

chairman should be one of the persons on the committee from the public service.

As I said, I have had to play the role of parliamentary secretary, but that is briefly what my colleague the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley felt should be done. This is an amendment to clause 4 of the bill, and in particular an amendment to two parts of it. The first part would rewrite subclause 1 so that three of the five members of the oil and gas committee would be drawn from the public service. The second part would rewrite subclause 2 so that the chairman of the oil and gas committee would in all cases be chosen from among those appointed to the committee from the public service.

On behalf of the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley, who, as I say, is in eastern Canada with the committee on agriculture, I submit this amendment for the approval of the house.

Mr. R. J. Orange (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said he felt as though he was acting as parliamentary secretary to the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley (Mr. Thomson).

An hon. Member: Unpaid.

Mr. Orange: Yes, unpaid. I congratulate him for the way he once again expressed what the hon. member expressed in the committee in respect of the amendment. This amendment was thoroughly examined by the committee and, if I might say so, I think the opinion of the committee was of such a nature that it cut across these lines of action. I experienced this cutting across lines of action in respect of an amendment I proposed. It was not accepted by the committee. It dealt with the insistence in subclause 1 of clause 4 that the minister select members of the public service as members of this committee. I felt this would deny the minister the kind of flexibility which I believe is essential to a developing industry in a developing area.

Let me use the example of how we could lose this flexibility if the chairman of the National Energy Board reached retirement in his career but was, as a public servant, available to continue to serve his country and was agreeable to accept an appointment of this nature. He would then be one of the two people classified as being from the private sector. This is the kind of flexibility the minister should have, and we must be careful that we do not become dogmatic by insisting

Oil and Gas Production and Conservation that all the members of our boards and commissions be controlled necessarily by members of the public service. We must be sure that members of the public service do not necessarily have the upper hand.

It is not a bad idea that members from the public service be outnumbered by people from the private sector in developing and working on a board such as the oil and gas conservation board for the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. I believe there are sufficient controls within the bill to preclude the so-called vested interests from taking over the operations of such a board.

While it has not been said in this amendment, I think there is allusion to the fact that we must be careful, in respect of vested interests in the oil and gas industry, to avoid having more than three or four in control of the activities of such an oil and gas conservation committee. There are other controls within the framework of the legislation in respect of the amount of stock which can be held by individual members of the board, and the fact that a member should withdraw if there is a conflict of interest.

While I respect the hon. member's proposed amendment, I do not believe it is practical. I do not believe we should incorporate in legislation a fundamental principle that will give the public service control over such a board. I do not suggest that the minister initially or in years to come would not have three members on the board from the public service, but I think this is a bad principle to adopt. It does not allow the minister the necessary flexibility, and it could conceivably eliminate other desirable people in the future.

● (4:30 p.m.)

The amendment to subclause 2 concerns the chairman of the committee. I do not believe this house should insist that a member of the public service become chairman of the committee, again for the reason of flexibility. Therefore, while I do not dispute the motives with which the amendment was put forward, it is just not practical at this stage and I propose to vote against it.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Orange). The only element of flexibility that I can see in what the hon. member said is the elasticity of his argument and the extent to which he stretched credulity beyond recognition in trying to make a point which I do not think was very well made.