

them are veterans who did not obtain a qualification certificate prior to October 31, 1968. Their not doing so stems from a number of reasons. As a matter of fact, some of them—I think it is a particular shame that they are being denied this benefit—did not apply for a qualification certificate because they knew at that time that there was a March 31, 1974, deadline in the legislation, and so they thought there was no point in their applying for a qualification certificate.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): There was no pressure on housing then.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): As my hon. friend from Edmonton West says, the pressure on housing was not as great then as it is now. There are also many cases of veterans who understandably did not get the word that they had to get a certificate before October 31, 1968. I even have some cases of veterans who had written letters years before, which letters were not regarded as formal applications, and they are not now permitted to come under the provisions of this act.

There have been other instances. For example, there are a number of widows who have written to me. The ones I have in mind are widows who are themselves veterans and would normally have the rights of veterans, but somehow or other equality does not seem to exist in this area. Many widows who themselves are veterans are unable to take advantage of this legislation for one reason or another. It seems to me that that sort of thing ought to be cleared up.

As I said the other day when the minister announced that this legislation would come in, perhaps one of the main advantages of it is that it gives us another year in which to fight for these other improvements that are so important. If the granting of loans were to end as of this Sunday, our chances in the next few months of getting the act overhauled would not be very good. But since the Veterans' Land Act will still be an active piece of legislation for another year, perhaps in that year our efforts might be to some avail.

As the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe has pointed out on a number of occasions, this legislation also ought to be amended in regard to the amount of money available by way of a loan. After all, costs have soared, particularly the cost of land and the cost of building homes. In view of this, the grant available by way of loan under the Veterans' Land Act should be increased. Likewise the minimum size of lot requirement should be lowered. As the minister knows, this is a matter about which many veterans feel very strongly.

This leads me to the point that almost every time we make our pitch about the Veterans' Land Act the minister says that we have forgotten its original purpose, that we are trying to twist the purpose from its being legislation simply enabling people to go on land as farmers, small or what-have-you, to legislation that will enable veterans to secure land on which to establish a home for retirement. I accept that criticism, Mr. Speaker; the minister is perfectly right. Indeed, that is the very change that we are trying to make.

In support of my position I suggest a couple of points for consideration. Firstly, a few decades have gone by since most of these veterans served overseas. When they came

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back, getting a small holding for some do-it-yourself agriculture was something in which they were interested. They are now 25 or 30 or more years older, and do-it-yourself agriculture—

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): That is out of date now.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): That is out of date now, says my "parliamentary secretary" from Edmonton West, who is giving me a great deal of help with this speech, and I appreciate it. The problem of these veterans today is the problem of finding a place to live during their years of retirement.

I remind the minister that this House of Commons expressed itself on this point unanimously on November 9, 1973. That was the day that I asked leave of the House under Standing Order 43 to move a motion which my hon. friend from Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe seconded. These were the words of that motion, as reported at page 7693 of *Hansard*:

That this House requests that the Minister of Veterans Affairs give urgent consideration to the amending of the Veterans' Land Act regulations to permit veterans to acquire small holdings, even if the main purpose of most of the older veterans now applying for loans under the Veterans' Land Act is to meet their housing requirements, it being the view of this House that entitlement to a piece of this land ought to be the right of any veteran.

I plead guilty, Mr. Speaker, and most of the hon. members of this House will have to plead guilty, to the charge that we are trying to get the government to adapt the Veterans' Land Act to the needs of veterans today. What they need today is not just the opportunity to raise a few carrots. What they need today is an opportunity to get themselves homes in which they can live the latter years of their lives. I plead very strongly that this kind of an adjustment in the Department of Veterans Affairs toward the Veterans' Land Act ought to be made, and I urge again that the view expressed unanimously by this House ought to be taken into consideration.

● (1620)

I believe that between the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) and myself we have spelled out the other things we ought to be doing at this time. We regret that the bill was drawn so narrowly that even the amendments we have in mind would probably be out of order if we tried to move them.

Certainly it is our view first that instead of an extension for only one year the extension ought to make it possible for any veteran who qualifies under the Veterans' Land Act to take advantage of that qualification as long as he lives and, in the second place, we think the amount of money available under the act should be increased and that the minimum lot requirements should be lowered.

I have already referred to the cases of widows who themselves are veterans and who are being denied the rights available to other veterans, and I also stress very strongly the point, and I think there will be others pressing this when we get into the Committee of the Whole on the bill, that the failure at this time to do anything about the cutoff date of October 31, 1968, works a real hardship and a real case of discrimination against many veterans. I