

impressed by the various factors which have led to the conclusion on previous occasions that a minimum land size requirement should be maintained, and some of which I have reviewed here tonight.

VETERANS AFFAIRS—REQUEST THAT DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS UNDER LAND ACT BE EXTENDED

**Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe):** Mr. Speaker, what is happening tonight is another attempt on my part and on the part of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) to get some straight answers from the minister—perhaps I should not say that—but to get consideration for the fact that because of changing conditions veterans find it difficult to meet their needs under the Veterans Land Act. Apparently the first attempt has been in vain. Whether my own few words will be effective, I do not know.

The minister indicated that in 1954, in order to meet changing conditions, the department made provision for building lots primarily to be used for the building of homes. That is where the problem lies today, Mr. Speaker. A vast number of veterans are being stultified by restrictions. The minister indicated that many of the 140,000 applicants applied "just in case"; they certified themselves after October 31, 1968, just in case they wanted to build a home later on. According to reports of the department, only 5 per cent of those 140,000 applicants will take up their right to build. Even so, those people are being stultified by restrictions imposed with regard to the size of the lot, to which the minister referred, by mortgage loans being only as high as \$18,000 and by the down payment requirement of \$2,600. The minister ought to know, and if he does not he can find out by asking the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Basford), that it is impossible to build a house on a lot of one half acre or less for \$18,000.

● (2210)

I am sure the minister is getting as much mail as we are to rebut his remarks that there are not many now applying. He must be receiving mail from those who indicate they did not know about the October 31, 1968, deadline. I was on an open-line show in Kingston the other day. I received two or three calls from World War II veterans who did not know about the deadline.

Apart from the facts I have mentioned, there is no justification for phasing out the act if there is even one veteran in this country who is denied the opportunities provided under the act. A pledge was made in 1917, and again in 1944 by the then prime minister who stated emphatically, and I am not trying to be dramatic or emotional, that no veteran would ever have to say that Canada did not repay the obligation owed to all veterans who served.

Without going into further debate, there is a very simple solution to the problem that the minister could propose to his conscientious-objector cabinet. I suggest the minister suspend phasing out the act for a period of three years. I suggest he amend the act to raise the maximum loan to \$30,000, reduce the lot requirements to a normal-size building lot and provide the same method of 95 per cent loans under the National Housing Act.

Adjournment Debate

The minister should write a letter to every veteran who is certified, asking whether they are now ready to build under the new conditions. He should write to every veteran of World War II and Korea offering the same terms and asking their intentions on retirement. With the co-operation of the national veterans organizations, every last veteran should be allowed to be certified within that period.

It would also be a shame to phase out the veterans land administration which is set up with top expertise. It has the organizational ability to serve a large segment of our population in the desperate housing situation that exists today. All the minister will be doing is throwing thousands of citizens into the jungle where many hundreds of thousands are having a difficult time finding housing today, something which this government is finding difficult to resolve.

I hope the minister will not quote more meaningless figures and leave the matter hanging in the air. We only have four more months. I ask the minister to ensure that all of us will not be sorry for the impending action this government intends to take.

**Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) has suggested that the deadline of March 31, 1974, as specified in the Veterans Land Act pursuant to an amendment made to that act some eight years ago, will be detrimental to some 125,000 veterans who are qualified to apply for VLA loans because the time remaining is so short as to preclude them from locating suitable properties and submitting loan applications. It seems to me that the essence of his representations was expressed in his remarks in the House on November 6 last. My response at that time is recorded at page 7605 of *Hansard* and I believe there is little more that I need say tonight.

I think I should repeat, however, that I am satisfied the vast majority of those veterans who obtained VLA qualification certificates by the deadline of October 31, 1968, did so on a purely precautionary basis in case their personal circumstances or plans should alter before the March, 1974 deadline. My view in this respect is supported by the fact they have already had some 28 years to settle under the provisions of the act if they were interested in doing so; and that apart from the increase which I think was to be expected in this final year, there was relatively no change in the number who applied for establishment in each of the three previous fiscal years.

Having regard for the lending deadlines specified in the act as approved by parliament in 1965, the veterans land administration has been taking advantage, wherever practical, of normal staff attrition so that there will be no undue number of surplus personnel after new settlement comes to an end. Notwithstanding the lesser number of staff now on strength compared to last year and the year before, almost without exception loan applications are being handled in an effective manner. I am confident the VLA staff will continue to do so between now and next March even if some further acceleration should occur in the rate of applications.