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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FRANKLIN K. LANE, SECRETARY

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

STEPHEN T. MATHER, DIRECTOR

# CANADIAN NATIONAL PARKS



ADDRESS

BY

HON. J. B. HARKER

*Commission of Dominion Parks, Department of Interior, Canada*

DELIVERED AT THE NATIONAL PARKS CONFERENCE  
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By J. B. HARKIN, in Charge of National Parks, Dominion of Canada.

Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentlemen, I really did not come here prepared to tell you of the competing scenery of the north. I think while nothing would give me more pleasure than telling you of what our scenery is, and why we think it is in its way, as yours is in a different way, in a class superior to all others, I would rather speak simply of the general question of national parks.

There is one thing I must say at the outset, and that is that I very much appreciate the action of your parks department in inviting me to attend this conference. I know, sir, from what I heard here yesterday and to-day and from what the program for to-morrow promises that I shall return to Ottawa with a fund of useful information and suggestions and ideas and, what is perhaps best of all, renewed inspiration with respect to the work we are all engaged in.

If there is one thing in regard to which I envy your parks organization more than another, it is in regard to the enthusiastic and very efficient help which you receive from various public-spirited organizations. I have in mind the American Civic association, the Women's Federation, and numerous others. I think you are also fortunate in regard to the class of men—Mr. Mather, for instance—who have thrown themselves into the work. Everything you do and everything the association behind you do, with respect to national parks in the United States, contributes and contributes materially to the momentum of the national parks' cause in Canada. It is with pleasure, sir, that I have an opportunity to bear testimony to this fact. Much has been done for your parks by your Secretary of the Interior. I believe, sir, that he was born in Canada, and therefore when I realize how much your parks' work does for us, I feel that Canada has not poorly repaid you when it gave you such a man for your Interior portfolio.

In Canada the parks organization at present deals with three varieties of parks; they are the scenic parks corresponding to your Yellowstone and Yosemite; animal parks, in which we preserve near extinct native animals, such as buffalo and antelope; and historic parks, located at points where events of critical importance in the life of the nation have transpired. Of course all our parks are maintained as wild-life sanctuaries, and possibly on this account we have

been given to understand that the parks organization must take over the administration of the migratory-bird treaty and the administration of the wild life of the Northwest Territories.

The Northwest Territories extend from the northern boundary of the prairie Provinces as far toward the North Pole as Canadian authority extends. The eastern boundary is Hudson Bay and the western the Yukon Territory. That comprises an area of about a million and a half square miles of land—and some ice.

When I first received an invitation to this conference I was under the impression that it was to be of the same character as previous national-parks conferences; that is, that it was to be primarily a round-table conference for the discussion of ways and means; that the discussions would relate primarily to the practical work in the parks themselves. I received a program the day I left Ottawa, and then found that the conference had been planned on a very much larger scale. I came here expecting to discuss the practical business side of parks. I recognize that the detail of such a discussion would not be suitable for a conference of this kind. However, there is one detail of parks administration to which I want to refer in passing.

Probably one of the most serious problems we all have to deal with in connection with national parks is the protection of the parks from fire. In Canada we have taken certain steps in connection with this subject, which we, at all events, think have been a distinct advance. The first is the development of a portable gasoline engine. We went on the principle that the most effective means of dealing with fire is water. We figured that since cities no longer used water pails for extinguishing fires, we should take a pointer from that fact and develop a portable fire engine. We now have a portable fire engine, which can be taken to any part of the mountains on pack ponies—in fact, you can carry two engines on a pack pony—and which can be handled very readily by two men. In actual work it has demonstrated its success, and the engine is now being adopted—has been adopted already—by a number of associations of private timber owners throughout Canada. I mention this simply as a suggestion, because, so far as I know, it is the first occasion on which a mechanical fire-fighting outfit has been developed for forest-fire work.

There is one other feature of the fire work which I wish to mention and that is a campaign of education which has been carried out in connection with forest fire prevention. I mention it chiefly because I think the methods adopted can be readily and satisfactorily followed not only for fire education purposes but for many other public purposes as well. We recognized the necessity of a campaign of education with respect to forest fires because it is a fact that nearly

all forest fires originate from human causes; and it is also a fact that the individual who starts them does so through ignorance or carelessness; he does not realize, for instance, that a match or a cigar butt carelessly thrown down in the forest, or a smoldering camp fire left behind, may result in a huge forest fire. To educate the public it was felt that the campaign must involve a huge and continuous circulation and that the media used must be such that they would keep the educational information constantly before the general public.

Being without an appropriation for a fire education campaign it was also recognized that the work must be carried on without any expenditure on the part of the Government. To meet these two conditions it was decided to endeavor to get manufacturers of articles in common and constant use to put fire warning notices on these articles or their receptacles.

The responses of the manufacturers were prompt and favorable and the result is that education in regard to forest fire protection is constantly going on in Canada and that it is not costing the country anything. We began our campaign with the match manufacturers. For several years practically every box of matches made in Canada has carried on it a fire warning notice. No one can take a match from a box without seeing this notice.

