

Government Orders

This was not a date chosen by this government after dutiful study. This was a date of retroactivity because it has caved in to that big, big lobby. The said letter apparently was full of commands, such as insist and must.

These brand name companies, in essence, made the rules and had seen to it how those rules could be adopted as international standards.

They wanted to set a precedent for the world, but who is the guinea pig? Canada.

We do not even know if there is ever any intention on the part of the pharmaceutical companies offshore to transfer biomedical research to Canada in exchange for Bill C-91. Why did we not ask for that?

A special assistant to President Bush, Gail Wilensky, said: "Canada does not have to worry about having a biomedical research industry, it can make use of ours. That is what it means to be a small country next to a large country".

What a mocking attitude and what arrogance. This government has chosen to be mocked and has chosen to surrender.

Retroactivity would knock about two dozen generic licences into oblivion. Worse, if Bill C-91 is passed and entrenched in the North American free trade agreement, it will be virtually impossible to change later on.

What does this mean? It means that in future no Canadian government would be able to provide for its citizens without violating the international trade agreement. More seriously, when entrenched with the international trade agreement it would wipe out the sovereign right of this Parliament to allow generic companies to provide cheaper bio-equivalent drugs of brand name drugs to the poor, the elderly and the sick. Are we prepared, as members of Parliament, to truly surrender our right?

I ask all members of Parliament, particularly those from the other side who seem to be defending the position of the government, to come to their consciences. I am really groping for words to define the

attitude of this government. This bill is more than unfairness, it is more than arrogance, it is more than lack of sensitivity, it is more than lack of leadership and integrity; it is the sum total of all these.

It is as though low-income and middle-class Canadians no longer matter in our society; no wonder most Canadians are disillusioned with this government.

Bill C-91 is a reflection that this government has lost touch with the pulse of Canadians. Even this government which talks of fairness to business will not allow other businesses to flourish. The saddest truism in Canada is that life is harder now than when this government came into power in 1984. The irony is that it is the same government that promised prosperity and now with Bill C-91 this government would like it to be even harder for the Canadians of tomorrow.

I appeal through the Chair, the ultimate authority in this House, to use its great persuasive powers to change the hearts and hands of this government. Can the Chair tell us of any parliamentary procedure that I can share with my constituents so that we can change the hearts and intention of this government and all its members? I only know of one approach and that is for this Parliament to be dissolved and for the government to call an election. Is there anything within the Chair's power that can invoke this wish of Canadians?

This is about the only retroactivity that we can allow, that we should not have elected this government to begin with in 1984. Surely this government is not blind to the 1.6 million unemployed and blind to the food banks.

As I conclude with the remaining minute allowed to me, we know of the havoc that Bill C-22 has wreaked and four years later in these December days, again we will see the havoc to be wrought by Bill C-91. Is this the Christmas gift the government is prepared to offer Canadians during this holiday season? I trust that its conscience will be stirred.

• (1200)

Hon. Bob Layton (Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to join in the debate with my colleagues today on the drug patent bill, C-91.