

Rural Development

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Positive and unequivocal.

Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West):—positive and unequivocal, as my colleague says, which I see the minister is assenting to by the motions of his head, I am quite prepared to withdraw the amendment on that understanding.

● (7:20 p.m.)

The Deputy Chairman: Does the committee give its unanimous consent to the hon. member for Middlesex West to withdraw his amendment?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Amendment (Mr. Thomas, Middlesex West) withdrawn.

Mr. Herridge: Mr. Chairman, I am sure we all appreciate the minister's explanation which resulted in the amendment's being withdrawn, allowing the hon. member for Kootenay West to continue his remarks.

The situation I refer to is rather unusual. It has created a very difficult problem for a good number of people, to such an extent that various members of all parties from the Arrow lakes region have joined together in support of the committee which presented its views to the minister in British Columbia and the B.C. Hydro and Power Authority. These members represent all the parties in this house, with the exception of the Creditistes, and that party does not exist out there.

The problem which has been created is of a general nature, and everyone who is in the know realizes that the expenditures necessary are far in excess of the money received by the government of British Columbia to build the dams I mentioned. The tendency is to be conservative in making compensation for properties involved. This compensation is far less than the replacement value of the lands lost. These people are not given enough money to clear an equivalent area because the tendency has been to restrict the amount of compensation to the actual cost of purchasing land. Consequently the amount of money spent for new works, replacement of fish and wildlife areas is limited.

At the very least there is a difficult problem in communities in the Arrow lakes region, and I refer particularly to the development of new communities. Certain individuals have accepted insufficient amounts of money, as compensation for the loss of ranches or other properties, to clear similar

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acreage under present cost conditions. Evaluations have been very low as compared to this clearing cost.

The B.C. Hydro and Power Authority has put up as much as \$900 per acre for clearing replacement land in the Arrow lakes, Arrow river and Duncan lake areas. In spite of that fact, the suggestion has been made that the cost of clearing agricultural land which has been taken over is in the neighbourhood of \$30 per acre. This is a most unusual circumstance.

Mr. Nielsen: It is a most unusual statistic.

Mr. Herridge: It is a most unusual statistic, but it is one quoted by the hon. member for Kootenay West, and you know his reputation.

In any event, there are certain small communities and districts which will have to face difficult problems. I bring this fact to the attention of the minister because there is a certain overlapping. Theoretically and sentimentally the people involved must look to the B.C. Hydro and Power Authority and the government of British Columbia for a solution, but I know very well there will be many unsolved problems.

Under these circumstances I hope the minister and his officials will discuss the situation with the government of British Columbia in an attempt to see whether, under certain circumstances, new communities can be established in new areas with assistance in clearing the land for farming and ranching. I trust the minister will comment in this regard because the problem has to be faced by quite a number of people who have spent many years of their lives developing the properties they have lost or will lose.

Mr. Sauv : Mr. Chairman, certainly the officials of the department will meet with the officials of the government of British Columbia to examine the situation to see whether anything can be done under this act. In view of the definitions and the aims of this measure, perhaps the province of British Columbia can arrive at some special agreement whereby assistance can be provided through the ARDA administration.

[Translation]

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Chairman, section 5, (a), states:

For the purposes of this Act, a comprehensive rural development program is a program, consisting of several development projects—

Perhaps the minister should give some region as an example, so as to see whether, say,