

final application date for new loans being next March 31 and for all loans March 31, 1977.

However, these loans are for up to 30 years, which means that the administration of the Veterans Land Act will continue well into the 21st century. To illustrate, lending under the Soldier Settlement Act of World War I ceased in 1924, but there is still one outstanding account. We know that the Veterans Land Act took into account the lessons learned in the administration of its predecessor, but changes in the national economy and in the circumstances of the individual veterans and their families ensure that public servants will be required to manage the VLA loans until they are paid out.

The other large veterans affairs program is welfare services which provides, among other things, field services for the War Veterans Allowance Board. Obviously, those services will be required as long as VVA application are received and payments are made.

Perhaps equally important are the counselling services the welfare officers provide to their clients. These men and women know the various social and philanthropic services that are available in their particular areas and they are able to advise a veteran, a widow or an orphan in need of the services that will help them to cope with that need. Sometimes they act as a co-ordinator to ensure that the different resources available are utilized to the best advantage.

Usually, too, their standing in their communities is such that other agencies accept their recommendations without question when the need is immediate. That is a great advantage to veterans and to the dependants of veterans.

How long this special service will, or should, continue is unpredictable, but as veterans and their families grow older and life becomes more complex, their need for good advice and counsel is more likely to increase than it is to decline. That need will have to be met by an organization of qualified public servants.

What these remarks boil down to, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the veterans charter provides many continuing benefits, benefits that will have to be administered for half a century or more. Obviously a point in time will be reached when a full-scale federal department cannot be justified for this purpose, but the functions will have to continue even though the administrative groups are branches of one or more other departments.

I hope these few remarks will put in perspective the outlook for veterans' benefits and will explain why it will be some time yet before the veterans affairs portfolio is likely to disappear, and several decades before the responsibilities it now looks after will have been fully discharged.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House in the name of the hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore (Mr. Grier) is one of 27 motions in his name that call for an expression of opinion on the right of parliament to see the program forecasts that are worked out by various departments of government. In no case does any one of these motions call for an examination of work done in the respective departments, but rather each of these motions relates to the principles of secrecy which the government continues to

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practice with regard to so many of its reports, papers and documents. However, since the hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Dupras), followed by others, chose instead to treat this as though it were a debate on veterans affairs in general, I wish to say just one word before Your Honour rules me out of order on the basis of what I have already said.

The hon. member for Labelle read from his prepared statement a sentence that I think was very important. He said that the \$15 increase to individuals in old age security and guaranteed income supplement that was provided in 1972 was given special status for veterans 65 years of age or over. That special status is contained in an order in council which says that a veteran 65 years of age or over may exceed the ceiling in the War Veterans Allowance Act by \$15. The hon. member also pointed out that in the case of a married veteran the figure is \$30. There is nothing vague about that. It is clear and straightforward, namely that veterans who are 65 or over got and still get the \$15 increase that was added to the OAS/GIS in 1972.

All that the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) and I are asking is for the same kind of clear statement with respect to the increase in OAS/GIS that will come in October.

I like the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) very much, but it is not good enough for him to stand up in this House and say the government will take steps to see that the veterans get a fair deal. That is fine as a general statement, but until we know what it is, I will suspect that that means some kind of compromise, something less than we got in 1972.

I ask the hon. member for Labelle to go back to the minister and the department so we will have the very simple answer to the question asked by the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe, namely that there will be an order in council exempting the full amount of the OAS/GIS increase coming in October so the veterans will get the full benefit of that increase without any question.

Mr. Dupras: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) that I take exception to the fact he mentioned I had a prepared text. As I have not mastered the English language, I like to have a text before me. I will show the same deference to the hon. member if he ever speaks in French.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I extend my apologies to the hon. member. I hope he will take the message I gave him to his minister.

Mr. Dupras: I will.