

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Fraser: Madam Speaker, I am in your hands and the hands of the House.

Some hon. Members: Ten o'clock.

Mr. Fraser: I wish to answer the question but government supporters do not wish me to answer.

Some hon. Members: Ten o'clock.

● (2200)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

VETERANS AFFAIRS—POSSIBLE INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION CONCERNING HOUSING FOR VETERANS

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, November 22, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 1575, I put this question to the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald):

Mr. Speaker, in view of the many references made on November 5 and November 6 during the recent debate on the Veterans Land Act to the possibility of introducing veterans' housing legislation, which would be even better than the provisions of the Veterans Land Act, could the Minister of Veterans Affairs now say whether such legislation will be introduced in the near future?

The Minister of Veterans Affairs replied:

Mr. Speaker, as was indicated by myself and also by my colleague, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs, this proposal is still under study, and I feel good progress is being made.

A few days ago, because of my continuing concern about this matter, I put another set of questions on the same subject to the Minister of Veterans Affairs. The questions and answers are found in *Hansard* for December 9 at page 2057. The initial question and answer were much the same as those I have already quoted, but as a supplementary question on December 9 I put this to the minister:

Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question which relates to the fact that the right to make applications under the Veterans Land Act will expire on March 31, 1975. Will the new legislation be ready by that date?

It was at that time the minister gave an answer which gave me some concern. All his previous answers had indicated that something definite was coming in terms of veterans housing legislation to replace the Veterans Land Act. His answer to my supplementary question on December 9 was in these words:

Mr. Speaker, I feel that whatever is going to be done will be made known before then.

That, of course, is before March 31, 1975. The minister ended with this sentence:

I am not endeavouring to leave the impression that it will be in the form of legislation.

I confess to great concern over that reservation which the minister made. When we were debating this matter on November 5 and November 6 on the basis of a motion

[Mr. Fraser.]

which I made arising out of arrangements we made in the last parliament, a motion seconded by my friend the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall), the line from the other side for two full days was that the Veterans Land Act had been an excellent piece of legislation, but it had served its purpose and now it was time for it to be replaced by something better, something that would fit today's needs. When taking part in that debate, the Minister of Veterans Affairs said that the Veterans Land Act had fulfilled its purpose, and so on, but what was needed now was something of greater relevancy. He said:

... that a study has been undertaken to examine whether special arrangements should be made to assist such veterans. Because discussions are still in process, I am not in a position to comment further at this time. I am hopeful, however, that it will be possible for me to do so in the not too distant future.

Those words of the minister were spoken on November 5, 1974, as recorded at page 1072 of *Hansard* when he was taking part in the two-day debate on my motion. The speeches from the other side—and I am happy to use this example tonight because the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen) is here for this late show—is he listening? I am trying to catch the ear of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Cullen: Sorry.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I was saying that the speeches from the other side against my motion culminated, I thought, in a statement by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance when he said, as recorded in *Hansard* of November 6, at page 1128:

I have no hesitation whatsoever in voting against this particular motion. Nor will I be ashamed to go back to the veterans in my riding and indicate to them, as I am doing publicly here in this House, that I am against this motion because the act has done the job it was set up to do. Let us now get on with some new legislation. For the reasons I have stated, I am voting against this particular motion.

But now, after the Liberals had all been persuaded to vote against an extension of the Veterans Land Act because new and better legislation was coming, the Minister of Veterans Affairs says, "I do not want to leave the impression that there is going to be new legislation; I have been talking about arrangements; I have been discussing the matter with the Minister of State for Urban Affairs." Some of us contend that this is not good enough, and that if the Veterans Land Act cannot be continued, the arrangements promised us should be implemented and legislation on this matter should be introduced so that it can come into effect before March 31, 1975.

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question and the concern felt by the hon. member. In my remarks I said I did not want to leave the impression there would be new legislation. On previous occasions I had referred to special arrangements. I did not state there would be new legislation. The hon. member, in questioning me, was very emphatic, but all I am leaving is the impression that things can be done sometimes without legislation; possibly by making use of existing legislation.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Tell that to your colleague.