

‘THE KISS OF DEATH BESTOWED WITH GRATITUDE’: THE POSTWAR
TREATMENT OF CANADA’S SECOND WORLD WAR MERCHANT NAVY,
REDRESS, AND THE NEGOTIATION OF VETERAN IDENTITY

by

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the Merchant Navy's redress campaign and appraises shifting government attitudes towards the mariners in veterans' legislation. It traces the wartime experience of the mariners and discusses their postwar treatment. By examining the factors that contributed to the mariners' initial exclusion as veterans, this study sheds light on the complex process whereby the state evaluates and then reassesses what is owed to those who serve. It demonstrates that concepts of "veteranhood" are fluid, and, that in the case of the Merchant Navy, once neglected wartime narratives can be reincorporated into the nation's military past. In the case of the Merchant Navy, renewed public engagement with Canada's social memory of its involvement in two world wars helped the merchant seamen find an audience willing to validate their claims. This study of Merchant Navy redress serves as an exploration into the nature of the state-veteran relationship.

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Abbreviations

ANAVETS – The Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada
BPA – Bureau of Pension Advocates
CBC – Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CGMM – Canadian Government Merchant Marine
CMC – Canadian Maritime Commission
CMMC – Company of Master Mariners of Canada
CMNA – Canadian Merchant Navy Association
CMNPOWA – Canadian Merchant Navy Prisoner of War Association
CMNVA – Canadian Merchant Navy Veteran Association
CSB – Canadian Shipping Board
CSU – Canadian Seamen’s Union
D.E.M.S. – Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships
DPNH – Department of National Health
DVA – Department of Veterans Affairs
GACDR – General Advisory Committee on Demobilization and Rehabilitation
ICMSP – Interdepartmental Committee on Merchant Shipping Policy
LPP – Labour Progressive Party
MNA – Merchant Navy Association
MOMP - Mid Ocean Meeting Point
MSO – Merchant Seamen’s Order
NBS – Naval Boarding Services
NCS – Naval Control of Shipping
NCVA – National Council of Veterans Associations in Canada
NEF – Newfoundland Escort Force
NSHQ – Naval Services Head Quarters
P.C. – Privy Council
P.O.W. – Prisoner of War
PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RCN – Royal Canadian Navy
R.C.N.V.R. – Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve
RN – Royal Navy
SAPA – Sir Arthur Pearson Association of War Blinded
SCONDVA – Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs
SIU – Seafarers International Union
UMA – United Maritime Authority
U.S.M.C. – United States Maritime Commission
USN – United States Navy
VIP – Veterans’ Independence Program
VLA – Veterans’ Land Act

Introduction:

“We are the men that saved the world,” exclaimed Ossie MacLean during an interview with the CBC conducted from the footsteps of Parliament Hill on October 1, 1998.¹ MacLean was the leader of a small group of Merchant Navy veterans who staged two hunger strikes on Parliament Hill in the fall of 1998 in an effort to secure compensation for veterans’ benefits that the mariners had been denied at the end of the Second World War. The desperate plea from the aging wartime sailors – all in their seventies or older - was part of a long-running redress campaign from Canada’s wartime mariners. Ward Duke, one of MacLean’s fellow strikers, stated on national television that his motivation to go on a hunger strike was that “when the war was over they [the federal government] told me I wasn’t a veteran.”² He and his comrades had spent decades living with that stigma and were desperate to reverse it. They saw themselves as veterans of the war and they wanted the recognition and compensation.

The struggle fought on behalf of the Canadian Merchant Navy veterans following the Second World War for recognition of their unique and essential wartime service was long and arduous. It has yet to receive proper attention from historians even though the fight for rights spanned more than fifty-five years, culminating in 2000 with the extension of full veteran status to the mariners. The decision to grant full rights to the merchant seamen marked a complete policy reversal on the government’s behalf and signified a reassessment of the Canadian Merchant Navy’s place within Canada’s memory of the Second World War. The key focus of this thesis is to explore the mariners’ redress

¹ CBC, *Morningside Radio*, “Merchant seamen stage hunger strike on Parliament Hill,” October 1, 1998. Accessed via <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/merchant-seamen-stage-hunger-strike-on-parliament-hill> [August 15, 2015].

² CBC, *The National*, “Merchant mariners stage second hunger strike,” November 25, 1998. Accessed via <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/merchant-mariners-stage-second-hunger-strike> [August 17, 2015].

campaign, fought mainly from 1989 to 2000, in order to explore how this was achieved as part of a foray into the negotiation of veteran identity, rights and entitlements in post-Second World War Canada. To set the context, the thesis will provide an overview of the wartime and postwar treatment the mariners received at the hands of the federal government.

Unlike the Canadian armed forces the Merchant Navy was not a military service arm but part of a civilian industry. In peace, it operated under normal market conditions but in war it was controlled by the Canadian government and became part of a complex web of military and civilian shipping operations directed mainly by the Royal Navy. In Canada, the small industry underwent rapid expansion to meet the wartime needs of the nation and its allies. The government encouraged young men to serve and by the midpoint of the war stringent new measures were put in place by the government to make it difficult for merchant crews to opt out of their work. Many sailors, who were anxious to serve their country in any way and had often been denied service in the armed forces for health reasons or age, signed continuous service agreements. They could be imprisoned if they refused to serve on ships. Despite the fact the mariners were often exposed to similar threats as Canadian combatants, they were never recognized on a par with military personnel and were, in the eyes of the government, civilians, albeit in a war zone. While the government and media employed the rhetoric of calling the Merchant Navy the “Fourth Arm of the Fighting Services” they occupied an ambiguous space as part worker and part warrior. After the war, the mariners were denied veterans’ benefits, which seemed to go against the government’s responsibilities to Merchant Navy veterans, although the gray area of wartime worker and warrior allowed for such an interpretation.

Overtime, however, the mariners asserted that the risk they faced, the casualties they suffered, and the wartime government management of the fleet, meant that the state had greater responsibilities with regards to the mariners' postwar care. The aging mariners would use these claims and others as the basis for their subsequent successful efforts for redress.

My work seeks to fill in the gaps in the literature on Canadian veterans and Canada's Second World War Merchant Navy by assessing shifting government attitudes towards the mariners, as manifested in federal policy. By doing so, my thesis engages with the Canadian Merchant Navy's wartime experience, the basis of subsequent claims to mistreatment and redress, before focusing on the mariners' campaign to find validation as veterans. Since the bulk of the mariners fight involved gaining access to veterans' entitlements, I focus heavily on tracing the history of merchant seamen benefits in Canada, before, during and after the redress campaign. In this thesis I argue that shifting government definitions of what a veteran is and how this shapes the government's sense of its responsibilities to those who serve in war enabled the Merchant Navy to secure veteran status.

Divided into four chapters, this thesis explores the wartime experience of the Merchant Navy, the postwar treatment of the mariners by the federal government in the early Cold War years, the emergence of Merchant Navy claims for redress, and the redress campaign itself. These four chapters provide insight into a broader inquiry into the negotiation of veteran identity in Canada.

Chapter one explores the wartime experience of Canada's Merchant Navy and the development of a government fleet of ships from 1939 to 1945. I discuss the

recruitment, training and management of Canadian merchant seamen by the federal government. Increasingly stringent measures were put in place during the war to ensure that the civilians who volunteered to crew the government's war built fleet, and privately owned Canadian vessels, served on the ships and did not seek other work. I will also address how these procedures impacted the sailors' lives and their experiences on the seas. As part of the seamen's wartime contributions, the government, the public and the media recognized the Merchant Navy as the "Fourth Arm" of the armed services.

The second chapter assesses the postwar treatment of members of Canada's Merchant Navy and explores how the government sought to transition the industry from wartime to peacetime from 1945 to 1950. It will compare access to veterans' benefits provided for the mariners with those made available to ex-service personnel. Since the mariners' treatment was tied to national aspiration for an enlarged postwar fleet, this section of the thesis will chart the decline of deep-sea shipping in Canada, its causes, and Ottawa's response. Ultimately, the merchant seamen were denied veterans' status for a number of reasons, not the least being that other veterans and the Canadian Legion refused to support them in this fight. By focusing on federal policy, this chapter will comparatively assess the challenges and barriers established between war service work and civilian war work with regards to civil re-establishment.

Chapter three will explore debates concerning the postwar treatment of Canadian merchant crews that occurred alongside a broader period of veterans' benefit reform in Canada from 1965 to 1991. It investigates the discourse surrounding "veteranhood" and veterans' benefits that developed in the 1970s and it assesses the mariners' ability to slowly stake a claim for better access to veterans' entitlements. In addition, it will discuss

how the mariners' were able to successfully appeal to both the public and officials for support and it will highlight the sites of contest and contexts in which "veteranhood" was disputed.

The fourth and final chapter will explore the contours of the Merchant Navy redress campaign as it unfolded from 1991 to 2000. The focus of this chapter will include: an analysis of the government's policy reversal from the perspective of veterans' policy; a discussion of the key stakeholder groups, both public and official, along with their shifting views on the issue; an examination of the effects that contemporary debates on "veteranhood" had on the mariners' campaign; and a final evaluation of the mariners' successful achievement of veterans' status.

Although the focus throughout the thesis will be on the mariners' fight for recognition and compensation, some attention is paid to the shifting contours of public perceptions of the mariners both during and after the war in an effort to show the impact that popular opinion had on the government's policy relating to "veteranhood." Notions of veteran identity will be explored through the legal system of entitlements crafted for Canada's returning Second World War veterans. I explore legislated definitions of Canadian veterans and the mariners' efforts to be included under these definitions.

Naval historian Marc Milner has commented that "The story of Canada's twentieth-century merchant navy, whether in the Second World War or at any other time, is not so much forgotten as unwritten."³ References to Canada's wartime merchant seamen can be found in a multitude of historical fields and discussions, but only rarely is

³ Marc Milner, "Review of *The Unknown Navy: Canada's World War II Merchant Navy* by Robert G. Halford," *Canadian Historical Review*, 79:1 (1998): 164.

the Merchant Navy the primary topic of analysis. As a result, the men and women of Canada's Merchant Navy have not been forgotten so much as they have been ignored.

Naval histories focusing on the Royal Canadian Navy's (RCN) role in the Battle of the Atlantic usually pay homage to the wartime work of the Canadian Merchant Navy and the convoy system that staved off defeat from the U-boats, but the treatment given specifically to the Merchant Navy is often marginal.⁴ The primary focus is on the fighting ships. A handful of studies by Max Reid *D.E.M.S. At War!: Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships and the Battle of the Atlantic* (1990) and *The Arming of Canadian Merchant Ships in the Second World War: Two Navies – The Same Ship*, as well as Fred Watts's *In All Respects Ready: The Merchant Navy and the Battle of the Atlantic 1940-1945* (1985), have examined the protection of merchant shipping in war, specifically D.E.M.S. (defensively equipped merchant ships) and the development of the Naval Boarding Services (NBS) branch of the RCN.⁵ Canada's wartime shipbuilding program has also been explored in considerable detail, although these works focus on ship design and the development of the shipbuilding industry.⁶ These accounts, by and large, do not

⁴ See, for example, Tony German, *The Sea is At Our Gates: The History of The Canadian Navy* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990); Marc Milner, *The North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Donald E. Graves, *In Peril on the Sea: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle of the Atlantic* (Toronto: Published for the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust by Robin Brass Studio, 2003); Roger Sarty, *Canada and the Battle of the Atlantic* (Ottawa: Art Global, published for the Department of National Defence, 1998).

⁵ Max Reid, *DEMS AT WAR!: Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships and the Battle of the Atlantic 1939-1945* (Commoners Publishing Society: Ottawa, 1990) and Max Reid, *The Arming of Canadian Merchant Ships in the Second World War: Two Navies – The Same Ship* (Quyon: Chelsea House, 2003). For the NBS in Canada, see Fred Watts, *In All Respects Ready: The Merchant Navy and the Battle of the Atlantic, 1940-1945* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1985).

⁶ For an example of two of the most prominent works in this field, see S. C. Heal, *Conceived in War, Born in Peace: Canada's Deep Sea Merchant Marine* (Vancouver: Cordillera Publishing, 1992) and S. C. Heal, *A Great Fleet of Ships: The Canadian Forts and Parks* (St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing, 2000). Seal's work also includes a discussion of American shipbuilding offered by way of a comparison with Canada's efforts. For a detailed discussion of the Canadian West-Indies "Lady Boats," including their use in war, see Felicity Hannington and Percy A. Kelly, *The Lady Boats: The Life and Times of Canada's West Indies Merchant Fleet* (Halifax: Canadian Marine Transportation Centre, Dalhousie University, 1980).

provide a discussion of the individual experiences of the civilian sailors who manned the fleet during the war, their postwar treatment, and their subsequent struggle for redress.

The multi-volume official histories of the RCN during the Second World War provide little space for the Merchant Navy.⁷ In Joseph Schull's *The Far Distant Ships: An Official Account of Canadian Naval Operations in the Second World War* (1950), he offers praise for the mariners, acknowledging that "the men of the merchant ships wrote an epic which will not be forgotten," but ironically makes little reference to their contributions and experience.⁸ More recent histories have demonstrated a similar disinterest in the merchant seaman's war. W.A.B. Douglas, Roger Sarty and Michael Whitby's, *No Higher Purpose: The Official Operational History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War 1939-1943* (2002) and *A Blue Water Navy: The Official Operational History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War: 1943-1945* focus almost exclusively on Canada's fighting navy and make few references to merchant sailors.⁹ As these works represent official commissioned histories of the RCN the work of the merchant service remains outside of their focus. Patricia Giesler's 1998 publication through the Department of Veterans Affairs, *Valour At Sea: Canada's Merchant Navy*, emerged during the redress campaign and in conjuncture with ongoing government research into the issue of the mariners' status as veterans. It offers a well-crafted overview of merchant shipping in times of war in Canada, but fails to give the

⁷ The views of official historians remained largely unchallenged until the 1980s until access to government and military archives was broadened. Tim Cook, *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 162.

⁸ Joseph Schull, *The Far Distant Ships: An Official Account of Canadian Naval Operations in the Second World War* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950), vii, 71-72.

⁹ W. A. B Douglas, Roger Sarty and Michael Whitby. *No Higher Purpose: The Official Operational History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War, 1939-1943*. St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2002) and W.A.B Douglas, Roger Sarty and Michael Whitby, *A Blue Water Navy: The Official Operational History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War, 1943-1945* (St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing, 2007).

topic an in-depth treatment due to space constraints. Furthermore, it ignores entirely the postwar struggle of merchant sailors, the industry's decline from 1945 to 1950, and makes no mention of the redress campaign.¹⁰

Michael Hennessy has shed light on maritime policy during the Second World War and has included a valuable discussion of the merchant fleet's postwar fate. Hennessy's doctoral thesis, "The Rise and Fall of a Canadian Maritime Policy, 1939-1965: A study of Industry, Navalism and the State" (1995), traces the roots of naval and maritime policy in Canada from the Second World War through to rearmament in the Cold War. Hennessy also follows the wartime growth of Canada's oceanic merchant marine, its fate following the war, and the interactions between naval and civil arms of the government from 1939 to 1965.¹¹ Hennessy's academic article, "World War II and the Rebirth and Death of the Canadian Merchant Marine" (1995), is a more focused account of his thesis on government policy decisions and the eventual abandonment of the war built merchant vessels. Claims about poor labour relations and higher Canadian labour costs being the key reasons for the industry's disappearance after the war have been articulated by Jim Green in *Against the Tide: The Story of the Canadian Seamen's Union* (1986) and William Kaplan in *Everything That Floats: Pat Sullivan, Hal Banks, and the Seamen's Unions of Canada* (1987).¹² Both Kaplan and Green approach the disappearance of the fleet as part of a complex labour struggle between the dominant postwar labour union representing Canadian sailors, the Canadian Seamen's Union

¹⁰ Patricia Giesler, *Valour At Sea: Canada's Merchant Navy* (Ottawa: Veterans Affairs Canada, 1998), 29-32.

¹¹ Michael Hennessy, "The Rise and Fall of a Canadian Maritime Policy, 1939-1965: A Study of Industry, Navalism and the State," (PhD Diss., University of New Brunswick, 1995) i.

¹² William Kaplan, *Everything That Floats: Pat Sullivan, Hal Banks, and the Seamen's Unions of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) and Jim Green, *Against the Tide: The Story of the Canadian Seamen's Union* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1986). For more on the CSU's demise see also John Stanton, *Life and Death of the Canadian Seamen's Union* (Toronto: Steel Rail Educational Publishing, 1978)

(CSU), the federal government, and the American Seafarers' International Union that was used to forcibly replace the CSU. Hennessy's work reveals that, although high labour costs and union activism had a negative impact on the industry's ability to thrive in the postwar, they were ultimately not the reason why it fell into decline. Hennessy asserts instead that, "The fleet's ambiguous origins, conflicting national trade policy, the absence of a laissez-faire international shipping market, the rise of cold-war tensions and the very peculiar problems of trade to the sterling bloc," paired with, "Barriers to currency convertibility, carriage restrictions, and high labour and production costs," collectively led the federal government to abandon the fleet.¹³ Although Hennessy's scholarship focuses less on the mariners themselves and more on government maritime policy, it offers valuable insight into the history of Canada's Second World War Merchant Navy and the fleet's postwar years.

Writers and historians have only recently focused on Canada's wartime seafarers and most of the authors have been associated with the merchant seamen's redress campaign or were themselves mariners. Few of these works are unbiased. Most of these publications consist of veterans' recollections, memoirs and interviews. With these books crafted during the period of the veterans' redress campaign, all are written with an agenda to further the concept that the merchant mariners were wartime veterans. Some have been less influenced by the campaign than others. For example, George H. Evans's *Through the Corridors of Hell* (1980) is a well-crafted memoir of a Newfoundland Merchant Navy veteran that emerged just as the campaign was beginning, while Elmer Munro's *Someone Was Watching Over Me: My Memoirs 1943-1950 Canadian Merchant*

¹³ Michael Hennessy, "World War II and the Rebirth and Death of Canada's Merchant Marine," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* No. 1, Vol.6, (1995): 209.

Navy (2002) came following its success. Both offer valuable eye-witness accounts but do not involve deep historical research.¹⁴ Bill Cowling's *Merchant Ship War, 1939-1945: Personal Canadian Records* (1998) is an assortment of surviving documents from merchant seamen, but offers little commentary on the sailors' history.¹⁵

A more strident tone in showing the merchant seamen as active warriors in the Battle of the Atlantic can be found in Doug Fraser's *Post War Casualty: Canada's Merchant Navy* (1997), which is introduced by the author "as a personal commentary and response to half a century of neglect of Canadians who served at sea during the Second World War as merchant mariners."¹⁶ Largely anecdotal and based heavily on the author's personal experiences, *Postwar Casualty* has the tone of a polemic. Without any citations or bibliographical references, Fraser's work does little to further academic discussions of the Merchant Navy, although it establishes the neglect felt by the mariners at the hands of the federal government following the war.

Robert Halford's *The Unknown Navy: Canada's World War II Merchant Navy* (1994) is the fairest assessment of the Canadian Merchant Navy by a former wartime mariner. Halford's work draws extensively on primary documents, oral histories, official reports, contemporary research and the author's own wartime memories.¹⁷ The strength of Halford's book lies in his ability to weave together a narrative that examines how government policy, the Canadian shipping and shipbuilding industry and union activity

¹⁴ George H. Evans, *Through the Corridors of Hell* (Antigonish: Formac Publishing Company, 1980) and Elmer Munro, *Someone Was Watching Over Me: My Memoires 1943-1950 Canadian Merchant Navy* (Norwich Ontario: Munro, 2002).

¹⁵ Bill Cowling, *Merchant Ship War, 1939-1945: Personal Canadian Records* (St. Catharines: Vanwell, 1995).

¹⁶ Doug Fraser, *Post War Casualty: Canada's Merchant Navy* (Lawrencetown Beach: Pottersfield Press, 1997), foreword.

¹⁷ Robert Halford, *The Unknown Navy: Canada's World War Two Merchant Navy* (St Catharines: Vanwell, 1995), v.

all came together to shape the experience of Canadian seafarers during and immediately following the Second World War. However, he fails to comment in any substantial way on the struggle for redress except to mention that “full and unequivocal recognition for service in Canada’s WWII Merchant Navy remains wanting.”¹⁸

Oral histories of merchant mariners during the war provide some raw insight into their war experience. The two best are Eric Sager’s *Ships and Memories: Merchant Seafarers in Canada’s Age of Steam* (1993) and Mike Parker’s *Running the Gauntlet: An Oral History of Canada’s Merchant Seamen in World War II* (1994). With over fifty interviews of Canadian merchant sailors, all of which are properly contextualized with a rich analysis of secondary source material from Canadian, British and American perspectives, Parker’s work is a welcome contribution to the scarce body of literature on Canada’s wartime merchant seamen.

Sager’s book offers an approach similar to Parker’s, but only devotes one chapter to the war.¹⁹ Most of *Ships and Memories* is focused on capturing the experience of Canadian seafarers as they undertook the industry’s “roller-coaster ride of growth and decline” from the 1920s to the 1950s, making it essentially a labour history.²⁰ Canada’s Second World War Merchant Navy was, as historian Jay White notes, “just one minority among many ethnic and national groups involved in the convoy system, a hierarchical industrial structure directed by British interest.”²¹ Sager’s focused analysis of how war transformed the industry in Canada, framed from the sailor’s point of view, offers

¹⁸ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 242.

¹⁹ Eric Sager, *Ships and Memories: Merchant Seafarers in Canada’s Age of Steam* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993).

²⁰ Sager, *Ships and Memories*, 4.

²¹ Jay White, “Hardly Heroes: Canadian Merchant Seamen and the International Convoy System, 1939-1945,” *The Northern Mariner* 5:4 (October 1995): 19.

valuable insight into both the history of the industry and the perspectives of those who laboured in it. Of further value is Sager's introduction and discussion on debates concerning the accuracy of oral history. "People revise the past in memory," Sager acknowledged, and "sometimes remake past events to fit current ideological positions and values," Sager offers a cautious reminder that facts are often misremembered or overstated when recollected many years after the event.²² Nonetheless, he reminds us that:

The validity of memory appears not so much in the events of the tale as in something deeper: the story tells us about something so important in the past that it has stayed in the mind, to be recovered and created anew, in and for the present. More important than the event is the need, the fear, or the urgent lesson that shaped the tale and its telling.²³

In my own interviews of veterans, I kept in mind that veterans' remembrances have potentially been shaped both by temporal distance and the emerging debates on the mariners' exclusion from veterans' benefits.

To understand the Merchant Navy redress campaign requires an understanding of the history of veterans' benefits in Canada, and, more specifically, an investigation of the origins and views expressed in Canada's Veterans Charter. There exists a growing body of literature on Canadian veterans that provides an understanding of how government attitudes and public perceptions of veterans have changed over time.

The history of veterans' benefits in Canada has received increased attention since the 1980s. Glenn Wright and Desmond Morton note in their seminal work on Canada's First World War veterans, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life* (1987): "Historians examine the formation of navies, armies, and air

²² Sager, *Ships and Memories*, 9-10.

²³ *Ibid.*, 10.

forces; their dissolution is an unwritten epilogue.”²⁴ They demonstrate how the system of benefits devised for returning service personnel in 1918 failed to properly prepare them for re-establishment in civil life. They also document the growth of veterans’ advocacy in Canada following the war. Subsequent work in the field by Peter Neary and Desmond Morton have expanded on the themes established in *Winning the Second Battle*, explaining that the growth of an influential veterans’ lobby led Second World War veterans to receive a more comprehensive benefits package than was offered after the First World War.²⁵

Building on Morton and Wright, Peter Neary and J. L. Granatstein’s edited volume of essays, *The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada* (1998), presents an excellent compendium of historical assessments of Canada’s Veteran Charter, and its origins, successes and impact on Canadian society. Two essays are of particular value to any understanding of the principles that guided the crafting of the Veterans Charter: Jeff Keshen’s “Getting It Right the Second Time Around: The Reintegration of Canadian Veterans of World War II” and Don Ives’s “The Veterans Charter: The Compensation Principle and the Principle of Recognition for Service.”²⁶ Keshen’s piece contrasts Ottawa’s mishandling of re-establishment in 1918 with the success of 1945, linking the Veterans Charter to a shared desire by the public for a prosperous peace, one that

²⁴ Desmond Morton and Glenn Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), ix.

²⁵ Peter Neary, “Without the Stigma of Pauperism” Canadian Veterans in the 1930s,” *British Journal of Canadian Studies* Vol. 22, No. 1 (May 2009): 31-62; and Desmond Morton, “Canadian Veterans’ Heritage from the Great War,” in *The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada*, eds. Peter Neary and J. L. Granatstein, 15-31 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998).

²⁶ Jeff Keshen, “Getting It Right the Second Time Around: The Reintegration of Canadian Veterans of World War II,” in *The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada*, eds Peter Neary and J. L. Granatstein, 62-84 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998) and Don Ives, “The Veterans Charter: The Compensation Principle and the Principle of Recognition for Service,” in *The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada*, Peter Neary and J. L. Granatstein, eds 85-94 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998)

benefited from Keynesian economic policy.²⁷ Ives, on the other hand, focuses less on policy and more on the philosophy guiding the hierarchical system of benefits that emerged following the Second World War.²⁸ Collectively, these two pieces weave a narrative that connects the system of benefits devised for Canada's First World War veterans with that offered to ex-service personnel returning to Canada in 1945.

Neary has contributed two further works on postwar reconstruction. The first, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004* (2004), is a government-funded report directed by Neary that studies the origins and growth of veterans' benefits in Canada. In it, Neary notes that a number of groups, including the Merchant Navy, found themselves either barred from or with limited access to veterans' legislation. But the topic of the mariners' struggle to be recognized with full veterans' rights is not examined in any detail.²⁹ Neary's *On to Civvy Street: Canada's Rehabilitation Program for Veterans of the Second World War* (2011), described by the author as his "master narrative" on veterans' benefits in Canada following the Second World War, makes excellent use of earlier work in the field while pulling together emerging scholarship. Still, its triumphant approach to understanding the Veterans Charter neglects a more nuanced discussion of one of its failings, notably the denial of benefits to the Merchant Navy veterans.³⁰ Both works, however, are valuable contributions to the field.

²⁷ Keshen, "Getting It Right the Second Time Around," 62, 78.

²⁸ Ives, "The Veterans Charter," 86.

²⁹ Neary's reference to the Merchant Navy and their subsequent ability to impact changes in government policy during the 1990s received extremely limited space. Veterans Affairs Canada, *Reference Paper: The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004* Veterans Affairs Canada, Canadian Forces Advisory Council, March 2004. 40-41.

³⁰ Peter Neary, *On To Civvy Street: Canada's Rehabilitation Program for Veterans of the Second World War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011). "Master narrative" is taken from *On to Civvy Street*, xviii.

Serge Durflinger's *Veterans with a Vision: Canada's War Blinded in Peace and War* (2010) covers new ground in the complicated and often neglected history of Canada's war blinded. Drawing upon the contributions and experience of Canada's blinded soldiers and service personnel from 1899 to 2002, although focusing primarily on years following the First and Second World Wars, it is a history, Durflinger asserts, of which "We in Canada know so little."³¹ Durflinger's work illustrates the link between civilian and military organizations in the care and rehabilitation of Canada's war blinded and how those veterans also made important contributions to the establishment and growth of national institutes for the blind. His work shows the potential for scholars who wish to advance studies on wartime disabilities and the postwar care of those who suffer from them.

Recent scholarship of redress, not always centered on veterans' benefits, has established how dominant narratives can be reworked to better address social memories. Nicole Neatby and Peter Hodgins' collection of academic essays in *Settling and Unsettling Memories: Essays in Canadian Public History* (2011) offers an assortment of works that address the various ways in which Canada's national past has been re-imagined.³² Of particular interest for my work is Ian Radforth's "Ethnic Minorities and Wartime Injustices: Redress Campaigns and Historical Narratives in Late Twentieth-Century Canada," which involves a discussion of how recent redress campaigns undertaken by Japanese, Italian, and Ukrainian communities in Canada have attempted to

³¹ Serge Durflinger, *Veterans With a Vision: Canada's War Blinded in Peace and War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 358.

³² Nicole Neatby and Peter Hodgins, *Settling and Unsettling Memories: Essays in Canadian Public History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), i.

reshape dominant narratives regarding each group.³³ By looking at how each community articulated a claim to redress and appealed both to official channels and the public for support, it offers a framework for understanding redress in Canada during the late twentieth century. Most useful amongst the three examples is the redress campaign of Japanese Canadians who were removed from coastal communities during the war and had their personal goods sold off at unfair prices. The successful redress campaign, which resulted in a 1988 official apology and \$400 million paid in compensation, led Radforth to characterize it as a total success that brought “state sanction of the group narrative, public validation, and incorporation of the particular social memory in the national memory.”³⁴ Work on Aboriginal veterans’ redress has also recently emerged in the work of Scott Sheffield. His essay, “Canadian Aboriginal Veterans and the Veterans Charter after the Second World War” (2007), examines the origins of indigenous veterans’ redress in Canada beginning in the late 1970s. His work establishes that there were linguistic, cultural and political barriers that kept indigenous veterans from accessing entitlements that they had been promised.³⁵ By exposing that the Veterans Charter had, in the case of indigenous veterans, inequalities built into it, he enlarges discussions about the failings of postwar reconstruction in Canada and demonstrates how this group of veterans overcame these hurdles.

³³ Nicole Neatby and Peter Hodgins, “Introduction,” in *Settling and Unsettling Memories: Essays in Canadian Public History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 15.

³⁴ Ian Radforth, “Ethnic Minorities and Wartime Injustices: Redress Campaigns and Historical Narratives in Late Twentieth-Century Canada,” in *Settling and Unsettling Memories: Essays in Canadian Public History* eds. Nicole Neatby and Peter Hodgins (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 370, 405.

³⁵ R. Scott Sheffield, “Canadian Aboriginal Veterans and the Veterans Charter after the Second World War,” in *Aboriginal Peoples and Military Participation: Canadian and International Perspectives* eds., P. Whitney Lackenbauer, R. Scott Sheffield and Craig Leslie Mantle (Winnipeg: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 77, 91-94.

The emerging historiography on Canada's Second World War veterans has done much to inform the contours of this thesis. It has helped establish government attitudes towards veterans during the twentieth century and how veterans in turn have pushed back to define their own status and identity. By understanding the causal links between government policy and veterans' entitlements, this body of work has helped inform my approach to the seamen's fight for recognition and compensation, which focused mainly on access to legislated benefits. Varying definitions of the word "veteran" have emerged over time and each definition has enabled and restricted access to state-sponsored privileges created for returning military personnel.³⁶ Typically, these definitions have dealt with a strictly military population, but over time and across national borders they have varied. Most of these views represent a combination of attitudes expressed by the military (and veterans organizations representing ex-military personnel), the government and the public.³⁷

In order to explore how these views have been negotiated and contested in the case of the Merchant Navy, I limited my research to a discussion of legislated benefits and the intersection of public opinion and veterans' policy as expressed in the media during the redress campaign. To better understand both the wartime and postwar experience of the sailors, and their subsequent claims to redress, I interviewed veterans and spoke with members of the Merchant Navy community. This allowed me to collect a number of records that would have otherwise not been available in archival repositories. Since legislated benefits are controlled by the state, understanding how and why

³⁶ Howard Burdett *et al.*, "'Are You a Veteran?' Understanding of the Term 'Veteran' among UK Ex-Service Personnel: A Research Note," in *Armed Forces and Society* Vol. 39, No. 4, (2012): 752.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

government policy changed over time required extensive research into government records.

My research drew widely from Eric Sydney Brand's fonds at the Directorate of History and Heritage, as well as the Director of Naval Information and General Maritime Forces fonds. Research at the Library and Archives of Canada (LAC) in the Department of Transportation, Privy Council Office, Federal Royal Commissions and Department of Veterans Affairs fonds likewise proved useful in tracing the interplay between Canadian veterans and the federal government. As this work represents the first attempt at capturing the history of the mariners' redress campaign, I had to employ formal Access to Information Requests to see collections at LAC and a number of government departments. Although some information remained redacted on account of privacy laws, a tremendous amount of information emerged. Accessing records at the Department of Veterans Affairs in this manner proved particularly difficult, and took almost a year to secure. With the assistance of Senator Jack Marshall's estate, and the help of his widow Evelyn, I was the first to open his records at LAC. They contained a number of political documents and commentaries on the Merchant Navy redress campaign. Opening these records still took more than a year of persistent requests. While access to much of his fonds was denied for privacy reasons, the available files in his collection nonetheless helped to further piece together the disparate strands of the redress narrative.

The files collected from members of the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality also helped to guide me, as did media coverage of the mariners' negotiations with the state. Both sets of records offered valuable insight into the campaign's complex history. My attendance at the 2014 Annual General Membership meeting of the Canadian

Merchant Navy Veterans Association in Ottawa further connected me to the small community of remaining Merchant Navy veterans. Many of those present were active in the campaign and offered advice to help guide my research, and a few agreed to be interviewed or to send along private documents.

The Merchant Navy redress campaign allows one to pose broader questions regarding the nature, use and negotiation of veteran identity and war memory in Canadian society. In this thesis, I draw attention to the myriad ways in which “veteranhood” manifests itself over time. By pulling together for the first time the many threads weaving through the mariners’ recently achieved redress, I hope to enlarge debates about the nature and scope of the state-veteran relationship and the factors influencing it. What follows, by way of an analysis of the Canadian Merchant Navy redress campaign, is meant to serve as a case study into the complex topic of the history of veteran identity in Canada.

