

*Supply—Veterans Affairs*

veterans who have taken up small holdings have found it impossible to maintain that amount of land, particularly when they have more or less permanent jobs in a city.

In most sections of the country three acres is not enough to sustain a family. The small holdings section of the act was not intended to provide a means of permanent livelihood for a veteran but rather to augment what he might be earning from his regular trade, or to augment some pension he might be receiving.

There seems to be some misunderstanding as to the actual extent of land a veteran must have before he may have the benefit of the small holdings section. I was always under the impression, until a few days ago, that it now had to be three acres; but I was informed that it has to be three acres provided the value of the land is less than \$500 an acre. If it is more than that amount the extent of land may be reduced to two acres. Even then the director under the Veterans Land Act has some discretion in the matter, and may reduce either a three-acre or two-acre holding by ten per cent, if he considers such reduction desirable in order that a veteran may have the benefit of a particular small holding.

Furthermore if a veteran is drawing a pension and has a war disability which makes it impossible for him to operate two or three acres, as the case may be, at the discretion of the director an even smaller extent of land may be allocated to him.

I do not believe those conditions are generally known, and I would ask the minister whether the figures I have given concerning the extent of land are correct. If it is recognized that either because of the price of the land, or because of the disability from which a veteran may be suffering, the three acres may be reduced to a smaller amount, then I believe it would be in the interests of veterans who are taking advantage of this small holdings section in the act that the extent of land be reduced for all. If a man wishes to take up a small holding outside the limits of a city there are certain restrictions imposed so that it will not clash with some Central Mortgage and Housing scheme. It is therefore necessary that there be still greater flexibility. It should not be necessary for a man to take up more land than he can operate profitably and keep in a suitable condition. When land is left idle, weeds develop and become a menace to the people in the immediate neighbourhood.

I should like to ask another question with regard to the length of time that must elapse before a veteran can obtain a clear title to his land. I understand the period varies from ten to fifteen years according to the

[Mr. Pearkes.]

risk, if I may use that word. A man who is getting on in years is not considered as good a risk as a younger man and therefore must pay up in a shorter period of time.

There are many veterans who have been able to meet all their payments well ahead of the period they contracted for but are not able to obtain clear title to their land until that original period has elapsed. Recently the Department of National Defence wrote to many veterans across the land asking them if they would consider rejoining the services. I have had letters from some of these men who have taken up small holdings and they tell me that they would be willing to rejoin the services but they do not feel they can do so because they have not free title to the land they have taken up. They do not want to be saddled with a home in one part of the country and perhaps be stationed in another part when they rejoin the services. A man might have to transfer his family from Alberta to Ontario for instance. If a man who had met all the payments could get clear title I think he would be more disposed to rejoin the services as they desire.

I presume the time limit was placed there to prevent speculation, but surely after a reasonable time has elapsed the opportunity or desire to speculate in connection with a small holding would have passed. Could consideration be given to granting full title to these lands at an earlier date? If it is not considered expedient to do it in all cases, I would ask that it be done in the case of the man who intimates that he intends to rejoin the services. At the present time a man who has met his payments may still have to wait some years before his original contract is completed.

**Mr. Gregg:** The first point raised by my hon. friend was in connection with the acreage and I know this is a matter of interest to many hon. members as it is to us. As it stands at the present time it is three acres where the price of the land and a suitable water supply is less than \$500 per acre, and two acres where the price of the land and a suitable water supply cost more than \$500 per acre. The hon. member was right when he said that the director has discretionary power up to ten per cent.

Replying to the second point raised by my hon. friend, may I say that the veteran on a small holding may get full title at any time provided he pays the full amount of the cost to the director. After ten years he would have the benefit of the 23½ per cent discount which amounts to approximately \$2,300. I am sure that the motive in placing a limit of ten years was to discourage speculation.