

Commons, the people of Canada and those people particularly concerned, to know about decisions and the gathering of information which vitally affect their careers and lives. Had the President of the Privy Council not intruded in order to deny parliament, by his use of the rules, the fundamental right that parliament has to control expenditures of the government, I should have used the opportunity to defend and preserve that fundamental right, not simply of parliament but of all democratic government anywhere. I should like to refer particularly to the right to public information and to open decision making.

I should like to speak specifically in respect of Vote 70 of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the conservation branch, as it specifically relates to national parks and the professional and special services of that branch. Let me make it clear at the outset that we are not, by this debate, opposing research. What we are against here is incompetent research and secret research of the kind carried on by the department. In this House there is no consuming interest in national parks, with the notable exception of the interest shown by the hon. members for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) and Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett), as well as some others who have national parks within their constituencies.

I think as well there is a disposition to approve of the commendable initiatives—and I am quite prepared to call them that—of the minister in establishing certain new national parks in remote parts of the country. I certainly approve of that as a member of that party which started the policy of national parks in Canada. I should like to make the point in passing that there is a very serious weakness in the practice of establishing national parks, in that so many of them are established at points far distant from the population. If I may say so, that is the relatively easy part of the job of establishing national parks, but we will soon be in the position of having the best isolated park system in the world.

If the minister wants to earn the accolades he has received, he should place a higher priority on establishing parks closer to where the people live. It is certainly our party's commitment to work with the provinces toward the establishment of a genuine national recreation policy that will meet the growing needs of the people which have resulted from increased leisure time. I have in mind the need for recreation of my people who live in large metropolitan areas, a long way from Kluane. That, Sir, is another point and one that I want to make at another time. The point now is that we generally approve the good things that have been done. But it is clear to us, and it must be clear to the House, that there is both a dark side and a light side of the national park policy in Canada. There has been a certain celebration and commendation of the light side, and I think that the dark side is not known for the very good reason that the government realizes it does not stand scrutiny.

● (1640)

Earlier in this debate I referred to the right to public information and open decision-making. Those are fine sounding phrases and abstractions, but they are a reality to people who are denied the opportunity to enjoy either the right to public information or open decision-making. Unhappily, an attitude runs through the parks branch that

Estimates

is both colonial and dictatorial. I, personally, believe that attitude grew out of hand because the minister is called upon to be the minister of three departments, in effect and is preoccupied obviously elsewhere with questions of northern and native policy. We have a situation where bureaucratic control has developed. Bad policy has developed as a consequence. There was the hope in this House that it might be possible for parliament to control the bureaucracy if the minister would not, but by the actions of the President of the Privy Council today we have been denied even that opportunity.

I want to review for a moment the situations which result from many aspects of the national parks policy. I wish to indicate that when I used the word "colonial" in relation to that policy I used it in a literal sense. Few people in this House know that at this moment the people of Banff and Jasper have no municipal authority. They must come to Ottawa for authority to levy traffic fines, for authority to collect garbage and for authority to have their streets paved. That is the situation which exists. It is a denial of the powers of a normal municipal government as a result of over-control by a bureaucracy distant from the location. That situation is changing.

In answer to a question asked by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) the other day, the minister indicated that his officials were in discussion with representatives of the Banff Advisory Council, but it is instructive to know why that is changing. It is changing because the Alberta Government, at the request of the citizens of the townsites, began an action which forced the hand of Ottawa. In other words, the bureaucracy has not acted on its own. It acted because it had no alternative. The question of perpetual leases, I believe, is not known particularly well in this House. This is a situation in which the government of Canada acted in a way which the courts of Canada decided was illegal in trying to terminate the rights of people who have been settled in national parks for a long time. That action, which was a matter of grave concern, proceeded in secrecy and darkness. The question of duress leases, which were signed while the court decision just referred to was still pending, under which people were forced to accept terms which were adverse to them or be stalled forever in the granting of leases, is another matter.

The question of consultant reports is a matter of specific concern here. On February 9 this year a return was tabled in the House in response to a question of mine about the cost of various consultant's reports undertaken at public expense by this department. In addition, I was given the date on which these reports were released. I wish to read briefly the responses to the question concerning the dates on which they were released. In respect of the master development plan for Lower Lake Louise, the answer was that it was never released publicly in total. In respect of the urban development plan for Jasper, the answer was that it was not fully released to the public. Then, with regard to the land lease problems of Banff National Park, the answer was that this report was not released. In relation to the report on a form of municipal government and administration for Banff Townsite the answer is, "intended for internal consideration". Then, there is the report on economic feasibility re commercial core visitor services centre at Lower Lake Louise and so on. The