

*Recreation Parks*

ment should be more visibly engaged in providing parks and recreational facilities in and around urban areas. Here I make a distinction between that kind of recreational or green space and the national parks system to which the hon. member who just spoke has referred.

The principal burden of this resolution, as I read it, is that there is a particular need for parks around the growing cities and that unless the federal government takes a more active role we may well reach a state where there is no space left for such parks. Indeed, in the area which both the member for Peel South and I represent, this is very largely the case today.

I think there is a very real need for consultation at the highest level between the federal government and the administrations in both the provinces and the municipalities in order to work out a program or schedule for providing parks. All of us would want to avoid the appearance of unilateral action, if not the fact of unilateral action, which we noticed when the federal government suddenly, and perhaps coincidentally in the middle of an election campaign, announced that some \$80 million would be spent on providing Toronto with more waterfront park facilities. I do not think there is any room in the resolution, and I know that the hon. member for Peel South did not so intend, for the federal government to get into any kind of competition with the provinces or municipalities in the provision of park space. Rather, between those three levels of government there should be worked out a coherent and consistent policy which will ensure that as cities grow and sprawl outward, land will be preserved for the use of the residents now and in the years to come.

In that connection, it is perhaps worth noting that the word "park" connotes more than one use. There are parks which are equipped with recreation facilities, with play structures of one kind or another, pools, parking lots, service facilities, food outlets and so on. They are, for practical purposes, areas of recreation rather than green space. There are other areas aesthetically more important, where the wilderness is allowed to stand much as it has been; here people have an opportunity to come into contact with nature which has not in any large measure been redesigned or reorganized by man.

● (1730)

As the hon. member for Peel South mentioned, around the metro Toronto area there is a growing network of conservation areas developed by the Metropolitan Toronto Regional Conservation Authority. In this area of park usage in the form of wilderness or for conservation there is special room for federal participation and initiative. There is a tendency to make parks too structured. There is a tendency on the part of some municipal parks and recreation departments to dump a lot of equipment into green space, to organize it and set up rules and regulations. After a while it ends up as play space and a recreational area but has not much in the way of trees or grass. Trees, grass and wilderness are just as important to the physical as well as to the spiritual needs of urban populations as recreational facilities in play areas.

There is now a tendency to assume that a park is where recreational facilities should go. Thus valuable, irreplaceable green grass areas are gobbled up by arenas, rinks and

community centres which might well be situated in other more built-up parts of the city because they bring with them the need for parking lots and more and more traffic. Before long, what was a relatively unspoiled park area becomes a scene of vehicular as well as human activity.

I hope this resolution will envisage some room for federal initiative to make it possible for provincial authorities as well as national parks' departments to exercise greater control over the use of land in provincial parks. In recent years there have been controversies surrounding land use in both Algonquin provincial park in Ontario and Quetico park. I do not wish to dwell on those controversies. I felt at the time, and still feel, that if the provincial government had more in the way of financial alternatives at its disposal it might be able more quickly and effectively to phase out land usage in park areas which are really not compatible with preservation of the wilderness, protection of wildlife and maintenance of the ecological balance.

I refer to a point raised by the hon. member for Peel South, namely, that there is room under this resolution for the federal government to provide some assistance to the municipalities so they can make recreational use of land which has in fact been rendered useless for all other purposes by decisions of the provincial or federal government. The land in the vicinity of Toronto international airport is a case in point. At a committee hearing some weeks ago I asked the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) whether his department or the government would consider providing assistance to the borough of Etobicoke and/or the municipality of Mississauga to equip that land, which is now not suitable for any other kind of development, for recreational purposes and to provide financial assistance to the municipalities. The municipalities are hard enough pressed for funds without expecting them to undertake this kind of initiative entirely on their own.

In conclusion, I support the fundamental principles underlying this resolution. I hope it will provide a basis upon which the federal government can go forward, not to insist upon provincial or municipal acceptance of a pre-conceived pattern of parks but to engage much more fully in a process of mutual planning and joint consultation with the provinces and municipalities. In this way parks could be provided for recreation, structured parks if you like, and wilderness or conservation areas created. Assistance should be given to the provinces to enable them to hold the line against the spoiling of wilderness areas already set aside, and to enable the municipalities to make use of lands rendered largely useless for other purposes by decisions of various levels of government.

**Mr. Peter Stollery (Spadina):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak on this motion moved by the hon. member for Peel South (Mr. Blenkarn). I was rather disturbed by and I would like to address my remarks to the convenient manner in which the hon. member moved his motion favouring essentially an urban parks policy and conveniently dismissing the assembly of 86 acres on the Toronto waterfront. The only criticism of the hon. member seems to have something to do with lack of consultation. I must say this is a little bit thick. It so happens that the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Basford) chaired a meeting at Toronto city hall which was advertised in the Toronto newspapers and attended by