

I work very closely with the veterans' organizations of this country. The additional \$50 million that I said it would cost was also questioned very vigorously. That is a true statement. It may not be true to the exact dollar, but it will take approximately an additional \$50 million to do this. And as long as I am Minister of Veterans Affairs, my door is open to any veteran in this country at any time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): It does not have to be eight o'clock or nine o'clock; it can be any hour of the day or night, in any part of this country. The veterans' organizations will tell the veterans that. We increased the number of pension commissioners by seven.

Mr. Marshall: Not according to the letters I am getting.

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): I think you write them yourself. I must also say that all aspects—

Mr. Dinsdale: It is your fault that—

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): Didn't you have the floor before?

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Order, please. The minister has the floor. He has the right to express himself as does any other member who wishes to speak.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): I want to say that as far as reviews are concerned, all aspects of our department are under constant review. We welcome the resolution proposed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. Another question was posed this evening by a couple of members; I will not mention their constituencies. There has been a lot of talk about veterans in the armed services who were denied the privilege of becoming established under the Veterans Land Act. I want to inform this House that our department sent people to Lahr, Germany, to consult with veterans in the armed forces. Many of them took the opportunity of establishing themselves under this process. When I met them in England and France, they thanked me and my department for sending people over to give them the opportunity to become established.

These people know when they are going to build and when they are going to retire. This program has been available to them.

I see, Mr. Chairman, that the time is going by quite rapidly. We will be very glad to receive and support this motion.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Is the committee ready for the question on the amendment?

Some hon. Members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Shall the amendment carry?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Amendment (Mr. Knowles, Winnipeg North Centre) agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

Veterans Land Act

Schedule agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported.

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan) moved that the bill be read the third time and do pass.

Mr. Reg Stackhouse (Scarborough East): Mr. Speaker, one thing that has impressed many members in this debate and what came before it is the reluctance with which the government has accepted the principle of this bill. It brought in this legislation only after concerted pressure from the opposition. It accepted the amendment only after it was submitted by the opposition, supported by the opposition and when the government saw clearly it would be defeated if the amendment went to a vote. The government brought before the House what was really a specious point of order in an attempt to have the amendment ruled out of order. I suggest we ought to be mindful of the reluctant spirit with which the government addressed itself to this matter.

In his remarks the minister recited some of the achievements of his party, his government and his department for the veterans. He was right in what he said. The point I would make is why, then, be out of character now, if you can help the veterans? Why not, in the same spirit, be open-hearted and open-handed now with regard to these ex-servicemen who are seeking to meet their accommodation needs? One reason many have not been able to take advantage of the Veterans Land Act is simply unavailability of credit and lack of capital. They have hopes for the future, hopes of being able to borrow enough money and to acquire land on which they can build a home for their retirement years.

I wonder just what great good accrues to the people of Canada and the government of Canada by having the deadlines of 1974 and 1975. Why should we impose this limitation upon the commitment of the government and the nation to our veterans? They did not have a time limit on their service: they signed up for the duration. Why should the public not now honour the same kind of open-ended commitment?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stackhouse: We have unanimously accepted the possibility of 20 members of parliament opening up this question in one year's time.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Six months.

Mr. Stackhouse: Yes, opening up the new deadline in six months. I hope whichever party is in power in six months—

An hon. Member: Not you.

Mr. Stackhouse: Maybe. The hon. member was wrong a few minutes ago, and he may also be wrong in the near future. One thing we do hope is that six months or a year from now there will be in office a government that is prepared to honour the public's commitment to the veterans of this country. The government has been forced into this extension and it is clear to the whole country that the