

Veterans' Land Act

I thank the hon. member for his suggestion. However, it is a singular circumstance that the opposition to anything of this type comes from an hon. member who belongs to a party which must look so far ahead. For, after all, the hopes of political parties go ahead for generations. He looks to that day when the party he represents, whatever its name may then be, because it may have been succeeded by one of another name, but ultimately a party of some kind espousing the national socialism which he also espouses, might find it necessary to have this power in order to carry through its policies. I took it that the hon. gentleman was looking a generation ahead and he realized that with the removal of closure it might be impossible to achieve that for which his party stands.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the Prime Minister would permit me to ask him a question.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Yes.

Mr. Pickersgill: I wonder whether the Prime Minister was not reflecting, as I was when the hon. gentleman was speaking, on the kind of letter he is going to get from Mr. Knowles when he reads his speech.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, that is a very penetrating question and one that I am sure penetrated the sensibilities of the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Regier). However that may be, he recently had the opportunity of viewing parliament in another portion of the commonwealth, and spoke with that authority which comes from knowing how governments operate in other parts of the world. I took it that he referred to that experience when he was a one man representative of Canada to British Guiana.

However that may be, I think it would be well not to follow the suggestion of the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate, because it might be thought by those who represent the third party that an unfair advantage had been taken of them by so rapid an agreement on the part of the official opposition.

Such a reformation on the part of any party has, I think, never been equalled since biblical days in the case of Saul. This has been one of the most unusual transitions and changes. Even so, no one would deny that it is a worthy step forward. I compliment the official opposition for this and, speaking most seriously, I thank the hon. member for this suggestion. In order to prevent the possibility of a numerically small group in the opposition saying that advantage was taken of them, the committee might meet and give a report on this matter at the earliest possible date. It

should not take long now, in view of the unanimity among more than 95 per cent of the membership of the house. A unanimity of 95 per cent should assure that the committee will be able to report on this, and then action can be taken immediately. Certainly I thank the hon. member for having taken this step. I know now that the committee will operate with assurance and effectiveness.

The hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam said that I, in the course of my remarks, had prejudged what the select committee might do. Nothing of the kind. Anyone who knows the stand I have taken knows that this has always been my stand since 1956, and that the attitude taken today will not have changed that in the slightest degree. This being so, the committee can meet and report on this matter and we shall be able to carry out almost immediately the abolition of closure.

I do not think there is any more I need add. I am pleased with this attitude on the part of the official opposition, and can only say that parliament will always discharge its responsibility for the benefit of all the people when members are prepared to stand up, as did the hon. member, and take the position he did. It is quite the antithesis of what took place in 1956, but the hon. member will recall what Sir Winston Churchill said at one time, though these are not the exact words: "I have never developed indigestion as a result of having to eat my earlier words".

Motion agreed to.

VETERANS' LAND ACT**AMENDMENTS TO EXTEND QUALIFICATION PERIOD, ETC.**

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Minister of Veterans Affairs) moved that the house go into committee to consider the following resolution:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to amend the Veterans' Land Act to extend the period during which a veteran may qualify for benefits; to establish dates on which persons shall be deemed to be discharged; to extend the repayment period of loans; to enable the director to arrange group life insurance for veterans on a voluntary basis; to increase the rate of interest where a property reverts to the director; to increase the maximum assistance under part II; to provide further financial assistance to certain full time farmers; to provide further financial assistance to part time farmers and commercial fishermen; to extend the purposes for which a part III loan may be used; to extend the uses to which proceeds of a sale or other disposition of land may be put; and to provide for the release to a veteran of a portion of the land on which he is established.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee, Mr. Chown in the chair.

Mr. Carter: Does the minister intend to make a statement?