

SUMMARY

This report is a summary of the briefs presented to the Special Committee of the Senate on Land Use in Canada during the last session of Parliament. The objective of the Committee was to stimulate and promote the initiative and interest of administrators and local groups in the ARDA program, to get an insight into the progress and direction of economic development proposals in the provinces, and to study the critical role of rural extension and the organization of local area committees in the furtherance of this program. The briefs were directed to this end. Some of the highlights of the proceedings are noted here.

Preliminary plans and proposals under the ARDA program were presented to the Committee. Cost-sharing federal-provincial projects envisaged putting some rural lands to more productive use as well as soil and water conservation programs and general rural economic development. These are being incorporated into a three-year federal policy program. Some of the projects are viewed as pilot.

Witnesses from two provinces that have made a start on rural development programs stressed the need for detailed research and study in long-range planning; vocational agricultural training and training to up-grade the skills of farm people for off-farm jobs; development of soil and water resources through ARDA to facilitate efficient agricultural production and rural industrialization; and switching of submarginal cropland to more appropriate alternative uses such as grazing, forestry and recreation. The organization of local area committees was viewed as essential for sustained economic development of rural resources.

The availability of more farm credit and more technical information including farm business management for farmers was urged to enable the efficient operation of economic units. To this end a rural development fund, which would especially apply in high risk marginal areas, was proposed by a rural settlement society.

The role of the extension service and the individual extension worker was viewed as critical to the success of the ARDA program. It was believed that a new kind of rural development extension agent with a background in agriculture, trained in organization of community activities and group dynamics, ability to motivate and stimulate local leadership and action was needed. He should be backed by specialists with technical knowledge of resource in agriculture and other industries to help rural residents organize and carry out the kinds of improvement projects which they desire.