

## CANADA'S RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Addressing a recent meeting in Regina, on Canada's rural problems, Forestry Minister Maurice Sauvé said he intended to speak "not of rural poverty but of the growth in the rural development programme throughout Canada, and of the opportunities this programme offers - not only to the poor, but the whole of our society..."

A partial text of Mr. Sauvé's speech follows:

...Of course, not all rural areas in Canada are in great need of special development assistance. There are extensive rural areas in which agriculture is relatively prosperous, where rural incomes and living standards are good, and where natural resources are well managed. In these areas the people have been able to adjust to the times and take full advantage of the great technological changes of the last three decades. Much of your vast wheat-growing area of the southern prairies has adjusted very well to the changing times. The adjustment was far from painless. I need remind nobody here of the hardships and heartaches of the 1930s when much of the agricultural adjustment was forced upon you by severe economic conditions combined with the great drought. But, by and large, the adjustment in farm size and farming methods has taken place, and the continuing problems are those of commercial agriculture - efficient production and effective marketing.

While these adjustments in land use and farming methods were largely brought about by the labour enterprise of your rural people, the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act...has provided very substantial assistance. The PFRA bought lands most susceptible to drought, gave assistance in the rehabilitation of the displaced owners, and developed pastures for the remaining community. This was a truly great programme of assistance for water supply, community pastures, soil conservation measures and irrigation development. In fact, the success of this programme in the Prairie Provinces convinced people across Canada that government assistance programmes properly designed and carried out, could be of tremendous benefit in all rural areas undergoing basic changes and in need of economic development.

### ARDA

The Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act, known widely as ARDA, was introduced to Parliament, by the Honourable Alvin Hamilton in 1961. ARDA was recognized as an important legislative tool for tackling many of the manifest problems that still existed in rural areas and which were being steadily aggravated by the rapidly changing economic and social life of Canada....

The rural problems to be solved are very complex, and it was clearly the intent of the Act to seek fundamental solutions and not temporary relief measures. It was obviously necessary to avoid too much haste in development programmes. Early action could be taken on the more obvious problems, but research, investigations and pilot projects were needed for long-term solutions of the more complex and deep-seated problems.

This is what has been done during the first few years of the ARDA programme. In 1962, the first set of agreements under the Act were signed between the federal and provincial governments. They were to run for a trial period of two and a half years. They were designed in very general terms, to allow for exploration of various alternative programmes and for adequate research and investigation during this initial period.

All the provinces of Canada entered into the first general agreement with the Federal Government. Each province started to develop programmes aimed at its particular needs. Understandably, new approaches to the more complex problems must be developed very carefully, and the people who are directly affected by these programmes must have a full part in their development. Social, economic and physical research into the rural problems was greatly accelerated and communities were involved in rural development planning in many areas. However, the development projects undertaken during this first stage of ARDA were very largely expansions of land use and soil and water conservation programmes in the provinces....

During the period of the first general agreement, the federal and provincial governments gained much experience and knowledge of the real tasks that must be tackled if the rural development programme is to have a major effect in assisting all rural people attain the full benefits of the developing Canadian economy.

There has been close contact with the people in low-income rural areas. There has been research. The experience of other countries of the western world has been studied. It became abundantly clear that the problems of low income in extensive areas of rural Canada could not be solved by any single type of programme. Solution of the problem does not necessarily lie in programmes of agricultural development, particularly in areas where soils are poor or the climate unfavourable. Equally, programmes of resource development, other than agriculture, clearly do not offer opportunities of full and productive employment for all our rural people. Nor can we expect all rural areas to be able to attract and support industries that will offer well paying jobs to all the inhabitants of these areas.

### RURAL FUNDAMENTALISM BANKRUPT

There is no doubt that the solutions to rural development and adjustment problems must be sought within the overall context of national and regional economic and social development. We must be willing to abandon the approach of rural fundamentalists. When rural life which holds that, if the problems of agricultural production and marketing can be solved, the problems of the whole rural population will automatically disappear. All our studies show that rural poverty can exist in provinces which have a generally healthy agricultural economy. In fact, as commercial farming becomes more and more efficient, the population which is not directly engaged in commercial agriculture is put in an increasingly difficult position. If they are unable