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THE ROOSEVELT CAMPOBELLO INTERNATIONAL PARK COMMISSION

Although not an event of world-shaking importance, the creation in 1964 of the Roosevelt Campobello International Park most certainly was a significant milestone in the evolutionary growth of Canadian-American friendship and goodwill. During the preceding half century numerous bridges, monuments and markers along the "unguarded boundary" had been established and dedicated to the peace and friendship ideal. More significantly still, in 1932 two "peace parks" had been created: (1) the International Peace Garden, on the border between Manitoba and North Dakota, consisting of 1300 acres on the Canadian side and 900 on the American side and (2) the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, between Alberta and Montana, a vast area of 1,122,481 acres—140,800 in Canada and 981,681 in the United States.¹ Although the opening of each of these parks was hailed as a remarkable demonstration of amity and friendship—which indeed was true—neither in reality is an international park. Each country is responsible for the administration and financial upkeep of that portion of each park lying within its own boundaries. In sharp contrast, the Roosevelt Campobello International Park is truly "international". It is owned by the people of the two countries and is administered in their name by a joint Canadian-American commission.

Who first had the imaginative thought of converting the former Roosevelt property on Campobello Island into an international park it, obviously, is impossible to say with any certainty. What can be affirmed, however, is that such a project first became a real possibility in the spring of 1963 when Dr. Armand Hammer, one of the owners, called R.A. Tweedie, Director of the New Brunswick Travel Bureau, to say that he proposed to offer the estate as a gift to the United States

and Canada.² The idea, of course, was one that might have occurred to any public-spirited person interested, at one and the same time, in honoring a former great President and in strengthening Canadian-American relations. The property, consisting in 1964 of 15 acres of land, a 23-room colonial home and outbuildings located on Campobello off the coast of Maine in the Bay of Fundy, had been the summer home of the Roosevelt family. In the waters of the Bay, Franklin D. Roosevelt had spent many days of his boyhood swimming, sailing and fishing. It was while living at Campobello that he had been stricken with polio and had started his fight back to a life of great activity and distinction. The home was sold in 1952 to Victor, Armand and Harry Hammer, friends of the Roosevelt family. In 1957 it was put up for sale. Despite the modest asking price of \$75,000—for the house, furnishings and land—it did not sell. Tweedie, Dalton Camp, Hugh John Flemming and other Canadians recommended that the Diefenbaker Government buy the property and set it aside as a National Site. Although Prime Minister Diefenbaker indicated much interest in the proposal, his Government decided not to make the purchase, principally, it would seem, because the Historic Sites and Monuments Board did not favor the acquisition of a building which was not “of distinctively Canadian interest”.³

Largely, no doubt, because of Canadian failure to act, from late in 1959 Governor Clinton A. Clauson and Senator Edmund S. Muskie of Maine and other admirers of the former President urged the American Government to purchase and set aside the estate “as a memorial to President Roosevelt and as a symbol of international friendship”. But at first the National Park Service indicated no special interest in the proposal. With, however, the inauguration of John F. Kennedy as President, the project gained an influential champion. He not only directed the Interior Department to study the proposal but also—following the opening of a bridge between the Island and Leduc, Maine—publicly announced his support of a memorial.⁴ Shortly thereafter Dr. Hammer wrote to Senator Muskie and Congressman Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., offering the estate as a gift to the United States. When no reply was promptly forthcoming, Dr. Hammer, as indicated above, called Mr. Tweedie to say that he was prepared to donate it to both countries and asked him to advise the New Brunswick Government of this fact. At the same time, he suggested that the

provincial authorities approach Ottawa at once with respect to the proffered gift.⁵ Both suggestions were promptly implemented, but the preliminaries were not yet over. During the Hyannis Port conversations of 1963 President Kennedy suggested that the estate be converted into an international memorial park; Prime Minister Pearson readily agreed; and Kennedy phoned Dr. Hammer in California to confirm the gift and the acceptance by the two Governments.⁶