We later on also got the ammunition manufacturers to adopt a similar plan, the idea being that when people were hunting, using ammunition and shells, that that was the time they were most likely to cause fires. Now all the ammunition companies in all of their shell boxes insert special fire warning notices which are worded so as to appeal to the selfish interest of the hunter. It is made clear to him that if he starts a fire through carelessness or any other cause, there may not be any game for him to shoot. The campaign was extended in many other directions. The tent makers of Canada have put fire notices in all their tents. Even the telephone directories have them now. I mention this simply to illustrate what a tremendous circulation you can get at no cost, and how you can reach the very people who are most likely to require the information you have to give. It has proved very effective with us, and I think that in other matters of national importance a corresponding course might prove effective.

There is a point in connection with national parks which I would like to emphasize. At first sight your parks and our parks may appear to be competitors. In reality, I believe that all our parks are a benefit to yours and that yours are a benefit to ours. There may be an element of competition in so far as the railways are concerned. However, I think the railway men would be well advised if they took the view that I mention. I hold, sir, that every man who visits one



national park, whether it is in Canada or the United States, will thereby get a taste for what national parks alone can give him and that he will never be satisfied till he has visited other parks. He may come to Banff this year. He will then want to visit Yellowstone next year.

I have read articles by some Americans who seemed to think it was a catastrophe that so many Americans annually visited Canadian parks. To me it seemed that they should in reality rejoice that so many Americans were getting a taste for national parks and, if you will pardon me for saying it, getting such a good start on the right line. They should rejoice that those Americans, by virtue of their trip, are sent home better men and women, physically, mentally, and morally; that our parks have contributed to the vitality and efficiency of your people. Personally, I rejoice to see the figures regarding visitors to your parks jump up, because I then feel perfectly certain that a considerable proportion of those people are going to visit our parks eventually.

I suppose, sir, from the discussions which I have heard here that one of the real purposes of this conference is to devise ways and means for increasing public interest in national parks and for increasing the number of visitors who annually go to national parks. You want increasing numbers to visit American parks. I want increasing numbers to visit Canadian parks. Why this desire? In the first place we all want to keep money at home: in the second we want to bring in foreign money. It is a perfectly legitimate ambition, but I think you all agree with me that this commercial side of parks is only of secondary importance. If it is not, then we should not have the parks run as governmental institutions, but should hand them over to the railroads, just as we do mining and lumbering and such.

But, sir, national parks are of much too great importance to hand over to any railroads. After all, they do concern the wealth and vitality of our people, and that in the end means the welfare of the nation. Therefore, it seems to me, that the nation alone should handle them. My reference to railway companies might suggest that our first missionary work should be with the railway people. At present I am afraid they concern themselves too much with the trippers, the people who travel out of curiosity, the people who travel largely in order that they may boast to their less fortunate friends that they have seen Banff, Mesa Verde, or the Yellowstone.

It is quite true we want to see these people visit the parks, but we are much more concerned in the rest of the people who do not get the sort of recreation parks afford. These people need the parks, but so far as millions of them are concerned parks to-day might as well have a Chinese wall around them. I think Mr. Chamberlain referred

practically to the same point a few moments ago. It is all important that the national parks should be made available for all the people, and that is why our missionary work should be directed to convert the railroads. Personally, I am convinced that if the railroad people would look at this matter from a new standpoint they would not only be doing what I would call an act of higher patriotism, but in the end they would largely increase their own dividends.

Let me put it this way: Suppose that 500,000 people who do not now visit the parks went to your parks next summer. Is it not a fact that the renewed capacity, vitality, and energy that these people would derive by virtue of that visit would mean in the end a tremendous acquisition to the national power to produce. And, sir, if we increase the national power to produce we increase the business of the railway companies.

I have said we want increasing numbers of people to visit the parks. I sometimes think that we in parks work are really merchandisers. We have goods to offer that we want everyone to buy. But, unlike most purveyors of commodities, it doesn't matter how many customers we have, our stock is undiminished. We are like the two old people in the Greek fairy tale who entertained Jove and his son. No matter how much we give our guests, we still have just as much wine left in the pitcher. The dispensers of all our other natural resources are bound in the end, if they keep disposing of their commodities, to find themselves in the unfortunate position of that illustrious old lady, Mother Hubbard. But our cupboard never gets bare, and, like most merchants who have superior wares to sell, our customers are our best advertisers.

It is, I know, unnecessary to say anything to such a conference as this of the revenues which may be derived from tourist traffic, but I want to point out a peculiarity which distinguishes them from all other sources of revenue, and that is that there are no other taxes that people pay so gladly. And the interchange of travel between our two countries is bringing about a delightful international reciprocity, for the American tourists are helping to pay our taxes and the Canadians who go to your parks are helping to pay yours.

Aside from all questions of revenue, are there any reasons why we should strive and strive constantly to attract more people to the national parks? I think that there are a great many, and to my mind the best possible reasons.

The first of these is the one you have embodied in the slogan, "See America first." In other words, know your own country before you seek to understand others. And in our national parks we have set aside the best our countries have to offer. They contain the masterpieces of nature in our respective countries. And I venture to say that the man who has seen the Grand Canyon of Colorado, the

Valley of the Yosemite, or our Canadian Rockies, has a new realization of his country. His conceptions are broadened, his imagination enlarged, and he will sing "My country 'tis of thee" or "O, Canada" with a new and deeper patriotism.

