

---

# ***Development or Conservation: A Round Table on National Parks Policy***

---

*This is an edited version of a panel discussion which took place the annual Canadian Regional Parliamentary Conference held in Alberta in 1989. Sandra Davis is Regional Director General, Western Region, Canadian Parks Service; Art Webster is Minister of Tourism, Yukon; Bill Brewster is the MLA for Kluane in the Yukon Legislative Assembly; and Edward Clark is Speaker of the Prince Edward Island Legislative Assembly.*

**Sandra Davis (Parks Canada):** Let me say at the outset that the view of the Canadian Parks Service is that rational and responsible development should take place within the context of preserving and protecting our parks. As you are aware, the Parks Service has a strong mandate to preserve and protect national parks for the use and enjoyment of the Canadian public.

A number of parks related issues in western Canada have reached national attention lately. The Sunshine ski resort proposal for Banff National Park obviously was one. The Rafferty-Alameda dam situation has also had an impact on our programs within the Canadian Parks Service. We sensed a real growing distrust on the part of the Canadian public in government's ability to manage and protect our natural resources. We in the Canadian Parks Service have had a hundred years of experience in managing this, yet we too are receiving from the public a growing concern and a growing demonstration that they want us to make sure that we in fact protect the integrity of our legislation, policies, and procedures to make sure that the environment is protected.

I would like to speak to you for just a moment about Canada's national parks as opposed to what we often consider to be Canada's national park, and that is Banff. If we separate the policy issues from the two, I would suggest to you that Banff is not representative of all the Canadian parks and that Banff should not necessarily be the one park in which policy is spread over the rest of the parks in the country and that a park like Banff may need different types of approaches than some of the other parks that we have.

The Canadian Parks Service follows a Parks System Plan which has divided the country into 39 different natural regions. There are 34 parks at present, representing 21 of these 39 regions. Many of the parks which remain to be developed are those which exist in Canada's northern territories. Canada has set aside these lands for the protection of the most spectacular

and the most representative landscapes, but I think the protection issue is far broader than that. These, as representative samples of the ecosystem, are the last opportunities that we have to set aside those examples for research and for models of environmental protection. Once we lose those lands set aside, there will not be other lands that are unimpaired. That does not, however, mean that we should prohibit visitors from visiting those properties or that all of those lands should be wilderness areas to which the public is allowed no access. On the contrary, the Canadian Parks Service welcomes visitors.

***On average almost every single Canadian visits a park each year. In Banff alone we have 8 to 10 million visitors yearly which represents almost half the total of the 26 million annual visitors to national parks across the country.***

Public participation plays a very great role in the parks policy and development. We have a system now of management planning which is directed to better land use management in parks. The four mountain parks plans, which are perhaps the most famous of those plans, were approved in November 1988. In those plans, as in others, we set aside lands for particular purposes within the parks: wilderness areas, special use areas to protect endangered species, areas to provide recreational opportunities and visitor services. The public participates in the debates around the management plans for each park. In Banff alone we received over 12,000 formal responses to that management plan.

---

I recently returned from a visit to Italy for an international environmental conference, and it occurred to me that Canadians take their natural resources very much for granted. We tend to assume that these spaces will always be there. We are often unaware of how much activity really takes place within the parks. We are at a stage in many of the parks where we will now have to start assessing carrying capacities because many of the parks are being taxed to the limit. We are also potential targets, particularly Banff, for the development of tourism potential.

Just to demonstrate that there is development within the national parks, in Banff alone building permits issued over the last 10 years have exceeded \$270 million. We have contributed \$126 million of private-sector development since 1984. We have contributed, in Alberta alone, to the economic activity of the province representing 13.8 percent of the GDP for the tourism industry in '87, and our expenditures within the national parks represent \$466 million of Alberta's gross domestic product and 13,000 person-years devoted to employment in the tourist industry.

In summary, I would like to suggest to you that there is no pat answer for how we can balance development and preservation. We in the Parks Service are doing our share to contribute to tourism, to permit development within parks, and also to ensure that every proposed development is tested through a series of environmental assessments to measure and ensure that the impact of that development will not be detrimental to the parks. We share the growing interest in environmental concerns that face all Canadians and within our mandate we will do everything we can to educate, entertain, and offer visitors a quality parks experience.

\*\*\*

**Art Webster (Minister of Tourism, Yukon):** The purpose of the *National Parks Act* of 1930 was to set aside unique areas of land to preserve and protect for the benefit, enjoyment, and education of all Canadians. That indeed is still the purpose of the *National Parks Act*. However, difficulty arises in defining certain terms. Some developers will have certain ideas on what they consider to be in the public interest. That may be in opposition to some of the conservationists who think such development may not be in the public good. Both sides can put forth some very valid and convincing reasons on either side of the equation.

