



Robert G. Smith, Publisher

It's time we took tourism seriously

As we put this issue to bed we were struck by the wide choice of holiday destinations and exciting holiday activities available to Canadians compared to a decade ago. Canadian ski resorts have finally begun to respond to the boom in cross country skiing now that there are over 1,000,000 Canadian cross country enthusiasts.

What has happened in skiing is pretty well characteristic of the entire tourist industry. Millions are spent on the glamour end while the mass market languishes waiting for development. For example, there has been a boom in winter beach resort building in North America and Europe. More governments are getting into the resort development business in cooperation with international airlines and multinational corporations, many of whom are in the resort business for the first time. Tourist departments of many countries are supervising the planning and building of major resort complexes. Whereas it used to take years, even decades, to develop an international resort, most planners think in terms of months. Jet airports, highways, high rise hotels, condominiums, shops and restaurants mushroom at remote beach sites. The developers are faced with the task of training whole towns in the business. Local people often resent the complete uprooting of their lives in order to cater to a flood of foreign visitors.

An example of how quickly things can go wrong despite the declared in-

tentions of government may be found in Jamaica. Canadian visitors have been badgered by Jamaicans. The government ran an advertising campaign to get people to deal more politely with tourists. However, it takes more than a little advertising to change fundamental attitudes.

Abuse of the tourist business can be more subtle. Many resort operators believe in charging all the traffic will bear. Florida got a bad name for high prices a few years ago which cost them considerable business. Several Caribbean countries are moving in the same direction. If something isn't done to discourage price gouging, the results of years of careful promotion can go down the tubes in a few months.

Whether or not the developer says he is building for the mass market, inflation has escalated costs putting the great new resort complexes out of reach of the majority of Canadians. Rising prices are clearly against the best interest of the industry. Ever since the rapid growth of the charter market in Canada in the sixties it should be clear that mass market merchandising is the key to future industry growth. The IATA airlines finally gave up and introduced low group inclusive tour fares. Since then group travel has become big business in North America and Europe. For example, an estimated 9,000 Swedes will visit Portugal this year on group travel plans.

If the mass market is to continue to develop, everyone in tourism must get together to co-ordinate low cost holidays and merchandise them to consumers. This includes governments, educational institutions, transportation companies, hotels and motels and customs and immigration people.

If there is any doubt as to whether or not this is a worthy area for investment, an examination of the figures should dispel it. Tourism has grown at a rapid pace over the past 15 years. The World Tourism Organization reports that tourist spending rose from \$2.1 billion to \$29 billion between 1950 and 1974. In the latter year, Canada ranked fourth in the world in total per capita expenditures. It's too important a business to manage in a haphazard manner. □

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