

is irrelevant to the subject matter under discussion. I listened carefully to the arguments advanced by the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Orange) and also by the minister in the discussion regarding clause 4 of the bill. They presented a convincing case for the proposed amendment to clause 6. The minister made reference to the kind of people who might be available for appointment to these positions. He was kind enough to make the suggestion he might be prepared to nominate my colleague the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman) if he was thinking of retiring from the political field. I wish to propose my nomination to the minister. If the hon. member for the Northwest Territories, for whom I have high regard, decides to retire or is involuntarily retired from politics, he may be a suitable person for this board.

I do not know anything about the private holdings of either of these hon. members, but I suspect neither one holds 5 per cent of the shares of Imperial Oil. I mention Imperial Oil because I have no idea of the total value of the shares of Imperial Oil, but I suggest to the hon. member for Northwest Territories that if he held 5 per cent of those shares he would probably be in a somewhat more affluent position than he is.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): He might even be a minister.

Mr. Barnett: The hon. member has been engaged in service to his country in this house, receiving the magnificent stipend provided by the government of Canada to those in that service. The retired chairman of the National Energy Board might be a suitable person to be appointed to this kind of position.

I wish to indicate and underline the importance of ensuring that the people serving on this committee are not shareholders of companies engaged in the oil business. I find it rather astounding that the government has brought forward this proposal. There have been many discussions in the house over the years on the general subject of conflict of interest.

While I agree with the hon. member for Trois-Rivières that the fact one does not hold shares or an interest in a company operating in this field is an absolute guarantee of the honesty and integrity of the person, we have come to accept the old expression about Caesar's wife. It is a recognized principle that people whose responsibility it is to act in the public interest should not only have no conflict of interest but must appear to have no

Oil and Gas Production and Conservation
conflict of interest. This clause as it stands is a violation of the basic principle under which we operate in a democratic society.

• (5:30 p.m.)

The hon. member for Northwest Territories raised the question of this committee operating only part time. I presume he means that the people from the public service who are on the committee will receive their remuneration out of public funds. If we look at that part of the bill which provides for members of the committee who are not public service employees, we find they can be paid such remuneration as may be authorized by the Governor in Council. I submit that if it is in the public interest to have people serve on this committee who have expert or technical knowledge in the field of oil and gas, then their remuneration should be fixed at a level which will enable them to perform that service without being involved in the obvious conflict of interest that would be involved were they holding a financial interest in an oil or gas company. I suppose if one were to take this to the extreme—which I am sure would be an unlikely event—then the minister could appoint two people with expert knowledge who both happened to have an association with the same company, and if this clause should stand they could hold 10 per cent of the shares of that company. I am no authority in this field but from my general reading I understand that, in many cases, if two individuals held 10 per cent of the shares of a company they would be in the position of virtually running the affairs of the company. I admit this is an unlikely development, but there is this possibility as the bill stands.

It seems to me the proper thing would be for the minister to agree to the relatively minor increase in the amount of remuneration he might have to pay under the provisions of clause 5 to secure the calibre of people he believes to be suitable. This would be the better course rather than run the risk of having an unsuccessful operation, as is inherent in the clause now.

Mr. R. J. Orange (Northwest Territories): Mr. Speaker, so that there will be no misunderstanding I am not the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. My interest in this particular bill is as the member for the Northwest Territories. In reviewing the Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the committee for Wednesday, May 14, it would seem to me that some of the concern expressed by my friends across the way