

**“A DEBT OF SHAME” REPAID:
CANADIAN MERCHANT NAVY VETERANS
AND THEIR STRUGGLE FOR COMPENSATION**

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In the summer of 1998, a decade after beginning their most earnest attempt at securing the recognition and benefits that they had long been denied, Canadian merchant navy veterans had little reason to be optimistic. The groups representing the seamen had persuaded the government to recognize them as “merchant navy veterans” in 1992, providing them access to many of the War Veterans Allowance and Pension Act benefits they had been denied since the end of the Second World War. Since that achievement, however, the groups had made only limited progress toward their second goal of government and public recognition of their wartime deeds and none at all toward their third objective – financial compensation for having been denied access to the generous post-war benefits package offered to regular service personnel. Cliff Chadderton, chairman of the National Council of Veteran Associations (NCVA), was one of several prominent supporters who insisted a cash payment was the only means by which the government could remedy such a longstanding injustice.¹ However, the veterans affairs minister, Fred Mifflin, maintained that the wrong had been rectified by the 1992 legislation that had broadened their access to veterans’ benefits. He adamantly refused to entertain proposals to make the act retroactive or to compensate the seamen for the more than four decades they had been denied many of the benefits provided to military veterans.² The Liberal majority on the parliamentary committee responsible for veterans’ affairs resisted calls for hearings to consider the seamen’s demands for recognition and compensation.³ The merchant navy veterans’ groups had received the support of many military veterans, sympathetic news media, and well-wishing individuals, but their objective of redress for the manner in which they were treated by

¹ “Vets back seamen’s demands,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 30 September 1998.

² *Ibid.*

successive post-war governments appeared a remote possibility. The Chrétien government's attitude toward them appeared little different from those of the post-war King and St. Laurent governments. At that time, explained one former mariner, the esteem in which their nation and government had held them had been inscribed right on their uniforms: "All we had to do was turn our buttons upside down. The 'MN' would be 'NW' – not wanted."⁴

By February 2000, however, the government had unveiled a \$50-million package to provide the seamen with between \$5,000 and \$20,000 in remuneration.⁵ In October, after receiving far more applications than anticipated, the government made available another \$20 million, in an effort to ensure every eligible veteran received the full payment. When this also proved insufficient to compensate each veteran, the government allocated a further \$34.5 million in May 2001, bringing its total expenditures to \$104.5 million. The veterans' groups had overcome bitter infighting, galvanized the media and public, and, with the assistance of a sympathetic new cabinet minister and his deputy, ultimately persuaded a previously immovable and deficit-conscious government to accede to their demands. That a Canadian government had been convinced to open its coffers to pay compensation for the wrongs of past governments was almost unprecedented.⁶ After making relatively few gains over the

³ Foster Griezic, "Let merchant seamen present their case," *Ottawa Citizen*, 22 March 1998.

⁴ Maurice Atkins, Interview by author, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, 26 July 2000.

⁵ "Merchant sailors finally get their due," *St. Catharines Standard*, 28 July 2000.

⁶ Many of the veterans' supporters and opposition MPs argued the same approach should be taken as occurred with the government's December 1998 decision to award \$24,000 in compensation to Canadian Hong Kong veterans forced into slave labour while prisoners of war in Japan during the Second World War.

first ten years of their campaign, the merchant mariners achieved one of the most dramatic reversals of government policy in Canadian history.

The merchant navy's fight for equality, recognition and compensation dates from the end of the Second World War. Among the benefits offered to discharged wartime Armed Forces personnel and denied to merchant mariners were: an allowance of \$100 to purchase new civilian clothing; a rehabilitation grant providing one month's pay and allowances; a land settlement providing loans for such activities as farming or commercial fishing; subsidized university education and vocational training (the latter was extended to certain merchant navy veterans in 1948 and 1949); preference in civil service employment; business and professional loans; a war veterans' allowance; assistance with burial expenses under the Last Post Fund; and preference with regard to certain housing.⁷ Acceptance of some benefits precluded or limited eligibility for others. Most significantly, discharged veterans were able to choose only one of the "big three" options: the land settlement package, free education or training (at university or vocational and trade schools), or a re-establishment cash credit, the amount of which depended on the length of service.⁸ Some of these benefits, such as land settlement or vocational training, were made available to merchant mariners who had been disabled as a result of "enemy action or counter-action," as were pensions. However, military

⁷ Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs (hereafter SCONDVA), *Fifth Report: A Story that Must Be Told (The Canadian Merchant Navy and Its Veterans)*, Appendix "A": Post-war demobilization benefits for the armed forces & merchant navy eligibility, pp. 8-14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

veterans were eligible to receive pensions under the “insurance principle” regardless of whether they had been engaged with the enemy at the time they became disabled.⁹

Merchant seamen were repeatedly forced to explain their wartime activities in order to justify their claims to veterans’ status, benefits and compensation. It is surprising that the death rate of merchant seamen compared to those of Armed Forces personnel was insufficient to convince critics that the seamen were as fully engaged in the war and as subject to its dangers as Armed Forces personnel. Figures cited by the Canadian Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality during its campaign for recognition claimed one in eight merchant seamen perished during the Second World War. In contrast, the death rate was believed to have been one in 16 for the Air Force, one in 32 for the Army, and one in 47 for the Navy.¹⁰ Not even the government knew how many mariners had served in the wartime merchant fleet, as most individual manning pool records had inexplicably been destroyed at the war’s end. The Coalition had based its figures on the basis of government statements that there were about 12,000 sailors in the wartime merchant fleet.¹¹ This estimate was later revealed to be low, with statisticians for Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) eventually concluding that the actual figure was about 18,000 – making the death rate about one in 12.¹² Regardless of this discrepancy,

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 10, 13.

¹⁰ Canadian Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality figures, cited in “Merchant sailors finally get their due,” *St. Catharines Standard*, 28 July 2000. These figures appeared on at least one Web site supportive of the Merchant Navy cause, however the site was removed from the Internet sometime after the compensation package was announced.

¹¹ Captain Tom Brooks of the Company of Master Mariners of Canada has said that all along, some groups within the Coalition believed the actual number was between 15,000 and 16,000. Presumably, the lower figure was allowed to stand because it would have made the potential cost of any compensation seem lower and, in the government’s eyes, more practicable.

