

well jeopardize it by needlessly tinkering with a system that is already working very well. The Bill deserves to die on the Order Paper.

• (1730)

Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on Bill C-280, which has been presented to the House by the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier).

An Hon. Member: A very distinguished gentleman.

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Yes, I agree he is a very distinguished Member. After all, as a colleague of his, working on the Joint Standing Committee on Official Languages, we have become well acquainted and I have developed a good deal of regard for the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier. It is perhaps worth noting that the *Ottawa Citizen* shows that this is a good day to say a few words about *M. Bilinguisme* in its paragraphs about his work in the Province of Ontario in advancing education for Franco-Ontarians and pressing for immersion programs for the English-speaking, and so on, which are important parts of his political and public career.

Mr. McDermid: Hear, hear!

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): I think I hear the Parliamentary Secretary echoing my comments. Because I was at committee I arrived a little late so I unfortunately did not catch the Parliamentary Secretary's first comments, but his notes probably did not include these compliments, so it is a pleasure now to pass them on indirectly from the Parliamentary Secretary.

I did arrive in sufficient time, however, to catch the suggestion of the Parliamentary Secretary that the Bill is unnecessary and to listen to his reassurances that the achievement of a trade arrangement with the United States, which will have all kinds of radical impacts on the Canadian economic, social and political system, did not represent a threat to one of the very important commercial aspects of bilingualism in Canada, the regulations, in fact, which require labelling and packaging of items in English and French.

I must confess that I am not nearly as sure as the Parliamentary Secretary. The Government's performance in these areas has not often been reassuring. When I think of the activities of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre) in particular, or as he is labelled unofficially, the Minister for consumer loss and corporate profit, I think of his efforts on behalf of the International Pharmaceutical Manufacturers. The Government's intention was allegedly entirely distinct from any pressure from the United States, or from any kind of link to the bilateral negotiation carried on with the United States. Here was a good thing which the Canadian people would have to accept. Here was a necessary change. The licensing provisions under which drugs could be manufactured in Canada by generic producers were so objectionable, presumably, to the Canadian people that they simply had to be

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changed. The Canadian people did not have to worry about the consequences of it. The result would not be higher drug prices.

But in fact, once the changes were made, Canadians experienced far higher drug prices. Very steep increases in drug prices have occurred just within the last few months and it has become clear in the last months of the bilateral trade negotiations that in the American mind, these changes in the pharmaceutical and manufacturing licensing provisions were part of the negotiations.

The Canadian office involved with these trade negotiations desperately sought to get these provisions off the record, removed from the final documents. The fact that they were in other documents certainly allowed one to infer that they had been part and parcel of the whole thing. If it was not being done to satisfy the American administration and international pharmaceutical manufacturers, it certainly was not being done for the advantage of Canadian consumers, not by a long shot. It is all too likely not to be done to the advantage of Canadian scientists or researchers either, because the changes, we are told by the pharmaceutical manufacturers themselves, are not going to lead to any great increase in research in Canada. We have been sold a bill of goods by the Minister for consumer loss and corporate profit.

A Government which is capable of pulling off that kind of stunt is capable of exactly what the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier is suggesting in the speech he made in support of this Bill. A Government that does that is capable of doing away with the regulations under which Canadian manufacturers have been operating. It is recognized that if there is this great change in our trading relations with the United States, if the agreement is actually carried through, if tariffs drop, there is surely going to be a significant increase in trade into Canada of grocery products.

Canadian producers of agricultural products, which are processed to make many of these grocery products, have expressed concern about that. Surely, it was very convincing to have the head of the McCain foods manufacturing empire, which began in New Brunswick and has spread out across the country, telling us that the consequences of this trade deal were going to be very serious for Canadian agricultural producers. The survival of our supply management programs, the maintenance of prices for Canadian producers, will be made very difficult under the pressure of products coming from the United States. What he was saying was that he himself supported our marketing board arrangements, and the pressure he would be under he saw as having only the most serious and detrimental effects on Canadian agricultural producers. If in fact we maintain our marketing boards and keep our prices as we want, the result will surely be the undercutting and the flowing in of products.

The Government seems to be completely committed to the idea of vastly increased trade. In those circumstances, when the Government comes under pressure from American producers of grocery products and other items which are