

them that they voted against this statute which was meant to benefit our veterans.

I conclude on this note. I listened with great interest to the eloquence of the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain. If he reads his speech, he is going to find that he dug a little hole for himself. He is going to find he said that retired veterans were second class citizens because of this legislation, and that the government was attempting to uplift them by taking their benefits away.

In the course of his eloquence he had this to say: "The veterans of this country are in the hearts and the minds of all of us". And they are. What we ask of the government today is that the veterans be in the legislation that is approved by this House. I ask those who choose to vote against this motion, which many of us were very proud to sign in anticipation of the day of remembrance, to remember what I can only term the hypocrisy of the position that they are taking.

**Mr. Jack Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I am going to vote against this motion, and I say so at once so no questions will have to be asked across the floor. When I hear hon. members opposite talking, I wonder whether they are talking about the same veterans I am talking about, namely, those who served in the first and second world wars. Why should we be ashamed of ourselves for the kind of assistance we have given our veterans?

● (1710)

Rather than listen to hon. members opposite I think it would be more appropriate to listen to what the president and two vice presidents of the Canadian Legion said on a local CBC television program entitled "Platform". They were asked how veterans were being treated, and they said they had been treated extremely well. They said they felt that the veterans of this country had been treated better than the veterans of any other country which was involved in the first or second world wars.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** The government is still leaving some of them out.

**Mr. Cullen:** Does the hon. member want to listen or does he want to shout? I am prepared to sit down while he shouts, after which I will get on my feet and speak.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** I will speak after you so that we can hear what you have to say.

**Mr. Cullen:** I have a little bit to say and I take second place to no one, including those veterans in the House, of whom I am not one. Certainly as a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, and as a past vice chairman and chairman of that committee, I begin to wonder when I hear members opposite suggest that we have been arrogant because we now have a majority. Surprisingly enough, from 1966 to 1972 when we had a majority and when we were considering this legislation, representatives of the Canadian Legion said this was the best veterans' legislation they had seen in 50 years. They said that then, and they are saying it now about veterans' legislation.

**An hon. Member:** What about the Veterans' Land Act?

### Veterans Affairs

**Mr. Cullen:** The reason the opposition parties want to keep this piece of legislation in existence is that they have not been able to come up with any new ideas.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Cullen:** The hon. member for York East (Mr. Collette) has indicated what the veterans feel about this particular piece of legislation, and we all heard the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) talk about what happens when we all go back to our local legions. The thing I thought significant was that I found myself apologizing for the members of the opposition party, and I did so in view of what members of the Legion in my local branch were saying. They asked me why those fellows were playing politics. They were saying that this was a shameful thing to do in a minority parliament. I indicated to those veterans that members of the opposition were not playing politics, but were sincere in their belief that this piece of legislation should be extended. That is the kind of non-partisanship all hon. members of this House should bring to debates on veterans affairs.

I did not hesitate at the time to indicate that I quite frankly did not agree with extending it, as I felt the act had served its purpose. I was not ashamed to say that then, and I am not ashamed to say it now. I will not be ashamed to say it when I go back to my riding to attend a dinner on November 11.

I think this piece of legislation has been used to do a good job. We have all heard what has been done, as recited by the hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore (Mr. Robinson). Perhaps hon. members opposite have to be reminded that surely there comes a time to look at new and different ways to help the veterans rather than the same old ways. This bill has outlived its usefulness and we have to move on to something new.

I was quite frankly surprised by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) when he looked over at the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) and indicated that the reasons he was not going along with this motion were economic. That right hon. member should know better, and knowing better I do not think he should have made that kind of ridiculous suggestion.

There are new areas of assistance to veterans that we must consider. We must consider the ages of these veterans at the present time. One suggestion that has been made, and I think it is incumbent upon me as a member of parliament to repeat it, is that we should start giving old age pensions to veterans at age 60. Many of our citizens gave up their lives during wartime, and many others gave up five or six years of their lives away from their wives, families, their brothers and sisters, and perhaps this is one way we can show our appreciation. We can never compensate them for that sacrifice, but perhaps this is one way we can help them, by lowering the eligibility age for old age pensions to 60 for veterans. That may be a start in the right direction.

The minister has suggested that there will be some arrangement made in respect of retirement. I do not know what he has in mind, but perhaps there will be some form of compensation in the way of rentals or municipal tax payments. In any event, I think we have to look at new ways to assist the veterans. These are not young people