

Veterans' Land Act

Mr. Lawrence: I move the adjournment of the debate, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser)—Industry—Electronics—Lay-offs of workers caused by importation of foreign television sets—Government action; the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles)—Social security—Suggested review of pension escalation formula—Possible increase in basic pensions; the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall)—Fisheries—Presence of Portuguese and French druggers in St. George's Bay—Government action.

It being five o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely, notices of motions (papers), private bills, public bills.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

[English]

REQUEST FOR MATERIAL RESULTING FROM FIRST MEETING OF VLA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe) moved:

That an order of the House do issue for a copy of all material resulting from the first meeting of the VLA senior management team convened by the director-general of the Veterans' Land Administration in Ottawa from March 26 to 29, 1973, as follows (a) operational plans in the periods before and after March 31, 1974, deadline for new loan applications (b) further implementation of MBO as the VLA style of management.

He said: Mr. Speaker, my motion today has to do with my notice of motion for production of papers asking for copies of all material resulting from the first meeting of the Veterans' Land Act management team convened by the director-general of the Veterans' Land Administration held from March 26 to 29, 1973, and dealing with operational plans in the periods before and after March 31, 1974, which was the original deadline date for the Veterans' Land Act, dealing with the deadline for new applications and also with further implementation of management objectives as the style of management under the Veterans' Land Administration.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

The main reason that I had the matter transferred for debate is because of my surprise when on more than one occasion this information was denied on the basis of the fact that it was an internal document and could not be disclosed. I really wonder what would be so secretive or classified about discussions in regard to the operational plans between the periods before and after the original deadline date of March 31, 1974, under the Veterans' Land Act.

It must be obvious that those plans must have included the phasing out of the act, and that was before we were able to force the extension of the act for a year after March 31, 1974. I have no quarrel with the senior management team, whoever they happen to be, carrying out their planning because, naturally, they were directed to do so. Nor do I object to the "management by objective" style of management. What I do object to, taking into account the reaction to the phasing out of the act by veterans and organizations across this country, is that those Canadians should be denied the information that would be revealed by the papers I have asked for. The Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) kept repeating during the many months of debate on the issue that the act had outlived its usefulness, but there was no substantial reason given which was acceptable to me or to the many thousands of veterans who claimed that they were denied their rights under the charter. The only exception to this was two or three editorial writers who did not know what the hell they were talking about in the first place.

If the government, in its refusal to produce the papers, can substantiate that it was in the best interests of Canada to phase out the act, then it should put its reasons by disclosing the requested documents. I am sure that every member of the House of Commons would want to clear his own mind if such proof could be produced. Certainly the members of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs would want to know, in order to ease their consciences because of our failure to live up to Canada's commitment made to veterans over the years. This might be the opportunity we have been waiting for, and I am certain that the motion today will come to a vote and be passed unanimously.

As a result of questioning today, I understand that between the period of April 1, 1974, which was after the original deadline, to the end of January, 1975, over 2,700 veterans applied and are receiving benefits under the Veterans Land Act or they are in the process, which proves that it was worth while having the act extended for a year. I hope that in the remaining two-month period, or less than two months, there will be many more. But indeed we in the opposition parties are completely justified in our request to have the act extended. However, we are now at the crossroads again where we have less than two months before the new deadline, and those two or three press critics who seem to know everything that is going on in the country will no doubt try to cost the program out for the year against the fact that there were over 2,700 applications, and they will be looking for the cost of administration to process those 2,740 applications.

I want to remind those self-styled experts that, as I have said many times before, the administration of the Veterans' Land Administration will not go up one cent. It will