

● (1210)

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on the amendments which are before the House at this time. My concern about the Government's proposition to have a one-hour debate in the House of Commons on a regulation is that it does away with parliamentary control. Those of us who have been involved with legislation realize that regulations can be just as important as the Bill itself. They can be of any length, such as the regulation in the Department of National Defence concerning the rules of appeal for practices and procedures in courts martial which is over 14 pages long. Many words can be printed in 14 pages of *The Canada Gazette*.

I do not believe that Members of Parliament could ever agree to a clause which dictates that we must pass a regulation in one hour when it may take us five hours to read the regulation itself. If we really want to be the voice of the people and supervise the affairs of the Government, and if we really want to take the control of legislation and regulations away from the bureaucrats and restore it with the people's representatives, we certainly should have more than one hour of debate in the House of Commons.

Another provision I find offensive is that which suggests it takes 30 Members of the House of Commons to initiate this one-hour debate while it takes only 15 Senators to do the same thing. The situation may well arise when Members from one Province may wish to argue about a section in the regulations. I believe Members should have the automatic right to speak about a certain regulation, whether it is 10 Members or 15 Members. I find it hard to believe that anyone could suggest that two Members equal one Senator.

My main concern is that the Government, through this provision, is trying to limit the future role and authority of the House of Commons itself. The regulations on the awards and sanctions clause of the Bill will be very important to the agriculture and transportation industry in Canada. The provision in this legislation to provide only one hour in the House of Commons to debate regulations which could affect farmers, the transportation industry and the very way of life in western Canada is ridiculous. As one of my colleagues pointed out, even a time allocation motion requires two hours of debate in the House of Commons. The time allocation procedure under which we are presently debating this Bill allows us three days to debate the last two stages of the Crow legislation. Therefore I must ask how we could ever agree to a one-hour limitation provision which is more strict than any other rule in the House. It would give us less time for debate than we have for a Private Member's Bill and it is less time than we have for an Opposition day or for any Bill that comes before the House of Commons.

I must question why the Government wants to restrict us to a one-hour debate through this legislation when the regulations to be debated may be very important and of concern in the House two or three years from now and which may require a longer debate. If we agree to this one-hour debate, we will prevent future Parliaments from exercising their responsibility.

Western Grain Transportation Act

As a Member who represents the constituency of Churchill, which includes the Port of Churchill, I recognize the danger that this Bill to kill the Crow creates for a place such as the Port of Churchill. From the time this Bill was introduced we recognized that if variable rates were implemented and CN did not provide adequate repairs to its line, the Port of Churchill could be destroyed. For that reason the people in my riding are extremely concerned about this legislation and certainly would not want me to vote for it or any clause within it which would limit the power of the House of Commons to debate and supervise the affairs of the Government.

I certainly support the amendments put forward by my colleague for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin). We should not limit ourselves in the future or today to a one-hour debate or even a three-day debate. We are all aware of the lengthy wording that bureaucrats put into regulations. If Members of Parliament are faced with 15-page regulations, how can we only allow them one hour or three days to debate? We should not set a limit on the length of debate when we do not know what the regulations will be. For us to limit our own ability to speak or investigate legislation which could affect all of western Canada and parts of eastern Canada would be complete folly and would run against the very nature of the House of Commons.

Each of us was elected to this place for the primary purpose of representing our constituents. The very history of Parliament has been for the people's representatives to review legislation. The very purpose of Parliament is to supervise the activities of the Cabinet and the bureaucracy. This limitation of debate to one hour as proposed by the Government detracts from the fundamental purpose and rights of Members of Parliament. I certainly will not support the Government's position and I suspect that Government Members, after reconsideration, would recognize that they are cutting their own throats if they pass legislation of this nature.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak for a few moments on the proposal put forward by my colleague from Vegreville that would deal with the regulatory process of this Bill. I suggest that all of us are looking for a reasonable position regarding the ability of the Government to design and implement regulations. The difficulty is that all of us have different ideas of what is reasonable.

The Government takes the position that once the legislation is passed it should have the right to design regulations that flow from that Act, regulations that would be pursuant to the Act. We feel that is true, but even those regulations deserve a certain amount of debate because it is not necessarily true that the Government will always present regulations that are pursuant to the Act or for the good of the people involved. I believe even Members of the Government would recognize that those who design the regulations and who have spent their years in Ottawa, rather than out in the fields where the producers are, do not necessarily remain in touch with the situation in the rest of the country. Since that isolation exists, the regulations flowing from the Bill that the Government designs may not