

National Parks Act

As one member of this chamber, I plead with hon. members opposite to be aware of this as we enter a most expansive phase in the development of the national parks of Canada. They must recognize that whatever is done, the people concerned have a right to be involved in the decision-making process. They have that right especially when what we are talking about is their home, their right to fish and their right to hunt. I am not speaking of a bamboo rod at the water's edge; I am speaking of the salt water fishermen and the inshore fishermen. I might tell hon. members opposite that if Canada had not had the wealth from these inshore fisheries between the years 1735 and 1860 in what is called central or Upper Canada, if we had kept this at home, the story of Canada's development might have been a little different. Eighty per cent of the development capital came from that region of Canada, the rural areas of Canada, in this period and up to about 1923 or 1924. It came out of rural Canada.

This is where the parks are built, apart from the abortive efforts of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) and his park in Toronto. All the national parks that are of value to Canada came out of the rural areas, the wilderness areas, wherein live Canadians of substance and concern who are willing to trust. I counsel them not to trust institutions which fail to keep abreast of changing times, the needs and the necessity to offer to one part of Canada exactly what is offered to another part of Canada.

I should like to ask the minister if he has browbeaten the province of Nova Scotia or whether he has let Jerry Regan browbeat him into anything in respect of Gros Morne. The minister does not answer. He looks blandly. Why should he not look blandly when Garnet Brown has not taken the time to tell the people in eastern Halifax county what is proposed to be done by the distinguished minister and himself? I hope that whatever is done, is done in parallel. I hope that whatever is done in respect of parks in Canada is done on a common base.

The distinguished Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) is here. He knows about my love and affection for his end of Prince Edward Island. He knows of my love and affection for one of the most beautiful spots in the world, not to mention the tuna in the waters off that shore. He knows the difficulties there are when the people concerned are not told what is going on. I say to the minister he should make the decisions after consultation with the people concerned. He should not present them with a *fait accompli*. He should invite the people into his confidence. He should seek their counsel and guidance in respect of simple things such as amendments to the existing National Parks Act.

The policy in respect of the act should be the same in respect of all portions of Canada. He should not say to Halifax or to Nova Scotia that they can have things the way they want them, or say to Quebec it can have things the way it wants them, and say to Newfoundland it can have the world. One cannot live like that. This does not make good political sense. It does not do anything to encourage trust and confidence in the leadership of this institution. Hopefully, the minister will be able to do something about this, but whatever he does he should be very aware of the frustrations, doubts and concerns that

[Mr. Forrestall.]

are raised in the minds of people when he acts from four or five different pedestals.

The minister should not be afraid to call public meetings. As I mentioned earlier he called off some public meetings simply because someone had said to him that he should not go down there because all the people would do would be to scream and holler. Of course they would scream and holler because nothing has been said to them in which they could believe. Everything that had been said to them has been withdrawn. All they receive is little snippets in the press telling them that everything is fine, that there will be no deprivation and that no one will suffer the loss of his home. That may be good for one provincial politician, but unless and until the federal government, in the person of the minister responsible, gets up and says that not only is nothing planned but that he is determined to allow the people to participate in discussions, the minister will continue to do a disservice to the institution he pretends to serve.

When he does a disservice, he does it to the entire House, not only to his own colleagues on the treasury benches or his government supporters in the backbenches. He does it to the people in Assiniboia. He also does a disservice to the people in adjacent communities and ridings. He does a disservice to the people in Dartmouth-Halifax or in any other constituency in Canada where he might wish to establish a national park.

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Amend your act by all means; there is nothing wrong with that. You are changing your mind every day, anyway. But this is not really important. What the Canadian people find to be important is the total inability of the government department to devise a national parks policy which is clear to one and clear to all. Until that is done, there will be confusion. Seeds of doubt and ad hoc approaches will remain in what is a vital and important aspect of Canadian life, that is, the preservation of wilderness and semi-wilderness areas, areas that are attached and adjacent to large and growing urban centres, the total concept of open space for people. There will be doubt and there will be no ready acceptance.

I suggest to the minister that rather than play around with ad hoc arrangements, he would be well advised to put on the order paper at the earliest possible opportunity in the next session some meaningful researches and a well thought-out new national parks policies. I appreciate the attention which hon. members have given me in this matter which is important to the people. I believe very sincerely, as I hope everyone in this chamber does, that governments exist to help people, not themselves.

Mr. Barnett J. Danson (York North): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to follow two distinguished speakers tonight, the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall), who spoke of the national parks policy and the way in which he feels it should be applied, particularly as it relates to his beautiful part of the country, and the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Knight) who took us on a travelogue through Saskatchewan and through beautiful parks, which we all appreciated. But we each speak from the context of the part of the country from which we come