

Supply—Veterans Affairs

absence from his office. The answer I received was the report that was given on this young man's case. That was not the answer I wanted, because the young chap himself gave me the same report, which he had also received some little while before.

The regulations were quoted, and evidently the young veteran has to put in a certain length of time before he can qualify. I am wondering whether that is simply a hard and fast rule or whether the rule could not be made flexible enough to take in deserving cases. According to this young man's interview with me, he was not entirely responsible for his early discharge. He wanted to remain in the forces and he also wanted to go overseas. I must confess the young man feels that perhaps he has been discriminated against a little for some reason or other. I am wondering whether the minister would agree to look into this case further to see if something can be done for this young man. He does not want a grant; he wants a loan. It would appear that he is able to pay back a loan. At present he is residing on land that he is farming. It looks good, and there appears to me to be no risk on the part of the government to grant the loan to this young man under the regulations, if it is possible for him to get under the present regulations.

If there is no risk taken I do not see why he, as well as others who may have been in the army a week longer than he was, are not able to receive the benefit of the loan. I know that in all of these things you have to draw the line somewhere; but in a case like this of a young chap, who after all offered himself and was in the forces, it does seem to me that he should be able to get the benefit of this. As a matter of fact, it is not a benefit; it is simply an accommodation.

I am wondering whether the regulations could be made more flexible, or whether the minister will not look a little further into this case, with a view to trying to accommodate this particular individual.

Mr. Gregg: It is not a matter of the regulations; it is in the act. A great deal of thought was given to this by those who worked on it here and framed the act. The result of their deliberations was: for the veteran who had service overseas, yes; if he were a pensioner on any amount, yes; if he had 365 days, in the western hemisphere, yes. As my hon. friend says, they felt that there had to be a fair cut-off day somewhere, and one year appeared to be sound. Bear in mind that service of less than that time did entitle the veteran to some re-establishment credit for his service, so he was not left out entirely. But for the purpose of this act it was considered that either 365

days, a pension or service overseas was the governing factor. It is there in the act, and I think that it has met with general acceptance. I feel sorry, as my hon. friend does, for those that we have had to turn down. We have not granted any at all under that 365 days. I have one on my desk now for 363 days which I have to turn down; so there it is.

Mr. Harkness: The travelling expenses under the Veterans Land Act, soldier settlement board, seem to be pretty high. I see it is estimated at \$600,000 this year. Last year it was \$550,000. I was wondering whether it was necessary to have that amount for travelling expenses. I do not know how much of this \$550,000 was spent last year. I would like the minister to tell us that. In my own experience with this I think that there is probably a great deal more running around the country than is entirely necessary.

During the last year, for example, there was a sort of garden competition held for small holdings. I know that the supervisors and others ran all over the country looking at those gardens to see which one had made the greatest improvement. A prize was given for the garden which showed the greatest improvement. As a matter of fact, these people went around in threes. I happen to know of three of the supervisors who went around to the men's places looking at their gardens. They spent considerable time there. Then they went on to somebody else's place. They spent a great deal of time doing that. It seems to me that the travelling expenses incurred as a result of these people doing that amounted to a large amount. I do not know how many of them did it. It must have been a large number across Canada as a whole. The cost of that was extensive. I doubt very much whether any good result came from it. This is one instance of the way in which considerable amounts of money are being, if not wasted, at any rate very close to it, in the way of travelling expenses under the Veterans Land Act.

Mr. Gregg: To answer my hon. friends' question, last year the sum of \$574,340 was spent in travelling expenses. It is a large amount. I think it will be realized that those who followed the experiences of the soldier settlement board from 1920 on, and saw the losses incurred by the treasury and the taxpayer on account of veterans being placed on land and left to a great extent to fend for themselves under circumstances that they did not understand, losing their morale in many instances, and coming to the point on two occasions where these loans had to be cut off, or substantial portions of them, will not object. We are now in the process of clearing up these problem cases at the latter