

*National Parks Act*

**Mr. Nesbitt:** I must tell the minister that many of us have read the bill very carefully. We may have different views and interpretations, but we will get to those in committee. I hope the minister will be able to clarify the matter, but the interpretation of many members in the opposition is that the bill clearly proposes that a Crown corporation should formulate policy for the parks. This is our principal objection to the bill, as the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) pointed out. As I say, if in committee, the minister can prove this is not so, so much the better.

There is one suggestion that I have to make to the minister at this time. There have been discussions in another context in this House about Arctic sovereignty and the government's rather vague and contradictory stance in this connection. Lately, we have at least had a little firming up of that stance, and I think it would be a good idea if the minister were to contemplate the inclusion of a provision in the bill to take over some of the Arctic areas as a national park.

I know some people will immediately ask, who wants to go up there. I would point out that technological changes come about rapidly, and therefore it might be a good idea to set aside quite a bit of the Arctic as a park for future use. When the Ontario government in the 1880's established Algonquin park, many jokes were made about it. People at that time asked who on earth would go up there, since there was a lot of wilderness in Ontario at that time. Nevertheless, people did have the foresight to set this area aside as a park, and today we are glad that they did.

Although it may not appear likely at the moment that there would be too much tourist traffic in the Arctic, I would point out that more and more people are going up north to fish for Arctic char, or to hunt bears. According to the magazine *B.C. Outdoors* there are only 5,000 polar bears left in the world. Now, I do not know whether that is true or false, but it would be a good idea to protect the ecology of the Arctic. Further, 50 years from now there may be all sorts of ways and means to accommodate visitors to the area. A park would also establish a more direct de facto control of the area and would help reassert our sovereignty, something I am sure every member of the House would wish to see.

The members of this party are very much opposed to the bill as it now stands, and for reasons that have been repeated many times.

[Mr. Chrétien.]

May I conclude my remarks by saying that we are opposed to the legislation because it removes from the control of Parliament this essential aspect of public affairs.

It has been pointed out, both today and other days, that national parks cannot be regarded in the same light, say, as the CNR. The parks are part of our national heritage, and in many cases the provinces turned over the land to the federal government on that understanding. We feel that the administration of our parks, which belong to all Canadians and are a great source of tourist funds, should be controlled by this House, not by a Crown corporation.

The action that the government is now taking is one more facet of the general pattern that the government, and the immediately preceding government under the former Prime Minister, has established to erode the powers of Parliament. The government started with the Canadian Transport Commission. Now, we have this. In addition, it is being suggested that the Post Office should be taken out of the control of Parliament, and also public works. The government is continuing its course down this slippery slope.

The establishment of this crown corporation will mean that the residents of the parks will have no representation. Despite what the minister said a few moments ago from across the floor, we feel that the de facto running of the parks should not be done by a Crown corporation. As one of my colleagues pointed out a few moments ago, once a Crown corporation assumes responsibility for something, it is pretty hard to control it.

In theory, of course, Crown corporations such as the CBC or the civil service commission—it is called a commission but is really a crown corporation—are responsible to Parliament. In actual fact, they are not responsible to anybody. They do exactly what they like and have their own little system of patronage. They are really a little family affair, as those of us who have been here for some time know. If the government were to make some basic move to make Crown corporations and commissions in fact answerable to Parliament then we might not have this strong objection.

This bill contains no provision for making the Crown corporation responsible for reporting to anybody. In spite of what the hon. member for York East (Mr. Otto) said—perhaps he should have read the bill a little more carefully—there is no such provision in the bill. One clause does require the corporation to report on the operation of the parks'