

National Parks Act

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): They have been out of touch with the situation, Mr. Speaker. They believe that running a national park is something like running Pelee National Park in Ontario, and the future park in the province of Quebec, just a few square miles of very attractive scenery where people may drive in and say "Ooo-h and Aaa-h" during the course of an afternoon, and leave. That is a national park in their estimation.

I should like to point out most forcibly to private members on the government side that I was a member of a committee a few years ago that went out to Banff and Jasper to look into the leasing situation. Frankly, I was appalled at the abysmal ignorance of the hon. members from the government party with regard to national parks. This was something that had to be experienced to be understood. Out they trotted to Banff and Jasper—they have never heard of Elk Island. They saw the buffalo and were duly impressed, then came back and solemnly approved a policy of the government with regard to leaseholds. Not one serious brief or one serious representation was presented to the committee that approved the policy. Many constructive suggestions were made with regard to zoning in the parks and the lead in this was taken by the chamber of commerce of the city of Calgary which came up with an eminently sound suggestion.

There were other bodies that felt similarly. We had representations from some bodies, and I will not name them, which figured that a national park of the size of Banff or Jasper should have erected around it a ten foot fence, with here and there a gate and with a 20 foot padlock, the key of which shall be taken and buried and lost forever. According to these people, the only creatures who may benefit from our great national parks shall be the bears, the goats, the moose, the elk and other fauna. But those bodies fail to recognize, and this is the point which must be hammered home to hon. members, that the two transcontinental communications systems, which are as important to western Canada as any means of transportation is to eastern Canada, go through the national parks. Banff and Jasper were built astride the ways of communications. Banff, in fact, was built up at about the same time the CPR went through. Jasper National Park was designated before the Grand Trunk Pacific or the Canadian Northern went through, that is true; but there they are and no amount of bureaucratic nonsense will erase these national parks being astride these two main ways of communication.

Not only must we remember that but also that the Government of Canada, immediately after the war when the Trans-Canada Highway system was set up, accepted the proposal of the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta to build a Trans-Canada Highway through Banff National Park and some of the adjoining parks to the west. How on earth are you to eliminate those communications systems? Will you do it simply by erasing those highways and by erasing the railroads which go through there? You are not going to erase the passes, because these are the only means of getting through the mountains. Yet we hear such nonsense from people down here, and not only from those in government. I have seen it in editorials in metropolitan dailies. The people who have written the editorials would not know a national park if they saw one and have no idea of the rights of the people involved.

Banff National Park occupies an area of 2,564 square miles; Jasper, 4,200 square miles and Waterton, within Canada, now occupies some 195 square miles according to the bill descriptions. The last park has been cut back. The three parks occupy a total of 7,000 square miles. I invite hon. members to look at a map of Alberta and British Columbia and note the location of these parks on the eastern slope of the Rockies. The northern boundary of Jasper is to the north of Edmonton, and the parks go all the way down to the United States border. Then, they tell us, "Oh, but you people in Alberta have no right to any special privileges in those parks." And pray why not, when the greatest proportion of the population of the province resides in an area immediately east and adjacent to those national parks? Are we to have our best ski and other areas in the mountains set aside beyond us, and our best scenery? Let us remember these parks go to the provincial boundaries.

I have heard it suggested in eastern Canada that, "Your provincial government should set aside provincial parks for you to carry on your skiing." What? Should we do this with all the finest slopes, all the good areas and the scenery in the national parks? Such assertions are only a measure of some people's abysmal ignorance of the situation. I will admit that the province has permitted the establishment of a number of small provincial parks; but that is in addition to the 7,000 square miles of national parkland. And remember, Mr. Speaker, that the 7,000 square miles of national park in the province of