

Supply—Veterans Affairs

June 30, 1949. Because of the time limitation this man is shut out from receiving vocational training even though he may be eligible in all other respects.

Many Canadian ships have been sold to foreign owners. The number of ships being operated has dropped from 43 to 18 which means that a large number of seamen have had to give up their occupation as sailors. Because of the present shipping situation they are not able to get work at their former vocations. The order provides for training only to those under 30 years of age with the restriction of the six months' limit.

I should like to hear from the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Veterans Affairs that they intend to give a more generous interpretation of this order particularly in regard to age and the extension of the time limit for receiving applications.

Mr. Green: I had intended to say a word on this matter and perhaps I can add a little to the submission made by the hon. member for Vancouver East. Just this week I had a return showing the number of merchant seamen who had applied under this order in council and stating what had happened to their applications. This return shows that 770 seamen applied under order in council P.C. 5983. Of that number, 118 were ruled out because they were over the age of 30 years. One hundred applications were withdrawn voluntarily before the cases had been referred by the different district officers to Ottawa. Three hundred and twenty-one applicants were accepted for training. This evening the Minister of Veterans Affairs gave that figure as 317 so there appears to be some slight variation. Nine applications were rejected on the ground that the men had served on ships of a registry other than Canadian. With regard to that I understand that in many cases men were ordered to go to allied ships. If that is so they should not be disqualified on the ground they did not serve on Canadian ships. One hundred and thirty-two were rejected on the ground that they had not signed a manning pool agreement. My understanding is that many of these lads were so young that the manning pool authorities would not sign them up, and hence it is unfair that they should be ruled ineligible. Then others were at sea at the time, and for that reason did not sign a manning pool agreement.

The return also showed 26 had been rejected on the ground they already had employment or a vocation. This evening the Minister of Veterans Affairs said there had been 195 rejected on the ground that they had not left the sea. That is the first time

I have heard of that reason for rejecting them, and I think it is not a very good reason because, as the hon. member for Vancouver East said, the number of men who can get such employment is being reduced steadily.

Another question I had answered showed that there are only about 4,100 officers and men now in the Canadian merchant navy, so that it would seem that these men, who will probably have to leave the sea, should be allowed to get vocational training.

In any event, the figures show that less than half of the number who applied were able to qualify. I suggest to both ministers that the age limit should be lifted. I do not believe there should be any restriction imposed for that reason. The war service these men rendered was some years ago, and if they were twenty-five at the time they went into the merchant navy they are now too late to get vocational training. Of course with the lifting of the age limit there should also be a lifting of the time limit for application. Quite wide discretion is given to the departments to rule on these applications, and that should be sufficient without imposing an age limit or a time limit.

Apparently they can only take the type of vocational training approved by the Department of Transport. I brought up a case the last time these estimates were considered. It was the case of a man who wanted to get a type of training that the Department of Veterans Affairs would give, but the Department of Transport would not approve of it. Since that time the Department of Transport have given in and now this man is going to get the training that the Department of Veterans Affairs would have given him all the time. Training actually comes under the Department of Veterans Affairs, and I suggest if they have a course of training these men should be able to take that course.

Really the order in council in question, P.C. 5983, is based on the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. The order in council itself refers to the Department of Veterans Affairs Act, so that the Department of Veterans Affairs is directly responsible here. The vocational training is given because of the provisions of the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Section 5 of that act gives the department power not only to help men who served in the armed forces but also reads in part:

... any person who has otherwise engaged in pursuits relating to war, and of any other person designated by the governor in council.

Therefore there is power under the Department of Veterans Affairs Act for that department to give training to merchant navy