

A STATEMENT ON THE AGRICULTURAL REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT ACT

Adopted by the Second Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America--Canada Section
Port Arthur, Ontario, June 23-24, 1965

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolved, That Lutheran Church in America--Canada Section express its approval of Federal-Provincial programs already undertaken under the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act and urge the fullest possible co-operation of governments at all levels towards efforts to provide opportunity for our rural poor to find an exit from poverty;

and

That Lutheran Church in America--Canada Section request the synods to call upon their congregations and their members in areas designated for rural development under ARDA to demonstrate Christian social responsibility by developing awareness of their community needs through the use of ARDA research studies and by participation in the planning and implementation of programs for the development of their areas.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For many people the affluent society is very real. What is not so obvious, but nevertheless real, is the increasing number of poor in an age of plenty. A hopeful sign is that efforts by government, voluntary agencies, and research specialists are bringing into sharp focus the dilemma of poverty in the midst of plenty.

Poverty is not new but what is new is that we now have the knowledge and resources to make a concerted attack on poverty. As forward steps, we note with approval major studies to identify the causes and extent of poverty, the efforts of governments to develop an integrated plan for social welfare in Canada, and projects by public and private agencies for the prevention of welfare problems and dependency.

As a specific example, your committee views with much favour federal legislation for rural development, namely the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act. Our interest derives from the important social role of the church in the rural community and from the fact that there is a considerable Lutheran population in some areas already designated for rural development.

The Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act enables the federal government to assist rural areas to generate positive attitudes to development, to develop and diversify their resources and to create income and employment opportunities. Effective action is contingent upon provincial government response and the application of the community development concept.

It is estimated that there are 500,000 families of rural poor. Present ad hoc measures to alleviate this vexing problem have proven inadequate. Its immensity demands broad programs of economic and social planning including federal, provincial, and local governments. Hence it is hoped that nothing in the area of federal-provincial co-operation will hinder the objectives of ARDA. Jurisdictional rights as between federal and provincial governments are not sacrosanct and are secondary to human rights.

The implementation of the objectives of ARDA is dependent upon the application of the community development process. Community development emphasizes the self-help principle and thus calls for the direct involvement of rural people identifying and tackling their problems. On the basis of research knowledge made available to them, rural people develop their own plans for improvement of their economic, social and cultural circumstances. Congregations and their members have a social responsibility to their communities and, as well, have a vital stake in the development and rehabilitation of those rural areas in which they are situated.