

The bill introduced today, Mr. Speaker, as I expressed to the House when replying to the statement on motions by the minister, is a narrow concession. It is given to us, I suppose, so that the government can say that it has complied with the motion we introduced on March 12. To me, however, this concession tells another story. The minister in his speech indicated that this extension was given as of right, that the government had reviewed all relevant factors and has extended the legislation for one more year. But that is not what he said when replying to our motion on March 12. Then, he said the extension was not warranted. That tells me that this concession is given, not because the extension is what thousands of veteran citizens have been demanding individually and through their organizations, not because the government wants to serve veterans, as is its duty, but because by granting it the government is fulfilling its selfish aim to govern, regardless of circumstances. What bothers me, and I say this seriously, is that this type of thing is allowed to go on in the hallowed halls of parliament.

I suppose we have proved one thing, that there is still some hope left for the parliamentary process. Using rules and procedures laid down by those who came long before us and, as a result of representations from a large segment of Canadian citizens, parliament brought about changes in legislation passed by previous governments, brought them about because of changing conditions, and for the benefit of those who made the representations. To set right the far out versions of those who profess to know what efforts have been made in changing what are considered to be inequities in the veterans land charter, let me put on record the motion under Standing Order 58 which I moved on behalf of my party on May 18, 1973. It will be worth while looking at some of the representations which were made in the House, for the benefit of the supposed experts who saw this in a different light. The motion reads:

That this House urges the government to introduce priority measures to remedy present injustices to war veterans and, in particular, to remove those inequities arising out of basic rates of disability and other pensions, treatment services, allowances, and the Veterans' Land Act.

Since then, periodically and continuously, I have asked questions, brought in motions, either individually or in collaboration with my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and others of my party, in conformity with the rules and Standing Orders. My questions and motions had to do with action regarding the inequities in the Veterans Land Act. They are too numerous to repeat at this time. It is worth while mentioning that my party took every opportunity under the rules to bring up this matter. Since the minister kept evading the issue, and since we realized the extent of the emergency, we brought in a motion on January 11, just before the last recess, to adjourn the House.

On January 11 I said—and I shall read those words into the record, even though Your Honour made a ruling that day concerning my motion—as follows:

I ask leave to adjourn the House pursuant to Standing Order 26 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely, the proposed phasing out of the Veterans Land Act by March 31, 1974, which will result in denying to over 100,000 veterans benefits available to them under the act, instead of increasing the maximum loan ceiling and reducing the lot requirements.

Veterans Land Act

If you will forgive me, Mr. Speaker, I will read into the record part of your ruling. Your Honour said:

The subject proposed for discussion must be a new one in the nature of an emergency.

I thank Your Honour for the advice. I continue:

In this particular instance it is relevant to note that the problem has been raised on a number of occasions over a long period of time by a number of members . . .

In particular, may I refer to the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert), who has been an outstanding member of the Veterans Affairs Committee and is a former minister of veterans affairs. He, I and others have brought up this matter periodically. I continue:

The Standing Order also requires the Chair to take into account the possibility that the matter might be discussed on other occasions, or that there may be other opportunities for debate. As hon. members know, all of the seven days in the current supply period, which expires on March 31, are available now or would be available during March after a possible adjournment or prorogation. In addition, I think it is reasonable for the Chair to assume that other and additional opportunities for debate will be available in the month of March or before.

● (1600)

In view of the circumstances, the Chair has to rule that the proposed debate cannot take place today under the terms of Standing Order 26.

That was on January 11. I just want to emphasize that those who take the opportunity to twist the facts should follow what is going on before making far out proclamations. The first opportunity I had to make further representation was on March 12.

The other point I wish to make is to relate our efforts to our responsibility as members of parliament. The Progressive Conservative party has no exclusive channels of communication with veterans or veterans organizations. Every last member of this House of Commons knows that the vast majority of veterans want this date extended. They have received representations to this effect.

Every last veteran in this House knows that, while the extension of the March 1974 deadline fulfills part of the wishes of the veterans, the October 1968 deadline should be repealed. What is most important is that the loan ceilings must be raised, and the minimum lot requirements reduced, to allow the many thousands of veterans to take advantage of the deadline. This, every member also knows. The minister certainly knows because he is receiving many more letters than I, and I am receiving many. However, he was willing to agree to this narrow concession to his cabinet colleagues. I was going to call them the dirty dozen, but there must be more than that who make the decisions in cabinet.

When the minister appeared before the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs last Wednesday, he indicated he was considering these factors. I wish to quote from the committee report. I asked, and I quote:

I want to ask the Minister, in his consideration of the extension of the March 1974 deadline, since it is consistent that the 1968 deadline be repealed, is consideration being given by his department to recommend through him to the government that this 1968 deadline be repealed?

MR. MACDONALD (CARDIGAN): We have considered this, Mr. Chairman.

MR. MARSHALL: With regard to the mortgage loan requirements, the maximum is \$18,000, which everybody knows is not capable today of providing them with a lot and building a house. Is there any consideration being given to increasing the maximum loan ceiling?

MR. MACDONALD (CARDIGAN): This has also been under consideration.