

Veterans Affairs

application by March 31, 1975, for a specific piece of property, which is what the deadline requires.

We are dealing with a small number of people and, indeed, a different kind of situation from that of the hardship which might exist under a piece of social legislation. If there is any hardship at all to the veteran, and any way to counteract it to help those veterans who served this country, by somehow reviewing the expiry date of this act or simply through straight-forward generosity under a new piece of legislation, I am sure every member on both sides of this House would want to see to it that this is done.

I entered this debate to say that if circumstances come to light which indicate that a single veteran has been aggrieved, even though that may be the result of his own actions, we have to recognize that we can never adequately repay him. If there is any way that the cabinet can be persuaded at any time to extend to that veteran some privilege, whether by new legislation or by interpretation of old legislation, this is something we must always do. Therefore I oppose the motion.

● (1700)

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I am sorry to have to follow the remarks that the hon. member for York East (Mr. Collenette) used in opening his speech, which was an attempt to impute improper motives to the members of this House when they were considering this very important matter shortly before Remembrance Day a year ago. I think that if the hon. member reads *Hansard* he is going to regret having made those opening remarks regarding this very important matter. He may justify his stand if he wants to, and I may disagree with his stand if I want to; but he ought not to try to justify his stand by retreating into the worst kind of partisanship that we have seen during the course of this debate.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): He ought not to accuse any member on this side of saying to the minister that he lacks compassion. We have never said that. But what we have said is that we are worried about the company in which this compassionate minister finds himself so far as this legislation is concerned. We do not doubt for a moment that the minister, as the hon. member for York East has said, considers this matter every day and that he is concerned about it every day. What we are concerned about is that his colleagues are not equally concerned about the position of veterans every day.

I now turn to the remarks of my hon. friend, the member for Toronto Lakeshore (Mr. Robinson). I use the expression "my hon. friend" with some justification since he is a man I knew for many years before I came to this House. His contribution to this debate has been to read into *Hansard* a brochure on veterans' legislation, all of which is well known to the beneficiaries of veterans' legislation. He might better have read into *Hansard* the act and regulations. He took us on an Alice in Wonderland tour of the statute. Surely he did not do this for nothing. In taking us through the act he must have meant that it was a good piece of legislation. Then having said that by implication,

[Mr. Collenette.]

he announced to the House that he was going to vote against this motion, while two sentences before he had said he thought VLA was a great piece of legislation.

The minister and others in the House have implied that a study is being undertaken of other legislation. I ask the minister, as others have asked, where is this legislation? What is the timetable for the completion of this study? When is the bill going to be brought forward? If the minister says it will be introduced within a short period of time, then I would call on that compassionate man to call off his dogs and let this matter stand while the House examines that legislation. There is not one member in this House who does not have concern for the veteran. But what I am concerned about is the way this whole matter had degenerated.

I share the concern of many members of the House that these studies, if they exist at all, are only at the beginning stage. Perhaps the government does not really know what it intends to do. This piece of legislation will be off the statute books for a long time before any other legislation is made available. If this is the case—and it has not been denied—then I respectfully suggest that the deadline be removed and the statute amended so that in no way is any veteran deprived of the benefits of the legislation. More than that, I suggest the statute be amended so it is in tune with the current situation in urban communities.

I have heard the members of the House discuss the issue of partisanship. We have not approached this matter with any partishanship, and quite frankly we do not like being accused of partisanship. I remind every member of the House that when this matter last came before us as a result of the hard work of the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-Barbe (Mr. Marshall) and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), it was brought forward under Standing Order 43 and received the unanimous consent of the House. That includes the consent of the minister, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the hon. member for Sarnia-Lambton (Mr. Cullen). There was no question of partisanship at that time.

What has happened to that unanimity? Where are these other members of the Liberal party? I would be cynical if I suggested the reason is majority government.

I want to say something to those members of the House who, in a few moments, are going to stand up and vote against this motion. I want them to remember the last Remembrance Day and how proud they all were to leave this House and, on that sacred day, visit Royal Canadian Legion branches and cenotaphs all across this land and proudly lay a wreath presented by the government in memory of those who served their country in war. Madam Speaker, I will lay you dollars to doughnuts that when all of the members left that solemn ceremony and went back to the Legion branch for good fellowship, they told their friends in the Legion how they had given unanimous consent to the resolution moved last year just a few days before Remembrance Day.

In a few days' time the members of this House, including the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. MacFarlane), the hon. member for Toronto Lakeshore and the hon. member for York East, are going to go out of this place and lay those self-same style wreaths, and I should like to see them look those survivors in the eye and tell