

National Parks Act

Mr. Dinsdale: I think I gave the parliamentary secretary too much credit. His minister said he was an excellent man, that he was capable—

Mr. Honey: Perhaps the hon. member would answer my question.

Mr. Dinsdale: The hon. member asks if I am opposed to equitable assessment.

Mr. Honey: No; to economic rents.

Mr. Dinsdale: Let us make them equitable, too.

Mr. Honey: The word used was "economic". The question was whether the hon. member wants economic rents to be charged. If he wishes to answer another question, that is fine, but the question I put to him was whether he opposes the policy of charging an economic rent in the national parks, and if so, does his party also oppose that policy?

Mr. Dinsdale: This question was answered seven or eight years ago when we held detailed consultations with the people most concerned in the national parks. As the letter I read from the president of the Banff Advisory Council indicates, they are quite happy with the economic rental formula which was laid down by the former administration. I quote again, because obviously the hon. member did not hear the sentence: "We still find the standards and principles of the province of Alberta acceptable." I would regard that as referring to an economic rent.

• (9:10 p.m.)

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be short. Many people in my constituency are concerned about the form of the developments taking place in our national parks, particularly in the national park at Waskesiu in Prince Albert National Park. They are concerned, as I suppose all Canadians are, about overcrowding, the influx of cars and the increased use of facilities that is going to be the fate of our national parks, particularly the one that we have in northern Saskatchewan.

Changes are already under way. The park has been developed over the years and the people there lived in very modest residences such as shacks, summer cottages, and so on. Recent policy seeks to change this situation. The change will be either gradual or rapid, but nevertheless it will be a change. This particular park, at least up to the present time, has been what I would call a community

[Mr. Honey.]

park in the sense that people in northern Saskatchewan, and even further south, have used it as a community. There has not been in the past a great influx of tourists from other areas.

What I and the people of Saskatchewan are concerned about is that a corporation is to be given the job of running the park. We would like to know whether the park is still going to serve the community as a community park. What is going to be the cost of accommodation for those who live in the accommodation centres that are to be set up? Will the ordinary people of Saskatchewan be able to afford to use the park as they have until now? Will those who visit the park for a short stay, either with or without camping equipment, be able to obtain the kind of accommodation they need, at reasonable rates? Indeed, will they have access to the park at all? Will the local people, or the expected influx of tourists benefit from the facilities offered by the park?

We are also concerned about the importance of preserving our natural heritage and the beauty of the wilderness there. Not too long ago some young people in Saskatchewan who had recently visited the park wrote me to ask why the cabin of that great naturalist, Grey Owl, which they had assumed was an historic monument, had fallen into decay. I wrote to the department involved and asked what was to be the future of this very important historic monument and I was informed that there were certain plans under way to preserve it.

This is the sort of thing that gives people in northern Saskatchewan cause for concern. They want a place of beauty, a place of natural wilderness, accessible by ordinary means of transportation and which can be enjoyed by ordinary people. I hope that before this debate is over the minister will be able to convince the House that a corporation such as that envisaged will be able to maintain this kind of environment for the people of Saskatchewan. I hope there will be clear guidelines to ensure that the interests and needs of the people of Saskatchewan are looked after. I hope the House will be given the assurance that those who now have accommodation in the park will continue to have that kind of accommodation.

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I want at this time to make a few remarks on the general subject of the importance of parks in our national life. For a long time, of course, during the early period of our