

*Veterans' Land Act*

although I cannot entirely agree with some of the smaller points in his presentation.

I feel, Mr. Speaker, that motions of this type create a certain amount of divisiveness. Constant calls for the production of papers do not get us very far, and as far as I can see do not add anything to debate. What we are talking about is whether it is right or wrong to extend the Veterans' Land Act deadline, whether to give the veterans more, and so on. I do not think that confidential material has anything to add to the picture. I understand that the House leaders have met and discussed this matter, but I am not sure if the results of the meeting should be made known. I do not suppose they are ashamed of what happened. In any event, it is best to leave trivia out of our debates, because when we discuss trivia we are not doing that which we were sent here to do, pass legislation.

● (1720)

Speaking of trivia, I was upset because about one hour during routine proceedings was taken up with points of order and motions under Standing Order 43. I think we could get along without such proceedings. Most of the time they waste the time of the House, but perhaps not more time than this motion is wasting.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Or this speech.

**Mr. Railton:** The speech the minister gave in 1974 put the matter in a clearer light. He pointed out that veterans' land legislation which was introduced after the First World War, in 1918, was phased out six years later, in 1924, after it had done the job it was designed to do. Significantly, the new land settlement act which was brought in after World War II has been in effect for 30 years, or five times longer than the original act. Why was this law introduced in the first place? Mainly, it was to encourage returning veterans to settle on the land, to become agrarian. It was not a form of welfare.

Returning soldiers had available to them alternative schemes, for instance the university training plan which was phased out in the middle 1950s. The re-establishment credit program was terminated in 1968. So, you see, all these programs were terminated. You could only keep the present Veterans' Land Act going if you changed the reason for which it was introduced in the first place. In other words, you would need to substitute a new act for the present Veterans' Land Act. The reason for introducing the new act would be different from the reason which was behind the introduction of the old act. Such a course may be all well and good, and I am willing to wait for the introduction of that new act.

Let me refer to what the first speaker said in this debate. We all want to see what he suggests, but these things should not be done under the Veterans' Land Act. Also, the last time the House was asked to extend the provisions of the Veterans' Land Act I felt that nothing should be done, because the act had been in existence for many years. It is now thirty years after the end of the last world war, and the average veteran is just about ready to retire. Remember, the Veterans' Land Act was designed to establish soldiers on the land, and it is a bit ridiculous to establish retired people on the land. It is about time we

[Mr. Railton.]

began to look after the veteran who is ready to retire; that is the direction in which we should be looking.

I have talked to very many veterans; they feel they can talk to me because I understand their problems. I have looked after them medically, I went overseas with them in the war, and I understand them. The great majority of veterans I have talked to would be perfectly happy to see the act phased out. They think they have had a good show and they think that the last one-year extension was as much as was needed and there is no reason to keep the plan going. I know that the previous speaker talked about 700 applications having come in since April 1. I believe there were 500 last year and 519 the year before. That is not many applications, although no doubt there has been a last minute scramble by veterans under 60 who want to take advantage of the good interest rates available under the act and build a home. I should think, however, that they are thinking of retirement homes. Don't kid yourself; such applications are not for establishment on the land. As I said, I think most veterans would be satisfied if the act were phased out.

I feel that our veterans can be helped by the proposed new housing legislation, although calling for the production of papers which would show what is in the minister's mind regarding the proposed legislation—would be about as sensible as calling for the production of the papers mentioned in the motion we are discussing. I do not think the minister intends to tell the House what he is thinking about before he brings in any proposals.

The previous speaker mentioned the provision under which a veteran can borrow up to \$4,000 for the rehabilitation of a home. I think this provision should continue. Any veteran who has acquired a home under the Veterans Land Act will be entitled to the benefit of this provision until April 1, 1977. So the veteran has two more years in which to apply for such help. Perhaps this matter can also be discussed in committee. The hon. member who spoke previously also wondered if this provision could apply to condominiums, mobile homes and other similar homes. If it does, why cannot it be used to subsidize rent?

I do not think any one of us can take credit for being a greater champion of our veterans than anybody else. I think our veterans expect us to act in a businesslike way and not in a way which may prompt some to say what jolly good fellows we are. Veterans should have first call on our generosity; their position should be higher than that of the average citizen. Veterans who served in the forces and expressed willingness to serve overseas, even if they were not sent overseas, are entitled to equal treatment. How can you measure who gave most to this country? Is it the man who was badly wounded, or the man who was never in battle? We know of veterans whose limbs have been amputated; an example is the minister.

There are veterans who have been in many battles and come through without a scratch, veterans who have been on many bomber missions or who have piloted fighters and come through without getting hurt, although perhaps they had some miraculous escapes. Others have been in prisoner-of-war camps. Can we say that one veteran deserves to be more preferentially treated than another? Can we make gradations of heroism, courage and suffer-