

Editorial

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Editorial

Every year Canada's national parks are visited by thousands of tourists in search of relaxation, exercise and the pleasures of seeing our country in its natural, undeveloped state. A few travellers go well prepared with guidebooks and a mind stocked with a winter's reading about the parks they visit, but most hope to obtain, at park centres and local bookstores, the information they will need about campgrounds, trails and natural history. Your editor and his family were among the thousands of such relatively unprepared tourists who visited Jasper and Banff National Parks this last summer.

This was to be a non-geological trip, a real vacation; but we had hoped to obtain at least those guides to the natural history of the parks that were available to tourists. We soon discovered, however, that almost no information about geology was available. D. M. Baird's excellent guides (Geological Survey of Canada Misc. Repts. 6 and 13) were out of print, and the only information on geology available at park information offices was Baird's generalized *Guide to Geology for Visitors to Canada's National Parks*. None of the offices displayed or sold geological maps. They did distribute free some very useful pamphlets on wildlife (bears, wapiti, bighorn sheep, etc.) but only two pamphlets (Icefields Parkway, Athabasca Glacier) contained any geological information.

The Icefield Centre, just below the Athabasca glacier, has excellent displays explaining the nature of glacier flow, erosion and deposition. Two other well done geological exhibits that caught our attention were those at the Natural Bridge (Yoho National Park) and at the hoodoos on the Bow River at Banff. We also discovered at commercial outlets two small books written by Richard E. Kucera of the University of British Columbia (*Probing the Athabasca Glacier*, 32 p., many black and white photos, \$1.25; *Lake Louise, Moraine*

Lake: Interpreting the Mountain Landscape, 64 p., many colour photographs, \$2.95; both published by Evergreen Press, Vancouver). These are very well done: illustrated with first rate photographs, and written in a style that makes them accessible to the intelligent layman, yet still interesting to a professional geologist. The emphasis in these books is on physical processes, particularly glacial, in forming the modern landscapes.

For the most part, however, it seems that a fine opportunity is being missed to deepen the traveller's appreciation of landscape and to inform him of the splendours of Canadian geology. Promotional literature, for example, urged us to visit the summit of Sulphur Mountain, for the best view of the "geological structure" - but when we reached this vantage point (and also those on Mt. Norquay and on the Whistlers at Jasper) absolutely no information on the geology was available. All of this leads one to wonder: does the Geological Survey of Canada ever communicate with the National Parks? The Geological Association of Canada and the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists might also take some action to fill the present information vacuum. No doubt the GSC is planning a new edition of Baird's guides, but even so, some supplementary booklets about special topics in the parks might be planned for the new GAC guidebook series. The CSPG has just announced publication of its new Geological Highways Map of Alberta, and hopefully this will be widely sold to the public as well as to professional geologists. And how about if someone presented each of the Park's information centres with a mounted geological map of the area?

G. V. Middleton