

holders, may obtain a grant of up to \$2,320 for the purchase of improvements, for essential building materials, for clearing and breaking, and for livestock and equipment. No down payment is required, and the \$2,320 is not repayable if the veteran fulfills the terms of his settlement agreement for a 10-year period. Similar assistance is available to Indians on Indian reservations.

Since inception, 140,000 veterans have been approved for assistance under the Veterans' Land Act, more than 13 per cent of the enlistments for world war II and Korea. For the fiscal year 1973-74, over 8,000 loans were approved of which 2,500 were additional loans to veterans already settled under the act. Since inception of VLA operations, in excess of \$1,200 million has been disbursed under all sections of the act. The outstanding principal investment is \$545 million. Currently there are approximately 9,000 farm accounts and 51,000 small holding and commercial fishing accounts. At the end of September, 1974, the total VLA staff consisted of 480 employees, compared to 1,818 in 1947. As one can see, this represents a considerable reduction in staff, in line with the reduction in the number of claims.

Since 1942 when the act was created there have been a substantial number of amendments. The original ceiling of \$4,800 was progressively increased to \$40,000 for full-time farmers and to \$18,000 for small farmers, commercial fishermen and small holders. The repayment period has been extended from 25 to 30 years. Aside from the increased ceilings perhaps the most significant changes have related to the purpose for which expenditures may be made.

**Mr. Benjamin:** The minister wants to cancel these provisions.

**Mr. Robinson:** Initially, expenditures were limited to the purchase of land and improvements and to the purchase of a limited amount of livestock and farm equipment. It is now possible to utilize loans for almost any worth while purpose relating to the improvement of the security in land permanent improvements, for livestock and equipment, and to pay off various farm operations or property debts.

● (1540)

There were no terminal dates in the act prior to 1959. In that year, by means of Bill C-50, a section was introduced into the act which established a time limit for a veteran who wished to be settled under Part I to obtain a certificate of qualification. The time set was 15 years after September 30, 1947, or 15 years after a veteran's discharge, whichever date was the later. By Bill C-80 in 1962 this date was extended to October 31, 1968, which corresponded with the final date for the use of re-establishment credits.

For the purpose of phasing out VLA lending operations in an orderly manner, Bill C-128 was approved by parliament in 1965. It established terminal dates for submitting loan applications and for the commencement of work related to construction or effecting other permanent improvements. The terminal date for new establishment loan applications was the March 31, 1974, but this deadline, pursuant to the provisions of Bill C-17 approved by parliament last spring, has been extended to March 31, 1975. A veteran with a subsisting contract may apply for an addi-

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tional loan up to March 31, 1977. Construction or improvement work must commence within one year of these dates.

The foregoing is a concise history of the act and its provisions. It is now time it was terminated. If new measures are necessary, they can be brought forward, Mr. Speaker.

I agree with the minister when he said, and I quote:

An urban housing program for veterans who have reached or are approaching retirement from post-war careers is inconsistent with an agriculturally-oriented rehabilitation program which was designed to assist veterans following their discharge from wartime active service.

I also agree with him when he said, and I quote:

Many low or modest-income veterans have needs in respect to housing. It is realized that many do—and that their requirements or preferences are varied in nature. It is in recognition of that awareness, and of the greater relevancy of the provisions of the National Housing Act to those needs, that a study has been undertaken to examine whether special arrangements should be made to assist such veterans.

In conclusions may I say that I have every concern and interest in veterans and their affairs. I have had close contact with them for over 25 years. However, I do believe the Veterans' Land Act should be wound up without any further extension. I must therefore vote against the motion because the Veterans' Land Act has really outlived its original basic usefulness.

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, I do not often speak on matters affecting veterans, although it goes back a long way to when I first became a veteran. And 1916, in the month of March or April, is a year and a day of long ago. Through the years I belonged to the Canadian Legion, first in the Great War Veterans' Association from September, 1917, through to 1924 when the Canadian Legion had its beginnings.

When I was Prime Minister I recommended to Her Majesty the Queen that the Canadian Legion, by reason of its service, should be entitled to have the addition of the royal honour of Royal. It was pointed out to me that no other national Legion, whether in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand or elsewhere had that right. I could only conclude that the Prime Ministers of those several countries had not asked her for her approval. As a result of the representation made, the Canadian Legion became the Royal Canadian Legion.

When I listen to these young members speak, I begin to realize that I am indeed casting my longest shadow toward the east. I have listened to a number of the speeches and read all of them. I would now endeavour to bring this House back to the question that we face.

I recall the days of world war II and the tremendous galaxy of greatness sitting on the treasury benches. All of them today have gone beyond, excepting one. I think of Colonel J. L. Ralston, Angus L. Macdonald, Chubby Power and Clarey Gillis of the CCF. There are other members I could mention in the Social Credit. The only one now living of that group who sat on the front benches of those days is the Hon. Joseph Thorson.

In 1944 it was decided that this House should consider a veterans charter. In those and in later days when debates took place on matters concerned with veterans, ministers were in the House. Today the numbers that are present