

people must pay for war, I do not believe average citizens throughout Canada would feel the minister was abusing their tax dollars if he would reverse the decision that obviously he has taken. If the minister were to make the decision to extend this legislation I am sure the many veterans in this country who would have 5, 10 or 15 years in their own homes would beatify the ministry of this particular minister.

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Dupras (Labelle): Mr. Speaker, this contribution on my part in the debate on the Veterans' Land Act, is the fourth or fifth one. I have no objection to my doing so or to the hon. members opposite doing so whenever it will be necessary in the House and wherever we are given the opportunity to protect the interests of those who fought with us during the dark years from 1939 to 1945 and later on the Korean battlefields.

Every time we do so, we like on either side to say and to repeat that it is without partisanship. I must admit I am doing so today in a partisan spirit, a spirit I feel for my former comrades in arms, especially at this time of the year, in November, where 37 or 38 years ago conditions were not as good, as easy, as peaceful as they are now in the world. Considering the community of interest that all veterans feel for their former comrades in arms, the handicapped or the disabled ones as well as those who never came back, we must earnestly try to find for the former a solution to the various problems they are faced with.

The problem facing us today is precisely a legislation passed in 1942 by the Canadian government in favour of those veterans, that is an act providing for their reestablishment on farms. It was extended and the first time we extended it with a time limit, it was in 1962 and it was not the liberals but a conservative government, which set a time limit to the renewal of the benefits granted under the legislation. I wonder whether my progressive-conservative colleagues can approve of that 1962 policy to limit the benefit period under that legislation and what prompted them to do so. Did they think that the veterans' needs would change some day? As for me, I trust those who set a limit to the benefits at that time. They thought that some day, a limit would have to be set to the benefit period and that an alternative would have to be found. As a matter of fact, if we look at the preamble of the act that I quoted in my speech on March 12, 1974, I said and I quote:

Whereas many men now serving in the active forces of Canada have recorded their desire to settle on land or engage in farming when hostilities cease, and it is desirable that suitably qualified veterans be encouraged to seek rehabilitation in the agricultural industry;

● (1740)

Mr. Speaker, already in the act the matter of required qualifications was raised without reference being made to competence; at that time however farming was a lot easier than it is today, because it is now an industrialized and mechanized operation, which is not easy for everyone to enter successfully.

The preamble of the act stated that a veteran, or a person wanting to enter that very honourable field, had to meet certain qualification criteria. I quote:

Veterans Affairs

Whereas part-time farming coupled with other employment is an increasingly important aspect of the rural and semi-rural life in Canada;

During the years 1942-43 it was still possible for a healthy person to actually have two jobs, work eight to ten hours a day in an industry, a store or any other business, and also farm on a part-time basis. The veteran coming back home and raising a family is a lot more captive at home than when one reaches my age, for example.

It was already possible for a veteran to farm while at the same time having another job. However, the problem is quite different today in the month of March 1974 and the month of November of 1973 when one considers that, on the average, veterans are 59 or 60 years old. That is not the age when a person considers going into a new career, particularly farming, because when one considers today all the complications imposed on someone who has the training to enter that industry, one sees that the act concerning the establishment of veterans contains a very wise provision respecting a "prerequisite" in addition to competence. Later, in 1962, the government set certain limits. Admittedly, it was already recognized that there could perhaps be other solutions to the problem, and such an alternative is precisely what I want to talk about—the Farm Credit Corporation.

When the Farm Credit Corporation was established in 1959 by the Farm Credit Act, it is said that this corporation was created to replace the Canadian Farm Loan Corporation. Its major objective is to grant long term mortgage loans under favourable terms and conditions liable to help Canadian farmers establish family farms on a profit-making basis and to promote the development of a healthy and competitive agricultural industry.

It also administers the Farm Credit Act which provides for loans to groups or syndicates. If you examine the Corporation's annual report for 1972-73, Mr. Speaker, you will soon notice that the spirit prevailing when the Veterans' Land Act was passed is no more. The situation has changed a lot since then. The average loan granted by the Farm Credit Corporation in 1970-72 amounted to \$35,173 compared to \$28,430 for the previous year. Within one year, the average loan rose by approximately \$7,000 and an additional 1,200 loans were granted.

What I want to bring to the attention of this House concerning the Farm Credit Corporation, Mr. Speaker, is mainly the spirit of the Act which provides that the person to whom a loan is granted must have appropriate training. This is not an undertaking that beckons when one is 60 years old.

And the proof that this is not an undertaking upon which one embarks when one is 60 years old is that when you consider the average age of those who asked for or were granted loans in 1971-72, only 5.4 per cent of the borrowers were over 54 years old. And of those who asked for or were granted a loan, the great majority, 75 per cent, were 35 or younger.

That, Mr. Speaker, is the age of those who are presently taking farms over to turn them into a profitable operation which will bring success to them and their family.

As a matter of fact, this is not a business venture that a 55 year old veteran who has worked for the Post Office or