¹² Statistics Directorate, Corporate Planning Division, Veterans Affairs Canada, *Briefing Note*, 21 September 1999, p. 3.

the figures still support the merchant navy's argument that its veterans had been at least as imperiled as their uniformed colleagues, and arguably more so.

The 1941 Order-in-Council referring to the Canadian merchant marine as “virtually an arm of our fighting services” has frequently been cited by veterans' groups as proof that the government considered merchant seamen part of the Canadian war machine.¹³ Yet as merchant navy veteran and historian Robert Halford has noted, the government's decision to dismantle the Canadian merchant fleet soon after the war strongly suggests that in peacetime, it quickly came to regard the vessels as “just another form of munitions.”¹⁴

That merchant navy personnel constituted just over one per cent of all veterans at the war's end suggests the government's decision to exclude them from most benefits offered to Armed Forces veterans was not driven by a penny-pinching mentality. The decision instead seems to have been rooted in the plans the Canadian government had for the fleet in the immediate post-war period. Before the war's end, the Mackenzie King government had decided it was not interested in operating a 200-ship merchant fleet, the fourth largest in the world, during peacetime.¹⁵ The government recognized, however, that the ships and related industries employed many thousands of Canadians. The solution was to offer the ships to private shipping companies at attractive prices, on

¹³ Order in Council P.C. 14/3550, 19 May 1941, quoted in *National Council of Veteran Associations' Submission to SCNDVA*, 29 April 1999.

¹⁴ Robert G. Halford, *The Unknown Navy* (St. Catharines, 1995), p.236.

¹⁵ Captain E.S. Brand, Director of Trade Division, RCN, to Captain J.S. Thomson, Marine Superintendent, Park Steamship Company, 17 February 1944, quoted in *ibid.*

the condition that the ships remain under Canadian registry, employing Canadian crews.¹⁶

The Canadian Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality insisted that economic concerns heavily influenced the King government's decision not to offer merchant navy personnel the same benefits that had been extended to their counterparts in the Armed Forces. The government believed the sale of 200 Canadian-flagged vessels would be much easier if it could guarantee potential buyers that an ample pool of experienced men would be available to crew them. The federal cabinet thus ensured that the benefits made available to merchant mariners after the war were not "of a nature which would encourage Seamen to leave the industry at the end of the war . . . as the services of many skilled Seamen will be required if Canada is to maintain a Merchant Marine after the war."¹⁷ In a brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs (SCONDVA) in April 1999, one of the groups in the Coalition, the Company of Master Mariners of Canada, went so far as to suggest that the government's policy amounted to "collusion or treachery," in which it withheld substantial post-war benefits from the wartime seamen in order to sell the ships – complete with largely intact, veteran crews – to private firms.¹⁸ Veterans Affairs Canada did not dispute this claim and a senior official in the department later acknowledged the Company's analysis was probably accurate.¹⁹

¹⁶ Halford, p. 236.

¹⁷ Transport Minister Lionel Chevrier, in a Department of Transport pamphlet issued in 1945, quoted in Halford, p. 40; Order in Council P.C. 3227, 3 May 1945, quoted in Company of Master Mariners of Canada, *Speaking notes for brief to SCONDVA*, 22 April 1999, p. 7.

The government achieved its objective, as the Park and Fort ships, which comprised the bulk of the merchant fleet, sold quickly.²⁰ For two years immediately following the war, the ships offered steady employment for 4,500 Canadian sailors and earned ample profits for their new owners.²¹ It was not long, however, before the economic situation became bleak for Canadian shippers. Cargoes paid for with Marshall Plan aid could only be transported in ships flying U.S. flags or those of the countries receiving the assistance.²² Faced with the decision to either subsidize the shippers or stand idle as ships were laid up and their crews laid off, the government instead opted for what it considered a middle-ground approach. In 1949, it permitted the bulk of the 173 Canadian ships to switch their registries to Britain, while providing a one-year subsidy for the 30 to 40 ships remaining under the Canadian flag. As Halford pointed out, the government's assertion only two years earlier that the merchant navy was "a definite part of the nation's armour" had been rather quickly forgotten.²³ With no long-term assistance from the government, most of the 30 to 40 ships were not flying Canadian flags by the middle of the next decade.²⁴ The great fleet that had maintained the lifeline to Britain during the war had evaporated, along with many thousands of jobs.

The prospect of extending veterans' benefits to wartime merchant seamen in light of the industry's collapse was not even raised. A lengthy strike by the Canadian's

¹⁸ Company of Master Mariners of Canada, *Speaking notes*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁹ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, Ottawa, Ontario, 15 March 2002.

²⁰ Halford, p. 236.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 236-237.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 147.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

Seamen Union, the organization that represented the crews and whose leaders included self-proclaimed Communists, tarnished the lustrous reputation the merchant mariners had earned in wartime and relations with the government quickly soured.²⁵ Richard Brunton, VAC's director of legislation, who worked closely on the merchant navy recognition and compensation file, has rightly identified the government's action at this time (and lack thereof) as the source of the half century-long dispute.²⁶ Had the government kept to its course and continued to subsidize the fleet, or had it resurrected its benefits package for the benefit of the displaced seamen, the problem would have been immediately resolved. Instead, the Liberal government's retreat from its original policy effectively left thousands of sailors without jobs or access to the education and training programs that had been offered to military veterans years earlier.

There were remarkably few developments involving wartime merchant sailors over the next four decades. About 700 mariners received vocational training between 1948 and 1950, but this offer was not made permanent to allow more individuals to take advantage of it.²⁷ In 1962, wartime merchant navy personnel were placed under the jurisdiction of the Civilian War-related Benefits Act and, depending on earnings, offered income support and health care benefits.²⁸

In the late 1980s, after remaining dormant for decades, several individuals belonging to different merchant navy organizations began a campaign of letter writing

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.

²⁶ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 15 March 2002.

