

*National Parks Act*

Indian people at Snowdrift and around Great Slave Lake as well as the people involved in the mineral industries. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development recognized the outcry and hue that came from all concerned, including citizens of the north who really had no direct involvement in the proposed national park other than looking forward to having a park in the north. They said to the minister, "We believe that what you are proposing is all right, but for heaven's sake sit down and talk with us; tell us what your plans are. We will tell you what our objections might be, and maybe we can get together and work something out."

With due credit to the minister, he met the Indian people of Snowdrift. He told them in no uncertain terms—I was present on that occasion—that in no way would their traditional rights be affected by the establishment of a national park in the area. The minister assured them that the other Indian bands situated along Great Slave Lake would be involved in the discussions. He had discussions with the mining industry. In this way he has been able to establish some form of agreement.

I wish to make reference to three principles involved in a document which was presented to the minister by the Mining Association of the Northwest Territories. The Northwest Territories Chamber of Mines proposed that a park be established in the Lockhart River area with boundaries approximately the same as those proposed by the national parks, to be administered by a government department; that principles involved in parks policy take into account minor changes which would be compatible with the requirements of the mining industry and the Indian people; that the parks administration come up with a concrete plan which would in effect outline for the people of the north, the people of Canada, their intention with respect to the development of this vast wilderness area.

I think, Mr. Speaker, there has been a meeting of minds. I believe there was compassion, understanding and negotiation. Many of the hurdles, the unfortunate circumstances of last winter, have been overcome. We as Canadians can now look forward to a national park in the east arm of Great Slave Lake. This will be one of our most exciting national parks, perhaps not for this generation but for generations to come.

Earlier today I listened with interest to a number of members who made reference to Wood Buffalo National Park, that area which

comprises 17,000 square miles of northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories. I was a little surprised at some of the comments as to why this national park was established. There was reference to the whooping crane and it was said that the park was designed to protect the whooping crane. This, Mr. Speaker, is a lot of nonsense. This park was established in 1928, as most hon. members know, to provide a sanctuary for the fast-disappearing buffalo. Those familiar with the history of the buffalo on the prairies recognize they were a dying species by the mid-twenties. A far-sighted proposal of the government in those days led to the transfer from the prairies of a great number of buffalo to the Wood Buffalo National Park, where they now number approximately 15,000. There, this magnificent species of animal, a symbol to many of the old way of life in Canada, is protected against hunters and against disease.

• (8:30 p.m.)

Originally, though this area was called a national park it was not really a national park but a wilderness area. At the present time problems are arising which concern the province of Alberta, the government of the Northwest Territories and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in connection with the future of this park. There is no doubt that in the opinion of most people the great portion of this national park ought to be maintained in its natural state as a habitat for the buffalo, the bison from the prairies and the other species of wildlife which exist in the area.

The park is part of our heritage. However, there exist within the area, particularly on the western side, mineral resources which I believe could be significant in the development of western Canada. I am referring primarily to the gypsum deposits which now lie within the park but which must somehow be freed for exploitation without interfering with wildlife and its habitat.

I look to the possibility of extending the road system which now goes as far as Fort MacKay, north of Fort McMurray into the national park and Fort Smith in the Northwest Territories, so as to create a circular route for Canadians and others who wish to visit this region of northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

We look to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and his counterpart in the Alberta government to sit down in serious discussion and work out in detail the