Canada's natural gas needs in the reasonably foreseeable future? That is a vitally important question that must be addressed by the National Energy Board as well. The National Energy Board is the best equipped body in the country to make that decision. The National Energy Board should be given the flexibility by the government to consider not just that gas which is now available through opening up a valve, but the gas that has been discovered and could be brought to market with reasonable dispatch. It should also be able to consider that gas which can reasonably be anticipated as coming on line as a result of the exploration and development activity that will be going on.

• (1230)

In conclusion, I would indicate that we are in favour of providing the National Energy Board with this increased manpower to provide flexibility in handling the ongoing mandate as well as the new mandate given the board as a result of Bill C-60. I would express the hope and the wish that the National Energy Board will understand, and I think it does, the gravity of the situation for the Canadian oil and gas industry in western Canada, particularly those smaller Canadian-owned companies which are rich mainly in gas rather than oil, and that the board will handle these hearings with dispatch and make recommendations to the government at an early date. Perhaps with that kind of quick movement on the part of the National Energy Board and, hopefully, the government, we can repair some of the damage done in the last two years, getting this vital and creative sector of the Canadian oil and gas industry back on track, making this country self-sufficient with a more vigorous economy. This will put back to work some of those thousands of Canadians who have been laid off as a result of the energy mistakes over the last two years.

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to speak on behalf of the NDP on this bill and to give our approval for its speedy passage. We agree that we need more temporary board members properly to administer the act. Like a hockey team, we would like a few leftwingers if we could choose, but I suppose we will not have that choice, and I will have something to say about that in a few minutes.

I do want to reply briefly to some of the remarks by the hon. member for Calgary Centre before I wish him a Merry Christmas as he leaves to go back to the gas boom. I could not let his remarks pass without some comment. They sounded like what one of my colleagues has called "the Canadian Hunter refrain", or what my colleague refers to as "the oil magots". The refrain is: Give us some money so we can find more gas and oil, becuse we are broke. Give us some tax advantages. When the money and the tax advantages are given, give us permission to export the gas and oil as quickly as we can because we have a surplus and we are broke. Then after it is exported they say: Give us more money because we have to find more. This is like perpetual Christmas, like having Santa Claus all the time. They say: Do these things or we will take our rigs south. We hear that refrain all the time.

At one time in this country in the early 1970s we were exporting one half of our daily production of oil because these people told us that we had lots and we should sell it. Now we are faced with this terrible difficulty of importing about one third of our oil. I am worried that the same thing may happen with natural gas.

We want to help these companies out, but there may be other ways of helping them. For example, would it not make more sense to move our gas east and west rather than north and south? If there is in fact a surplus of gas, perhaps we could even have a gas bank to store some of that gas for Ontario or for Quebec until we need it, particularly when the government is encouraging people to convert to natural gas. Perhaps it could be moved to the maritimes; we might even consider that. It seems to me those kinds of alternatives would make some sense, rather than advocating that we predetermine the board's hearings. After all, the National Energy Board has to determine whether we have an exportable gas surplus, and I do not think it is for members of this House to make those decisions for the National Energy Board.

We are in favour of this bill because we think the new members will be needed to administer effectively the provisions of Bill C-60, as mentioned by the hon. member for Etobicoke North. Bill C-60 was passed last week in the House. It related to new expropriation procedures and protection for those people who are affected, the land owners and small farmers, as a result of pipelines going through their lands. On previous occasions in the House, including last week, the hon. member for Kootenay East-Revelstoke made quite strong speeches about the necessity for that measure. Bill C-60 is the "Yahk" bill". It is named after a little town in British Columbia. They have a little slogan there: "I have been to Yahk and back". I hope you will go there some day, Mr. Chairman, to see that very friendly little place.

If my colleague to my left here stops yakking for a minute I will tell hon. members that the Yahk home owners raised such a fuss when their land was expropriated under a very old 19th century law that the member for Kootenay East-Revelstoke brought the issue to the attention of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the government did bring in the bill to update that expropriation procedure. What we are now doing is adding temporary members to the National Energy Board who will help administer the measure more effectively.

Before I sit down I want to draw the attention of the House to a private member's bill I had the honour of introducing in the House on October 10, 1980.

An hon. Member: This sounds like a commercial.

Mr. Waddell: My friend across the way says this is a commercial, and it is. He should read that bill because it is an attempt to upgrade and modernize the National Energy Board. The bill we have before us today only touches on one aspect, adding some temporary members. What I was attempting to do in my bill was make some other provisions and I just want briefly to touch on those.