²⁷ SCNDVA, *Fifth Report*, Appendix "A": Post-war demobilization benefits, p. 9.; Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 15 March 2002.

and agitation that resulted in them receiving the government's permission to access Transport Canada's files.²⁹ A 1988 *Ottawa Citizen* article by Foster Griezic, a Carleton University history professor, kick-started a campaign to inform the public of the lingering inequities between merchant navy and military veterans' benefits.³⁰ In 1990, however, when the minister of veterans affairs assembled a group of military veterans' organizations and government representatives to look into the issue of merchant seamen's benefits, the merchant navy associations were conspicuously excluded. The government's continued refusal to meet with any of the associations resulted in the merger of four groups (the Merchant Navy Association, the Company of Master Mariners of Canada, the Canadian Merchant Navy Association, and the Canadian Merchant Navy Prisoners of War Association) into the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality in August 1991.³¹

The Coalition identified its three goals as equal access to veterans' benefits, recognition of the merchant navy's wartime role, and financial compensation for lost opportunities and benefits.³² Although "no one at the time believed that the Coalition was anything more than a transitory coalition that would be disbanded as soon as the Merchant Navy veterans received their equality, recognition and compensation," the formation of a united front was the most effective step in the fight for recognition (and later, compensation).³³ However, this patchwork coalition would never meld into one

²⁸ Veterans Affairs Canada, *Media Backgrounder: Chronology of VAC Benefits for Merchant Navy Veterans*, 29 October 1999.

²⁹ Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality, *Backgrounder*, revised 2001, 2:1.

³⁰ "Our forgotten heroes," *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 July 1988.

³¹ Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality, *Backgrounder*, 2:5, 2:10.

³² *Ibid.*, 2:10.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2:15.

uniform body. Its component organizations and individual members often differed on specific aims, continually quarreled, and occasionally worked at cross-purposes. None of this was lost on the government and, consequently, gains almost certainly took years longer to secure than they might have taken had the mariners been completely united under one banner, speaking with one voice.

This paper is concerned primarily with the circumstances surrounding the merchant navy's deprivation of benefits and the events leading to the government's provision of compensation. The following is therefore only the briefest of summaries of the many gains made by the merchant navy associations between 1988 and 1998. As one merchant navy advocate put it, the decade was characterized by "years of chipping away . . . as benefits gradually fell out of the system."³⁴ In 1988, the mother of a merchant seaman killed during the war was the Silver Cross mother at the national Remembrance Day ceremony.³⁵ In 1989, wartime merchant mariners were admitted into the Corps of Commissionaires – though preference in federal government hiring came decades too late for most.³⁶ In 1992, the government recognized the merchant seamen as "veterans," though they were not yet under the same legislation granting benefits to military veterans. In 1993, they were provided with Last Post Fund benefits, and in 1994, a merchant navy Book of Remembrance was placed in the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill. They were also declared eligible to apply for the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal.³⁷ After the veterans launched a court challenge and held public

³⁴ Captain Tom Brooks, Interview by author, Ottawa, Ontario, 8 April 2002.

³⁵ "Special tributes mark Remembrance Day," *Ottawa Citizen*, 12 November 1988.

³⁶ "Canada's forgotten vets," *Ottawa Citizen*, 8 November 1989.

³⁷ Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality, *Backgrounder*, 2:18.

demonstrations and media events over the next few years, the government in 1998 produced a booklet on the merchant navy's wartime role, entitled *Valour at Sea*, and introduced Bill C-61.³⁸

This bill, which became law in May 1999, provided increased War Veterans Allowance and pension benefits and tied up the loose ends that had remained after the passage of the Merchant Navy Veterans and Civilian War-related Benefits Act in 1992. The new legislation left no ambiguity about the status of merchant mariners; they were formally acknowledged to be full veterans, subject to the same legislation and provided with benefits identical to those of military veterans.³⁹ This included the extension of benefits to veterans' widows.⁴⁰

In meetings with the deputy minister of veterans affairs and department officials in May 1997, the Coalition was informed that its grievances would be addressed on a two-track basis. Track one dealt with legislative amendments relating to the demands for equality with war veterans. This track was essentially completed when Bill C-61 received royal assent. Track two was to deal with matters of policy, including anything that involved the allocation of public funds – namely, compensation.⁴¹

By early fall 1998, as the government was drawing up Bill C-61, the merchant navy groups had become frustrated by the refusal of Veterans Affairs Minister Fred

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ "Merchant Marine vets continue fight," *Ottawa Citizen*, 13 June 1999.

⁴¹ Captain Tom Brooks to Captain Douglas Wilson, 26 May 1997.

Mifflin to meet with them to discuss the prospect of compensation. In late September, three veterans began a hunger strike on Parliament Hill demanding that the government compensate them for the benefits they had been denied for nearly 50 years. The veterans, believing they had secured an agreement from the government to finally address the issue, ended their strike after 12 days.⁴² When it became apparent that the government and minister had not changed their position, five veterans headed back to the Hill for a second, liquids-only fast. The most vocal of the hunger strikers, Ossie MacLean of New Brunswick, vowed that the government would either pay a \$30,000 special benefit or fund his funeral expenses. Supporters, such as Cliff Chadderton, chairman of the NCVA, advised the hunger strikers to accept a reasonable olive branch if the government offered one.⁴³ Liberal MP Bob Wood branded the strikers' actions as "undemocratic and even un-Canadian," but the Standing Committee on which he sat (SCONDVA) summoned the men one day into their strike and promised them a hearing early in 1999.⁴⁴ The committee eventually called several hearings, giving numerous individuals and veterans' associations, both merchant navy and military, the opportunity to express their views on what the government should do to compensate or further recognize the merchant seamen.

The hunger strikes succeeded masterfully in generating public support for the merchant navy's cause. Broadcast and print media from coast to coast provided

⁴² "Victorious merchant navy vets toast promise of fair treatment," *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 October 1998.

⁴³ "Minister fails to dissuade hunger-striking veterans," *Ottawa Citizen*, 26 November 1998.

