

Government Orders

I urge members of all parties to support its speedy passage.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is fairly knowledgeable on this subject and has spent some time discussing it with people of the faculty of the University of British Columbia.

I want to tell him that in a visit to UBC a week and a half ago I did the same thing. I had a discussion with Dr. Bernard Bressler, who is knowledgeable in this field. It explained part of the reason why he and the members of the faculty of UBC sought passage of this bill. He mentioned the same \$15 million grant that was available for research purposes at UBC as part of the reason for his support of this legislation.

What I would like to ask the hon. member to do is take the House into his confidence. He must have approached the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and perhaps his colleague the Minister of National Health and Welfare to see how much Canadians are going to pay for this research.

I think this is a fair question, and I would like to hear his answer to it. How much are the Canadian taxpayers going to pay in order to get this research in Canada? He is asking Canadian taxpayers to fork over another \$800 million during the next six years in order to fund a few million in research.

I would like to know how many dollars are going to be spent. Perhaps he can also tell us how much more is going into the obscene profits already being made by the international drug companies—

An hon. member: The biggest profits in the world.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member says they have the biggest profits in the world. Friends of mine who are unbiased observers of this call these profits obscene.

How much of the additional \$800 million that is going to be taken out of the pockets of the Canadian taxpayer is going to that source?

I agree that research and development is very important. I concede that point, but Canadian taxpayers are really the ones who are going to fund this research if we change the law to allow this.

The hon. member knows the government has already changed the law once in a way that is very favourable to these drug companies. Now it is proposing to change the law again and hand over a few hundred million dollars more to these drug companies.

I want to know how much Canadian taxpayers are going to pay for this research. How many dollars of taxes are going to be collected from every taxpayer in Canada for every dollar of research spent? Can the hon. member give us that figure?

Mr. Wilbee: Mr. Speaker, that is a very reasonable question and certainly I considered it myself.

First of all, I do not really agree with his number of \$800 million. There has never been any basic research as to where that would actually come from. Like so many statistical studies, you can prove whatever you really want to from this type of thing. We can pick a number out of the air. We can neglect to include other factors such as what would the actual cost be without inflation, with inflation and what are the actual drug costs going to be even if this research is not done.

We cannot say that all the money is going to be put into research and will be taken directly off. In drug prices, as the hon. member probably knows, there is very little relationship between actual cost and what is charged. This is one of the facts of the industry. There are many different factors that are involved in drug prices.

For example, just the other day on the news there was a report where a criminal in the United States had sued the makers of halcion for approximately \$1.5 million because he committed a horrendous crime after taking a halcion tablet. The drug company was expected to pay this penalty because somebody had abused its product. All over this continent people are suing the drug houses for exorbitant amounts. Also, the drug approval system we require is fantastically expensive.

• (1150)

I believe it is unrealistic to say that because we give three extra years of patent it is going to cost \$800 million. We already have 17 years. As I have said, those figures may be used, but someone else on this side of the House may come up with an entirely different set of figures they can justify in the same way.