

*Government Orders*

In terms of the time we have had to debate this bill, it should be enough to in effect see if all the good things that government spokespeople say are attributable to this bill, to let the public have a chance to hear a debate. This country is large and it takes time to build a groundswell from coast to coast on any issue.

I can talk conservatively and certainly independently about a three-day debate, parts of three days, and a grand total of eight hours and 40 minutes, and then an allocation order sending it to committee, where in effect it was parts of three days for committee witnesses and great disagreements, understandably, between opposition parties and the government as to how many witnesses. A very few witnesses came before the committee. Here we have it back today for report stage, and 71 amendments on the Order Paper, pointing out that this is a complex bill, a complicated bill affecting all Canadians. It has not thoroughly got the scrutiny of Parliament.

I am the first to say that too often in this House we debate *ad nauseum* too many matters that frankly do not matter that much. I understand the government's using closure and allocation of time when the debate has gone on for days and days and perhaps the opposition is running the clock rather than really debating the merits of a bill.

Never has there been a bill in my memory with so much potential to debate both sides of the issue. To have the ramrod of allocation of time and closure on this bill is a travesty of Parliament, which is one of the reasons this institution is in such low esteem with the public which knows and senses something is wrong. This is the best example.

Before I go on to the other matters of the substance of the bill, I want to take time to pay justified credit to the member from Surrey North and especially to the member for Dartmouth of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition who is a fellow colleague from my province of Nova Scotia and who has been the spokesperson for the opposition, really leading the questions and the objections to this bill in a proper way.

I give him full credit because I certainly know from the constituency that he comes from in metro Halifax, where there is a great university community and other interests

that affect his party, that he has had cross-currents to compete with as all members have cross-currents to compete with from time to time when you get such an important bill.

The other perversion of problem, and I am not going to take long on this since other members have spoken about it and there are several amendments that are supposed to cure it, is a retroactivity feature.

Retroactive legislation in Parliament is odious. It does away with rights that were there in the law, then you pass a law like today and you take back rights that were already given. You have changed the rules of the game in midstream and that is very wrong. Hopefully it may be corrected in an amendment but I am not naive enough to believe that amendment may carry.

Those are some of the points in terms of the perversion of Parliament that some of us still believe in although it is getting difficult to believe in it when you see this type of example.

The other element of Bill C-91 is the substance of the bill. We have heard much today, we are going to hear more in the afternoon or whenever this debate terminates on all the aspects of the bill. It does not take all the graphs, facts and figures to tell the people here and the people outside that generic drugs are cheaper and keep under control the cost of prescription drugs.

When you have all the provincial ministers of health, other than the minister of health from Quebec, raising questions about this bill, writing to the Minister of National Health and Welfare, suggesting certain amendments which have not been incorporated by the government to help some of the deficiencies of this bill, then all Canadians, especially those Canadians who believe in our universal health care, should stand on guard and be concerned.

I can understand the member for Laval. If you have a lot of pharmaceutical drug companies in your backyard, of course you are going to be in favour of this bill.

If it is so great then there should be time for people to get involved in the debate so that the government could justify this hurried action rather than to have it come on to the floor of the House the way it has come on with the hope that it is going to get through before our Christmas recess.