

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, I listened to some of the speech of the hon. member opposite. Perhaps my reading of the bill is different than hers but my understanding of the bill is that it is basically a codification of regulations that currently exist under two other acts.

I know that in the last Parliament when the Liberal Party was in opposition we fought very hard against government by regulation on many bills that were put before this place. We believe that when measures impact on the people of the country by way of regulation, wherever possible they should be codified. If flexibility is needed that is fine, but the place to debate major changes is certainly on the floor of the House of Commons. It is my understanding that we are not going in the direction of further regulation but we are going in the direction of codification of existing regulations under some acts.

• (1230)

She spoke for a bit about the pharmaceutical industry. I can certainly tell her that when Bill C-91 hit the floor there was great debate on all sides about the impact of that bill on both sides of industry plus consumers in the health care sector of Canada. One of the major things that this side fought for, and we had a particular point of view on it, was that the regulations inherent in that piece of legislation had to at least go before a parliamentary committee to be debated.

I do not know what the position of the members on her side was. I think they did support the bill but we did not. That was one of the reasons. We believe strongly that when we are dealing with things such as C-91 and indeed when we are dealing with enforcement under the Narcotics Control Act or the Food and Drug Act the place these regulatory changes should be debated is here on the floor of the House.

I would like to get her comments because she did mention the pharmaceutical industry. I would like for her to sort of broaden that out because I did not quite buy her argument insofar as it related to the pharmaceutical industry in Canada.

[Translation]

Mrs. Venne: Mr. Speaker, first of all, we are talking about the regulations which cabinet makes from time to time, as I said in my speech. In fact, cabinet may propose regulations in the case of administrative laws but not in the case of criminal legislation. However, the present wording of the bill gives the government or cabinet the right to make criminal laws.

We had a similar case in the debate on gun control legislation, and at the time it was said that the regulations would have to be tabled in the House 30 days before adoption and publication, during which time they could be discussed in the House. That is

what we decided, and that is what will happen in the case of our gun control legislation.

As for the second part of the hon. member's question in which he referred to the lack of response on the part of pharmacists and the general public, who do not see these things the way I do, I simply want to say there is no response at the present time because they do not feel concerned by this legislation. They are not mentioned in the bill. Why should they respond? The same applies to dentists and physicians. At the present time, no one is responding and no one is concerned by the bill. Why? Because for the time being, the individuals and professions that will be in this bill have not been identified.

So this is one way to get legislation through Parliament without people realizing what is going on, until the regulations are tabled and people are told these apply to veterinarians, physicians and dentists, and then they will react, but it will be too late.

That is why, as a member of the opposition, I see it as my duty to condemn these practices the government is trying to get through the House.

[English]

Ms. Margaret Bridgman (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that the Reform Party members will be dividing their time.

This bill deals with substances as listed in schedules I through IV and involves those substances that: "when introduced into our bodies produce a stimulant, depressant and/or hallucinogenic effect".

I have some concerns regarding the clarity and the continuity of the intent in some areas of this bill. It is a large bill and to illustrate my point I will select a few sections to indicate this lack of clarity or continuity.

Commencing with section 23 and a few thereafter, this section involves the disposing of controlled substances. The bill states, and I paraphrase, that any person may apply to the justice in writing and within 60 days of the seizure date of the substances for their return. If the justice is satisfied a person applying is the lawful owner or legally entitled to possession of the substance, and if the minister does not have reasonable grounds regarding the safety of the substance and the justice agrees that the substance need not be disposed of, then the substance will be returned to the legally recognized owner.

• (1235)

The minister can do this also in another situation and in that case the legal owner gets paid for the amount of the drugs. Considering this disposal when a legal owner is recognized, if the substance here is not required as evidence, the bill provides for the owner, if he or she wishes, to give consent to have the minister dispose of the substance.