

SKIING IN WESTERN CANADA'S PARKS

The following is a partial text of a speech recently made by Mr. Arthur Laing, Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, to the Pacific Northwest Ski Areas Association, Mount Hood National Forest, Oregon, U.S.A.:

...On September 18, 1964, I had the pleasure, as the minister responsible for the administration of Canada's national parks, to make a policy statement on the preservation, development and administration of these magnificent areas. The statement expresses the Government's opinion on the best manner in which the parks can be operated, developed and administered to serve the public interest.

The statement was, of course, only the beginning of a long line of definitive pronouncements on the direction in which the Government saw the parks developing.

The policy is a broad statement of principles intended as a guide to our Canadian park administrators. It must, of necessity, take into account a vast range of conditions and be valid, generally, for many years to come. There are cases where a very important policy principle can be stated quite briefly. Our parks contain areas that are accessible and provide excellent skiing. It is claimed by many that our national parks are better endowed with such areas than are lands outside the parks. In the interest of providing enjoyment, healthful recreation and opportunities to develop physical fitness, skiing is encouraged in the national parks with the necessary and appropriate facilities for large-scale recreation skiing.

SPECTACULAR RATES OF GROWTH

Over the last decade, the growth of winter-recreation demand has outpaced even the rapid demand for general outdoor recreation. This has been due primarily to the great emphasis on skiing activity brought about by increased economic and physical ability of large segments of the population to participate in the sport. Growth-rates of 15 to 20 per cent *per annum* over the last few years have not been uncommon; and, in Banff National Park since the 1960-61 season, the growth-rate of skiing participation has averaged 24.7 per cent each season.

Although these growth rates are spectacular, the skier represents nevertheless a very small part of the population in most regions and a small part of total park attendance. It has been estimated that, in the Calgary-Edmonton region near our major national parks in the West, about two per cent of the population are active skiers; and it is expected this will grow only to about 2.8 per cent by 1976. This is comparable to the rest of Canada and the United States....

AREAS OF HIGH POTENTIAL

The above trends were recognized by the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources several years ago, and led to a careful analysis of the implications to basic national-park purposes. It was apparent that several guidelines were possible in facing these demands for skiing. The Department could have taken the stand that mass skiing with attendant permanent uphill equipment and major

slope clearing was not compatible with the "use-without-impairment" management conception of national parks. At the other extreme, the Department might have permitted development of a multiplicity of ski centres, and risked serious and permanent defacement of important scenic attractions. A middle course, and the one decided upon, was to define certain areas that have a high potential for ski development, and zone them for intensive development of skiing facilities. This step was believed to be the best solution to the particular conditions that prevail in the Canadian national park situation.

Once this principle of providing for modern ski developments in suitable settings in national parks was accepted, the next step was to analyse systematically all existing ski developments. This was carried out and was further broadened into a full-scale study in the late winter and early spring of 1964. This comprehensive study took into consideration the broad spectrum of supply and demand of ski facilities in the northwestern region of North America. The study, which dealt specifically with Banff, covered such subjects as:

- (1) The present status of winter sports.
- (2) Potential and feasibility in terms of need, demand, markets.
- (3) A "phased" master plan for winter sport facilities.
- (4) Visitor and revenue projections.

From this and earlier studies and reports, a fairly specific long-term winter development programme has been advanced....

NEW DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

The rapid expansion of skiing in North America has led to the development in the past ten years of a large number of new ski areas and the redevelopment of some older ones. These areas are, in one respect, in competition with one another. They are, however, all interlocked in promoting the development of the Pacific Northwest as a ski region in broader markets such as the heavily populated areas of the Eastern United States of America and Canada, and possibly Europe. In the long run, joint action to stimulate new markets is an essential aspect of regional development that should be encouraged. Until our major ski areas can be occupied seven days a week rather than two or three, many operations will remain financially marginal....

BANFF BID FOR 1972 OLYMPICS

I have not touched on the proposal to bring the 1972 Winter Olympics to Banff. This topic is one in which I am sure you are all intensely interested, but it would require a paper in itself to do justice to the topic. I would like to say, however, that the potential is outstanding and that the *Banff '72* Committee has not slowed in its efforts since its unsuccessful bid for 1968.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I am fully convinced that the Pacific Northwest Ski Region has the physical potential, the climate, and the people who have the imagination to create one of the truly outstanding ski areas in the world.