The Hammer gift, though most attractive, posed some difficult problems. One was to get the project formally and legally approved by the New Brunswick Government, within whose boundaries the Island is located. A second was to obtain, if possible, exemption for the property from all taxation. A third was to determine how the Park was to be used and how it was to be administered. After months of negotiations between officials of the two National Governments, in close consultation with the New Brunswick authorities,⁷ an agreement was reached, January 22, 1964, providing for the official acceptance of the property and its establishment as the Roosevelt Compobello International Park, conditional upon the enactment in each country of implementation legislation.⁸

The agreement called for the establishment of a joint Roosevelt Campobello International Park Commission with three main functions: (1) to accept title to the former Roosevelt estate, (2) to take the necessary steps to restore the Roosevelt home, and (3) to administer the Park as a memorial to the former President. The Commission was to have a juridical personality and all powers and capacity necessary or appropriate for the purpose of performing its functions, including, but not by way of limitation, the capacity to acquire and dispose of personal and real property, to enter into contracts, to sue and be sued, either in Canada or in the United States, to appoint a staff, to accept donations or bequests, to grant concessions, to charge admission fees and to adopt such rules of procedure as it deemed desirable.

The Commission was to consist of six members, three appointed by the Government of Canada and three by the Government of the United States. One of the Canadian members was to be nominated by the Government of New Brunswick and one of the American members by the Government of Maine. The Commission's Chairman and Vice-Chairman were to hold office for a term of two years, in such a manner that members of the same nationality did not simultaneously serve as

Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The chairmanship was to alternate between members of Canadian nationality and of American nationality. A quorum was to consist of at least four members or their alternates, including always two from Canada and two from the United States. The affirmative vote of at least two Canadian and two American members or their alternates would be required for Commission decisions. The Commission was authorized to employ both Canadian and American citizens and, pursuant to arrangements with competent agencies of the two Governments, to obtain, without reimbursement, such services as it might request for the orderly development, maintenance and operation of the Park. It was to maintain insurance, hold at least one annual meeting, make an annual report to the two Governments and permit inspection of its records by the accounting agencies of both Governments.

All property of the Commission was to be exempt from attachment, execution, or other processes for satisfaction of claims, debts or judgements. Equally significantly, the agreement affirmed:

The Commission shall not be subject to Federal, State, Provincial or local taxation in the United States or Canada on any real or personal property held by it or on any gift, bequest or devise to it of any personal or real property, or on its income, whether from Governmental appropriations, admission fees, concessions or donations. All personal property imported or introduced into Canada by the Commission for use in connection with the Park shall be free from customs duties. Further consideration shall be given to granting exemption from other taxes the imposition of which would be inconsistent with the functioning of the Commission.

The two National Governments were to share equally the costs of developing the Park and the annual cost of its operation and maintenance and were to divide equally any revenues derived from admission fees or concession operations of the Commission. Other funds received by the Commission might be used to further its purpose in accordance with the agreement. The Commission was to submit annually to the Canadian and American Governments a budget covering total anticipated expenditures and was to conduct its operations in accordance with the budget as approved by the two Governments. The Commissioners were to receive no monetary remuneration, but might be paid reasonable per diem and travel expenses.⁹

Within less than six months from the date of the signing of the agreement, the legislature of New Brunswick, the Canadian Parliament

and the American Congress had each enacted the legislation needed to implement those provisions of the accord falling within its respective jurisdiction.¹⁰ On August 13, 1964, the two Governments announced the names of the six Commissioners, i.e., for the United States, Edmund S. Muskie, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., and Sumner Pike; for Canada, D. Leo Dolan, R.A. Tweedie and Murray Johnston. One week later, Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson, Mrs. Lester B. Pearson, Senator Muskie and Mr. Roosevelt participated in ceremonies dedicating the Park.¹¹ By the middle of May, when the Park opened for its first season, the Commission had appointed an Executive Secretary, a part-time Secretary-Treasurer, and a Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds and had authorized the hiring of additional staff for the summer season.

