

Government Orders

extreme urgency or in cases of public non-commercial use”.

What is the public health care system of Canada if not a public non-commercial use? Do we not have a public health care system province by province? Is it not designed to ensure that all Canadians receive fair and equal medical treatment at the lowest cost possible? Does that not become fair, honest, serious grounds for exemption under the proposed GATT proposal? Of course it does.

We continue to have the voices of deception in this country led by this government trying to sell it as if somehow we must yield to some kind of holy obligation. If you go back to article 8 of the GATT agreement, in terms of setting out general principles: “Parties may, in formulating or amending their national laws or regulations in relation to patent law, adopt measures necessary to protect public health and nutrition and to promote the public interest in sectors of vital importance to their socio-economic and technological development”.

That is the basic principle of the GATT agreement, that we have a right to defend our public health and our socio-economic system.

I charge this government, with no uncertainty, of misleading Canadians by saying that we need Bill C-91 and that we need the retroactive clause to meet the GATT agreement. It is simply not the truth. It is about time the Minister for International Trade owned up to fact he can no longer tell the truth because he no longer understands what it is.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, that is according to the text.

Therefore, any validity or credibility this government had that is prepared to defend the public interest of Canada gets flushed down the tube by the very words of what it says it has to obey. It is heresy. The Conservatives are misinterpreting their responsibilities under the GATT rule.

The NAFTA agreement is the government's own concoction. The countries of the world did not come up with NAFTA. It is what the government is writing into it.

However, it was so stupid and so idiotic that it was prepared to sign an agreement that would allow the Mexicans to have an eight-year transition period for their own public drug companies but we could not bargain the same thing for ours.

• (1720)

It is incredible and it is unbelievable. Yet the Prime Minister and the minister of trade stomp across Canada saying: “NAFTA is good for you”. Sure it is good for you. It is good for a \$2 billion swallow of increased cost for you. It is good for their friends, it is good for their corporate buddies, and it is good for their allies. It may be good for getting them jobs after they get defeated but it sure is not good for the Canadian people.

That is the real reason. The real reason is not in the trade agreements. I will concede that when drafting NAFTA, in copying the GATT they tended to forget. They included the first part of the proposal, which requires the phasing out of compulsory licensing, but they did not live up to the honour and the word of the GATT proposal, which provided clear exemptions for compulsory licensing.

Mr. Edwards: Tories like Judy Erola.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I hear the Conservatives raising the name of one of my former associates, as if somehow the Liberal Party and the present caucus must be held responsible for the vagaries of one of its members.

If they answered for the vagaries of all their former associates they would be attending parole board hearings every single day of the year.

Let us not use that as an excuse. Let us get down to the merits of the case. There is nothing under GATT that would require Canada to implement Bill C-91. If there was any court of justice that required some sense of veracity and verity from a minister, the Minister for International Trade would be given the longest sentence possible.

He would be incarcerated for the rest of his life, because he has told the biggest whopper which has cost Canadians more money than any criminal we could possibly imagine. It is a bigger heist than the Brinks robbery, to use that argument.