

Government Orders

the Americans who say that Bill C-91 will bring them a billion dollars more.

I was disappointed when my colleague from Winnipeg replied by saying, "Come on, how can we trust the Americans?" You here in the House of Commons are acting as if the Americans were part of the evil empire. You are saying that they cannot be trusted. I am not asking anyone to trust all Americans but at least to trust the figures quoted in a reputable newspaper like the *New York Times*. Those figures were quoted there yesterday and I have not seen any retraction today. I have not heard this government ask that newspaper to retract so those figures still stand and they show that it will cost us a billion dollars more.

I conclude by saying that those listening and watching us will want to know whether to believe the Liberals, the Conservatives or the New Democrats. It is not necessary to trust us either, but check out drug prices, talk to your pharmacist and especially your doctor because he too will tell you that this is an unnecessary bill that will open the field of pharmaceuticals to a certain kind of banditry and make the law of the jungle prevail and above all that it will affect not just old people but everyone. That is what bothers me.

Although the government made promises to the drug companies, it should have told them: "Thanks for all your donations, but we did what we could and were unable to pass this bill. Wait for the next election and maybe after that we will submit this bill again". We must not pass this bill now because it is detrimental to Canadians' health.

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate and I wish to begin by raising one very simple question: Why is it that the government in the last gasping, dying days of its existence is bringing in legislation which is so destructive and so injurious to the well-being of this country? Why does it believe that it has a mandate to so completely go against the interests of the large number of Canadians who depend upon proper health care and proper drug prices? Whom is it paying off? To whom is it answerable on this question? Clearly, there is nothing in this bill that justifies the Draconian actions of taking away what has been one of

the most useful areas of social legislation that Canada has had for the last 20 years.

I was in this city at the time when the compulsory licensing bill was brought in. I was a special assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the former leader of the Liberal Party, when we brought in compulsory licensing. I remember well the debate at the time and the committee examination because my job was to monitor what was taking place. I can remember the conditions back in 1968: price gouging, exorbitant, unfeeling rip-offs of all kinds of people by the major manufacturers, with no sense of responsibility. They were not simply providing a product, they were providing the life blood for hundreds of Canadians who need their medicaments.

Now we have a government that is going to return exactly back to the old system. It is turning the clock back over 20 years. Again, one would have to ask why. What is the reason? What possibly could seize it with this reason?

I suppose it is not too hard to find because all one has to do is read the North American free trade agreement and realize that this was a condition inserted by the now rejected Bush administration in the United States for signing the NAFTA agreement and this government went along. It was the classic pieces of silver that it sold out for. If anybody wants to know why they should object strenuously to the North American free trade agreement, it is because it includes measures like this that totally work against the interests of Canadians. This is not the only hidden nugget in that agreement, but this one is the most blatant and the most damaging because it goes to the very vital health of Canadians.

My colleague has reported the general accounting study done by the Americans, about the extra \$400 million in health costs per year at a time when the health system is already overloaded. It is interesting that at a time when the Americans have examined the Canadian compulsory licensing system to see if that is a way of effectively cutting costs in their health care system, we are rejecting that very same system. I would suggest, watching the impacts of the American election, that President-elect Clinton has made a major commitment to reduce health costs. One of the things that the new administration will be looking at is this proposal to deal with compulsory licensing that Canada has had for over the past 25 years and it will take a hard look at that as