During that first season a total of 18,361 people signed the visitors' register. Since that time, aside from the summer of 1967, the number of visitors has consistently registered a steady annual increase—reaching a total of more than 123,000 in 1972.¹² This increase has, no doubt, been due in part to the practice introduced in 1967 of keeping the Park open until well into October, rather than closing it the middle of September, as had been done previously. But more important, it is reasonable to assume, has been the favorable publicity the Park has received and the enlargements and improvements that have been effected under the Commission's authorization. These, to mention only the more important, have included repairs to the Roosevelt house; landscaping of the grounds; the construction of parking areas, picnic tables, shelters and new roads and trails; the erection of a large Visitors' Centre; the development of an audio-visual program; and the expansion of the Park by the end of 1969 from the original Roosevelt cottage and 15 acres of land to a complex of six buildings and more than 2700 acres.

The three Americans appointed to the Commission in 1964 are still serving (as of late 1973). By contrast, of the original three Canadian Commissioners, only Tweedie is still a member. Johnston resigned early in 1965 to become Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds and was succeeded by David Walker, who has served continuously since March 1965. Dolan died in June 1966. Since that time the third Canadian position has been filled successively by Senator Alan Macnaughton, who resigned in July 1970, and by the present incumbent, Senator H. Robichaud, now Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick.

In recent years most of the administrative duties have been handled by the Chairman of the Commission, a position held by Muskie in 1964-1965; by Dolan for a few months in 1966; by Macnaughton for the remainder of 1966 and all of 1967; by Muskie in 1968 and 1969; by Macnaughton for the first six months of 1970; by Walker from July 1, 1970 through 1971; and Muskie since January 1, 1972.

From the outset each Government has named three alternate members. The alternates have been invited to all Commission meetings and have taken an active part in the discussion and in the making of decisions.

Generally the Commission meets three times annually--the favored meeting places being Campobello Island, Washington and Ottawa. In 1966 four regular meetings were held; in 1969 a special meeting was convened to fill a staff vacancy.

The preparation of the agenda is very much a collective responsibility. The usual practice is for the Executive Secretary to obtain suggestions from the Manager and the Commissioners; after which he prepares a tentative agenda and transmits it to the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman, who settle on a manageable number of items. Then, a few weeks in advance of the meeting, the Executive Secretary sends each Commissioner a copy of the agenda and any work papers that he may have assembled.

An important agenda item at the last meeting of each year is always the budget for the following year. Most of the preliminary budget work is done by the Park Manager. He normally discusses budget questions with a staff official from the Auditor General's office in Ottawa, as well as with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Commission. Then he prepares estimates of expenses and expected appropriations and mails out copies to each Commissioner some weeks in advance of the meeting. The estimates generally are approved as presented with only minor changes.¹³

Indeed, even though a number of matters of special significance and potential difficulty have been dealt with by the Commission, all of them have been disposed of without rancor or the engendering of nationalistic controversies. Furthermore, according to Commissioner Walker, the American members do not attempt to throw their weight around:

We in Canada often feel that the United States rides roughshod over us. In the affairs of the Commission there has never been the smallest sign of that from the American members...We agree quite often; we disagree quite often; but as individuals, not as delegates from one country or the other.¹⁴

As a matter of fact, with respect to at least one noteworthy issue the Commissioners presented a united front in opposing the position of an interested government. The issue was whether Canada Seafoods Limited should or should not be permitted to construct a fish reduction plant near Head Harbour, an area with magnificent scenery and great potentiality for tourism, some eight to ten miles from the Park. The project, promoted by the New Brunswick Development Corporation, had received substantial monetary grants from the Provincial Government. The Commissioners, fearing that such a development would have serious adverse effects on the use and future development of the Park and Island, travelled to Fredericton to urge that the plant not be constructed. Their urgings, however, were in vain. The provincial authorities refused to reverse their decision. The plant was built, but the company soon went bankrupt. The Development Corporation provided additional funds, but the company again went bankrupt. Recently Head Harbour property has been taken over by Matuna Fisheries of Campobello, which uses the building for the storage of fishing gear. Whether the project of a fish reduction plant will be revived no one can say with certainty, but the firm stand taken by the Commissioners and the increasing preoccupation of the New Brunswick Government with the promotion of tourism cause one to suspect that the project has been permanently abandoned.¹⁵

