

*Government Orders*

I certainly am not opposed to intellectual property rights. I think most people in this House have great respect for people and corporations creative enough to produce products not only in Canada but around the world that benefit mankind.

Certainly Canada has had its share of historic developments, some in the drug industry and others such as the great Canadarm on the space shuttle that continues to fly around from time to time. I do respect intellectual property rights.

The first thrust of my remarks on Bill C-91 is simply this. When Canada entered the free trade agreement, it allowed 10 years for the reduction of tariffs to bring Canada and the United States on the same playing field. This legislation at the date it was signed to make it official, bang, adds three years in one fell swoop to the patent protection of the large drug manufacturing companies.

It has been argued rightly or wrongly in the last while that those three years may even be more than three years. I am not in a position to say whether those who said it would be seven years are correct, or those who said it would be less are correct but clearly there is going to be a tremendous added cost to all Canadians in our haste to pass this legislation.

This represents, as the government has indicated, billions of dollars worth of revenue to those big companies. While we gave 10 years to implement the free trade agreement with a gradual change to tariffs, now for some reason there is an almighty rush to push this through. I object to that. It would have made no difference to those in GATT had we done it on a more gradual basis and it probably would have been fairer to all Canadians. That was my first objection.

I want to say this concerning the retroactivity of this legislation. As was put forward by my colleague, we have very good generic companies in Canada. They have made some great inroads in the production of generic drugs. Going back to retroactivity on this to me is a slap in the face for Canadian companies. There was absolutely no need and would not have stopped the investment of those major drug companies, as is pointed out by even some of the headlines: "Greater patent protection opens drug firms' wallets".

It opens more than their wallets to come to Canada. It fills their wallets as they come to Canada. The drug business is a very lucrative business. Everybody understands how lucrative it is, so why the need for retroactivity? I believe it would have made no difference had we really studied this legislation and its ramifications to the public and given it three more years, rather than worry about its retroactivity.

Yet I had no indication from this side that it was prepared to revisit that issue right up to today. That is not being flexible and we want to be a flexible nation. I have some real difficulty with that aspect of it. What is the rush? Therefore, my question to the member for Broadview—Greenwood: Who lobbied who and for how much, so that this had to be put through in this fashion. That is a question I will ask when we address this issue in the committee of consumer and corporate affairs when we investigate lobbyists. I hope we come up with some answers because I think this issue is important to everyone in this House.

• (1610)

Let us look at one other part that I am interested in too. Should this investment take place as is indicated by the headlines, that is the drug companies are going to invest in Canada in a major way and they are going to create jobs. I do not think anyone in this Chamber denies that new and more jobs for Canadians everywhere are needed, but my fear is that if you look at this whole drug pie you will see that 10 per cent is research and development. However, I can tell you that 80 per cent of that research and development is going to take place in central Canada only.

I am not suggesting that the manufacturers pull up their factories and move them to Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Prince Edward Island, but at least give those parts of Canada, whether it is Atlantic Canada or western Canada where some of my colleagues come from, a commitment to their fair share of the R and D. Out of the hundreds of millions of dollars, the drug companies should at least give a commitment to put this R and D in different parts of Canada. This is not ripping up a factory or denying the big name companies their investment in Ontario and in Quebec, not at all. It is only saying to give us a fair share of the investment which comes from all Canadians.