However, the main reason why we want visitors in connection with parks is purely on account of recreation. After all, national parks are simply places of recreation in its broad sense. It needs no argument to convince anybody that the public recognize the need of recreation. We have only to look at the millions of dollars that the public are spending on recreation. They spend very much more on recreation than they do on the necessities of life. We have only to look at the theaters, the picture shows, the ball organizations, the seaside resorts, the golf clubs, and the thousand and one institutions that exist solely to provide recreation.

Now, in the national parks, we provide a form of recreation which we who are concerned in the work, at all events, believe is vastly superior to all other forms of recreation. Recreation, of course, is only a means to an end. It is, after all, nature's method of repairing the damage we all sustain in the struggle for existence. Life in the city is particularly hard on man. I once saw it put this way: "Life in the city squeezes the juice out of man like a lemon, and leaves nothing but the pulp." National parks exist to repair damages of this kind by providing means of recreation in the outdoors. Of course, all recreation in the outdoors is valuable in the matter of this repair work, but the best recreation of all is the recreation in the wilderness. I want to emphasize that word "wilderness," because to me it is the all essential point with respect to national parks. Other parks, city or suburban parks, all help the human unit in this matter of recreation but these parks are necessarily small, are largely artificial and are in reality, as an American writer once described them, simply "first-aid" parks. You have to go to the wilderness park to get the real results.

Now the wilderness possesses something that is not to be found anywhere else and that can not be reproduced. Sir, you can not transplant the wilderness. We can transplant a strawberry plant. It will grow in our gardens but what of its fruit. It has lost that delightful tang which was its soul. Its spirit has fled back to the wilderness—its home.

In a certain sense we who live the life of cities are like the transplanted strawberry plant. As your own Lowell says: "Before man made us citizens, great nature made us men." There is something which has come down to us in our blood from our remote ancestors which is satisfied only by the wilderness—the home of our first mother—Mother Nature. There is no better example to explain what I mean than the grate fire. You know how we all love a grate



fire. It is not for its warmth. We might easily get more warmth from a steam radiator. But we all take a peculiar delight in blazing logs or crackling coal. It seems to me that something in our blood associates that grate fire with the camp fires of our ancestors when they lived the life of health and vigor and freedom around their camp fires in the wilderness.

I am told that if you take one of your cultivated strawberries and transplant it back to the wilderness it will revert to type and regain that wonderful wild tang it had lost in the garden.

Well, sir, we can not go back to the wilderness to live. We are committed to civilization, but we can see that there shall always be a certain share of the wilderness reserved so that all our people can go back to it at times and regain there some of the vitality which the city has taken away from them. The soil of the city grows a wonderful crop of dollars, but it grows a poor and weedy crop of men. Well, we want to make it possible for everyone to rotate his crops. To grow some dollars in the city with all the rest the city has to offer, and then go back to the wilderness for a period and gather what might be called "coins of life." Because every mountain peak, every lake, the wild flowers, the air, and all the wondrous beauty of national parks are like the machinery of a mint turning out coins of life, representing health, vitality, clarity of mind, moral efficiency.

In this connection I want to read a paragraph written by an American writer, an American newspaper man, who had been in the habit of spending his holidays in the wilds of northern Canada. I read it simply to indicate what it means to a man to have gathered "coins of life" in the wilderness. The paragraph is:

Canada—land of the sunshine and the snow, how big and beautiful you are. Surely the God of all the earth never made another country like you.

When I die I hope it will be somewhere that they will have to carry me out from in the bottom of a canoe—and my last regret will be, not that I shall not see again those who are dear to me, because, please God, I shall see them again, but that nevermore, so far as I know, shall my eyes see the sweep of those dear northern hills and my senses be lulled to rest by the roar of the rapids and the incense of the balsam and the spruce.

Mr. Chairman, I think you recognize that national parks are a much bigger question than a mere getting of tourist revenue or a mere matter of carrying passengers. In Canada we who are charged with parks matters believe they concern the very life of the nation. We claim it is our first duty to see that every person is given an opportunity to gather some of these "coins of life." At present one of the most important matters in connection with national parks, it seems to me, is the necessity of more and still more parks, not simply parks such as you have and we have located in the West, but parks everywhere, and particularly parks nearer the large cities.



Before I sit down I want to refer briefly to what the Canadian soldiers are doing in France. We in Canada take a very special pride in their accomplishments, and there seems reason to believe that to a considerable extent, at all events, the resourcefulness and courage and energy which they have shown on the battlefields of Europe have been due to the habits of the outdoor life which they lived in Canada. You all know that on the whole the people of Canada live the outdoor life.

In conclusion I would say this: We who are concerned in parks believe that the best and most important step in connection with preparedness—a matter which, I believe, has received more or less consideration in this country of late—is the building up of a strong and virile race. We are also equally convinced that national parks, and what national parks stand for properly developed, will contribute materially, and very materially, to this end. I thank you.

