

EDITORIAL

Recently, I was part of an SNHS delegation that met the Honourable Mr. Douglas, MP for Assiniboia, to discuss with him the Society's views on the establishing of a grasslands park. We wanted Mr. Douglas, whose constituency includes part of the land originally proposed by our Society for this park, to know how concerned we were last fall to learn that plans for a national prairie park had been given up for the current budget year.

You will remember that our Annual Meeting in Yorkton last October strongly protested this announcement. We sent resolutions urging both the federal and provincial governments to reconsider the decision, and to study forms of park management that would make the establishment of a prairie park practical.

As you know, SNHS has repeatedly urged the creating of a grasslands park in the southwest of the province, and officials of both the Saskatchewan and Canada governments have declared their approval of a national prairie park. This would be perfectly in keeping with the stated basic purpose of national parks (May 31, 1962), namely "to preserve for all time areas of national significance for their geographical, biological or geological features, as a national heritage for the benefit, education and enjoyment of the people of Canada, present and future."

We know that very serious study was given to the unique grasslands area along our southern border by a team of federal government biologists. This area contains birds like the Sage Grouse, Sage Thrasher and Brewer's Sparrow, reptiles like the Horned Lizard, mammals like the Prairie Dog and the Pronghorn Antelope, and plants like *Astragalus purshii* and *Antennaria dimorpha* which occur almost nowhere else in Canada. At the same time the area studied is large enough to give the impression of never-ending prairie expanse and to reduce the effect of outside influences on the original wildlife species.

In spite of these encouraging studies, plans for the park have not gone ahead. In fact, the joint negotiations that must take place between the two governments seem to have broken down, and although various reasons have been given for this by government spokesmen, it is apparent that the matter of financing the project is an important obstacle. The land for a national park must be turned over to the federal government free of all encumbrances, and a number of difficulties seem to stand in the way of the provincial government's providing these large tracts of land.

Our Society has been suggesting that a more flexible attitude might be taken to the means and timing of land acquisition. We know that there are people now living in the area, and others with grazing leases there. We think it should not be necessary to cancel or buy up these immediately, and that it might be possible for the present lessee to retain the land as long as he is interested in ranching. With controlled grazing, this land would meanwhile be protected against the invasion of agriculture with accompanying rising land prices and destruction of native plants and animals.

The delegation that discussed the park with Mr. Douglas included J. Wedgwood of Saskatoon, H. C. Moulding of Ducks Unlimited, Regina; Norm Flaten, who has a farm at Weyburn, and myself. We represented a wide range of interests in the society, all equally concerned with preserving our grasslands. A similar delegation had previously had a worthwhile discussion with the MP for Saskatoon, the former Dean Otto Lang, now a minister without portfolio in the federal cabinet. We want to get as wide a hearing as possible with interested government people. Can you talk or write to your local MP's and MLA's?—George F. Ledingham.