Chapter 1: “Virtually an Arm of the Fighting Services.”

On January 1, 1942, the *Halifax Herald* offered the following description of Canada’s wartime merchant sailors:

In the streets of this wartime port you see them – in waterfront cafes, in theatres and in uptown restaurants – you see them. Quietly dressed and weather beaten men they are. Some of them are ‘teen-aged’ kids, others are older men with greying hair. No medal ribbons, no Nelson scarves, no gold braid, no hatbands, bearing heroic names, mark their identities. Instead there is only the unmistakable stamp of the sea and a little silver button – “M.N.” – they’re the men of the Merchant Marine. Like their sea-gray ships that ply in and out of this storied seaport, the keen-eyed men of the merchant fleet are here today and gone tomorrow. Many of them – all of them in fact – have faced death in one form or another on the ocean.³⁸

Throughout the Second World War civilian crews manning Canada’s Merchant Navy played a decisive role in transporting millions of tons of vitally needed food, petroleum, and munitions and millions of troops across the Atlantic and beyond. Serving as part of an intricate web of military and civilian shipping operations, Canadian seamen helped assure Britain’s survival in the Battle of the Atlantic and the war at large.³⁹ Following Allied victory, Rear Admiral Leonard W. Murray, Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Northwest Atlantic 1943 to 1945, remarked: “The Battle of the Atlantic was not won by the Navy or Air Force. It was won by the courage, fortitude and determination of the British and Allied Merchant Navy.”⁴⁰

During the war, the Canadian government oversaw the recruitment, growth and management of its Merchant Navy, reviving an industry that had all but collapsed in the interwar period, and leading those in its employ to be given the unofficial wartime title of ‘Fourth Arm of the Fighting Services.’ Throughout the war, increased government

³⁸ Department of National Defence Directorate of History and Heritage (hereafter DND/DHH), 91/145, Director of Naval Information fonds, box 1, folder 2080, “‘M.N.’ Is Mark of Heroic Men Who Ply War’s Seas in Cargo Craft,” *Halifax Herald*, January 1, 1942, 4.

³⁹ Doug Fraser, *Post War Casualty: Canada’s Merchant Navy* (Lawrencetown Beach: Pottersfield Press, 1997), 11.

⁴⁰ Robert Halford, *The Unknown Navy: Canada’s World War Two Merchant Navy* (St Catharines: Vanwell, 1995), 243.

control of merchant shipping, including the recruitment, management, and discipline of the merchant service, had an enduring effect on the lives of merchant seamen. Naval Control of Shipping (NCS), put in place by the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) just weeks before the war, sent merchant crews across the Atlantic to deliver food, clothes, fuel and military supplies.

The re-emergence of the Canadian Merchant Navy was a tremendous accomplishment and a component of Canada's contribution to Allied victory during the Second World War. Working as civilians operating on Canadian or Allied vessels, Canada's merchant mariners endured threats from enemy U-boats, mines, aircraft and surface raiders while sailing across the Atlantic and the ocean waterways of the world.⁴¹ Compounding these risks were threats from dangerous storms, the possibilities of collisions in convoys and groundings, and the prospect of death by freezing water or flaming oil. The initial fleet, mostly privately owned vessels, expanded rapidly through the production of government-owned 'Park' ships, operated by the crown corporation Park Steamship Company. Despite the important work of the merchant sailors, they often encountered prejudice while ashore and were perceived at times to be conscientious objectors or money hungry mercenaries since they were never officially recognized as being on a par with the armed forces.⁴² Yet even without uniforms or the respect that accompanied enlisted service, the men and women of Canada's wartime Merchant Navy helped win the war.

Merchant shipping as industry

⁴¹ Patricia Giesler, *Valour At Sea: Canada's Merchant Navy* (Ottawa: Veterans Affairs Canada, 1998), 29.

⁴² Fraser, *Post War Casualty*, 47.

Unlike the Navy, Army, and Air Force, Canada's Second World War Merchant Navy was not a military service arm but part of a civilian industry. It continued to operate as such during the war, albeit with stricter government controls. Order onboard ship was maintained in peacetime through a rigidly defined hierarchical set of labour relations outlined in the *Canada Shipping Act* of 1934. The Ministry of Transport enforced the *Shipping Act*, which dictated terms of engagement, disciplinary measures, wages, and numerous other considerations involving crew conduct.⁴³ It was borrowed from the British system and gave the ship's captain tremendous authoritarian powers – such as the ability to impose hefty fines on a seamen's wage - and total control over those working beneath him in matters relating to crew conduct.⁴⁴

The composition of a ship's crew varied depending on the size and type of vessel, but was composed of three essential groups of workers: mates, engineers, and sailors.⁴⁵ Beneath the command of the ship's captain – also known as the ship's master - were the mates and deck officers. These men worked with the captain to ensure that all operations ran smoothly onboard ship, including but not limited to the steering and navigation of the vessel, managing the crew, and assisting on deck and below.⁴⁶ The second group, the ship's engineers, were responsible for the maintenance and operation of the engines and laboured under the supervision of a chief engineer. This department, with the exception of unlicensed personnel, had two positions: oilers, who maintained the water levels of the boilers, operated the sanitary pumps and greased, oiled and maintained the steering

⁴³ DND/DHH, 85/397, Director General Maritime Forces fonds box 9, file 55, Canadian Maritime Commission, "Control of Canadian Merchant Seamen in War," circa November 3, 1948, 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁵ William Kaplan, *Everything That Floats: Pat Sullivan, Hal Banks, and the Seamen's Unions of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 10.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

engines; and firemen, the most demanding of all positions aboard ship, who were responsible for feeding the ship's furnace.⁴⁷ The last and largest group were the ordinary seamen, also known as unlicensed seamen, who worked as part of the forward crew, aft or engine room staff, or as members of the steward's department, to help ensure that a myriad of other tasks - such as painting, cooking, cleaning, and fuelling the ship - were completed. These men were the least skilled of the ship's crew and the most poorly paid, earning roughly \$30 a month before the outbreak of the war.⁴⁸ A ship's crew worked long hours, often seven days a week, and during the war did so under increasingly stringent government and naval controls.⁴⁹

From private to government control

Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War it was clear that Britain had to secure resources from her self-governing dominions and colonies for survival.⁵⁰ In Canada, planning to this effect emerged before war erupted. On July 17, 1939, Captain Eric Sydney Brand, Royal Navy (RN), was appointed to the position of Director of Naval Intelligence and Plans at Naval Service Headquarters (NSHQ) in Ottawa.⁵¹ The move was meant to ensure effective co-ordination between the RN and the RCN during the war. Brand, working at NSHQ in Ottawa, the headquarters for North American trade, co-ordinated his efforts with thirteen other intelligence centres empire-wide throughout the war.⁵² Shortly after Brand's appointment, the RCN took control of all oceanic merchant

⁴⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 10-11.

⁴⁹ Kaplan, *Everything That Floats*, 11 and Joseph Schull, *The Far Distant Ships: An Official Account of Canadian Naval Operations in the Second World War* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950), 72.

⁵⁰ Tim Cook, *The Necessary War Volume One: Canadians Fighting the Second World War 1939-1943* (New York: Allen Lane, 2014), 2.

⁵¹ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 77 and Marc Milner, "Naval Control of Shipping and the Atlantic War 1939-45," *The Mariner's Mirror* Vol. 83, No.2 (May 1997): 170.

⁵² Milner, "Naval Control of Shipping," 170.

shipping in Canada. As a result, thirty-seven privately owned Canadian flagged vessels – Canada’s entire Merchant Navy – totalling roughly 227,000 *dwt* (deadweight tons) and employing 1,450 sailors were placed under government control.⁵³ This figure is tiny given that worldwide shipping amounted to 68,509,432 gross tons in 1939 placing Canada near the bottom of the list of maritime powers.⁵⁴ This occurred by order of the British Admiralty, which announced on August 26, 1939, via the pre-arranged coded ‘Funnel’ telegram, that the movements of all merchant shipping in the Empire, including Canadian ships, would be managed in coordination with the British Ministry of War Transport and the Admiralty.⁵⁵ In exchange for the compulsion of the order, which the Canadian government had to agree to if it desired to keep operating its vessels in British waters, the Admiralty offered war risk insurance – far greater than could otherwise be secured – to all vessels operating under its direction.⁵⁶ The purpose of the arrangement was to ensure that Britain, largely dependent on importing goods for its survival, would maintain a steady flow of trade in the event of a war with Germany.⁵⁷

When the famous ‘Funnel’ signal reached Brand’s hands on August 26, 1939, he spent the bulk of the evening sending telegrams to the proper shipping authorities, major shipping companies like Canadian National Steamship and Imperial Oil, informing them that the Canadian Government was assuming control of all Canadian registered deep-sea

⁵³ The figure of thirty-seven ships is the most often cited figure for the strength of Canada’s prewar merchant fleet. See for example: Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 23; Mike Parker, *Running the Gauntlet: An Oral History of Canadian Merchant Seamen in World War II* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd., 2003), 17; John Boileau “Canada’s Merchant Navy: The Men who Saved the World,” <https://legionmagazine.com/en/2010/07/canadas-merchant-navy-the-men-that-saved-the-world/> [February 16, 2015]; and Cook, *The Necessary War*, 2. The figure of thirty-eight is given cited in Gielser, *Valour at Sea*, 8 and Tony German, *The Sea is At Our Gates: The History of the Canadian Navy* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), 59.

⁵⁴ Hennessy, “The Rise and Fall of a Canadian Maritime Policy,” 45-46.

⁵⁵ Parker, *Running The Gauntlet*, 5.

⁵⁶ German, *The Sea is At Our Gates*, 72-73.

⁵⁷ Parker, *Running The Gauntlet*, 5.

going vessels.⁵⁸ Before the Admiralty's message had arrived on Brand's desk, an Order-in-Council he requested earlier from Cabinet authorizing the government to take control of all merchant shipping in Canada arrived giving permission to implement the Admiralty's plans.⁵⁹ The result was the establishment of NCS in Canada on August 26, 1939. With the establishment of NCS all merchant shipping in Canada passed from private to naval control.⁶⁰ In Canada the RCN co-ordinated all merchant shipping operations with the British Admiralty working as part of an international system of merchant shipping controls that would remain in place for the next six years.⁶¹ This meant during the war sailors aboard Canadian vessels were now subordinate to government authority, despite the civilian nature of their work.

Outbreak of the Second World War

As Hitler's forces marched into Poland on September 1, 1939, Canada's entry into another European conflict seemed likely, though the issue was deferred to a vote in the House of Commons. As the federal government discussed the extent of its involvement, the William Lyon Mackenzie King government promised a limited war that avoided conscription.⁶² O.D. Skelton, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs and one of the Prime Minister's most trusted advisers, stressed that the provision of munitions, raw materials, and foodstuff would not only help Britain in the war, but would also reduce the need to commit large overseas forces.⁶³ This pledge for a war of 'limited liability'

⁵⁸ DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol. 7, E. C. Russell, "Captain Eric S. Brand - Interview" Ottawa, February 27, 1969, 18.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Milner, "Naval Control of Shipping," 173.

⁶¹ German, *The Sea is at Our Gates*, 73.

⁶² W.A.B. Douglas and Brereton Greenhous, *Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War* 2nd edition (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1995), 20.

⁶³ Ibid., 21.

required merchant ships transporting goods across the sea-lanes of the Atlantic and placed Canadian merchant sailors at the sharp end of the impending conflict.

On September 3, 1939, following Britain's and France's declaration of war on Germany, the physical and psychological threat of the U-boat menace resurfaced with the sinking of the S.S. *Athenia*, an unescorted and unarmed British passenger liner sailing westward from Europe to Montreal.⁶⁴ The sinking of *Athenia* was done by a U-boat acting in direct violation of German naval policy, but reactions to the sinking were widespread and of significant consequence.⁶⁵ In Britain, it led immediately to the implementation of the convoy system, which proved exceedingly useful in the First World War by curtailing losses of ships to U-boats, and the development of an extensive British shipbuilding program aimed at creating escort fleets.⁶⁶ In Canada news of the 128 dead, including several Canadians, served as a stirring reminder of the barbarity of U-boat warfare. Moreover, it delivered Canada's first wartime service casualty with the death of stewardess Hannah Baird, from Verdun, Quebec.⁶⁷

Two days following the sinking, the *Globe and Mail* reported its effects in rallying support for the war in Canada and elsewhere, stating: "The brutal attack on the *Athenia* with its cargo of women and children is good for a million more recruits in the democracies. It has intensified determination to resist the Nazis to the end. If there were

⁶⁴ Cook, *The Necessary War*, 20-21.

⁶⁵ Dan van der Vat, *The Atlantic Campaign: World War II's Great Struggle at Sea* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 3-4.

⁶⁶ Francis M. Carroll, "The First Shot was the Last Straw: The Sinking of the T.S.S. *Athenia* in September 1939 and British Naval Policy in the Second World War," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 20:3 (2009): 403.

⁶⁷ Serge Durflinger, *Fighting From Home: The Second World War in Verdun, Quebec* (UBC Press: Vancouver, 2006), 193.

any hesitation in Britain and Canada as to their course this deed has dispelled it.”⁶⁸The tragic sinking of *Athenia* reinforced the notion that Canada could not stand idly by while Britain went to war. On September 10, following much debate about what role Canada should play in another European war, Parliament voted to declare war.⁶⁹ At the time of its entry into the Second World War, Canada’s small vanguard of merchant sailors had already received their first casualty and had been serving under naval orders for fifteen days.

Canada’s Merchant Navy and the Battle of the Atlantic

Though Canadian merchant crews sailed on all the oceans of the world, from north of the Barents Sea and Arctic Ocean to south of the African Cape, and over the India and the Pacific oceans, it was the shipping lanes that lay between North America and Britain that proved the most costly.⁷⁰ As Churchill remarked in his 1951 war memoirs:

The Battle of the Atlantic was the dominating factor all through the war. Never for one moment could we forget that everything happening elsewhere, on land, at sea, or in the air, depended ultimately on its outcome, and amid all other cares we viewed its changing fortunes day by day with hope or apprehension.⁷¹

The Allied forces and civilians in Britain required supplies throughout the war and the vast majority of them were carried by sea. Recognizing this, Germany and its allies, from the opening salvos of the war until its final blows, dedicated substantial forces efforts to targeting the ships and sailors that carried these essential war-winning goods.⁷² Whether

⁶⁸ “Nazi Frightfulness Begins,” *Globe and Mail*, September 5, 1939. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/1353772274?accountid=9894> [April 13, 2015].

⁶⁹ Cook, *The Necessary War*, 20-21 and 24.

⁷⁰ Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 2.

⁷¹ Winston S. Churchill, *Closing the Ring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951), 121.

⁷² Max Reid, *DEMS AT WAR!: Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships and the Battle of the Atlantic 1939-1945* (Commoners Publishing Society: Ottawa, 1990), 1.

demonstrable or not Canadian merchant sailor Edson Yeadon recalled after the war, “If it hadn’t been for the Merchant Navy there would be no England now.”⁷³

Canadian shipping policy and involved both coastal and trans-oceanic trade. In total, the volume of coastal trade outstripped overseas trade.⁷⁴ This was caused by the strategic importance of the ore-trade routes, the bauxite trade, tanker movements from the West Indies, and the various movements up and down the St. Lawrence and between Halifax and Newfoundland.⁷⁵ Overall shipping losses during the war, however, were concentrated in the Atlantic with 75% of all shipping losses occurring in this region, followed by 8% in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean combined, 6% in the Pacific, and 5% in the South Atlantic. The success of Canada and its allies in the Battle of the Atlantic, was of significant strategic importance and was a victory that was neither cheap nor easy.⁷⁶

At the outbreak of the war Canada was not prepared for its engagement in the Battle of the Atlantic and the broader war of supply. More than half of the thirty-seven ship merchant fleet came from Canadian National Steamships and Imperial Oil, the former contributing eleven vessels including the Canadian Government Merchant Marine’s (CGMM) Lady Boats (five luxury liners operated by the Canadian National Steamships for service to the Caribbean since 1925 whose names evoked ‘ladies’ famous to history), and the latter providing ten much needed tankers.⁷⁷ Canada also had at its disposal the large Great Lakes fleet comprising a variety of 6,000 *dwt* or smaller

⁷³ Mike Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 327.

⁷⁴ Roger Sarty, *Canada and the Battle of the Atlantic* (Ottawa: Art Global, published for the Department of National Defence, 1998), 56.

⁷⁵ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 30.

⁷⁶ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 35-36 and Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 2.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

“canallers” and “laker” vessels that quickly found use at sea across the Atlantic. In total, 133 of these ships were transferred from inland waterways to open ocean for use during the war. Of the initial twenty-five “laker” ships sent to the United Kingdom, six were used during the evacuation of Dunkirk and only nine survived the war.⁷⁸

During the war, the Canadian and Allied Merchant Navies suffered heavy casualties as Germany sank 4,800 Allied merchant vessels totaling more than 21 million gross tons killing at least 40,000 merchant sailors.⁷⁹ Despite heavy competition for able-bodied men from the other services, the Canadian Merchant Navy grew to an approximate strength of 12,000 sailors by the war’s end.⁸⁰ These sailors became part of the Allied convoy system and throughout the war worked alongside British, French, Belgian, Norwegian, Swedish, Greek, Polish, and Dutch crews, sometimes serving on the same vessels.⁸¹

Although Canada’s small prewar Merchant Navy was composed mostly of professional mariners, the vast majority of its voluntary wartime recruits were civilians looking to serve their country - many of whom had no experience at sea. Often enlisting those too young for military service - or those too old, the Merchant Navy found recruits in men and women who had failed to meet all the physical requirements of the armed forces. There were also those who simply preferred service at sea without being a part of the military hierarchy.⁸² Earl Wagner of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, who served in the Merchant Navy during the war recalled, “It was usually sixteen before you could get in,

⁷⁸ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 8 and German, *The Sea Is At Our Gates*, 192.

⁷⁹ Donald E. Graves, *In Peril on the Sea: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle of the Atlantic* (Toronto: Published for the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust by Robin Brass Studio, 2003), 150.

⁸⁰ Cook, *The Necessary War*, 190.

⁸¹ Jay White, “Hardly Heroes: Canadian Merchant Seamen and the International Convoy System, 1939-1945,” *The Northern Mariner* 5:4 (October 1995), 19.

⁸² Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 24.

but people lied about their age and got in at fourteen and fifteen. Things weren't too strict. If you looked able and willing and had reasonably good health, they took you."⁸³

Leslie Kenneth Main joined after being rejected by the Army and fellow wartime mariner Robert Downing confessed he "would have liked to have been a fighter pilot" instead of a mariner, but enrolled after his application was rejected.⁸⁴ Retired 'old salts' like L. M. Goddard and Charles Redearn of Colborne, Ontario, two former Great Lakes steamship captains, both left retirement during the war to do their bit for Canada in the Merchant Navy.⁸⁵ A veteran and sniper from the Great War, Ernest Marcotte, upon being deemed inadmissible for entry into the Army joined the Merchant Navy in an effort to "crash the party" and get into the war against Hitler.⁸⁶ Others, like Aubrey Jefferies, simply were averse to the prospect of military life: "I'm glad I stayed in the merchant service... I don't think I'd have enjoyed military life; my personality doesn't adapt me well to that."⁸⁷

Despite the occasional riff-raff or alcoholic, most men who joined were seeking to serve the Allied war effort, pursue adventure, and find steady employment.⁸⁸

Although the Canadian Merchant Navy was a male dominated affair, women also served. In 1938 roughly 2% of the industry was female, but this percentage was reduced as the war proceeded, likely on account of better paying employment opportunities and vacancies left behind by enlisted men, or the newly created women's branches in the

⁸³ Graves, *In Peril on the Sea*, 150.

⁸⁴ The Memory Project, interview with Leslie Kenneth Main. Accessed via <http://www.thememoryproject.com/stories/1349:leslie-kenneth-main/> [August 6, 2015] and Veterans Affairs Canada, "Heroes Remember," Interview with Robert Downing. Accessed via <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/video-gallery/video/4556> [August 6, 2015].

⁸⁵ DND/DHH, 91/490, Directorate of Naval Information fonds, Press Clipping - Merchant Navy Canada, box 9, folder 7800, "2 Veteran Skippers Back to Sea Again: Former Steamboat Captains Aid in War Effort," *Toronto Star*, May 27, 1943.

⁸⁶ DND/DHH, 91/490, Directorate of Naval Information fonds, Press Clippings - Merchant Navy Canada, box 9, folder 7800, Gregory Clark, "Stamina of Russians Praised by Hardy Merchant Seamen," *Winnipeg Free Press*, February 1, 1943.

⁸⁷ Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 152.

⁸⁸ Cook, *The Necessary War*, 190.

three service arms of the Canadian military.⁸⁹ Fern Blodgett Sunde, a native of Cobourg, Ontario, served as a wireless operator on the Norwegian cargo ship *Mosdale* starting in June of 1941 and made seventy-eight ocean crossings during the Battle of the Atlantic.⁹⁰ Others like Toronto's Mina Gould, Vancouver's Mary Jeanett Stacey, and Saint John's Janet Beckwith braved the sea and the U-boats while sailing through blacked-out shipping lanes helping to secure the Allied supply line during the war.⁹¹

The U-boat menace, convoys and shipping operations

The principal threat to merchant sailors throughout the Battle of the Atlantic and the war at sea was the German U-boat. At the opening of the war, Karl Dönitz, *Führer der Unterseeboote* (Submarine Leader) and his fleet of fifty-seven U-boats posed a reduced threat to merchant shipping on account of Hitler's demand that Prize Law, which prohibited the sinking of unarmed merchant ships, be observed. Further, half of these vessels were coastal submarines and not a significant threat in the Atlantic. Initially, these strategic considerations and logistical constraints kept Canadian waters out of the U-boats' key operative areas.⁹² With the German U-boats confined to European waters in 1939 and the early part of 1940, Canadian naval and shipping authorities were given time to adapt to the complex nature of convoy organization and Allied merchant shipping plans.⁹³

Integrating hard lessons learned from the First World War, merchant vessels were herded together into convoys and protected by naval escorts in order to make them less

⁸⁹ Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 21 and Cook, *The Necessary War*, 6.

⁹⁰ Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 21-22.

⁹¹ DND/DHH, 91/490, Directorate of Naval Information fonds, Press Clippings – Merchant Navy Canada, box 9, folder 7800, Stanley Mantrop, "Women Found In Merchant Navy Now," *Kingston Whig Standard*, June 23, 1943.

⁹² Van der Vat, *The Atlantic Campaign*, 3 and 76-77 see also Marc Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 81.

⁹³ Cook, *The Necessary War*, 99.

vulnerable to U-boat attacks.⁹⁴ An average-sized convoy of forty ships, ten columns wide and four across, would be headed by a flagship carrying the convoy commodore and would ideally be escorted by several naval vessels.⁹⁵ This meant that U-boats had to search immense stretches of ocean for fewer targets and risked a fight if they chose to engage those they found.⁹⁶ Before sailing, the convoy commodore, usually a retired senior naval officer, would hold a convoy conference with all merchant captains under his command, where he would assign sailing instructions. The commodore was also responsible for ensuring that convoys formed up properly and were kept in line while on passage.⁹⁷

Although the convoy system provided a measure of protection for merchant vessels, it also introduced a new element of danger owing to the nature of their close formation and the inherent difficulties that came with manoeuvring such a complex arrangement of sea craft.⁹⁸ Sailing only a few hundred meters apart meant that accidents were commonplace in crowded convoys where blacked out silent ships often experienced collisions while managing enemy threats, heavy winds, ice and shoals.⁹⁹ The most dangerous position in convoy – “the last in the outside right-hand column and the last in the left-hand corner were referred to as coffin corner,” as described by Merchant Navy veteran Paul Brick – were usually the first to get hit by enemy submarines.¹⁰⁰

Halifax was Canada’s main assembly point for U.K-bound North American traffic, with its first transatlantic convoy sailing on September 16, 1939. The fleet of

⁹⁴ Donald E. Graves, *In Peril on the Sea*, 58.

⁹⁵ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 13 and Graves, *In Peril on the Sea*, 60-61.

⁹⁶ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 3.

⁹⁷ Graves, *In Peril on the Sea*, 60.

⁹⁸ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 170.

⁹⁹ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 23.

eighteen merchant ships of Convoy HX-1 set out for Britain escorted by two Canadian destroyers, HMCS *St. Laurent* and *Saguenay* and two British cruisers HM *Berwick* and *York*.¹⁰¹ Slow convoys, incorporated into service later in the war, assembled in Sydney, Nova Scotia, and were made up of mostly older ships capable of achieving speeds of only between 7.5 and 8.9 knots. Their slow speed made them easier targets for the U-boats and some of the older ships billowed large clouds of smoke into the air or broke down mid-voyage.¹⁰² Fast convoys were made up of ships capable of speeds of between 9.0 and 14.8 knots, and were assembled in Bedford Basin while even faster ships, those capable of 15 knots or greater, mostly sailed alone on routes dictated by the navy and could outrun most U-boats.¹⁰³

The convoys, the first of which sailed from Britain on September 7, 1939, and operated continuously until the war's end, saved countless lives.¹⁰⁴ Ralph Burbridge, a Canadian mariner who served on a British navy supply ship in the Mediterranean making runs in convoy to Gibraltar down through the Suez canal in the fall of 1939, boasted that in the beginning he and his crew "Went freely from one place to another, without a care in the world."¹⁰⁵ Naval and military planners maintained Burbridge's optimism in the early months of the war, judging the 200,000 tons of ships sunk each month amounting to about a ship a day, in the fall of 1939 to be a sustainable amount capable of being replaced, and far less than would be lost if ships were routed independently.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ German, *The Sea is at Our Gates*, 73 and Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 253 and Giesler *Valour at Sea*, 6 and Graves, *In Peril on the Sea*, 58.

¹⁰² Graves, *In Peril on the Sea*, 58.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Canadian War Museum (hereafter CWM), Oral History Interview Program, Interview with Ralph Burbridge, 31D 3 Burbridge, 6.

¹⁰⁶ Marc Milner, *Battle of the Atlantic* (St. Catharines: Tempus, 2003), 32.

Effective use of the convoy system was one of the principal concerns of the Allied militaries. In April of 1941 Western Approaches Command issued the following instruction to the RN and RCN: “The safe and timely arrival of the convoy at its destination is the primary object and nothing released the escort commander of his responsibility in this respect.”¹⁰⁷ The success of the convoy system in Canada shows that between 1940 and 1945, 7,357 merchant vessels packed with 41,480,161 tons of cargo sailed from Canadian ports to overseas destinations, with most of them surviving the passage.¹⁰⁸

To further protect shipping, Canadian and British governments equipped merchant ships at the start of the war with armaments. Smaller ships could find themselves with a single combatant and a machine gun for defence while larger vessels would usually be more heavily equipped.¹⁰⁹ A later report by Brand, revealed that at the beginning of the war armaments were so scarce that he and his staff had persuaded “some unfortunate masters to go to sea by handing them some Thompson Sub-Machine guns which had probably been donated by [sic] some residents of Chicago or obtained by some other gangster arsenals.”¹¹⁰ At the beginning of the war, D.E.M.S. (Defensively Equipped Merchant Ship) ratings and merchant crews only received ‘on the job’ training while proper facilities were being built.¹¹¹ However, by 1942 naval ratings received training for up to eight weeks while merchant sailors undertook a mandatory, though greatly reduced,

¹⁰⁷ Terry Copp, *Essays From Legion Magazine* (Waterloo: Laurier Center for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies, 2004), 191.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁰⁹ Cook, *The Necessary War*, 192.

¹¹⁰ DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol. 1, Eric Sydney Brand, “Annual Report of Director of Naval Intelligence and Trade,” Ottawa, 1945, Appendix A, 7.

¹¹¹ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 119.

two-day gunnery training program.¹¹² The mandatory gunnery training demonstrated government recognition that the mariners' would be exposed to harm as a result of their civilian work. In these circumstances it was expected that they would assume the role of combatants to protect themselves and their cargoes if engaged by the enemy. The merchant seamen later used the potential for combat role as part of their subsequent claims to be included as veterans in federal legislation.

Arming merchant ships never ensured an advantage over enemy vessels, but it boosted morale and offered the sailors aboard a chance at defending themselves from enemy attacks. Max Reid, one of the roughly 1,600 Canadian D.E.M.S. gunners that served on merchant ships during the war, recalled that: "Placing armaments in Canadian merchant ships could be compared with the provisions of lightly armed corvettes for escort duty. While the destruction of enemy forces was always an aim, it was secondary to the 'safe and timely' arrival of the convoy at its destination."¹¹³ Others agreed with Reid that the ship's armaments were mainly of psychological value. Randolph Hope, who signed on to the *Kawartha Park* at age fourteen in 1944 and served until the end of the war, remembered the guns as something meant to "give you the feeling you was [*sic*] protected."¹¹⁴ But in some cases, the armaments proved essential. Mariner William Parker recalled their life saving potential in the following story:

We'd gone out early in the morning and it was a wet, misty day and it was at breakfast time and we were looking out and there were three planes on the horizon circling us.... Eventually one plane decided to attack us, the first one. We had a 12 pounder aft and we had two naval ratings that were gun layers [who aim the gun] with us and one of the officers and a few deck hands, they looked after the gun and I was up on one Oerlikon with a sailor and there were two other guys on the other side. And it looked like, well this guy is going to take a run at us... well, as it turned out,

¹¹² Ibid., 123-124.

¹¹³ Max Reid, *The Arming of Canadian Merchant Ships in the Second World War: Two Navies – The Same Ship* (Quyon: Chelsea House, 2003), 30 and Cook, *The Necessary War*, 192.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Randolph Hope conducted by author on April 25, 2015.

we were very fortunate, we got a direct hit, the 12 pounder hit the plane as it was coming in...we raked it with our guns and he went down.¹¹⁵

Defensively equipped merchant ships, although never used in an offensive capacity, helped deter threats from enemy air and sea craft and saved lives.¹¹⁶

The Fall of France and its effects on merchant shipping

On June 15, 1940, the first Canadian merchant ship, *Erik Boye*, was sunk by *U-38* south of Ireland as the German *Blitzkrieg* thundered through Western Europe.¹¹⁷

Following Germany's conquering of Western Europe in June, threats to merchant ships and sailors increased. German victories allowed for extending the operational range of Germany's U-boat fleet through the establishment of a series of naval and air bases on the Bay of Biscay, to the Spanish border, along the English Channel and into Norway.¹¹⁸

Additional threats from aircraft in the form of low and high level bombing harassed merchant ships. The bombers also acted in a surveillance role and bolstered the ability of the U-boats to strike more effectively.¹¹⁹ The U-boat fleet also expanded rapidly in the summer of 1940, with a production target of twenty-five U-boats per month, and a goal of having an operational fleet of 300 within a year.¹²⁰

The war at sea intensified as the German *Wehrmacht* planned to invade Britain in "Operation Sea Lion". In order for it to succeed, Hitler needed to overcome the tremendous obstacle posed by the RN.¹²¹ The German *Kriegsmarine* and *Luftwaffe* combined their energies in an attempt to defeat the Royal Air Force (RAF) and neutralize

¹¹⁵ The Memory Project, Interview with William Parker, accessed via <http://www.thememoryproject.com/stories/2413:william-parker/> [August 10, 2015].

¹¹⁶ DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol. 1, Eric Sydney Brand, "Annual Report of Director of Trade Division," Ottawa, 1944, 5.

¹¹⁷ *Erik Boye* was an ex-Danish ship taken in prize by the RCN. Robert C. Fisher, "Canadian Merchant Ship Losses, 1939-1945," *The Northern Mariner* Vol. 5 No. 3 (July 1995): 58 and 70.

¹¹⁸ Cook, *The Necessary War*, 102 and Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 10.

¹¹⁹ Reid, *The Arming of Canadian Merchant Ships*, 17.

¹²⁰ Milner, *Battle of the Atlantic*, 31-32.

¹²¹ Cook, *The Necessary War*, 48.

the threat of the RN, but failed to score a decisive victory during the Battle of Britain.¹²² As part of its efforts to defeat Britain, Germany bombed London and Britain's important channel ports with unrelenting vigour while positioning more U-boats and long-range bombers at key strategic choke points around British supply lines.¹²³ In this attempt to strangle British supplies, merchant seamen bore the brunt of the U-boats' destructive force.

In the last three months of 1940, Germany sank 700,000 tons of shipping, with the majority of losses occurring in British waters.¹²⁴ For Canadian and Allied merchant sailors, a staggering forty-three ships were sunk in just three convoy attacks in the mid-Atlantic.¹²⁵ Another 2.1 million tons of Allied shipping sank to the bottom of the sea before year's end.¹²⁶ The new German U-boat "wolf pack" tactics implemented in September of that year caused much of the damage. The 'pack' attacks involved a group of six or more U-boats stalking a convoy at night and overwhelming the screen of defenders, followed by fierce and deadly attacks on merchant ships.¹²⁷

So bad was the situation that convoys rarely stopped to pick up torpedoed crews and only sent back a rescue boat once the U-boats had been chased off.¹²⁸ Only half the crews of all ships sunk during the war were expected to survive and those who were sent into the frigid waters of the North Atlantic had even lower chances for survival.¹²⁹ During this time, and until the tide in the Battle of the Atlantic turned in May 1943, Canadian

¹²² Ibid., 57-58.

¹²³ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 11.

¹²⁴ Cook, *The Necessary War*, 109.

¹²⁵ For a detailed account of the attacks on convoy HX 72, SC 7 and HX 79 see Milner, *Battle of the Atlantic*, 42-45.