⁴⁴ "Vets call off hunger strike," *Ottawa Citizen*, 27 November 1998.

favourable coverage and editorials throughout the fall.⁴⁵ The events planted the veterans' battle for compensation on the long-term news agenda of many media outlets. Though most Coalition members shied away from associating themselves too closely with the strikes in case anything went wrong, all could recognize their effectiveness in shaming the politicians into action, especially the Liberal members of the veterans affairs committee, who had previously deflected calls for hearings. As Coalition member later observed, "Everybody could relate to a hunger striker."⁴⁶

While the strikes advanced the merchant mariners' agenda, they changed few minds in the federal cabinet or the veterans affairs department. The cabinet remained adamant that there would be no retroactive compensation and Mifflin, while able to stomach the prospect of committee hearings, continued to toe the government line. Richard Brunton, then the department's director of legislation, has said most of his colleagues regarded the hunger strikes as a form of blackmail, although they fully recognized that the mariners had suffered terrible injustices at the hands of past governments.⁴⁷

It was at this time, when the prospects for remuneration seemed closer than ever, that the Coalition began to unravel. In 1996, the Canadian Merchant Navy Association was renamed the Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans Association (CMNVA). A bitter leadership fight occurred within the organization in 1998 and the group splintered into

⁴⁵ "Respecting veterans," *Calgary Herald*, 30 November 1998; "Merchant seamen were heroes too," *Montreal Gazette*, 11 November 1998; "They also served," *Montreal Gazette*, 1 October 1998; "Merchant mariners seek due recognition," *Charlottetown Guardian*, 17 October 1998.

⁴⁶ Captain Tom Brooks, Interview by author, 8 April 2002.

two factions, often known as the “MacIsaac” and “Ferlatte” factions, after their respective leaders, Allan MacIsaac and Aurele Ferlatte. The latter group withdrew from the Coalition in October 1998 and, in February 1999, applied to the Supreme Court of British Columbia for recognition as the leadership of the CMNVA. The judge instead called for a leadership election that summer, which resulted in a modest victory for the Ferlatte faction. The Ferlatte faction thus took control of the CMNVA, while the MacIsaac group reformed as the Canadian Merchant Mariner Veterans Association (CMMVA).⁴⁸

That there were at this time five merchant navy organizations, one of which refused to campaign under the Coalition umbrella, was understandably frustrating to some of the Coalition members. As one wrote, “This will just complicate matters and play right into the hands of those who wish to keep the merchant navy representation as weak and fractured as possible – and there are lots of them. Not knowing ‘who speaks for the merchant navy’ is the most common excuse for retaining the status quo.”⁴⁹

Brunton has said that consecutive governments ignored or responded slowly to the merchant navy’s claims not because of any calculated plot to wait until their ranks thinned with age, as several merchant navy activists and editorial writers alleged, but because the groups were so fragmented. These small, disparate groups lacked the organization and clout of larger groups like the Legion, NCVA and the Army, Navy and

⁴⁷ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 15 March 2002.

⁴⁸ Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality, *Backgrounder*, 3.

⁴⁹ Tom Brooks to Alan Knight, 4 July 1999.

Airforce Veterans (ANAVETS), and consequently, were not heard for decades.⁵⁰ When they finally caught the ear of the government in the 1990s, the politicians and bureaucrats had great difficulty trying to discern who actually did speak for the merchant navy and what it was that they wanted.

The SCONDVA hearings ran from November 1998 until May 1999 and included appearances from representatives of VAC, the Legion, ANAVETS, NCVA, and a host of smaller groups. The most salient issue was the question of compensation, and the committee heard various recommendations on the matter. Most of the Coalition groups pushed for a figure of \$20,000 for each veteran or surviving spouse, observing that the amount “works out to the price of about a cup of coffee a day for 53 years.”⁵¹ They were also asking for an additional \$20,000 for prisoners of war. The newly independent CMNVA requested a sliding scale package, which would pay between \$15,000 and \$30,000 to each veteran, based on the length and nature of service.⁵²

Opinions on what would constitute fair compensation ranged from the \$5,000 suggested by the Royal Canadian Legion to the \$200,000 proposed by the head of the Merchant Navy Association, who, though a Coalition member, believed the \$20,000 figure was far too low.⁵³ While the committee members agreed that a payment of \$200,000 to each veteran was unrealistic, some felt the request was not totally unfounded. Several opposition MPs acknowledged that a subsidized university

⁵⁰ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 15 March 2002.

⁵¹ Captain Tom Brooks, Interview by author, 10 November 1999.

⁵² Aurele Ferlatte, *Submission to SCONDVA*, 18 March 1999, p. 8.

education or a generous loan to start up a new business could well have determined whether a veteran lived a prosperous or indigent lifestyle after the war.⁵⁴

In its committee appearance in March 1999, the Legion had advised the government to ensure that the amount of any payment was smaller than the \$24,000 paid to the Hong Kong prisoners of war, who had endured slave labour. It also recommended the government “temper” its payment with the knowledge that not all seamen would have applied for re-establishment benefits, pointing out that several military veterans had not applied for certain postwar benefits, including the “big three.”⁵⁵ Veterans Affairs’ figures showed only about 80% of Armed Forces personnel received one of the “big three” benefits, with only 5% opting for university education and 5% for land grants – the two benefits merchant seamen complained loudest about having been denied.⁵⁶ These numbers can be attributed to a variety of factors, ranging from expiration dates on the programs to the simple failure of eligible individuals to apply. For instance, the requirement that veterans meet the qualifications for admission to university within fifteen months of being discharged surely precluded the matriculation of many veterans who had not finished high school.⁵⁷ However, the Coalition reminded VAC that merchant seamen had not even been given the option of applying for the education or land benefits, except in a very limited capacity with

⁵³ *Evidence*, SCONDVA proceedings, 18 March 1999, 0935; *Evidence*, SCONDVA proceedings, 4 May 1999, 1740.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1720; *Evidence* (unedited copy), SCONDVA proceedings, 18 November 1999, 0915.

⁵⁵ *Evidence*, SCONDVA proceedings, 18 March 1999, 0935, 0925, 0920.

