

Veterans Affairs

naval veteran to support the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald). I proudly remember two very fine army people, my father and my brother, who did so much for their country.

I am left a little confused by the remarks of the previous speaker, the hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge (Mr. Saltzman), who, while praising the servicemen suggested that similar rights should be granted to the general public. These are privileges that only servicemen earn. I am a little confused by the mixing of apples and grapes in the same barrel.

In considering the representations of last March to extend the statutory deadline of March 31, 1975 for qualified veterans to submit loan applications under the Veterans' Land Act, it is essential to look at the matter having in mind the purpose of the act and its alternative relationship to other rehabilitation measures.

As indicated in previous statements which have been made, both in the House and before the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, the Veterans' Land Act was not designed as a program of urban housing, nor as a part of a retirement program for persons reaching the end of their productive careers. Its basic purpose was to provide loans for the purchase of agricultural land, to be used on a full or part-time farming basis by veterans who were interested in this form of rehabilitation program on their return to civilian life following wartime active force service.

It was recognized that many veterans would neither wish nor find it practical to settle under the Veterans' Land Act. Two other programs were enacted: university training under the Veterans Rehabilitation Act, and re-establishment credits under the War Service Grants Act. The benefits under these three programs were alternative one to the other. Each veteran had the right to choose which plan he considered would best serve his needs and desires. The Department of Veterans Affairs' university training program was concluded in the 1950's, and October 31, 1968, was the final date for veterans to use re-establishment credit benefits.

As has been mentioned previously in the House, virtually every veteran who has written about VLA has used either of the other two alternative benefits. Having regard to the basic purpose of the Veterans' Land Act and its alternative relationship to the other two measures, in 1965 parliament established deadlines to phase out VLA lending operations in a reasonable and orderly manner.

By next March more than 30 years will have elapsed since the end of world war II, and 20 years in the case of the Korean conflict. This is a rather fantastic length of time for this particular arrangement to continue. In the context of a rehabilitation measure to assist veterans to pick up the threads of civilian life following wartime active service, this has been a worthwhile program.

Reference has been made from time to time to the fact that some 125,000 veterans such as myself who hold VLA certificates have not applied for VLA benefits. I might suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that this has relation to the dreamer—and aren't we all dreamers—who imagined that he might have a little market garden some day, that he might also test the greenness of his thumb, and that he might even go to the growing of the grape. The words of

[Mr. Flynn.]

St. Patrick who said, "—a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" would only prove to him that he would not be able to utilize completely the VLA certificate to its fullest advantage.

An hon. Member: That was St. Paul who said that, not St. Patrick.

Mr. Flynn: Thank you very much. I was waiting for someone to correct me. Everybody is not in the throes of euphoria; they are wide awake. It is possible that the vast majority of these veterans simply took the precaution of obtaining such a certificate by the deadline of October 31, 1968.

The Minister of Veterans Affairs received some representations that March 31, 1974, was premature for qualified veterans still serving in the armed forces to apply. At that time the minister brought into the House legislation which extended the deadline to March 31, 1975.

In summary, I believe the terminal dates established by parliament more than eight years ago for the orderly phasing out of VLA lending operations were reasonable and realistic at that time. By next March approximately 140,000 veterans will have been settled, involving an investment of public funds of more than \$1¼ billion. Those are impressive totals, and I suggest that they reflect the great popularity of this rehabilitation measure for Canadian veterans.

● (2050)

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpègue): Madam Speaker, it is my intention to be brief in my remarks, and I hope that I will not be repetitious. First, I wish to say that I support completely the point of view advanced by a number of members on this side of the House on this important issue. I believe that the crux of the matter is that governments have responsibilities. I do not speak here of any particular government but rather of the institution of government.

Surely a government should follow a code of conduct, the same as a good citizen. If we take as an example the responsibility of government in administering justice we find that there is one view on this subject. It is generally accepted, especially following our tradition of British justice, that justice for the individual is all important, and that the matter of cost, inconveniences or anything of that sort, is secondary.

For example, if a bank is robbed every effort is made to apprehend the criminal and to bring him to justice. Large amounts of public funds are used to ensure that the accused is not condemned unjustly, and that justice prevails. But for some curious reason although that view is generally accepted with regard to the administration of justice, an entirely different set of values comes to play in relation to the justice of administration. Here the view that seems to prevail is similar to what is said of a corporation: no soul to be saved and no body to be whipped, therefore no need for moral compunction. Governments are somewhat similar. However, they have a responsibility, and this is only one example. All too often, when we consider the justice of administration, we find that a kind of bureaucratic syndrome sets it.