¹²⁶ Marc Milner, "The Battle of the Atlantic," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 13:1 (March 1990): 49.

¹²⁷ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 11 and 32. For a more detailed discussion of the "wolf pack" methods of attack, see Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 86-87.

¹²⁸ Cook, *The Necessary War*, 195.

¹²⁹ Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 1.

seamen carried on amidst constant danger, even though 88% of their total wartime casualties came before December 31, 1942.¹³⁰ The heavy losses sustained by the mariners' during this period led to merchant seamen to campaign for postwar pensions and veterans' entitlements.

Frank Grant, who joined as a radio operator in December 1940, often worked twenty-four hours a day when serving on the Norwegian motor vessel *Brand*. When speaking of the U-boat threat, Grant recalled: "You just figured if your number came up your number came up and you never ever [sic] didn't think about it."¹³¹

Disciplining and expanding the fleet

Most crews sailing in the early years of the war had minimal protection and were often survivors of fierce battles that witnessed ships vanish in a burst of flames with few or no survivors.¹³² The unending danger and bleakness of the situation led to a breakdown in discipline, known as "crew troubles." Some sailors wavered in their resolve and refused to go back to sea.¹³³ Deliberate attempts to avoid returning to sea came in the form of sit-down strikes, sabotage, and refusal of duty.¹³⁴ Convoys were also delayed on account of logistical considerations caused by a shortages of berths and a lack of loading equipment, bunker fuel, and proper ship repairing facilities. Brand's NSHQ in Ottawa recorded that eighty-seven ships had missed convoys sailing from Halifax in 1940.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 9.

¹³¹ Interview with Frank Grant conducted by author, January 29, 2015.

¹³² German, *The Sea is At Our Gates*, 193.

¹³³ DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol.1, Eric Sydney Brand, "Annual Report of the Director of Naval Intelligence For Year 1940," Ottawa, circa 1940, 14.

¹³⁴ German, *The Sea is at Our Gates*, 194.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.

This turbulent period led to a breakdown in discipline and faltering morale. The RCN stepped in to further control the merchant seamen in Canada.¹³⁶ Naval Services staff employed search parties to “find potential saboteurs, converse positively with crews, and exercise a beneficial influence over the safe keeping of his [the naval staff officer’s] ships and cargoes in this manner.”¹³⁷ These search parties were part of the Naval Boarding Service (NBS) established at the Admiralty’s request.¹³⁸ By 1941 the NBS was in use throughout Eastern and later Western Canadian ports conducting valuable anti-espionage work and providing strained crews with a sympathetic ear and simple comforts like magazines and cigarettes that helped improve morale.¹³⁹ The imposition of NBS in Canadian ports during the war demonstrates that the mariners were increasingly being treated enlisted service personnel. The Navy League of Canada, the Red Cross, the Seamen’s Mission, the British and Foreign Seamen’s Guild, the Catholic Seamen’s Club, the Knights of Columbus and various women’s auxiliary groups also provided seamen with creature comforts to detract from their weary work.¹⁴⁰ The Allied Seamen’s Club in Halifax, for example, run by the Navy League of Canada, acted as a drop-in centre and social club for merchant seamen of all nationalities.¹⁴¹

With all the losses to ships and sailors - pegged at a figure of roughly 2.1 million tons of shipping sunk per year in 1940 and 1941 - manpower problems began to plague

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol.1, Eric Sydney Brand, Director of Naval Intelligence, “Annual Report of the Director of Naval Intelligence, Ottawa, for year 1940,” 14.

¹³⁸ Milner, “Naval Control of Shipping,” 174 and Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 80.

¹³⁹ For a detailed account of how NBS operated, see Fred Watt, *In All Respects Ready: The Merchant Navy and the Battle of the Atlantic, 1940-1945* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1985). For a detailed summary of NBS, its origins, and wartime application, see: Milner, “Naval Control of Shipping,” 177 and Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 79 and German, *The Sea is at Our Gates*, 194.

¹⁴⁰ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 82.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Canadian and Allied merchant navies.¹⁴² Ottawa toughened up in dealing with the merchant seamen who were grousing.¹⁴³ Regulations enabling mandatory jail sentences for reluctant, unwilling, or potentially troublesome foreign-going (those assigned to deep-sea trade routes) merchant sailors were implemented on September 12, 1940, with the passage of the first Merchant Seamen's Order (MSO). Those imprisoned were put to use by the Minister of Mines and Resources as labourers for stone breaking and other monotonous hard physical work.¹⁴⁴ These powers were all the more extraordinary since the merchant seamen were considered civilians. The MSO would later be bolstered by the implementation of Order-in-Council 2385 passed April 4, 1941, which gave a panel of civil and naval authorities the power to jail Canadian civilians working in the industry for up to nine months without trial.¹⁴⁵ As a coercive measure, it illustrated the stringent control of merchant shipping undertaken in Canada during the Second World War and shows that merchant seamen, while civilians, were increasingly being treated like service personnel. It is worth noting that in 1942, in the Annual Report of the Director of Naval Intelligence and Trade, Brand stated, "In spite of its [the MSO's] latent severity all reports go to indicate that it is respected by seamen and administered fairly."¹⁴⁶ The MSO, nevertheless, added the threat of compulsion to the work of Canadian mariners.

With the implementation of strict disciplinary measures came more recognition for the Merchant Navy. An Order-in-Council passed on May 19, 1941, elevated the prestige of the service stating:

¹⁴² Marc Milner, "The Battle of the Atlantic," 49.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 80.

¹⁴⁴ DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol.1, Eric Sydney Brand, "Annual Report of the Director of Naval Intelligence, Ottawa, for year 1940," 14 and Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 80

¹⁴⁵ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 80.

¹⁴⁶ DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol.1, Eric Sydney Brand, "Annual Report of the Director of Naval Trade Division, Ottawa, 1942," 14.

[T]hat the Merchant Marine, on which our seaborne commerce depends, is, under present conditions, virtually an arm of the fighting services, and the provision of Merchant Seamen, their training, care and protection is essential to the proper conduct of the war, and vitally necessary to the keeping open of the sea lanes on which the successful outcome of the present conflict so largely depends.¹⁴⁷

In addition, the order-in-council officially recognized Arthur Randles as Director of Merchant Seamen. He served under the Minister of Transport and was responsible for the training and welfare of Canadian merchant crews. One of Randles's first actions involved advancing a government plan to establish merchant seamen barracks – also known as Manning Pools.¹⁴⁸

On August 26, 1941, another Order-in-Council was passed to increase shore side recognition of the Merchant Navy. The order acknowledged that the sailors' work often received little praise from the public due to the profession's lack of uniforms. While these were not issued, the Order in Council provided for Merchant Navy badges, consisting of small rhodium plated white metal badge with the letters "MN" resting on rope sitting beneath a crown with "Canada" written in raised letters. Sailors with three months of service qualified for the badge.¹⁴⁹ Though it was an attempt at recognizing their work, some sailors scoffed at it, querying why they could not have an official uniform. In a letter to the Director of Merchant Seamen received on August 6, 1944, merchant sailor J.D. MacNeil lamented:

It is a hell of a thing to go any where and have people making cracks about why you are not in the services and if you say well I am in the Merchant Service they want you to prove it to them. If you show them a Merchant Pin, that is if you have one, they turn around and say why hell anybody can wear one of them.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ DND/DHH, 85/397, Director General Maritime fonds, box 9, file 55, A.D.P. Heeney, Clerk of the Privy Council "Order In Council Authorizing Establishment of Manning Pools for Merchant Seamen: P.C. 14/3550," Ottawa, May 19, 1941, 1.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Robbie Johnson, *Canadian War Service Badges 1914-1954* (Surrey, B.C.: Johnson Books, 1995), 121-122.

¹⁵⁰ LAC, RG 12, Department of Transportation fonds, vol. 1494, file 8090-53, Letter to the Director of Merchant Seamen from J. D. MacNeil, 2nd Steward, Shell Canadian Tankers, August 6, 1944.

Randles responded to MacNeil on August 30 stating:

So far as uniforms are concerned, there is no statutory uniform drawn up or approved for merchant seamen other than officers and engineers. It is an offence to wear a uniform which in any way resembles or is likely to be mistaken for the uniform of any of the Armed Forces, but subject to the Master of your vessel agreeing, you could possibly be permitted to wear a single-breasted navy blue jacket with dark buttons and a Merchant Navy cap with a Merchant Navy rating badge. This, of course, is again subject to the rules of the Company under whom you are serving. I am presently exploring the possibility of devising a uniform for merchant seamen, but I should point out to you that traditionally merchant seamen do not wish to wear uniform and be otherwise regimented. It is in deference of this general wish that no uniform, except for navigating and engineering officers, has ever been adopted, but in war time, of course, the situation changes and I am quite in sympathy with your viewpoint that a man who is serving in such a dangerous occupation as that of a merchant seamen ought to have something to show to offset any criticism he may be subjected to when he is ashore. You will, of course, appreciate that while the Merchant Service is an important one, the seamen still remain as civilians...¹⁵¹

Embedded in Randles's reply was a contradictory notion that merchant sailors, though deserving of a uniform in war, should be denied one on account of their occupation's civilian nature and peacetime preferences. Furthermore, it failed to account for the industry's strict regulation throughout the war that saw the workers being treated increasingly like members of the armed forces and less like civilians.

At times, the dangers facing merchant sailors were further obscured by misconceptions regarding their pay. When asked about his relationship with merchant sailors as a D.E.M.S gunner during the war, RCN sailor John Dempsey replied "We got along great with the merchant seamen. There were no problems there," but, he believed, "the difference of course, in the wages of merchant seamen and the navy men was quite a bit."¹⁵² Dempsey's attitude was reflected by members of the Canadian public who believed the merchant mariners received better pay over those in uniform. In reality, members of the RCN were tax exempt and overall pay, with war-risk bonuses in the

¹⁵¹ LAC, RG 12, vol. 1494, file 8090-53, Letter from the Director of Merchant Seamen to J. D. MacNeil, 2nd Steward, Shell Canadian Tankers, August 30, 1944.

¹⁵² The Memory Project, Interview with John D. Dempsey, accessed via <http://www.thememoryproject.com/stories/1218:j.-don-dempsey/> [August 10, 2015].

merchant service, was roughly equivalent to that of the navy.¹⁵³ However, on July 15, 1943, the Canadian Shipping Board (CSB) presented the following statement to the Minister of Trade and Commerce regarding the manning of merchant vessels and pay, “The present rates of pay on Canadian merchant vessels are not considered equivalent to the remuneration granted to no more sustained and no more dangerous work of a similar character in the Canadian Navy.”¹⁵⁴ In short, the CSB seemed worried that the mariners were not well enough paid when compared to their military counterparts.

For example, a commander on a naval vessel earned an average of \$415.50 a month tax free, while his merchant equivalent onboard a Park ship earned only \$262.62 after taxes.¹⁵⁵ That the mariners were forced to pay tax raised the ire of sympathetic Canadians. A letter to the editor appearing in the February 9, 1943, *Ottawa Journal* lambasted the Minister of Finance for not granting the sailors tax exemption. The writer avowed sternly, “Our lives are safe today because of their efforts, and thousands have paid with their own lives for the privilege.”¹⁵⁶ A comparative scale of wartime wages on RCN vessels and 10,000-ton Park Steamships showed the eleven highest ranks of the RCN out earning their merchant counterparts while the thirteen lowest ranks on board a naval vessel earned slightly less.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the myth endured as a result of the public confusing Canadian rates of pay with those paid in the United States, as American

¹⁵³ See Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 244-245 for a full comparison of all merchant and naval rating wartime pays.

¹⁵⁴ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 71-72.

¹⁵⁵ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 244.

¹⁵⁶ DND/DHH, 91/490, Directorate of Naval Information fonds, Press Clippings Merchant Navy Canada, Box 9, Folder 7800, “The Merchant Marine,” *Ottawa Journal*, February 9, 1943.

¹⁵⁷ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 244-245.

sailors reported deckhands earning of up to \$1,000 per month based on their complex and generous system of bonuses.¹⁵⁸

To help secure a steady supply of mariners, the Canadian government devised a Manning Pool system by Order-in-Council P.C. 14/3550 on August 26, 1941.¹⁵⁹ The first merchant seamen Manning Pool was set up in Halifax in September 1941, and later it was joined by three more in Montreal, Saint John, and Vancouver.¹⁶⁰ The purpose of these barracks was two-fold: first, the staff of the Manning Pools attempted to provide basic care and comforts for medically fit and trained foreign-going seamen and paid their wages while the sailor awaited his next posting onboard ship; and second, they offered merchant sailors continuous employment so long as they remained in the pool giving the government a steady supply of manpower to draw upon.¹⁶¹ This system not only supported the mariners while they awaited their next berth but it also improved upon the previous and less efficient system of connecting sailors with the next available voyage. Prior to the establishment of manning pools, individual sailors had to seek work directly through shipping agents – a time consuming practice that could sometimes contribute to shipping delays.

The establishment of the barracks was also a welcome development for Canadian sailors. Willis Marsolais, who at the age of fourteen, served with the Canadian Merchant Navy during the war, recalls “The most beautiful places was the Manning Pool for a merchant seamen to stay ... they were very well kept, and a place to get rest between the

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 75.

¹⁵⁹ DND/DHH, 85/397, Director General Maritime Forces fonds, box 9, file 55, A.D.P. Heeney, Clerk of the Privy Council “Order In Council Authorizing Establishment of Manning Pools for Merchant Seamen: P.C. 14/3550,” Ottawa, May 19, 1941, 1.

¹⁶⁰ Lionel Chevrier, *Canada's Merchant Seamen* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1945), 6.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

ships.”¹⁶² By 1944 a new Manning Pool agreement was drafted, whereby Canadian merchant sailors could choose to sign on for either two years continuous service, or until the end of the war, whichever came first.¹⁶³ Upon signing such an agreement the men, similar to service personnel, were no longer free to walk away from their jobs. Those who did were subject to imprisonment as outlined by the terms of the MSO. The merchant seamen would later use the continuous service agreement, and the powers of the MSO, to stake a claim for better access to veterans’ benefits following the war.

By September 23, 1941, Randles, in his post as Director of Merchant Seamen, had prepared a comprehensive recruitment and training scheme aimed at recruiting more Canadian sailors for service in ships of Canadian and British registry.¹⁶⁴ Two government programs aimed at training unlicensed seafarers were offered at St. Margaret’s Sea Training School for Ordinary Seamen and Cadet Officers in Hubbards, Nova Scotia and the Prescott Marine Engineering Instruction School for engine room personnel.¹⁶⁵ The program initially targeted recruits rejected by the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (R.C.N.V.R.) for slight physical defects, Sea Cadet Corps, and other suitable organizations like the Boy Scouts before expanding to target the general public.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Interview with Willis Marsolais conducted by author on March 28, 2015.

¹⁶³ LAC, RG 12, Department of Transportation fonds, vol. 1486, file No. 8046-46, Letter to J. H. Perry, Taxation Investigator, Department of Finance, Ottawa, from Arthur Randles, January 22, 1945 and DND/DHH, 85/397, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol. 5, Eric Sydney Brand, Director of Trade Division, “Memorandum to the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services regarding the Review of Canadian Merchant Navy Situation in 1944,” 4.

¹⁶⁴ LAC, RG 12, Department of Transportation fonds, vol. 1492, file no. 8060-40, Arthur Randles, “Comprehensive Programme for the Training of Merchant Seamen in Canada,” September 23, 1941, Ottawa, 3.

¹⁶⁵ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 27.

¹⁶⁶ The training of wireless telegraphists was left to wireless schools, such as Marconi and other radio corporations. LAC, RG 12, Department of Transportation fonds, vol. 1492, file no. 8060-40, Arthur Randles, “Comprehensive Programme for the Training of Merchant Seamen in Canada,” September 23, 1941, Ottawa, 6, 10 and Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 27.

Training at St. Margaret's was minimal and meant to ensure that sailors were put on ships rapidly. New recruits learned rope work, lifeboat handling, signalling, cargo work and navigation during their stay at St. Margaret's – all essential skills in the seafaring trade.¹⁶⁷ Merchant sailor Paul Brick spoke of the training:

They had a mock ship built where you could do rigging and stuff like that. They had rowboats you rowed around in. You did marching; what the hell good that did us, I don't know. My class was 103. It was a three-month course; we were called "Ninety-Day Wonders."¹⁶⁸

Allan Murray Sr. compared his training to "being in prison" where "you don't learn anything you just go there and are put to work while they are waiting to transfer you."¹⁶⁹

Once given rudimentary training, mostly on land, in the classroom, or on the peaceful waters of St. Margaret's Bay, new recruits were moved to a Manning Pool before being taken directly into sea service. Most were deeply unprepared for what awaited them on the Atlantic.¹⁷⁰

The development of the Park fleet

The Canadian merchant service continued to expand as the federal government undertook a shipbuilding campaign. Following a recommendation by the CSB in March 1941, the Department of Munitions and Supply established the Wartime Merchant Shipping board in April 1941 to deal with all merchant shipbuilding in Canada.¹⁷¹ By May 1941 the Canadian government had scheduled the production of sixty-three "North Sands" type 10,000 *dwt*¹⁷² merchant ships for the Canadian fleet, as well as another twenty-six for the British. Wartime Merchant Shipping, the government body in charge

¹⁶⁷ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 160.

¹⁶⁸ Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 31.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Allan Murray Sr., conducted by Angela Beeking in 2005. In author's possession and secured with the permission of his granddaughter and the interviewer Angela Beeking.

¹⁷⁰ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 160.

¹⁷¹ DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol. 9, Eric Sydney Brand, "Canada Expanded Merchant Fleet To Meet Demands of Wartime," *Foreign Trade*, 1:14, (April, 1947): 601.

¹⁷² DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol. 6, untitled document attached to a copy of a lecture titled "Control of Merchant Shipping In War" given by Brand to the RCAF staff college circa 1956.

of managing ship production in Canada, moved quickly to secure an agreement with the United States Maritime Commission (U.S.M.C.) to purchase all ships then scheduled on the program and to “lease-lend” them to Britain. This helped assure replacement tonnage, but meant that the British only purchased two of the original vessels they had ordered from Canada earlier in the year.¹⁷³ Each 10,000 *dwt* vessel proved of vital usage and could carry enough food to feed 225,000 people for a week and transport fuel, steel, aluminum, lumber, aircraft, tanks, guns and whatever other essential wartime supplies were required.¹⁷⁴

The Park Steamship Company, formed by Order-in-Council on April 8, 1942, following a request by the CSB,¹⁷⁵ immediately entered into an agreement with the Department of Munitions and Supply to supervise and control operations of the merchant vessels being built in Canada. The company held title to the government-owned Park ships, which were named for Canadian parks, and allocated them to shipping companies to manage under the general supervision of a shipping company at a fixed management fee.¹⁷⁶ The vessels were thus government owned but operated by private companies under wartime controls, and almost all vessels were manned by newly recruited Canadian mariners.

¹⁷³ Hennessy, “The Rise and Fall of a Canadian Maritime Policy,” 56.

¹⁷⁴ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 8.

¹⁷⁵ DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol. 9, Eric Sydney Brand, “Canada Expanded Merchant Fleet To Meet Demands of Wartime,” *Foreign Trade*, 1:14, (April, 1947): 601. Hennessy explains that an oil shortage and gasoline rationing in Canada, paired with an over 50 percent loss of initial Canadian merchant tonnage, helped move Howe to accept the CSB’s recommendation to build merchant ships for Canada’s needs. Michael Hennessy, “The Rise and Fall of a Canadian Maritime Policy,” 57.

¹⁷⁶ DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol. 9, Eric Sydney Brand, “Canada Expanded Merchant Fleet To Meet Demands of Wartime,” *Foreign Trade*, 1:14, (April, 1947): 602 and J. de N. Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply: Canada in the Second World War Volume One* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1950), 385.

The Canadian-owned ships received sailing direction from the CSB and found crews with the help of the Director of Merchant Seamen, all of which was coordinated with the RCN for convoy duty.¹⁷⁷ On June 30, 1942, the Park company took its first delivery of the *Prince Albert Park*, one of five 10,000 *dwt* ships it received by the year's end. By war's end, the fleet had grown to 176 ships operating under the Park Flag.¹⁷⁸ From its inception in 1942 until the end of the war, these vessels made a tremendous contribution to Canadian and Allied shipping operations. Historian Michael Hennessy has noted, that "Canada's merchant fleet had risen from virtual extinction to become the fourth largest in the world by 1945."¹⁷⁹

From grim to disastrous

The establishment of the Newfoundland Escort Force (NEF) occurred in the spring of 1941 to reduce sinkings in the North Atlantic and the 'Greenland Air Gap,' giving the RCN a more active role in the North Atlantic.¹⁸⁰ Convoy routes from North America to the United Kingdom took a northerly sweep past Newfoundland to Iceland before moving down to Britain in order to gain full support from land-based patrolling aircraft that kept the U-boats at bay. However, a large 'Greenland Air Gap' (known as the 'Black Pit') of several hundred miles remained inaccessible by air for most of the war. The waters of the 'Black Pit,' comprised of some of the coldest and roughest in the world, became a veritable killing space and was referred to by the Germans as the 'Devil's Gorge.'¹⁸¹ With the creation of the NEF, Canadians operating under direction

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ For a more detailed discussion on the operation, growth, and expansion of the Park Steamship company, see Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 28-44.

¹⁷⁹ Hennessy, "The Rise and Fall of a Canadian Maritime Policy," 58.

¹⁸⁰ Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century*, 89 and Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 10-11.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

from Western Approaches Command (the section of the RN responsible for the safe and timely arrival of British shipping coming from western approaches), began escorting convoys between their assembly points in Nova Scotia to the Mid-Ocean Meeting Point (MOMP) south of Iceland.¹⁸² Additional protection came from Britain's Coastal Command that was bolstered by the addition of ten long range four-engine B-24 Liberators.¹⁸³ Unfortunately, it took Canada almost two years to acquire any of these long-range bombers for its own forces, a delay that resulted in less air protection for the mariners, thereby greatly increasing losses.

These developments occurred as Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June of 1941. Although this reduced some of the military might directed against Britain, it placed further strain on Allied trans-Atlantic shipping operations. Beginning late in the summer of 1941, convoys undertook the 'Murmansk Run' to supply the Soviets through the Arctic at its most northerly ports of Archangel and Murmansk.¹⁸⁴ The dangers presented by the Murmansk Run took a heavy toll on merchant sailors. George Harold Evans lamented the strain of the trip: "I heard a lot about Russia, you know. People coming back from Russia, survivors and some with arms gone, and legs gone or frozen... And I said, 'I hope to God we're not going there.'"¹⁸⁵ The heroism of those who braved the northerly routes to the Soviet Union was depicted in Canadian wartime propaganda as part of the "Men of Valor" series issued by the Wartime Information Board. A poster, drawn by Hubert Rogers, portrayed the Canadian icebreaker *Montcalm* on route to

¹⁸² Milner, *Battle of the Atlantic*, 66.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁸⁴ Sarty, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, 56 and Veterans Affairs Canada, "Canada Remembers: The Murmansk Run," accessed via: <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/pdf/cr/pi-sheets/murmansk-eng.pdf> [May 21, 2015].

¹⁸⁵ Veterans Affairs Canada, "Heroes Remember" interview with George Harold Evans <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/video-gallery/video/5981> [Accessed May 22, 2015].

Murmansk. It was titled, “Men of Valor – They Fight for You!”, and it appeared above a caption that described the Merchant Navy as the “Fourth Arm of the Services.”¹⁸⁶ The captain of *Montcalm*, F.S. Slocombe, was made a member of the Order of the British Empire for captaining the vessel through the ice.¹⁸⁷ Such high praise and exposure for the mariners’ work during the war was later used to bolster the mariners’ claims to “veteranhood” and better access to veterans’ benefits.

Canada and Britain gained an ally in the war of supply following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, but this did little to improve the fortunes of Allied merchant crews.¹⁸⁸ While the vengeful Americans prepared for a two-front war against Japan and Germany, they were unprepared for battle. With America now in the war, Germany ordered U-boats to North American waters. To make matter worse, this occurred after the United States Navy (USN) redeployed most of its warships to the Pacific leaving fewer defences on the Atlantic seaboard.¹⁸⁹ This left the RCN alone to pick up the slack in the western Atlantic.¹⁹⁰ As Dönitz launched operation *Paukenschlag* or “Drumbeat” in January 1942, he brought the U-boat threat more directly into Canadian and American waters south of Newfoundland, from the St. Lawrence down to the Caribbean.

As part of Operation Drumbeat, Dönitz initially ordered five of his long-range type IX U-boats to attack merchant ships off Sydney, Halifax, Boston, New York, and Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Some twenty-five U-boats were soon hunting for

¹⁸⁶ CWM, George Metcalf Collection, Artefact No. 19880069-838, catalogue description accessed via <http://collections.historymuseum.ca/public/pages/cmccpublic/emupublic/Display.php?irn=1026142&lang=0> [August 10, 2015].

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Graves, *In Peril on the Sea*, 88.

¹⁸⁹ Graves, *In Peril on the Sea*, 88 and Douglas and Greenhouse, *Out of the Shadows*, 76.

¹⁹⁰ Milner, *Canada’s Navy the First Century*, 97.

unsuspecting prey.¹⁹¹ An October 15, 1942, article in the *Montreal Herald* reported the sinking of a westbound merchant ship off a summer resort near Metis Beach, northeast of Rimouski. The article reported, “The ship was struck just after midnight and 12 of her crew are missing. The 18 others were picked up by Canadian naval vessels, which tried to locate and counter-attack the vessel.”¹⁹² With German U-boat offensives now stabbing into Canadian inland waters, there were few safe places for coastal and deep-sea going merchant crews. Shipping losses due to enemy action rose rapidly from an average of roughly two million tons a year prior to 1942 to a staggering eight million for the rest of the year (with U-boats alone accounting for 6.1 million).¹⁹³ Despite roughly 400 ships sunk from January to July 1942, merchant crews carried on.¹⁹⁴

While several hundred Canadian mariners were killed during these dark days, dozens of sailors were also captured. In 1942 Willis Marsolais, when returning from Liverpool to Halifax on SS *Danskie* - a Liberian registered freighter - had his vessel overcome by a well-armed German surface raider. After a brief firefight where he was shot in the leg, his ship was captured and its crew sent to Germany, where he remained a prisoner of war (P.O.W.) for eighteen months.¹⁹⁵ His worst experience as a P.O.W. came at Stalag XII, where he was wrongfully accused of spitting on a German officer. After being placed in solitary confinement without food for twenty-one days, he was brought

¹⁹¹ Sarty, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, 92 and Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 60.

¹⁹² LAC, RG 12, Department of Transportation fonds, vol. 1494, file no. 8090-49, “Merchant Ship Sunk In River Near Metis,” *Montreal Herald*, October 15, 12.

¹⁹³ Milner, “Battle of the Atlantic,” 49 and Hennessy, “The Rise and Fall of a Canadian Maritime Policy,” 56.

¹⁹⁴ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 20.

¹⁹⁵ “Will’s Story,” Willis Marsolais interviewed by Jean De La Croix circa March 23, 1999 used as Willis Marsolais’s statement before the Standing Committee hearings on P.O.W.’s at Parliament Hill, 1-2. In author’s possession secured via Merchant Navy veteran Randolph Hope.

back to his quarters, stripped of all his clothes and beaten to within an inch of his life.¹⁹⁶

Willis later described the event for a Canadian Parliamentary Standing Committee

hearing on prisoners of war:

I was bent over face down on a bench. My arms were stretched out in front of me and my hands were handcuffed to the front at the bottom of the bench. My feet were chained to the bottom of the other end of the bench so that I was completely stretched out and totally unable to move. From my position I couldn't see anything or anybody but everybody could see me. I was beaten in front of everybody. I don't know how many were beating me; it could have been one or several taking turns. They were using a strap and were concentrating around an area about a foot and a half wide along my spine and my rump. My punishment broke just about every vessel along the spine of my back. I can't say for certain how long I was beaten... When the show was over, I was hauled up into my bunk. The vessels of my back were bursting with blood. I had to stay there 3 days, unable to move.¹⁹⁷

Marsolais returned to Canada from England on the *Wentworth Park* in 1944 and subsequently served for the remainder of the war.¹⁹⁸ In total, 198 Canadian seamen were taken as prisoners of war before victory was achieved.¹⁹⁹ During the war merchant seamen were captured and treated in enemy prison camps as service personnel despite their status as civilians.

A period of brief reprieve in the war at sea came along the shores of North America following the end of the second German "Happy Time," from January to July 1942, but high losses quickly resumed as Dönitz shifted his forces once more into the mid-Atlantic.²⁰⁰ By this time Germany's wartime shipbuilding program was producing U-boats at a rate of almost twenty per month. They prowled in the more vulnerable parts of the North Atlantic, taking advantage of a lack of Allied air cover in the 'Black Pit'.²⁰¹ With an operational fleet of 300 U-boats in the fall of 1942 Dönitz began once more to

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 6-7.

¹⁹⁹ Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 276.

²⁰⁰ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 15-16 and Marc Milner, *The North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 157.

²⁰¹ Milner, *The North Atlantic Run*, 157-158.

exact heavy losses on merchant shipping. In November alone his fleet sank 118 merchant ships.²⁰² High losses continued into March of 1943 when another 108 Allied ships were sunk, most of which were operating in convoys in the North Atlantic.²⁰³ Compounding these threats were extreme weather conditions and storms. Gordon R. Underwood of Markham, Ontario recalled the deadly cost of violent winter storms in the Atlantic:

When I tell anyone of the number of missing men overboard, I'm sure they feel I am going overboard myself. In the North Atlantic we ran into all kinds of storm where you could be held in one place for two or three days. One Christmas day we lost ten men in our convoy; it was a bright day but rough and the flags were going up all over the convoy. None was ever recovered that I know of because you couldn't lower a boat.²⁰⁴

The icy waters of the U-boat ridden North Atlantic passage were a veritable hell for the merchant crews that sailed them.²⁰⁵

From 1942 onward, Canadian merchant crews were recognized with more awards for their gallantry on the high seas. On December 18, 1942, the *Halifax Chronicle* reported that two Canadian merchant seamen, who were instrumental in saving damaged vessels, had been honoured for bravery by British authorities.²⁰⁶ The first sailor, the ship's carpenter Eugene Bergstrom from Regina, was awarded the British Empire Medal (Civil Division) for his work in the firefighting party on a British ship following an attack by Japanese aircraft; the second, Peter George Andrea of North Sydney, Nova Scotia, was commended for brave conduct when he re-boarded his torpedoed vessel with his captain and a small crew, enabling it to eventually be brought back to port.²⁰⁷ The *Toronto Daily Star* reported on December 23, 1942, that three members of the Canadian Steamship *Lady Hawkins*, sunk a few months earlier, had by order of the King been

²⁰² Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 26.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 202.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 191.

²⁰⁶ LAC, RG 12, Department of Transportation fonds, vol. 1492, file no. 8090-53, "North Sydney Man is Cited For Bravery," *Halifax Chronicle*, December 18, 1942.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

commended for brave conduct. Robert Carter Clayton, a radio officer from Halifax, Charles Sydeny Boliver, the boatswain's mate from Upper Lehave, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, and William Arthur Burton, the ship's carpenter from Hamilton, Ontario, were all recommended for awards, but not eligible for military decorations. The specific details of their gallantry were not discussed.²⁰⁸ A complete list of wartime honours for merchant seamen has yet to be produced.

In early 1943 a series of positive tactical, intelligence, and organizational developments helped turn the tide in the war of the Atlantic.²⁰⁹ Two of the most important of these were the acquisition of Ultra intelligence and the development of air support used to close the mid-Atlantic gap. The restoration of Ultra intelligence to British routing authorities enabled convoys to be more efficiently routed allowing most transatlantic convoys to make their passage without attack.²¹⁰ This greatly bolstered the offensive capabilities of the Allied navies, while strengthening the defence of merchant shipping. Meanwhile, by April 1943 Liberator bombers from the United States began arriving in Canada, helping to finally eliminate the mid-Atlantic air gap, what Milner has described as "the final area for free-wheeling U-boat operations."²¹¹ Brand's Trade Division noted the effects in 1943:

The happy trend of events in the battle of the Atlantic during 1943 has been noteworthy in the Northwest Atlantic more than in any other area. It was here that shipping losses were serious in the latter part of 1942 and in the early months of 1943, and it was here that losses dwindled to nothing in the latter part of 1943.²¹²

²⁰⁸ LAC, RG 12, Department of Transportation fonds, vol. 1492, file no. 8090-53, "Merchant Seamen Lauded For Bravery," *Toronto Daily Star*, December 43, 1942.

²⁰⁹ Milner, *Battle of the Atlantic*, 137.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

²¹¹ Milner, "Battle of the Atlantic," 60.

²¹² DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol.1, Eric Sydney Brand, "Annual Report of Director of Trade Division Ottawa – 1943," 1.

Yet even with the U-boats thrown back in the summer of 1943 the losses to the merchant sailors continued to the end of the war.

