

# **N.C.V.A. BRIEFING NOTES**

## **For Parliamentary Committee**

These notes are based on our main submission titled *COMPENSATION Members of Canada's Merchant Navy*, dated April 29, 1999.

### **REPRESENTATION**

The National Council of Veteran Associations in Canada represents 34 organizations of former members of the Canadian Armed Forces. NCVA has been in existence since 1932, and over the years has made many representations to government, ministers and departmental personnel.

### **BLACK MARK**

Government spokesmen have on many occasions stated that Canada has the most comprehensive program of benefits for veterans. The exception is Merchant Seamen. As we shall attempt to point out, the coverage for members of Canada's Merchant Navy from the commencement of World War II until 1947, which was the date of cessation of hostilities for the Merchant Navy, and in the 52 years following, is nothing short of disgraceful. It is our hope that this Committee will make recommendations which will remove this only **BLACK MARK** from Canada's record, regarding veterans.

## **DOCUMENTS**

The documents supporting this presentation are as follows:

- S Film: SAIL or JAIL, with transcript
- S NCVA Main submission (covered by these Briefing notes)
- S Précis of main points: SAIL or JAIL

It should be understood that we are dealing here with the very complicated history covering a period of 60 years (1939-99).

## **PENSION COVERAGE DURING WARTIME**

November 10, 1939, Order-in-Council PC3359: This provided pension coverage but only where disability or death was a result of enemy action. The most draconian provision was that application had to be made within one year with an extension provision under certain circumstances. The Woods Committee recommended removal of the one year deadline. The government removed the deadline in the 1971 legislation.

## **FINANCIAL LOSS TO MERCHANT NAVY PERSONNEL**

### ***Income Support:***

Merchant Seamen were not eligible for War Veterans Allowance (means tested income support) until a legislative amendment in 1962. Assuming the Merchant

Seamen met the “income eligibility” provisions, his loss compared with a soldier would have been around \$45 thousand calculated on rates from 1945 until 1962.

***Disability Pension:***

Assuming a Merchant Seaman was injured (not in direct action with the enemy) he could not have qualified for a pension until 1992. At a hypothetical assessment of 40% his loss between 1945 and 1992 would be about \$70 thousand.

***Widows:***

In either of the cases above, if the comparison is made between widows of an Armed Forces veteran and a Merchant Seaman, the loss could not be calculated in practical terms. It is shameful, however, to realize that many of the Merchant Seamen’s widows could not have qualified at all if, in income support cases, the husband had died before ‘62; or in disability cases, before ‘92.

**WARTIME DEATH/ACCIDENT COVERAGE**

Members of the Armed Forces were covered by the “insurance principle.” From the date of enlistment, compensation could be paid for death, injury or accident even where such occurred in Canada with no military involvement.

Merchant Seamen, as indicated previously, could qualify for coverage for death, injury or accident only if incurred in direct action or counteraction with the enemy. Excluded, for example, would be the widow of a Merchant Seaman who fell overboard in rough water or in case of injury, to a Merchant Seaman injured during

a storm where enemy action was not involved. Also, application had to be made within one year of the death or injury.

## **CONCLUSION**

The failure to provide adequate benefits is derived, in our view, from the obvious conclusion that there has been a failure on the part of the government to recognize the full story of the discrimination, including government statements during the war that the contribution of Merchant Seamen was equal to that of Armed Forces personnel. Other factors:

- S Promises made that Canada would build a Mercantile Marine after the war.
- S Denial of Rehabilitation Benefits as Merchant Seamen were needed for the post-war Merchant Navy.
- S Failure to sustain a post-war Mercantile Marine.
- S Cancellation of Government Subsidization in 1949.
- S Government support of the American Seafarers International Union brought in to destroy the Canadian Seamen's Union.
- S Failure to provide adequate pension coverage even during the height of the war when casualties were enormous.

S Failure to provide income support and disability benefits after the war,  
comparable to Armed Forces

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April 29, 1999