

*Agricultural Rehabilitation Act*

economic adjustment in the face of rapid technological changes, and the land conservation ideal—the idea of obtaining the maximum production from our lands, of building a sound relationship between people and the land.

It is primarily that second motivation that I would hope we can get going with our Indian bands and our Indian reserves across the country. Later on, Mr. Davidson said this—and this is the technical reason, if you want to call it that, for the introduction of this amendment:

Let me emphasize, then, that except for research, the federal government under ARDA can do nothing strictly on its own—only in agreement with the provinces. Programs can be undertaken only if the provinces take the initiative with us and join us. The program is in keeping with our co-operative federalism system of government. This is a vital point. And it makes it necessary for me to talk mostly in generalities about ARDA yet, not only because the program is at an early stage but also because although we have had in the past one and a half months discussions with all the provinces, we have not yet signed any agreements with the provinces.

As a matter of fact, agreements have now been signed with the province of Ontario. Now, the emphasis, as the director says, is that the federal government enables agreements to be entered into with the provinces. I feel that this amendment will enable the band councils to enter into agreements with the federal government and take advantage of this particular fund that may be available, and in certain areas and locations they will be able to get an ARDA program going that will integrate completely with the reserves. I also hope that in areas where reserves are a part of a larger conservation whole, they will be able to fit in with the federal-provincial programs in a joint way.

As I said, this is a rather small amendment that I am asking, but it seems to me it is a sensible one. It will certainly extend the philosophy and objectives of this act in a worth-while way. Now, to give some specific examples from my own part of the country, I may say that like a few other members in this house, I have a large number of Indians in my riding. I think the figure is somewhere over 6,000, probably around 7,000. Many of them are in poor economic circumstances. I know their economic standard is much below the average of the rest of the country and the rest of the area. These people, because of their background, are talented mostly in relation to the bush and to all the activities that relate to the bush such as fishing, hunting, cutting trees, park work and things like that.

One of the sad things, when we look at the economic opportunities for them, is the realization of the difficulty we have in getting them to fit into our natural economic units such as pulp and paper companies, and the

[Mr. Fisher.]

mines that are in our area. One of the great hopes is that they can find greater opportunities in the fields where they have skills and talents on their own initiative, through their own band councils. Mr. Davidson in this speech to which I referred says:

I am sure our forest industry needs and wants for tree production more lands with fair soil, under our best climatic conditions, and accessible to mills and markets. Is it possible that it would pay to invest intensively in forest management on these lands, and that they would then produce tree fibre at very competitive prices? I think this is an important national resources question—do these lands warrant large scale public and private investment in very intensive forest management? I think they may and I regard as one of the first research contributions of ARDA, the stimulation of economic and physical research on this question.

I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, from my knowledge of forestry that the answer that comes from reserves is going to be yes, and I can give an example of one Indian reserve at Gull bay at the west side of lake Nipigon where quite recently we have been trying to find timber cutting for the band, but because of fire in recent years there is not a decent bit of timber left on their own reserve, or within 20 miles of it. There are approximately 300 to 325 people on that reserve, of which about 100 are able-bodied men ready and willing to work. At the moment, however, the unemployment level on that reserve is somewhere between 75 per cent and 80 per cent, on a yearly average.

I could conceive of that band entering into an agreement under the ARDA program and working out a conservation project which would mean that the whole reserve would come alive again in terms of reforestation or perhaps intensification of tree farming to fit into the Christmas tree market, and the whole thing tied into development along the shore of lake Nipigon.

This is the view I have of ARDA and I think it is worth examination. I believe the hon. member for Fort William can offer another example in connection with the Indian band in his riding on the reservation that nestles along the slopes of mount McKay, where economic opportunity is badly needed. This is an area very well suited for tourist development but that development must be tied in with reforestation and other conservation programs in order to give the city of Fort William and those Indians a tremendous economic asset.

Here again a wonderful role could be played by band councils entering into agreements under ARDA. One may ask why I emphasize the band council, and why not just assume that the department of Indian affairs can go ahead and make some kind of arrangement either with the provincial or