

*National Parks Act*

hon. member for Calgary South, the hon. member for Rocky Mountain and others. I think hon. members on all sides of the House would agree there is some cause for concern and that we should in fact be looking at—and I can assure hon. members that the minister and his officials are in fact doing this—ways and means by which a greater degree of autonomy can be given to the residents of these areas in their local affairs.

The hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) was concerned about a national park in Newfoundland. I can tell him, through you, Mr. Speaker, that these negotiations are well under way. It is hoped that before much longer an agreement can be arranged between the federal government and the provincial government with regard to the establishment of the Bonne Bay National Park in Newfoundland.

The hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas) dealt with a second national park for Saskatchewan and urged the minister to consider this. This is a subject of consultation with the Saskatchewan government, and the discussions are proceeding. Hopefully, with representations such as we have had from the hon. member for Assiniboia, these discussions might before too long be brought to a conclusion. I, too, will look forward to the day when Saskatchewan, which happens to be my native province, will have a good grassland national park that will be a real credit to Canada and to that province.

To refer for a moment to the purpose of the bill, Mr. Speaker, I should like to re-emphasize that the purpose is to create an agency with a specialized and fully qualified staff to give prompt, efficient service to leaseholders and businessmen within the parks. The intent is that there be a nucleus of trained staff with the resources required to carry on the increasingly complex business transactions involved in providing services to the growing stream of parks visitors in a prompt, efficient manner. In the case of development needed to meet present or future demands which may not be of interest to the private sector, the corporation may borrow funds required for capital investment on the open market. The corporation is thus freed from dependence on the annual departmental appropriation, and its capital needs can be amortized over the lifetime of the project. These provisions, and many others which I hope will come to light

[Mr. Honey.]

in the committee examination, have the purpose of providing prompt, businesslike dispatch of business and a speedier determination in respect of decisions.

• (5:20 p.m.)

Hopefully this can be done, particularly with the large western parks, at the local level. Then, leaseholders, property owners and businessmen in those parks will be able to deal with officials of the leasehold corporations in Calgary, Edmonton or in some place in proximity to the parks. They will thus be able to sit across the desk and hammer out their problems with these people rather than have to deal with the minister and his officials in Ottawa, as has been the case in the past. I have dealt with what seems to be the particular task of this government, that is the consideration of reasonable methods to provide a greater degree of autonomy for the residents of the parks.

I want to close by referring to the fact that by creating a specialized agency to deal with the leasehold properties in the parks we are establishing a corporation, subject to the direction and control of the minister and of the Governor in Council, to deal with leasehold interests in national parks and nothing else. By doing this, we are freeing the officials of the department from that responsibility because with the large tracts of land and the high land values it is becoming an increasingly specialized sort of business which requires the attention of professionals. By setting that aspect of the responsibilities of the department aside, these officials will be free to go ahead and do what is necessary in the administration of the policy as a whole such as conservation, wildlife, the amenities for visitors to the parks, and so on. These are the sorts of things that the officials will be able to do more readily, and will have more time to do, once they are free of such specialized matters as the operation of the leasehold properties in the parks.

So, I want to thank all hon. members who have participated in the debate for their useful contributions. As I have indicated, some may not have been so relevant, but at least some ideas have been thrown out that could be helpful when they are sifted out. So, I thank them for their participation. I know that in the committee, where the minister will appear, there will be an opportunity for a detailed examination of the queries of hon. members with which there was no time to deal in the House.