

DVA Studies and Department of Transport Views Annex B

endeavour should be made to encourage the men we have trained to remain at sea."

Who was going to ask for training that had already been refused? The message was that if you didn't want merchant marine training, you didn't deserve anything else. You could go to sea, to become unemployed in about two years, or you could be beached and stranded immediately. Many prisoners of war had the second option imposed, although some had the choice of the first.

On 12 April 1948 Captain Johnson, Supervisor of Nautical Services, wrote to E. D. Wilkes, as follows:

"Merchant seamen are adequately provided for . . . no other nation made like provisions for their merchant seamen.

"In any event a seamen's employment is always of a continuing nature, not disrupted by the exigencies of war, and the question of his rehabilitation in no way compares to the man who joined the Armed forces for the duration of hostilities."

Just over two months later the Veterans Affairs final report stated, as mentioned above, that there was employment for less than 4,000 of 10,000 merchant seamen. Captain Arthur Randles had provided conscientious support to merchant seamen until his resignation 25 February 1946. Captain Johnson, his successor, apparently marched to a different drummer.

The interpretation of 180 days service is another story. There are many examples, but one will suffice. On 21 February 1944, a merchant seaman signed a two year Manning Pool agreement. On 8 May 1945 he was discharged after 440 days. He was only credited with 171 days on Articles and has been refused the Civilian War Allowance (He was indigent). If he had joined the services under similar circumstances, he would have qualified for War Veterans Allowance on time alone, and he would have qualified many times over for his voyages in dangerous waters.