

Government Orders

Once again the instrument here is the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board. Bill C-91 gives that board significant new powers to better deal with any kind of excessive pricing that might be contemplated. Both introductory and existing drug prices will come under its control. The board's guidelines have the same force and effect as a federal court. The board will have the power to order price restrictions or penalties. Failure to comply will subject offenders to stiff penalties including fines and even imprisonment.

We see by the record of the past five years what improved patent protection can do in this field. We have a pretty good idea of the benefits that an extension of this protection will create. Over half a billion dollars in new investment has been announced since January when the government announced that it would end compulsory licensing. Companies in this field have already announced that their Canadian operations will be the base for international product mandates. We expect to see the total research and development investment by the innovative industry reach \$2 billion over the next five years.

Five years ago, with the passage of Bill C-22, we set out on a new course confident that it was the right one but content to be judged by the record. We see now that it was the right course. It is time to continue.

This bill is good for Canada. This bill is good for competition, good for the consumer, good for our economic well-being. I urge all honourable members to give this bill speedy passage.

I would like to also add that in the period since Bill C-22 was passed the total research and development expenditures by the innovative industry are estimated at \$1.1 billion for the four years from 1987 to 1991. That is \$1.1 billion in research and investment and jobs that we would not have had if Bill C-22 had not been passed. I also would like to note that the funding for basic research increased from \$30.3 million to \$94.2 billion between 1988 and 1991.

• (1740)

Those are just two of the statistics out of many I could give to show that this kind of opening up of competition to the innovative drug sector is very good for Canada. It is good for our science and technology sector. It is good for jobs. It is good for the economy. Ultimately, it will be good for consumers as more and more new drugs are brought on to the marketplace. Hopefully drugs that

were developed and researched right here in Canada will be among the leaders in the field tomorrow.

Again I want to reiterate my urging of all hon. members to give this bill speedy passage so that all of the research and development dollars and other investments that are waiting to flow to this country can start flowing.

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, I have a short question for my colleague who just delivered her thesis for why this bill should pass quickly. First I would like to voice my displeasure at the fact that the government has brought in another closure limiting debate on an issue that is important to all Canadians, Bill C-91.

My question is simply this: We have been accused in this House of complicating matters more so than they should be. I think that message came through loud and clear in the recent referendum vote in Canada.

Let us get back to the fundamentals that are being discussed in this House today which are, as I understand it, the purpose of the legislation. Really the purpose of the production of drugs and the research in drugs is that drugs are used to cure illness. Drugs are used to control disease and drugs are used to alleviate or lessen pain. Those are three functions of drugs.

Drugs are an intricate process in the health care of the people of our country. I think all sides of the House are dedicated to a comprehensive plan of medical care for all Canadians. We have to come down to the basic issues of the purpose of drugs and how they interact with the curing of illnesses of citizens through our comprehensive medical plan.

Then we have to ask ourselves three fundamental questions. One is whether Bill C-91 is going to increase the cost and availability of drugs through the provincial plans that already distribute drugs in this country. The empirical data is unquestionable that it will increase the cost of drugs through our health care system. Will Bill C-91 increase the cost to young families who are not covered under a comprehensive drug plan in this country? The empirical data indicates unquestionably that it will increase the cost of drugs to young families in this country. Will Bill C-91 contribute to the cost of drugs to senior citizens in this country? The empirical data we have available indicates that it will increase the cost of drugs to senior citizens in this country.