One reason for the successful operation of the Commission has undoubtedly been the generally helpful attitude of the interested Governments. Thus in 1970 the New Brunswick Government proposed zoning regulations for that portion of the island contiguous to the Park which, after having been reviewed by the Commission, were put into effect.¹⁶ The two National Governments have not only consistently appropriated the funds requested by the Commission but have aided it in other ways, as, for example, in the spring of 1968 when the United States National Park Service and the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development made a survey of the environment and facilities of the Park and submitted a report for its long-range development.¹⁷ Also important has been the competent staff—during

the summer months generally numbering about two dozen persons—that the Executive Secretary has recruited and the Manager has effectively supervised. But possibly most important of all have been the time, energy and intelligence that the Commissioners—particularly the successive Chairmen—and the Alternate Commissioners have devoted to their duties. Without the incentive of monetary reward, they have labored long and diligently to make the Park an ever more attractive and useful facility.

One proposal that the Commissioners recently have had under review has been to make the Park facilities available to national and international groups for seminars and conferences. Currently the Commission has accommodations for about 35 people; by the summer of 1974 it expects to have accommodations for between 45 and 50. A second proposal is to prepare a brochure of the botanical attractions of the Island, which are said to be unique; a third is to build new roadways; and a fourth is to encourage the residents of the Island to open up tourist facilities and to take other actions to help themselves economically. Regardless of what new projects are undertaken, or what administrative procedures are introduced, the binationally operated Park has already become both “a demonstration of cooperation among nations” and “a vital and growing symbol of friendship between the peoples of Canada and the United States of America.”¹⁸ It may well point the way to other even more extensive projects of Canadian-American cooperation.

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FOOTNOTES

- 1 See Frank C. Bray, “Play Bridges National Frontiers,” *The Rotarian*, 45 (July 1934), 16-17, 48; Robert J.C. Stead, “Million Acres of Goodwill,” *The Rotarian*, 52 (March 1938), 40-42.
- 2 Robert A. Tweedie to Armand Hammer, Feb. 19, 1973 and Hammer to Tweedie, March 26, 1973 (R.A. Tweedie Papers, Fredericton, N.B.).
- 3 Alvin Hamilton to R.A. Tweedie, Oct. 8, 1957 (R.A. Tweedie Papers).
- 4 “Report to Maine,” Senator Edmund Muskie, *Houlton (Me.) Pioneer Times*, July 16, 1964.
- 5 Tweedie to Hammer, Feb. 19, 1973 (Tweedie Papers).
- 6 Senator Muskie, Sen. Rept. No. 1097, 88th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1964), pp. 11-12; *New York Times*, May 12, 1963.
- 7 See the statement of Hon. H.J. Robichaud, *House of Commons Debates*, June 22, 1964, V. 4551-52.

- 8 The agreement, effected by an exchange of notes, entered into force August 14, 1964. See TIAS 5651; 1964 CTS 17.
- 9 In practice no per diem payments have ever been made—merely payments for “out of pocket” expenses.
- 10 See Stat. N.B. 1964, c. 11; 13 Eliz. 2, c. 19; 78 Stat. 299.
- 11 See *Selected U.S. and Joint Documentation on Canada-United States Affairs*, Jan. 1963 - Sept. 1964 (U.S. Information Service, U.S. Embassy, Ottawa), pp. 122-25.
- 12 The statistics were supplied by Commissioner Tweedie, November, 1972.
- 13 Interviews with Miss Jane Fenderson, Dec. 1970, and Commissioner Walker, Sept. 25, 1971.
- 14 David Walker, “Muskie—The Man I Know,” *The Atlantic Advocate* 62 (March 1972), p. 13.
- 15 Data for this paragraph was obtained largely from interviews and from the *Fourth Annual Report of the Roosevelt Campobello International Park Commission*, March 31, 1968, pp. 1-2.
- 16 *Sixth Annual Report*, p. 2; interview with Miss Fenderson, Dec. 1970.
- 17 See *Fourth Report*, pp. 2-3 and *Fifth Report*, pp. 1-2.
- 18 The first quotation is from the remarks of Senator Muskie and the second from those of Senator Alan A. Macnaughton made in July 1967, at the ceremonies opening the Visitor's Center. See *Canadian-American Relations 1867-1967* (U.S. Information Service, U.S. Embassy, Ottawa, 1967), III, 58-59.