

National Parks Act

attractions. That is why I believe this bill is perhaps taking a step in the wrong direction. I do not think this sort of Crown corporation ought to handle our parks development. I could say much about Glacier National Park; it is connected with the railway history of this nation and particularly the linking of the west with the east. That is a fantastic story. When the railway was taken through the Rocky Mountains this area proved one of the toughest sections through which to build the railway system of Canada. There is a fantastic background of stories linking the park with the pioneering of the railways. It would be a natural spot for displaying old, historic engines and everything connected with the early days of the railway. This park happens to be in British Columbia, but other parks which I believe have similar potential are to be found from one end of Canada to the other.

In a moment or two I will sit down and allow other hon. members to take part in the debate. Before I do that, I again wish to stress the point I made earlier: there is an urgent need for Canadians to set aside far more acreage for park purposes than is now the case. I understand that Japan has 10 per cent or more of its land mass in parks; Germany has 8 per cent. They are smaller, more densely populated countries, but they realize the value of recreational assets for the needs of the population.

● (8:20 p.m.)

Although Canada is relatively under-populated, we must not delay much longer in picking out some of the choicest areas and setting them aside for park purposes. An area in which the federal government cannot escape responsibility is our northern sections. In the Yukon and Northwest Territories there are outstanding areas which should now be set aside for posterity. Already we know the move is on to the north.

There are gas, oil and mineral explorations going on there. We will have clashes with companies who say, "This is a good area for mineral development. Why should we conserve it for park purposes?" This is the tug-of-war that will take place between these interests and the long-run interests of Canadians generally. No one knows what type of development will take place in the north a couple of generations from now. The ecology of the area must be protected. We must not have just one or two parks in the north; there must be a series of parks set aside. The time to do that is now. We must move quickly. We

[Mr. Harding.]

must move into those areas and make certain they are retained for Canadian use for all time.

Mr. R. J. Orange (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to talk about the principle of national parks, with particular reference to the national parks which now exist in northern Canada and those which are proposed.

I congratulate the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) and his predecessor for having taken hold of a political football—to anyone who has followed this debate, it is obviously that—and tried to achieve some semblance of order out of the chaos that exists in the national parks with respect to leaseholds, the principles which determine who can live and work in a national park, and the purpose of our national parks. At the same time I think there are areas which must be studied, particularly as they affect the people who live in our national parks or in areas surrounding them.

I would now comment briefly on the visit of officials of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development last winter during which they appeared before the Northwest Territories Council in Yellowknife to announce almost unilaterally a proposed national park in the Northwest Territories. I do not think any one of us who was involved in this question objected to the principle. We did not object to the location. However, we did object to the fact that in all probability there had been no consultation with the people directly affected. I am referring to the Indian people who have used the area of the proposed national park in the east arm of Great Slave Lake as a traditional trapping and hunting grounds. I also refer to the people who have expended a great deal of money, energy and effort to find out if there are non-renewable resources in the area.

The proposed park will be one of the more exciting parks of the Northwest Territories. It includes the area of the Lockhart River, including the magnificent falls and part of the Macdonald fault which is one of the more exciting mineral areas on our continent. It includes the treeline as it moves into the barrens. In time it could provide for the people of Canada some of the most exciting and interesting parts of our national parks system.

On the other hand, the proposal put forward by the national parks administration failed to take into account the fact that there were people who had deep involvement, the