

Veterans Affairs

to building, in the hope that their self-respect will wither and they will take early retirement. This is not the sort of treatment they thought they were going to get when the hospital was handed over to the province.

There are only two doctors left in the hospital. Once there were six. My friend who spoke to me about these matters on the telephone the day before yesterday was obliged to call on a chest specialist to examine him because the chest specialist who had been at the hospital was no longer in attendance. The doctors who were in attendance were so occupied they could not offer him the treatment he required. Where, I ask you, but in a veterans' hospital, with the history of how they became veterans and the circumstances of why they went there known to the staff, is it more likely that a chest specialist should be in attendance? Is this living up to a commitment?

The laboratories have been moved, and even wheel chair cases are obliged to go from one building to another for laboratory tests. Is this living up to a commitment? Electrocardiogram equipment has been removed from the veterans' hospital and patients who require this, although they are not expected to run, have to go to the other hospital to get electrocardiogram readings. I submit this is renegeing on a commitment.

The chronically ill, those known as 29ers, are no longer able to eat in the dining room in the veterans' hospital. Even those in wheelchairs have been told to go to a much smaller accommodation known as the board room.

These are simple evidences from one person, Mr. Speaker, and I know I can get others. As far as I am concerned, they are evidences of the government's attitude toward those who saw their duty in wars in which Canada was involved. I find it disgraceful. These men are being repudiated by the leaders of the government just as the government is now renegeing on the commitment of earlier governments to veterans under the VLA. As it is renegeing on the commitment it gave to the veterans just a year ago by its association in the unanimous consent accorded on that occasion to a motion, so now it is renegeing on the whole operation and hinting at other better legislation.

Some of those opposite who have spoken in this debate, such as the hon. member for Kitchener (Mr. Flynn), may be inclined to believe the promises the government makes from time to time, and particularly the promise of new and better legislation for veterans. I am not so gullible, Mr. Speaker. I have learned my lesson. I have been hearing promises since May and June of what the government is going to provide, and for many months before that. We have all seen so many of those promises repudiated.

We were warned by the "Chief Manitou" of promises himself, right at the outset of the campaign, that there were going to be promises made and we had better beware of them. He began to make a great many promises involving a lot of public money, and of course they have since been repudiated. Not too many of those promises fell on stony ground, however, and now that he has his majority position he feels quite free, indeed entitled, I suggest, to forget them.

Let us not get roped in by the vague and uncertain promises we hear from the other side of this House about new and better things for veterans. We cannot believe it

until we see it. This renegeing process could have attained epidemic proportions so let us watch out, let us beware.

What new legislation is being hinted at, Mr. Speaker? Let us see it. If it comes from the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Danson) as has been suggested, let him bring it on. We cannot believe it until we see it. Many of my colleagues on this side of the House and myself fall into a class of unbelievers as far as the government is concerned because we can no longer accept its promises.

The VLA we now have must not be rejected or allowed to die on the statute books until something as satisfactory has been brought forward to replace it. We all know the story of the bird in the hand, so let us not go beating about in the bush looking for the bird that just may not be there.

Mr. W. Kenneth Robinson (Toronto-Lakeshore): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity of taking part in this debate because I happen to be a veteran, having served in the Royal Canadian Air Force and also the Canadian Army. I appreciate the remarks made by the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) whose motion we are debating. I appreciate the remarks and their sentiments, but on the other hand I must say that I too have been interested and concerned about veterans for many, many years. As a matter of fact, on Remembrance Day this year I shall be taking the salute as usual before at least one of the legions, of which there are five, in my riding.

At the end of world war II, Mr. Speaker, I was able to take advantage of the educational credits offered, and my brother took advantage of the Veterans' Land Act. Both of these were commendable ways in which the government showed interest in veterans, and we were helped a great deal. Just a year ago I was honoured by my legion, Branch 217, with a 25 year pin, and this certainly indicates that I have every concern and interest in veterans.

At this time in the debate, Mr. Speaker, it would appear that virtually everything has been said, and said several times. I believe we should take a look at the Veterans' Land Act, however, its provisions and history.

The Veterans' Land Act was enacted as one of three postwar rehabilitation programs and was designed to assist veterans of world war II and of the special force in Korea to settle in Canada as full time farmers, part time farmers and commercial fishermen. Assistance was also available to veterans who wished to act as their own contractors in construction of their own homes.

The act consists of three parts. Under Part I financial assistance, including both grants and loans, may be provided to veterans who held a Veterans' Land Act certificate of qualification on October 31, 1968, and who desire to settle on the land as full time farmers, part time farmers coupled with other employment, commercial fishermen, settlers on provincial or dominion lands, or Indian settlers on Indian reservations.

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Part II of the act provides that any veteran who is approved for a loan under the National Housing Act may receive financial and other assistance to build his own home on any lot acceptable for a single family dwelling.