Following May 1943, the U-boat menace was never the same, as better weather, faster and more heavily armed merchant ships, and a drop in U-boat attacks occurred, the once perilous North Atlantic crossing, as Roger Sarty has remarked, “soon came to be known as the ‘milk run’!”²¹³ Yet U-boats continued to manage periods of significant success inflicting heavy losses on Allied merchant shipping, although these sinkings were no longer a threat to Britain’s survival owing to the rate of production of North American merchant ships.²¹⁴ In addition, Canadian merchant ships now found themselves strengthened with sturdier defensive armaments.²¹⁵ Nevertheless, Canadian and Allied Merchant Navy losses continued to occur until the last day of the war as merchant ships remained under constant threat of U-boat attacks. On May 7, 1945, hours before the German surrender, the Canadian *Avondale Park* was torpedoed at the Firth of Forth, off Scotland, by *U-2336*.²¹⁶ Even German surrender did not secure safety. A new type XXIII submarine, upon its failure to properly receive the ceasefire signal, sank two merchant ships off Newcastle on May 7, 1945. Men and women of the Allied Merchant Navy were amongst the first and the last casualties of the war.²¹⁷

Victory, praise, and sacrifice

Canada’s contribution in Allied shipping operations was crucial to the Allied victory and rightly earned the service the title of the ‘Fourth Arm.’ A 1945 pamphlet

²¹³ Sarty, *Battle of the Atlantic*, 135. For a full account of the dangers facing the Canadian Merchant Navy and Royal Canadian Navy during the last two years of the war, see W.A.B. Douglas, Roger Sarty, and Michael Whitby, *A Blue Water Navy: The Official Operational History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War, 1943-1945* (St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing, 2007).

²¹⁴ Milner, “The Battle of the Atlantic,” 62.

²¹⁵ Cook, *The Necessary War*, 192.

²¹⁶ Fisher, “Canadian Merchant Ship Losses,” 61.

²¹⁷ Copp, *Essays From Legion Magazine*, 238.

issued by Canada's wartime Minister of the Department of Transport Lionel Chevrier on Canada's merchant service, stated unequivocally:

No body of men has contributed more to the prosecution of the war effort than those gallant seamen who man the ships of the Allied Merchant Navies, and to which Canada's contributions in ships and men has grown from small beginning to now play a substantial part.²¹⁸

Canadian shipyards produced 456 merchant ships during the war years, 176 of which were Canadian owned and operated by the Parks Steamships Company.²¹⁹ These, and the other merchant fleets of Allied flags, helped ensure Britain's survival by maintaining vital supply lines on the Atlantic. Between September 1939 and May 1945, 25,343 merchant ships carrying 164,783,921 tonnes of cargo sailed from North America to Britain. This lifeline staved off defeat and provided the tools for eventual Allied victory.²²⁰

The sacrifices made as part of the cost of wartime shipping were equally significant. British merchant shipping losses to enemy U-boats numbered over 1,300 vessels sunk and 32,027 merchant seamen killed.²²¹ In terms of loss of life suffered by Canadians, a definitive statistic of those who served has yet to be established. The merchant navy casualty ratio was higher than any of the armed forces, with at least 1,629 lives lost, or 1/8 out of the estimated 12,000 who served.²²² William Parker, when asked about his time in the merchant service during the war, replied: "It was short times of utter

²¹⁸ Chevrier, *Canada's Merchant Seamen*, 1.

²¹⁹ Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 17.

²²⁰ Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 29.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 35. For a complete list of Canadian merchant ships lost during the war, including Newfoundland registered ships, see: Robert C. Fisher, "Canadian Merchant Shipping Losses, 1939-1945," *Northern Mariner* 5:3 (July 1995): 57-73.

²²² Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 29.

terror,” before stating “90 percent of the time you were happy enough, peaceful enough.”²²³

The civilian crews, working without the recognition that accompanied uniformed service, endured five and a half years of enemy assaults on some of the most treacherous ocean-waterways of the world. Despite this, they remained the ‘Fourth Arm of the Fighting Services’ in name only and never officially had their war service recognized on a par with their military counterparts. But what was to become of these men and the war built fleet as Canada prepared for peace? In 1945 the federal government was faced with deciding what rewards its wartime Merchant Navy would receive, and how they would be remembered. Whether or not they were to be counted as veterans of the conflict was a painstaking and difficult decision that would have to be made as part of a broader set of negotiations between Canadian civil and military planners that would play out in the war’s immediate aftermath.

²²³ The Memory Project, Interview with William Parker accessed via <http://www.thememoryproject.com/stories/2413:william-parker/> [August 10, 2015].

Chapter 2: “The kiss of death bestowed with gratitude.”

Wartime merchant sailor Clayton Stones served in the Canadian Merchant Navy. At sixteen years of age he left his home in Richmond Hill to volunteer and within a year he had survived one sunken ship and avoided numerous other close calls with enemy U-boats.²²⁴ At age eighteen he was called to the Army in Toronto, but upon trying to enlist he was refused entry due to his essential work as a mariner.²²⁵ During the war he carried supplies through the heavily mined northerly route to Murmansk, a trip referred to by merchant crews as the “Death Run.” He, like many merchant seamen, believed that he had risked all to help ensure an Allied victory.²²⁶

In 1946, while trying to obtain medical care and financial support afforded to his military comrades, Stones recalled:

I went down to Christie street to try and get some help for me... I had severe tingling in my ears all the time from the explosions and whatnot on the ship. So I went in there to ask them if I could get some help and they told me: ‘No, we...we only treat veterans here.’ And then we...we applied for to get stuff, like these gratuities that the army and that got: ‘No, you’re not veterans. You guys are only... you’re all civilians.’²²⁷

Owing to their civilian status, Canada’s wartime merchant seamen were denied most of the generous benefits afforded to service personnel. Instead, they were given a parsimonious offer of continued employment at sea in lieu of more flexible re-establishment programs. Such treatment failed to address the extensive dangers the mariners faced while operating under naval and government control during the war, and the high casualties, which, per capita, were worse than any of the other three service arms pegged at a figure of roughly 1/8 compared with 1/16 in the Royal Canadian Air Force,

²²⁴ “Man angry Ottawa won’t honor his war work,” *Toronto Star*, February 4, 1986. Accessed via http://datav2.thememoryproject.com/image/8694_original.jpg [July 16, 2015].

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ The Memory Project. Interview with Clayton Stones.

<http://www.thememoryproject.com/stories/2081:clayton-stones/> [July 16, 2015].

1/32 in the Canadian Army, and 1/47 in the RCN.²²⁸ To better understand the causes and origins for such treatment it will be necessary to examine the beliefs and principles that guided the development of Canada's Veterans Charter, determine eligibility for "veteranhood" as it emerged in 1945, and compare how armed force veterans and merchant seamen were treated.

In receiving restitution from the federal government, the merchant seamen became one of many groups of war workers – such as Canadian Red Cross workers and the Civilian Overseas Fire Fighters Corps – who had their rehabilitation benefits dealt with in separate legislation from that of other recognized military veterans.²²⁹ The distinct legislated treatment enshrined in the legal tenets of Canada's Veterans Charter labelled the mariners as non-veterans and denied them many of the rewards offered to returning service personnel. An additional cause for the merchant sailors' exclusion came from a government desire to maintain a large oceanic merchant marine following the war for both economic and defence purposes.²³⁰ In 1945 the Minister of Transport, Lionel Chevrier, made clear this motivation as grounds for the mariners' further denial of entitlements, explaining frankly in a pamphlet:

Such benefits [merchant seamen rehabilitation benefits] should not be of a nature which would encourage Seamen to leave the industry at the end of the war to seek employment in other fields as the services of many skilled Seamen will be required if Canada is to maintain a Merchant Marine after the war.²³¹

As a result, government vocational training schemes for merchant sailors proved extremely limited and very rarely allowed for non-maritime related training. In short, the

²²⁸ Mike Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 5 and Fraser, *Post War Casualty*, 23.

²²⁹ Walter S. Woods, *Rehabilitation: A Combined Operation* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1953), 219-220.

²³⁰ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 236 and Michael Hennessy, "World War II and the Rebirth and Death of Canada's Merchant Marine," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* No. 1, Vol.6, (1995): 209 and 214.

²³¹ Chevrier, *Canada's Merchant Seamen*, 12-13.

government wanted to keep the merchant seamen in the national service and was extremely ungenerous in offering training or educational benefits that might take the seamen away from the ships. Without the presence of a powerful and influential lobby, the mariners found work where they could in Canada's postwar economy, but did so without the aid of the federal government or recognition as veterans.

The growth of veterans' advocacy in Canada

Government planning for demobilization in Canada began almost immediately after war was declared as planners sought to avoid repeating the mistakes of the First World War.²³² Following the First World War, in the context of the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s, many re-establishment schemes for veterans had failed, causing much hardship and leaving the federal government heavily criticised by its veterans.²³³ Returning service personnel felt the government treated them callously and many complained that their exclusion from the negotiation process to determine benefits, programs, and pensions was a chief cause of such neglect.²³⁴ This betrayal led returning soldiers to mobilize politically on behalf of the veteran community in an effort to secure better benefits.

By 1925 a number of fledgling veterans' organizations amalgamated to form the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League, which strengthened the voice of its collective membership.²³⁵ Subsequent veterans negotiations with the federal government from the 1920s onward led to what Morton and Wright have called the

²³² Canada. Veterans Affairs Canada (hereafter VAC), *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans' Benefits in Canada 1914-2004*. Veterans Affairs Canada, Canadian Forces Advisory Council, March 2004, 9.

²³³ Desmond Morton, "Canadian Veterans' Heritage," in *The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada*, eds. Peter Neary and J. L. Granatstein (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 27 and VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans' Benefits*, 6.

²³⁴ Morton, "Canadian Veterans' Heritage," 21.

²³⁵ Peter Neary, "'Without the Stigma of Pauperism'" Canadian Veterans in the 1930s," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* Vol. 22, No. 1 (May 2009): 34.

“second battle” between veterans and the government resulting in the emergence of veteran advocacy in Canada.²³⁶ This move towards greater unity, made in the late 1920s and early 1930s, did not always serve the needs of smaller special-interest veterans’ groups, such as the Sir Arthur Pearson Association of War Blinded (SAPA), but in a more universal sense it enabled returning service personnel to strengthen claims for better pensions and postwar benefits.²³⁷ As part of its dealings with the state, the Legion played an active role in shaping the system of privileges that emerged for Canada’s Second World War veterans.²³⁸

The Second World War and the Veterans Charter

Following its entry into the war in September 1939, the federal government assigned the Department of Pensions and National Health (DPNH) with the task of administering early civilian re-establishment schemes, while the Royal Canadian Legion maintained its position as the main organization lobbying for veterans.²³⁹ Many of the administrators in the DPNH were veterans of the Great War who used first-hand experience to improve upon the failings of the government’s demobilization framework from the last war.²⁴⁰

On December 8, 1939, P.C. 4068 established a cabinet committee on demobilization and rehabilitation with the minister of the DPNH and veteran of the Great

²³⁶ For an in depth discussion of this period of veteran-state relations, see Desmond Morton and Glenn Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

²³⁷ Serge Durlinger, *Veterans With a Vision: Canada’s War Blinded in Peace and War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 143.

²³⁸ Neary, *Reference Paper*, 10.

²³⁹ Peter Neary, *On To Civvy Street: Canada’s Rehabilitation Program for Veterans of the Second World War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011), 62 and Peter Neary and Shawn Brown, “The Veterans Charter and Canadian Women Veterans of World War II, in *The Good Fight: Canadians and World War II* ed. J. L. Granatstein and Peter Neary, (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1995), 388.

²⁴⁰ Neary, *On to Civvy Street*, 62.

War, Ian Mackenzie, as convener.²⁴¹ The cabinet committee then appointed a General Advisory Committee on Demobilization and Rehabilitation (GACDR), which, over the course of the war, appointed fourteen subcommittees to study the scope of the state's responsibilities to returning ex-service personnel and was one of the primary government bodies responsible for creating the system of benefits that emerged in 1945.²⁴² Harold French McDonald was selected as chairman of the GACDR while other notable and influential veterans, such as Robert England and Walter S. Woods, also formed part of its membership.²⁴³ For the next five and a half years, Mackenzie, McDonald, Woods, and England – four veterans of the First World War - became the primary architects of Canada's rehabilitation and re-establishment programs that came to be collectively known as the Veterans Charter in 1946.²⁴⁴

Canada's plan for veterans of the Great War had been confined to the disabled and those who had enlisted as minors. The Second World War was different. Benefits were available for everyone who served in the Armed Forces as decreed by Order in Council 7633 October 1, 1941.²⁴⁵ The "Post Discharge Re-establishment Order," P.C. 7633, built upon the fraternal and egalitarian notions of "veteranhood" articulated by Canada's First World War veteran organizations like the Legion that strongly advocated for Second World War veterans, especially in formal recommendations to the GACDR. The order acknowledged that Canada owed a debt to all of the 1,081,865 Canadian men

²⁴¹ Ibid., 63.

²⁴² Neary, *On to Civvy Street*, 63 and Neary and Brown, "The Veterans Charter," 388.

²⁴³ Neary, *On to Civvy Street*, 63. [I wonder if you need all these refs? Can one or two be cut? Some of the above might not need to be footnoted]

²⁴⁴ Neary, *On to Civvy Street*, 66-67 and Neary and Brown, "The Veterans Charter," 388-389.

²⁴⁵ VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans' Benefits in Canada*, 9 and Neary and Brown "The Veterans Charter," 388.

and women who had served in uniform from 1939 to 1945 from a population of 11,506,655.²⁴⁶

As the war neared its end, the DPNA was replaced with two newly established government departments: the Department of National Health and Welfare and the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA). Formed on October 21, 1944, the DVA became the primary branch of the federal government tasked with promulgating and overseeing veterans' benefit.²⁴⁷ Ian Mackenzie became the department's first minister and Walter S. Woods held the position of deputy minister. They were tasked with the co-ordination and administration of all government statutes relating to the re-establishment into civilian life of ex-service personnel.²⁴⁸ But the DVA did not work alone in its task. A number of government departments, including the Department of Reconstruction, the Department of National Defence, and a myriad of others were involved in administering re-establishment schemes, leading Woods to call the process a "combined operation."²⁴⁹

Two principal beliefs guided the extensive and comprehensive system of Second World War veterans benefits that emerged from 1939 to 1945: first, that able-bodied veterans would rather work than receive relief from the state, leading to the establishment of short-term help to compensate ex-military personnel for their services during the war; second, that the long-term care for Canada's sick or disabled veterans should be a responsibility of the state.²⁵⁰ The government desired to provide returning veterans with assistance both to compensate them for their service and to assist them in returning to

²⁴⁶VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans' Benefits in Canada*, 9-10.

²⁴⁷ Neary, *On to Civvy Street*, 121 and Neary and Brown, "The Veterans Charter," 389.

²⁴⁸ Neary, *On to Civvy Street*, 120 and VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans' Benefits in Canada*, 12.

²⁴⁹ VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans' Benefits in Canada*, 12.

²⁵⁰ Peter Neary, "Introduction," in *The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada*, ed. Peter Neary and J. L. Granatstein (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 7.

lives that had been interrupted by the country's entry into the war.²⁵¹ Also influencing the state's approach to demobilization were the bitter lessons of the First World War that demonstrated that postwar economic reconstruction planning was tied more broadly to the re-establishment of returning veterans.²⁵² Understood as an investment in the nation's future, the Veterans Charter was designed to improve the lives of veterans through training and re-establishment schemes in an effort to make future leaders out of ex-servicemen. This came in recognition of the fact that successfully re-established veterans would help with the nation's development and long-term economic prosperity.²⁵³ After a short-term of rehabilitation and training, those able in body and mind would return to family life, buy houses, pay taxes, and help the country enter a prosperous peace.²⁵⁴ All veterans, according to Woods and his fellow planners, were to be provided with "opportunity with security."²⁵⁵ Also motivating this Keynesian view to properly train the men was a desire to ensure that returning ex-service personnel would not become a public charge on the state. Reducing the number of unemployed veterans and those in need of chronic financial assistance was thus in the state's best interest.

In 1943 Robert England attempted to answer the difficult question, "What is a veteran?"²⁵⁶ Before admitting the degree to which the term veteran can be a fluid category, sometimes meaning battle hardened but other times simply meaning discharged servicemen, he revealed what he believed to be its core principles:

The major premise has been that military service is involved, and this in law derives from the attestation on enlistment, enrolment, engagement, call up, or on being commissioned, for a period

²⁵¹ Neary and Brown, "The Veterans Charter," 390.

²⁵² Neary, *On to Civvy Street*, 64.

²⁵³ Neary and Brown, "The Veterans Charter," 390.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ Robert England, *Discharged: A Commentary on Civil Re-establishment of Veterans in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillian Company, 1943), 1.

of service with an oath of allegiance. This means a definite kind of service, usually in uniform, in the navy, army and air force, from which the member cannot withdraw by his own choice for the period for which he may have engaged himself or until released under authority. There are, however, developing forms of service such as merchant-navy, air-raid and civilian defence, where the presence of the enemy and risk because of enemy action are very real, but in many of these corps or occupations resignation from or the discontinuation of service are possible.²⁵⁷

In this definition, exposure to harm, threats of enemy action, and the actual presence in battle were only secondary characteristics of “veteranhood.” What mattered most was continuous uniformed service and the inability to resign from that service.

When discussing representations made by the Merchant Navy before a Special Committee of the House of Commons on Veterans Affairs in 1945, some years after the hearings took place Walter S. Woods revealed that England’s definition of the veteran seemed to hold true in government circles:

The representations on behalf of the seamen conceded that the wartime status of these personnel differed greatly from that of members of the armed forces, but argued that this was not due to any action on the part of the seamen themselves and may be ascribed to the failure to include Canadian merchant seamen in the same category as members of the forces; further, that the Merchant Navy played an important, if not a vital role in the winning of the war and their claim to proper compensation should be dealt with in a sympathetic and practical manner.²⁵⁸

Woods revealed that merchant mariners were outside of the influential and privileged sphere of the veteran in 1945 despite government recognition that they had a legitimate claim to compensation for the role they played in ensuring victory. As a result of their categorical exclusion, their needs would be met with separate legislation that fell far short of what ex-military personnel received.

Armed forces veterans returned to a robust and flexible system of benefits aimed at ensuring a smooth re-establishment process. The government offered returning service personnel a wide array of rehabilitation options that came in the form of discharge and demobilization programs. The first level of benefits was administered immediately by the

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Woods, *Rehabilitation*, 229.

military upon the veterans' return home. Upon discharge, Armed Forces personnel received a rehabilitation grant equivalent to one month's pay, a War Service Gratuity of \$7.50 per month for service in the Western Hemisphere or \$15 for service overseas, a \$100 clothing allowance, and a train ticket home.²⁵⁹ These benefits were designated for those who had served in the military forces and therefore not made available to returning merchant sailors.

Post-discharge, ex-service personnel had a choice of three substantial benefits that were mutually exclusive and came in the form of a re-establishment credit, free educational or vocational training (including university), or the opportunity to own a farm. Later legislation was introduced to help veterans start a business.²⁶⁰ All of this could be done because of the nation's relative wealth, far greater than it had been in 1918.²⁶¹ As Desmond Morton has remarked while comparing both postwar experiences,

The veterans of 1945 would inherit a very different Canada. Unlike the economically ravaged country of 1919, Canada did well out of World War II, and it could afford to do well by all its veterans... Most important, it could absorb all who were willing to work; and in the Canada of 1945, like that of 1919 (or, for that matter, 1998), 'high and stable levels of employment' made more difference than legions, charters, the Hon. Ian Mackenzie, or his sturdy deputy and GWVA [Great War Veterans Association] stalwart, Walter S. Woods.²⁶²

The first of three mutually exclusive options for veterans, a "Re-establishment Credit," was a government-managed fund meant to provide returning soldiers with the 'pots and pans' money they needed to refit their new homes.²⁶³ The amount was equal to

²⁵⁹ Jeff Keshen, "Getting It Right the Second Time Around: The Reintegration of Canadian Veterans of World War II," in *The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada* eds. Peter Neary and J. L. Granatstein (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 72.

²⁶⁰ Neary, *On to Civvy Street*, 165.

²⁶¹ Neary, *On to Civvy Street*, 64 and Desmond Morton, "Canadian Veterans' Heritage from the Great War," 28.

²⁶² Morton, "Canadian Veterans' Heritage from the Great War," 28.

²⁶³ R. Scott Sheffield, "Canadian Aboriginal Veterans and the Veterans Charter after the Second World War," in *Aboriginal Peoples and Military Participation: Canadian and International Perspectives* eds P. Whitney Laukenbauer, R. Scott Sheffield, and Craig Leslie Mantle (Winnipeg: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 81.

the basic War Service Gratuity but unlike the gratuity it was not paid in cash but held in trust by the government in an account as outlined in the stipulations of the *War Service Grants Act*, 1944.²⁶⁴ Those who opted to receive it could make multiple claims for reimbursement through the fund for various housing and business related expenses for a period of up to ten years following the date of their discharge.²⁶⁵ The second option, enshrined in the *Veterans Rehabilitation Act*, 1945, fulfilled a government promise for retraining and education, and was administered under the Canadian Vocational Training program. The DVA worked alongside the Department of Labour and with local provinces and municipalities to help veterans receive free university education and training for over one hundred vocations with a living allowance of \$60 per month for single veterans and up to \$154 per month for married veterans supporting a maximum of six dependants.²⁶⁶ Through the provisions of this act, 80,110 veterans received vocational training while 53,788 undertook university training.²⁶⁷ The third option, established in the *Veterans' Land Act* (VLA), was meant to help those who wished to undertake full or part-time farming. It was a combination of a loan and grant of up to \$6,000 to finance the acquisition of land, equipment, stock, or buildings for the purpose of farming, commercial fishing, fur farming, or forestry.²⁶⁸ One final choice emerged in 1947 in the form of *Veterans Business and Professional Loans Act*, which provided \$25 million to

²⁶⁴ Neary and Brown, "The Veterans Charter," 391.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Keshen, "Getting It Right the Second Time Around," 73 and VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans' Benefits in Canada*, 14.

²⁶⁷ VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans' Benefits in Canada*, 14.

²⁶⁸ Sheffield, "Canadian Aboriginal Veterans and the Veterans Charter," 82.

protect Canadian banks from financial losses associated with providing low interest high-risk loans to veterans.²⁶⁹ This investment enabled veterans to pursue business ventures.

Additional benefits also helped re-establish veterans returning to civilian life. A veteran insurance policy was provided through the *Veterans Insurance Act*, 1944; priority job placement and veteran preference for civil service jobs were provided for by the *National Employment Service and Civil Employment Acts* (1942 and 1946); access to unemployment insurance for up to a year was provided for veterans with a veteran specific ‘return grants’ system, similar to the allowance system administered in the Canadian Vocational Training program; and health benefits and pensions for war related medical ailments were also provided.²⁷⁰ Lastly, in cases where prior rehabilitation failed and was deemed impossible, veterans were cared for by the *War Veterans’ Allowance Act* and the *Pension Act*.²⁷¹ The *War Veterans’ Allowance Act*, 1930, provided “burnt out” pensions for those who could not successfully transition to civilian life as a result of their engagement in the war. While there was no formal recognition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), there was a sense that the trauma of war prevented some soldiers from returning to work.²⁷² The *Pension Act*, established in 1919, but vastly improved upon as part of the 1945 system of benefits, specified the terms of military pensions in cases of death or disability resulting from service.²⁷³

²⁶⁹ Jeff Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 274.

²⁷⁰ Sheffield, “Canadian Aboriginal Veterans and the Veterans Charter,” 83.

²⁷¹ Don Ives, “The Veterans Charter: The Compensation Principle and the Principle of Recognition for Service,” in *The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada* eds. Peter Neary and Jack Granatstein (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), 84-85.

²⁷² Ives, “The Veterans Charter,” 89 and VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans’ Benefits in Canada*, 8.

²⁷³ VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans’ Benefits in Canada*, 4.

As civilian war workers, the ‘demobilization’ benefits for returning merchant seamen were far less generous and often more difficult to obtain. One of the principal forms of compensation they received was a War Risk Bonus. In 1941 a War Risk Bonus was added by the federal government to the basic monthly wage of Canadian merchant seamen equivalent to 25% of their \$52.50 monthly earnings, although payable only for time at sea.²⁷⁴ In 1943 the bonus was increased to a flat rate of \$44.50 a month and kept in place until December 31, 1945.²⁷⁵ This bonus recognized the risk merchant seamen faced as a result of their service, but constituted wartime compensation instead of a form of rehabilitation since it was added to their pay and not put aside and administered later.

Additional recognition for the mariners’ work came with the establishment of the War Service Bonus. On April 18, 1944, Order in Council P.C. 49/2705 introduced a bonus payment of a 10% gratuity on the annual wages of a mariner payable at the end of each 12-month cycle beginning from April 1, 1944.²⁷⁶ In order to qualify, the sailor had to sign a continuous service agreement at a Canadian manning pool for a period of two-years or until the end of the war, whichever period proved the lesser.²⁷⁷ Those who were at sea when the order came into effect could move to have the 12-month cycle prorated to the day they took work on their present ship.²⁷⁸ Similar to the War Risk Bonus, the War Service Bonus was meant to top-up mariners’ earnings during the war thereby making it less of a rehabilitation bonus and more of an incentive to serve continuously.

²⁷⁴ Canada. House of Commons. Special Committee on Veterans Affairs. *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 1 Appendix B*, March 26, 1946.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Canada. House of Commons. Special Committee on Veterans Affairs. *Minutes of Proceedings No. 1 Appendix B*, March 26, 1946.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

The Merchant Seamen Special Bonus Order, established by P.C. 3227 in May 1945, constituted a mixed form of demobilization and rehabilitation benefit but did not apply to all sailors. It paid, upon the termination of hostilities, eligible merchant seamen (those with a minimum of six months' service in dangerous waters) a 10% bonus on total earning, excluding overtime, for service at sea between September 10, 1939, and April 1, 1944, and provided them with transportation by rail from a Canadian port to the sailor's residences.²⁷⁹ It also made accommodations for vocational training grants but limited such training to a career at sea.²⁸⁰ This limiter was directly correlated to the government's desire for an enlarged postwar fleet and an expressed hope to keep the wartime sailors in it, and was of no value for those who joined the fleet strictly for wartime service.

The Special Bonus Order also had strict qualifications. In order to obtain these benefits, applicants had to prove that they had six months of service in dangerous waters on a Canadian or British ship and had signed a Manning Pool agreement for continuous service. Additionally, any sailor domiciled in Canada and had served for the duration of the war in a United Kingdom Merchant Seamen Reserve could secure the bonus as well as those who had sustained a disability while at sea.²⁸¹ These requirements precluded many mariners from acquiring the benefit. It has been estimated that only 5,055 mariners of the roughly 12,000 were able to access this benefit at an average payout of \$283.²⁸² For those who qualified, the Special Bonus offered both financial and rehabilitation options to merchant sailors, albeit with the stipulation that vocational training was limited

²⁷⁹ Woods, *Rehabilitation*, 230.

²⁸⁰ Chevrier, *Canada's Merchant Seamen* 13.

²⁸¹ Chevrier, *Canada's Merchant Seamen*, 13 and Woods, *Rehabilitation*, 230.

²⁸² Tom Brookes, "Comparison Between Some of the Veterans Benefits Granted to Military Veterans Vs. Those Granted To Merchant Navy Veterans," September 31, 1999, 13. In author's possession and provided by Tom Brookes, Company of Master Mariners of Canada and former Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality member.

to the seafaring trade. In addition, merchant seamen who had left civil employment to pursue the seafaring trade also had access to the *Reinstatement in Civil Employment Act*, but not preferential treatment in civil service job placement.²⁸³

Another form of benefit received by the Merchant Navy seamen was access to the government-run Manning Pool system. The pools provided merchant sailors with basic pay so long as the seamen agreed to accept assignment on Canadian foreign-going ships as directed.²⁸⁴ This acted as a form of insurance for work and wages during the war and afterwards until the pools were closed on July 31, 1946.²⁸⁵ Prior to the closure of the pools, Cabinet added a bill to amend the *Unemployment Insurance Act* to provide unemployment insurance to merchant seamen similar to that which veterans were receiving.²⁸⁶ In any event, the Manning Pool system ended shortly after the war— and, again, was created as a way of ensuring ongoing service – making it more of a wartime provision than a postwar entitlement.

Disabled merchant sailors received access to additional benefits not available to most seamen. Provisions were made in May 1942 with the passing of P.C. 80/4430, granting vocational training to ex-members of the Merchant Marine Service and salt-water fishermen who were in receipt of pensions because of disabilities incurred during

²⁸³ Woods, *Rehabilitation*, 234.

²⁸⁴ Chevrier, *Canada's Merchant Seamen*, 6.

²⁸⁵ LAC, RG 2, Privy Council Office, series A-5-a, volume 2638, Cabinet Conclusions, item no. 6920, “Merchant seamen; manning pools; unemployment insurance,” May 24, 1946. Accessed online via <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/politics-government/cabinet-conclusions/Pages/image.aspx?Image=e000822444&URLjpg=http%3a%2f%2fcentral.bac-lac.gc.ca%2f.item%3fop%3dimg%26app%3dcabinetconclusions%26id%3de000822444&Ecopy=e000822444> [July 7, 2015] –

²⁸⁶ LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, series A-5-a, volume 2638, Cabinet Conclusions, item no. 7056, “Unemployment insurance; treatment of merchant seamen,” June 27, 1946. Accessed online via <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/politics-government/cabinet-conclusions/Pages/image.aspx?Image=e000822521&URLjpg=http%3a%2f%2fcentral.bac-lac.gc.ca%2f.item%3fop%3dimg%26app%3dcabinetconclusions%26id%3de000822521&Ecopy=e000822521> [July 7, 2015].

wartime and who could no longer follow their regular occupation as a result.²⁸⁷ These sailors also had access to the *Veterans Insurance Act*. For merchant seamen, however, all were denied access to free university training and had their options limited to retooling for work in sea trades.²⁸⁸

The treatment of disabled merchant seamen was more comprehensive. For those merchant mariners who suffered a war-related death or disability, their pensions were administered through the *Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act*, 1946. Each fatality was assessed in a similar manner as the *Pension Act*, provided that the seamen's death or disability was caused by "enemy action or counteraction," placing an extra onus on the mariner (or his/her next of kin) in order to receive a successful claim.²⁸⁹ The clause regarding enemy action only covered death or injury occurring as a result of "extraordinary marine hazards occasioned by the war and encountered by a Canadian ship or a certified non-Canadian ship."²⁹⁰ The vagueness of this definition failed to universally include death or injury while sailing aboard ship in blackout conditions or accidents ashore, and left most work related incidents to be dealt with under existing provincial Workmen's Compensations Acts, significantly less comprehensive than the coverage received by service personnel.²⁹¹ As a result, few of the next of kin from the Canadian Merchant Navy's estimated 1,500 war dead were receiving pensions by July

²⁸⁷ Woods, *Rehabilitation*, 103.

²⁸⁸ Woods, *Rehabilitation*, 234. See also: Debates. House of Commons. 3rd Session, 20th Parliament, March 24, 1948, 1651-52.

²⁸⁹ VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans' Benefits in Canada*, 15 and Giesler, *Valour at Sea*, 29.

²⁹⁰ Ian A. Mackenzie, *The Veterans Charter: Acts of Parliament to Assist Canadian Veterans* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1947), 226.

²⁹¹ Canada. House of Commons. Special Committee on Veterans Affairs, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 45*, May 6, 1946.

16, 1946, with statistics indicating a figure of only 396 successful claims.²⁹² The act also provided detention allowances for merchant seamen Prisoners of War, compensating them at a rate of pay equivalent to their monthly earnings prior to their capture and compensation for loss of personal effects.²⁹³ Prisoners of war were also eligible to receive payment of the Special Bonus Order for the months in which they were detained.²⁹⁴ However, while incarcerated, the prisoners had their earnings subjected to government income tax regulations.²⁹⁵

The separate legislative treatment of merchant seamen meant they were denied the most generous benefits of the Veterans Charter. In many cases they had to qualify to receive the few entitlements that the government had crafted for them, most of which required the signing of a continual service agreement that only an estimated 4,000 had signed by January 22, 1945.²⁹⁶ Armed forces veterans had the opportunity to choose between a crisp packet of bills to help them refit their homes or start a business, the pursuit of a vocational training or a university education, and even the option of starting a farm and, later, a business. Moreover, they were given preference in civil service hires. Merchant seamen, those who qualified, received wartime bonuses on their wages with the War Risk Bonus and War Service Bonus, but were given access to a limited rehabilitation

²⁹² The figure of 1,500 seamen does not include Newfoundland sailors as it was still a British colony at the time. Canada. House of Commons. Special Committee on Veterans Affairs, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 46*, July 16, 1946 and “1,500 Merchant Mariners Died While Serving Allies,” *Toronto Star Daily*, May 7, 1945, page number indiscernible. Accessed via <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1601&dat=19450507&id=DrE7AAAIAIAJ&sjid=KisMAAAIBAJ&pg=2952,6576348&hl=en> [August 20, 2015].

²⁹³ Canada. House of Commons. Special Committee on Veterans Affairs, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 1 Appendix B*, March 26, 1946 and Mackenzie, *The Veterans Charter*, 229

²⁹⁴ Canada. House of Commons. Special Committee on Veterans Affairs, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 1 Appendix B*, March 26, 1946.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ LAC, RG 12, Department of Transportation fonds, vol.1486, file no. 8046-46, Letter to J. H. Perry, Taxation Investigator, Department of Finance, East Block, Ottawa, from Arthur Randles, Director of Merchant Seamen, Ottawa, January 22, 1945.

program outlined in the Special Bonus Order, allowing vocational training only if it furthered the sailor's career at sea. In the case of death or disability, mariners and their next of kin were able to access some additional support in the form of pensions and veterans insurance. Furthermore, many mariners were not made aware of their entitlements and, following their return to civilian life, they received none or little counselling, advice, or assistance on matters relating to benefits.²⁹⁷

The combined legislation of Canada's Veterans Charter explicitly acknowledged the risks and hardships that the Merchant Navy seamen endured as a result of the war. However, on account of the civilian nature of their work and an explicitly stated government desire for an enlarged postwar fleet, Ottawa offered returning sailors few benefits that would enable them to leave the trade. Furthermore, their wartime work lacked the perception of compulsory service, despite the powers of Canada's Merchant Seamen Order, which enabled the government to jail reluctant or unruly merchant crews, and the establishment of two-year Manning Pool agreements crafted in 1944. Since the merchant fleet was never recognized officially as being on a par with Canada's military arms, the merchant seamen did not gain the prestige associated with uniformed service. As a result, they found themselves without the support of the Legion or other veterans and became outliers of the Canadian veteran community immediately following the war. And, as Canada slowly decided to sell off its war built fleet, first to private Canadian shipping companies and later to foreign interests, these actions undermined the promises of long-term employment the federal government had pledged to its wartime merchant sailors.

