

the board and the industry should result. At no time in the history of energy development in Canada has the need for closer liaison and co-operation been greater.

The considerable time spent by Calgarians in National Energy Board hearings must not be overlooked. A representative sample of National Energy Board hearings shows that Calgarians make up between 38 and 48 per cent of persons participating in those hearings. If one takes into account western Canadians, the figure is between 80 per cent and 90 per cent. There are currently under way in Ottawa hearings before the National Energy Board. The majority of the participants are from Calgary and western Canada. The convenience and saving in money, and so on, that would result from the hearings being held in Calgary should not be overlooked.

It is appreciated that the National Energy Board has responsibilities ranging beyond the petroleum industry and extending internationally. It is also appreciated that frequent consultation with federal ministers and deputy ministers is required. Actually, part II of the National Energy Board Act requires that such measures within the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada as it considers necessary or advisable in the public interest, to do with the control, supervision, conservation, use and development of energy and sources of energy must be reported upon and recommendations must be made to the minister through the National Energy Board.

It is also recognized that there will be costs associated in the moving of senior personnel from Ottawa to Calgary. It is my firm view, however, that in view of the purpose of the National Energy Board "to assure Canadians the best use of energy resources", according to the 1971 annual report, maximum benefit toward that purpose can best be attained in Calgary which plays such a prominent role in the total energy spectrum.

One of the primary considerations in the best use of energy reserves is the development of an adequate supply. This situation is particularly pertinent with regard to depletable energy resources, and relocation of the board is closer geographical proximity to existing supplies and nearer to the frontier of future supplies would seem to be most prudent indeed and in the best long-range interest of all Canadians.

If the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is to be believed, the decentralization of government activities is a goal toward which we should aim. I hope my remarks show that relocating the National Energy Board in Calgary would be one small step in that direction. I have tried to show why Calgary would be the reasonable location for the National Energy Board.

I want to conclude by urging hon. members to allow this bill to be read the second time and to let it go to committee where it can receive detailed study. I say this in view of what happened last week end at the conference in Vancouver, where members of the Liberal Party from western Canada brought forward a resolution urging that the National Energy Board be moved to western Canada. By permitting this bill to be read the second time now, hon. members opposite would show how responsive they are if three days after the resolution was moved in Vancouver they permit the bill to pass on second reading; and, coincidentally, it seeks to do that which the resolution sought to

National Energy Board Act

do. I think hon. members opposite now have a real opportunity to demonstrate how wise they are. If they are anxious to make some sort of political demonstration, to do something that will encourage western Liberals and give them more spirit, what better way is there than agreeing to this bill on second reading?

I have tried not to play down the difficulties of moving an agency of this size. According to the estimates, on March 31, 1974, they will be 247 people associated with the National Energy Board. They would not all need to be moved; a substantial number only would be moved. I agree that there are problems associated with such movement. The National Energy Board must report to the minister and make recommendations on various issues that come forward. I agree that there might be a communications problem.

I am not trying to underestimate problems associated with the decentralization of federal government activity. I am merely saying that if hon. members opposite are sincere in believing that this decentralization is desirable, that if they want to keep Canada together and reduce western alienation which has not been created by the press but is a reality, that if they want to impart to western Canadians a sense that they are part of Canada, they must look at this question. What an opportunity this simple bill has given them. I suggest that they agree to it on second reading and send it to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Public Works where it can be explored and where witnesses can be brought forward to look into the difficulties of decentralization. We need to know what are the difficulties of spreading out across Canada functions of the federal government instead of concentrating them in one region.

I think hon. members opposite would be doing a real service to Canada and to Liberal members of western Canada, and giving them encouragement and hope for the future if they could all say, "Look at how we are considering government decentralization." They would also be giving the Prime Minister the chance to open the western economic opportunities conference next week in Calgary by saying, "Look, we are responsive. Last weekend there was a resolution asking for the National Energy Board to be moved to the west. On Tuesday we allowed a private member's bill to go through on second reading which would have that effect. We did that because we were sincere in what we said in Vancouver last weekend. Because we are sincere and genuine, we took that action."

This is a real opportunity. As a matter of fact, if you want to chisel away some of the large majority I received in the last election, you can do so by being responsive in the way I have suggested. If you are responsive, I will have to go home and do my homework, because I will be in trouble.

Mr. J.-J. Blais (Nipissing): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre), mostly because it was highly political in content and revealed his astuteness. He recognized the effect of the Liberal conference in Vancouver and its ramifications for Liberal policy in future. Since the hon. gentleman chose to take that line and speak about the conference, let me say that I was there. His analysis was very accurate. Indeed, all the participants were very