

who sat with them day after day, I can still remember with great sensitivity.

I am suggesting to the Minister and to the members of the committee that may review this Bill, that further consideration be given to the possibility and advisability of making the drug available for use in homes, hospices and other places to which terminal patients are taken. So very often a person suffering from terminal cancer is just sent home when a hospital can do no more for him and her. The hospital, quite understandably, needs the facility for other people to whom it still has services to offer. That person is sent home to be cared for by loved ones, visiting nurses and others. They are sent home to suffer probably the worst pain that they will be called upon to endure. It seems to me that in such a situation that patient will need a drug of this kind that can relieve pain.

I am aware that there are other drugs which can relieve pain equally, though not as rapidly. Nonetheless, I ask that consideration be given to this. I am aware of the potential dangers, but we are equally aware of the fact that these dangers are possible as well in hospitals or wherever the drug may be administered. There will always be a need for surveillance, vigilance and action by authorities. I hope that some further consideration can be given to this matter on behalf of nameless and faceless people who will, nonetheless, be sufferers and who could find an equal measure of relief to that given those patients in hospitals with whom we are now concerned.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier):** Mr. Speaker, I shall, if I may, add my Party's comments to those made by the Minister and the Hon. Member presenting this Bill, which aims to legalize, within certain limits, the therapeutic use of heroin.

We have all known Walter Baker, the former Member for Nepean-Carleton and a good friend, and I remember when he presented a similar Bill in the House. I was in the House at the time, and we all realized the meaning of his message. This afternoon, the Minister explained that the Government intended to come back with its own legislation next March, and the Minister deserves to be praised for this felicitous initiative.

There are of course two sides to the question, but I think the Minister has understood the problems involved. We simply want to say that we are anxiously awaiting this Bill or amendment, that we fully support this initiative and that we also want to congratulate the Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) who has shown once again that backbenchers can contribute very substantially to the parliamentary process.

I feel the Member for Scarborough West (Mr. Stackhouse) made a valid suggestion, namely to extend the use of heroin to institutions other than hospitals. This is of course a point that will be looked into by the Minister because of the risk factor in controlling a dangerous drug, even if it is to be used for a very humanitarian purpose, namely to alleviate pain.

### *Narcotic Control Act*

In previous Parliaments, I have heard Hon. Members—physicians—who objected to the therapeutic use of heroin, and said that new and effective drugs were available. As the Minister said, we are not experts. This is a technical question, and we are not qualified to discuss this aspect. However, I have to say that there is a proven need. We hope that by March next year, the Minister will have had an opportunity to consult Hon. Members and that he will let us know what his requirements are and what kind of co-operation he will be seeking to implement the legislation. We therefore fully support this initiative.

[English]

**Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East):** Mr. Speaker, I would agree with my colleagues that there is no better tribute to the late Hon. Walter Baker, whom we all respected and of whom we thought so much, than to have carried this Bill forward. I congratulate the Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) for presenting the Bill and stimulating the debate today, and also the Minister for his Government's response which would allow some very positive movement in implementing the use of heroin for therapeutic purposes as a controlled pain-killer.

● (1730)

There is no doubt that this is a subject that raises considerable fear as a result of misinformation, distortion and misunderstanding. Since that will be the basis for the response in many parts of Canada, it is very important to involve the public in public education as well as to have a clearly controlled time limited experiment as a first step.

Hon. Members may be interested in reading an article by Marjorie Nichols in *The Vancouver Sun* in which she attributes much of the fear and opposition to the use of heroin for therapeutic purposes, at least in our province, to the history of the race wars, or opium wars.

There is no question that studies have shown that this is a very wise and safe procedure. Experience has shown for some time in the United Kingdom that heroin has proven to be a most significant drug as a pain-killer. As the Minister said, other countries have adopted the use of heroin as a pain-killer as regular policy and we really have nothing to fear.

I believe public education is important. Although the CMA has certainly recommended this move, there are still some reservations even among physicians. Therefore, a time limited experiment with controlled research would seem to be very wise at this time. We support this move and commend the Minister and the Member for St. John's East for the steps they have taken.

**Mr. Bruce Halliday (Oxford):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate today. Let me begin by congratulating the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) who has kept this issue alive in the House to a large extent. He has done what our late colleague, Walter Baker, tried very strenuously to do. The words of tribute that were paid to him by the Hon. Member for St. John's East and the Minister are indeed