

Agricultural Rehabilitation Act

P.F.R.A. to all the agricultural areas of the prairie provinces. It is unfair to have an act such as P.F.R.A. which brings great benefits to only a certain geographical area of the country. I think that under ARDA the benefits of P.F.R.A. are going to become applicable to the agricultural areas of Canada as a whole. I think this is one of the ramifications of bringing in ARDA and is something that will be welcomed, especially by the people of Quebec and the other eastern provinces.

I have very little more to say, Mr. Speaker, because—as the hon. member for Port Arthur said—the principle of the bill is very simple. Basically, the principle is that ARDA be applied to Indian reserves. As I have said, I am wholeheartedly in accord with the sentiments and the purposes expressed by the hon. member, but it seems to me that this bill is superfluous to some extent. First of all, the money is not there in the Indian bands to vote; second, capital projects that are undertaken are now paid for 100 per cent by the federal government through the Indian affairs department; third, and I do not think this was meant in the bill, but there was some suggestion that most of these projects are restricted to Indian reserves, although most of them under ARDA are area and regional development projects, and at the present time Indian reserves can fit into those projects very well.

The provinces are taking an increasing interest in this matter. It is not only Indians, of course, who can benefit from the projects. There are the Metis, and we have a great many of them. In the province of Manitoba we have the Legasse report. One thing I have noticed as welfare payments have multiplied on Indian reserves is that the Indians are saying, "We just do not want these handouts. We want to be able to look after ourselves. Give us the opportunity to make our own livelihood". That was really the basis of what the Legasse report suggested, that the direction the government should give both provincially and federally in trying to assist the Indian and the Metis should be to make them self-sufficient and responsible. I think we should increase our efforts in this regard through the Indian affairs branch, through such people as sociologists and others who understand the attitude of the Indian, their desires and their experience, people who can give them the guidance that is necessary and the enthusiasm to partake of these programs.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that as far as this bill is concerned I am wholeheartedly in favour of the basic purpose behind it, which is to extend conservation and development programs to Indian reserves. I support that principle wholeheartedly; but I must say that I have some

misgivings about the bill itself because in essence it is asking the Indian bands to help pay the bill. Under ARDA, three different cost-sharing schemes are in operation. Towards certain projects, the federal government will pay one third of the cost. With respect to others it will pay one half or even as much as two thirds. None the less, the burden which will fall on the funds of the Indian bands no matter how small it might be, is likely to prove a definite hardship except in the case of a few reserves where the bands have substantial funds to their credit. I know that in the area from which I come and, I believe, in the area from which the hon. member comes, it would be difficult for the bands to make such contributions out of the funds which are available to them. The money which does exist could, I think, be better spent on other projects and the bands should not be burdened with this expenditure.

Mr. Hubert Badanai (Fort William): I should like to commend the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Fisher) for having introduced Bill No. C-22, which should receive the unanimous approval of this house. I express the hope that the government will allow a vote on it.

The joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian affairs met for three years, from 1959 to 1961, and heard the submissions of many Indian bands and organizations, as well as of non-Indian groups. As a result, the final report of the committee was presented in July, 1961, a report in which several specific recommendations were made. However, no recommendation was made which would enable Indians on reserves to participate in the benefits of the farm loan act or its successor, the Farm Credit Act, which, in some reserves where there is an agricultural potential, could have been of great assistance in providing work and wages for many adult Indians who find it difficult to secure jobs outside their own reserves. This bill is designed to make it possible for Indian bands to benefit from the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act.

I believe the provision of financial assistance is only part of the measures which should be taken to improve the economic life of our first citizens. It is generally recognized that they cannot be expected to follow their traditional way of life without additional consideration for their needs, having regard to the present living standards of other Canadians. The Indians are faced with the problem of making a living, as are most other citizens, and in so doing they face serious competition