²⁹⁷ Tom Brookes, "Comparison," (1:17). In author's possession as stated above.

This betrayal was given voice in Parliament on November 30, 1945. Fred Rose, a Communist Member of Parliament for Montreal's Cartier riding, stood in the House of Commons with the 1945 pamphlet of Canada's Merchant Seamen produced by the Minister of Transport, Lionel Chevrier, and questioned the validity of its claim to job security for returning seafarers. Directing his inquiry to Chevrier, Rose asked, "Will they have jobs? Will they have a merchant marine to man? Is Canada to have a merchant marine?"²⁹⁸ Chevrier's response conveyed the extent to which the government had no firm answer when he stated, "Unfortunately I am not able to tell him what the government policy is with reference to the merchant navy."²⁹⁹

Wartime debates regarding postwar merchant shipping policy had been ongoing in the federal government since 1943, but were by no means settled by 1945. The Interdepartmental Committee on Merchant Shipping Policy (ICMSP) had been appointed to study the issue in 1943, following a government announcement of support for a postwar fleet by the Minister of Munitions and Supply, C.D. Howe. But its role was only meant to be advisory.³⁰⁰ By 1945 the ICMSP had published a memorandum summarizing all Cabinet and Cabinet War Committee decisions on merchant shipping policy to date. In it, the ICMSP recounted that it had recommended to Cabinet the maintenance of government ownership of the wartime merchant fleet "at least until the value of such ownership for bargaining purposes has been realized."³⁰¹ The report went on to state that the management of the Parks fleet should continue at the present management-fee

²⁹⁸ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 20th Parliament, 1st Session: Vol. 3, 2731.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ Hennessey, "The Death and Rebirth of a Canadian Merchant Marine," 216

³⁰¹ DND/DHH, 85/397, Director General Maritime Forces fonds, vol.5, Interdepartmental Committee on Merchant Shipping Policy, "Memorandum: Summary of Cabinet and Cabinet War Committee Decisions on Merchant Shipping Policy," December 19, 1945, (1:3).

arrangement for Canadian companies (meaning the ships would be operated by private Canadian companies but would remain government-owned), with the remainder of the vessels being made available to other operators of foreign registry on a similar basis. Vessels that were to be sold, it argued, should remain under Canadian registry.³⁰² In the long-term, the ICMSP encouraged the outright sale of government-owned vessels provided they would be maintained under Canadian register, as much as was possible, and operated to the benefit of Canadian trade. Unsold vessels were to be employed on a management-fee or bare-boat charter basis (meaning, the charterer insures the vessel, brings over his own crew, and operates the vessel entirely at his cost, hoping to return a profit) and the remainder of the fleet would be sold without registry restrictions to avoid being laid up, provided such sales were not injurious to the Canadian merchant marine.³⁰³

Despite these sensible suggestions, the decision over what policy to endorse was not the ICMSP's to make. Canadian policy with regards to the maintenance of an enlarged fleet fell ultimately under the responsibility of the Minister of Reconstruction, C. D. Howe. Following Howe's appointment to this newly created post in mid-October 1944, he was given a free hand to form postwar maritime policy.³⁰⁴ Howe, as the man responsible for dismantling the Canadian Government Merchant Marine (CGMM) less than ten years earlier in 1936, seemed an unlikely supporter of a government owned and operated fleet.³⁰⁵ Although Howe believed that a postwar fleet of approximately 200 ships could be a "substantial source of employment," he expressed no desire for long-

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ DND/DHH, 85/397, Director General Maritime Forces fonds, vol.5, Interdepartmental Committee on Merchant Shipping Policy, "Memorandum: Summary of Cabinet and Cabinet War Committee Decisions on Merchant Shipping Policy," December 19, 1945, (1:4) and DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol. 6 Eric Sydney Brand, "Lecture on Canadian Merchant Shipping given at McGill" February 6, 1956, 13.

³⁰⁴ Hennessey, "The Rebirth and Death of a Canadian Merchant Marine," 219.

³⁰⁵ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 15 and 236.

term government ownership.³⁰⁶ Just prior to this appointment, Howe had told his cabinet colleagues in October 1944 that a Canadian merchant marine could be more efficient if under the management of private ownership.³⁰⁷ Plans to sell the war built fleet were under consideration even before the guns went silent, but the scope of the sales had yet to be determined.

Shipping in Canada following the war was never far from economic crisis, because shipping was contingent upon unstable international markets that had been drastically altered by five and a half years of war.³⁰⁸ However, at least initially, the needs of the international shipping market and those of the Canadian merchant marine coincided. But following the surrender of Japan, a worldwide surplus in shipping arose, leading to a series of negotiations on overcapacity in Washington in October 1945.³⁰⁹ The American conference on international shipping sought to ensure that the goodwill that had been established by Allied nations during the war would not be damaged by intense shipping market competition. As a result of the negotiations, America agreed to layup roughly 50% of its fleet.³¹⁰ Canada agreed to reciprocate following a request that such layup should come from wealthy North America instead of war-ravaged European nations.³¹¹

Since August of 1944, following the signing of an Agreement of Principles concerning Allied merchant shipping, the United Maritime Authority (UMA), operating under the auspices of the United Nations, regulated all allied tonnage providing for

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 236.

³⁰⁷ Hennessey, "The Rebirth and Death of a Canadian Merchant Marine," 220.

³⁰⁸ Michael Hennessey, "The Rise and Fall of a Canadian Maritime Policy," 145-146.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 147.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

military, trade, and relief operations.³¹² These conditions, prior to their cessation, ensured that favourable considerations would be given to Canada's vital import and export trades.³¹³ With an end to Allied shipping controls set for late 1946, the Canadian federal government implemented Howe's plan to run its merchant ships under private Canadian ownership.³¹⁴ Cabinet decided to sell the nation's Park ships to Canadian shipping companies at bargain prices with the provision that they remain under Canadian registry.³¹⁵ This decision was in line with the earlier suggestions of the ICMSP and Howe's desire to see shipping practices return to normal commercial conditions – private and not state ownership.³¹⁶ At first the sale began slowly since, for the time being, the surplus problem had not yet become cataclysmic. From 1945 to 1947 Canadian crews continued to be employed on Park ships without interruptions as Canadian companies found steady work delivering relief cargoes to Europe and Russia.³¹⁷ It was estimated that in 1946 roughly 12,000 to 14,000 sailors had found employment on Canada's fleet of over 200 ships.³¹⁸

The disposal of government-owned Canadian ships, however, had begun almost immediately after the war, albeit in a manner meant to reduce surplus tonnage. Eleven of the large 10,000 *dwt* tankers and some of the 4,700 *dwt* tankers were deemed to be no longer of use to the federal government and were sold to foreign ownership through the

³¹² Ibid., 101.

³¹³ Ibid., 100.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 148.

³¹⁵ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 236.

³¹⁶ Hennessy, "The Rise and Fall of a Canadian Maritime Policy," 145.

³¹⁷ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 236-237 and Canadian Maritime Commission. *Second Report of the Canadian Maritime Commission* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1949), 22.

³¹⁸ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 20th Parliament, 2nd Session: Vol. 5, 4994.

War Assets Corporation acting via the Park Steamship Company.³¹⁹ The bulk of the sales went to Canadian owners, as Howe had intended. The dry-cargo Park vessels were offered at a rate of between \$50-\$60 per *dwt* for the larger 10,000 *dwt* class vessels and \$90-\$100 per *dwt* for the smaller 4,700 *dwt* class. As a way of ensuring that the majority of these vessels remained under Canadian control, a ‘flag covenant’ was added to Canadian purchasers prohibiting the sale of such vessels to foreign registry without prior government consent.³²⁰ The flag covenant helped ensure that Canadian crews could continue to find work without further government subsidy, and that the nation maintained a sizeable oceanic merchant marine.

By the end of February 1947 one hundred and nine 10,000 *dwt* ships and nineteen 4,700 *dwt* had been sold, with an additional three 4,700-ton ships loaned on long-term bareboat charter. These vessels had gone to twenty-seven private Canadian companies.³²¹ The transfer of the war built fleet to private hands was a significant move, but it did not mark the death of the government-owned merchant marine. The Canadian government maintained ownership of eighty vessels delivered to Britain under Mutual Aid that were scheduled to return to Canada by 1950.³²² Between government and private ownership, it was estimated that in 1946 Canada had 1,948,000 gross registered tons of shipping, placing its merchant navy as the fourth largest in the world.³²³ But this level of activity in deep-sea maritime shipping proved to be remarkably short-lived, as the industry in Canada quickly slipped into a period of steep decline.

³¹⁹ DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, Vol.9, Eric Brand, “Canada Expanded Merchant Fleet to Meet Demands of Wartime,” *Foreign Trade* Vol.1, No.14 (April 1947): 604-605. A specific number of the 4,700 tonners is not given.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 605.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ *Ibid.*

As the industry's prosperous postwar years waned from 1947, the press and Members of Parliament in the House of Commons raised protests with regards to the treatment of Canada's wartime sailors. J. A. Heide, a merchant seaman during the war and a member of the Merchant Marine Rehabilitation Society of Vancouver, was part of a two man delegation to Parliament seeking war benefits for merchant sailors comparable with those enjoyed by veterans of the armed forces.³²⁴ Heide had his claims articulated in a report in the *Ottawa Citizen* on April 24, 1947, and his objectives were described as threefold: he called for medical attention, possibly under the DVA for merchant seamen; education and vocational training on par with that afforded to the Armed Forces for merchant seamen; and disability grants for merchant seamen suffering as a result of war service. While acknowledging that disability pensions did exist, Heide claimed that regulations were "so stiff" that "a man had to practically be hit by a torpedo" to obtain them. By his count, only 31 Canadian seamen out of 12,000 who served in the war were getting such benefits.³²⁵

Members of the House of Commons, particularly those from maritime ridings, also demonstrated their discontent over the treatment of Canada's wartime seamen. Those who supported the sailors claimed that merchant service was war service too and should be remunerated in a manner similar to other veterans. On July 8, 1947, Charles Merrit, M.P. for Vancouver-Burrard, remarked:

One set of figures indicates that there were 1,400 in the merchant marine in 1939. One of my colleagues places the figure at 1,000. My figures indicate further that in 1945 there were 12,000 in the merchant marine. Therefore eighty-eight percent of those who served during the war were temporary merchant seamen for the duration of the war only, and who had not chosen the sea as

³²⁴ "Case for Merchant Navy Goes to Government: Seek Medical Attention, Vocational Training And Disability Grants for "Fourth Service," *Ottawa Citizen*, April 24, 1947, 16. 161947.https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2194&dat=19470424&id=__suAAAIBAJ&sjid=FtwFAAAAIBAJ&pg=6362,5347633&hl=en [July 6, 2015].

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

their career. If evidence were needed I believe that is sufficient to indicate that their service was a war service, and their intention in going to sea was to contribute to the war effort.³²⁶

He went on to state, “The only merchant seamen veteran who gets any benefits at all is the chap who wishes to stay at sea as a profession. Seamen-veterans in that category number less than ten percent.” He concluded, “the difference [in the nature of their service] was not sufficient to warrant keeping merchant seamen out of the principle of war service and veterans benefits.”³²⁷ The response from the Minister of Transport, Lionel Chevrier, was sympathetic. After listing off the benefits to which the merchant seamen were entitled, Chevrier stated:

That they may be entitled to more; that they have performed wonderful service for Canada – with such a statement I cannot [contest] because that is fact. While I should like to see perhaps many things done that are not done for the merchant seamen, it is unfortunate to some extent that the merchant navy was not placed in a different category.³²⁸

Chevrier’s statement was backed by an attempt, made a few days earlier on July 4, 1947, to extend vocational training options to wartime merchant seamen for retooling outside of their nautical professions. He asked Cabinet to consider an amendment to the *Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act* at a proposed cost of \$500,000, but had his request refused.³²⁹ The proposed changes would have meant that those currently receiving pensions and still able to work, but not desiring to stay in the seafaring trade, could receive training for a job ashore. Even wounded merchant sailors seemed to fly beneath Cabinet’s radar as a priority in rehabilitation schemes.

Similar criticisms emerged in 1948 from other Members of the House. During debates in the House of Commons regarding a bill to establish a Special Committee to

³²⁶ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 20th Parliament, 3rd Session: Vol. 5, 4940.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4941.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4943.

³²⁹ LAC, RG2, RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Volume 2640, Cabinet Conclusions, “Merchant seamen; vocational training,” item no. 5538, July 4, 1947, 4. Accessed online: <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/politics-government/cabinet-conclusions/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=5538> [July 5, 2015].

Consider Pensions, Treatment and Re-establishment under the DVA, Howard Green, M.P. for Vancouver South, and Alfred Brooks, M.P. for Royal New Brunswick, proposed on March 8, 1948, an amendment to have the Merchant Navy's treatment evaluated alongside that of the armed forces.³³⁰ Brooks argued, "The men of the merchant navy have not received and are not today receiving the justice they are entitled to from this Canadian House of Parliament."³³¹ Green and Brooks argued that the Merchant Navy was told numerous times during the war by senior military and political figures that they were the 'fourth arm' of the military. Surely they deserved equal compensation to the other members of the armed services. Yet the powerful and evocative wartime cry of the fourth arm was derided by none other than Louis St. Laurent, the Secretary of State for External Affairs. When asked if the Liberal Cabinet had referred to the Merchant Navy in such a manner during the war, St. Laurent scoffed at Green, replying, "Did my hon. Friend never hear of allegories or rhetorical figures of speech?"³³² As Brooks continued to push on this point, another Liberal Member of Parliament, Humphrey Mitchell, likewise denied that such references should hold any weight:

My. Hon. Friend speaks of the fourth arm of the services. That is just a slogan; it is not based on fact. I take second place to no one in the house in paying tribute to the services these men rendered during the war; but you do not have trade union agreements as between the army and the crown. You do not have a trade union agreement between the navy and the crown, or between the air force and the crown. Merchant service men had their trade union. They were paid on the basis of civilian workers, might I say, there is absolutely no comparison.³³³

³³⁰ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 20th Parliament, 4th Session: Vol. 2, 1955.

³³¹ Canada. House of Commons, *Debates*, 20th Parliament, 4th Session: Vol. 2, 1993.

³³² *Ibid.*, 1991.

³³³ *Ibid.*,

By virtue of their wartime status as civilian, and the union affiliation of some of its members, the amendment to include the Merchant Navy in the Special Committee's investigation was ruled out of order.³³⁴

The focus on the union affiliation in Mitchell's reply appears to be an indication that the Canadian Seamen's Union's (CSU) communist affiliation, revealed only a year before, had tarnished mariner-state relations. Though Mitchell never indicated outright that the communist association had tainted the mariners, his hostile tone seems odd and points perhaps to a further cause of the mariners' exclusion and of a government unwillingness to re-negotiate their entitlements. The revelation of communist influence in the CSU was perhaps known to the federal government before March 14, 1947, but it became public knowledge with the mass publication of a letter of resignation given by CSU president Pat Sullivan that contained such confessions.³³⁵ Sullivan unequivocally associated the CSU with being under communist influence, stating: "They [CSU members] are doing the work they are told to do by the communist party directors."³³⁶ As a result, the Canadian government became increasingly hostile towards the CSU as fears of communism spread in Canada's Cold War climate, offering perhaps a partial explanation also of why Chevrier's request to Cabinet in July 1947 was refused.

Late in the fall of 1947 a Canadian Maritime Commission (CMC) was formed under the chairmanship of J. V. Clyne, a Vancouver-based lawyer with a specialization in

³³⁴ Ibid.,

³³⁵ Jim Green, *Against the Tide: The Story of the Canadian Seamen's Union* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1986), 158.

³³⁶ J. A. (Pat) Sullivan, "Former CSU Head Tells Extent of Communist Pressure," *The Globe and Mail*, March 17, 1947, 12. Accessed via <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/1323647668?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:summon> [August 15, 2015].

marine law, to advise on policy regarding shipping and shipbuilding policy.³³⁷ The CMC found that by 1948 the imposition of the flag covenant had become a hindrance to Canadian merchant shipping in light of emergent challenges resulting from increased competition from faster more modern ships, tighter currency controls, less trade with sterling bloc areas, and lower international freight rates.³³⁸ From 1947 to 1948 the percentage of imports carried on Canadian bottoms dropped from 28.1% to 19.6%, while export carriage declined slightly less from 18.3% to 17.3%.³³⁹ By 1948 the postwar period of profitable merchant shipping in Canada was coming to its end.

As the failure of the postwar fleet became all the more apparent, the federal government marginally improved the vocational training scheme offered to its wartime merchant seamen, linking the industry's decline to the need for further retraining. MP Howard Green made a request on April 16, 1948, for such extensions. Citing a decline in job stability in the merchant marine, Green argued that most seamen were receiving no form of rehabilitation benefits except for further training for a career at sea. He noted:

As the house knows, our merchant marine is small in size, although it is a great deal larger than it was before the war. Yet it is so small, compared with its size during the war, that only a very small proportion of the men who served in the merchant navy could hope to carry on in that occupation in peacetime. In effect, most of the men who served in the merchant navy can get no rehabilitation benefits, and I hope that the government has not closed the door on giving training to these men. This is not the time to repeat the submission which I have made been in other sessions, and in fact this session, but I do hope that the door is not closed against these men.³⁴⁰

With the industry in decline, the government announced the last re-establishment benefit it would make available to members of its wartime Merchant Navy.

³³⁷ Hennessey, "The Rebirth and Death of Canada's Merchant Marine," 226. See also Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 20th Parliament, 4th Session: Vol. 5, 4984 and Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 145.

³³⁸ Canadian Maritime Commission. *Second Report of the Canadian Maritime Commission* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1949), 22 and 24 and Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 20th Parliament, 4th Session: Vol. 5, 4984.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁴⁰ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 20th Parliament, 4th Session: Vol. 3, 3067.

In December of 1948, P.C. 5983 was passed allowing for the vocational training benefits for ex-members of the merchant navy under thirty years of age provided they had qualified for the War Service Bonus and were in need of training to pursue a career on land.³⁴¹ This marked a substantial improvement upon P.C. 80/4430 made in 1942 that only allowed those in receipt of pensions because of disability incurred during the war, and who found themselves no longer able to pursue a maritime career, the opportunity to retrain for a new vocation on land.³⁴² A number of merchant sailors were able to take advantage of this benefit before the deadline for applications on September 30, 1950.³⁴³ For example, Donald McIntosh of Ottawa, who had served on both British and Canadian ships during the war, was awarded \$455 to study at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto.³⁴⁴ In total, at least 514 merchant sailors were able to take advantage of the program from 1948 to 1951.³⁴⁵

In 1948 the CMC informed the Minister of Transport that the transfer of flag restriction was further exacerbating the growing problems encountered by private Canadian shipping firms. In order to create better balanced fleet, the CMC advocated that the older war built vessels be sold off and replaced with modern units with refrigerator capacity as opposed to being laid up until they lost all value and became obsolete.³⁴⁶ The Canadian government adopted the CMC's recommendation allowing Canadian ship owners to sell off bulk carriers. It sold them at bargain prices, provided the funds would be held in escrow until used to purchase more modern vessels. Owners

³⁴¹ Woods, *Rehabilitation*, 103.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ Woods, *Rehabilitation*, 235.

³⁴⁴ Accessed through ATIP request. LAC, RG38, BAN 2001-01151-2 File No. 11-6, Vol. 7, Department of Transportation, Merchant Marine Training, Application for vocational training and certificate of eligibility (merchant seamen) prepared by Donald McIntosh and approved by F. L. Logan, May 9, 1949.

³⁴⁵ Brookes, "Comparison," (2:7).

³⁴⁶ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 20th Parliament, 4th Session: Vol. 5, 4986.

desiring to do so would have to first apply to the CMC for approval. The decision was ultimately based on an assessment of whether or not such actions were to the advantage of Canadian trade, meaning that they could minimize economic losses and stimulate economic growth.³⁴⁷ But seeing as how multiple barriers remained in the deep-sea trade, it was unlikely that Canadian owners would be refused this option of sale. Lionel Chevrier, assured the House of Commons on June 9, 1948, “There will be no great volume of sale in the near future, and modernization of the Canadian fleet will be a matter of gradual development.”³⁴⁸ The merchant seamen seemed, by the government’s assurance, to be spared.

As of March 1, 1949, foreign sale had been approved for thirty-six privately-owned war built Canadian vessels.³⁴⁹ The total sale generated \$23,119,350 with an additional \$3,372,669.83 in funds being advanced by loan to Canadian owners in order to help them discharge obligations to the Crown, such as outstanding mortgages.³⁵⁰ With \$27 million in an escrow fund to be used towards the modernization of a merchant fleet, the CMC’s fleet improvement scheme appeared to have achieved its goal of modernizing Canadian shipping and saving jobs. Unfortunately for Canada’s oceanic seamen, the replacement vessels built were used for the Great Lakes or coastal trade primarily, and permission to do so was given from Clyne on grounds that this was the only way the owners could obtain a profit.³⁵¹ The result was a further decline in Canadian tonnage in the ocean trade.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Canadian Maritime Commission. *Second Report of the Canadian Maritime Commission* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1949), 52.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 147-148.

The abandonment of the Canadian flag on the high-seas raised the ire of the Canadian Seamen's Union (CSU). By 1949 an additional forty Canadian ships were laid up reducing the 1948 fleet of 131 Canadian ships by a third.³⁵² During the war, the CSU had maintained a truce with the federal government and gained influence in merchant seamen circles. In November of 1943 the CSU signed a collective labour agreement with the Park Steamship Company, secured an eight-hour workday and the right to elect crewmembers during a voyage to grieve poor conditions of employment. In exchange the mariners forfeited their right as a union to strike during the war.³⁵³ These successful negotiations and gains for sailors placed the CSU in a position of influence with merchant crews.³⁵⁴ In the postwar years, however, the union found itself fighting for its own survival in a battle it would eventually lose.³⁵⁵

By 1949 Canadian crews, including those who served their country in times of war, found it increasingly difficult to find work.³⁵⁶ With powerful foreign competition in more efficient vessels, high Canadian labour costs, and fewer available shipping markets open to ships of Canadian registry as a result of the Marshall Plan and the global dollar shortage, the CSU prepared to strike.³⁵⁷ Working against the CSU in the postwar years was their known communist affiliations. Claims that the union was taking orders directly from Moscow allowed the government and media to paint negatively the Union, its membership, and their labour action.³⁵⁸ In fact, the strike was done against the desire of

³⁵² In addition to the government retained ownership of 58 ships on loan to the United Kingdom and set to return to private ownership in Canada in 1950. DND/DHH, 81/145, Eric Sydney Brand fonds, vol. 6, Eric Sydney Brand, "Lecture on Canadian Merchant Shipping given at McGill" February 6, 1956, 13.

³⁵³ Kaplan, *Everything That Floats*, 37.

³⁵⁴ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 105.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 236.

³⁵⁷ Kaplan, *Everything that Floats*, 60-61.

³⁵⁸ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 238.

the Canadian Labour-Progressive Party (LPP), the de-facto Canadian Communist party. The LPP advised the CSU that such actions would fail because of perceived communist influence and therefore should not be attempted, as they would lead to the union's demise.³⁵⁹ Despite such warnings, the CSU felt compelled to defend its workers, even if it meant eventual dissolution. Reflecting on the sentiments held by the CSU members just prior to the strike, one sailor recalled, "They'll get us anyway, so let's give the bastards a run for their money and go down fighting."³⁶⁰

Initially the strike, which began on March 31, 1949, experienced tremendous success as a result of the support it gained from foreign trade unionists, most notably British dockworkers, tugboat men, and seamen.³⁶¹ But this support was not shared in the media, especially after the four month paralysis of the Port of London caused the British Labour government to proclaim a state of emergency and invoke the *Emergency Powers Act*. British workers were forced back to work, and this hurt Canadian strikers since their British counterparts had refused to unload Canadian ships.³⁶² As the strike dragged on, Canadian shipping interests and the federal government supported a plan to find scab workers through the American Seafarers International Union (SIU), led by convicted felon Hal Banks.³⁶³ Banks's strike breakers replaced CSU crews with the aid of local police and gangland style violence.³⁶⁴ When the strike was finally called off, both

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 238-239.

³⁶⁰ John Stanton, *Life and Death of the Canadian Seamen's Union* (Toronto: Steel Rail Educational Publishing, 1978) 130.

³⁶¹ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 237 and Kaplan, *Everything That Floats*, 61.

³⁶² Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 237.

³⁶³ Kaplan, *Everything That Floats*, 73.

³⁶⁴ Kaplan, *Everything That Floats*, 73 and Green, *Against the Tide*, 220 and 225.

nationally and internationally on October 15, 1949, the CSU lost its membership in the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada and Canadian sailors lost an important ally.³⁶⁵

A few months before this, on June 30, 1949, the CMC tabled its Second Report highlighting a variety of factors conspiring against the continued success of Canada's postwar merchant fleet, which was now reduced to 119 vessels (this figure including those currently on loan to the U.K.).³⁶⁶ The report indicated that by 1948, owing primarily to the war built design of Canadian ships, the handicap of a world dollar shortage, and increased competition from more efficient ships, Canadian shipping had become an unprofitable industry.³⁶⁷ The report went on to state that, only with an annual subsidy of \$20 million or more, could the government expect to maintain a large merchant fleet equivalent to its 1948 fleet (roughly 215 dry cargo vessels accounting for a combined tonnage of 2,080,066).³⁶⁸ As a result, the report argued that Canada should maintain only a nucleus sized fleet composed of well-balanced modern ships, roughly 750,000 *dwt*, approximately one third of its 1948 size. It was suggested that a fleet of this size could meet Canada's economic and defence needs.³⁶⁹ Issues of national security were quoted as the primary reason for the maintenance of this reduced fleet (as opposed to cutting the whole fleet), and the precedent of Canada's need for one in both world wars was also mentioned.³⁷⁰

Further, in a memorandum sent to Minister Chevrier on November 24, 1949, the CMC suggested the government arrange for a one-year subsidy of \$3 million dollars to

³⁶⁵ Kaplan, *Everything That Floats*, 68-69 and Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 239.

³⁶⁶ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 21st Parliament, 1st Session: Vol. 3, 2977.

³⁶⁷ Canadian Maritime Commission. *Second Report of the Canadian Maritime Commission* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1949), 25.

³⁶⁸ The figure of 215 vessels includes those in government possession, those under Canadian registry, and those under charter in the U.K. *Ibid.*, 47 and 50.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

the industry, allowing it to employ 1,600 men annually.³⁷¹ With this recommendation in hand, the federal government announced the fate of the industry. It also marked the breaking of its 1945 promise of security to the merchant marine and one of the primary reasons why it had denied the wartime crews further benefits. By 1949 the Canadian government had sold all of its ships, including fifty-eight that remained due to return from the United Kingdom in 1950. Flying the Canadian flag were 118 dry-cargo privately operated vessels, but their continued operations could only be undertaken with a \$25 million subsidy, a cost the federal government was not willing to assume.³⁷²

On Friday, December 9, 1949, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent rose in the House of Commons to deliver the deathblow to Canada's postwar fleet and its promise of job security to returning wartime sailors made in 1945. St. Laurent stated:

In considering the studies which are available to us on the subject, we have concluded that we are not justified from an economic viewpoint in maintain a Canadian fleet by artificial means. It is not the intention of the government to maintain an industry at the expense of the taxpayers, by the unhealthy method of subsidies, unless these countervailing considerations are very strong.³⁷³

The Prime Minister went on to allay fears about readiness in a future conflict by announcing that Canada's emergency needs would be met with the maintenance of a 500,000 *dwt* fleet.³⁷⁴ When asked about the further extension of veterans' benefits to merchant sailors, he simply stated that the recently expanded vocational training scheme would remain in place until September 30, 1950.³⁷⁵

With this announcement, the government finalized its betrayal of the promise made to its wartime sailors, who by now had gone from heroes to anonymous labour agitator and found themselves without further government support for their essential war

³⁷¹ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 149 and 265.

³⁷² Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 21st Parliament, 1st Session: Vol. 3, 2977.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2977-2978.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2978-2979.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2980.

work. Reflecting on his poor postwar treatment as a wartime merchant seamen Doug Bould complained, “The merchant Navy...was never recognized. I don’t think it’s right. Nobody realized what a merchant seamen had done. We were just nobody.”³⁷⁶

³⁷⁶ Mike Parker, *Running the Gauntlet*, 121-122.

Chapter 3: “Vanished from the public consciousness.”

As a result of Canadian veterans’ legislation, union troubles, and global postwar reconstruction plans, Canada’s wartime merchant seamen were denied equal access for fifty-five years to veterans’ benefits provided to members of the armed forces. After the war, a lack of significant government recognition of the merchant marine’s essential war service led to the systematic neglect of Merchant Navy veterans in federal legislation, which in turn diminished the group’s presence in Canadian society. Denied a part in Canada’s commemorative landscape, and not recognized as war veterans, the wartime service of Canada’s merchant seamen was quickly obscured and forgotten. Historian and former merchant mariner Robert Halford, when writing about public perception of Canada’s Second World War merchant seamen in 1995, stated bluntly “Once the fleet was gone, the wartime merchant sailors vanished from the public consciousness.”³⁷⁷

J. P. Michaud, wartime Minister of Transport, stated in 1945 that “They [the merchant seamen] have rightly earned the title of the ‘Fourth Arm of the Fighting Forces’ and a grateful government has accorded to them compensation and benefits equivalent to many of those granted to the personnel of the Armed Services.”³⁷⁸ This proved to be a gross exaggeration; few merchant seamen were able to qualify for rehabilitation and training programs because they were labelled by the government as civilians working in the war zone rather than as combatants. The denial of veterans’ benefits for merchant seamen was also the result of an effort by the Canadian federal government not to encourage merchant seaman to leave their current careers. This decision was premised on

³⁷⁷ Halford, *The Unknown Navy*, 241.

³⁷⁸ J. E. Michaud, “Canada’s Merchant Navy,” *Ottawa Citizen*, January 13, 1945, 19. Accessed via https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2194&dat=19450113&id=U_QtAAAAIBAJ&sjid=DdwFAAAAIBAJ&pg=3399,2525863&hl=en [January 15, 2015].

the assumption that an enlarged post-war merchant fleet would be a national asset.³⁷⁹ Lionel Chevrier, Michaud's successor as Minister of Transport, expressed in a 1945 government pamphlet he authored that "Such benefits [merchant navy benefits] should not be of a nature which would encourage Seamen to leave the industry at the end of the war to seek employment in other fields as the services of many skilled seamen will be required if Canada is to maintain a Merchant Marine after the war."³⁸⁰ Following the war, the fate of Canada's merchant seamen was contingent upon the success of the post-war fleet, and, the fleet's success was never guaranteed.

By 1948 the dream of maintaining an enlarged post-war merchant fleet was failing.³⁸¹ Less than three years after the end to the war, Canada's wartime merchant sailors found themselves in an increasingly vulnerable position as the promise of sustained employment in merchant shipping proved to be unattainable. These men were promised jobs as a form of postwar security but promptly had this promise betrayed.³⁸² As signs of inadequate government support for a post-war fleet emerged in 1948, culminating in a total industry collapse in 1949, successive Canadian governments made only limited concessions to the wartime merchant crews. In 1946 the *Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act* was passed granting some additional benefits to Merchant Navy veteran who may have been injured or killed while performing war-related acts, meaning as a result of enemy action or counteraction.³⁸³ Additional aid also came in the form of improvements to the vocational training scheme discussed by Chevrier, which improved in 1948 but did little to help the mariners escape the shackles of an industry in

³⁷⁹ Tom Brookes, "Comparison," (5:12) in author's possession as stated above.

decline.³⁸⁴ Once the promised enlarged post-war fleet had failed, merchant seamen were cast out into the unemployment lines and denied the jobs they had been promised in 1945. The merchant seamen had gone from the nation's heroes – the Fourth Arm – to unemployed seamen. Within a few short years, their wartime deeds had been forgotten.

In an exploration of Canada's social memory of the wars, historian Jonathan Vance sees Canada's memory of the Second World War as less prominent in Canadian society than that of the Great War. Vance argues that the prolonged period of prosperity that accompanied peace in 1945 led fewer Canadians to search for meaning in the war's immediate aftermath, which in turn meant that fewer questioned the decisions made by the government in its wake. The instability following the Great War in Canada - poverty, labour strife, rising unemployment, inflation, and political turmoil - led to the creation of a complex myth about why Canadians fought and died during the First World War, one that Canadians turned towards as a form of refuge from the failures of peace in 1919 and to justify the terrible loss of life on the battlefields.³⁸⁵ The sacrifice of Canada's 44,000 Second World War dead, in contrast, was marked by the emergence of a strong Canadian economy, political stability, and reassurance in the social welfare state.³⁸⁶ Unlike in 1919, veterans of the Second World War returned to a relatively wealthy country that could support their re-establishment into civilian life with generous training and education opportunities.³⁸⁷ More importantly, Canada was able to absorb those willing to work back

³⁸⁵ Jonathan Vance, "An open door to a better future: The memory of Canada's Second World War" in *Canada and the Second World War: Essays in Honour of Terry Copp* Geoffrey Hayes, Mike Bechtold and Matt Symes eds. (Wilfrid Laurier University Press: Waterloo, 2012), 473-474.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 474.

