

A number of provinces have proposed areas for pilot area studies, although no agreements—and I should have pointed this out earlier—have been signed with the provinces with respect to any of these projects. These are simply proposals from them for consideration with the expectation that they will lead to agreements. As I have already said, a number of provinces have suggested rural development pilot areas which would be very intensively studied, and in which local committees would be set up out of which we hope would come blueprints or proposals for the development of that particular area. The kind of studies that we have talked about that might take place in these rural development areas include studies of present land use and land capability for various purposes; studies of resource use or resource development opportunities for increasing income in the rural development area; studies of needs in the rural development area for soil and water conservation projects; rural sociology studies; studies of agricultural economics, including marketing studies, employment, labour, under-employment, and vocational training needs; and studies of off-farm employment opportunities and industrial development opportunities.

It is thought that if enough information is gathered about these factors in the rural development areas, and this information is presented to local committees in such a way that they can understand it, it would then be helpful to them in devising proposals for doing something about improving living standards and opportunities in those areas.

Once the local people have made their proposals about the kind of programs and projects they would like to see carried on in their area the idea is that through ARDA, which is partially a co-ordinating agency, programs under ARDA for better use of lands and for soil and water conservation would be applied.

And in addition to that the assistance provided by other Government programs, both provincial and federal, would be focused on that area in an endeavour to meet its local problems, and in an attempt to increase the income opportunities in that area. In other words, it is an integrated attack on the problems of local economic development.

We are quite anxious to get some of the rural development pilot studies started this year because, of course, it will take some time for the completion of the studies and then some further time before actual proposals can come out of these studies, and action taken. Enough of the provinces have now selected areas so that I think it will be possible to begin these studies this summer.

As I said earlier, we are now drawing up policy proposals for submission to the cabinet and if these policy proposals are approved we will return to the provinces and start to negotiate project agreements for implementation with some of them this year. We hope to start this summer.

I have also been concerned since I came on staff about the question of staff and organization for the ARDA program. I have drawn up a staff and organization proposal. ARDA itself will be largely, as I said earlier, a co-ordinating agency. We do not propose to have a large number of staff to carry out the program itself. We will rely largely on the existing agencies of Government, and these will be co-ordinated through people on the ARDA staff who will keep in touch with the other agencies concerned. There will be also an inter-departmental co-ordinating committee at the federal level, and we are now setting that up. This inter-departmental co-ordinating committee will operate at two levels. It will function at the deputy minister level and will meet about twice a year to consider broad policy questions, and also on a lower working level—on a senior officer level—to meet continually to consider the projects and programs which have been proposed by the provinces, to appraise them, and to give advice on the carrying out of these local area studies.