

National Parks Act

territory to the federal government—in this case to a Crown corporation—as it relates to leaseholds within the parks. They will definitely not want to do it. I think it is very likely that this legislation will eliminate the possibility of further national parks being established, with the exception perhaps of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

In closing, I believe that to place our fellow citizens under the administration of a Crown corporation would be tragic and reverting to colonialism. To submit them to the undemocratic procedures of a faceless, impersonal and bureaucratic agency is wrong. Therefore, I am opposed to this legislation. I appeal to members of the government to consider what will happen if this measure is passed by the House.

I do not even believe the legislation can be amended so as to protect the rights of the people living within the parks. The only way in which the proposals set out in the legislation can be advantageous is by eliminating the bill altogether and making sure that there is closer ministerial supervision so far as concerns the development of the policy that governs the parks. We should also strengthen the administrative services of the parks.

The people responsible for the routine administration of the parks have done a very good job. If one were to compare the way in which our parks are administered with the way in which this is done in the United States, one would realize that we have a superior administration. The same comparison can be drawn between parks administration in Europe. Our parks administration ranks with the best. The problem is with policy at government level. I believe that Parliament is responsible for parks policy, not just a few senior bureaucrats who are trying to dictate policy which they think is best when actually they do not seem to know what the situation is. Thus, I hope we will take a careful second look at this bill lest we bring to pass something we will regret in the years ahead.

Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, I should like to take a few moments to enlarge on some of the points that have been made briefly, and to stress other points. We realize that Bill C-152 means many things to different people, just as parks mean different things to different people. To some people parks means a place where they can go for leisure; to other people they are places where they can go to see wildlife, the beauties of nature and many other things that we are not able to see in the large urban centres.

[Mr. Thompson.]

What we must really understand is the true concept of national parks. Is it really the beauty of nature that attracts people to the parks? I think all of us can agree that it is. Do Canadians really believe that national parks belong to them and will belong to them in perpetuity? We know that this is also true. We also know that the people of Canada thought the government of this land would hold our national parks for them in trust forever. This is one of the concerns that I have in considering the bill now before us.

Another point we must consider is whether we wish to retain the natural beauty and the ecology of these areas in exactly the same condition. There are two national parks which hold special status, namely, the national parks of Banff and Jasper. This point has been amply brought forward by many of the speakers who have taken part in the debate. I believe we must ensure that these parks are preserved unimpaired.

Another concern is to ensure that these parks are preserved forever. This leads us directly to the question of why we are establishing a corporation to administer the parks instead of continuing the present method of operation. Members who have spoken on this subject have done an excellent job in explaining why the establishment of a corporation would not be in the best interests of Canadians and of Canada as a whole.

I am sure many of us realize that the primary concern of many Crown corporations is the balance sheet. We have noted in our study of the estimates that services have been cut in some Crown corporations in order to make a good impression upon the government. We have also heard the government saying that an austerity program must be enforced. A perfect example of this is the cuts that have been made to the staff of the National Film Board—the very people who represent our national identity. The same thing could happen to our national parks if they were put under a Crown corporation. The government would then be able to say it will establish an austerity program which will apply to the national parks, and it will deliberately cut the very programs which the people of this nation deserve.

Another aspect to which we should pay attention concerns the blot on our landscape created by billboards, service stations and hot dog stands, which may bring the national parks corporation a buck today, and to heck with tomorrow! An analogy can be drawn from within our international airports which