

Supply—Indian Affairs

Mr. Barnett: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, before the minister begins his remarks I wish to ask the minister and the committee whether it is proposed that we deal with the various aspects of the department in some sort of orderly sequence. That is to say, could we not take the Indian affairs branch, then the northern program, the parks program and so on, in an orderly fashion. That, I think, is partly what was in the mind of the hon. member for Brandon-Souris. I wonder if the minister could not proceed in the way the hon. member for Brandon-Souris suggested, so we do not jump all over the place or from one aspect to another of the minister's department.

Mr. Laing: Of course the hon. member who has just spoken will realize that under item 1 in the estimates the responsibility devolves upon the minister to deal with all aspects of his department. It will be my proposal to say a few words about the national parks of Canada and the historic sites and monuments work allied to that, also about my responsibilities in respect of Indian affairs and my responsibilities in respect of the development of the north. I propose to take the subjects in that order.

I wish to remind the committee that again we have a crisis in connection with the provision of park facilities in Canada, but this is a crisis of plenty and not of poverty. During last year the attendance in our national parks again increased by 15 per cent to a total of 11,300,000 persons. This is an indication of the desire of Canadians that these services be supplied. In addition we are beginning to realize that the national parks of Canada are one of the great magnets for that part of the tourist business of this country that comes from outside Canada.

We have worked most co-operatively, I think, with most of the provinces in looking toward an expansion of the national parks system.

We are progressing very well with the Kejimikujik park in Nova Scotia which will open next year for the public of Canada. We have studies under way with Ontario, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Alberta at the present time, and also a small study with the province of British Columbia dealing with the long expressed desire that is reflected by hon. members from British Columbia. Whereas we have five national parks on the Atlantic coast, it is felt that it is about time we should have one park at least on the Pacific coast of Canada.

Recently we have given an undertaking to the province of British Columbia, and at the present time we are studying with British Columbia authorities an area that is very close to the Long Beach part of Vancouver island which I am informed—and I must confess I have not been there—is one of the most beautiful areas of Canada.

We have been thinking in terms of amending our act to make it possible for us to acquire additional amounts of sea shore in Canada. As I have already reported to the house, and I repeat this, we are concerned that an increasing amount of our sea shores are being purchased by persons who are not citizens of Canada. We think it is about time we took steps to see to it that an adequate amount of these open areas along the sea shores of Canada is available for national purposes—

• (11:40 a.m.)

Mr. Douglas: Does the announcement mean that the government has not been able to reach any satisfactory arrangement with the government of British Columbia regarding a park in the lower mainland around Garibaldi mountain?

Mr. Laing: I must say we have had no satisfaction in negotiating for Garibaldi park. That area is a provincial park at the present time. The province pointed out to us that there were resources there, timber and reputed resources of metal, that it wished to develop. We undertook to move the boundaries of the park so as to exclude these areas which the province thought contained resources, placing its limits at the sea shore and the Squamish river. We have not had a good response in respect of that proposal. However, I am still hopeful that some day this will be a national park, because it is reported to me by people who are authorities on alpine meadows that here we have an area unsurpassed by any in the world.

We have received good co-operation from Saskatchewan, and we hope to make an announcement at a fairly early date concerning a national park in that province. Other provinces have been very co-operative indeed.

Mr. Roxburgh: May I ask the minister a question. How far have the discussions between the federal government and the province of Ontario advanced with respect to the establishment of a national park in this province? How soon is it expected that these talks can be concluded? How is this progressing?