

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): I have no control over what my good colleagues may say in this great, democratic country of ours, with free speech and what have you. What they say is their choice and it is all said in good faith. Last November 5 and 6 I mentioned a study which was being undertaken by my department in conjunction with other departments. I said the study had been undertaken to consider whether special arrangements should be made to assist, in particular, veterans with low or modest incomes with respect to housing. The housing requirements and preferences of veterans vary in nature. On the one hand, we must recognize the housing needs of many veterans living on low or modest incomes. On the other hand, the average age of World War II veterans today is approaching 60 and many of them are interested in acquiring a retirement home located in an urban area.

A housing program with provision for the requirements and preferences just described is not consistent with the provisions of any existing legislation for veterans. In recognition of the current housing requirements of veterans, it is considered that the provisions of the National Housing Act have greater relevance to these needs. It is with these factors in mind that a study has been undertaken by myself and my colleague, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Danson). Good progress is being made on this study, but I am not in a position to comment further this evening. I expect, however, that it will be possible for me to do so in the not too distant future.

● (2210)

Mr. Cullen: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I simply add that I stand by my word.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): There are no points of order at this stage.

VETERANS AFFAIRS—SURVEY OF VETERANS' HOUSES IN
NEWFOUNDLAND—POSSIBILITY OF ASSISTANCE FOR
IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Madam Speaker, from my experience in the service it appears that we cannot make a direct attack on the minister; we have to do it by flanking—from the left by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), and by myself from the right.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The hon. member is not that far to the right.

Mr. Marshall: I am pleased to have the opportunity to follow my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, in an attempt to make an impression on the minister. Tonight I would refer the minister to the wrongdoing of his government in adopting the attitude not to extend the expiry date of the Veterans Land Act beyond March 31, 1975.

In order to impress upon the minister the lack of rightful consideration as expressed in my supplementary question on November 22, let me say that it is completely amazing to me how the minister could condone such a decision by his colleagues in cabinet, when at the same time he was instrumental in achieving the approval of

Adjournment Debate

funds to the extent of \$38,000 to allow the provincial command of the Newfoundland and Labrador command of the Canadian Legion to conduct a survey to determine the standard of housing of veterans in that province and, hopefully, as a result of the survey to provide funds to rehabilitate the housing to an acceptable level, which I am sure the minister wants to see.

If it is worth while to expend that amount of financial assistance in undertaking such a survey, surely it would be justifiable to bring that survey to its successful conclusion and to provide the funds necessary through the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Danson), in his responsibility for housing, to allow those veterans on fixed incomes to bring their homes up to a standard of reasonable comfort for the future of themselves and their families.

Not only was this project worth while; its results, as I have seen them—and certainly as the minister has seen them—would point out the similar needs of veterans in like circumstances not only in Newfoundland but right across the nation. I would like you to take as an example one case I have read about in the report following the survey. In this particular case, as a result of inadequate toilet facilities, one veteran—who happens to be a double amputee—has to be carried out by other members of his family to an outhouse several times a day. If this is an example of our Canadian way of life which we accept, then I wonder what Canada is all about.

I have come to the very sorry conclusion that as a result of the apathetic and complacent attitude of this government, the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald), although I am sure he wants to, cannot convince his colleagues in cabinet that rather than phase out the Veterans Land Act, with promises to the opposition that a housing program will be forthcoming to replace that act, we will sorrowfully arrive at March 31, 1975, when thousands of veterans will again express their sorrow at being denied their rights under the veterans' charter.

As chairman of my caucus in respect of veterans affairs, I have gone beyond my capability under the rules of parliamentary procedure to impress within that capability the need for protecting many thousands of Canadians who will be denied their rights under the veterans' charter. If the minister, as he has said on many occasions, feels that this is to the benefit of that segment of our Canadian population, being the veterans, then so be it. I say that with only one qualification, and that is that there are only three months remaining until the expiry date, and I hope that with the support of veterans and their organizations, they will take up once more, after so many years, the battle to recover, with respect for Canada, their rights which are being denied as a result of the decision of the government to phase out the act.

Certainly we should be at a stage not only where the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial command should determine the question of a survey of substandard housing, but where we can allow and provide funds for a survey of the housing for all veterans in Canada which, if the minister is sincere, and I am sure he is, would be a humane consideration to Canadians. The government should extend the VLA until every veteran in Canada has