

*The Address—Mr. S. Knowles*

to go. I remind the minister and the government that this House of Commons on November 9, 1973, passed unanimously a motion of mine made under Standing Order 43 calling upon the government to give consideration to continuing the Veterans Land Act beyond March 31 and making it possible for veterans to get holdings even if the only reason they want those holdings is to establish homes. Surely those who fought for this land are entitled to a piece of it. It should not be cut off because of the deadline that is in the legislation.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** The minister thus far has simply said that he is still considering it. I give him credit for the fact that at no time has he by word of mouth or in a letter said that the answer is final. But neither has he given any great hope that that deadline can be lifted.

Appeals are coming in from veterans all over the country with regard to this matter, and while perhaps this is slightly at variance with the theme of my remarks tonight, which has focussed on pensions throughout, I submit this is part of the standard of living of retired veterans. If the government is not prepared to do as much for them as we want done in terms of pensions and allowances, surely the government can keep alive the Veterans Land Act. I would not just postpone that March 31 deadline; I would remove it altogether. Surely as long as any veteran who has served this country wants assistance to get a piece of this land on which to live, this parliament would want to support the veteran in that claim.

I ask the Minister of Veterans Affairs to read carefully the letters that he is getting from some of the veterans organizations on this issue. I say again: I know where his heart is. I think it is with the veterans, and I am aware of the problem he has with some of his colleagues, notably the ones who sit between him and the Minister of National Health and Welfare. The extremes are not bad, it is what is in the middle. Oh, there is the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), who has just come in. He is not between them because he is in the front row. He has great influence and I am glad he came here to hear this part of my speech. I hope he will use that influence in favour of the veterans with respect to this issue, just as I hope he will use his influence with respect to the other issues about which I have been speaking tonight, if I can prevail upon him to read the parts of my speech that were made while he was not here.

I thank hon. members of the House for their courtesy in giving me these extra few minutes. I am sure that some of my friends will say to me: "My, you made a speech on pensions, imagine that. That is something new". It was new when I first made speeches on pensions back in 1942 and 1943. But there have been many of them and we have come a long way since then in all these areas. Pensions in those days were \$20 a month payable at age 70 with a means test. Widows were not covered under the War Veterans Allowance Act. There was no Canada Pension Plan. We have come that distance because some of us believed that the things we were fighting for were right and that if we stuck with them we would win.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

I take the position tonight that we are right in asking for a substantial increase in old age security and the lowering of the pension age to 60; that we are right in asking for equal treatment for widows; that we are right in asking for immediate consideration of the problems of railway workers; and that we are right in asking for a fair deal for our veterans right down the line. I welcome the feeling of support that I sense in the House tonight for these remarks that I have made, and I call upon the government to come through.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Barnett J. Danson (York North):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure always to follow the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) particularly when he speaks about veterans pensions. I have a conflict of interest as a 30 per cent pensioner and I want to encourage him in his program as far as he wishes to go.

First, I should like to congratulate my colleagues, the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, the hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Stollery) and the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Pelletier), who acquitted themselves so ably yesterday. I also want to say how good it is to be back and to see your smiling countenance here in the House after the recess, Mr. Speaker. I think it is important that this recess took place. It was the best one I have had since I have been in the House of Commons. We had a long and grinding session and by the time we left we were a little worn out, I think. I think it is important that everybody is back refreshed. When I came back the other day I felt like a stranger in Ottawa. I think that is good because for a while we were beginning to think that this was our home, this was where the real world was. We went back to our homes and the real world and we are enriched once more.

I think the recess was particularly important because all of us accomplished a great deal of work. We now have our constituency offices. I urge those who have not opened them to do so as quickly as possible because it will give them a further contact with their constituents and a further opportunity to serve them. It is extremely important to have a fully staffed constituency office. It has put a heavier workload on us but it has also given us an opportunity to serve our constituents, one that we have not had before. When we are not here in session and are home in the recess we can continue our liaison with Ottawa easily and we are happy about that.

However, my comments will be on the throne speech. I should like to say frankly that I am particularly pleased with the throne speech of yesterday. Our newspapers kept on saying that we should not expect very much, and I did not.

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However, I was pleasantly surprised because I thought it contained a great deal. It responded very much, and addressed itself to the issues of today to which we must respond. They are gut issues; they are bread and butter issues. I have not heard too much carping about "too little, too late." In sum it is the sort of thing where people address themselves to the issues as they are.