

*National Parks Act*

the one they were attempting to establish in southern Saskatchewan. It turned out to be a ridiculous report. It pointed out the stupidity of hiring these consultants for this kind of work. The report was so ridiculous that everyone in the area who read it could not believe it was written for any government, federal or provincial.

The possibility of establishing a Grasslands national park in southern Saskatchewan is in a stalemate position. I would like to outline the problems that have arisen and the objections to it. One problem is the cost of buying-out or relocating the ranchers and the farmers. Another problem is the loss of income to the provincial economy. One problem is of a social nature. It involves the social aspects of evicting ranchers, many of them pioneers, from land which they have homesteaded and/or leased for many years. In fact, some families have been there for generations. The lifestyle on a social basis is good in terms of its economic basis. It is a remote and very significant minority in this country. The aspect of that region, in terms of lifestyle, can be found in very few parks in the Dominion of Canada. It is a kind of lifestyle that contributes to the very great interest in that area: it is the great attraction.

There would be a loss of some of the better mule deer and antelope hunting areas, along with complaints from disgruntled hunters—something to which I do not attach as much significance as the province. The Kaplan report suggests building a fence to protect the game. That is contrary to what in fact would happen. A large barrier or fence would keep the animals out of the area to which they migrate for protection during the winter. This is in the high mountains and hills. It allows them to get at short grass in the winter instead of trying to survive in the plains where there are snowdrifts of six, seven or more feet.

There is another very real problem to those who live in the area. There is the danger of prairie fires created by automobiles, locomotives and other mechanical apparatus. The sparks from these could catch the grass on fire and destroy it. Last summer there were two or three major fires in the area; they were put out by local people. Another problem is related to the very narrow outlook of the national parks department and the minister in terms of coming to grips with the fact that this is a large cattle-grazing area. The Kaplan report recommended removing cattle from 360 or 640 square miles and replacing them with a few buffalo. I do not know all the expertise of the environmentalists, but I do know that it is necessary to keep the grass grazed. It would take an awful lot of bison to keep the grass at the grazing level to which it is now kept by cattle. For years the cattle have neither overgrazed nor undergrazed. There is always the odd exception of a producer not being careful. Generally, grazing has been at a proper level.

Another problem related to the establishment of this park is the possible economic loss to towns in the area, such as Mankota where at least one million cattle are sold in the auction ring in any year. Other objections have been raised to this proposal. I have already mentioned the necessary removal of cattle from the park under the national parks policy. However—and this is pointed out in the Kaplan report—cattle-grazing at the present level is not detrimental to habitat or wildlife. They point out that

[Mr. Knight.]

cattle serve an important function in several respects and, if removed, could probably be replaced only by bison. Cattle do not compete with wildlife presently inhabiting the area.

Constant grazing prevents the long growth of grass which is a potential fire hazard. Most damage was done when people thought they could cultivate this land and use it for wheat or barley production. The land was not good enough for that. This lesson was learned during the depression. Since that time most of the land has been turned back into grazing land. If there is a large influx of tourists, there is the problem of garbage and destruction to the very habitat we are trying to preserve for future generations.

Another area of significance is mineral wealth. Crown reserves in the general area, and the possibility of development of an oil field, do not make the provincial government very excited about establishing a national park which will take away the right of the province to have control over the mineral wealth that may possibly be in that area. I hope the minister and the federal government will avoid areas where there may be mineral development—coal, and so on.

● (2100)

It is difficult at a time when more than 60 per cent of Canadians are living in large urban areas for a member from a rural area blessed with some very beautiful scenery to come to a reconciliation with people whose children are growing up in a society where all they see are cement sidewalks, paved streets and lampposts, maybe concrete, in places like the riding of the hon. member for York North (Mr. Danson) or other areas of this country like Toronto or Montreal, Regina or Saskatoon. How do we reconcile this with the preservation of a lifestyle, the preservation of wide open spaces that is needed in an area so attractive to people who have not the opportunity to view and to respect the kind of beauty one finds in this Killdeer-Valmarie area.

I believe that if the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) wishes to see development in this area there is much that he could accomplish. I, by the way, have respected many of the national parks he is attempting to set up and respected the moves made to preserve some of these areas for Canadians. I believe that if he took the opportunity of working with the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Jamieson) there is a possibility of tourist development in Southern Saskatchewan that is far more imaginative in terms of attracting people to viewing some parts of Saskatchewan I am sure they don't realize even exist. What I am suggesting is this. Saskatchewan was one of the first provinces, I believe, to co-operate in the development of No. 1 highway, which runs from the Manitoba border to the Alberta border and makes sure that people can get through Saskatchewan in a day and a half, if they really want to do so. Each summer, because of the high volume of traffic on that highway, increased by the traffic coming up from the United States and up through Estevan and Weyburn on to No. 1, conditions on that route are such that I never have, and never will travel that piece of highway during that July-August rush. As far as I am concerned,