

Veterans Affairs

Empress Legion branch is only the width of the Saskatchewan River outside my constituency.

I am looking forward to next Monday, Madam Speaker, when I will march with considerable pride with my fellow veterans in our Remembrance Day parade. I would be less than truthful and sincere tonight, and on Monday, if I did not participate in this debate and report to this House that I have discussed these matters with all these legion branches and that their response has been that which I have indicated.

This House, in all sincerity, can do nothing less than support to the fullest the approach and philosophy suggested by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe.

Mr. C. Douglas (Bruce): Madam Speaker, first of all I should like to say to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) as well as to the Minister for Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) that I know the veterans of this country appreciate their concern and the opinions they have voiced many times in this House. They appreciate the non-partisan way in which veterans' problems have been brought before the House of Commons and the committee, and the attention they have received from members of all parties.

One thing I have noticed throughout this afternoon and this evening, Madam Speaker, is that hon. members who have spoken about the Veterans' Land Act and the amendment all have the responsibility of speaking for veterans. They have realized the devotion to duty and the work of the veterans in this country. I think we are all attempting in our own ways to reach the right solution. In this particular case, while I agree that many things are wrong with the legislation before us, I disagree with the means by which the opposition parties attempt to resolve the problem.

This is an act which I feel has served the veterans of Canada very well for the past 30 years, but which now has become time worn and, in many instances, has outlived its usefulness. I therefore support the decision of the Department of Veterans Affairs that the act be phased out with the final application date for loans to be March, 1975.

As I said in my initial address to the House, on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, the men and women of the Bruce-Grey area have been among the first to serve the needs of Canada as a nation in time of war. Also I believe many have taken advantage of the moneys and grants available under the Veterans' Land Act, and now many with whom I have talked feel that something more comprehensive and more up to date should take its place.

I think in many ways we as members and as citizens of this country put off things that should be done. I read an article in the *Globe and Mail* which said that over the past 15 years successive governments have tried to close the books on the VLA because it had served its original resettlement function, and is being used now for a quite different and unintended purpose, to assist world war II veterans to acquire farms and homes for their retirement years. I do not think that is why the act was originally introduced, and I do not think an act that is amended over

and over again can successfully serve the same purpose at a later date.

We need a new act, something different. By continuing to introduce motions to amend the act we eliminate the possibility of getting a new act, one that would serve the veterans of today as well as those of the first and second world wars.

I did not hear many of the members who spoke this afternoon discuss what would happen to the young people who have gone into the services in the past two or three years. I believe their entitlement has ended, so we must come up with something for them when they come out of the service. It seems that in talking of world war I, world war II and the Korean war we somehow implied that the men and women now in the forces are not as good as their predecessors because they do not have a war in which to serve. We must look at these young men and women as the reason why we do not have a war. In many instances their work has prevented a war.

One aspect that we must think about, even though the closing date on loans under the Veterans' Land Act is March 31, of next year, is that these loans are for up to 30 years, which means that the administrative program of the Veterans' Land Act will have to continue well into the twenty-first century. To illustrate further, as many hon. members know, lending under the Soldier Settlement Act of World War I ceased back in 1924, only six or seven years after the end of hostilities in 1918. I believe that there is still one outstanding account under that act.

● (2110)

While we know that the Veterans' Land Act took into account the lessons learned in the administration of its predecessor, changes in the national economy and the circumstances of individual veterans and their families ensure that public servants will be required to manage the current VLA loans until they are paid up, after the year 2000.

One of the reasons, Madam Speaker, that I would like to give in explaining my stand on the act is that, first of all, part of the act states that veterans can borrow up to \$18,000. I am sure that all hon. members who are in the House at this time realize that the incredible sum of \$18,000 in this day and age will not even buy a garage in most instances, and certainly not even complete the basement or any semblance of an adequate house at this point in time. Therefore, it certainly seems to me that, bearing in mind this limitation, a much newer and better approach can be made.

While the argument can and will be put forth that housing is the main concern now for the VLA, I submit that the act was directed mainly to allow returning veterans the opportunity of establishing themselves in the field of agriculture, should they desire to do so. I am very happy to say that many veterans in the particular area that I represent certainly took advantage of this opportunity, and have become respected and well thought of farmers and citizens of the community.

Anyone who has had associations with the farm market in recent years and months would find the amount of \$18,000 not only insufficient but ridiculous to the point of being outright offensive.

[Mr. Hargrave.]