

Supply—Veterans Affairs

not be able to receive a loan under the Veterans Land Act if his income is more than \$7,000 or, in the case of the Atlantic provinces and Newfoundland, if his income is more than \$6,000. This restriction does not apply in cases where a new house is to be built. I must confess right off the bat that I do not know the details of these instructions.

I wish to sidetrack for a moment, Mr. Chairman, to indicate the position at which we have arrived in Canada with respect to directives which are not confidential. Administrative directives go out to several hundred members of the civil service, even to the lowest of the low clerks in the civil service. But when a member of parliament asks for a copy of such a directive the minister himself refuses to give him a copy. There must be a rethinking on the part of the government of Canada with regard to its attitude toward members of parliament.

I can, as a veteran, go into a Veterans Land Act office and obtain a great deal more information by asking questions than I can by writing to the minister. The minister ordered his top civil servants to send me a summary of these directives. I have obtained ten times as much information from inquiring at Veterans Land Act offices than the minister gave me in a letter. This is a different subject, Mr. Chairman, but it is something that requires the attention of governments in the future. We have arrived at a deplorable situation when members of parliament cannot get information to which every civil servant has access.

Coming back to the restrictions on Veterans Land Act applicants in the future, it is true that this policy is supposed to apply for one year only. I maintain that we can be sure of that only if the present government is not in office at the end of that year. I recognize that behind this directive, this policy decision of the government, is the saving of money, but there are certain places where it is not possible, reasonable or feasible to save money. Veterans legislation such as the Veterans Land Act was passed by parliament as a reward for service. It was not social welfare legislation. It was never intended that there would be a means test to ascertain whether a person should receive benefits under the Veterans Land Act for university training or re-establishment. Whether a veteran was to receive these benefits was not dependent on the amount of income he earned. These benefits were provided as a reward for service.

Beginning on April 1 of this year we could have a most anomalous position. Let us say that veteran A has five children, had meritorious service, receive a disability pension of 100 per cent and has not been able up to now to save enough money for a down payment on a house under the Veterans Land Act. When he goes to the Veterans Land Act office he will be rejected if he resides in the Atlantic provinces or Newfoundland and his income is \$6,001. If the veteran is from elsewhere in Canada his application will be rejected if his income is \$7,001.

Mr. Teillet: Be fair, now.

Mr. Chatterton: But another veteran who has no children will probably be able to receive a loan because his income is less than the minimum set by the government. I should like the minister to tell us later what will happen when such an applicant applies. Will the minister use his discretion? Why were these directives issued saying that in the circumstances I have outlined a loan cannot be made?

There is another class of veteran who could be badly hit. I refer to those now in the armed forces. As hon. members know, members of the armed forces can receive a loan under the Veterans Land Act only if they are on their last posting and they can get a letter to certify that they are on their last posting. However, it is very difficult to get such a letter. The result is that many veterans who stayed in the armed forces and have not hitherto been able to qualify for a loan under the Veterans Land Act will in the ensuing year beginning April 1 not be able to get such a loan.

I have not been able to find out what other exceptions there are. I realize that where the loan is for a new house the veteran will be able to get it. However, I have not been able to find out exactly what will be the situation with regard to full-time farmers. I understand that under the Veterans Land Act those full-time farmers who apply for a loan in order to remove an encumbrance will be refused. I maintain that this is an extremely wrong principle to adopt in the case of legislation which was intended as a reward for service. It was certainly never the intention of parliament when the Veterans Land Act and other veterans legislation was passed that there should be any kind of a means test with respect to the reward to be given for service. I hope that before we pass these estimates the minister will answer some of the questions I