

Supply—Northern Affairs

boundaries of Rocky Mountain park and was administered under the Dominion Forest Reserves and Parks Act.

The area comprising the ranch is particularly good grazing land for horses and has been used for this purpose by the parks service for many years. When the transfer of resources agreement and the new National Parks Act were being prepared to come into effect simultaneously it was realized that the Ya-Ha-Tinda ranch would be outside the boundaries of the new Banff park which would replace the Rocky Mountain park. As the area was still required as grazing land for park horses belonging to the warden service it was withdrawn from the Rocky Mountain park by order in council P.C. 565 of March 14, 1930 and therefore was not included with the federal crown lands transferred to the province of Alberta a few months later. It was this order in council that was referred to by the hon. member for Red Deer when he discussed the ranch last Thursday evening.

Since the passage of the order in council the land has continued to be administered by the parks service but, as I mentioned before, it is not subject to the National Parks Act and it is in effect similar to any privately owned ranch in the province of Alberta. The hon. member raised the question of hunting privileges within the ranch boundaries. We have checked with the superintendents who have been in charge of Banff park since 1947 and I have been assured that at no time have they given permission for hunting on the ranch property. As a matter of fact when the then park superintendent visited the ranch in September, 1952 he found a number of hunters on the premises. They were requested to leave and signs were erected prohibiting hunting and also motor traffic on the property. These signs have been maintained and to the best of our knowledge no hunting has taken place on the ranch since that time.

There is one feature that may have led to a misunderstanding about hunting. A trail, which is passable at times to motor traffic, leads to the ranch, and an extension of this trail crosses the ranch and leads to excellent hunting grounds to the north and west of the ranch. We have permitted hunters and pack trains to cross the ranch on the way to the hunting grounds beyond. Many return through the ranch bearing their kill. This may have given the impression that the game was shot on the ranch property. I might add that we do not have any intention of opening the area to hunting and the foreman in charge has been instructed that hunting is prohibited.

Mr. Shaw: I appreciate very much the information that has been given. May I ask the minister whether the area has been leased to any individual or group of individuals?

Mr. Lesage: If the hon. member means the ranch area there is no lease and there is no intention of leasing it.

Mr. Shaw: The word "ranch" rather confuses me. Who operates the ranch in this area?

Mr. Lesage: As I said a few moments ago, the national parks service operates the ranch for the grazing of horses which are the property of the parks administration.

Mr. Shaw: There is one other matter. The minister has indicated that we may have been confused with respect to hunting in the area. I would suggest to the minister that possibly that aspect of it should be checked a little more carefully because hunting has been conducted in the area. Hunters have been seen shooting in the area, and that led to much of the difficulty. Other hunters have been forbidden the privilege while they themselves have witnessed hunters hunting in the area. As I say, that led to a good deal of criticism because it did appear to the people to whom I spoke, hunters and others, that certain persons were being granted the privilege of hunting there. The minister has given the assurance that there has not been any hunting in the area and that there will be none, but I am more concerned with the policy. I certainly hope that that is the policy and that every effort will be made to enforce it rigidly. Otherwise there is bound to be no end of trouble.

There is one other matter I should like to clear up. I should like to know why this is a more or less privileged area in relation to park areas? Why is it that the public are prohibited from entering? The minister has said certain pack outfits have been permitted to pass through. That is news to me, and I am sure it is going to be news to many of those hunters with whom I spoke and who were told to pay attention to the no trespassing sign on the gate. Personally, I cannot understand why people who desire to spend a Sunday afternoon, for example, by those falls, which are very beautiful and are just two or three miles inside the area, are prohibited from entering. I should like to know if any similar situation exists anywhere else in Canada? Can the minister give me any information about that? I want to know specifically why the public should be barred from entering there as they would any park area?