

*Veterans Affairs*

If we had some such restriction in respect of national housing it would not be possible for young couples to build a home and profit by the sale of that house in the first six months, perhaps the result of a breakup in their marriage. I suggest this has been the case, and many of these people have been able to double their original investment in a short period of time.

That is a situation which has not existed in respect of veterans' legislation, probably evidenced by the fact that the Minister of Veterans Affairs is still one of the largest landowners in this country, holding more deeds to property than any other government agency. He probably has not considered the number of properties that require his signature to be transferred, but I imagine the number would be much greater than the number for which the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Drury) is responsible, even though he in effect owns or controls all the land in the right of Canada.

Controls of that nature restrict profiteering on land, and I am sure the specific control under the veterans' administration has prevented speculative purchasing by many young people. We could benefit from the extension of that type of legislation to the national housing field, with the result that benefits would be provided young people except for speculative purposes through quick sales.

I am not suggesting that all CMHC loans be transferred to the Department of Veterans Affairs, but loans under veterans' legislation have been administered very well over the years. This type of control has created stability for the individual buying property, and for the communities in which veterans live. In my home town most of the houses built under the small holdings legislation are still occupied by the people who built them, and I think this is true in a large percentage of the cases throughout the country.

I do not believe that members of this House are different from members in past years. I think the difference which now is becoming apparent is a partisan difference resulting from the majority position of the government. The amendment by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), seconded by the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall), was not considered last year to be partisan. The motion was supported unanimously.

This year the motion accepted unanimously by a previous parliament seems to have become a partisan thing. Apparently the minister will not agree to look at this piece of legislation extending the period of time. I think that by the one-year extension we probably made it possible for an additional 5,000 veterans to take advantage of the act.

Having regard to the original deadlines, surely anyone can admit that he was wrong. I was one of the individuals here in 1965. I was a member of the committee at the time, and heard officials of the department say there was no real advantage in continuing this legislation beyond the deadline as all the people were covered. The officials of the department have said from time to time they have not been busy servicing these loans as the number of applications has been dropping off. At that time we accepted their word and set the deadline for three years from then. During that time nothing really came to light which changed our opinion.

[Mr. Peters.]

However, when the 1974 deadline came in view everyone agreed unanimously that we should have another look at it. As a result we unanimously extended the deadline by one year. I suggest that the fact we have a majority government may be the reason for the partisanship feeling we have today. I certainly hope that is not the reason this legislation is not being changed.

In closing, I would say that as far as I am concerned I am pleased to listen to any suggestions the minister has in terms of changing the legislation. Over the years we have decided that the cost involved was too great to cover all small holdings, and we have found that in the case of many of the people involved it has been too difficult to look after the required amount of land. If I remember correctly the original stipulation was two acres, but we have reduced that. It was reduced two or three times. It now has been reduced to the point where a piece of property may be contiguous to another piece of property and thereby make up the required four-tenths of an acre. Over the years we have come to realize that what we are talking about now is perhaps a retirement home rather than re-establishment property for veterans. We realize that many people who are retiring do not wish to become involved in agriculture but wish to have a small retirement residence. This may be a first home. It may be a long distance from where the person conducted his business.

● (1730)

Perhaps this is a benefit we can give to some veteran who has not been able to obtain a home in some other way. He might wish to leave the locality in which he worked before retirement and move to another community where life is a little slower, and where he may find living expenses to be more within his means.

I suggest it is unfair to those who have not taken advantage of the provisions of this legislation for the government to turn down the request for extension. One of my colleagues just a few minutes ago mentioned that he is a veteran. He said that he knew of this piece of legislation, but that until he came here and heard the discussion several years ago he did not know there was a cut-off date. He had never heard about that. I think that sometimes inside this building we believe everything we have said here has been passed on to everyone in the country. That really is not the case. There are people who did not know the cut-off date was 1968.

If the minister wishes to continue in the jovial, genial and generous manner he displayed in respect of veterans and during the last minority parliament with regard to the Woods Commission Report and the changes that were made in respect of veterans legislation, I would like to see him say that he is in favour of eliminating the 1968 qualifying date, and also the other date.

If this were the case I do not think the minister would be overly generous. We would not be giving these people very much. We would merely be providing them with what they need in respect of housing. At this period of their lives they probably are in a position to augment that to some degree. It will come back to us. We will hold the mortgages on those properties in any event.

Particularly in this month, Mr. Speaker, when people should be thinking of the evils of war and the penalties