

Rural Development

At the provincial and federal levels of government co-operation is essential among the numerous agencies which have a role to play in the comprehensive development program, and I am most pleased to note that co-operation among the various government agencies is improving constantly as each agency more clearly perceives its role and the role of other agencies. I may state my conviction that one of ARDA's most significant contributions to rural development has been that ARDA has provided a sort of reference point for the planning of many private and public agencies. This has resulted in a breadth of view and a degree of co-operation which had previously been in some degree lacking.

[Translation]

In Quebec, the pilot-area for ARDA development extends east of Rivière-du-Loup along the south shore of the St. Lawrence. It includes the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands. Its 16,000 square mile territory offers limited resources to the 325,000 inhabitants scattered in some 250 communities located mostly along the coast.

The area is far less urbanized than most of the other parts of the country. In 1961, its agricultural population was 83,000 and the non-agricultural rural population numbered 130,000. Approximately 38 per cent of the active population found employment in the lumber industry, agriculture, fishing or mining, that proportion being two and a half times greater than the figure for Quebec as a whole. Only 17 per cent worked in secondary industries, as compared with 28 per cent for the whole province.

The per capita income was lower in the pilot-area than in the rest of the province, namely \$700 per annum as compared to \$1,206 per annum. Almost a third of all income of any kind came from transfers from the federal or the provincial governments. These payments, totalling \$83 million, equalled the total value of goods manufactured in the area. Unemployment often reached up to 35 per cent of the population during six months of the year.

It was obvious that such a situation cannot be tolerated in an affluent society. Accordingly, the Quebec government set up in the area, thanks to considerable financial assistance from the federal government, a research and social stimulation program under the terms of ARDA.

As a result of intensive work over a period of three years, the Quebec government is now able to launch a vast overall program of rural readaptation and development.

These three years of work clearly show that the inhabitants of the region can react most dynamically when the occasion arises. During the winter of 1964-65, 5,000 of them took courses to qualify for grades 7, 8 and 9.

In view of this, it would be intolerable to allow this enormous economic and social waste to continue through a laissez-faire attitude on the part of the government. The fund for rural economic development, which is to be established by Bill No. C-151, now before the house, is the answer of the federal government to this sort of situation. I believe the Quebec government will soon present a detailed plan which will help us to make proper use of the fund in this vast pilot-area suffering from such economic imbalance.

[English]

To conclude the examples of regions in which the fund is applicable, I will turn to the ARDA pilot region in New Brunswick. This region, located south of the Bay of Chaleur, comprises 3,350 square miles and in 1961 had a population of 106,000. A little more than three-quarters of the people are Acadians. This region differs from most other parts of Canada in that its rural non-farm population is rising. While the rural non-farm population of Canada as a whole dropped to 19 per cent during the 1950's, the rural non-farm population in this region rose from 46 per cent in 1951 to 61 per cent in 1961. In Canada as a whole, rural farm and rural non-farm people represent 30 per cent of the total population. In this region they represent 70 per cent. The income per family is about one third of the Canadian average. Unemployment varies from 6 per cent in summer to 30 per cent in winter.

● (4:00 p.m.)

The educational situation reflects the economic situation. In 1961, 15 per cent of the labour force of the area had no schooling. In Canada as a whole the figure is 5 per cent. Less than one third of the whole labour force had achieved a grade four education. Less than one third of the young people of 15 to 19 years were in school. One quarter of the teachers of the region have not gone beyond grade nine. I hope that hon. members will consider this last statement carefully. Imagine how an intelligent, eager child must surely and quickly lapse into frustration and