

Veterans Affairs

conventional mortgage rates. In addition of course, the outside limit of \$18,000 (\$2,600 of which is the applicant's) is unrealistic in today's real estate market. Argument that increasing the limits would re-open previous applications is hardly valid in that previous borrowers under the act would have already enjoyed the gains in real estate values.

Then he encloses the form in which they ask veterans to sign a certain statement, part of which I will read. This is what veterans have to sign:

I have been advised that the interest rates of Part III loans is 7 per cent at the present time. It is my understanding that this rate is subject to change on 1st April, 1974. I will continue with my Application for Assistance regardless of any change that might take place in Part III interest rate on my Agreement if my loan should not be processed to the approval stage before the above-mentioned date.

I am aware it is my responsibility to submit a property acceptable to the Director prior to March 31, 1974.

If the property is rejected because of area zoning, drainage, price or other reasons not associated with title difficulties, I realize an Application for another property cannot be accepted after March 31, 1974.

This is the type of procedure and attitude that the department has been perpetrating on veterans. I am totally ashamed of this attitude of the government and more especially of the Liberal members of parliament, with the exception of the Minister of Veterans Affairs. As I said at the outset, I feel sorry that a man who has made such a tremendous commitment to his country, both in service and in loyalty, should have been subjected to a war that he has lost in the cabinet, and should have been unable to persuade the cabinet that the veterans should have the highest priority with regard to some of the programs that exist.

It has been said that civilizations are evaluated according to the way in which society is treated. If that is so, our civilization, or more especially this government, will be regarded as one that has treated veterans in a very shabby and niggardly fashion.

Mr. Gus MacFarlane (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this debate, especially one where I am certain of the sincerity of so many members. I include in that sincerity the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall), and of course the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald).

I rise to say that on this weekend of weekends and this day of days it might be important that we not all speak for the record, merely to place on the record those moments and things that concern us so desperately in the one situation which confronts us.

I for one would like to say that there are people in Canada who ask: who were they? That should be asked clearly. Who were they? Why did they go? What did they do? It is important to say to those people who ask: they were young, they walked with a quick step, their hair blew in the wind, they went laughing, they went strongly, they left their fathers and mothers, their children and their friends.

It is important that people not always see them as they are now in veterans hospitals. It is important that people not always see them as so many crosses row on row. It is important to remember that they did indeed go to end war. They had decided to put an end to war. This was their

[Mr. Gilbert.]

decision. This was their legacy to us at a time when we required them.

They returned, and the Canadian government of that day did honour to them, did not say they were Sunday soldiers, but said that they did indeed deserve a spot in our country, in our hearts and in our minds for life, for all their lives. This was done in those days.

Having had a father who came from that war with a total disability, I remember the situation which he faced. I remember him facing the depression and the possibility of losing his pension if he went out to earn \$1.50 shovelling snow. None of us are apart from this, it does not matter what political colour we are. As the war disappears, we forget. Unfortunately it came again.

● (1630)

An hon. Member: You soon forgot, however.

Mr. MacFarlane: The hon. member would be wise not to refer to me but to bring his mind to bear on those people who were so important to us.

It happened again. I remember when I stood in short pants by a train that was going somewhere with an older brother on it; a year later I rushed to a port to see a sister going away in the navy. Then a younger brother joined them. This is what has happened down through the generations. In the same way we lost the cream of our youth.

I was proud to call these people who served, my comrades, and I was proud that succeeding governments, which served in times when veterans were important, would see to it that they received special consideration.

The day may come when young people may not go to war to end wars. We are not ashamed to say that, and our fathers were not ashamed to say it to us. We did not go like lions and tigers to devour the enemy simply for that purpose. We went to fight for high sounding causes, we were idealists and so were some older men who went with us and fought like younger men to lead us.

Lest anyone make a mistake, it should be understood how we would handle the situation, as it were, from the outside. We would be with our comrades—indeed we are with our comrades and our minister. We have no doubt that veterans receive the kind of treatment that is important. We make decisions justly and honestly, taking into account the seriousness of the situation and our responsibilities.

It is the minister's difficult task to administer the act justly and to bring forward legislation that will benefit the veterans. This we believe he has done and will do. We have no doubts about it, Madam Speaker. At this point it is like freeing someone from an almost unwanted patronage. We believe it is time for those veterans to be recognized openly lest they be thought of as people who have not earned their way in life.

We believe that by doing something different, by removing this kind of giving which is not recognized as being truly a reward, we can make things better in the long run. When pruning a plant one must be careful not to destroy it. We are mindful of our responsibility, Madam Speaker, and will not forget it.