

Administrative Change in Parks Branch

Quebec; and the Atlantic region, with headquarters at Sydney, will cover the four Atlantic provinces. To give additional strength to the Ottawa head office of the national parks branch, there will be a second assistant director. Similarly, in recognition of the complexity of problems in administering the townsite of Banff, a townsite manager is to be appointed. The townsite manager will be resident in Banff and will report to the general superintendent. This reorganization of the national parks branch will go into operation as soon as the necessary new regional headquarters can be opened and staffed.

The announcement I have just made is all the more significant in view of other information just placed before me today. Attendance at our national parks and sites for the period April 1 to September 30, 1963 has soared to an unprecedented 9,224,788, an increase of 24 per cent over the same period in 1962. This information confirms the popularity and importance of our parks and the need for even more efficient administration and more careful development to ensure their proper use and preservation for present and future generations.

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, I think the house has listened with interest to the statement by the minister in regard to the re-organization of the parks branch of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources.

I would like to point out that the necessity of decentralizing the parks administration has been evident for some time. As the minister will remember, during the early period of the previous administration we made a first move in this direction by putting the western parks under a western supervisor, who tried to bring about some cohesion in over-all field of policy to the western parks, and the extension of this principle to central Canada and the maritimes is good.

I would like to take this opportunity, I think on behalf of most Canadians, to put forward the idea that any effort made by the government to try to establish national parks in the big provinces of Quebec and Ontario will be welcomed by all the people of Canada. These national parks can play a big part in the Canadian parks policy that can only be fully understood as generations follow each other; and if in the future we in Canada have parts of our country in the very conditions they were in at the beginning, they will be a constant reminder of the wonderful pristine wilderness our country was, and how we saved its natural resources.

My second thought in connection with parks policy is to remind the house that formulating it and making it good can only be done

[Mr. Laing.]

most effectively when there is complete co-operation and co-ordination with the provincial governments. They each have their parks policies, and if in the working out of a co-operative program with the provinces they are continually informed they will be able to share in this over-all planning. The Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources in the last government helped in bringing the provinces together to further that policy, and I am glad this statement by the present minister is carrying on the moves made at that time.

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I am sure we were all very pleased to hear of the increased patronage of the national parks—I am referring to numbers, not other aspects thereof—and of the division of the administration into regions. I have been very interested, as have members of this group, in national parks for many years, because they are a very important part of our national resources, and there is a great need for improvement in their administration, which result largely from changing circumstances and the growing numbers they are required to handle.

I agree with what the hon. member for Qu'Appelle said, that there is a need for close co-operation with provincial governments, and also with the public. We must have the understanding, appreciation and co-operation of the public in general if we are to devise a permanent national parks policy that will be satisfactory in preserving the parks for future generations.

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, without going into any detail on the effect that this new administrative policy might have regarding our national parks, I would just add my support to the remarks that have already been made, which emphasize the importance of the national parks in our Canadian way of life and the need not only to improve the administration but also to extend the services of national parks. Therefore in so far as the general principles involved in this statement of policy are concerned, we give our support to them.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Gregoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, it is with great interest that we learned from the minister that the administration of national parks in Canada is being decentralized.

I should like to point out to the house, however, that even though it was deemed advisable to decentralize the administration of national parks by dividing it into three regions, that is, the maritime provinces, the western provinces and the central provinces