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A NEW CONCEPTION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA

On November 3, Mr. Maurice Sauvé, the Minister of Forestry, made the following speech to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture at Toronto:

The Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act has now been in effect for more than three years. The first General ARDA agreement between the Federal Government and each province was signed in the fall of 1962. This agreement interpreted the rather general ARDA legislation, and set up the working arrangements that would govern ARDA policy and programmes until April of 1965. In January of 1963, the programme began to get under way. Since that time, several hundred individual projects have been initiated and it is now possible to see a little more clearly the shape of the rural problem, and to see our successes and failures with a little perspective.

Many farm groups — the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture in particular — have taken a keen and active interest in rural development problems and in the ARDA programme. The health of a programme like ARDA depends on non-governmental organizations constantly examining, evaluating and taking an active part. I am very pleased, therefore, to have the opportunity of discussing with you, as frankly as possible, the experience with the ARDA programme during its pilot stage of development.

RURAL INCOME SITUATION

I will not occupy your time with detailed statistics on rural income levels. You have all seen areas where poverty exists, and some of you have seen

areas where poverty is the norm. However, it may be useful to describe briefly the rural income situation using statistical terms. There are about 436,000 ordinary farms in Canada. 254,000 of these are capitalized at less than \$24,950. 177,000 farms provide their operators with less than \$2,500 gross income per year. More than half of these low-income farmers worked less than one month per year at off-farm work. Now, of course, the rural problem is not merely the farm problem. There are nearly 300,000 rural non-farmers — heads of families — who earn less than \$3,000 a year. If we can reasonably describe people at these income levels as being "low-income families", then there are, in rural Canada, about 457,000 low-income families.

Up to the present time, nearly 600 ARDA projects have been approved involving a Federal Government commitment of over \$20 million. The provinces are contributing about the same amount. This is a large accomplishment, but of course it has not solved the basic problems in most rural areas which suffer from low incomes and lack of opportunity.

You are all, I am sure, quite familiar with the general intention of the ARDA legislation — which is to enable joint federal-provincial programmes of alternate land use, soil and water conservation, and rural development, to provide increased income and employment opportunities for rural people. The general concept of the ARDA programme has been ably set forth by the Minister who introduced the ARDA legislation, the Honourable Alvin Hamilton. The legislation and the policy or philosophy which have grown around it are, in my opinion, among

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