

# PARKS AND THE PEOPLE

Too often in the past major decisions regarding the disposal of natural resources and the future of Canada have been made without consultation with the people. But this year Canadians are being given the opportunity to participate in environmental planning. We hope that the recent public hearings on national parks mark the beginning of a new era in which we, as Canadians, will be prouder of our resources and will consider long-term good rather than short-term selfish interests.

Many of the briefs presented at the hearings quoted the succinct statement in the National Park Act which reads:

“The Parks are hereby dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment . . . and such Parks shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

The key words, of course, are “leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” and it was the business of the hearings to receive concrete suggestions as to how such an objective could best be realized. As a representative brief explaining the broad needs for parks and their places in Canadian life as well as many precise proposals relating to the Prince Albert National Park, we print in full the brief which was presented by Professor J. S. Rowe, Plant Ecologist of the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon Campus. We hope that *Blue Jay* subscribers will read Dr. Rowe’s article carefully and thoughtfully. They should also read Mr. J. Wedgwood’s précis of the Prince Albert public hearing and Miss M. Belcher’s account of the presentations made in Regina. (In a later issue we shall attempt to bring readers up to date both on the preliminary report of the public hearings and also on the subsequent decisions of the National and Historic Parks Branch.)

The holding of such hearings has been, then, a positive step forward. And there are additional achievements to record. Three months ago we were able to report the establishment of the first Wilderness Area in Saskatchewan. Other provinces are also making significant progress in the protection of natural areas: British Columbia with its Ecological Reserves Act is leading the way; Alberta and New Brunswick have anti-litter and clean environment acts under consideration; Ontario has at last been successful in eliminating lumbering from some of her great Provincial Parks and is borrowing millions of dollars to build water treatment plants in an effort to reduce Canadian pollution of the Great Lakes. On the National Scene, the Honourable Jean Chrétien, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, has announced the formation of five new National Parks; consideration is being given to the formation of a grassland park in Saskatchewan as well as parks in the Yukon and North West Territories. As we go to press we hear that the Government of Saskatchewan is interested in preserving the cleanliness of the whole Churchill River System, possibly as an additional National Park. It is obvious that governments are now realizing the importance of protecting examples of each kind of ecosystem in Canada.

It is therefore essential that active involvement by concerned naturalists, amateur and professional alike, continue and continue vigorously. The first advances toward conservation have been made but only the participation of people can assure further progress.