

be worth a lot more than the \$400 billion we were talking about. But the Government wants to debate those regulations affecting the coal lands in ten-minute debating slots if we are lucky. The other Opposition Party might get one of those slots and certainly representatives of the prairie grain farming area will get some of those speaking slots. We from British Columbia might get no time at all to debate the regulations affecting the development of those B.C. coal lands.

I am saying that when it comes to a sense of honour we have had enough lessons in the past three and a half years to teach us not to take a position of trusting honour in the development of the regulations. We have to be sure. Therefore, we need a minimum of three days' debating time. If the regulations are good and we agree with them, we do not have to debate them for three days. But certainly it is reasonable to expect at least a three-day opportunity to debate those regulations if we sense that we need that time.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, I have an observation arising from a concern about a section in the Act. Although in this day and age legislation is becoming very complex. Thus it is incumbent upon us not to forget from time to time that we have a responsibility as Parliamentarians to ensure that people being affected by legislation and regulations made pursuant to a measure are understood. We have a responsibility to ensure that in this case producers understand clearly what Parliament intends when it introduces regulations.

If that concern is a valid one, it seems rather easy to me, indeed a very proper position for this House to take, to amend the present wording in the Act. As Your Honour knows, it sets forth with respect to debate on regulations a period of one hour. I have some uncertainty as to whether or not it is one hour for each regulation, one hour for all the regulations, or one hour for an amendment to the Act with respect to regulations which might be introduced at some point in the future. I am still unclear. If this piece of legislation produces a thousand separate regulations, it may well be that the House could be preoccupied for a thousand hours of debate. Of course, that is an extreme interpretation.

● (1230)

The Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), together with those Members who laboured long and hard all summer with respect to the legislation, has adopted a much more reasonable position. The Hon. Member for Vegreville suggested that we should have three days of debate on regulations. That is reasonable. In three days it is possible for us to indicate clearly to those persons most directly affected by the regulations what we intended or what we meant, whether we understand clearly the position of the producers, but in theory the position of anyone directly affected by the regulations. Do we understand their position? The only way those directly affected will know is if they have access to a historical document, in this case the *Debates* of the Chamber. If they have access to the *Debates*, only in that way will they understand whether or not we in fact understood their needs or, to

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put it another way, whether or not the regulations do what they were intended to do, that is, to make the legislation itself operative, flow smoothly and serve the needs for which it was intended.

In seeking to amend the particular clause by striking out the one hour and replacing it with three days, Hon. Members of the House and indeed the Senate would be given an opportunity to put on the record their interpretation of what they believe people in fact want. Unless I am seriously mistaken, it seems that the function and role of government is to serve the people. It is not complex or complicated. We do that by proposing and debating laws which are good laws. Good laws are simply ones which people will instinctively want to follow and adhere to. Bad laws are just the opposite. In my judgment it is not good law to deny people access to an understanding of our intentions. The three days would allow that access; if it is a simple matter, it could be simply stated and perhaps clearly understood.

As other speakers have said, there is no suggestion that every regulation be debated for three days. On the other hand, if it takes more than an hour or one speech to indicate that clearly to those most directly affected by regulations, then that is our responsibility. I think it is a very clear one.

I do not see it as anything other than a reasonable proposition, and I do not understand the Government's objection. I did not understand when it objected to it during the committee debate. It seemed like a reasonable position. My friends in the New Democratic Party suggested some other changes which are quite recognizable from their point of view. Today they might qualify; after the next election they might not. They see themselves as holier than thou, the only spokesmen for western producers or as very specific representatives of particular interest groups. I understand their seeking to reduce the numbers required to communicate to the Chair their desire to debate a particular recommendation. I have no quarrel with that in any particular sense, so I will not in any way try to deal with it.

I would like to deal more particularly with the amendments of the Hon. Member for Vegreville and his colleagues who worked diligently on this, in order to facilitate the prosecution of a responsibility, that is, to ensure that anyone who is interested and follows the debate clearly understands what we intend. It might be that with the complexity of legislation today a speaker may not in ten minutes be able to deal completely with the implications of a regulation. It is incumbent upon us in the Chamber not to impose restrictions on people who participate in debates in such a way as to render it very difficult, if not impossible, to communicate their views to Hon. Members, or, much more important, to those people directly affected, and to have them on the historical record. To this end the ten-minute limitation seems unreasonable. Whether it is more unreasonable to remove that and have no time limit on the debate than the ten-minute restriction, I am not absolutely certain, but I am certain that whatever we in this Chamber do with respect to these guidelines it should be done in such a way as to allow individual Members and Members