

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, I think that in the past several months, we could have really discussed the facts instead of fears and instead of frightening Canadian consumers. I believe that the figures speak for themselves; the most accurate estimates we have now show that the increase will not be more than \$125 million over five years. That is a dollar per Canadian per year. Beyond that, we have already obtained \$1.1 billion in investment since 1987. We will get \$500 million more in the coming months so that Canadian researchers, physicians and universities throughout Canada can be in the major leagues of research. I think we owe that to Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand a copy of a letter dated February 26, 1992 from the U.S. multinational drug companies to U.S. trade negotiator Carla Hills, which states:

In clear, straightforward language, the NAFTA must require Canada to dismantle its discriminatory compulsory licensing regime for pharmaceutical products and to suspend the granting of any compulsory licences from December 20, 1991 forward.

My question is for the minister answering for the minister of trade. Will the minister confirm that Bill C-91 accomplishes both of these U.S. goals and confirm that with the NAFTA Canadian governments will lose sovereignty and will not be allowed to bring back compulsory licensed low cost generic drugs?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, there are two questions and the answer to both is no.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, it is now clear that the December 20, 1991 retroactive date was not required by GATT but was directed by the U.S. pharmaceutical industry and resulted in 24 drugs receiving up to 13 years additional patent protection.

In view of this, will the government do the honourable thing in the face of this corporate greed and withdraw Bill C-91?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr.

Speaker, I think that my colleague is leaving something out. December 20, 1991 was the date Mr. Dunkel, GATT Secretary General, tabled his report and all industrialized countries that make pharmaceutical products and do basic research accepted this date. I do not see why Canada should have a date different from the rest. It is not by choice or related to trilateral or bilateral negotiations but because we live in a world where more and more barriers are coming down. Canada wants to be a leader in basic research, which will help Canadians and Canada enter the 21st century not as copiers but as a country that does basic research.

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• (1440)

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance.

The North American free trade agreement involves a thorough restructuring of our economy. From now on Japan, through Mexico, will be within driving distance of our domestic markets.

Why does the government keep repeating the same mistakes it made in the free trade agreement with the United States? Why, in last week's minibudget, did the minister refuse to prepare Canadian workers and businesses for this unprecedented level of international competition?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should take the trouble to read last week's statement.

If we look at the statement over all and the major investment in human resources, in training, there we have Canada's key to success on international markets, the key to being competitive and productive.

The hon. member has been asking us to invest more in human resources, and now that we have, I am waiting for a token of approval.

[English]

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, the fund went broke last June and what the government has put in place will not carry it through the last summer. The fact is that it is substantially short of the mark and it is going to bear a terrible penalty for it.