⁵⁶ SCONDVA, *Fifth Report*, Appendix “A,” p. 10.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Veterans Affairs, “Back to Civil Life,” revised 1 April 1946, quoted in Peter Neary and J.L. Granatstein, eds., *The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada* (Montreal, 1998), p. 267.

restrictions attached. The Veterans Land Act, for example, had been accessible only to those in receipt of a disability pension as a result of action involving the enemy.⁵⁸

The text of the committee's final report in June extolled the wartime achievements of the merchant mariners, but its recommendations fell far short of what most veterans had asked for. It called for the establishment of a \$1-million scholarship fund to encourage historical research into the history of the Canadian merchant navy and its veterans; the assignment of a permanent merchant navy representative to the board of the Canadian War Museum; and the installation of a permanent tribute to the merchant marine in the museum.⁵⁹ The Liberal majority on the committee wrote that Bill C-61 represented the recognition Merchant Navy veterans had been seeking (namely, the receipt of full veteran status and the consequent benefits).⁶⁰ This was deemed a sufficient means of righting the original wrong. There is every indication that Liberal members on the committee were pressured into voting the government line as decided by cabinet, as several who appeared to support the merchant navy claim to compensation during the hearings ended up voting against it.⁶¹

Most veterans' groups were outraged that the recommendations made no mention of compensation, the primary issue they had lobbied for in their submissions and testimony before the committee. (The Liberal majority on the committee had, in fact,

⁵⁸ Foster Griezic, <fjkg@uvic.ca> "Legion critique as discussed," 30 September 1999, personal e-mail to Doris Boulet dmboulet@vac-acc.gc.ca; SCONDVA, *Fifth Report*, Appendix "A," p. 10.

⁵⁹ SCONDVA, *Fifth Report*, pp. 5-6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

⁶¹ George Baker, Interview by author, Ottawa, Ontario, 16 April 2002.

voted down an opposition proposal to recommend a \$20,000 payment to the veterans.)⁶² The president of the Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans Association, Aurele Ferlatte, accused Mifflin, a retired RCN admiral, of betrayal, and promised to shame the government into action by organizing a mass hunger strike on Parliament Hill. He accused the government of deliberately stalling for time on the compensation issue so that most of the surviving veterans would be dead by the time any remuneration was offered.⁶³

One department official described Mifflin as being annoyed by the veterans' reaction, feeling it was he who was being betrayed. "He'd given them what they wanted (in Bill C-61) and they were now asking for retroactive compensation, which is a no-no in government."⁶⁴ It is quite likely that Mifflin, a long-time government man who sat on Treasury Board, was concerned not only about the cost of compensating the merchant mariners, but also of unforeseen costs that might arise from groups using the merchant navy case as a precedent to seek retroactive remuneration for other past wrongs or changes of government policy.⁶⁵

In his denunciation of Mifflin in the wake of the report, Ferlatte had said: "A minister has to have the (guts) to be able to put pressure on his cabinet to represent his parish. This guy has not done so."⁶⁶ A cabinet shuffle six weeks later would bring a new minister to the veterans affairs portfolio – one who would pay much closer attention to

⁶² *Evidence*, (unedited copy) SCONDVA proceedings, 18 November 1999, 0900.

⁶³ "Merchant Marine vets continue fight," *Ottawa Citizen*, 13 June 1999.

⁶⁴ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 15 March 2002.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

“his parish” and shepherd the merchant mariners into a united flock long enough for a settlement to be reached.

In the meantime, department officials began preparing a memorandum to cabinet on the committee’s recommendations. Realizing that the compensation issue could not simply be ignored, as the committee had largely done in its report, the department planned to argue “that the errors of the past were limitless,” and that it was impractical to pay remuneration for past wrongs. “We weren’t very happy with the explanations,” director of legislation Richard Brunton said afterward. “Our hearts weren’t in it.”⁶⁷

It was the report written by the opposition members of the committee that shaped the course of events. In their dissenting opinion, opposition MPs called on the government to “erase this blight on the history of Canada’s veterans” by making an *ex gratia* payment of \$20,000 to veterans or surviving spouses.⁶⁸ They argued that the government should approach the matter in the same manner it had dealt with Canada’s Hong Kong veterans, who had been forced into slave labour during the war. Six months earlier, the government had paid \$24,000 in compensation to those veterans or their surviving spouses – not because of any obligation to do so (since culpability rested with Japan), but because it desired to right an injustice.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ “Merchant Marine vets continue fight,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 13 June 1999.

⁶⁷ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 11 April 2002.

⁶⁸ SCONDVA, *Fifth Report*, Appendix “D”: Dissenting Opinion, p. 27.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

The opposition consensus from the hearings was that the sailors had been treated unfairly after the war, relative to the treatment military veterans had received, largely because of “what is now shown to have been a misguided notion that these men and women economically benefited from the war and were not subject to military or quasi-military discipline.”⁷⁰ The long-held perception that merchant navy personnel did not require the same level of assistance reintegrating into peacetime life had been dispelled during the committee hearings, the opposition said. As the Canadian merchant fleet shrunk to a fraction of its wartime size, due in no small part to the actions of the King and St. Laurent governments, the prospects for post-war employment disappeared.⁷¹ Veterans Affairs soon released revised figures showing there had been more merchant navy personnel than were originally believed, a revelation that further undermines the argument consecutive governments had used to justify the mariners’ exclusion from benefits – that they had not needed postwar re-establishment assistance because they were able to keep their jobs.⁷² While the merchant fleet may have provided employment to 4,500 seamen in the postwar period, these jobs were distributed amongst 18,000 wartime seamen, not 12,000, as was previously believed.

George Baker was named minister of veterans affairs on 3 August – his first ministerial appointment after twenty-five years in Parliament. Like Mifflin, Baker was a Newfoundlander, but one who was far more sympathetic toward the merchant seamen and their cause than his predecessor had been. Although his tenure as minister would

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁷² Statistics Directorate, Corporate Planning Division, Veterans Affairs Canada, *Briefing Note*, 21 September 1999, p. 3.

last only 14 months, it was during that stretch of time that the merchant navy would finally achieve its outstanding goal of compensation. There was also a change of deputy ministers. J.D. Nicholson, who the Coalition believed was even more hostile to their cause than Mifflin had been, was replaced by Larry Murray, a retired RCN vice-admiral.⁷³ In his first meeting with Baker, Murray broached the topic of compensation. Baker, who was on the record as a supporter of compensation for the wartime merchant navy and certain civilian groups, did not require much convincing. He also recognized that it was customary for the prime minister to allow a new cabinet minister some degree of latitude in his new portfolio.⁷⁴ Within a couple of days, the department had changed tack entirely. Brunton said department staff immediately began to revise the cabinet memorandum being written so that the recommendation on the question of compensation went from a “no” to a “yes.”⁷⁵

Baker’s appointment was met with enthusiasm by several merchant navy veterans and their organizations, many of whom contacted him in the days following his appointment.⁷⁶ “We believe we’ll get as good a deal out of him as anybody,” said Captain Tom Brooks of the Company of Master Mariners.⁷⁷ Baker’s appointment, along with an earlier appeal by Cliff Chadderton for merchant mariners to adopt a “statesman-like approach” (an implicit call to refrain from further hunger strikes), helped defuse much of the tension arising from the committee report.⁷⁸ When, in October, Ossie

⁷³ Captain Tom Brooks, Interview by author, 8 April 2002.

