

*Oil and Gas Production and Conservation*

minister's argument is logical, I wish something could be done for the other side of the coin. I am still unconvinced by the minister's argument concerning flexibility, though this may be because of my own densesness.

May I point out that the hon. member for Northwest Territories is fortunate to be the representative of an area that is still, to all intents and purposes, a frontier. I am sure he is more interested than anyone else in ensuring that we do not repeat the errors of the past, the exploitation of our frontier areas and consistent under-representation of the public interest. There was exploitation of all kinds, from the slaughter of buffalo to the rape of our forests, and representation of the public interest was minimal. Those who wished to exploit the resources did so to the maximum extent possible. Because it is still a frontier area and because its development is surging forward more rapidly than it has in the past, surely it is even more necessary to ensure that three of the members of the oil and gas committee shall be people from the public service.

I plead with the minister and with the hon. member for Northwest Territories to think again and to think of the whole history of resource development in Canada and of what occurred in other parts of the country which were developed sooner than the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. I hope that the historical evidence of that experience will convince them that at least for the first few years the board should have on it at least three members from the public service. Certainly the appointment of the chairman of the board from among these three members is a further logical extension of the protection of the public interest on the oil and gas committee.

I hope the minister will agree that this amendment does not in any way drastically or radically affect his legislation. I think he will find after a year or two of experience that it will prove practical and will give him all the flexibility he needs. If it does not prove to be that way, the minister will find that I and others in this group will be the first to agree and will gladly support an amendment which he might want to bring in a year or two from now. Frankly, I doubt very much that the government will initiate a change of this nature a year or two from now.

I would like to lodge a final plea with the minister and the hon. member for Northwest Territories that they change their minds. This amendment is not all that important. I urge

[Mr. Benjamin.]

them to try it this way first. If it does not work, the minister can come back and tell us about it.

**Mr. Chrétien:** We will try it this way, and if it does not work we will come back.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard):** Order, please. The minister has already taken part in the debate.

**Mr. Max Saltzman (Waterloo):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the minister very carefully, as I always do, and particularly when he said that we do not want to repeat the errors of the past. I think his words were to that effect. What strikes me about the whole situation is that by simply bringing in this kind of legislation the minister will not correct the errors of the past. I can appreciate the minister's intention to bring a little bit of order into the exploration for and development of oil.

The minister also indicated in the same vein that he wanted the best production and the best prices possible, and that he wanted to see these resources developed as effectively as possible. I point out to the minister that this legislation will not do that for him. Unless he changes the entire nature of the oil industry, he will be a captive of that industry, particularly if he rejects our amendment and insists on putting buccaneers at the helm of the ship. Surely this is a shortsighted policy for a minister who sincerely wants to change things and to develop the north.

If the minister wishes to ensure that our resources will be used in the best possible way, that they will bring benefits to the north and to the Canadian people, and that they will be an instrument of national policy, then he must go farther than he has in this bill. Certainly he should be prepared to accept our amendment. The evidence of what has taken place in Canada in the oil industry is shameful. Consumer prices are infinitely higher than they need be because of the monopolistic practices of the oil industry.

This industry is not the slightest bit interested in Canada. The companies have international affiliations. They exploit the country to benefit their own particular interests, and they will have no hesitation in exploiting the minister's dream to further their own interests. Therefore I fail to understand the reason for the minister's rejection of our amendment, and I fail to understand his optimism regarding this bill. If he sincerely means that he does not want to see the errors of the past repeated, then he must urge upon his colleagues—and I know it is not entirely within