

National Parks Act

is austerity. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that if this legislation passes, additional staff members, no doubt with special qualifications that adhere to the principle of the languages bill, will be hired. They no doubt will have exceptional qualifications and conform to certain requirements. On January 21, I asked the minister two questions about parks. They had to do with the number of people laid off in the parks over a certain period of time. I refer to Questions No. 928 and 929 in my name on the Order Paper. They have not been answered, and I am wondering why. Does the minister think that once the department becomes a Crown corporation they will no longer have to be answered, or does the government think bilingualism is more important than people?

The hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) asked the minister yesterday whether the committee might not hold hearings in the national parks to get to the bottom of what is obviously a grievous and serious problem. The minister may wish to ignore the plight of the people in the parks, but I do not see what is so objectionable in asking the committee to conduct hearings in the parks and hear evidence first hand. Or, does the minister feel that it is better to be a coward than a humiliated hero?

Mr. J. M. Forrestal (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, my intervention in this debate is understandable because I am concerned about the philosophy behind the amendment. I say that because at least one park in Nova Scotia could fit into a small corner of one of the parks we are mainly considering under this bill. I question the right of any government, on the strength of a whim, to change unilaterally the principle under which the Government of Canada assumes title to land in existing parks. The minister ought to explain to the House and committee whether he consulted the appropriate ministers responsible for this type of governmental operation in the provinces involved. If he consulted them, what was the result of his discussions? What did the provincial ministers say, first of all, about their desire to see park land turned over to the federal government; also, what did they say about decisions the provinces might make with respect to park land which would be turned over to third parties?

The comments made about the Crown corporation are valid. The widespread powers such corporations exercise ought to be scrutinized and considered at some length by those

[Mr. Skoreyko.]

who represent the people. We may not want to know in 1970 what goes on every day in thousands of square miles of park in the Rocky Mountains, but we should have the right of scrutiny. Clearly, the government is not overly-concerned about the importance Canadians attach to the ownership of their land and the direct control over it. Land, Mr. Speaker, is still a very, very important part of our lives. As a Nova Scotian, I do not want to see thousands of square miles of my province turned over to this government, because it would turn it over to a third party, the Crown corporation. As a result, the minister would be relieved of the direct responsibility. He would be minister in title only, because the corporation would report once a year. I hope the minister will consider my submission when the bill comes before the committee.

By establishing yet another Crown corporation, this government seems to indicate, on the surface at least, that it wishes to govern less and to interfere less; yet the far reaching implications of its policy will mean that the Canadian people will be governed by a sub-structure of government which will interfere with them. The people of Canada, I submit, do not like this hidden interference, and under the surface involvement, on the part of Crown corporations. These remarks are not meant to apply to the day-to-day operations of the nationally run airlines, railways or similar bodies. Nor am I talking about our national broadcasting system. I am talking about our national heritage and about the right of Canadians, their children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and descendants in a thousand year's time to enjoy a property in a park. The people's elected representatives must protect those parks, and not third parties like Crown corporations. The parks are our national heritage. Those who administer parks are not administering something which is technical. Therefore, I submit that amateurs and laymen can administer them on a day-to-day basis.

I am concerned about portions of clause 3, and I am concerned about the expropriation clauses of the bill. I know they will be exhaustively studied in committee. I hope the minister will explain the wording in the bill to the effect that the Crown corporation may, with the consent of the minister, expropriate what it wants. I see the minister keeps flitting in and out of the House, as he has done throughout the discussion of the bill. Perhaps he is not really interested in it. In any event, I should like to know what those words mean.