

*Rural Development*

The comprehensive rural development plans for these areas under this act will be implemented through agreements with the provinces. These agreements, as authorized by the act, will allow the federal government to undertake directly parts of the approved comprehensive special rural development area program, or to undertake parts of one program while the province undertakes other parts, or to share the costs of projects and programs undertaken by the province.

A proposed comprehensive rural development program will involve the following steps: (a) the undertaking of the necessary studies and research to determine the main development and adjustment problems of the area, and its potential; (b) it requires the involvement of local people through the establishment of rural development committees who will take part in the planning process; (c) it then requires the preparation of comprehensive rural development plans for the area, and (d) the implementation of the projects and programs in the plan to increase income and employment and to raise standards of living for the people of the area.

The joint federal-provincial agreements under the act will set forth a general strategy to develop the area and the programs and projects which will be implemented. They will set down the role of each level of government in implementing the plan.

The kinds of development projects and programs that may be implemented are not restricted. However, those projects and programs which may be carried out by existing federal and provincial agencies will be carried out by them.

● (4:10 p.m.)

It is proposed that in those projects to be carried out by the provinces the federal cost-sharing will vary, depending on the priority allotted to the project or program in the over-all plan.

It is proposed that the projects and programs under the plan will be of the three types:

1. Projects allowed for under the general ARDA program. Moneys from the fund may be employed to increase the federal financial contribution for some of these projects under the comprehensive plans.

2. Other federal and provincial programs which will be financed in the normal on-going way.

3. Major developmental projects under the plan which are specifically required for these

areas, and the federal participation in which will be financed entirely from the fund.

The federal government will retain considerable initiative in a number of ways:

1. The federal government will participate in the research and studies.

2. Direct federal programs will be required to implement some parts of the plan.

3. The federal government will jointly participate only in those parts of the program which are believed to be in the national interest, and the priority attached to them will be expressed in the degree of federal participation.

The advisory board provided for under the act has a particularly important function. Since the plan will propose direct participation or direct action by federal agencies, and will propose joint projects which are in the fields of interest of a number of federal agencies and departments, it is essential that the officers of these agencies be actively involved at the senior level. The board will assure that interdepartmental co-ordination is achieved to implement the plans, and that a number of federal departments are actively engaged. It will help assure the required mix and balance and integration of the various programs.

No simple, single unco-ordinated program approach will prove effective. The board will not only assure co-ordination but will assure program input at a senior level in the federal administration. The active participation of the people affected will be promoted at the regional level. The act permits and provides a framework for joint federal-provincial planning and program implementation to tackle directly the difficult problems of these low income rural areas.

The effective co-ordination of the programs of a number of provincial and federal agencies and departments involves rather complex administrative and organizational problems, but we believe that this act provides a program framework within which this can be done effectively.

From what I have said hon. members can see that the fund for rural economic development is an important weapon in our arsenal against rural poverty. It is a tool which provides what has been previously missing, a method of framing comprehensive development plans for the regions of Canada which most need help. This proposal provides a vital means to an urgently necessary end. It is a