

Mr. ANGUS MacINNIS (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I want to endorse what the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Green) has said, both that part of his speech which was in order and that part which was out of order. I believe that the compensation feature with which we are dealing should be extended beyond the time the order in council came into effect.

Mr. CHEVRIER: Prior to?

Mr. MacINNIS: Prior to. I think the minister will remember a case I brought to his attention in 1943 or 1944. This young sailor in the merchant navy was injured, he was not only crippled but he was paralyzed for life. This boy had a really wonderful physique, but because of his accident he will never walk again. Although the minister and members of his staff made all the inquiries they could when I took up the matter, and although they had the assistance of the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Mackenzie), it was found that nothing could be done for this individual. I am sure that is not a lone case, that there must be many others in the same circumstances. I think it is imperative that consideration be given to making this measure retroactive to 1941 or whatever other time should be specified to take care of all those who were injured in the merchant navy.

Mr. W. A. McMASTER (High Park): Mr. Speaker, I was surprised at what the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Green) said in reference to the number of seamen who have taken advantage of this act. I remember, when this bill was up in the house before and a large department was being created, I stated that I thought one stenographer could look after the whole thing.

Mr. CHEVRIER: I think the hon. gentleman misunderstood what the hon. member for Vancouver South said. He was not referring to those who had taken advantage of this act but to those who had taken advantage of the Civilian War Pensions Act, which is an entirely different thing and shows the danger of going off on a tangent when discussing compensation.

Mr. McMASTER: Regardless of that, I would ask the minister when he replies, now or in committee, to tell us the number of seamen who have taken advantage of the act and to give us the cost of its administration.

Mr. CLARENCE GILLIS (Cape Breton South): Mr. Speaker, first I wish to say that I agree with the two Vancouver members who have preceded me that this act should be made retroactive to the beginning of the war, because a large number of merchant

seamen suffered serious injury during the war and received no compensation. I know of several cases myself and one in particular I brought to the attention of the house, that of a boy who lost a leg and was crippled for life but could not establish a case for pension, and he will not come under this compensation legislation.

I rose primarily to get information. I should like to know if this act applies to Canadian nationals serving on ships of foreign registry. Many hundreds of Canadian nationals who served during the war on ships of foreign registry lost all the benefits that were applicable to Canadians who sailed on Canadian ships. This is something that should be rectified, and I want to be sure that this act is not carrying forward this injustice perpetrated by previous acts brought down by the government.

Second, I wish to know the mechanics of the minister's department with respect to an application for compensation. How is the application to be made and what are the rates that will prevail? Are they the rates of the province in which the seaman has his domicile? I know the rates are pretty well uniform across Canada, but they vary slightly as between provinces. I should like to have these questions answered, and I trust that the minister will give serious consideration to making this legislation retroactive.

Mr. CHEVRIER: I wonder if I might answer those questions after the bill gets second reading.

Mr. C. C. I. MERRITT (Vancouver-Burrard): Mr. Speaker, I want to support the appeal of other members of the opposition requesting the minister to make the act retroactive before 1945. The kind of case to which the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Green) referred of an injury at sea during wartime occasioned by bad weather or black-out is such an obvious reason for awarding compensation to these seamen that I feel that such action can hardly be refused.

I want to say this to the minister—and it arises out of his objection that the hon. member for Vancouver South was out of order in discussing veterans benefits—that even if you do, by this legislation extend workmen's compensation back to 1939 or some date prior to 1945, that is going at the problem of the merchant seamen in piecemeal fashion. To me the really important thing is that we should first establish the principle upon which merchant seamen are to be treated in the period from 1939 to 1945. Once we have established that principle, I do not think we would have this amendment to the act, but