

Veterans' Land Act

consider extending the Veterans' Land Act, but one or two Liberals said no, and the motion could not be put.

In the debate of November 5 and 6, 1974, there were many references to the fact that something better was going to come. When? The hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) and others have repeatedly asked the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Danson) when we are going to get this special provision for veterans to take the place of what was in the Veterans' Land Act. It does not seem to be coming.

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): Let not your heart be troubled.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I hear the Minister of Veterans Affairs quoting the New Testament, "let not your heart be troubled." *Mai tarasesthno humon hai kardia.* I am just returning it to the minister in Greek. As I said, this is the sort of thing that makes people wonder about parliament, this shifting from one side to the other, this inconsistent performance.

● (1740)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Oh, yes, my friends over there, especially my very good friend, the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Guay), can laugh. We are great friends when we agree with them, but when they do not agree with us, then they say we are playing politics.

I am still embarrassed that I should be engaging in this violation of the rules. All that is before us is a motion for the production of papers. However, if hon. members want this debate turned into a debate on the Veterans' Land Act, that is fine. When the vote comes, as it will come, I shall be voting for the motion. In so doing I shall be voting for an extension of the Veterans' Land Act, and veterans will be quite justified in considering those who vote against this motion as being against the continuation of that act.

Mr. Maurice Dupras (Labelle): I share with the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) his apprehensions, and his interest in the welfare of our former brothers in arms during the last war. I welcome his motion for the production of papers because it will give me another opportunity of expressing some views on this subject as it affects the welfare of veterans.

Like those who have spoken before me I, too, shall be out of order at times when I deal with matters other than the motion which should be our main concern.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, this matter has repeatedly been the subject of motions and debates in the House since 1970: in 1972, on November 9, 1973, on March 12, 1974 and finally when Bill C-17 was passed on March 28, 1974. Each time, Mr. Speaker, the House studied the question in the spirit that prevailed at the time when the Veterans Lands Act was first introduced in 1942. That is precisely what I tried to do in my speech on the subject, in pointing out that the situation which prevailed in 1942, the objectives the government had at that time, have changed since. One need not

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

be a soothsayer, Mr. Speaker, to realize that the situation has changed considerably since then, since 1942 when the act was first passed.

Today, we are not dealing with troops answering the call of their country to fight for either the territories of allied countries or our own; instead, we are dealing with people who want to make a career of military life. A young man who joins the armed forces today does not do so for the reasons I mentioned earlier, but because he is interested in a military career. The situation that existed in 1942 and until 1945 has changed substantially. Those who consider a military career are as motivated as those who take up medicine, law or commerce.

On the other hand, a limit has been set to the benefits provided under the act, a limit which did not exist when this legislation was passed in 1942. It was amended several times and the benefits were increased. On several occasions, at least three times, if I remember well, the benefits granted under the act were extended.

However, Mr. Speaker, before we seriously consider extending or even increasing the benefits as suggested, we should also think of the effect this could have on the great number of veterans who took advantage of the other options open to us on our discharge, namely university studies to help us further our education or a money gift to help us set up in business. And I wonder what the reaction of my former comrades in arms would be if, for instance, the benefits provided under the Veterans' Land Act were extended or increased. I wonder if they would not normally feel frustrated and get the impression that their rights had been encroached upon if, for instance, the benefits that I and others among my former comrades in arms received were not adjusted. And how could we ensure a fair adjustment for those who have already taken advantage of the Veterans' Land Act.

Mr. Speaker, this is what I wanted to say to my colleagues in this House so that they may judge the impact of any amendment to the Veterans' Land Act. It might be better, as we said in March and in February 1974, if the government proposed benefits which, would come from another source, from another department for instance. In a conversation I had with him, the United States Secretary of Defense, Mr. Galloway, gave me some information on the benefits now granted to American soldiers.

It would be untrue to say that members of the Canadian armed forces no longer have any confidence in their legislators and worry about the time when they will have to retire from the armed forces. In a moment I shall go back to the conversation I had with Mr. Galloway, but contrary to what other countries are experiencing, in Canada we do not seem to have any difficulty in recruiting enough people for the armed forces on a voluntary basis, something that does not succeed in France, the Federal Republic of Germany or Holland.

Mr. Galloway told me about the arrangements or measures through which the United States ensured sufficient recruitment to meet the requirements of the American armed forces.

Among those benefits, there are all kinds of advantages that were not included in those provided for people who answered the appeal made to them by the Canadian gov-