

Government Orders

There was a section in the act which gave Draconian measures to the government with respect to overriding any environmental laws, whether at the municipal or provincial level. I knew that Paul was deeply concerned about that and deeply concerned as to whether it was necessary. He and I worked together. I was a member of the opposition and a brand new member of the House. He arranged a meeting with himself, myself and the Hon. Donald Macdonald and officials. Very quietly he set out the reasons why he felt that particular section of the bill was not necessary. What is more, he pointed out that it went in a bad direction.

The Hon. Donald Macdonald listened. He and his officials discussed the matter further with Paul and myself and in one day the department came back, led by the minister, and said it agreed and would change it.

Sometimes people say that politicians do not make any difference. The right kind of politicians do make a difference.

That is just one story and there are others.

He made a difference and he was our friend and I am deeply conscious of the fact that he made a contribution to Canada which was important and a long way from being ordinary.

I hope his family will accept our condolences and our remarks of respect and affection for a very fine man.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PATENT ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Blais that Bill C-91, an act to amend the Patent Act, to amend another act in consequence thereof and to provide for other related matters, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee in the Departmental envelope.

Mrs. Edna Anderson (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, Canada's seniors need effective and affordable medicines. There are critics who do not want Canada to give the same protection to pharmaceutical patents as every other advanced industrial country.

They are not interested in attracting new investment or creating new jobs in this country. They do not want a strong and innovative pharmaceutical industry to grow on Canadian soil. They have used fear in their campaign against Bill C-91. They have attempted to frighten senior citizens with tales of spiralling drug costs and a collapse of the health care system in this country should the legislation be passed.

• (1520)

I think it is time to put an end to all this fear-mongering. Let us look at the facts. First, all pharmaceutical products account for only a small percentage of total health care costs in this country. Second, patented drugs account for less than half the costs of these pharmaceutical products or about 3 per cent of all Canadian health care costs at the retail level. Third, the net effect of the legislation will be to extend patent protection for an average of only about three years. The best estimates currently available suggest that this legislation will have no near-term impact on patented drug costs. Over the longer term, that is by the end of the decade, it is estimated that the additional costs incurred under this new policy will represent about 2 per cent of the value of purchases of prescription and behind-the-counter drugs by pharmacies and hospitals.

Indeed, the cumulative total increased cost of purchases of patented drugs by pharmacies and hospitals due to the elimination of compulsory licensing as a result of Bill C-91 over the next four-year period is estimated to be about \$1 per Canadian per year or less than one-twentieth of one per cent of the total health care bill in Canada. That is hardly enough to bring down the Canadian health care system.

Let us not forget it is the ability to develop new and more effective medicines and treatments that is the best hope for keeping health care costs in line.

Research has shown that new drug treatments can actually save on over-all health care costs by reducing