

Rural Development

with publicity, of course; it is part of the process of informing the people of the problems they face, and informing them of ways and means being considered for helping them out of their unfortunate economic circumstances. I believe this kind of publicity is good, and that it is necessary. However, I cannot escape the impression that the publicity has had another effect as well, and that is to leave the impression that it will give to groups with an over-all problem, an inadequate farm income. I cannot see that this legislation will be able to assist them. But since it is a fact that ARDA shall be carried out in conjunction and in co-operation with two levels of government, and the various departments of the government, I would hope that among other co-operation which is to be carried out between the Department of Forestry and the Department of Agriculture vis-à-vis ARDA, they would also co-operate with respect to the problem of trying to come up with a new and revised policy statement on agriculture which would, among other things, deal with the problem of farm income.

As has been said by the Minister of Agriculture, for the first time in a long time—perhaps the first time ever—we are beginning to leave the economics of surplus in agriculture and we are beginning to enter the phrase of economics of scarcity of food products. As a matter of fact, in recent days, certainly not more than two weeks ago, there was a major policy announcement from the White House to the effect that reverse United States government farm policy, particularly as it affected grain production, was now out to stimulate greater production from American farms. It seems to me that inasmuch as we are now beginning to worry about scarcity in Canada instead of surplus, now would be the time to concentrate on incomes and price policy for agriculture. Not until agricultural prices are improved considerably will we be able to hope that much of the rural poverty now existing in Canada will be erased. Only after we succeed in obtaining a more realistic and a fairer commodity pricing policy in agriculture will ARDA's task become manageable, because then they will be faced with the problem of attacking rural poverty, which stubbornly remains even after price revision and the measure of improvement it permitted.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the minister when he replies will be in a position to deal with some of these points and comments. I want to reassure him however that

while I do have some sceptical feelings to express relative to ARDA and its implementation to date, nevertheless at least in concept it is the kind of program which can be endorsed and if given sufficient moneys it will be able to do a creditable and memorable job in eradicating much of the world poverty existing in our country today.

I would restate that I feel much of this publicity about the efficacy of the program and its potential is really holding out false hope, and will continue to do so until such time as we have a revision of basic farm commodity prices and policies in this country.

• (8:10 p.m.)

[Translation]

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I shall say first to the Minister that Bill C-151, which is now before the house, is a piece of legislation which will be welcomed by all Canadians.

I should like also to mention the intellectual honesty of the minister when he said, at the beginning of his remarks, that ARDA, which was introduced in the house by the former Minister of Agriculture, the hon. member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Hamilton), had proved to be extraordinary legislation.

Indeed, ARDA which was presented by the previous government, has, I think greatly contributed up to now to the economic expansion of our rural areas. Of course, that legislation did not propose to cover all the economic sectors that are found in those rural areas; however, it has rendered a tremendous service to our farmers, our industrialists and those of our people whose income was below average.

I would say that Bill C-151, now before the house, supplements the ARDA legislation which was introduced by the former government and which was enacted by the house.

This legislation is entitled the Fund for Rural Economic Development Act. Of course, as a member from a rural area of Quebec, I must tell you that this legislation appeals to me in a very special way and that it is welcomed in our rural areas.

Through ARDA, the Department of Forestry has carried out in my area a project called Mont St. Anne, in Beaupré, on the north shore of the St. Lawrence. I must tell you that the taxpayers in that locality have greatly benefited from that undertaking.

But what I find a little disturbing in that legislation is that apparently the provincial authorities will have the choice as to pilot

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