

*Supply—Indian Affairs*

**Mr. Laing:** I appreciate the interest taken in this subject by the hon. member. He has repeatedly shown a very deep interest in these negotiations. I must tell him that we are working very well in respect of three different areas. Hon. members are aware, I believe, that the rule governing the acquisition of parks at the present time is that the province shall acquire the property free of encumbrance and turn it over to the federal government for development. Unfortunately due to a lack of foresight which is so easy to condemn, it would be very costly today for the government of Ontario to acquire a suitable area and turn it over to us. Nevertheless, even in the heavily populated and highly developed area of southern Ontario we are endeavouring to develop a park in co-operation with the province.

We have some 998 acres of national park in the province of Ontario. Had we been able to go back a hundred years we would, of course, have made other arrangements. There are two northern areas at which we are looking carefully now, but the government of Ontario is interested, if it is at all possible, in establishing a national park in the southern part of the province.

We are in some difficulty when it comes to assessing what the demand is likely to be 10 years or 20 years from now. If we fail to make some prediction even in our own minds, we feel we shall not be preparing adequately for the future. For this reason we are instituting a study of what Canadians are likely to be needing 10, 20 or 30 years from now in the field of recreation. This is something which is receiving study in other parts of the world, and it is about time we began to look into it here in Canada. Magnificent road systems have completely altered the type of people who are visiting our parks, and in many cases it is difficult to decide what kind of recreational facilities, what kind of outdoor services, should be provided for Canadians in what are primarily wilderness parks.

The need is certainly changing as compared with 30 or 40 years ago. The popularity of certain types of recreation such as skiing and the presence of magnificent ski areas in our western parks is placing a weight upon the service and raising questions to which, frankly, we do not have the answers at the present time. But we are undertaking the study to which I referred and hope to come up with a fairly accurate prediction to show where we are heading.

[Mr. Roxburgh.]

The committee went out to the western parks to interview people on the spot. There were protests from leaseholders to whom the department has said we cannot accept responsibility for maintaining the parks in the way we think the people of Canada want them maintained unless we clarify the position of private investment in these areas. After hearing the views of people within the parks, and of their organizations, the committee substantially confirmed the policy we had set out, that basically these parks should be maintained as wilderness areas with service arrangements under stricter control by the federal government in the operation of the leases.

We shall continue to endeavour to supply the services which Canadians want in respect of the outdoors. It will be a tremendous task, Mr. Chairman, because when one is operating an industry which is increasing at a compound rate of 15 per cent a year, problems are bound to arise. Moreover, organization is not made easier by the fact that this is a highly seasonal business, concentrated substantially within three or four months of the year. We shall continue to do our best, and I want to praise the work of our parks staff. I know what has been the response of those who use our parks today, because we get more correspondence from them than from all the others in connection with the activities of the department. Ninety eight per cent of those letters are the most laudatory and commendatory letters anyone could wish to read. About 2 per cent of them constitute complaints. They are legitimate complaints, too, and we check to find out how somebody in the service of the parks has slipped up. But in general we are beginning to believe we probably have as good a national parks service as any country in the world.

Now I should like to deal for a few moments with the subject of Indian affairs. I was asked to assume responsibility for the Indian affairs branch on January 1, 1966. I have said publicly that I did not ask the Prime Minister for this responsibility. It is a towering task. I have told the Indian people and Canadians in general that according to my assessment most ministers responsible for Indian affairs have been adjudged failures, and that after I have been on the job a little while I shall be adjudged a failure too.

• (11:50 a.m.)

This is a consideration which should be impressed upon the members of this house;