

National Parks Act

Speaker, and all hon. members this question: Will a Crown corporation be flexible enough in its management and maintenance of the parks all over Canada to meet this need? Do Crown corporations build up reputations as being flexible?

An hon. Member: Never.

Mr. Horner: It is not very likely. I see the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) frowning. I do not blame him for frowning, with all the trouble he is having with the white paper.

• (9:40 p.m.)

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, all I can say to the hon. member is that the problems I have are nothing compared with his in defending an indefensible position.

Mr. Horner: If my position, according to the Minister of Finance, is indefensible, I would ask him to urge the minister and the Parliamentary Secretary to see to it that the committee to which the bill is to be referred travels to Waterton, Banff and Jasper, and then we will see whose position is indefensible. My case will rest with the citizens of these areas; they will be the final judge.

An hon. Member: They will also judge the white paper.

Mr. Horner: If the white paper were made of softer stuff, the people of western Canada would know where to use it. The only one of the two that would come back from the west would be the minister. Even the tourists who visit the national parks would make some use of the white paper.

To get back to the principle of the bill, it seeks to establish a Crown corporation to manage, maintain and develop our national parks. I ask how this corporation will be financed. If the corporation is to rely on the leases in the national parks, does it think it will be able to develop the parks quickly enough to meet the needs of the thousands of people who in the years ahead will be searching for areas like the national parks of Canada to relax in and lay down their weary cares?

There is no indication in Bill C-152 how the capital will be provided. However, I am interested to see the Minister of Finance take an interest in the legislation. He will shortly be bringing down a budget with a surplus, so perhaps he will be able to start the corporation off on the right foot. Even if the Crown corporation were given sufficient capital, will it have flexibility enough to meet the

[Mr. Horner.]

demands of the tourist industry in Alberta, in the Maritimes or in Quebec? I do not think it will. One thing that can be said about Crown corporations is that they become hidebound by rules and regulations; they are afraid to create precedents that go beyond the regulations that are laid down.

My experience has been that Crown corporations are not flexible enough to meet the demands made upon them. If there is one industry that does demand flexible servicing, it is the tourist industry. The nature of the tourist industry is such as to demand flexibility—flexibility of management, maintenance and development. The provisions of this bill lead me to suspect that the tourist industry will not receive this flexibility.

Let me get back to the basic question of taxation. There is a need today for the development of townsites in our national parks, particularly when the parks are far from centres of population. This is true in the case of Riding Mountain National Park, and all across Canada there are many other parks of which this can be said. Wherever there is a national park some distance from the centre of population you will require a townsite, a group of citizens who are prepared to provide the services that the tourists require. It is all well and good for the minister to say, "If you people don't like it there, you can move out". I suggest this is not a responsible position to take. Certainly it is no position for a politician, let alone a minister of a government which believes in participatory democracy, to take.

My point is that we need people in the national parks to provide the services required. Therefore, we should give these people some choice in the matter of local government. Let us write into Bill C-152 a provision that the members of the corporation shall be duly elected. If the people of each national park were to elect a member of the board, those in the townsites would have representation. I should like the Parliamentary Secretary to think about this proposal, because when the amendment before the House has been disposed of I may move another amendment to this effect. I would propose that the Crown corporation not be composed of political nominees appointed by a minister who does not care about those who live in the national parks. What is wrong with the idea of electing representatives from each of the national parks of Canada to serve on the board of the Crown corporation?

Mr. Nesbitt: No patronage there.