

Adjournment Debate

Ontario in order to improve the quality of these waters and, most important, to protect the health of Canadians who use them.

● (1810)

NATIONAL PARKS—WILDLIFE POACHING—HARSHER PENALTIES

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): On Wednesday, December 4, I asked the Hon. Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) what steps he was taking to deal with the problem of poaching in Banff National Park. I have no quarrel with the Minister's reply but the time limitations prevented the whole story being told. The Minister said in part:

Poaching, especially underground organized poaching, is becoming a serious problem in our national parks right across the country. Dozens of our big game species are being slaughtered, largely by non-Canadians for trophy purposes. For example, a bighorn sheep head will command about \$50,000 on the black market. To meet the problem head on, we intend to change the fine, which is now only \$500 and as such is not a deterrent but a licence, to \$150,000 maximum. And we intend to include six-month jail sentences as a further deterrent.

The majority of trophy hunters are Americans and Europeans. To hunt legally as non-residents they must pay \$7,500 to \$10,000 for a guided ram hunt in British Columbia, Alberta or the Territories. Since one-half of these hunts are successful, a hunter can reasonably expect to pay \$20,000 plus travel expenses before taking a animal. The chances of taking a trophy animal or the ultimate goal, a record trophy animal, are even lower, and thus the real value of a trophy ram to the hunter exceeds \$20,000.

The current black market value of a ram's head ranges from \$10,000 to \$30,000. In such a market the risk of a \$500 fine is of little consequence to a determined trophy hunter convinced his chances of taking a trophy animal are significantly higher in a national park. Trophy animals are becoming scarce in more accessible areas where they can be hunted legally.

As an example of what happens, in 1981 an elk was shot in Banff National Park and a bighorn sheep was shot in the Jasper National Park. As a result of a six-month investigation, an international poaching ring was broken and a B.C. guide outfitter was found guilty of poaching wildlife in both parks. His combined fines totalled \$5,000 and he served a three-month jail term. He lost his B.C. guide outfitter licence and the right to sell his hunting territory, valued at more than \$70,000. The application of the National Parks Act alone would have resulted in only \$1,000 in fines.

The American hunter in the above case pleaded guilty in the U.S.A. court to illegally importing an elk head from Banff National Park and two eagles from British Columbia. He faced a maximum fine of \$20,000 and five years in jail. He was fined \$13,000 and sentenced to 40 days in jail. Canadian arrest warrants remain in effect for charges under the National Parks Act should he ever return, but if he does he will only be faced with a maximum fine of \$500. This ring was broken up by our wardens and our RCMP.

In addition, there is an illicit trade going on in wildlife organs and body parts. For instance, the organs and body parts

of a grizzly bear are valued in the aphrodisiac, jewellery and charm trade. The hide and skull range in value from \$2,000 to \$7,000 and claws sell for \$50 to \$125. Elk antlers are highly praised as an aphrodisiac and velvet antlers sell for \$2,000 a pair.

In addition, organized poaching, in association with trophy hunting, is becoming a common practice and criminals are using advanced radio communications, night scopes, telemetry equipment and tranquilizers to increase their chances of success and reduce the chances of being detected. Law enforcement is only one of the several duties of the RCMP and a warden's job and consequently the poachers think they can get away with these trophies.

In addition, in the past decade there have been numerous cases of assault of wardens apprehending poachers. In 1983, two wardens in Riding Mountain National Park were robbed at gun point of their horses and radios by a poacher packing out six hind quarters of elk and moose meat. The poacher was later arrested by the RCMP in Winnipeg and convicted of armed robbery. Increased use of violence may be one negative aspect of higher penalties for poaching. On the other hand, better training, particularly in self defence and better equipment will hopefully counter this trend. The Minister, in increasing the fines and providing a jail term, I believe, is on the right track, and I hope we will be successful in saving the animals in our national parks. I also recommend that the RCMP and wardens be provided with weapons and equipment at least comparable to that used by the criminals and poachers so they can properly deal with this illegal work.

● (1815)

Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, when one has the responsibility of speaking during the Late Show, one sometimes is very fortunate in having the opportunity to reply to a comment by the Hon. Member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor), a Member who represents probably one of the most beautiful ridings in all of this great country. It is a riding in which I spend a lot of time in order to enjoy its abundant wildlife.

When we speak of poaching, my heart breaks. This is so for anyone who has experienced the sight of young children seeing animals in the wild for the first time. I can recall my first experience with bighorn sheep. I was so close to them that I could almost touch them. When I hear about poaching I am saddened. I feel badly about it.

Quite frankly, I was amazed to learn the price people can receive for trophy heads. This price ranges between \$10,000 and \$50,000 on the black market and I understand that the \$500 fine of which the Hon. Member spoke has been in place since 1919. An increase in the penalty is long overdue.

I can tell the Hon. Member that people go to a lot of trouble to poach. It takes a lot of work and a lot of planning but it is worthwhile if it pays off in the long run. Why go to the expense and trouble of taking a trophy animal legally when the National Parks present such an inviting alternative? We