

have any sense of consideration for our comrades and their colleagues on our side who want to support this motion—those who receive letters every day from their veteran constituents—and if they have any consideration for their colleagues who want to support this motion but probably will be commanded not to, they must support the motion. It will not hurt anyone, but, on the contrary, will help Canadians.

If the motion does come to a vote, the government should allow it to be a free vote in order to give all hon. members the opportunity to vote as they feel they should and not as they are commanded to; because if not, it will always remain on their conscience that they failed the veterans of Canada who fought for their country, not only those who lived and returned but those who remained in graves in other countries after fighting on behalf of Canada, and did not return.

[Translation]

**Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski):** Madam Speaker, I listened with pleasure to the two previous speakers and studied with interest the motion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) for extending the delay allowed in October 1973 to veterans' applications for land purchases. As the period was normally supposed to end on March 31, 1975, I think, Madam Speaker, that it would be advisable to cancel that deadline, or at least to extend it for another 5 years. This additional delay would allow veterans who, for different reasons, were not able to avail themselves of certain advantages provided by the legislation, to benefit from a further delay.

I often wondered why the government wanted so much to end this program in March 1975. All things considered, none of the veterans, to my knowledge, imposed conditions for his presence on the battlefields or for the length of wars in which he so courageously fought and sacrificed the prime of his life. In wartime, our governments are prepared to grant anything for the defence of our freedoms. Unfortunately, when the trouble is over, the same governments forget, or seem to, all the sacrifices that were demanded of our brave soldiers. Once back in their country, the soldiers must keep on fighting, this time against those they so valiantly defended.

Madam Speaker, those are the reasons why I ask that the legislation remain in force for at least another five years and I gladly support the motion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

● (1640)

[English]

**Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Madam Speaker, before I begin my remarks I should like to refer to an assertion by the hon. member for Humber-St. George's St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) that veterans who served in the war and are now serving overseas were denied the privilege of being entertained by VLA. I should like to inform the House that this is not a true statement. My department sent people to foreign lands to make presentations to the veterans who were serving with our forces overseas; they were very well received. Many veterans thus had the opportunity to establish a home in the area they desired. I also wish to thank those serving

overseas for that opportunity. I should like that to be known by this House.

Madam Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks by stating that the review requested by the motion which is before the House has already been carried out. I stated in the House on October 7 last that the whole question of the Veterans' Land Act was under careful study by the government. I think it appropriate that I outline a number of the factors which were of principal importance and relevance to this study. Some hon. members may not be aware of the fact that the Veterans' Land Act was enacted as a rehabilitation measure to assist veterans to engage in farming on a full or part-time basis following their discharge from active service in World War II. This is clear from the following sections of the preamble to the act:

Whereas many men now serving in the active forces of Canada have recorded their desire to settle on land or engage in farming when hostilities cease, and it is desirable that suitably qualified veterans be encouraged to seek rehabilitation in the agricultural industry;

And whereas part-time farming coupled with other employment is an increasingly important aspect of rural and semi-rural life in Canada;

And whereas it is in the public interest as a measure of rehabilitation to assist in acquiring the ownership of farm homes by qualified veterans;

And whereas it is the purpose of the dominion government to provide a measure of financial assistance to veterans on their performance of prescribed settlement conditions in order to promote their engaging in agricultural pursuits either as a full-time occupation or as a part-time occupation coupled with some other employment.

The original purpose of the act has been amply fulfilled. By March 31 next, 30 years will have elapsed since the end of World War II. After such a lengthy period of time, it is difficult to contend that there is any continuing need for the act to assist veterans to rehabilitate themselves for a career in civilian life. In this connection, I would remind hon. members that the act was one of three alternative rehabilitation plans. The university training plan was concluded in the mid-fifties. The re-establishment credit program terminated on October 31, 1968. The periods in which these two other alternative measures were available were considered to be adequate and appropriate. It seems evident that parliament had the same opinion about the Veterans' Land Act when it gave unanimous approval in 1965 to the establishment of a terminal date for phasing out new settlement in an orderly manner over a span of nine years. By next March, that period will have extended to ten years and, as I stated earlier, 30 years since the end of World War II. Any veteran seriously interested in settling on the land has had ample time to do so.

[Editors' note: See page 1089 for section of speech omitted at this point]

Earlier in my remarks I referred to the agricultural orientation of the Veterans' Land Act. It was on the basis of that concept, and on the experience of the Soldier Settlement Act, that the benefit provisions and other terms of the Veterans' Land Act were premised. With respect to land settlement in the post-World War II years, there is no question that the original concepts and provisions were sound and invaluable to the successful establishment of the many thousands of veterans who elected to seek rehabilitation in civilian life under the VLA program. However, with the technological socioeconomic and other