

National Parks Act

Do they mean that there must be a reference to the minister, and thereby to the body politic, with respect to every measure of expropriation, takeover, release, exchange or what have you, or is that wording inserted in the bill to give the Crown corporation a cushion to fall back on, if it is needed.

• (4:30 p.m.)

I would like to know what the procedure is going to be. How will expropriation be carried out? How will land be added to the parks already in existence. I am concerned about the addition in this bill of section 15. This section reads:

The Governor in Council may, by proclamation, set aside as a national park of Canada, lands in the area of Kejimikujik Lake in the province of Nova Scotia that the government of Canada and the government of the province agree are suitable for a national park, if clear title to the lands is transferred to Her Majesty in right of Canada; and upon the issue of the proclamation, the National Parks Act applies to the National Park of Canada so set aside as it applies to a park as therein defined.

I cannot understand what that means. It suggests to me that once we examine the extension to the Kejimikujik park, that is going to be the end of parks in Nova Scotia. Is that what it means? If it does not mean that, why does the bill refer specifically to this park? Why does it stop with that specific clause? I would like this question to be answered. Indeed, the minister has a moral obligation to answer.

There are detailed plans available. If the federal parks branch would get off their rearends and send the plans to the province of Nova Scotia, we could then get on with the establishment of a third national park in that province. However, they have not yet seen fit to do that. This branch seems to think it is better to say that the province of Nova Scotia is dragging its feet. I suggest it is not that way at all, but rather the other way around. I ask the minister to clarify whether section 15 in any way limits further participation in the province in terms of a third, fourth or enlargement of the two present national parks.

I wish to reiterate the importance of the minister explaining to the people of Canada, the philosophy or principles upon which the government feels they can, without effective public dialogue and consultation, arbitrarily move to usurp, annul or void the principle on which all the present parks were established. I suggest there is not a provincial minister, provincial authority, any provincial government, past or present, that believed these

lands would ever be transferred to a third authority. Indeed, their responsibility to the people they represented forced them to clearly stipulate conditions which dictated the retention of this land in the hands of a minister in right of the Crown. Any departure from that might not only be unconstitutional, but illegal.

I think the matter is deserving of much more detailed thought and consideration. This is nothing more than another shotgun approach to the despicable, continuous conflict in the present parks policy. People do not know where they stand from one day to the next. This has been the situation for a number of months. I suggest the minister and his officials should very carefully review their responsibilities to the people of Canada. I think our national heritage is being abused. Canadians do not want this to happen. It may be that it is being done unwittingly. I suggest the danger is there and it is a very real danger.

Mr. A. B. Douglas (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, there are already two national parks in Nova Scotia and an additional one is to be created. Nova Scotia is quite a bit smaller than the province of Saskatchewan, yet we have only one national park. I suggest there should be more national parks in Saskatchewan.

I wish to take this opportunity to say a few words about the need and desirability of developing a Prairie grasslands national park. The Prairies and Canada, especially western Canada, are practically synonymous, but native Prairie land with its distinctive flora and fauna is fast disappearing. There is still some of this shortgrass area, with its distinctive flora and fauna, in southern Saskatchewan. It is presently supporting a very sparse cattle population. Many ranchers are progressively converting the natural Prairie grass into cultivated grasses and forage crops of various kinds which have been developed to increase the grazing capacity of this range land. I am sorry to say that some of this original Prairie land is being brought under cultivation to produce wheat.

There has been some investigation into the feasibility of establishing a national park in this area. The hold-up seems to be that most of this land is owned or leased by ranchers who are very reluctant to give up their land and way of life. It seems that a tract of land could be declared a park area, development could proceed and cattle could be allowed to continue to pasture there. I urge the park