

Act should be reviewed because it has no further purpose. I should like to remind some of my friends on the government side of the wording of the motion of November 9, 1973. My hon. friend from York East was not here then, but this motion obtained unanimous consent in this House and it was his colleagues, sitting in the House on that day, who approved it. The motion reads:

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.

That is the issue, Mr. Speaker. That is what the government agreed to last November 9. That is why this motion is before the House today, and none of what they agreed to then has come about.

It is not enough to come in front of this House and say, "We have decided, despite what we agreed to a year ago, that we are not going to amend that legislation. We are going to do nothing to secure those rights. We are not going to continue the legislation and make amendments which would put into effect the principle to which we agreed on November 9, 1973. We are going to eliminate it; take it right out of the legislation."

But that is what the government is doing, and it is doing it without offering us any commitment that something will be placed before us in substitution. I say that with all sincerity, Mr. Speaker, and I ask every one of my friends on the government side to ask themselves quietly in their own consciences if they believe that something will be brought in as a substitute, and what commitments they have that this will be done. I have the answer already, of course. The answer is that they do not have a clue whether they are going to do anything or not.

I ask one other commitment from hon. members on the government side. After they defeat this motion today, after they have wiped out this legislation which their minister admits secures the rights of veterans, will they search their consciences and go to work to make sure that very soon substitute legislation is put before the House so that the rights, which the government agreed to a year ago, will be reasserted at the earliest possible time?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I think I was just about to bring up the same point because no other member seems to be standing to participate in the debate. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) under Standing Order 37(2) has right of reply, having moved a substantive motion. I wonder if we could come to an agreement to allow the hon. minister, in a short speech with allotted time, to answer the question that was asked?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, that question was asked by the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) and I rose to say that we would consent. I have spoken to the minister about that.

Veterans Affairs

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that we will allow the minister to give a short answer to the question asked by the hon. member for Edmonton West?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked me if I could explain how a veteran serving in Germany could select a piece of property on which he could become established, and I told him I could explain. A year and a half ago regulations were passed, approved and accepted to the effect that a soldier serving in a foreign land could select an agent to do this. That is how it is done and that is how it has been done. A number of veterans have thanked me for this.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have had a good many experiences in my years in this House but I think this is the first time that I ever had the privilege of concluding a debate that I started.

In connection with this two day debate which was provided for in a statute that was passed in March, I want to say how much I appreciate that speeches made by all members but I have to say that in particular I appreciate the speeches of those who have supported this motion.

● (1750)

I am still conscious of the events of the last session of parliament. Because of that I am surprised that there are those on the other side who have spoken as though we should not have brought this motion before the House of Commons. Not only was there complete unanimity on November 9, 1973, to the motion put in my name and seconded by the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall), which was again read a few moments ago; there was, also, on March 28, 1974, unanimous approval for the amendment to the bill we had before us that day, which provided for this debate to take place. Indeed, the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) in speaking to that amendment said, on behalf of the government, that the proposal was welcome.

In other words, last March this House, at the very time it was extending the Veterans' Land Act for another year, said that we would welcome the opportunity some time after September 30 to debate the matter again. That is what we have been doing. We have been carrying out in the past two days the will of the House, as expressed by the House of Commons last March.

Because I have the right of reply, I am allowed to speak until the last minute. But it is not necessary for me to do so. Rather, I should like to speak for just a few minutes, and in doing so to deal not with the unimportant things which have been said by members on the other side, but to deal with what those on the government side seem to regard as their strongest argument.

Liberal after Liberal has said that it is time for something better, and that they are going to oppose this motion, that they are going to oppose the continuation of the Veterans' Land Act beyond March 31, 1975, because veterans should have something better with respect to housing. That would be a good argument if there were anything to it. But, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Veterans Affairs was