

Routine Proceedings

proper study on this bill and then report it in due course, one way or the other, to the House.

I think that the procedural irregularities that have plagued this committee to date have rendered this report nugatory and I suggest it be refused in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I will recognize the hon. member for Churchill on a further argument. I am sure he has heard all the arguments here. Does he have something new to add?

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do. As you know, when I entered the discussion earlier it was basically to ask for The Speaker's indulgence which has been given earlier on previous occasions when there is a complicated matter before us in order that the parties, including the government, would have the opportunity to make further argument on Monday, which is an appropriate measure and a measure which has certainly been bound and recognized in the traditions of this House.

As the previous speaker on behalf of the Liberal Party put it, there are number of things that happened in that standing committee of which members of the House are just becoming aware. We all know about the ruling that insisted that the committee in six hours would review clauses 13 to 66 of the bill and then vote on them and any amendments. We all know that the Chair in his order, in his ruling, a ruling that was not asked for by any member of the committee, ruled that the debate must finish by Thursday afternoon and that the committee must report today. We all know that he said that opposition parties would be allowed one minute per amendment and that other members of the committee would be allowed one minute per amendment.

• (1320)

I just discovered this morning that the Chair did not enforce that rule when he did not wish to enforce that rule. In other words, sometimes he would enforce his own ruling and force members of the opposition to speak on an amendment for less than one minute on an issue of this importance. Can you imagine dealing with Clause 12, or Clause 13, or Clause 14 of the goods and services tax bill and be told by a ruling of the Chair —unsought after as that ruling was, interrupting the debate on a motion put forward in a legitimate process —that you are

allowed to speak for only one minute, and to have that enforced by the Chair. And that same Chair, himself, on the next amendment, spoke for more than five, or six, or seven, or eight minutes. What kind of a rule of law, what kind of rule of precedent was that committee operating on? The Chair can tell other members that my ruling stands when you speak, but when I speak it does not matter, it does not count.

We had an intolerable situation in the committee. We are just finding out some of the things that the Chair did. There was a privilege motion. The Chair allowed himself to speak for more than one minute. He would not allow others to speak, except when he chose to let them speak for more than one minute. It was draconian. It was completely without precedent in the way that this House and the committees of this House have acted. I would submit that since the committee itself has not dealt with the privilege motion, the motion to have the member removed from the chair, that there are many things we have to worry about with regard to the conduct of the Chair, with regard to whether or not this report is admissible, whether or not the House can feel any confidence that we followed the process set out in the standing orders to have a report stage which is preceded by clause-by-clause study in a committee.

How can we go into report stage now when the document that is going to be submitted to this House is flawed? It did not follow the standing orders with regard to how a committee works. It did not follow the rules of the House in terms of how motions are made. It invoked rules which do not exist anywhere in the scope of the parliamentary practice and that those rules were not enforced in any uniform manner for all members of that committee.

We are making very serious charges against the conduct of that committee and the Chair of that committee. I would ask and request that the Speaker make sure that all members of this House and members of that committee have a full opportunity on Monday to explain their grievances against the Chair and against the committee and to explain why they believe that the committee report on the goods and services tax is inadmissible to this House of Commons.