

*National Parks Act*

future of Wood Buffalo Park in a way which would free those areas which seem to be good resource areas, while at the same time developing the north-south routes which are so important to the opening-up of the north. I would ask the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to give us a report, either on second reading or during the committee stage, on the progress of the discussions which are taking place with his counterpart in the province of Alberta.

At the outset I said I supported the principle of this bill. We must remember that the purpose of setting up the Crown corporation is to separate the management of leases and leaseholds from the management of the parks themselves. Let us get on with building facilities within the parks and at the same time minimize the kind of thing which has taken place in this Parliament during the last eight or ten years—the discussion of whether or not our friends should have leases, what they should pay and how they should pay it.

In conclusion, I should like to make a suggestion in which I believe and which I consider to be most important. As we develop our national parks system across Canada—and we should do this with all possible haste—we should look to the Canadian Arctic with the intention of establishing a National Polar Park there. I am thinking of preserving within such a national park the kind of wildlife which we may not see on this planet in the years to come. I have in mind the polar bear, caribou, the narwhal, the seal and the walrus in the coastal areas. I hope the minister, in his anxiety to create new national parks, will look upon the Canadian Arctic as a prime area for the establishment of a national park in the far north of our country.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer):** Mr. Speaker, I regard it a privilege to take part in this debate. For a number of years major portions of Banff and Jasper National Parks were within my constituency. Under the redistribution arrangements affecting electoral districts, the boundaries changed prior to the last election. However, because of the proximity of my constituency to the two major national parks I can still speak with familiarity about these major components of our national parks system.

I do not think it would be redundant if I were at this point to review briefly certain aspects of the set-up of our national parks. I believe it would be relevant after several

[Mr. Orange.]

days of debate to remind ourselves just where the national park areas are and just what problems have arisen with regard to them. At the present time the federal government possesses something less than 30,000 square miles of Canadian landscape tied up in the national parks. Half of this area consists of the Wood Buffalo Park in the far north of Alberta, to which the hon. member for the Northwest Territories (Mr. Orange) has just referred. Few tourists ever reach this wilderness area. Of the remaining national parks area, 94 per cent is in western Canada which contains less than 30 per cent of Canada's population. The national parks area in Ontario is insignificant—a few square miles at Point Pelee, Thousand Islands and Georgian Bay. There is one in the province of Quebec just in the process of formation.

**An hon. Member:** One.

**Mr. Thompson:** One is coming, but I do not think it has been formalized yet. From this background it can be readily seen that the question of national parks is one which basically involves western Canada. Certainly, the whole problem with regard to leaseholds relates only to western Canada. For this reason the bill before us is one in which the representatives of the west, particularly those who live in the proximity of the parks, have a special interest and concern.

I would say in as non-partisan a way as I can—my remarks will not be partisan because I believe the real issue goes deeper—that many of those who discuss park administration, and even many who have taken part in this debate, do not really understand from personal experience and involvement just what this bill will mean to a certain portion of our country and its citizens.

• (8:40 p.m.)

My concern about this bill is that it proposes to place the rights of a sizeable portion of Canadians under the administrative responsibility of a Crown corporation. I believe this is a regressive step, one which will take us back to colonialism of the worst kind. One of the basic concepts that has been democratically developed in our Canadian way of life is the right of people to express themselves in government, be it local government, provincial government or federal government. Those who are of necessity rendering a basic service to our national parks will not only be denied their rights; the bill would