

*Veterans Affairs*

another department or for a private concern can successfully take over and manage. We have but to think of those who were brought up on farms who have devoted their lives to farming, who are now having problems making ends meet and feel they must resort to radical actions judged very severely by Canadians to demonstrate the problems they are faced with.

If the people that were trained for it and lived on a farm experience difficulties, imagine what hardships a middle-aged veteran will have to face.

Mr. Speaker, I did convince my colleagues that the veterans problem is that they did not avail themselves of the other benefits, namely the loan for starting in business or for university education. The minister would do a bad turn to the 80,000 veterans holding a certificate if he embarked them on a venture with exceedingly low chances of success.

Mr. Speaker, that is something I would not be a party to.

Those members who were here in 1973 will recall the efforts by the government and the minister of Veterans Affairs to promote the redemption of certificates by veterans, whether or not they had availed themselves of the statutory benefits. They will also remember campaigns aimed at Canadian Legion sections across the country, and advertisements in veterans publications, calling for the veterans to avail themselves of the benefits provided by the act.

At that time, some came forward for redemption of their right. Since 1968, Mr. Speaker, twenty thousand have availed themselves of their rights.

I wish those holding certificates could use them rather than feeling, as I and other colleagues do, that the time for applications under the act is over.

Since farming and rural settlement come to a much larger degree under the responsibility of another department, I wonder whether the Department of Veterans Affairs would not overextend itself if it went once more into a venture for which much expertise already exists in another department.

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, whether insistence could not be made to bear upon the minister, in order that the very important problem of veteran settlement be reviewed, without developing an act that would restrict very dangerously the veterans' chances of success.

I listened this afternoon to remarks by my hon. colleagues opposite, as I did in March last or November 1973. I heard nothing in the way of a solution comparable to the one I just mentioned, that is considering the possibility that another department or agency might find the key to the problem, that is the continuance of benefits provided by the act.

[*English*]

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak in the debate on the Veterans' Land Act. I believe that in my constituency in Victoria, B.C. there are probably more veterans than any other constituency, at least on a percentage basis.

Along with my colleagues, I was rather shocked at the remarks of the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Guay)

[Mr. Dupras.]

who said, at the start of his address, that the Veterans Committee has always been a non partisan committee on a non partisan subject, and then proceeded to be quite partisan himself.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. McKinnon: I am sure that he regrets it, as we all do. I have been privileged to serve on some committees of the House that are nonpartisan, and it has always been a pleasure.

The minister made some comments that left me somewhat puzzled. I understood him to say in his speech this afternoon that there are some veterans overseas who might be qualified, and that his representatives had talked to some of them who had not seen fit to take up their options to purchase land under the Veterans' Land Act. I am somewhat skeptical of the likelihood of anybody wishing to buy land that he had not seen, and that in fact is in another country.

With regard to the remarks about the article in the *Globe and Mail*—and I have not had time to get it from the library since the hon. member from St. Boniface brought it up—let me point out that, so far as I recall, it pointed out that perhaps the VLA should be wound up because there were not enough veterans taking advantage of it. Surely that is not a reason for closing up VLA. That is a reason for looking at it again and deciding why they are not taking advantage of their options.

● (1750)

When you have on record between 125,000 and 150,000 veterans who qualified to purchase land under the Veterans Land Act and who ask for the certificate, and then you find that nobody is buying the land, I do not think you can say this means they do not want it. The truth is that it is financially impossible for them to buy the land.

I believe this Veterans' Land Act followed the Soldier Settlement Act of World War I, and until a few years ago the government supplied a mortgage of \$15,400 and the veteran paid \$2,600, making \$18,000. The veteran could buy an \$18,000 home provided it was on .4 acres of land, but a dwindling number of veterans have been taking advantage of this. Anybody who could buy a piece of property with a house on it anywhere in this country today for \$18,000 must have an uncommon ability.

At the conclusion of his remarks the minister pointed out that the government is aware of the need for low and modest income homes. He said:

It is in recognition of that awareness, and of the greater relevancy of the provisions of the National Housing Act to those needs, that a study has been undertaken to examine whether special arrangements should be made to assist such veterans.

Because discussions are still in progress, I am not in a position to comment further at this time. I am hopeful, however, that it will be possible for me to do so in the not too distant future.

This is asking the House to cancel VLA in exchange for a promise about which the minister is not prepared to speak. It would have been much better if the minister had transformed his cloudy promise into legislation, and brought the legislation here as a quid pro quo for the Veterans' Land Act. In dealing with governments a bird in the hand is worth much more than a promise. It is the