

Supply—Indian Affairs

Mr. Laing: Would the hon. member permit a question? Is the hon. member suggesting now that he supports perpetual leases in the parks? He has criticized me for acting arbitrarily in respect of these leases, but I would like him to explain to us why he introduced an order in council in 1959 which ended perpetual leases and made it obligatory on the minister to issue 42-year leases only. This is precisely what we are doing. Our policy is in accordance with the order in council of 1959 introduced by the then minister.

Mr. Lambert: The minister is not serious when he is saying that.

Mr. Laing: I am entirely serious, and the bluster of my hon. friend does not detract from my seriousness.

Mr. Lambert: There is no one in the parks who believes the minister.

Mr. Laing: There are a great many people in the parks who believe me, and when it comes to support for our policies with regard to national parks, my policy has more support than the ideas of my hon. friend, who would boil everything down to a dollar bill.

Mr. Lambert: That is a lot of nonsense.

Mr. Laing: We will see about that some day, but I would like the hon. member for Brandon-Souris to answer my question. Is he or is he not in support of perpetual leases?

Mr. Dinsdale: I am very pleased that the minister has pinpointed the crux of the problem, because I did not intend to deal with it, nor is there time today. This is a statement which he has made repeatedly, and it is quite contrary to the facts.

With reference to the further exchange across the floor of the house, it is true that the minister has strong support for his policies from the Liberal members on the committee who do not understand the peculiar problems in western Canada. But I think he must be looking at the map with blinkers if he thinks he has popular support in western Canada for what he is endeavouring to do.

With reference to the specific question put to me by the minister, I was not minister until 1960. The minister claimed that the previous administration arbitrarily cancelled perpetual leases. All it did was to declare a moratorium on any further leaseholds in the national parks, which was a sensible policy because obviously the parks were becoming overexploited. In some instances this was used to cancel out the perpetuity feature

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

when some of the existing leases came up for renewal.

We will speak about this in greater detail later on. When this came to my attention I, as minister, immediately issued an order in council to avoid this difficulty and at the same time deal with the necessity for closer control, reflecting the attitudes which emerged out of the resources for tomorrow conference in respect of wise management of these parks. This was a lease for 42 years, renewal for 21.

• (12:30 p.m.)

Mr. Laing: Excuse me, but in the first instance it was 42 years. Then it was changed to 42 plus 21.

Mr. Dinsdale: Exactly; that is what I am saying. The problem came to my attention. When I was minister we changed the policy so there would be no mistake and said 42 plus 21, after which the situation would be reviewed. I think this was a more successful approach than the minister's confiscatory policy at the moment. We introduced policies that would control the future use and development of national parks and at the same time preserve the rights of the residents of Banff and Jasper who, after all, are living in permanent townsites.

We asked in the committee that this matter be referred to the courts by the government. The request was refused, and as a result the residents themselves are taking the matter to court at their own expense. This action indicates that the government has been high-handed, arbitrary and bureaucratic in these matters. The residents of the park are going to be represented by a Liberal lawyer I guess I should give him a large "L". He is Mr. George Steer of Edmonton, who as a member of the Liberal party has uttered some strong words against the un-Liberal tendencies represented by this particular action. I merely wanted to refer to that so we may remove the misunderstandings that have been created by statements such as the minister made in asking me a question a moment ago. I am glad he gave me an opportunity to clarify the record.

Mr. Laing: No, I should like to clarify the record by saying the hon. member introduced a measure by order in council at one time and found the pressure so great he retreated. We have come to the point now, with the increase in use of the parks, that I cannot afford to retreat. If he were in my position he could not either.

Mr. Dinsdale: Let me repeat, because apparently the minister did not hear me; I was