

Government Orders

It is really astonishing to see this bill coming forward from a Conservative government. What is it talking about? This is the government that talks about free market. This is a bill that limits competition. It says that for 20 years one does not have to compete against anybody else.

It is offering the patent drug companies a protected market for 20 years. This is the government that talks about competitiveness. How can competitiveness flourish, however, when rules change in the middle of a game? A company that a year ago was able to produce a drug is told now that despite the money invested in getting that drug ready to come on the market, it is not going to be able to do that because the rules have changed and they have changed retroactively.

We talk about fairness. The generic companies now have permission to produce 22 patent drugs that will not come on the market and will not compete with patented drugs because this government is saying that the rules of the game are changing. The change goes back to last year. We are removing the permission to provide 22 different drugs at a lower cost to Canadians.

• (1700)

We talked about honesty. There is no honesty in the debate on this bill. It is not extending patent protection, it is entirely removing the right of any company to produce generic drugs as long as the patent lasts.

It is not true that GATT requires us to do this. The proposed changes to GATT have not even been approved. Even if approved they would allow one year for a country to act and even after that year there is no certainty that Canada would have to take this kind of action.

It is not true that NAFTA requires us to do this. How could NAFTA require us to do this when NAFTA has not even been introduced in this Chamber? It has not yet been debated and has not been approved.

If NAFTA tells us what we can and cannot do to provide health care for Canadian citizens then we do not need NAFTA. That is just one more reason to vote against it.

I want to say a few final words about the corruption I have seen in people's integrity around this issue. This government attempted to suppress a report from its own officials that showed what this bill would do to drug prices in Canada, a report that said that patent protection was not producing research now and would not in the future. The report by our government officials would have led us to the conclusion that we should be cancelling the 1987 Bill C-22 that extended patent protection rather than making it absolute as this bill proposes to do.

I and every member of this House resent it when officials are told not to tell the truth, when they are brought before a committee of Parliament and gagged, when they are prevented from telling the truth about the scientific and analytical work they have done.

With all the money that is being spent on lobbying for this bill, we must ask who gains and who loses. Those who gain are the most profitable industries in this country. Those who lose are seniors, the poor, and the taxpayers, those least able to afford to pay to increase those profits.

To conclude, I do not think that we are here as government and as Parliament, to benefit the most profitable segment of our economy at the expense of those least able to pay.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Fontaine (Lévis): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to Bill C-91 which I view as a particularly significant piece of legislation for the drug industry in the province of Quebec. It is well known that this bill has generated considerable controversy and goes back to Bill C-22. You will recall the uproar, both in the House and in the Senate, surrounding the passage of Bill C-22 which paved the way for the present situation allowing us now to strengthen the protection granted to companies involved in research.

The government is aiming at striking a balance between economic growth and consumer protection. Bill C-91 builds on the 1987 amendments to the Patent Act called, as I already mentioned, Bill C-22.