

*Veterans Affairs Committee Report*

I know of many veterans who have not been able to raise the money to take advantage of the Veterans Land Act. Why could there not have been an extension? Why was there a cut-off? Are we to assume that a person 50 years of age is too old to build a house? There should be special legislation for veterans as well as maintaining the present legislation. Why did the government say after 25 years, that is enough of that foolishness, we will cut it off?

I am shocked at the way the government is dealing with the veterans charter. When the veterans charter was designed and developed after the war, it was one of the best pieces of veterans legislation in the world. I am surprised that only 25 years later the government is trying to destroy and distort that charter at every opportunity. Changes made to the Veterans Land Act may only be the beginning. The minister should state that he will not agree to any curtailment of veterans rights.

I do not know what is going to happen to the Woods report. I do not know to what extent the government will accept or reject the report. I do know that there is not a veteran in this country who is not disappointed and disgusted with the government for commissioning a report on abuses in veterans legislation and then not being prepared to introduce legislation immediately to correct those abuses. I have attended a number of meetings of the Legion and other veterans organizations. In every case these veterans are unhappy with the government and disgusted with the minister for not pressing the implementation of many of the recommendations in the Woods report to provide them with immediate benefits.

We are all aware that the government is carrying out an austerity program. However, this program should not be applied to legislation respecting veterans. What happened to the former Minister of Veterans Affairs may also happen to this minister. The former minister was unable to get the nomination again in his own constituency. The present minister is not doing much better than the former minister. The minister should seriously consider this matter in order to avoid becoming very unpopular with the thousands of veterans in this country.

The veterans are depending on the minister to implement the recommendations of the Woods report in order that they may receive these benefits. I strongly urge the minister to consider this matter for his own peace of

[Mr. Peters.]

mind. He has a responsibility to all the veterans of Canada who have been waiting a long time for final justice in their relationship with their country through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Dumont (Frontenac):** In my remarks on the comments made by the previous speakers, I for one would like to support unreservedly those words which conjure up the time when I myself was a bit young. I was not old enough to go to war, but I followed very closely the unfolding of that conflict which allowed us to preserve the freedom to speak in this house.

I agree with all that has been said, because I often receive complaints from veterans in my constituency who feel that they are not treated adequately. Too often, owing to a mere technical mistake, they are not eligible to the pension to which they are entitled.

I know that there should exist regulations, that the generosity of the government is not boundless. It has but limited resources yet it belongs to the department to take a more human approach toward the requests it receives.

● (12:50 p.m.)

I recall a fact which took place a month ago. A veteran who, at the end of the war, had been a few months only in England, came back to Canada where he had served for four years. Because he was short of a few days of service to qualify for service overseas, he could not qualify for a pension that would have enabled him to live decently.

Veterans, as all Canadians, are affected by the increase in the cost of living, and because their pension is not big enough to enable them to live decently, they are treated as people on welfare.

I will not repeat what the previous speakers said, but I will deal with a problem that is for French Canadians, and especially Quebecers, simply shocking.

That happened recently—several hon. members have talked about it earlier—during the commemoration of the battle of Normandy, in France. First of all, I shall read—for the understanding of the context,—a report from the *Montreal-Matin* of June 12, and I quote:

—during a trip, all too short, to the Normandy beaches. The commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the allied landing in 1944 was taking place. Thousands of American, English and Canadian veterans were coming back for the first time to the scene of the battle, when French veterans,