

Remarks of John A. Carver, Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Public Land Management, before the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, January 23, 1964, 9:45 a.m.

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee:

It is a pleasure once again to consult with you on the parks and recreation matters of mutual interest to the Congress and the Department.

The week of the President's budget message is an opportune time for this review. I assure you that the President's determination to cut down expenses and effect economies has been communicated to each bureau of the Department, and no one is in doubt about it.

The new Park Service Director has devoted much of his time and attention in recent weeks to organizational matters. He will be describing to you some of the changes which are being effected, designed to improve efficiency and to cut costs, without diminishing the basic program for which the Service is responsible.

When visiting a dentist recently, I observed on his office wall a large map of Great Smokies National Park. Observing my interest, he said, "I own a piece of that." I assumed and asked whether he owned one of the private tracts within the park boundaries. He didn't; what he had meant was that as an American citizen he owned "a piece" of each of our national parks.

Because so many Americans quite rightly feel this way, and because their elected representatives almost to a man are proud of our national park system, and generously support it through good times and bad, the National Park Service has a rather special status as a governmental

organization. As I've told this Committee before, park people are like professional baseball players and airplane pilots -- they are paid for doing the work they love best.

A park career attracts the highest type of employee, and no public service offers more satisfaction.

Perhaps this is why a political appointee winds up with a lump or two when he undertakes to suggest the desirability for a park executive to be "better informed on the nature of the legislative process as parks are affected"; or that loyalty to park ideals cannot be oblivious to governmental discipline.

In recent decades, the increasing mobility, higher incomes, and longer vacations of Americans have changed park administration. Park visitors once came by train; took "staged" trips through the parks -- on stages, and by stages equal to a day's travel; and were fed and housed accordingly. They were numbered in the thousands.

Now millions come in the family car; the geologic and other natural wonders vie for attention with commercialized recreation on the one hand, and outdoor experiences for their own sake -- as in the National Forests, or at reservoirs, or city parks -- on the other hand.

As a result, the biggest management problem of the Park Service is now management of people and traffic. And the proliferation of federal recreational activity led to a major Congressionally authorized study -- Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission.

That Commission's report recommended a federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, and such a Bureau has been established; its functions have

been set forth in legislation. Consideration is being given to another key recommendation, which will have tremendous influence on the program to establish new parks and recreation areas, the Land and Water Conservation Fund bill.

New parks have been created preserving shoreline of the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts. Such parks are proving enormously popular, and others are before Congress. Scenic parkways, and riverways, are being considered -- all of these things representing response to a growing demand stemming from two disparate sources. To have the status of a national park is to be admitted into a select circle, automatically guaranteed a volume of visitors and attendant success of associated tourist industries. Furthermore, it is felt that only national status assures requisite protection against commercialization, and the maintenance of the highest standards of interpretation and protection.

This Committee and the Congress are entitled to the best help we can furnish in evaluating these proposals. Only as you have confidence that the testimony you get from us is professional in caliber, and as free as we can make it of institutional bias, can there be a sound working relationship between the Committee and the Department on park matters. This will mean, occasionally, some conflict among some of the government bureaus, including some within our department.

National parks are no more all alike than Indian reservations or African nations; but as in those two situations, it is easy to generalize that they are. Such generalizations lead us into difficulties, with the Congress, with the public, and with ourselves.

But though they are different, each one, policies are needed for general application.

One policy I've discussed with you before is that dealing with concessions. We have found that the policy statement adopted by this Committee in 1950 probably should have attention legislatively. For reasons set forth in the report which accompanies it, we have asked the Congress to enact that policy into law.

The natural history research program of the National Park Service has been criticized by a committee of the National Academy of Sciences. The recommendations of that committee are regarded as well founded, and we hope this Committee will assist in seeing that they are implemented.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, we need your help on a rather large agenda -- evaluation of several new proposals; working out common policies on recreation with several other government agencies and bureaus; making the organization lean and efficient, and responsive to the Congress and the public; consideration of the extremely complex concessions management policy; and establishing guide lines in other areas, such as natural history research, wildlife management, and the like.

We have a new Director, able, young, and vigorous. He is working on an organization to fit with his style of operating, which I know you are going to like. He has his key lieutenants, and his regional directors with him, and I am sure before your hearing is over, you will have come to know each other very well.