

War Service Grants Act

on November 10 last it suggested that the time should be extended until 1960. I should like the minister to tell the house why the government has seen fit to restrict it to five years.

Mr. Lapointe: The act as it now stands terminates on the 1st of January, 1955. Therefore by extending it for five years we will be extending it until 1960, exactly what the Legion requested.

Mr. Herridge: Excuse me; I was thinking in terms of the act expiring next year. That is very satisfactory indeed. That is the second occasion during this session that the government has given effect to representations by the Canadian Legion on somewhat minor matters. However, half a loaf is better than none, or a fraction of a loaf. I noted that the minister said that the time within which a veteran may repay his re-establishment credit received for some other purpose in order that he may take advantage of the Veterans Land Act expires on December 31, 1957. I am glad that the time has been extended for veterans who want to take advantage of the Veterans Land Act, but I would suggest to the minister that he should give consideration to an even longer extension.

It has been my experience, as I am sure it has been that of most members who are interested in this question and also the officials of the department, that there are quite a number of veterans who started out on one course and found they were not suited for that type of work. The percentage is not big, but a number started out on one course and found they were not suited for the thing they were tackling. They had accepted re-establishment credits and things of that sort and then wanted to change direction. A goodly number of these veterans have found that the best thing to do is take advantage of the provisions of the Veterans Land Act. That has been very noticeable in the last two or three years.

When the boys returned home immediately after the war, a good number of them, because of their experience with hard work, long hours and poor returns from agriculture during the depression on the prairies and in parts of British Columbia, rather turned up their noses at returning to the farm. I know that a good number of these men went into industry because of the high wages and shorter hours but they have now returned to their first love. There are certain advantages in living a farming life if you can find satisfactory markets. I know a number of men who have repaid their re-establishment credits and have taken advantage of the Veterans Land Act. I am very glad that

they have had the opportunity to do that, but I suggest that the minister give consideration to extending that time limit beyond the end of 1957.

I was particularly pleased with the statement the minister made that he is going to be able to make provision for re-establishment credits to be paid on behalf of orphan children. Like the hon. member for Royal, I remember that matter being discussed on several occasions in the veterans affairs committee, and I am sure that this provision will be welcomed by all members of the house. At this point I want to say that I find the veterans affairs department somewhat different from most other departments of the government. One finds a certain human touch in the great majority of officials in the Department of Veterans Affairs, a human touch that is sometimes lacking in a department such as national revenue. One finds that these officials are interested in human beings. I know from my own experience that when local superintendents or district administrators find certain conditions existing they make suggestions as to small amendments or changes that might be made to the regulations to improve the administration and to serve the needs of the veterans to better advantage.

I think that spirit has been outstanding in the Department of Veterans Affairs, and I think other members of the former special committee will bear me out in that respect. I am quite sure that some of these amendments were advocated by members of the veterans affairs committee during its various sittings, but I know that the government has also finally been persuaded to take action in that respect as the result of the experiences and recommendations of the officials in the field who have day to day contact with the veterans concerned. As I said before, we are quite pleased with this further improvement of veterans legislation and look forward to seeing the contents of the bill.

Mr. Quelch: We in this group are also very glad to support the resolution. Like the hon. member for Royal, we would like to have seen this bill referred to the veterans committee because there are many things branching out from the resolution which could have been discussed by that committee and which will not be discussed in the house. We are glad that the time limit for the availability of the re-establishment credits has been extended by five years, and also that orphans are being brought in. I was wondering if the minister could tell the house what the situation is with regard to widows of veterans, in so far as their application for re-establishment credits is concerned. Have