In the Yukon we have a national and, indeed, an international treasure called Kluane National Park, located in the southwest corner of the territory. Its unique flora, fauna, and very sensitive ecosystem has been declared a world heritage site worthy of special protection. Parks Canada at this time is preparing a management plan for development of the park, and of course, this has fostered debate regarding the form this development should take. There are those who want to develop the park

immediately in the form of a highway loop within the park to provide access for large recreational vehicles and tour buses. Opponents object to this because they see this following the course of Denali National Park in Alaska, which is a major park featuring Mount McKinley. They favour development on a very minor scale in the form of upgrading existing roads and improving existing trails for hiking and horseback outings.

I personally do not see the issue as one of development versus nondevelopment. There obviously must be some development in order to encourage and to enable Canadians to take advantage of the wilderness and the unique attractions that make that particular park worthy of such a special designation. So yes, there should be some development. It should be specifically tailored to that particular park. It should occur in a very careful and gradual manner, avoiding the salami sandwich type of development — just one more slice will not hurt. I feel that once development begins, it is difficult if not impossible to retard growth or reverse it. One road will beget another, and one ski resort, because you like competition, will lead to another.

*In trying to strike a balance between preservation and development in our national parks where conflicts arise that cannot be easily resolved, I believe it would be wise and indeed in the public interest, for this generation of Canadians, and future ones, to err on the side of preservation.*

\*\*\*

**Bill Brewster (MLA, Yukon):** This question of conservation versus development is not a new issue. I return to Alberta after 40 years and they are still fighting Sunshine ski village. I can recall, as a small boy, my grandfather and my great uncle fighting over the national parks policy. However, they finally succeeded in getting Mount Norquay, and then they finally succeeded in getting Sunshine, although I can remember my grandfather saying that it's not big enough and should have been built bigger. It put a lot of people to work. There are an awful lot of pros and cons on this. My friend the Minister of Tourism implies that proponents of development want to see large buses and recreation vehicles going into Kluane National Park. I would like him to show me a brief that ever made such a statement.

We ask for "controlled" access. The roads are already there. They were put there by placer miners. They are still there. After 40-some years, they have not deteriorated. They are built on rocks, so they are not doing too much damage. What is the point of putting 22,000 square kilometres out where nobody can see

it? There is a Kluane game sanctuary between the park and the highway and of the 3,000 or so people who thought they were in the national park in 1986, less than 10 percent were actually in the park because they could not walk the nine or 10 miles to get there. The park puts their signs up on the highway which belongs to the Yukon government. We simply asked and I think we are going to win it, quite frankly, for more access. We did not ask for large access into this area; we simply asked for controlled access.

I asked it for my Indian constituents, because they understand that type of work. They can drive these four-wheeled vehicles in there. They can spot the game. They live this way. The two bands I have in my area have problems. They have no future. They can not look ahead. This park is part of their world. The first land claim negotiations from Ottawa promised that they would get work in this park. Nothing has happened. We continue to go along in ways like this.

***We now have a northern park which we are not allowing anybody into. Now, just think about this. Well over 14 percent of Yukon land is now completely out of control.***

By the year 2000, 70 percent of the Canadian population will be over 50 years of age. They will never see Kluane National Park, a world heritage site, because they can not get there. I am fortunate because I spent years and years in there with pack horses before the parks took over. Now, they have the nerve to tell me to get my poor old horses out of the park because they were eating grass. That bothered the sheep. Well, the fact is that in 1898 Shorty Chambers put horses in there, wintered them, and the sheep were still there.

Some people want to make the park a preserve of "wilderness people". I just got through talking with Denali National Park officials before I came down here. They have controlled access. They have not been able to prove in all these years that this controlled access in any way has bothered the wildlife. The animals are still around the road. We can point this out at Sheep Mountain. The sheep have continually been there since 1943, when the Alaska Highway was built. I have personally seen where they come right down in front of you and walk down to the lake for water. They are now disappearing. They are disappearing because we have wilderness people that walk all over and kill all the grass and everything else. I am not against wilderness people. They have to go in, but they have to be controlled.

A bear was shot in the park just before I left because of wilderness people. They kept leaving their garbage around, so we have one less grizzly bear. Last year there were at least six grizzlies shot. We can not keep this up. And it is not because

we have a lot of people in there. We can turn around and put more people in there by far, and we can put them in by buses. They are controlled completely. They are not going to hurt the bears, because when there is a bear around the bus driver is not going to let them out of there and bears do not attack buses. In 1970 the Denali National Park had 44,600 people. They put the road in and in 1986 got 530,000 travelling on these buses. That's an increase of 145 percent. Now, when your whole area depends on tourism, that is an awful nice increase. They have learned an awful lot about controlling animals and controlling people, and we can learn from them. We must open this area up. I have 17 lodges there that are literally going down. Our tourism is dropping because of the fact that we simply are not looking after people.