³⁸⁷ Desmond Morton, "Canadian Veterans' Heritage from the Great War," in *The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada* Jack Granatstein and Peter Neary eds. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), 28.

into the economy and civilian life.³⁸⁸ As Vance notes, “For the time being, Canadians were happy to close a gate on the past and direct their gaze through the open door to a better future.”³⁸⁹ For most returning to Canada from the Second World War, a dream of a family, house and job proved to be within reach leading few to question the success of Canada’s Veterans Charter in the war’s immediate aftermath.

As veterans aged, they became less interested in postwar benefits and more anxious about access to long-term healthcare. As a result, debates about veterans entitlements resurfaced. Veterans became primarily concerned with access to long-term care, pensions, and health benefits. In August of 1969, the government of Canada reported in a *White Paper on Veterans Pensions*, issued under Minister of Veterans Affairs Jean-Études Dubé, as a response to the Woods Report of 1965 (that surveyed the organization and work of the Canadian Pension Commission), that one-twelfth of the adult population of the country were veterans.³⁹⁰ This figure represented 112,600 veterans from the First World War and 832,600 veterans from the Second World War and Korea (including those who served in both world wars).³⁹¹ The sheer enormity of Canada’s veteran population meant that pension and long-term healthcare legislation would need to be re-examined in anticipation of the imminent and expansive role this would play in future years.

In the 1970s new legislated healthcare benefits for veterans emerged to meet the needs of Canada’s aging First World War veteran population.³⁹² A shortage of hospital

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Vance, “An open door to a better future,” 474.

³⁹⁰ VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans’ Benefits in Canada*, 23 and 25-26.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 25.

³⁹² Ibid., 29.

beds for frail First World War veterans for long-term care was an increasing worry.³⁹³ The lack of beds meant that the looming needs of the country's Second World War veterans could not be met by the existing system. Veterans' organizations in 1978 demanded a solution and a departmental study was commissioned by the Department of Veterans Affairs to examine the issue. The study sought to establish alternatives to a costly major expansion of hospital facilities and worked with a number of provincial home-care programs in Canada to achieve this aim.³⁹⁴ The findings of the commission, composed of geriatricians, gerontologists, hospital managers, health professionals, federal and provincial policy makers, and international experts, led to a three-year home-care pilot project called the Aging Veterans Program.³⁹⁵ Eventually this pilot program resulted in the establishment of the Veterans Independence Program (VIP) in 1980, which has since undergone numerous changes.³⁹⁶ The significance of the establishment of the VIP program is that it marked the beginning of a new debate on long-term veterans' care, and pension and benefit reform in Canada beginning in the late 1970s.

The government's positive response to the concerns of veterans' organizations with regards to long-term care for Canada's aging veterans population not only demonstrated a willingness to re-examine veteran legislation but sparked a renewed interest in the veteran-state relationship and the legal framework that sought to enshrine it. On October 20, 1981, a report published by the Standing Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science, *They Served – We Care*, brought to light a number of existing anomalies in veterans' legislation and pressed the government to re-evaluate current legislation in

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 29.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 29.

³⁹⁶ For a more detailed account of the VIP program's history, see VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans' Benefits in Canada*, 29-32.

order to make benefits more accessible. The report recommended, “that all necessary steps be taken immediately to eliminate the unacceptable delays in processing pensions and applications,” pointing to the large number that had accumulated since 1970.³⁹⁷ The committee, chaired by Senator Lorne Bonnell, further stated “there are other possible inequities” and recommended

That the government appoint a Committee composed of officials from both the government and veterans associations to review and update those recommendations of the Woods Committee which had not been implemented and to identify, study and make recommendations about the anomalies which still exist in the treatment of veterans and their survivors.³⁹⁸

Specifically, Senator Bonnell’s committee pointed to issues relating to the entitlement of benefits under the existing legislation of the *Pension Act* and the *War Veterans Allowance Act* and to the compensation of ex-prisoners of war, but the Merchant Navy received no mention.³⁹⁹ Following this report, a period of intense revision of veterans’ legislation stimulated a renewed public awareness of veteran concerns. The debates on existing legislation grew beyond the walls of the Senate and Parliament as veterans’ frustrations made headlines in the media after being picked up in 1984 by the investigative journalism program *W-5*.⁴⁰⁰ By the mid-1980s, Canadian media and the government had re-opened the debate on the state-veteran relationship.

The status of the wartime Canadian Merchant Navy seamen as veterans was re-examined during this period of review on matters concerning veterans’ legislation, care, and access to benefits. But without a unified voice, they were largely ignored by Ottawa and other veterans. In 1982, Canada’s Second World War Merchant seamen began to re-

³⁹⁷ For additional details on the recommendations regarding pension reforms, see the beginning of the report. Canada. Senate. *Debates*, 32nd Parliament, 1st Session: Vol. 3, Standing Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science, *Final Report ‘They Served – We Care’* 2851-2858.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2858.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans’ Benefits in Canada*, 33. For a more detailed account of legislative pension reform from 1984-2000, see VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans’ Benefits in Canada*, 32-38.

organize with the formation of the Canadian Merchant Navy Association (CMNA), created by Merchant Navy veteran Mervyn ‘Merv’ Hartley.⁴⁰¹ A similar body had existed in the postwar years in the form of the federally-chartered Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans Association (CMNVA) established in 1947.⁴⁰² The CMNVA lobbied the federal government for further benefits and reached a membership of 4,000 but was disbanded in 1958 following charges its founder and president J. Heide and another member of its executive had defrauded the public.⁴⁰³ With the fall of the CMNVA, Canada’s wartime mariners found themselves without a voice. Though another organization emerged in 1960, the Canadian and Allied Merchant Seamen’s Veterans Association, it operated only until 1965 and did so without the sizeable membership of the CMNVA and without a federal charter.⁴⁰⁴ The newly established CMNA, therefore, was of vital importance in providing the ageing seamen once more with a place to discuss their wartime experiences, and, more importantly, to air their grievances.

As the merchant seamen approached their retirement, they began to reconsider their wartime experiences and postwar treatment and decided to undertake the fight for greater recognition. The Canadian Merchant Navy Prisoner of War Association (CMNPOWA), founded in 1986 by Gordon Olmstead of Nepean, Ontario, was established to secure broader recognition and compensation for Canada’s 198 wartime merchant sailors

⁴⁰¹ Halford, *Unknown Navy*, 241; and Betty Spry, *Canadian Merchant Navy Association Backgrounder*, November 2004. In author’s possession and donated by Betty Spry, National Secretary and Treasurer of the Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans Association.

⁴⁰² Tom Brookes, “Backgrounder,” (1:1).

⁴⁰³ “Member to Reunite Merchant Navy Group,” *Globe and Mail*, December 25, 1958, 5. Accessed via: <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1288605495/CCD95905D0E9476APQ/1?accountid=9894> [July 21, 2015].

⁴⁰⁴ Tom Brookes, “Backgrounder,” (1:1).

captured by the enemy.⁴⁰⁵ The specific aim of the organization was to help unify surviving POWs and their wives in order to pressure the federal government to amend existing veterans' legislation.⁴⁰⁶ The establishment of Merchant Navy organizations like the CMNA and CMNPOWA that often worked together in their attempts for redress, marked the beginnings of what would develop into a complex and powerful lobby.⁴⁰⁷

The re-emergence of the Merchant Navy debate also coincided with a renewed interest in veteran voices. Beginning in the 1980s, as veterans retired from working life, they began to write about their wartime experiences, sometimes in response to more critical official, academic, and popular accounts of the war.⁴⁰⁸ Historian Tim Cook, speaking of this phenomenon, notes "The profusion of memoirs since the 1980s also reflects the nostalgia of Second World War veterans who, after completing their careers and moving into retirement, had begun to look back on the events of 'their' war."⁴⁰⁹ This reification of veterans as agents of remembrance would play an increasingly important role as Canada prepared for massive anniversary celebrations relating to its participation in both the First and Second World Wars. Moreover, the outpouring of memoirs slowly contributed to the reconstruction of historical memory of both conflicts as they were

⁴⁰⁵ Letter from Captain Tom Brookes Merchant to Captain Alan Knight October 30, 1998. Letter in author's possession and passed to author from Tom Brookes.

⁴⁰⁶ Anthony Wilson-Smith and John Demont, "The Unsung Seamen" *Maclean's* 105, No. 27 (July 6, 1992), 77. Accessed via <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/218425326?pq-origsite=summon> [August 15, 2015].

⁴⁰⁷ Merv Hartley died in 1987. Spry, *Canadian Merchant Navy Association*, November 2004.

⁴⁰⁸ Perhaps one of the best examples of this was their response to the McKenna brothers' production *The Valour and The Horror* and the clash that ensued over the right to critically portray Canada's experience of war in the subsequently published *Crucible of War*. This event was a significant one as it demonstrated that Air Force veterans wanted 'a celebratory history not a critical one.' See: Tim Cook, *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 232-234.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 241.

distilled, refined, and incorporated into the nation's more general understanding of the legacy of these events.⁴¹⁰

The creation of the CMNA and CMNPOWA did not mark the first time that wartime merchant mariners organized for political reasons. Many representations by individuals acting on their own accord or under the aegis of a collective voice had in the past been made on behalf of Canada's Second World War merchant seamen, mainly in the House of Commons in the immediate postwar years.⁴¹¹ However, the re-emergence of Merchant Navy organizations alongside broader debates on benefit reform marked the beginning of a new chapter in political campaigning that enabled the mariners to reassert a claim to past and present perceived government mistreatment. Unlike preceding organizations, the CMNA and CMNPOWA were able to draw upon 1970s and 1980s debates about long-term veterans' benefits and pension reform. Moreover, these discussions were played out in the media in the years leading up to the 50th anniversary of Canada's participation in the Second World War, a time when Canadians were more willing to celebrate the achievements of veterans. Collectively, the emergence of new Merchant Navy organizations, media coverage of their cause, and contemporary discussions regarding the commemorations of the First and Second World Wars, facilitated a re-discovery of the Merchant Navy's wartime contributions in government circles and the Canadian public. These factors combined to give Merchant Navy veterans a space to restate their case for greater recognition and veterans status.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 242.

⁴¹¹ A number of merchant seamen groups existed in the postwar years and were active in seeking better support for the government for Merchant Navy veterans. The Merchant Marine Rehabilitation Society (1949-1950), a provincially chartered body, the Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans Association (1947-1958), a federally chartered body, and the Canadian and Allied Merchant Seamen's Veterans Association (1960-1965), the last of which was aimed at securing benefits for all Allied seamen in Canada regardless of nationality. Brookes, "Backgrounder" September 31, 1999, (1:1).

During the 1980s, the Merchant Navy organizations began to lobby the government. In the mid-1980s, there were at least three separate groups representing Canada's Second World War merchant mariners: the Merchant Navy Association (MNA); the Canadian Merchant Navy Association (CMNA); and the Canadian Merchant Navy Prisoners of War Association (CMNPOWA).⁴¹² Realizing that the interests of Canada's remaining Second World War merchant seamen were better served if articulated from a unified front, these organizations worked together from the late 1980s onward. Signs of collaboration and cooperation amongst the various Merchant Navy organization first emerged in the mid-1980s, while the president of the MNA, Bill Riddell, was pushing for a second circulation of Merchant Navy badges to qualified veterans. These efforts inspired Gordon Olmstead of the CMNPOWA to sift through Transport Canada's files and archives in order to launch a period of research in support of Merchant Navy claims.⁴¹³ This research, which covered topics that focused mainly on benefits access and the mariner exclusion from re-establishment schemes, was later used to support the merchant sailors' claims of past government neglect and the need for corrective legislation.⁴¹⁴ While this work was laying the foundation for greater awareness and bolstering the legal argument, the Merchant Navy veterans remained a small body and easily ignored. Without an influential champion, the Merchant Navy's fight for

⁴¹² Ibid., (2:1-2).

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ The research conducted by Olmstead focused primarily on comparing the benefits received by ex-service personnel and Canada's wartime merchant mariners. The categories he used were short-term postwar benefits, long-term postwar benefits, and no cost postwar benefits. The information covered Orders-In-Council, legislative research, empirical research on the administration of such benefits alongside cost analysis, and wartime figures involving casualties and injuries. His research, facilitated by Carleton University History Professor Foster Griezic, was used extensively by the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality in presentations made to the government. Brookes, "Comparison," 41.

veterans' status still required government validation and greater public awareness in order to gain legitimacy.

An important event in 1988 revealed that the efforts of Merchant Navy organizations were gaining momentum. An article in the *Windsor Star* reported that, after approaching Veterans Affairs Minister George Hees, Olmstead, president of the CMNPOWA, influenced the selection of 86-year-old Hazel Driscoe of Halifax as the Silver Cross Mother for Remembrance Day in 1988. She lost her son Kenneth, a twenty year old merchant mariner, when his ship *Vilcolite* was torpedoed off Halifax harbour on February 11, 1942.⁴¹⁵ First instituted by Order-in-Council 2374 on December 1, 1919, the National Memorial (Silver) Cross Mother is a distinction conferred annually by the federal government through the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) to mothers and widows of Canadian soldiers who died while on active duty.⁴¹⁶ The Royal Canadian Legion has selected the national representative for all Silver Cross Mothers each year since 1950 to participate in the National Remembrance Day Ceremony in Ottawa.⁴¹⁷ During the ceremony the appointed National Silver Cross Mother lays the second wreath, being preceded only by the Royal Representative. This act honours publicly the tremendous sacrifices of mothers and families who have lost a loved one in a war.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁵ "Merchant Seamen are honored at last," *Windsor Star*, B15, November 10, 1988. Accessed via <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/canadiannews/docview/253729692/8CA286B3F5D34A14PQ/1?accountid=9894> [July 21, 2015].

⁴¹⁶ "Memorial Cross," Veterans Affairs Canada. Accessed via <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/medals-decorations/memorial-cross> [July 21, 2015]. See also "National Memorial (Silver) Cross Mothers," Veterans Affairs Canada. Accessed via <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/books/silver> [July 21, 2015] and "Memorial Cross," Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage. Accessed via <http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhr-ddhr/chc-tdh/chart-tableau-eng.asp?ref=mc> [July 21, 2015].

⁴¹⁷ Stephanie Jenzer, "The Silver Cross Story," November 10, 2011. Accessed via <http://www.cbc.ca/thenational/blog/2011/11/producing-a-remembrance-day-story.html> [July 21, 2015].

⁴¹⁸ "National Memorial (Silver) Cross Mothers," Veterans Affairs Canada. Accessed via <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/books/silver> [July 21, 2015]. See also: Stephanie

Although no details were given in the article with regards to how Olmstead and Hees influenced the Legion's decision to choose Driscoe, it symbolized an important and timely precedent for Merchant Navy veterans. The decision to select Driscoe marked the first time the mother of a Merchant Navy fatality had been appointed as the National Silver Cross Mother and the first time the death of a merchant mariner had been commemorated in this highly symbolic manner. The event also officially linked for the first time in a national Remembrance Day ceremony the loss of a merchant sailor during the war with that of uniformed service personnel. By connecting the sacrifice of a group of civilian workers operating in a warzone to the sacrifices made by members of the armed forces through the appointment of Driscoe as the 1988 Silver Cross Mother, Hees helped to publicly re-establish the contribution of Canada's wartime merchant seamen.

Coverage of the event in the media served to highlight the significance of Canada's Merchant Navy. Stories focused on Canada's wartime merchant seamen, usually portraying them in a heroic light. Reporters sympathized with merchant sailors like Olmstead, who quickly became a spokesperson for the Merchant Navy cause. One *Windsor Star* article claimed, "Men like Olmstead risked their lives ferrying vital supplies across the Atlantic and Pacific. They braved U-boat and air attack and the bitter conditions of the oceans. Many went down with their ships and drowned or, like Olmstead, spent years in prison camps, often in brutal conditions."⁴¹⁹ In framing Olmstead's wartime experience as a necessary component of Allied victory, one exposed to the dreaded U-boat menace and other enemy threats, the newspaper aligned his

Jenzer, "The Silver Cross Story," November 10, 2011. Accessed via <http://www.cbc.ca/thenational/blog/2011/11/producing-a-remembrance-day-story.html> [July 21, 2015].

⁴¹⁹ "Merchant Seamen are honored at last," *Windsor Star*, November 10, 1988, B15. Accessed via <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/canadiannews/docview/253729692/8CA286B3F5D34A14PQ/1?accountid=9894> [July 21, 2015].

contributions in scope and purpose with those of his uniformed military counterparts. The story also offered a critique of the Canadian government's past treatment of wartime merchant seamen: "Olmstead and other merchant seamen were ineligible for veterans' benefits after the war because they were considered civilians, despite their sacrifice."⁴²⁰ The *Globe and Mail*, speaking of Driscoe's honour, remarked somewhat coolly "It is the first time the honour has gone to the mother of a merchant seamen killed by enemy action."⁴²¹ This recognition of sacrifice and the insinuation of government neglect helped publicly revive not only the memory of the Canadian Merchant Navy but also the debates about their dubious treatment since the war's end.

Increased media recognition and the ongoing influence of the CMNA and the CMNPOWA brought the mariners concerns to the attention of the Senate subcommittee on Veterans Affairs led by Senator Jack Marshall. Formed on June 28, 1989, the subcommittee was tasked to examine veteran legislative reform and assess the activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs alongside a wider discussion on veterans' pension and benefits reform that emerged in the 1980s.⁴²² Marshall would later describe the wartime service and postwar treatment of the Canadian Merchant Navy as "a major focal point of the committee's concerns" that "brought about some heavy debate when Bill C-87 was introduced in the House of Commons and here in the chamber [the Senate]."⁴²³

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ "Veterans father to remember war dead," *Globe and Mail*, Saturday, November 12, 1988, A3. Accessed via <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/1400720118/pageviewPDF?accountid=9894> [August 22, 2015].

⁴²² The subcommittee was formed as part of the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. Before introducing the second report of the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs meant to address Bill C-87, Marshall indicated that their first report in 1982, *They Served – We Care*, led to a variety of improvements in veterans' legislation. Canada. Senate. *Debates*, 34th Parliament, 2nd Session, Vol. 133 No. 132, 5276.

⁴²³ Ibid.

While Bill C-87, *An act to amend the statute law in relation to war veterans* - otherwise referred to as an omnibus veterans 'housekeeping' bill - was debated in the House of Commons, the questionable status of the Merchant Navy's past mistreatment emerged as a prominent issue.

Press coverage centering on the Merchant Navy's claims for redress persistently focused on the issue of postwar government neglect. On November 6, 1990, in the days leading up to Remembrance Day, an article in the Kingston *Whig-Standard* reiterated a number of concerns relating to government treatment of wartime merchant seamen that emerged alongside press coverage of the 1988 appointment of Driscoe as Silver Cross Mother. The article conveyed, in bellicose terms, the story of the second battle now being fought by Canada's wartime merchant seamen:

Those indispensables of the Second World War, the men of the merchant navy who sailed unwarlike ships into war and fought to keep the vital lifeline open to the Allies, are fighting another battle. It's a battle to win recognition for the survivors of the wartime Canadian merchant navy as bona fide veterans of the Second World War.⁴²⁴

The message and tone of the article were clear: the current treatment of the Merchant Navy was an injustice in need of remedying. It postulated existing veteran support for the mariners' cause by demonstrating an affiliation with the Royal Canadian Naval Association, the Royal Canadian Legion, and other branches of the Canadian Forces.⁴²⁵ Gordon Roberston of Kingston, Ontario, a veteran of Canada's Merchant Navy who sat before the Senate subcommittee alongside Olmstead in making a presentation on behalf of the CMNA's 400 strong membership in 1990, was quoted in the press as saying, "We are affiliated with the Royal Canadian Naval Association and that body is sympathetic to

⁴²⁴ Lyndon Jones, "Veterans of Merchant Navy Fight For Rightful Recognition," *The Whig – Standard*, November 6, 1990, 1. Accessed via <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/353311952/44EADD166B4B450APQ/1?accountid=9894>. [July 21, 2015].

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

our cause, as are other branches of the Canadian Forces. Our association also has support from the Royal Canadian Legion.”⁴²⁶ This linkage was crucial, whether or not it was true, as it positioned the merchant seamen as ‘bona fide’ veterans in the eyes of their military comrades, on a par in terms of wartime contribution with their military comrades.

The issue of extending veteran status to the Merchant Navy was studied by the Senate subcommittee, which then brought its findings to the Department of Veterans Affairs and the House of Commons. On November 20, 1990, Minister of the Department of Veterans Affairs Gerald Merrithew participated in a subcommittee meeting to discuss Bill C-87. During the meeting, Senator Mark Bonnell questioned Merrithew on the status of Canada’s wartime merchant seamen stating, “Although it is not in the bill, was any consideration given to including merchant marines (sic) as veteran under the legislation?”⁴²⁷ Merrithew admitted that the question was a difficult one to address; nevertheless, his reply purveyed little ambiguity as to his Department’s position on the matter. The Minister stated that the mariners’ wartime experience lacked a code of militarism, a membership card for the Canadian Active Service Force, and the accompanying discipline of the Department of National Defence. He then asserted that, despite this, the Merchant Navy engaged in a worthy war effort that had been compensated with “a good number of benefits.”⁴²⁸ He then returned directly to Senator Bonnell’s question, “You asked if merchant seamen were veterans. No, they are not veterans.”⁴²⁹ Bonnell, unsatisfied with the Minister’s reply, pressed the issue by asserting that the mariners had the Legion’s backing in their quest for broader recognition. This

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Canada. Senate. *Proceedings of Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs*, November 20, 1990, (26:20).

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

claim was rebuked by Merrithew, who described the Legion's position as complicated, conflicting, and in need of clarification.⁴³⁰ The exchange between Bonnell and Merrithew ended with little in the way of a resolution. In 1990 there was little ambiguity about the position of Veterans Affairs on the matter of Canada's wartime merchant seamen, and no obvious consensus on the issue to be found in Canada's Legion halls.

The exchange between Bonnell and Merrithew is important for a number of reasons. First, it demonstrated a growing awareness of a Merchant Navy veterans lobby in the Senate, at the Department of Veterans Affairs, and in the Legion. Second, it revealed opposition from the Legion and from the Minister of the Department of Veterans Affairs to the notion that Canada's wartime merchant seamen deserved veteran status. Third, it revealed that an *ad hoc* platform for further discussion of the issue had been fashioned out of existing deliberations on Bill C-87 that had emerged in 1989 as Canada marked the 50th anniversary of its entry into the Second World War. Although the Merchant Navy question was not the intended focus, the subcommittee, in its consideration in subsequent meetings and reports, demonstrated a reappraisal of the mariners' postwar treatment; furthermore, the context of its development confirmed that the question of Merchant Navy recognition would be addressed under the broader theme of benefit reform.

The momentum created by Marshall's subcommittee on Veterans Affairs led to increased media coverage of the aged mariners' plight. CBC's *Morningside* radio program reported on the Merchant Navy's redress campaign in light of the debate on Bill C-87 on the morning of November 9, 1990, while the House was considering the bill. Bill C-87 made no provisions for Canada's wartime merchant seamen. During the program,

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

Merchant Navy veteran Dan Bordelo, Vice-President of the CMNA, was asked about the symbolic and financial aims of the campaign:

Financial rights are there, [but] all we want is to be recognized as veterans, but then it's always been. Right now is a good opportunity to do it because Bill C-87 is before the House and it's an amendment to the veterans act and if they would include the recognition of the merchant seamen as being veterans it would mean that some of the irregularities would be abolished.⁴³¹

The increased media attention continued to raise awareness of the persistent discrepancies with regards to the treatment of Canada's wartime merchant seamen.

As the debate on Bill C-87 was underway in the House, Les Benjamin, Member of Parliament for Regina-Lumsden and the Liberal critic on Veterans Affairs Canada, broached the issue of Merchant Navy recognition. Benjamin stated firmly that he wished to have Bill C-87 amended to recognize merchant seamen as veterans. Benjamin asked, "Will the minister today give his assurance that he will either amend Bill C-87 today, or bring in additional legislation immediately that will give these merchant seamen, who served in Canada's merchant navy during World War II, veteran status?"⁴³² The Merchant Navy's high casualty rates, the dangerous nature of the work, and broader recognition of wartime merchant sailors in both the U.K and the United States meant that Canada's wartime seamen deserved recognition and access to the benefits now received by their fellow military veterans.⁴³³ The Minister of Veterans Affairs, Merrithew, retorted by reminding Benjamin of the current benefits mariners received and restated the department's views on the matter. In the Minister's words, "The problem is they were not part of the Canadian Active Service Force in time of war."⁴³⁴ Despite increased government awareness of the Merchant Navy veterans' claims, amendments to existing

⁴³¹ "Merchant mariners denied recognition," CBC Radio, *Morningside*, November 9, 1990. Accessed via: <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/merchant-mariners-denied-recognition> [August 15, 2015].

⁴³² Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. *Debates*, 34th Parliament, 2nd Session, vol. 11, 15328.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*

legislation continued to ignore them based on the premise that they were not official members of the Canadian Active Service Force, and thus not entitled to the benefits afforded to military veterans.

Despite these setbacks, the momentum of the redress campaign continued to build as the issue was debated alongside and in the aftermath of the bill. As a result of a discussion of amendments to Bill C-87 on November 8, 1990, the Minister of Veterans Affairs put the question of the Merchant Navy to a major parliamentary study.⁴³⁵ The appointed study group would investigate the issue and report to the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs (SCONDVA). The group's membership was comprised of individuals from the Royal Canadian Legion, the Army, Navy, and Air Force Association (ANAVETS), the National Council of Veterans Associations (NCVA), and members of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Canadian Pension Commission, Bureau of Pension Advocates, and the Veterans Appeal Board.⁴³⁶

The study group's membership did not involve any of the newly formed Merchant Navy organizations. Clifford Chadderton, Chairman of the NCVA and Chief Executive Officer of the War Amps of Canada, did not perceive this as problematic. He explained that the MNA was in fact being represented through the NCVA as an affiliate member, while the CMNA had similar acknowledgement through the Royal Canadian Naval Association.⁴³⁷ That this move was controversial in the eyes of members of Merchant Navy organization was recognized by Chadderton, who maintained his position claiming "to have consultation with all of the 20-odd organizations within NCVA, would make

⁴³⁵ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 34th Parliament, 2nd Session, vol. 11, 15347. See also: Brookes, "Coalition Backgrounder," (2:5).

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁷ DND/DHH, 92/125, Clifford Chadderton, "The Rights of Merchant Seamen" in *The Fragment*, no. 167, (Spring 1992): 2-3.

any meetings unwieldy, and would defeat the purpose of consultation.”⁴³⁸ Though denied direct participation in the study group on the grounds that such consultation would be “unwieldy,” the merchant seamen’s cause was nevertheless now being studied by influential government officials, veterans’ organizations, and parliamentarians.

Discussion relating to Bill C-87 served to reinforce the relationships of the many Merchant Navy organizations, namely the CMNA, MNA, CMNPOWA, and the Company of Master Mariners of Canada (CMMC), and helped to unify their political efforts.⁴³⁹ Through interaction, support, and collaboration, these groups strengthened the overall effectiveness of their message, and, in 1991, organized themselves into a coalition, the Merchant Navy Coalition For Equality. In October of 1999, it was said to have 1,321 members.⁴⁴⁰ The coalition was set up so that each of the founding partners would have one representative to sit and vote on the Board of Directors and that they would then agree upon a Chairman who would represent the coalition as a whole. The coalition agreed in principle on three main goals: to gain equal access to veterans’ benefits for Merchant Navy veterans; to have the services of the Merchant Navy recognized as war service; and to obtain financial compensation for lost opportunities and benefits.⁴⁴¹ The first officers of the coalition were Gordon Olmstead (CMPOWA), who also served as Chairman, Bill Riddell (MNA), Dan Bordeleau and Gordon Robertson in a co-position as elected chairmen (CMNA); and Paul Brick (CMMC). To this list were added Professor Foster Griezic from Carleton University, in the position of advisor and

⁴³⁸Ibid., 3.

⁴³⁹ Brookes, “Coalition Backgrounder,” (2:5).

⁴⁴⁰ Letter from Tom Brookes, Chairman of the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality to Peter Ireland, National Secretary of the Company of Master Mariners of Canada, October 12, 1999. In author’s possession as stated above.

⁴⁴¹ Brookes, “Coalition Backgrounder,” (2:10).

consultant in 1991, and Muriel MacDonald in the position of secretary in 1992.⁴⁴² In 1994 this group would be recognized by Veterans Affairs Canada as the official spokesgroup for Merchant Navy Veterans and for the rest of the political campaign it would be the unified front of the Merchant Navy lobby.⁴⁴³

Unified in purpose and with momentum generated from slow but growing recognition, the Canadian merchant seamen found themselves once more with a voice. Although the opening skirmishes yielded few tangible gains for the merchant sailors, save for the appointment in the House of Commons of a study to be reported on to the SCONDVA, they revealed the key players and arenas in which their claims could be contested. Moreover, they showed the role that the Canadian public and established veterans organizations would play in the negotiation process that would unfold with increased vigour from 1991 to 2000.

⁴⁴² Ibid., (2:12).

⁴⁴³ Ibid., (2:18).

Chapter 4: “It’s almost too late.”

On January 31, 1991, Senator Jack Marshall’s Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs tabled its report, entitled *It’s Almost Too Late*. It summarized the committee’s findings on the inadequacies and anomalies of current veterans’ legislation. When discussing the report in the Senate on the day of its presentation, Senator Marshall connected the committee’s current work to an earlier report, *They Served - We Care*, published by the Standing Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science in 1981.⁴⁴⁴ The debate about the wartime service and postwar treatment of Canada’s Second World War merchant seamen was discussed in depth in *It’s Almost Too Late*, picking up on the debate generated in the discussion of Bill C-87 that was passed only three months earlier.⁴⁴⁵ After outlining its recommendations, the first three of which dealt specifically with the Merchant Navy, Senator Marshall stated,

Veterans today do not have many more years to live. Fifty-odd years after the Second World War we should not be too proud of the fact that there are cases such as those I mentioned which require recommendations to give the veterans the deserving benefits that are due them and their spouses after they die.⁴⁴⁶

In the introduction of the report, a statement was made further validating the recognition of the Merchant Navy as veterans:

We have chosen the title ‘It’s Almost Too Late’ because it is literally true – the average age of our First World War veterans is over 90, while that of the Second World War veteran is over 70, and that of the Korean war veteran is approaching 60 and we have only a few more years in which to show those who served that we care by ensuring they and their surviving spouses spend their last years in dignity and comfort.⁴⁴⁷

The report made three specific recommendations with regards to government treatment and recognition of its wartime merchant seamen:

⁴⁴⁴ Canada. Senate. *Debates*, 34th Parliament, 2nd Session, Volume 5, 5276.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 5278.

⁴⁴⁷ Canada. Senate. Report of the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs Science and Technology. *It’s Almost Too Late*, January 1991, 1.

1. [T]hat at the earliest possible opportunity, the Government of Canada introduce legislation to extend full veterans benefits to all Canadian merchant seamen who served in dangerous waters in Canada's armed conflicts; 2. that the *War Veterans Allowance Act* be amended to define as a veteran all merchant seamen who made at least one trip through dangerous waters; 3. that the Government of Canada prepare and place in the Peace Tower a Book of Remembrance honouring merchant seamen who died of enemy action in Canadian armed conflicts and, further, that suitable monuments to their sacrifices be erected.⁴⁴⁸

While addressing postwar benefits provided for the merchant marine, the report, quoting Olmstead as a witness, stated:

Merchant seamen did get a number of benefits. However, the Honourable Lionel Chevrier, then Minister of Transport, put it this way in 'Canada's Merchant Seamen,' King's Printer, 1945. 'Such benefits should not be of a nature which would encourage seamen to leave the industry at the end of the war to seek employment in other fields...' That was the kiss of death, bestowed with gratitude.⁴⁴⁹

The subcommittee also found that the general lack of knowledge by Canadians of the wartime history of the merchant marine contributed to the mariners' neglect.

The subcommittee recommended full and unmitigated access to existing veterans' legislation for Canada's wartime merchant seamen. The report recounted not only the threats endured during the war by the German U-boat menace, but also the paradox of the Merchant Navy's postwar treatment, given the high praise they received as the 'Fourth Arm' in wartime.⁴⁵⁰ When discussing the failure of the Canadian merchant marine in 1948, the committee stated

Whatever the justification for the original decision to deny seamen veterans' access to the educational opportunities and veterans' preference extended to military veterans – in retrospect, your Committee finds it exploitative and unjust – the refusal to extend these benefits to veterans of the merchant marine after 1948. The only possible explanation for government inaction is that, relatively speaking, veterans of the merchant marine were a small group without the sympathy or support of a powerful lobby or friends in high places.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., i.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁵⁰ Sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 of the report deal specifically with the threats endured as a result of enemy actions; incidences of capture, and government attitudes of their wartime contributions. Canada. Senate. Report of the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs of the Standing Senate Committee On Social Affairs, Science And Technology. *It's Almost Too Late*, January 1991, 3-6.

