

Veterans Loans

this situation obtained, and we decided in that month to recommend this amendment to parliament.

Mr. Brooks: That is October of last year.

Mr. Harris: Last year, 1955. This is intended to cover all future cases, of course. The other information that the hon. member has asked for will be given on second reading. I do not have it at the moment. With respect to the Korean veterans, the amendment of course applies to them as well, as the hon. member has said, so that at the expiration of their ten year period they will have the additional time that the amendment grants between the date of application and the granting of the loan.

Mr. Brooks: What effect will it have on the staff?

Mr. Harris: The staff can handle this without any addition. We in finance do keep our staff down. We do not think that any additional staff or expense will be required to administer the act in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Brooks: I did not contemplate there would be any addition to the staff. I wanted to know if there would be any reduction in staff. There will be less work to do.

Mr. Harris: I do not think we can reduce the staff, although I will certainly look into the matter. It is a very minor job compared with others that we do and I think it is looked after by two or three civil servants who have many other duties as well.

Mr. Brooks: There is another question I asked the minister with reference to extending the time. I do not mean for those whose applications are already in, but since this is a popular piece of legislation I should like to know if there is any disposition on the part of either the veterans affairs department or the minister's department to increase the time from five to ten years for the benefit of applicants who might like to have assistance in setting up a business.

Mr. Harris: This, of course, brings up a rather fundamental question of policy. The purpose of the act was to see that veterans were re-established, not to go further and provide some kind of assistance to them throughout their lifetime. I realize that one may argue for the latter case, but this legislation was one of the many measures which were designed to see that veterans had an opportunity very quickly to obtain assistance in order to get started in business. I must say I am only surmising but I think I can say that the number of applications had

been declining steadily except for those that are coming up in respect of the Korean veterans.

Mr. Brooks: There were 218 last year.

Mr. Harris: Yes, but that would probably be because some realized that it was the last year. It would not be our intention to extend the time unless there are very good reasons for it. I would be glad to hear any argument advancing reasons but it would have to be based on a continuing advantage to a veteran whose circumstances did not require him to take advantage of the legislation in the past ten years.

Mr. Brooks: It was done, I might say, in the case of the Veterans Land Act.

Mr. Harris: I realize that.

Mr. Herridge: I want to say a few words on the resolution which provides, as the minister said, for a simple amendment to the Veterans Business and Professional Loans Act. I suppose you might term this resolution as a form of legislative tiddledywinks. Anyway, I have a personal interest in the measure. I was present at the Canadian Legion convention in Vancouver in 1944 and was one of the members of the committee that helped to draft the first resolution that suggested legislation of this type to the government of Canada. I remember the discussion on the legislation in 1946 when it was introduced and in the veterans affairs committee. I also remember the debate on second reading on August 8 of that year.

At that time I think most members of the house who spoke on second reading of the bill thought that it would perform a useful service for a good number of veterans. I think experience has proven that correct, although there have been some criticisms. My experience in my constituency, and I can only speak of what I know, is that it has been of assistance to a considerable number of veterans in becoming re-established, particularly in very small businesses. I understand the department is solely concerned with qualifying the man. It issues a certificate establishing the fact that the veteran concerned is qualified to receive assistance under the act and the administration of the act is the responsibility of the officials of the banks.

While, as I said, on the whole I think it has been a most successful piece of legislation, I have found a few instances where I thought the positions of the officials of the banks were rather rigid. There was a somewhat too severe and rigid assessment of the risk. I have only a very few cases but I have some of that type. I am going to illustrate by mentioning one. There was a veteran in a small