

*War Appropriation*

saying to these soldiers—not only those of the first world war, but those of this war who desire to take up land—that once they have proven their intention of staying on the land, and have shown their good faith by staying there for ten years, that the federal government would give them clear title. I hope that the government will take a saner view, and do that very thing.

Mr. NOSEWORTHY: Would the Minister of Veterans' Affairs give us a statement as to the factors which determine the eligibility of a veteran to receive aid under this act for the purchase of small acreages adjoining a city or town? There appears to be some confusion in that regard.

I know of one man who applied and was refused aid on the ground that the job he held in the city was not permanent, and there was some doubt as to whether he would be able to keep up his payments. In another instance I got a letter from the minister saying the reason this man was refused was that he had not had any farming experience for about twenty years and, consequently, they did not think he could make a living on the acreage.

It was my understanding when the bill was before the house that the purpose of helping people to get acreages nearer cities was so that they could work in the city during those seasons when work was available, and also have some assistance from small acreages, such as those on which they would keep chickens or grow berries. What are the factors which determine eligibility?

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): Some time ago the hon. member for York South raised the same question. He asked what qualifications should be possessed by a veteran seeking to establish himself on a small holding under the provisions of the Veterans' Land Act.

Just now he mentioned the case of a Toronto workman whose application was refused when he asked for a small holding. The hon. member was good enough to furnish the name privately, and since then a report has been obtained by myself in regard to that particular case.

I have indicated that the director had to go slow in authorizing settlements up to the present time. It is not in the interests of any veteran that he be encouraged to enter into a contract involving the repayment of a loan unless and until the necessary home, farm buildings, tools and equipment are available, so that he has the means of earning the money to pay his instalments.

Knowing the limitations in this regard, the administration has sought to allocate avail-

[Mr. C. E. Johnston.]

able materials among applicants considered to have the greatest need. This, frankly speaking, is a discretionary process, and inevitably it gives rise to disappointment in some cases. The policy of the department is to study as many as possible of those cases; but the hard fact remains that until materials, equipment and labour are more easily available we shall probably not be able to settle all applicants on small holdings.

These are the reasons, I may tell my hon. friend, why the veterans referred to by him and by others have experienced delay. There are several aspects to the qualifications mentioned by my hon. friend. The applicant must have the service record laid down in the act. I understand there is no difficulty on that score, in the case of the veteran mentioned by the hon. member. Either in farming, or in the case of most small holdings, it is contemplated that the veteran has to make at least some part of his living by cultivating the soil, some part of his living through some branch of agriculture or horticulture. Whatever it is, the veteran has to show that he has some experience and background related to the project for which he applies, whether it be a full farming acreage, or the keeping of poultry, the growing of vegetables or bee-keeping.

In the case of small holdings there must also be some assurance that the veteran has reasonable prospects of some other means of livelihood—the condition referred to by my hon. friend. That is, he must have reasonable prospects of some personal livelihood—a job or a skill which will ensure him a reasonable prospect of getting a job in the vicinity of his home.

A directive recently issued to regional offices on January 2 shows that the policy is to take a reasonable view of those requirements, along practical lines. Another qualification which, of course, is necessary in every case, has to do with character and steadiness. With some men there is little prospect of reestablishment by tying them up, or trying to tie them up with a hard and fast contract for fifteen years.

Here again the policy is not to be too strict, and account is taken of reasonable probabilities. Decisions on those points are not made arbitrarily by civil servants. Qualification is a process requiring interview by an advisory board consisting of farmers, business men, and veterans from the applicant's locality, men who know local conditions, and who are good judges of the person in question. Great care has been taken in the selection of these advisory boards to see that they will have the confidence of the veteran, and of the community in which he dwells.