

Veterans Affairs

the bone, made a grab for the shadow, and lost the whole thing.

We are being asked to support a proposition tonight that we are going to have something better in the future for our veterans. We are not sure what it is, but we are asked to vote out of existence a plan that has some reality to it in the hope that something else will materialize and become reality in the future.

I also think the certificate of eligibility is a somewhat ludicrous requirement. As my colleagues have been emphasizing today, a certificate should be available to veterans as long as there are veterans who require the benefit of the provisions in this measure. I believe these men and women have proven themselves in times past. I believe they have satisfied the nation of their service. What more should we want our veterans to prove than the record that they have established?

Without belabouring the point any further I hope the minister will let the House know what he thinks of the proposals that have been advanced by members on this side. I trust that he will reconsider his announcement of the phasing out of this legislation and agree to the indefinite prolongation of this plan, which we believe will continue to be of great importance and assistance to the veterans of this nation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the minister rising for the purpose of asking a question, or on a point of order?

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): Mr. Speaker, if the House would permit me, I should like to say something for information purposes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The minister is aware of the fact that he has already spoken, and in speaking twice he would close the debate unless he has the unanimous consent of the House.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): No, Mr. Speaker; it is not the minister's motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is right, I stand corrected. But the minister has spoken, and to speak again he would need the unanimous consent of the House, even though it might be to give the House information. Does the House agree?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): Might I explain, Mr. Speaker. I was using notes when I spoke, and when I got my blues and checked them I saw I had inadvertently picked up the wrong page and omitted from my remarks a page of notes that I sent around to the various House leaders. It is important to my statement in general, and if the House would allow me to add three paragraphs I would appreciate it.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): For the information of *Hansard* the insertion comes right after the sentence which reads: "Any veteran seriously interested in settling on the land has had ample time to do so." I then omitted the following: "It is a fact, of course, that the average age

today of world war II veterans is approaching 60, and most men of that age are not interested in getting into farming but, rather, getting out. This is evident not only by the limited number who have settled under the full-time farming provisions of the act in recent years but by the number who have paid up their loans and terminated their contracts.

"In commenting on the extensive period that the Veterans' Land Act has been in operation, I think it is appropriate to refer to the Soldier Settlement Act, its predecessor for veterans of world war I. Settlement under that program, which involved the establishment of 37,000 veterans, was terminated in 1924. By next March, the Veterans' Land Act will have been in effect more than five times as long. More than 140,000 veterans will have been settled under its various provisions involving advances of public funds of over \$1.25 billion.

"Apart from the comparative details I have just provided, I think it appropriate to make at least passing reference to the recent major changes to the Pension Act and the War Veterans' Allowance Act. I would point out, as well, that the estimates for veterans affairs this fiscal year is almost \$600 million, the second highest in the history of the department. As I stated in the House on October 7 last, the record of this government in the field of veterans' legislation has been outstanding and is self-evident rebuttal of the statement made recently that our veterans are treated with something less than the consideration they deserve."

I want to convey to my fellow members my deep appreciation for their permission.

Mr. Leonard C. Jones (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, the legislation that we have on our statute books for veterans has been good and progressive legislation, and I do not think that this is the time to stop its operation. I should just like to make a few points about the question under debate this evening.

This country, including each and every citizen, owes a moral debt to all veterans and servicemen generally, and I emphasize the word "all". At the present time, wherever our servicemen are serving they are serving under undue stress and severe hardship. The debt that we owe our veterans has not been paid and probably never will be paid. To those who have lived to return from service and to continue as citizens of this country, we owe not only a moral debt but a great material debt.

I urge that instead of abolishing the Veterans' Land Act or reducing the present policy under the act, the policy should be extended in time and made available to all veterans. The structures respecting lot sizes should be based on municipally and or provincially approved lots. Like many veterans who are members of the House, I too will be sharing fellowship and comradeship on Monday next.

I cannot agree and I will not agree that this legislation is worn out. If the government intends to present other legislation in lieu of it, then the responsibility is upon the government to introduce that legislation forthwith. The entire House should be privy to the intentions of the government. We cannot erase veterans' legislation unless we are certain that servicemen will never go to battle