

OFFICIAL RESPONSES

ANNEX E

5. Officially, the opportunities went to returning servicemen. Few wartime merchant seamen from prisoner of war camps found their future at sea. In fact even career seamen encountered a bleak and short lived future afloat. Hal Banks, of the Seafarers' International Union, who was ineligible for entry into Canada because of a criminal record, came in with government sanction in 1949. The first companies he signed up were Canada Steamship Lines and the East Coast shipping companies. He used considerable violence to break the Canadian Seamen's Union and denied thousands of wartime seamen the right to work with his "Do Not Ship" lists. The deep sea fleet declined rapidly. At the same time, shipowners were placing their ocean going ships under flags of convenience and replacing Canadian crews with lower paid foreign nationals.

6. In Germany, all merchant seamen were treated as prisoners of war under the Geneva Convention, but a radio officer repatriated from Camp 1B, Kawasaki, Japan, recounted the Japanese decision thus, "You merchant seamen are going to be lower than the military, whether they are a private or whatever they are in the military they are higher than the merchant seamen."

7. After liberation, the same radio officer was hospitalized by the Americans, and later brought to San Francisco with some of the Hong Kong veterans. He found the Americans friendly, generous, hospitable and compassionate. They conducted free tours and even handed out a few five dollar bills. His first encounter with a Canadian was enroute in Honolulu where a Canadian naval officer visited his sick bed and said, "You haven't any money, do you need any money?" He said, "Yes", and was given \$10 that was later deducted from his pay.