⁷⁴ George Baker, Interview by author, 16 April 2002.

⁷⁵ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 15 March 2002.

⁷⁶ George Baker, Interview by author, 16 April 2002.

⁷⁷ Captain Tom Brooks, Interview by author, 10 November 1999.

⁷⁸ National Council of Veteran Associations, *Merchant navy vets advised to take “statesman-like” approach*, 13 July 1999.

MacLean threatened to go on another hunger strike unless the department paid immediate compensation, he was chided publicly by Chadderton and his own organization, the CMNVA, for violating an agreement to stage no public demonstrations until the government responded to the committee report.⁷⁹ MacLean was eventually persuaded to call off his planned strike.

Shortly after Baker's desire to revisit the compensation issue became known, the committee sent him a unanimous, all-party letter, urging him to consider the opposition's specific recommendations as laid out in the committee report. In an appearance before the committee on 18 November, Baker told the committee he was certain every one of the merchant navy veterans' associations would object to any action on the part of the government that neglected the compensation issue.⁸⁰ The "thorniest issue" in Baker's eyes was the question of what constituted fair and equitable compensation.⁸¹ He had spent a few months consulting on an individual basis with military and merchant navy veterans' organizations. Twenty thousand dollars per veteran or survivor remained the position of most of those within the Coalition, while the CMNVA stuck to its sliding-scale proposal of between \$15,000 and \$30,000 per veteran. The department's records of its meeting with the Legion and ANAVETS show that both groups maintained that the payment should not overshadow the \$24,000 paid to the Hong Kong POWs. They therefore recommended a \$5,000 figure for the

⁷⁹ "Veteran mariner vows to starve," *Ottawa Sun*, 11 October 1999; National Council of Veteran Associations, *Merchant navy group and NCVA do not support strike*, 12 October 1999.

⁸⁰ *Evidence* (unedited copy), SCNDVA proceedings, 18 November 1999, 0905.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

merchant navy, with the Legion adding that anything approaching the Hong Kong amount would be “out of Disneyland” and completely unacceptable.⁸²

Another obstacle in the way of compensation was the absence of reliable figures on the number of surviving veterans and spouses. Baker noted there was a “staggering” disparity between the estimates of the veterans associations’ and those of his department. The problem was complicated by the fact that most wartime records had been destroyed by the transport ministry after the war, particularly in the case of the Maritimes. Many of the remaining records were in a form that made a comprehensive tally of individual mariners both difficult and time consuming.⁸³

Baker was also leery of allowing the amount of compensation to be determined by estimates of what individuals could potentially have gained from educational or monetary benefits. He warned that there were countless factors and circumstances that could leave the government open to legal challenges if compensation were awarded on such grounds. Baker noted that many veterans of both the merchant navy and armed forces did not return to Canada in time to take advantage of some of the benefits. Thus, if the government compensated all merchant navy veterans for the loss of specific benefits, Armed Forces veterans who had returned too late to receive certain benefits would surely demand compensation for themselves.⁸⁴ That no politician raised the prospect of offering compensation to military veterans who had not, for whatever

⁸² Veterans Affairs Canada, *Meeting with Veterans’ Associations – Key messages from RCL/ANAVETS*, 5 October 1999.

⁸³ *Evidence* (unedited copy), SCNDVA proceedings, 18 November 1999, 0905.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 0920.

reason, taken up certain post-war benefits suggests such a measure would have been regarded as unrealistic and prohibitively expensive, as well as a distraction from the merchant mariners' claim.

One committee member, New Democratic Party MP Gordon Earle, downplayed the importance of determining the number of veterans and spouses still living. He quite discerningly suggested that the government's concern for numbers stemmed from its desire to allocate a finite pool of funds from which each veteran's compensation would be drawn, thereby limiting the government's total expenditures. The amount of compensation, Earle told Baker, should be judged to be fair regardless of whether it were offered to one veteran or 10,000, and should not be reduced because the number of recipients turned out to be greater than anticipated.⁸⁵ The merchant navy groups and some of the larger veterans' associations echoed Earle's point, and the matter would resurface when the compensation plan was announced. Earle also echoed the sentiments of veterans and their supporters who were becoming increasingly frustrated and impatient with the long and drawn-out process:

...while we're trying to...dig through all the archives and work out the numbers, the numbers are ... (dying) off. And we can resolve this problem in a year or so by just doing nothing or researching and researching until the merchant mariners are dead, and then we don't have a problem.⁸⁶

Baker was asked whether an advance payment could at once be sent to veterans, with the remainder issued once a final figure had been settled upon. He replied that

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 0940.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

although he was sympathetic to a request for quick action, the bureaucratic apparatus that vetted federal expenditures would simply not process “half a submission.”⁸⁷

Two significant decisions were made as a result of Baker’s appearance before the committee. First, several members of the committee let Baker know they believed the merchant navy’s claim to compensation should be considered separately from claims of other wartime civilian support groups who were also seeking equality and redress.⁸⁸ Baker had asked whether these groups, which included the Newfoundland Foresters, Ferry Command aircrew and Red Cross workers, should be considered for recognition as well. Both the Coalition and CMNVA had said that while they supported the other groups’ causes, they did not want them “piggy-backing” on the merchant navy’s fight.⁸⁹ Their stance led at least one newspaper editorial writer in Atlantic Canada to brand them as “selfish.”⁹⁰ Captain Tom Brooks of the Company of Master Mariners later explained that the seamen’s opposition stemmed not from mean-spiritedness but from genuine fears that their bid for compensation would be stalled while the government made legislative changes bringing the civilian groups up to speed with the merchant navy.⁹¹ With a settlement on the horizon, the merchant mariners did not want to lose the momentum they had built up. The second decision was the committee’s refusal to hold further hearings on the question of compensation. Instead, Baker was told to assemble all the relevant veterans’ associations (the Coalition groups, CMNVA, ANAVETS, NCVA and the

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 0930.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 0945, 0955.

