

ing, and say, "We will pay you so much because you did this or that?"

● (1730)

In looking after veterans' problems it is important that we, as citizens, realize not only their sacrifice but their willingness to sacrifice, and treat them as generously as possible in relation to other people in the same age group with the same requirements.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, the motion before us at the present time is very simple. It calls for the production of certain papers. Those papers relate to the Veterans' Land Act. Indeed, procedurally all we are dealing with is the question of whether those papers should be tabled. I say this at the outset of my remarks because I find it somewhat embarrassing to admit that, in view of what has been said by the last two speakers. I am also going to break the rule.

The subject before us is not the question of whether the Veterans' Land Act should be extended. However, if that is what hon. members want to discuss, all right, we shall discuss it. I remind hon. members that this is not one of those private members' motions they can talk out for an hour and that is the end of it. This is a motion for the production of papers. It comes under a special rule. It will again come back on another day like this for 30 minutes or so, and then come to a vote. Therefore, the hon. member across the way who says he is a friend of the veterans will have a chance to vote against them by voting against this motion. If hon. members are going to turn this into a debate on the Veterans' Land Act, I submit that veterans, and the public generally, will have the right to construe the vote as a vote on the question of the Veterans' Land Act.

What is happening with respect to the Veterans' Land Act is, in my view, one of the things that make people wonder about parliament. In the last parliament, when there was a certain situation which made it necessary for the government to respond, the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) brought in a bill to extend the Veterans' Land Act for one year. When that bill was before us as a government bill, everybody was for it. Liberal after Liberal was for that bill. The Veterans' Land Act was a great thing, and it was a good idea to extend it.

Mr. Boulanger: Right.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The hon. member says right, it was a good idea to extend it. However, then there was an election and the situation changed.

An hon. Member: It was extended.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Yes, the act was extended for a year. There was included in that bill a clause which made it possible to have the matter debated again after September 30, 1974. Therefore, after September 30, 1974, we had that debate. We had it on November 5 and 6. All those Liberal members who, in the previous parliament, had said the Veterans' Land Act was a wonderful thing, began to say it was time to phase it out. It is not surprising that people wonder about parliament when that sort of thing happens.

Veterans' Land Act

Mr. Railton: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. The statement that all Liberals who were for the act were then against it is not true. I would like to say that I was very much against extending the deadline beyond March 31, 1974. I expressed that to the minister and the government. I do not think it is correct to say that the Liberals have to vote within party lines. That is one thing we do not do.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The hon. member is as confused as somebody else around here has been today. In the twenty-ninth parliament, because of the pressure the government faced, the bill brought in by the minister was supported unanimously. The Liberals voted for it. However, in this parliament when there was a motion asking the government to extend it another year, the Liberals voted against that motion.

Mr. Railton: One year was enough.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): If that is what the hon. member thinks, he is not in touch with the thinking of the veterans of this country. I can tell him he is wrong. The view is being expressed by many veterans and veterans' organizations that the Veterans' Land Act should be continued.

Let me again go back to the debate of November 5 and 6. I keep telling myself, as I told you, Mr. Speaker, that I know I am out of order because the motion before us is for the production of papers. However, the debate has become one on the Veterans' Land Act so I shall stay with it. On November 6, 1974, when the Liberals were in a majority and they had decided they would not extend the Veterans' Land Act for another year—

Mr. Railton: You are making the veterans a political football.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Whenever we agree with the government on veterans affairs, members opposite like to talk about the unity of the veterans affairs committee. However, whenever we ask for something the Liberals do not want to agree to, then we are dividing the House over veterans affairs. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that we have the right to express the views and wishes of veterans even if they happen to differ from what the government is prepared to do.

Let me go back to the debate of November 5 and 6, 1974. Liberal after Liberal, including the hon. member for Welland (Mr. Railton), the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen) and quite a few others relied for their opposition to extending the Veterans' Land Act for another year on the assurance they had been given by the minister that something would take its place. The hon. member for Welland does not remember what he said.

Liberal after Liberal said, "We have had enough of the Veterans' Land Act, it is going to be improved and we are going to get a veterans' housing arrangement of some other kind that will be better." On that basis, they stood up and voted against extending the Veterans' Land Act for another year.

Despite that vote, not many days ago I tried again to get this House to agree to a motion to ask the government to