⁴⁵¹ Canada. Senate. Report of the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science And Technology. *It's Almost Too Late*, January 1991, 6.

Embedded in this stinging assessment was a call for immediate corrective action by those in a position to effect change, namely members of parliament. This appraisal of the postwar treatment of wartime mariners urged Canada's political leaders to hastily correct the current inadequacies of existing veterans' legislation so as to properly provide for merchant sailors. This call came as a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and National Defence (SCONDVA) was studying the issue.

Further support for the Merchant Navy came following SCONDVA's report on the topic, tabled in the House of Commons on September 30, 1991. SCONDVA, having assessed evidence provided by Chadderton's appointed House of Commons study group, government officials, merchant sailors, and Canadian veterans' organizations, stated:

On the basis of evidence heard by the Committee, there can be little doubt that our wartime merchant mariners have been unfairly treated. We are unable to fully correct old mistakes but we believe it to be appropriate and necessary for the Government of Canada to recognize the errors of the past and make the proper amends.⁴⁵²

The report also noted strong support from the Legion, at least with regards to extending to the mariners greater benefit access, quoting its position as desiring to "obtain full access to all veteran benefits for those who so gallantly served in wartime aboard the ships of the merchant navy."⁴⁵³ In its conclusion, the committee offered three recommendations: first, that any mariner with one or more high seas ocean-going assignments during the war be fully recognized as a veteran and have full veterans benefits extended to them; second, that a Book of Remembrance be prepared for the Merchant Navy and placed in the Peace Tower; and third, that the Department of

⁴⁵² Canada. House of Commons. Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs (hereafter SCONDVA), *First Report*, 34th Parliament, 3rd Session, September 24, 1991, (5:9).

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

Veterans Affairs encourage the construction of a monument to honour the memory of the Canada's wartime Merchant Navy.⁴⁵⁴

As a result of the recommendations made by SCNDVA and Senator Marshall's subcommittee, supported by the efforts of a vocal Merchant Navy lobby, new legislation was introduced and read for the first time in the House of Commons on June 4, 1992.⁴⁵⁵ Bill C-84, *An Act to amend the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act, the War veterans Allowance Act and the Pension Act and to amend other Acts in consequence thereof*, also referred to as the *Merchant Navy Veteran and Civilian War-related Benefits Act*, acknowledged that merchant sailors had only limited access to veterans' benefits enjoyed by members of the armed forces, and that the mariners' access had been further curtailed at times on account of their non-veteran status.⁴⁵⁶

On June 10, 1992, Bill C-84 was read for the third time by the Minister of Veterans Affairs, Gerald Merrithew. Upon its introduction, Merrithew stated,

This is a day when Canada's merchant mariners will be very happy indeed. Those sceptics who believed this time would never come can now abandon ship. The legislation we are considering today will put merchant navy veterans on a par with veterans who served in uniform during World War I, World War II and in Korea.⁴⁵⁷

The legislation was depicted during its final reading as a correction of the second-class status attributed to merchant mariners, whom Merrithew now referred to as "the prime

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., (5:10).

⁴⁵⁵ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 34th Parliament, 3rd Session, vol. 9, 11375.

⁴⁵⁶ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 34th Parliament, 3rd Session, vol. 9, 11728.

⁴⁵⁷ The estimated cost of its implementation was discussed in the House of Commons and quoted to be a financial commitment of roughly \$100 million in spending over the next five years. The press confirmed these figures and reported that the changes would cost Veterans Affairs \$12 million in 1992-93 and a further \$88 million over the following four years to implement. See: Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 34th Parliament, 3rd Session, vol. 9, 11727-11728, and Stephen O'Brien, "Merchant navy vets granted full benefits," *Ottawa Citizen*, A5, March 27, 1992. Accessed via <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/239637017?pq-origsite=summon> [August 15, 2015].

targets of the enemy for much of the war.”⁴⁵⁸ As a result of research into the matter by SCONDVA, and the work of Senator Jack Marshall, the merchant seamen, and their supports, the bill moved quickly through the house and was passed on its third reading.⁴⁵⁹ With the support of senators, parliamentarians, established veterans organizations, and the general public, the Merchant Navy received broader access to veterans’ benefits and recognition under the newly created “designation of merchant navy veteran.”⁴⁶⁰

After forty-seven years of waiting, members of Canada’s wartime Merchant Navy had finally been recognized by the federal government as veterans, but not as military veterans. What this distinction of “merchant navy veteran” meant, and why the mariners found themselves being treated in separate legislation, remained unclear. As Merchant Navy veterans and their advocates further studied the bill and its implications, reports began to emerge in the media showing that not all the issues had been addressed.

Merchant Navy advocate and coalition member Foster Griezic, an associate professor in the history department at Carleton University, remained unconvinced that the treatment of Merchant Navy veterans and military veterans was indeed equal. On March 27, Griezic wrote in to the *Vancouver Sun* in response to the passage of Bill C-84, “No mention was made of merchant seamen being equal to military veterans.”⁴⁶¹ Other Merchant Navy veterans spoke out and claimed that their battle with the federal

⁴⁵⁸ Stephen O’Brien, “Merchant navy vets granted full benefits,” *Ottawa Citizen*, A5, March 27, 1992. Accessed via <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/239637017?pq-origsite=summon> [August 15, 2015].

⁴⁵⁹ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 34th Parliament, 3rd Session, vol. 9, 11736 and 11748.

⁴⁶⁰ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 34th Parliament, 3rd Session, vol. 9, 11728 and LAC MG32-C51, Senator Jack Marshall fonds, Veterans Affairs Canada, “News Release: Legislation Coming For Merchant Navy Veterans,” March 26, 1992.

⁴⁶¹ Foster Griezic, “Merchant Seamen: Promises, promises: Still Short of Full Veterans’ Status?” *Vancouver Sun*, A13, April 7, 1992. Accessed via:

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/canadiannews/docview/243375971/62CE3E15429417APQ/1?accountid=9894> [July 25, 2015].

government was far from over. On March 27, 1992, the day of the announcement that merchant sailors may get benefits, the *Toronto Star*, reporting from Halifax, the site of the Minister's public announcement, capitalized on the bittersweet note of the achievement: "The handful of former sailors who gathered to hear the news yesterday accepted it with good grace, but also with a trace of bitterness for the length of time it has taken the country to recognize their service."⁴⁶²

Less than a year after the publication of *It's Almost Too Late*, the first recommendation of the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs had been met with the passage of the *Merchant Navy Veteran and Civilian War Related Benefits Act* in 1992.⁴⁶³ The inclusion of Canada's wartime merchant seamen as veterans in the eyes of the federal government, albeit in a newly defined category, was a significant success for the coalition's campaign. Additionally, a Book of Remembrance containing the names of merchant mariners who were killed during the war was being produced and would be placed in the Peace Tower.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶² John Spears, "Merchant sailors may get war benefits," *Toronto Star*, A3, March 27, 1992. Accessed via: <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/canadiannews/docview/436582511/1B8EBDAA18134895PQ/1?accountid=9894> [July 25, 2015].

⁴⁶³ VAC, *The Origins and Evolution of Veterans' Benefits in Canada*, 41.

⁴⁶⁴ Bill C-84 deals specifically with the *Civilian War Pension and Allowances Act* (1); the definition of a merchant navy veterans (2-6); Civilian Merchant Seamen and Salt Water Fishermen (7-9); the *War Veterans Allowance Act* (10-12); the *Pension Act* (12-14); and other consequential amendments (17). Nowhere in the act does it mention the recommendation of a dedicated Book of Remembrance for Canadian wartime merchant seamen killed during the war. Canada. Government of Canada. Bill C-84, *An Act to amend the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act, the War Veterans Allowance Act, and the Pension Act and to amend other Acts in consequence thereof*, 34th Parliament, 2nd Session, S.C. 1992, ch.24, and Stephen O'Brien, "Merchant navy vets granted full benefits," *Ottawa Citizen*, A5, March 27 and Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 34th Parliament, 3rd Session, vol. 9, 11729. The project was being directed by Veterans Affairs Canada and undertaken on July 4, 1992, by a working group comprised of representatives from the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons, Merchant Navy associations and other Veterans' associations. DND/DHH, 93/25, Department of Veterans Affairs. Bruce Brittain, "Report on the Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance project from inception, July 4, 1992 to January 31, 1993," February 10, 1993, 4.

The dedication of the Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance became a complex struggle between the newly coined Merchant Navy veterans and the Legion, and one that played out openly in the Ottawa press. Being accepted as veterans by the Legion did not mean that the Legion viewed the mariners as the unequivocal equal to their military counterparts. In a letter to the *Ottawa Citizen* on November 11, 1993, Griezic attacked Bruce Brittain, a member of the Book of Remembrance working group and ex-Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Minister. This attack was based on a claim that Brittain, supported by the Legion Dominion Command and Veterans Affairs Canada, had tried to block the Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance from being dedicated officially during the National Remembrance Day ceremony in Ottawa.⁴⁶⁵ Griezic claimed that Remembrance Day was the only logical choice for the book's dedication and argued that attempts to block it should be seen as a continued form of discrimination against Canada's recently-recognized Merchant Navy veterans. Griezic, speaking as consultant and historical advisor for the coalition, asserted:

Their position [Veterans Affairs and the Legion] is not surprising since the government and the Legion have opposed granting merchant seamen equality with the military wartime comrades. The book for the First World War was dedicated on Nov. 11, 1942; for the Second World War on Nov. 11, 1957, for Korea, Nov. 11, 1962. Was Canada's Merchant Navy in some other war?⁴⁶⁶

In the coalition's view, to have the Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance dedicated on any other day than November 11 would be perceived as a slight to minimize their status meant to reinforce a hierarchy of veteran identity that placed military veterans above their newly-recognized civilian counterparts.

⁴⁶⁵ Foster Griezic, "Merchant Seamen to Finally get Book of Remembrance," *Ottawa Citizen*, A12, November 10, 1993. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/239809931?accountid=9894> [July 24, 2015].

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

Five days later, on November 15, 1993, Larry F. Gray, a member of the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command and the Book of Remembrance working group, responded to Griezic's attack in another letter to the *Ottawa Citizen* stating, "Foster Griezic's grasp of history is extremely flawed. As an associate professor in history he would be well advised to do some research."⁴⁶⁷ Gray went on to explain the position of the working group stating that the date had been agreed upon by members of the Merchant Navy veterans community both in an attempt to clear the Legion and Brittain of any wrongdoing and demonstrate that a working relationship between Merchant Navy and military veteran organizations had developed. Gray pointed out that a committee that contained four representatives of the Merchant Navy, including coalition Chairman and Foster's research partner Gordon Olmstead, decided the timing of the proposed dedication.⁴⁶⁸

On December 7, 1993, Olmstead struck back at Gray and officially clarified the coalition's opinion on Legion support and matters pertaining to the Book of Remembrance. First, Olmstead explained that he was involved in a meeting regarding the dedication of the Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance on October 28 and that, during this meeting, Remembrance Day 1994 was decided upon as the date of the book's dedication and forwarded this on to Veterans Affairs Canada.⁴⁶⁹ He then clarified that prior to the October 28 decision:

⁴⁶⁷ Larry F. Gray, "Merchant Navy vets," *Ottawa Citizen*, A10, November 16, 1993. Accessed via <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/239796698?accountid=9894> [July 24, 2015].

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Gordon Olmstead, "Merchant Navy book could have been ready," *Ottawa Citizen*, A10, December 7, 1993. Accessed via: <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/canadiannews/docview/239831030/B0520BC8BCA243DAPQ/1?accountid=9894> [July 25, 2015].

Merchant seamen had understood all along that the dedication was scheduled for Nov. 11 this year [1993]. On Oct. 13, the calligrapher reported the work 99.5 percent completed. If the dedication of the calligraphers and other workers on the book had been emulated by those responsible for arranging the ceremony, the book could be in the Peace Tower now.⁴⁷⁰

This revealed that a fissure had developed within the committee with regards to the book's date of dedication and contested Gray's earlier claim of Olmstead and the Merchant Navy's support for an alternative date. Moreover, it illustrated that Olmstead, speaking on behalf of the Merchant Navy, felt that the 1993 date was missed on account of a lack of cooperation between members of the working group and the newly coined Merchant Navy veterans. However, the attempt to block the Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance from being dedicated at the National Remembrance Day ceremony in Ottawa, an action both Olmstead and Griezic attributed to members of Veterans Affairs Canada and the Legion, failed as the mariners secured its dedication at the ceremony a year later in 1994.

The dedication of the Book of Remembrance was reported on in the press with an air of controversy, despite its intended purpose as a gesture of government support for and recognition of Canada's wartime merchant seamen; furthermore, media coverage of the event served to highlight persisting inequalities in the treatment of Merchant Navy veterans. On November 10, 1994, a report in the *Globe and Mail* criticized the federal government for its longstanding neglect of Canada's wartime Merchant Navy, even after the gains of the 1992 legislation, stating:

The government has had to be bludgeoned into dismantling discrimination against merchant sailors, one it'sy-bitsy step at a time. Gordon Olmstead, chairman of the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality – the lobby group for merchant-navy veterans – estimates there remain 40 points of inequality between the government's treatment of military and merchant-navy veterans. But today, a Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance will be dedicated in the Peace Tower – containing the names of 2,200 killed in both world wars.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Michael Valpy, "Belated Remembrance of Merchant-Navy Vets," *The Globe and Mail*, A2, Nov 10, 1994. Accessed via:

The Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance remained a lightning rod for controversy. The Legion continued to attempt to block the Merchant Navy and the inclusion of Merchant Navy veterans in the Vice Regal Party at the Remembrance Day Memorial Service in 1994 was described by the Legion as a one-time event that was not meant to set a precedent for other years.⁴⁷² An event meant to symbolize a broader acceptance of the Merchant Navy proved to be a bittersweet victory for the mariners, similar to the passage of Bill C-84 in 1992, and served to highlight the need for future reforms.

Despite the gains established through the 1992 *Merchant Navy Act*, Canada's wartime merchant seamen were still not recognized on a par with military veterans in Canadian veterans' legislation. Coalition documents pointed to twenty-four persisting legislated inequalities between the Merchant Navy and other military veterans, not forty as was originally reported in the press.⁴⁷³ They included the government not recognizing disability or illnesses that occurred while taking gunnery training, after capture on landfall, after shipwreck, or while traveling on orders between ports; furthermore, these periods were also not recognized as 'qualifying time' that could be used in claims made for access to additional benefits.⁴⁷⁴ Perhaps more importantly, the mariners were campaigning for financial compensation as payment in lieu of the generous benefits of the Veterans Charter they had been denied in 1945. The coalition articulated that this payment would help "compensate for the negative effect of denying these veterans the

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/canadiannews/docview/385061723/1D92DFD8B24300PQ/1?accountid=9894> [July 25, 2015].

⁴⁷² Brookes, "Backgrounder," (2:18).

⁴⁷³ There were six instances where civilians received more than mariners and two places where past benefits granted had been truncated by the 1992 amendments. Brookes, "Comparison," (1:2).

⁴⁷⁴ Brookes, "Comparison," (1:24).

full range of post-war educational, rehabilitation, employment and other head-start opportunities” offered to ex-service personnel.⁴⁷⁵

In an attempt to correct these discrepancies, the mariners brought their grievances to SCNDVA and the Minister of Veterans Affairs in 1993. The committee was told by Bill Bruce, a Merchant Navy veteran representing the Canadian Merchant Navy Association (CMNA), that the *Merchant Navy Act*, and Merrithew’s promise “that we [Merchant Navy veterans] would be equal to our military war comrades,” was a lie. With Bill C-84, Bruce noted, “we are not” equal.⁴⁷⁶ Merrithew’s successor as Minister of Veterans Affairs, Kim Campbell, in a letter to Bruce dated April 8, 1993, stated that merchant mariners were only given access to some benefits and services available to the military. Bruce told the committee that in a later letter he had received from Campbell on April 30 “she [Campbell] admitted that merchant seamen eligibility for pension benefits was to be as close as wartime service [as possible] but not equal.”⁴⁷⁷ Moreover, by 1994, out of the proposed budget of \$100 million dollars pledged by the federal government designated to aid in extending benefits to Merchant Navy veterans - later reduced to \$88 million - only \$2 million had been spent.⁴⁷⁸ Though the government’s coffers had been opened, few mariners had been able to access funds that had been earmarked for them.

A particularly poignant story recounting the failure of Bill C-84 emerged in *Maclean’s* magazine in August of 1994. Jim Kelley, a Merchant Navy seaman from Alberta, who had crossed the Pacific through perilous enemy waters seven times during the war and lost his toe while loading a munitions ship in Vancouver. Kelley had

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., (6:7).

⁴⁷⁶ Canada. House of Commons. SCNDVA, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, 34th Parliament, 3rd Session, (50:27).

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Brookes, “Backgrounder,” (2:12:1).

accessed the funds but only because he had friends in Alberta who filed the mail and service records he sent home during the war which allowed him to access military pension and health benefits that most other merchant seamen were unable to access since their injuries could not as easily be linked to their wartime service.⁴⁷⁹ This personal archive and, more specifically, a hospital record contained in its holdings, is what inevitably led him to cut the bureaucratic red tape and qualify for a monthly pittance of \$81 in veterans' disability benefits, something made possible as a result of the passing of Bill C-84.⁴⁸⁰ The triumph of Bill C-84 seemed somewhat underwhelming when juxtaposed against this account and the grievances expressed in the media, at SCONDVA hearings, and to the Minister of Veterans Affairs by the mariners.

By 1994 the Merchant Navy veterans still found themselves fighting to gain access to a complex system of benefits. It was reported in *Macleans* magazine that of the roughly 1,000 Merchant Navy applications made since 1992, only 194 had been accepted, a figure the story attributed to the scattered nature of Merchant Navy war veterans' record keeping, which spread the paperwork across ten government departments resulting in an average processing length of three years.⁴⁸¹ Veterans's *Affairs Annual Report and estimates for 1993-1994*, published in 1993, validated this low figure stating, "It is expected that approximately 230 Merchant Navy Veterans will benefit from this new legislation."⁴⁸² VAC's low estimated number of beneficiaries

⁴⁷⁹ E Kaye Fulton, "Lost in History's Shuffle," *Macleans* 107.35 (Aug 29, 1994): 12-13. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/218436213?accountid=9894>. [July 25, 2014].

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Canada. Veterans Affairs Canada, *Annual Report: Estimates for 1993-1994*, April 13, 1993, (1:3).

indicated that Bill C-84 would offer only a small portion of Canadian merchant sailors additional benefits.

The Merchant Navy veterans continued their fight for a timely review of their claims. This discrepancy was partially addressed with the passage of Bill C-67, the *Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act*, in 1995, and the subsequently delivered list of *Prescribed Persons and Organizations Regulations* of 1996.⁴⁸³ The Veterans Review and Appeal Board sought to address concerns regarding both the speed and accessibility of existing veterans' legislation, and, deal with complaints in a more efficient manner. The scope and purpose of the bill led the Senate to pass it without amendments in 1994 and it became law in 1995, a decision a subsequent Senate report would praise as a 'great leap of faith' that 'was well founded.'⁴⁸⁴ What emerged as the result of Bill C-67, according to the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, was a 'leaner, more efficient system.'⁴⁸⁵

Bill C-67 marked an important milestone in the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality's campaign. Written in Bill C-67 was a clause indicating that inquiries regarding the administration of veterans benefits would be deferred to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board as well as to a list of prescribed persons or organizations who would thereafter be given a chance to present on the question before the board made its final decision allowing veterans a say in the appeal process.⁴⁸⁶ On January 4, 1996, when Veterans Affairs Canada released its list of prescribed persons and organizations,

⁴⁸³ Canada. Government of Canada. Bill C-67, *An Act to establish the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, to amend the Pension Act, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to repeal the Veterans Appeal Board Act*, 35th Parliament, 1st Session, 1995, S.C. 1995, ch.19.

⁴⁸⁴ Canada. Senate, Report of the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, *Steadying the Course*, April 1997, i.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁸⁶ Inquiries relating to the administration of the *Pension Act*, *Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act*, and any other Act of Parliament pursuant to the concerns of the Board would be considered provided they were not 'trivial, frivolous, or vexatious'. *Ibid.*, Section 30 and 37:2.

pursuant to section 40(e) of Bill C-67, it named the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality as an official member of this group.⁴⁸⁷ This was a significant event in that it codified the coalition as one of the organizations that must be informed and involved in discussions concerning the interpretation of veterans' benefits enabling the organization to study and comment on inquiries put before the Veterans Review and Appeal Board.⁴⁸⁸ This act further validated the coalition as the official speaker for Canada's Second World War merchant seamen and gave the group legal recognition.

In an effort to raise awareness of persisting inequalities in the treatment of Merchant Navy veterans, members of the coalition – such as Gordon Olmstead and Bob Ducette – decided to stage a separate Day of Remembrance ceremony for Merchant Navy veterans on November 5, 1996, at the National War Memorial in Ottawa. The event was reportedly paid for by the CMNA and capitalized on the coverage of the war leading up to Remembrance Day commemorations.⁴⁸⁹ Prior to the event, the *Ottawa Citizen* ran an article that described in detail the tense relationship between Canada's wartime merchant seamen, the federal government, and the Canadian Legion. Olmstead, speaking as Chairman of the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality, referred to the treatment of Canada's wartime Merchant Seamen at the hands of the federal government and the Legion as “a bit of military bigotry.”⁴⁹⁰ Olmstead blamed the leadership of the Legion

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., Section 45(e), and Canada. Veterans Affairs Canada. *Prescribed Persons and Organizations Regulations*, created on January 1, 1996, accessed via: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/sor-96-68/FullText.html> [November 22, 2014].

⁴⁸⁸ The other groups listed were: the Army, Navy, and Air Force Veterans in Canada; the Bureau of Pension Advocates; the Minister of Veterans Affairs; the National Council of Veterans Associations in Canada; and, the Royal Canadian Legion. Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., (2:15).

⁴⁹⁰ The Legion's views were articulated by Jim Rycroft, Director of the Service Bureau of the Royal Canadian Legion, and expressed the institution's position. Joanne Laucius, “Merchant seamen fight for recognition,” *Ottawa Citizen*, D10, November 4, 1996. Accessed via:

Dominion Command for the lack of better compensation and recognition for merchant seamen.⁴⁹¹ Officials from the Legion, after stating that the separate legislation of the *Merchant Navy Act* constituted a purely cosmetic difference between military and Merchant Navy veterans, defended the position that the mariners had been justly compensated for their war service by arguing that merchant seamen could go back to their homes after their term was up and were also subjected to lesser punishments for desertion.⁴⁹²

The position of the Legion is noteworthy as it affirmed - in a very public sense - Olmstead's views of a persisting form of military prejudice or 'bigotry,' one that placed non-military veterans, and their service, beneath that of their military counterparts. Bob Doucette, president of the CMNA and Merchant Navy veteran, stated in blunt terms that he was fed up with the government's position: "We're getting too old. We have no motive before we go to the grave other than to have the merchant navy recognized."⁴⁹³ The qualifications that accompanied the mariners' separate legislative treatment under Bill C-84 was a further hindrance to their equal legislative treatment and fell short of their demands to be recognized as war veterans on par with their military comrades.

Meanwhile, as fissures continued to develop between the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality, the government, and the Legion, debates about postwar Merchant Navy treatment continued to undergo scrutiny in Senate and House Committees. In 1997 the final report by the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, *Steadying the Course*, was published. The committee had been charged with the mandate of examining the issue

<http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/240065145?accountid=9894>. Accessed on: November 22, 2014.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

of pension adjudication and heard testimony from the Canadian Legion, the National Council of Veterans Associations, officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs, officials from the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, and the members Bureau of Pensions Advocates (BPA) group.⁴⁹⁴ During the hearings, the issue of Merchant Navy representation gained the committee's attention. Recommendation eighteen of the report raised the issue of the mariners' separate legislative treatment more directly, advising:

That veterans' legislation be revised to eliminate the distinctions in status and benefits between uniformed veterans and civilians who serve abroad in close support of the armed forces in theatres of war or in Special Duty Areas, and that the full benefits of the Veterans Independent Program be extended to those civilians enumerated in Part XI of the *Merchant Navy Veteran and Civilian War-Related Benefits Act*.⁴⁹⁵

The recommendation demonstrated that full and unmitigated access to veterans' benefits was still at arm's reach for members of the Merchant Navy. The report further attacked the logic of maintaining such a position in contemporary debates, claiming "The Subcommittee is convinced that it is wrong in an era of total war and of peace keeping or peace making operation to make artificial distinction between uniformed and non-uniformed veterans who serve together in theatres of war or areas of conflict."⁴⁹⁶ These views came from voices outside of the coalition as the list of the subcommittee's witnesses only included members of the Royal Canadian Legion, the National Council of Veterans Associations in Canada (NCVA) and the Department of Veterans Affairs, demonstrating that the coalition's campaign was gaining the support of other veteran organizations, most notably the NCVA.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁴ Canada. Senate. Report of the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, *Steadying the Course*, April 1997, 1.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁹⁷ It is worth noting that, in 1997, the NCVA's position on the Merchant Navy compensation changed and they decided to support the Merchant Navy request for compensation in lieu of lost benefits from 1945-1992 and for the 19 benefits in the Veterans charter that they were not able to apply for. War Amps

In the late 1990s, almost a decade after their campaign for redress had begun, Canadian Merchant Navy veterans had made only limited progress towards their goals of financial compensation for lost postwar benefits and equal legislative treatment. Speaking in the House on April 22, 1998, as official opposition critic for Veterans Affairs, Peter Goldring tied Bill C-61 to an earlier request from Merchant Navy representatives who wanted status as war veterans, not civilian veterans, and equal treatment in legislation stating, “Canada’s merchant navy seamen have for far too long been the victims of government bureaucracy and systemic procrastination by the Minister of Veterans Affairs.”⁴⁹⁸

Unsatisfied with the slow pace of the government’s response to Merchant Navy issues and to force the hand of Members of Parliament, a small number of Merchant Navy veterans conducted a hunger strike on the footsteps of Parliament Hill. Ossie MacLean, accompanied by fellow Merchant Navy veterans Randolph Hope and Ward Duke, began the hunger strike on September 29, 1998, in an attempt to secure a one-time payment of \$30,000 for each of the estimated 2,300 remaining wartime merchant seamen. This payment was meant to cover lost postwar veterans’ benefits such as free university, job training, and land grants.⁴⁹⁹ Fellow wartime merchant sailors Martin MacDonald and Willis Marsolais later joined the initial trio. Hope, one of the strike’s organizers, later recounted his intentions:

This was a strike for recognition, and it was also a strike for benefits for people who shoulda’ [sic] had benefits. I got tired of going to the funeral Parlours, Brennan’s funeral parlour, Fitzpatrick’s

Canada, “Merchant Navy Backgrounder – Essential Facts and Time Line” Accessed via: <http://www.waramps.ca/newsroom/archives/merchant/back.html> Accessed on August 23, 2014.

⁴⁹⁸ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 36th Parliament, 1st Session, vol. 135, 5987.

⁴⁹⁹ David Gamble, “Merchant Navy vets on hunger strike,” *Spectator*, D1, September 29, 1998. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/269935739?accountid=9894>. Accessed on November 18, 2014.

Funeral Parlour where the guys that I sailed with on different ships was living very strict. They had no insurance.⁵⁰⁰

With time running out as wartime sailors passed away, there was an increased desperation to achieve a victory.

Support for compensation had also emerged outside the Merchant Navy lobby. A public statement from the NCVA's Chairman, Cliff Chadderton, it was argued: "The only way the government could make it up to this group now would be in the form of a cash grant for the survivors."⁵⁰¹ This was a stark change of attitude by Chadderton. In an earlier brief prepared for SCNDVA in 1991, Chadderton went on record as having stated: "I want to say first that the present coverage for merchant seamen is not all that bad." Chadderton pointed to the mariners' coverage under the *Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act*, and its benefits before indicating, "That particular piece of legislation was written in 1945, and it may surprise some of you to know that I had a part in writing it, so I know what was involved."⁵⁰² This comment seems odd given that these benefits were far less than what ex-service personnel received. Chadderton, once lukewarm to the idea of Merchant Navy compensation, had since become a definite advocate and important ally. In the coming years, he would testify frequently in support of both legislative amendments and a one-time payment for denied benefits. Chadderton never publicly articulated the reason for his change of opinion, but it appears that he never truly thought he was working against the mariners.

⁵⁰⁰ Interview with Randolph Hope, conducted by author, April 25, 2015.

⁵⁰¹ "Vets back seamen's demands," *Ottawa Citizen*, A5, September 30, 1998. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/240184365?accountid=9894>. Accessed on November 29, 2014. See also: "Merchant Navy vets' bid backed," *Toronto Star*, 1, September 30, 1998. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/437807020?accountid=9894>. Accessed on November 28, 2014.

⁵⁰² Canada. House of Commons. SCNDVA, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, 34th Parliament, 3rd Session, (2:19).

The hunger strike succeeded almost immediately in drawing nation-wide attention and sympathy for Merchant Navy Veterans. On October 1, 1998, during an episode of CBC's *As it Happens*, MacLean spoke from the steps of the Centre Block on Parliament Hill:

We come to Ottawa here on a hunger strike for a \$30,000 cheque upfront for our men that there is about 2,300 or 3,000 left and better benefits after because if we wait for benefits in this government we will all be six feet under. There's so many of our men living on poverty that it ain't [sic] even funny and we are the men that saved the world.⁵⁰³

Accounts of prolonged poverty at the hands of federal politicians oversimplified the complexity of the issue, but the act of aged veterans starving themselves brought the discussion once more into the public sphere. Support for the merchant seamen spread just as rapidly in newsprint as it did on radio with sympathetic reports being published across the country. An article appearing in the *Montreal Gazette* scoffed at the government's stance on the issue declaring, "That the three should feel driven to such a desperate course is a shaming indictment of Ottawa's parsimony."⁵⁰⁴

The presence of the hunger strikers at the seat of democracy caught the gaze of visiting tourists. Willis Marsolais, a Merchant Navy veteran who had spent two years as a P.O.W. in Germany from the age of fifteen to seventeen, remembering his time on the Hill, stated "We gave a note, to all the tourists, they read them and said it's terrible, that's

⁵⁰³ "Merchant seamen stage hunger strike on Parliament Hill," CBC Radio, *As It Happens*, October 1, 1998. Accessed via: <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/war-conflict/veterans/merchant-seamen-stage-hunger-strike-on-parliament-hill.html>. Accessed on September 18, 2014.

⁵⁰⁴ "They also served," *Montreal Gazette*, B2, October 1, 1998. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/433331452?accountid=9894> [November 29, 2014]. For coverage of the story in western Canada see: "Survivors of Hitler's U-boat war want a lousy \$50 million; Parliament Hill's most colourful hunger strike," *Edmonton Journal*, A13, October 6, 1998. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/252566270?accountid=9894> [November 29, 2014]. For coverage in eastern Canada see Campbell Morrison, "Hunger strikes are pushing on Merchant mariners protesting," *Daily Gleaner*, October 2, 1998. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/412644684?accountid=9894> [November 29, 2014].

the way they felt, it was a terrible terrible story.”⁵⁰⁵ The imagery of the hunger-striking veteran was poignant enough, but when paired with the outpouring of public support, it served to advance the Merchant Navy cause that had seen little progress in six years. The moral optics of the frail veterans on the Hill had proved itself a force too powerful to ignore.

The hunger striking merchant seamen received support in the House of Commons from a number of Parliamentarians who were also part of a House Committee tasked with examining Veterans Affairs and National Defence issues.⁵⁰⁶ This, paired with media coverage, helped the strikers broker a deal with the Minister of Veterans Affairs, Fred Mifflin, who, though out of the country participating in commemoration of the 45th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice on October 9, agreed to meet the strikers putting an end to the strike.⁵⁰⁷

The hunger strike led to a study by the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs (SCONDVA), which examined the complaints of the Merchant Navy lobby, especially the issue of persisting legislative inequalities and the matter of compensation. These two concerns would be the central focus of the SCONDVA hearings that ran from November 5, 1998 until November 18, 1999. These hearings involved representatives from ANAVETS, NCVA, the Legion, VAC, the Merchant Navy

⁵⁰⁵ Interview with Willis Marsolais, conducted by author, March 28, 2015.

⁵⁰⁶ Among the voices that emerged in support of the hunger strikers were Elsie Wayne (P.C Saint John, standing in for David Price in SCONDVA) Peter Goldring (Reform Party, Edmonton East), René Laurin (B.Q, Joliette), and Gordon Earle (NDP, Halifax West). Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 36th Parliament, 1st Session, vol. 135, 8575-6; 8570; 8704, 8875.

⁵⁰⁷ Chris Cobb, “Merchant navy vets end hunger strike,” *Calgary Herald*, A2, October 10, 1998. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/244696657?accountid=9894>. Accessed on November 27, 2014.

Coalition for Equality, as well as a host of smaller veterans organizations.⁵⁰⁸ In committee and in the House, frequent reference was made to the hunger strikes and the public support it had garnered for the redress campaign.

However, while parliamentarians seemed ready to act, the Merchant Navy lobby was fragmenting. By October 1998 the Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans Association (CMNVA), became divided over internal politics.⁵⁰⁹ On February 27, 1998, a number of the organization's directors removed president Bob Doucette and several other associates from the board of executives for undisclosed reasons. Certain members of the organization saw these actions as inappropriate and believed that they should have waited until the Annual General Membership meeting, where the actions could have been put to a proper vote.⁵¹⁰ The split resulted in two entities: the "MacIsaac faction" and the "Ferlatte faction." On October 15, 1998, the Ferlatte faction, named after its president Aurèle Ferlatte, indicated to the Minister of Veterans Affairs that it had withdrawn from the coalition.⁵¹¹ The MacIsaac faction, led by acting president Allan MacIsaac who took over for Doucette after he stepped down due to illness and subsequently died in late 1998, continued to operate under the designation of the CMNVA.⁵¹² This meant that by October

⁵⁰⁸ The topic quickly came to dominate the House Committee's agenda. SCONDVA met seventeen times to discuss issues relating to the legislative treatment of Canada's Second World War merchant marine and the issue of compensation between November 5, 1998, and November 18, 1999.