⁸⁹ *Evidence*, SCONDVA proceedings, 18 March 1999, 1155.

⁹⁰ “Vets’ stance is selfish,” *Saint John Telegraph-Journal*, 25 October 1999.

⁹¹ Captain Tom Brooks, Interview by author, 8 April 2002.

Legion) for a discussion of an appropriate compensation plan. The department was advised to facilitate such a discussion, but not to take part.⁹²

Yet as it appeared increasingly likely that an end to the protracted compensation fight was at hand, the infighting among veterans' groups became more conspicuous and was reported by the news media. Readers of the *Saint John Times Globe* learned on 26 November 1999 that CMNVA leader Aurele Ferlatte was threatening to sue the CMMVA's Allan MacIsaac over a letter that allegedly libeled him.⁹³ Professor Griezic, who had devoted more than a decade of his time and money toward the merchant navy cause as a consultant to the Coalition, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Ottawa Citizen* questioning why the large veterans' organizations should be involved in deciding on a figure for compensation. The military groups, he argued, had tried to hold back merchant mariners for decades and were now trying to minimize the size of any government payment.⁹⁴ The NCVA hit back with a letter of its own, pointing out that it had not yet suggested any compensation figure, and defending its role and those of the other veterans' organizations in furthering the merchant navy's agenda. It also chided Griezic for publicizing internal squabbles at a time when the government was working toward a settlement.⁹⁵ One newspaper reported that Griezic had been "blackballed" by many in the Coalition for what was seen as unwarranted, counterproductive criticism.⁹⁶

⁹² Patrick O'Brien to George Baker, 29 November 1999.

⁹³ "Bickering risks merchant navy compensation," *Saint John Times Globe*, 26 November 1999.

⁹⁴ Foster Griezic, "Merchant seamen not properly represented," *Ottawa Citizen*, 22 October 1999.

⁹⁵ H. Clifford Chadderton, "Estimate of payments to war veterans was considerably inflated," *Ottawa Citizen*, 5 November 1999.

⁹⁶ "Bickering risks merchant navy compensation," *Saint John Times Globe*, 26 November 1999.

In the eyes of some VAC officials, the clout of the larger veterans' organizations, such as the NCVA and the Legion, was essential to achievement of the merchant seamen's goals, even though some of the organizations had hindered the mariners' efforts in the past. The string of public insults hurled by several individuals and certain episodes of tactless diplomacy (including letters to the editor while sensitive negotiations were underway) made the groups appear "amateurish" in the eyes of some department staffers.⁹⁷ If, as is likely the case, previous ministers and deputy ministers also felt this way, it might help explain why the demands of merchant navy groups were first ignored, and then resisted, for so many years. Baker, however, bluntly told the veterans' groups that if they did not present a united front he would not argue their case before cabinet.⁹⁸ Baker's cabinet colleagues had informed him that unless he could guarantee that the merchant navy groups and other veterans' associations would give their unanimous consent to an agreement, he need not bother asking for the funds.⁹⁹ The government was not prepared to disburse tens of millions of dollars on a compensation plan only to be ambushed with criticisms from holdout groups protesting that the settlement was unfair.

For two days in December, representatives from the Legion, ANAVETS, NCVA, CMNVA, and the Coalition met to work out the details of the compensation scheme. "It was going to be their plan," Baker said afterward, "and we were going to blame it totally on the veterans' organizations if it didn't work. I wasn't going to take the responsibility or the credit."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 15 March 2002.

⁹⁸ "Bickering risks merchant navy compensation," *Saint John Times Globe*, 26 November 1999.

⁹⁹ George Baker, Interview by author, 16 April 2002.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

A joint agreement was signed by representatives of each group on 15 December, recommending a sliding scale package of \$5,000 for one to six months service (or less than one month if killed, captured or disabled), \$10,000 for six to 24 months, and \$20,000 for those who were at sea for more than two years during wartime. “Service” was to be defined by any voyages on which a mariner received the war risk bonus, which meant voyages in “dangerous waters.” Prisoners of war were to receive an additional 20 per cent payment. The benefits were also to be paid to surviving spouses.¹⁰¹

Baker took the plan to cabinet asking for \$65 million to pay for it.¹⁰² He received \$50 million. To allay fears that the compensation would set a precedent opening the government to court challenges, it was referred to as an *ex gratia* payment, symbolizing the value the government placed on the merchant navy’s wartime efforts. “We had to avoid at all costs the word ‘retroactive,’ ” said Brunton.¹⁰³

At a press conference on 1 February 2000, at which the plan was unveiled, Baker announced that the money would be paid in up to two disbursements, to ensure that all eligible individuals received a fair share of the available funds. The first installment would amount to 60 per cent of the total and, so long as funds remained, the remainder would be paid in a second installment.¹⁰⁴ In a letter to the *Ottawa Citizen* published two days later, Professor Griezic denounced the “disgustingly insensitive and hypocritical

¹⁰¹ *Joint Communique*, 15 December 1999. The details were also printed in a press release, available on the War Amps Web site [<http://www.waramps.ca/news/merchant/99-12-15.html>].

¹⁰² Captain Tom Brooks, Interview by author, 8 April 2002.

