

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

wretched conditions. At least, let us recognize the fact and let us provide them with a little well-being on their retirement, and spare them the feeling of being crushed and a burden to others. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that nobody will have to stint in order to provide more security for those people.

Mr. Judd Buchanan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's reference to the guaranteed income supplement to the old people in Quebec suggests that he misunderstood the matter. No pressures were put on Quebec to have it administer the guaranteed income supplement for older people.

Since we are on this subject, I should like to mention that the federal government increased by over 50 per cent the amount of the income supplement for older people in Canada. Since legislation to that effect was enacted in December, the increases in the supplement will ensure that no qualified married couple will receive less than \$255 per month and no qualified single person, less than \$135. Moreover, these increased benefits came into force at the beginning of this month.

[English]

NATIONAL PARKS—ELK ISLAND—ANIMAL STARVATION—
FAILURE OF WILDLIFE SERVICE TO DIRECT REDUCTION
IN ELK POPULATION COMMENSURATE WITH FEED
SUPPLIES

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, my purpose in raising the question of the starvation of animals in Elk Island National Park is simply to impress upon the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Buchanan) the request that a full and complete investigation be conducted into the actions of the Canadian Wildlife Service and the parks administration with respect to the discharge of their duties and responsibilities; also, of course, to seek an assurance from the minister that what transpired in Elk Island Park during last winter will not be allowed to recur.

I raised the matter on March 2, 1971, when as reported at page 3865 of *Hansard* I asked whether the minister was aware of the situation in Elk Island Park and whether action was being taken toward alleviating the situation there. The minister replied that he was aware of it; the problem was due to the early winter, heavy snowfalls and hardening of the top layer. He referred to the fact that a number of animals had already died and said:

—the officials of my department have arranged for the conveyance of six tons of feed daily in the park, in order to help the animals to survive throughout the winter which has been as hard for them as for us.

The assurance was given by the minister that a feeding program was to take place. However, upon checking with the officials of the park and Canadian Wildlife Service personnel it was pointed out that a feeding program was against sound management of wildlife principles, particularly at a time when the animals were suffering from gross malnutrition. It is obvious, therefore, that a feeding

[Mr. Laprise.]

program was not conducted. There was a feeding program of a sort, but not pertaining to the elk, and this is the question with which I am basically concerned.

In my opinion, the park administration and the Canadian Wildlife Service attempted to mislead the public into believing that politicians, self-styled experts and the public were becoming overemotional and panic-stricken. They merely suggested that nature in its raw form was cruel and that a natural culling-out process was desirable even though it meant that animals would suffer. I suppose one could accept this if the park contained all the attributes of a natural habitat. I suppose one could accept it more if there were abundant supplies of natural feed in the park. But this is not the case. I have examined the situation personally with the assistance of biologists who are familiar with the feeding and maintenance of wildlife in a park such as Elk Island.

● (10:20 p.m.)

Then, of course, the situation was compounded by a bad winter. That is the only argument that the members of the Canadian Wildlife Service and the park officials have put forward. They contend that the whole difficulty has resulted from a severe winter. We examined the park, and it is clearly evident that there is insufficient food available to support a population of something like 1,500 animals. This leaves two courses open to the authorities. They can either follow a population reduction process or undertake a feeding program. The Canadian Wildlife Service, according to information that I have received, recommended neither course. I understand that the park administration and the Canadian Wildlife Service has stuck to the argument that if they were to commence a feeding program they would be going against principles of sound wildlife management, and have rejected that course.

With regard to reduction of the elk population, this usually takes place in the form of a fall slaughter. The meat is processed and distributed to needy people, to hospitals, to Indians and Métis. Elk Island has an excellent abattoir and processing facilities. This could have been done easily. One slaughter was conducted in 1969. Even though it was obvious that supplies of food were glaringly short in 1970, no appreciable reduction in the wildlife population was recommended in 1970. It therefore seems to me that there has been a glaring lack of proper evaluation. I would go so far as to say that there has been a dereliction of duty, either on the part of the Canadian Wildlife Service or the park administration, or at least there has been lack of co-ordination. I do not believe that developments such as this should be allowed to take place. I do not believe we should tolerate them in this day and age.

This reminds me of a situation that developed only 20 miles from Elk Island Park. A farmer was brought to court and charged with starving his horses which were left unattended and without adequate feed. That is much the same type of situation as we have here. That man was charged, and yet in a park being administered by federal officials this sort of thing has been allowed to