⁵⁰⁹ The Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans Association (CMNVA) was the new title of the CMNA, which changed its name in 1996. Brookes, "Backgrounder," (1:1)

⁵¹⁰ Brookes, "Backgrounder," (3:0).

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² On February 26, 1999 the Ferlatte faction made an *ex parte* application with the Supreme Court of British Columbia seeking to have its group recognized as the current board of the CMNVA.⁵¹² However, their request was denied and a membership vote by secret mail-in ballot was ordered to settle the dispute. The results were 458 for the Ferlatte faction and 325 for the MacIsaac faction meaning the Ferlatte faction was able to claim the title of CMNVA, with the MacIsaac forming the Canadian Merchant Mariner Veterans Association (CMMVA), which chose to remain under the coalition's umbrella. Brookes, "Backgrounder," (1:1, 3:0).

1998 there were five organizations representing Merchant Navy veterans, four of which operated under the umbrella of the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality.

During the SCONDVA meetings both the ‘Ferlatte’ and ‘MacIsaac’ factions identified themselves as representatives of the CMNVA, though only members of the ‘MacIsaac’ faction claimed an affiliation with the Coalition for Merchant Navy Equality. This created confusion in SCONDVA proceedings as government officials struggled to understand who was authorized to speak on behalf of Canada’s Second World War merchant seamen. Elsie Wayne, Conservative Member of Parliament for Saint John, staunch supporter of the merchant seamen’s redress campaigned, belaboured this point on November 17, in a meeting of the House Committee. Wayne, when speaking about a recent presentation given by coalition members highlighted this confusion and the need for clarification before moving forward:

I have to tell you, Mr. Chairman, they do not represent the Merchant Navy. The president of the Merchant Navy is elected. They were self-appointed. They do not represent them. Your Merchant Navy president is Mr. Aurèle Ferlatte. A letter has gone out to the minister today letting him know that Olmstead, Griezic, and Muriel MacDonald do not represent them.⁵¹³

That Wayne equated the Merchant Navy lobby with a single elected president, and not as a coalition as it had been operating since 1991, was odd and served to highlight the government misperception about collective efforts for redress. This was understandably frustrating for the coalition as it meant they lost the monopoly they had previously had on Merchant Navy organizations, and, worse still, there was no longer a single Merchant Navy veteran voice.

While records are incomplete, the best figures for this point of the campaign show that in 1999 the CMMC had a membership of roughly 500, the CMNPOWA an estimated

⁵¹³ Canada. House of Commons. SCONDVA. *Evidence*, 36th Parliament, 1st Session, 1645. Accessed via: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=1039077&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=36&Ses=1>. [November 27, 2014].

40, the CMMVA about 325, and the CMNVA about 450.⁵¹⁴ This self-inflicted wounded jeopardized the efforts of the broader campaign as it required that the government now negotiate with the organizations represented by the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality, the MNA, CMNPOWA, the CMNVA MacIssac faction, the CMMC, as well as the recently independent Ferlatte faction of the CMNVA.

Frustration grew on all sides and led to a second hunger strike on November 25, 1998, when MacLean claimed Mifflin had gone back on his promise to meet.⁵¹⁵ Fortunately, the strike was brief – lasting only two days – and was resolved on the grounds that the strikers would be allowed to present their case to SCONDVA.⁵¹⁶ Parliamentary Secretary for Veterans Affairs and SCONDVA committee member Bob Wood believed that the merchant mariners were exhibiting “undemocratic and un-Canadian” behaviour and guaranteed “nothing had changed,” with regards to the Liberals stiff opposition to compensation.⁵¹⁷ Though internal divisions slowed down the negotiation process, the issue nevertheless continued to be examined by the House Committee.

While the matter of compensation was being debated by the House Committee, progress was made on the issue of continuing legislative inequalities. On December 2,

⁵¹⁴ Smaller organizations, such as the MNA and the CMNPOWA in the work of Gordon Olmstead and Bill Riddell, had made substantial contributions to the campaign in researching and presenting on the Merchant Navy issues. Membership figures are therefore not indicative of influence. Letter from Tom Brookes, to Peter Ireland, National Secretary Company of Master Mariners of Canada, October 12, 1999. In author’s possession supplied by Tom Brookes.

⁵¹⁵ “Merchant navy vets plan new hunger strike,” *Edmonton Journal*, C6, November 20, 1998. Accessed via:
<http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/252637039?accountid=9894> [November 30, 2014].

⁵¹⁶ Norma Greenaway, “Hunger strike called off,” *Montreal Gazette*, A15, November 27, 1998. Accessed via:
<http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/433332860?accountid=9894> [November 30, 2014].

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

1998, an omnibus veterans bill, Bill C-61, was introduced to the House of Commons.⁵¹⁸ The bill was to provide greater recognition for the war services of Merchant Navy veterans and remove any persisting inequalities in their treatment.⁵¹⁹ The proposed legislation was meant to transfer current Merchant Navy veteran benefit clauses to existing war veteran legislation, namely the *Pension Act* and *War Veterans Allowance Act*, in an effort to ensure the equal treatment of both uniformed and non-uniformed veterans in statute law.

Debates in the House regarding Bill C-61 focused on framing it as part of a larger set of remedial actions taken to underscore the contributions of Canada's wartime merchant seamen. Earlier debates linked the bill to previous discussions on Merchant Navy veterans in the House of Commons stretching back to 1992. Following Bill C-61's first and second reading, it found no opposition in the House. The main caveat discussed by those supportive of Merchant Navy claims to compensation was that endorsing Bill C-61 did not preclude a later attempt at securing payment in lieu of benefits, as this was a separate issue.⁵²⁰ The bill was then referred to SCONDVA for study; the committee quickly tabled their report on February 18, 1999, endorsing its passage without

⁵¹⁸ The full title of the bill was: *An Act to amend the War Veterans Allowance Act, the Pension Act, the Merchant Navy Veteran and Civilian War-related Benefits Act, the Department of Veterans Affairs Act, the Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act and the Halifax Relief Commission Pension Continuation Act and to amend certain other Acts in consequence thereof.*

⁵¹⁹ Other issues addressed by the bill were: adjustments to the deadline for the termination of War Veterans Allowance payments to allied veterans outside Canada; greater eligibility under the *Pension Act* for exceptional incapacity allowance benefits for former prisoners of war; and a broadening of coverage for survivors of disability pensioners who might benefit from posthumous increases in disability assessments in certain cases. Canada. Law and Government Division. David Goetz, *Legislative History of Bill C-61*, "Introduction" Accessed via: <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection-R/LoPBdP/LS/c61-e.htm> [September 24, 2014].

⁵²⁰ This view was brought up by Peter Goldring, official opposition critic of Veterans Affairs, and Maurice Godin, BQ Member of Parliament for Châteauguay. Though both men applauded the efforts of Bill C-61, neither appeared ready to abandon the issue of compensation. Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 36th Parliament, 1st Session, vol. 135, 11823-11829.

amendment.⁵²¹ With support from the Standing Committee, the bill was read in the House for the third time and passed with unanimous support on March 23, 1999.⁵²²

Following the passage of Bill C-61, SCONDVA focused on the matter of compensation and heard a number of presentations made by Merchant Navy veterans, coalition members, and representatives of the Legion, ANAVETS, NCVA, VAC, and a number of smaller veterans organizations stretching back from November 5, 1998. A later summary of the committee discussions showed that support from veterans organizations and witnesses for compensation was widespread, ranging from a proposed figure of \$5,000, coming from the Legion, to \$200,000, suggested by an individual merchant mariner. The low figure suggested by the Legion was based on a belief that it needed to be proportionally lower than the recent Hong Kong POW *ex gratia* payment of \$20,000.⁵²³ The urgent nature of the committee's work became all the more apparent following April 24, when Gordon Olmstead, an ex-POW, Merchant Navy veteran, and indefatigable advocate for the redress campaign, succumbed to cancer.⁵²⁴

⁵²¹ Some issues arose in the committee over the financial component of the Last Post Fund for veteran burials and with regards to retroactive payments, but both were ruled out of order as they had a financial component beyond the intention and scope of the bill in question and for this reason would need to be tabled as amendments in the House. After 1993 the Last Post Fund (LPF) had been accepting applications from merchant mariners for the LPF provided they met at least one of the following criteria: had served aboard a Canadian ship on a high-seas voyage during either the First or Second World War; were a Canadian national with service on an Allied ship on a high-seas voyage during the First or Second World War; was a Canadian national who had received the 1939-1945 Star for service in the Merchant Navy; or had served on a Canadian ship in "dangerous waters" while on a high-seas voyage during the Korean War. Canada. House of Commons, SCONDVA. *Evidence*. (Meeting No. 90, February 18, 1999) 36th Parliament, 1st Session. (Online). Available:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=1039258&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=36&Ses=1>. [November 27, 2014], and Serge Durlinger, *Lest We Forget: A History of the Last Post Fund 1909-1999* (Montreal: Last Post Fund, 2000), 218-219.

⁵²² Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 36th Parliament, 1st Session, vol. 135, 12725.

⁵²³ Canada. House of Commons. SCONDVA. *Evidence*, (Meeting No. 6, November 18, 1999) 36th Parliament, 2nd Session, 0900-0905. (Online). Available:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=1039858&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=36&Ses=2>. [November 27, 2014].

⁵²⁴ Roy MacGregor, "Honouring the man who wouldn't let them forget: Gordon Olmstead proved merchant mariners mattered," *National Post*, A8, November 4, 1999. Accessed via:

After months of deliberation, the committee tabled their report on June 8, 1999. The report entitled, *A Story That Must Be Told: The Canadian Merchant Navy and Its Veterans*, briefly summarized the history of the mariners' postwar neglect and put forth three recommendations. The committee recommended that: the government establish an ongoing scholarship fund with an initial endowment of one million dollars to support further study of and promotion for the history of Canada's Merchant Navy and its veterans; that a permanent tribute to Canada's wartime merchant seamen be installed at the Canadian War Museum; and that the Merchant Navy be given permanent representation on the Board of the Canadian War Museum.⁵²⁵ In the end, compensation was not endorsed by Liberal members of the committee, and was not included in the committee's recommendations.⁵²⁶ Though the committee's report helped ensure that the merchant mariners' story would be told more fairly and completely in the future, it seemed parsimonious given the broad support that a one-time tax free *ex gratia* payment had received from the various witnesses and veterans organizations who offered testimony.

The response in the media and by Veterans Affairs Canada demonstrated that despite the committee's ruling the question of compensation would continue to be scrutinized. This was further confirmed in a briefing note prepared for George Baker, the new Minister of Veterans Affairs, in the fall of 1999 that indicated the matter of

<http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/329605362?accountid=9894>. [Accessed November 28, 2014].

⁵²⁵ Canada. House of Commons. SCNDVA, *Fifth Report, A Story That Must be Told: The Canadian Merchant Navy and Its Veterans*, June 8, 1999, Introduction. Accessed via: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=1031673&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=36&Ses=1&File=6> [September 12, 2014].

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, Appendix D. Accessed Via: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=1031673&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=36&Ses=1&File=24> [September 12, 2014].

compensation remained unsolved, in the department's view, and that VAC had until November 6 to make its official reply to the SCONDVA report.⁵²⁷ On October 16, 1999, the *National Post* reported that Baker was seeking cabinet's approval for a \$55 million compensation package for lost benefits. The figure, revealed by sources close to the minister, pegged the number in the range of \$6,000-\$14,000 for most merchant sailors with \$24,000 for former Prisoners of War.⁵²⁸ By mid November 1999, George Baker had brought the issue before the SCONDVA three times. The committee, in a meeting on November 18 came to the agreement, without an official quorum, that none of the committee members were in opposition to the notion of a one-time tax free *ex gratia* payment. The final remaining dispute was over what that figure should be. After deciding further public hearings regarding an exact number of claimants, or specifying a cause that was already agreed upon would only serve to extend the Merchant Navy veterans' long wait, the committee decided to defer the question regarding the appropriate sum to the five Merchant Navy organizations and to facilitate a meeting of their leadership outside of the committee.⁵²⁹ However, if the federal government was to open its coffers and compensate Merchant Navy veterans, which by November of 1999 it had expressed an interest in doing, it would only be done once a consensus had been reached by all organizations representing that community in order to deter later criticisms from a

⁵²⁷ Veterans Affairs Canada, "Briefing Note for the Minister of Veterans Affairs," 2, circa September 1999. Obtained by author through ATI request A-2014-00246. The ATI information does not give an author, nor a date, but note appears to have been crafted in September 1999 based on the rest of the content packaged in the ATI request.

⁵²⁸ Robert Fife, "Merchant mariners may receive \$55 million in compensation: 20,000 Canadians eligible: civilian veterans bitter over treatment after the war," *National Post*, A6, October 16, 1999. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/329549587?accountid=989>. [December 6, 2014].

⁵²⁹ Canada. House of Commons. SCONDVA. *Evidence*, (Meeting No. 6, November 18, 1999) 36th Parliament, 2nd Session, 1035-1040. (Online). Available: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=1039858&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=36&Ses=2>. [November 27, 2014].

potential hold out organization.⁵³⁰ For this reason, the tenuous relationship of the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality and the CMNVA was maintained as these friendly adversaries worked together alongside more established veterans organizations to secure a payment.⁵³¹

On December 15, 1999, an agreement was reached by the five organizations representing Canadian Merchant Navy veterans and was signed off by the leadership of the NCVA, ANAVETS, and the Royal Canadian Legion. The details of their joint communiqué were reported on in a news release and included a proposed sliding scale for compensation based on length of service, with an additional 20% payment for Merchant Navy POWs. The terms were described as follows: for 1-6 months of service or for those who suffered attack by the enemy, the proposed amount of compensation was \$5,000; for those with 6-24 months of service, \$10,000; for those who served for longer than 24 months, \$20,000; and that all mariners who qualified for the war risk bonus be recognized with the compensation payable to either the Merchant Navy veteran or their surviving spouses.⁵³²

With the agreed upon figure in hand, the Department of Veterans Affairs researched the total cost of securing a compensation package, which was estimated to be \$50 million, and reported their finding in the House of Commons. The Department of Veterans Affairs and Merchant Navy lobby continued to disagree over the number of

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1040.

⁵³¹ The dispute over ownership of the CMNVA title would eventually be settled in July 1999 resulting in the Ferlatte faction keeping the organization title of the CMNVA and the MacIsaac faction rebranding itself as the Canadian Merchant Mariner Veterans Association (CMMVA). Brookes, "Backgrounder," (3:0). At the intervention of Industry Canada and the CMNVA, the CMMVA once more had to change its name in 2003, because of the similarity of the two names. They became the League of Merchant Mariner Veterans of Canada (LMMVC). Brookes, "Backgrounder," (1:1).

⁵³² War Amps, "Agreement by Veterans Organizations on Merchant Navy Compensation," December 15, 1999. Accessed via: <http://www.waramps.ca/newsroom/archives/merchant/1999-12-15.html> [December 5, 2014].

claims that would be made, but the earlier decision by the House Committee to not further over-study the details of the mariners' plea, since support for compensation had been secured, may have helped serve to minimize the significance of these debates.⁵³³ In the end, Baker brought the plan before committee and announced its approval publicly during a press conference on February 1, 2000.⁵³⁴

After fifty-five years Canada's Second World War Merchant Navy veterans finally received financial compensation for the benefits they had been denied at war's end. The official VAC press release announced that a total of \$50 million had been allocated, with maximum payments ranging from \$5,000-\$24,000.⁵³⁵ Coalition leader Allan MacIsaac praised the decision, saying he was "pleased that (merchant mariners) are finally being recognized as vets," and Aurèle Ferlatte, head of the CMNVA, felt satisfied with the decision but lamented, "I only feel so sorry that a lot of the people who started this are not here today."⁵³⁶

Shortly after the announcement, problems emerged with regards to the amount of funds allotted as the number of applicants quickly outpaced earlier estimates. As of

⁵³³The eligibility figure represented by the Merchant Navy lobby was 7,200 potential seamen on the high end and 4,000 on the low end. VAC presented the figure of a possible 27,000 claims at a meeting with NCVA in December, a number Chadderton refuted as outrageous and stated that once ineligible groups had been struck from the calculation it was closer to 7,200 potential cases. War Amps, *Gov't May Have Inflated Merchant Navy Numbers* December 21, 1999. Accessed via:

<http://www.waramps.ca/newsroom/archives/merchant/1999-12-21.html> [December 5, 2014]

⁵³⁴CBC, *The National*, "\$50 Million for merchant mariners," February 1, 2000. Accessed via: www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/50-million-for-merchant-mariners [July 25, 2015].

⁵³⁵The *ex gratia* payments would be made to eligible Merchant Navy veterans and their spouses and divided into two disbursements, the first at 60% of the determined amount and the second at 40% once the total liability of all applications had been adjudicated. Veterans Affairs Canada, "Federal Government Reaches Deal with Merchant Navy Veterans," February 1, 2000. Accessed via: <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/news/viewrelease/90> [December 6, 2014]. See also Veterans Affairs Canada, *Performance Report for the Period ending March 31, 2001*, [Ottawa] 2001, 24.

⁵³⁶James Baxter, "Canada's merchant navy wins \$50M compensation," *Ottawa Citizen*, A4, February 2, 2000. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/240337058?accountid=9894>. [December 6, 2014].

March 21, 2000, 10,225 applications were received by Veterans Affairs Canada from wartime merchant seamen and 706 payments had been processed at a total cost of \$5.5 million.⁵³⁷ That the figure of 10,225 surpassed the estimated number of applicants less than two months after the compensation package was announced indicated that the fund would likely require a top up. By August of 2000, the spokesperson for Veterans Affairs Canada confirmed that applications made before the initial deadline had reached 13,824, three times the initial anticipated amount, leading Merchant Navy veterans to demand a top-up.⁵³⁸ The deluge of applications led to delays at Veterans Affairs Canada. Threats emerged from within the CMNVA of a possible third hunger strike. Though not condoned by the NCVA and the organizations operating under the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality Umbrella, Ferlatte, speaking as president of the CMNVA, stated that, if the minister failed to come up with addition funds, “there will be one big blasted protest.”⁵³⁹

The logistical nightmare required urgent remedial action. Chadderton indicated publicly that the initial package had two main oversights. First, the principle of dual-service excluded merchant seamen who served in the armed forces, even if their service was brief, precluding them from the compensation; and second, the stipulation that in order to apply the seamen would have to have domiciled in Canada before the war. As a

⁵³⁷ Veterans Affairs Canada, *Performance Report for the Period Ending March 31, 2000*, [Ottawa] 2000, 20.

⁵³⁸ Sandra Davis, “Vets want \$15-million more; Merchant navy group threatens massive protest if compensation not topped up,” *New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal*, News, August 7, 2000. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/423124325?accountid=9894>. [December 6, 2014].

⁵³⁹ Bob Klager, “Hunger strike not the answer, head of veterans group says; ACTION NEEDED: Chadderton urges Ottawa to resolve logistical nightmare,” *New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal*, August 8, 2000. Accessed via: <http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/423110755?accountid=9894>. [December 7, 2014].

solution to both cases, Chadderton wanted to establish a review process where these special cases could be examined more closely, claiming that this would help ease delays and ensure every qualified applicant received his dues.⁵⁴⁰

Veterans Affairs and the federal government moved swiftly to diffuse the situation. Newly appointed Minister of Veterans Affairs, Ron Duhamel, secured an additional \$20 million in funding in October 2000 and helped establish a review. As of March 21, 2001 a total of \$50.7 million had been paid out to 7,063 successful applicants out of a total of 13,928 applications received.⁵⁴¹ In addition, 2,695 claims that had previously been denied were under review.⁵⁴² Despite these improvements, problems persisted, leading the CMNVA and coalition to continue to press the government for a firmer response.

On May 4, 2001, a mere four days before the 56th anniversary of the close of the Battle of the Atlantic, Minister Duhamel announced an additional \$34.5 million in funds to help compensate Canada's wartime Merchant Navy, bringing the total to \$104.5 million.⁵⁴³ Duhamel stated: "No amount of money can ever compensate for the death of a person or the wounds someone suffered, whether they're physical or emotional... but this gesture is a very powerful statement about recognizing the contribution merchant mariners made to our country."⁵⁴⁴ Approval from the Merchant Navy veteran community

⁵⁴⁰ "NCVA asks for immediate Merchant Navy payments," *Canada Newswire*, August 14, 2000, 1.

Accessed via:

<http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/455904000?accountid=9894>. [December 7, 2014].

⁵⁴¹ Veterans Affairs Canada, *Performance Report for the Period ending March 31, 2001*, [Ottawa] 2001, iii.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁴³ Veterans Affairs Canada, *Minister Duhamel Delivers Funding for Merchant Navy Veterans*, [Winnipeg], May 4, 2001. Accessed via: <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/news/viewrelease/124> [December 6, 2014].

⁵⁴⁴ Richard Roik, "Merchant seamen finally win compensation battle," *New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal*, May 5, 2001. Accessed via:

followed closely on the heels of the announcement. Ferlatte, after praising the hunger strikers and favourable media coverage of the struggle, and speaking for the CMNVA's membership, stated, "We commend Veterans Affairs Canada for their determination to bring this saga to a satisfactory, fair conclusion."⁵⁴⁵ Chadderton, representing the NCVA, thanked Duhamel on behalf of the thirty-six veterans organizations he represented as chairman, indicating that the accomplishment removed the 'black mark' that hung over Canadian veterans' programs.⁵⁴⁶ Though some issues remained regarding the administration of these funds, the May 4 announcement served to finalize the last aim of the Merchant Navy redress campaign.

One final gesture to further commemorate the Merchant Navy, and ensure that their wartime memory would be preserved, was the establishment of September 3 as Merchant Navy Veterans Day in Canada in 2003. Betty Spry, the National Secretary of in a letter to Prime Minister Jean Chretien Spry on March 12, 2001, advocated on behalf of the CMNVA, that September 3 be chosen as the Merchant Navy day of Remembrance because it is the anniversary of the sinking of *Athenia* and is date observed for the same purpose by both Great Britain and Australia.⁵⁴⁷ It was given Royal Assent on June 19, 2003.⁵⁴⁸

<http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/423128994?accountid=9894>. [December 7, 2014].

⁵⁴⁵ Aurèle Ferlatte, "Hunger strikers were lightning rod," *New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal*, December 18, 2001. Accessed via:

<http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/423169443?accountid=9894>. [December 6, 2014].

⁵⁴⁶ War Amps, *National Veterans Organizations Thank Government For full Funding for Merchant Seamen*, [Ottawa] May 7, 2001. Accessed via: <http://www.waramps.ca/newsroom/archives/merchant/2001-05-07.html> [December 7, 2014].

⁵⁴⁷ Letter from Betty Spry, National Secretary CMNVA Fernie British Columbia, to Prime Minister Jean Chretien, Ottawa, Ontario, March 12, 2001. Copy of letter in author's possession passed to author by Mrs. Spry.

⁵⁴⁸ Canada. House of Commons. *Debates*, 37th Parliament, 2nd Session, No. 73, 1520-1525. Accessed via: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?pub=Hansard&doc=73&Language=E&Mode=1>

The victory secured by the mariners came following a fifty-five year struggle with the federal government to have their service recognized on a par with that of their wartime military comrades in the army, navy and air force. For the seamen it involved a claim to financial restitutions, access to veteran status, and recognition. Ossie MacLean, a man who put his life on the line during two hunger strikes to achieve these objectives, reflecting on them stated, "It's all been worthwhile."⁵⁴⁹ The long wait meant that many wartime sailors could not share in the victory, but for those who remained it brought a great sense of closure that had been absent for fifty-five years. Ferlatte, in contemplating what compensation meant to him, indicated its importance in reshaping the mariners' place in history stating, "Finally a debt of shame has been paid. It was a black mark on Canada's history. I'm very, very grateful it's over. It took one hell of a long time."⁵⁵⁰

&Parl=37&Ses=2#T1520 [July 25, 2015]. See also: Canada. Government of Canada. Bill C-411 *An Act to establish Merchant Navy Veterans Day*, 34th Parliament, 2nd Session, S.C. 2003, ch 17.

⁵⁴⁹ Richard Roik, "Merchant seamen finally win compensation battle," *New Brunswick Telegraph journal*, May 5, 2001. Accessed via <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/423128994?pq-origsite=summon> [August 22, 2015].

⁵⁵⁰ Anna Nicolle, "Ottawa closes merchant navy saga with \$34.5 million," *Victoria Times Colonist*, May 5, 2001, A3. Accessed via <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/345831059?pq-origsite=summon> [August 22, 2015].

Conclusion:

Canada's Merchant Navy received high praise from Lord Leather, British Minister of War Transport, on May 9, 1945:

For more than 5½ years side by side with the Allied Merchant Navies, in the face of continual and merciless attacks by the enemy, you have maintained the ceaseless flow of sea traffic on which the life and strength of this country depends. All who have borne the strain of this grim struggle have a full share in the victory of the Allied Forces and a full share, too, in the nation's thanks.⁵⁵¹

Yet while the merchant mariners bore the “strain of the grim struggle,” they did not receive a “full share of the victory” or the nation's thanks. Unlike their military counterparts, the seamen found themselves with little access to legislated veterans' benefits and few remunerations for their efforts. Without a strong veterans' association and with no histories to share their wartime stories, official or popular, the reputation as Canada's ‘Fourth Arm’ of the services faded rapidly from social memory.⁵⁵² For proper recognition, both of rights and deeds, the mariners had to wait fifty-five years. Some, like wartime merchant sailor Charlie Moore, praised the announcement of compensation for Merchant Navy veterans in 2000 as a success stating, “That feels good. We deserves [sic] it.” Others, like hunger striker Ward Duke, claimed the government's financial offer was not enough to compensate the mariners for what they had been denied, stating, “Well a lot of the guys will probably say enough is enough we'll take that and go home, but as far as I'm concerned I'm not satisfied.”⁵⁵³

The aim of this thesis has been to weave together the various narrative strands of the merchant seamen's demands for recognition and redress. In doing so I have hoped to

⁵⁵¹ LAC RG 12, Department of Transportation fonds, vol. 1494, file no. 8090-200, letter from Mr. W. G. Hyngard, “Victory Message to the Merchant Navy,” to Ottawa from London, May 9, 1945.

⁵⁵² As Tim Cook notes, official histories of the services helped defend the reputations of both veterans and the government. Cook, *Clio's Warriors*, 162.

⁵⁵³ “\$50 Million for merchant mariners,” CBC, *The National*, February 1, 2000. Accessed via www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/50-million-for-merchant-mariners [August 30, 2015].

show that the eventual acceptance of the mariners as veterans was part of a complex process negotiated in a variety of socio-political spaces. Fought mainly over access to legislated veterans' entitlements and compensation, the campaign sought through recognition of veterans' status to validate the mariners' wartime experience, something that became more crucial as the mariners aged, and gain them compensation. The merchant sailors pursued these objectives in the Canadian Parliament, with Canada's established veterans' community and within the public arena as they pushed the nature of debates on "veteranhood" in Canada during the late twentieth century, making the government accountable for veterans of Canada's wartime merchant service. This thesis has shown how, in the case of Canada's Second World War Merchant Navy, redressing claims to "veteranhood" can be achieved as the federal government redefines its understanding of who and what a veteran is, and, what its obligations to those who serve are, whether the member is a civilian or ex-service personnel.

Building on established literature exploring Canada's Second World War veterans and the small body of work on Canada's Merchant Navy, I have traced shifting public and government perceptions about Canada's wartime merchant sailors from 1939-2000. During the war, the mariners were elevated into a prominent role in the fight against Germany as they endured the U-boat peril and kept open the crucial lifeline from North America to Britain. But the perception of the mariners changed after the war and these wartime heroes were relegated to being civilian workers. They had gone from patriotic warriors in the struggle against Hitler in 1945 to Communist agitators in 1950.

This thesis has established how the seeds of Merchant Navy redress developed during a larger period of veterans' benefit reforms and were examined in the context of

emerging debates about veteran entitlements as they unfolded from 1965 to 1988. Set against this backdrop of concern for Canada's aging ex-service personnel, the mariners began once more to mobilize and seek recompense. Between 1989 and 2000 the mariners brought their debate into the federal legislature and the homes of Canadians as they took advantage of a heady period of military commemorations.

In the decades-long struggle, a number of factors came together to help the merchant seamen achieve their goals. First, the emergence of a strong and vocal Merchant Navy lobby in the 1980s gave the seamen's campaign a more clearly articulated set of aims in negotiating with the federal government. Second, the increased interest in veteran narratives and survivor testimony from the war that developed in the late 1980s helped create an engaged audience in the general public, and further encouraged the government to listen to the merchant seamen's pleas. As Canadians, politicians and veterans' organizations prepared to mark important anniversaries of Canada's participation in both world wars, the mariners were given a chance to re-insert their wartime experiences into Canada's social memory of the war and used this as a gateway to further their claims to redress. By appealing to existing narratives of service and sacrifice surrounding Canadian veterans, the mariners strengthened their claims.

Convincing other veterans' organizations of their assertions was vital for the mariners' success. As stronger support emerged from influential leaders in Canada's veteran community, notably Clifford Chadderton, renewed pressure was placed on the government to recognize and compensate Merchant Navy veterans. The success of the campaign demonstrated not only the constructed nature of "veteranhood" in Canada, but it also revealed who the key stakeholders and gatekeepers were in the late twentieth

century. Moreover, the successful campaign demonstrated that previously neglected wartime narratives – those of the Merchant Navy – can be re-explored and re-incorporated into the nation’s broader memory of the war, provided the timing is right, all the stakeholder groups are on board and the public offers its support and sympathies. The success of the mariners’ claims to redress serves to illustrate the complex process whereby the state evaluates and then reassesses its constructed memory of the war and its obligation to those who serve, whether uniformed or otherwise.

This thesis has provided another way to examine the nature of “veteranhood,” and perhaps will be the jumping off point for further studies of those who served and were denied full veterans rights, such as Aboriginal veterans, the Red Cross and St John Ambulance Brigade personnel, and the civilian aircrews of Ferry Command. This thesis has meanwhile tried to break new ground in an often neglected and otherwise unexplored field of Canadian veterans’ history and has provided some insight into how one group – the merchant mariners – successfully negotiated and fought for the right to be called veterans. The long struggle and wait was a triumph of will and a testament to the fortitude of the merchant seamen’s convictions. But for many it left a bittersweet sense of accomplishment, and some, who succumbed to age, never received official confirmation that they were indeed veterans of the Second World War.

The mariners’ success demonstrated a reappraisal in the contributions of Canada’s ‘Fourth Arm’ and re-established their once forgotten reputation positioning it more firmly in the nation’s military past. For Aurèle Ferlatte, president of the CMNVA, this inclusion

brought a much-needed sense of closure. Speaking in 2001 Ferlatte proclaimed: “Our [the Merchant Navy] battle has ended, after 56 years our ship has finally come into port.”⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵⁴ “Vets’ compensation hiked; \$34.5 million added to deal for merchant navy vets,” *Daily Gleaner*, May 5, 2001. Accessed via <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/412817431?pq-origsite=summon> [August 30, 2015].

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Interviews conducted by author:

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Interview with Frank Grant conducted January 29, 2015.

Interview with Willis Marsolais conducted on March 28, 2015.

Additional interviews:

Interview with Allan Murray Sr., conducted by Angela Beeking in 2005.

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Form



Carleton University
 Research Ethics Office
 Research Ethics Board
 509C and 511 Tory, 1125 Colonel By Drive
 Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6 Canada
 Tel: 613-520-2517, ethics@carleton.ca

Ethics Clearance Form – New Clearance

This is to certify that the Carleton University Research Ethics Board has examined the application for ethical clearance. The REB found the research project to meet appropriate ethical standards as outlined in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human, 2nd edition*, and the *Carleton University Policies and Procedures for the Ethical Conduct of Research*.

Date of Clearance: August 26, 2014

Researcher: Matthew Moore (Student Research: Master's Student)

Department: History

University: Carleton University

Research Supervisor (if applicable): Prof. Tim Cook

Project Number: 101827

Alternate File Number (if applicable):

Project Title: Workers and Warriors: The Canadian Merchant Navy, the Second World War, and the Negotiation of Veteran Identity

Clearance Expires: May 31, 2015

All researchers are governed by the following conditions:

Annual Status Report: You are required to submit an Annual Status Report to either renew clearance or close the file. Failure to submit the Annual Status Report will result in the immediate suspension of the project. Funded projects will have accounts suspended until the report is submitted and approved.

Changes to the project: Any changes to the project must be submitted to the Carleton University Research Ethics Board for approval. All changes must be approved prior to the continuance of the research.

Adverse events: Should a participant suffer adversely from their participation in the project you are required to report the matter to the Carleton University Research Ethics Board. You must submit a written record of the event and indicate what steps you have taken to resolve the situation.

Suspension or termination of clearance: Failure to conduct the research in accordance with the principles of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, 2nd edition* and the *Carleton University Policies and Procedures for the Ethical Conduct of Research* may result in the suspension or termination of the research project.

Andy Adler
 Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board

Louise Heslop
 Vice-Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board

