

Supply—Northern Affairs

they are outside the park they become the control of the provincial authorities. We are doing our best, in collaboration with the provincial authorities, to restrict the wild animal population in Riding Mountain park in order to prevent grazing outside the park limits.

Mr. Zaplitny: But that hardly covers the point. The minister now says that wild animals are under the control of his department so long as they stay within the confines of the park but that the moment they cross the boundary line and go outside the park they come under the control of the provincial authorities.

Mr. Lesage: That is correct.

Mr. Zaplitny: But that does not cover the point at all. Because if the federal government is responsible for the actions of those wild animals which are under their jurisdiction, they are also responsible for keeping them within the confines of their property. I am sure the minister, who is familiar with herd laws passed by rural municipalities, is aware that it is not the responsibility of the municipalities to keep livestock off farms in certain areas. It becomes the responsibility of the owner of that livestock to keep his livestock fenced in or confined to a certain area so that it will not damage other farms. If the same principle holds good in this case, it is the responsibility of the federal government to keep their wild animals within the confines of their property. Of course, I am aware they cannot do that unless they round up some of the horses they have at the other park, put on spurs, and ride herd. But if they are not capable of keeping them on their own property, then the least they can do is to be responsible for the actions of those animals.

Mr. Lesage: What do you want to do, kill the elk and abolish the park?

Mr. Zaplitny: No, not at all; for all I am asking is that the federal government, which has a proprietary right over these animals—

Mr. Lesage: It has not.

Mr. Zaplitny: —or have control—

Mr. Lesage: When they are in the park.

Mr. Zaplitny: Well, the minister is a lawyer and I would hate to see what would happen if he took that kind of case to court. I am glad—

Mr. Lesage: It is a very good case.

Mr. Zaplitny: I am sure he is quite in the wrong if he is trying to tell me now that if the wild animals under the jurisdiction of his department damage someone else's property then he is no longer responsible for their

actions. That sort of legal philosophy would not go very far under property and civil rights. I am not asking that these animals be destroyed or the park abolished. On the contrary, I am asking the federal government to be responsible for the actions of the wild animals which come under their jurisdiction and which stray on to farmers' property and cause damage to their crops. The government should be willing to compensate such farmers for the damage done. It would not involve a large amount of money and it only happens once in every two or three years, but certainly it is time we should have a clear-cut arrangement so that the farmers who have suffered damage will know to whom they can apply for compensation or, if necessary, whom they should take to court to sue for damages. So far they have been given a runaround by the federal government and there is no one to whom they can apply in order to collect damages. I would like the minister to make a categorical statement as to whether he feels the federal government has any responsibility under the conditions I have described, and if so, to what extent.

Mr. Lesage: I cannot add anything to what I have already said. These wild animals are under the control of the park authorities when they are in the park. The moment they go outside the park boundaries they become a provincial responsibility and there is nothing I can do about it.

Mr. Knowles: Like a Liberal when he gets out of caucus.

Mr. Weir: Mr. Chairman, I am sure we all know of other parks in which there are deer which often take the notion to run away and visit open farmland and sometimes damage grain, and there simply is not anything one can do about it. As far as responsibility is concerned, what I rose to say to the minister is that if he is having trouble with crops being damaged by wildlife which has strayed from the parklands, and he is considering compensation in that respect, then I think he should also consider the Migratory Birds Convention Act and give consideration also to damage done to crops by wild ducks from nearby lakes. We have ducks from areas not far from those mentioned by the hon. member for Dauphin and I am bound to say that, at certain seasons of the year, I have had many more complaints presented to me in regard to damage done by wild ducks than that caused by deer. This, of course, is a seasonal matter, but if the question of compensation is going to come up in this regard I frankly cannot see why the federal government should be held responsible for such damage. After all, while the game is in the park there is no