

Supply—Northern Affairs

considerable investment, both from the point of view of the treasury and privately, in the facilities of that resort.

If investigations were made the minister would find that there are good possibilities for skiing in that area. It would bring additional revenue and make greater possible use of the Wasagaming resort. I believe it would be desirable. Has the minister looked into that question?

Mr. Lesage: This is one of the things we have under active consideration. We are investigating now what the effects of the necessary cutting of timber and wood on the slopes would be on the run-off of water. The setting up of a skiing resort in the Riding Mountain park is under active consideration. The possibilities are being studied very carefully at this time.

Mr. Zaplitny: I am glad to hear that. I shall leave it at that. The other question is in connection with big game animals within the boundary of the park. I was very interested in the exchange of opinions a few moments ago in connection with another park. I am not sure that I have the name of the park, but I think it was the Fundy park in the maritimes. The minister related the opinion of the Department of Justice that so far as all game within the boundaries of the national park is concerned, it is under the jurisdiction of his department. In other words, the proprietors of those animals are the department which administers it. That is a very interesting point, and I am glad he takes that attitude because we have a problem in connection with the Riding Mountain national park which has been causing some headaches for a number of years and has given rise to considerable dispute as between the province and the federal department.

Every few years that there is a late harvest—and there appears to be some danger of a late harvest this year again—large numbers of elk particularly and some deer come out of the Riding Mountain national park and damage the crops of the farmers who were unable to harvest them in time. If the crop is early and they can harvest it at a normal date not too much damage is done because the tendency of these animals is to come out late in the fall, particularly after the first snowfall. On several occasions elk have done serious and widespread damage. I have inspected it personally, and I speak from personal knowledge.

I have seen fields of flax which would have yielded from 20 to 25 bushels an acre completely destroyed and trampled into the ground. The same thing has happened with wheat, oats and other crops as far as a mile and a half, and in some instances two or three miles away from the boundaries of

[Mr. Zaplitny.]

the park. When those farmers whose crops were lost attempted to obtain some compensation they were given a sort of classic runaround between the provincial government and the federal government. The province maintains that since these animals belong to the federal government—

Mr. Lesage: They do not.

Mr. Zaplitny:—then, they are the ones who are responsible for their actions. The federal government has taken the attitude that the game laws of Manitoba, of course, are under the jurisdiction of the provincial government, which is true, and therefore they feel they do not have the responsibility. Of course there can be a delightful debate from the legal standpoint, but it does not bring any compensation to the farmer. Leaving the legal angles aside there is a feeling that there is a good moral case at least, because if a farmer living near a national park owns a herd of cattle, or horses, or any other animals and these animals find their way into the park and destroy property which belongs to the park authorities, then I am sure the federal government would be quite ready to prosecute the owner of that livestock and claim that he is responsible for the actions of his livestock. I do not think there would be any dispute about that. However, when the reverse happens, when the livestock which is owned by the federal government goes on to a farmer's property and causes damage—

Mr. Lesage: They are not livestock. They are wild animals.

Mr. Zaplitny: But who owns them?

Mr. Lesage: Well, who could own free wild animals? If they were owned they would no longer be free wild animals.

Mr. Zaplitny: Perhaps if they were a little more domesticated they would do less harm. I might point out that perhaps one of the reasons why they do leave the park is because of the crowded conditions. I notice in the case of the park mentioned by the hon. member for Red Deer the authorities see fit to provide 18 square miles for a herd of 150 horses, which works out mathematically at 77 acres per horse, so they must have Trojan horses there to provide such an area. In addition, perhaps if the elk had most pasture facilities within the park they might not leave it. But the legal point, or shall I say the question of justice, is that the minister has just taken the attitude this afternoon that wild animals within the park are the property of the government of Canada.

Mr. Lesage: I have never taken that attitude, Mr. Chairman. When they are in the park they are under our control, but when