¹⁰³ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 11 April 2002.

federal government” for what he felt was a tightfisted decision to divide the payment into two parts.¹⁰⁵ Griezic wrote the letter as an individual, however, and not as a Coalition consultant, as he usually signed off. The merchant navy groups were less than enthusiastic about the two-installment scheme but their criticisms were not as caustic or public. Recalling the press conference, Baker said that moments before he made the announcement, the Coalition and CMNVA representatives quietly informed him that they expected the government would pay the full amount, even if it required allocating more funds. During the press conference, reporters inquired whether the government would, in fact, ensure that the veterans received the full amount. “Whatever I said more or less put the Government of Canada on the spot at that point,” said Baker.¹⁰⁶

The department’s statisticians had warned that there might be far more people eligible for the special benefit than the estimates supplied by the merchant navy groups had indicated. The groups had told the government they believed the number of eligible individuals was similar to the membership numbers of their organizations.¹⁰⁷ However, as the department began processing the thousands of applications that arrived, it quickly became apparent that there were many people previously unaccounted for, and that \$50 million would be insufficient to make both payments. Baker has said he believes the merchant mariners used low-ball tactics, deliberately understating the number of people

¹⁰⁴ Veterans Affairs Canada, *Federal Government Reaches Deal With Merchant Navy Veterans*, 1 February 2000; George Baker, Interview by author, 16 April 2002

¹⁰⁵ Foster Griezic, “Marine veterans deserve full loaf, not just the crumbs Baker delivers,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 3 February 2000.

¹⁰⁶ George Baker, Interview by author, 16 April 2002.

¹⁰⁷ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 25 March 2002.

eligible for the benefit. “They knew that if they got us to announce a payment, they’d get the full amount.”¹⁰⁸

As soon as the merchant navy associations learned that there might not be enough money available, they pressured Baker to ask the government for more.¹⁰⁹ Ferlatte, an experienced union representative, was quite forthright in warning the minister of the potential fallout:

. . . I am now deeply concerned that there is a possibility the scale of payments agreed to in our Ottawa meetings are not going to be honoured, and there is a possibility that something less than the payments agreed to may be anticipated. Should that occur, I will not be responsible for the repercussions or consequences due to the failure of (the) government to uphold our agreement, and will be unable to control the backlash.¹¹⁰

To verify an applicant’s eligibility, the department was forced to use thousands of articles of agreement from individual ship voyages in a complicated process that involved determining the identity of each seaman from handwritten signatures. Department staff then attempted to piece together the length of each individual’s service by adding up the lengths of voyages. Inevitably, difficulties arose, and the department had to address individual complaints from veterans who believed they’d been shortchanged on their length of service.¹¹¹ Other significant problems surfaced as well. Some sailors, it turned out, had not been paid the war risk bonus as part of their wages when, in fact, they should have. Others argued that they had made trips through submarine-infested waters that, even if not defined by the government as “dangerous,”

¹⁰⁸ George Baker, Interview by author, 16 April 2002.

¹⁰⁹ Captain Tom Brooks, Interview by author, 8 April 2002.

¹¹⁰ Aurele Ferlatte to George Baker, 24 February 2000.

¹¹¹ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 15 March 2002.

had still put them at great risk.¹¹² There were also complaints from former merchant seamen who had also served in the military for a very short period, rendering them ineligible for both the post-war military benefits and the merchant navy compensation.¹¹³ All of these complaints were dealt with on an ongoing basis, with the deadline for applications and some of the restrictions eventually being loosened.¹¹⁴

Baker secured an additional \$20 million in funding in October, shortly before he graciously stepped down as Newfoundland's representative in cabinet to make room for Brian Tobin's appointment as minister of industry.¹¹⁵ Baker's successor, Ron Duhamel, announced a further \$34.5 million in funding in May 2001, to ensure the government was able to make both payments to the more than 7,000 individuals who were declared eligible under broadened criteria.¹¹⁶ That the federal cabinet relented twice more to allocate additional funds is a testament to the progress the veterans' groups had made in raising the profile of the issue in the eyes of the government and media.

The merchant navy's lengthy campaign holds a number of lessons that could be of use to other groups petitioning the government for redress. First among these is certainly the importance of solidarity. "It proved you can fight for fifty years and get nowhere until you work together," Captain Brooks has said, noting that unity and cooperation yielded both the amended legislation granting them veterans' benefits in

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Captain Tom Brooks, Interview by author, 8 April 2002.

¹¹⁴ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 15 March 2002.

¹¹⁵ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 25 March 2002.

¹¹⁶ Veterans Affairs Canada, *Minister Duhamel Delivers Funding for Merchant Navy Veterans*, 4 May 2001.

1992 and the compensation package in 2000.¹¹⁷ However, the tenuous alliance between the CMNVA and the Coalition quickly dissolved once the benefit package was announced. Having failed to convince the Coalition groups to coalesce under its banner, the CMNVA tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to persuade Baker to recognize them as the sole organization empowered to represent merchant mariners.¹¹⁸ The CMNVA and the Coalition have since been unable to agree on a means of selecting a merchant navy representative to sit on the Canadian War Museum Advisory Council.

Richard Brunton has maintained that “the reason for the decision (to compensate the merchant mariners) can be summed up in two words: George Baker.”¹¹⁹ Cliff Chadderton, who has dealt with every minister of veterans affairs since 1945 has stated that Baker was by far the most committed to his job.¹²⁰ The strong-willed minister was indeed the pivotal element in bringing about a total reversal of government policy on compensation, and in convincing his colleagues in the fiscally-conscious Chrétien government to ensure that enough money was made available to fulfill the government’s pledge. Equally important was the role of Baker and his staff in herding together the quarrelsome merchant navy factions long enough for an agreement to be reached. Relentless agitation and lobbying by the veterans’ groups over the course of the 1990s had resulted in recognition and equal benefits for the merchant navy. However, without the strong support and conviction of the departmental leadership at

¹¹⁷ Captain Tom Brooks, Interview by author, 8 April 2002.

¹¹⁸ Veterans Affairs Canada, *Meeting with Veterans’ Associations – Key messages from NCVA/Cn Merchant Navy Assn*, 6 October 1999; Aurele Ferlatte to George Baker, 4 February 2000.

¹¹⁹ Richard Brunton, Interview by author, 15 March 2002.

¹²⁰ National Council of Veteran Associations, *NCVA statement re: new minister of veterans affairs*, 9 November 1999.

Veterans Affairs, thousands more mariners and their survivors would likely not have lived to receive their share of compensation.