

*Veterans Land Act*

**Mr. Marshall:**—when they only offer this narrow concession in response to our motion. It is very evident that the government does not understand the needs of the veterans in only extending the Veterans Land Act for one year. There are still hundreds of thousands of veterans whose attempts to build under the Act by acquiring a loan have been stultified because the loan ceiling is not high enough. It is possible to obtain only \$15,000. They cannot build because it is impossible to buy a half acre lot for \$15,000 less 20 per cent. Those veterans who did not get a certificate by October, 1968, are still denied the opportunity to do so.

I had hoped, as I am sure all hon. members did, that the minister would have done what all veterans want, namely, introduced legislation to repeal section 31 of the act, to raise mortgage loan ceilings and reduce the minimum lot requirement commensurate with today's increased costs. However, the government is not doing that and there is no way in which we can accept the proposed legislation without action being taken on these other matters. Otherwise, there is no point in extending the Veterans Land Act. We reserve the right to amend the legislation when it is introduced to insert a provision that renewal will take place 90 days before the expiration of the deadline on March 31, 1975.

Last Wednesday the minister indicated at the committee meeting, as he indicated to the press, that the government would have to raise the loan ceilings and reduce the minimum lot requirement. I can assure hon. members—this was confirmed by the administrator of the Veterans Land Act in the committee last Wednesday—that the veterans land administration will be in existence until the year 2000 because they will have to handle cases until then at least. They now have a backlog of 1,240 cases.

Accounts are being repaid at a rate of \$69 million a year and of that amount some \$26 million is interest. So the fund is self-sustaining and is not costing the taxpayer any undue additional amount. Why not show compassion and fulfil the commitment that has been in effect over the past 57 years? Why does the government have to break faith with the veterans who were promised that the veterans charter would be in existence as long as there was a veteran alive?

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Marshall:** I hope the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, who understands the problem, will support the stand of my party, and I know he will. If the legislation is introduced it will be accepted only under the following conditions: that renewal will be made 90 days before the expiration of the deadline, that section 31 will be repealed, that the loan ceilings will be increased commensurate with today's increased costs, and that the minimum lot requirement will be amended so that it is commensurate with the needs of veterans who wish to live in cities.

I am surprised that the government does not show the compassion it should. I hope it will realize it has a duty to the veterans and will come up with legislation that will be acceptable and will give the justice to veterans that they deserve.

• (1430)

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) I wish this announcement included more than it does. It is my view that any veteran who qualifies under the Veterans Land Act should be entitled to take advantage of that qualification as long as he lives. Therefore I hope this is only an interim extension to March 31, 1975.

I also agree that something must be done to protect the rights of those veterans who did not get their qualification certificates before October 31, 1968. There is also the question of the amount of money available as a loan under the act, and the problem of lowering the minimum lot requirements. These are other changes that should be made in this legislation.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we now have a chance in this session of parliament to fight for these other things. The legislation forecast in this announcement will, I take it, be referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs after second reading where, as I say, we will have a chance to argue for these other improvements that we think should be made in the Veterans Land Act. As a result of this announcement the rights under this legislation will not die this coming Sunday. It gives us another year, a year in which a number of veterans will be able to get their loans, and a year in which we can continue the fight for a further extension. On that basis we welcome the announcement. We shall do our best to see that the legislation is dealt with expeditiously, bearing in mind our right in the standing committee to seek other improvements.

This announcement prompts me to say that I am proud that two weeks ago tonight we did not bring this parliament to an end.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Otherwise we would not now have this opportunity in this parliament to amend this legislation before March 31, 1974.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** By the same token, Mr. Speaker, any serious effort to bring this parliament to an end tonight would be a disservice to the veterans.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** We believe we should stay here to see this extension of the deadline enacted and to use the opportunity to win still further improvements.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Marie Boisvert (Drummond):** Mr. Speaker, we shall first allow the Liberals to rejoice for a little while, and then I shall proceed with my remarks.