

Supply—Veterans Affairs

was made by the parliamentary assistant. I suggest, however, that these men be given until the first of October to make application, and that if they apply before that time their allowances will run from the first of April. Is it not possible to do that even yet?

Mr. Gregg: I do not believe there will be any necessity. A good deal of publicity has been given to this matter. A great many applications—I am not speaking in the formal sense but rather of inquiries—were made before the first of April. Others inquired from our representatives here and there, and we are taking these inquiries, verbal or otherwise, as being tantamount to applications. I will be glad to keep my hon. friend's suggestion in mind and give it further consideration if it appears necessary.

Mr. Fulton: I have had inquiries from men in the remote areas to which the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra refers. Inquiries have been made directly to me as to what was being done about it, in some cases saying that contradictory rumours or reports had reached them, and that they did not know where the matter stood or when to go about making application. I have generally answered by telling them that the legislation was introduced and we expected it to be passed fairly soon. I have suggested that they get in touch with their local legion branch in order to keep themselves informed, and so that they could make their applications as soon as the act was passed and it became certain that the allowances would be granted.

I would certainly assume that in those cases these men have not yet even got to the stage to which the minister has referred, of making an inquiry of a representative of the department, because there is no war veterans allowance representative in that area. They may have made an inquiry of their local legion branch. Again I should imagine records would have been kept at the legion branches which are probably collecting files; but I do not know of any recommendations issued to the legion branches by either the British Columbia command or any other command to forward such applications or inquiries to the Department of Veterans Affairs district office in order that they may qualify under the arrangement the minister has just outlined. In the case of individual inquiries directed to myself and other members, of which we have received quite a number, and again in the case of inquiries directed to legion branches in centres where there is no departmental representative, it is almost certain that such inquiries will not yet be on file with the department. Therefore these men—who are just as interested in this matter as those living in Vancouver or Victoria

[Mr. Green.]

who have made their inquiries to the department—will be precluded from getting the advantage of the backdating of their applications which the others will get. For that reason I would strongly urge that favourable consideration be given the suggestion of the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra, even if the minister does not feel that he can put the date as far ahead as October 1. Let him make it July 31, or any date which will give these men a reasonable opportunity to get their applications in so they can be treated the same as the others. I hope the minister will do that.

Mr. Gregg: I can assure my hon. friend that we shall take into consideration the representations that have been made here this evening, and will undertake to put this into operation in a way that will not bring about any unavoidable hardship.

Mr. Herridge: I want to ask just one question, because I have had an experience very similar to that mentioned by the two previous speakers. Has the minister's department notified the national office of the Canadian Legion, or the national offices of other veterans' bodies, advising them to advertise or inform their membership that those who intend to apply should list their names immediately, and so on?

Mr. Gregg: There has been no official advice, but the executives of the two organizations concerned, that is the imperial division of the Canadian Legion and the British-Canadian veterans' association, were in close touch with my department all the way through, and I believe hon. members will recall that some weeks ago the legion had an editorial giving advice to its membership. I know Mr. Jones of the British-Canadian organization has also notified his membership to get their applications in without delay, and to get proof of service and proof of their arrival in Canada.

Mr. Quelch: At the time the Veterans Land Act was before the veterans committee the minister was strongly urged that merchant seamen should be made eligible for its benefits. I recall that the minister at that time stated that in view of the fact that the merchant seamen would be needed on their ships at the end of the war he did not think it would be wise then to bring them under that act. On the other hand, however, he said that some years after the war the situation might be entirely different. At that time there might be unemployed merchant seamen, and it might be possible then to give further consideration to the request that merchant seamen be made eligible under the Veterans Land Act. I am wondering, now