



Environeur - Vol. 6(3) 1978

The preservation mandate is now, and always should be, the cornerstone of the National Park System. It is, however, a mandate which must be interpreted with some degree of flexibility in the different regions of Canada in order to be responsive to the cultural and economic realities of the regions. This flexibility has been lacking in the past policies and practices of Parks Canada, and there is no indication that a change is envisaged in the draft policy paper under consideration.

The key issues are that Parks Canada has interpreted the preservation mandate to mean that people cannot reside in National Parks and that most resource utilization must be terminated. These interpretations may be logical for wilderness areas, but they are not necessarily the only or the best interpretations to apply to the settled regions of Canada - such as the Maritime Provinces. In the Maritimes we have many "natural areas of Canadian significance" - but they are not wilderness. In fact most of them have a long history of human settlement and use, often in terms of a dependency on one or more resources of that natural area to support the livelihood of our people. The people and the cultural landscape have become a part of the ecosystem associated with the natural area, particularly in terms of the agricultural and fishing communities associated with our coastal regions.

Yet when Parks Canada comes to establish a new National Park at East Point, at Ship Harbour, at Cape LaHave Islands, or at Kouchibouquac the message is loud and clear: the people must move out and the resource utilization must end. The message is not acceptable. The wilderness preservation ethic is not transferrable from the uninhabited Rocky Mountains to the settled shores which support our way of life. We do have significant natural areas that should be preserved through the National Park system, but they must be established through a more flexible interpretation of the preservation mandate that accommodates our people and works in co-operation with them.

In Prince Edward Island we recently observed a sad situation at East Point - a coastal area with one of the most spectacular beach/dune/lagoon systems in Canada, complemented by the cultural mosaic of communities, farm fields, woodlots and inshore fisheries. There is no question that the shore zone is of national significance nor is there any question that it would benefit from preservation by establishment of a National Park. Yet when the proposal to