\* \* \*

**Edward Clark (MLA, Prince Edward Island):** Prince Edward Island's national park is situated along a 45-kilometre stretch of land on the north shore of the province. With three campgrounds, our national park has one of the highest visitation rates in the country next to Banff and Jasper, and yet in terms of land base it is one of the smallest. The land-base-to-visitors ratio puts added pressure on the park and makes it extremely difficult to protect the environmentally sensitive areas of the park, which include the nesting grounds for the endangered piping plover. In fact, certain sections of the park must be closed every year at a certain time to ensure that the nesting grounds are not damaged.

***Each national park has its own unique and individual characterization. Development done without considering the history and future would be a monumental mistake.***

Most people agree that what most attracts visitors to our park is its natural resources, unspoiled scenery and beaches. For this reason we feel our natural resources must be protected, and to date this has been the case under Canada Parks policy. In striving to achieve a balance between development and preservation, many proposals brought forward by enthusiastic entrepreneurs have been turned down. Approximately 50 applications are received by the district office of Parks Canada in Charlottetown each month. These proposals include everything from beachside stands selling hot dogs and sunglasses to the construction of first-class restaurants. These development proposals for the most part centre around enhancing and better serving the visitors to the province and do not deal with extra activity usage such as mining, as the case may be in other provinces.

---

In keeping with the spirit of the national parks policy proposals requesting authorization to develop small businesses within the park are viewed in the light of sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.9 of the national parks policy. The former states that natural resources within national parks will be protected and managed with minimal interference to natural processes to ensure the perpetuity of natural, evolving land and water environments and their associate species. Section 3.2.9 states that Parks Canada will seek to eliminate or minimize sources of pollution affecting park resources. Where sources of pollution are external to the park, Parks Canada will work in co-operation with other responsible agencies. It may seem as though Prince Edward Island interprets these guidelines strictly. However, this strict application is deemed necessary due to the high sensitivity and fragility of the environment within the park itself.

Also to be considered when discussing new developments within the national park is the effect these new developments would have on not only the park itself but business already established in the area outside the actual park boundaries. On Prince Edward Island the service industry surrounding the national park is well developed. If Parks Canada were to become actively involved in promoting the park for possible investment, the existing business would undoubtedly feel the direct effects of the competition. This situation would directly contradict the premise on which the independent business person established their operations near the park, i.e. being that

the park is there to draw visitors, not to compete directly with those in the private sector.

In addition, many visitors to the province go to the beach to relax and get away from aggressive advertising campaigns, and it could prove to be an inconvenience and source of contention for those very people you are trying to accommodate. Too much development could lead to fewer visitors taking advantage of what the national park has to offer.

In conclusion, it is obvious that natural resource management within a specific park cannot be done without first considering what the usage for the park has been in the past and what is envisaged for the park in the future.

In a national park such as exists on Prince Edward Island, a certain type of development may be considered unacceptable, whereas in other parks across the country the same type of development could prove to be advantageous not only for the park itself but also for the general area in which it is located. The national park on Prince Edward Island has to date proceeded very cautiously with any major development proposals. Officials remain cognizant of the fact that people are attracted to the park in great numbers because of the unspoiled beauty and peace that can be found there. In addition, the fragile environment in which our park is located limits the type of development which could be considered viable, as any sort of other utilization of the park could result in damage to our environment. ♦

---

## *Letters*

---

Dear Sir:

I am shocked by the article "Quebec and the French Revolution" which appeared in the Autumn 1989 edition of the Review. Until now, I have never seen any article which made deliberate attacks on one of the two founding nations of Canada.

Two of the final sections (Clericalism and Counter Revolution, and The Nineteenth Century) contain statements which are clearly unbridled attacks on the English. If any Member of Parliament were to utter these words, he would be forced to apologize to the House. Note, for example, the following: "the myth ... that the conquest ... had been providential", "the English were taking advantage of the Revolution", "the English established a militia on the pretext of defending the country", "the English wanted to force each Canadien ...", "the English army ... crushed the insurgents, whose rebellions were then systematically repressed", "These revolutionaries were crushed and the English ... repressed it brutally" Compare these with such statements as "the figure of the Patriote ... has become a sort of folk hero" and "the ideals of liberty" which the Canadiens advocated.

While I realize that the Review, as a matter of policy disclaims itself from necessarily supporting any opinions expressed between its covers, I am quite upset that the Review's editors would allow an offensive article such as "Quebec and the French Revolution" to be printed. The sentiments, which are expressed as fact not as opinion, are clearly provocative and intended to offend. Professor Tetu's article is not one of a scholar who is trying to explain an historic event. He is merely trying to express his personal, nationalistic opinion. His article does not belong in a journal of repute such as the Review, but rather in a newsletter of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

David Schachow  
West Hill, Ontario