

the bar of Ontario for the work of these two outstanding members of the judiciary of Ontario.

Item agreed to.

Demobilization and reconversion—

510. To provide for expenses in connection with prize courts, \$10,000.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: To what extent was any action taken by prize courts in the past year?

Mr. ILSLEY: There were no expenditures in 1946 up to September 30. I believe that is the latest information we have. However, some money is expended in some years. These are the expenditures in certain past years:

1940-41	\$9,697.74
1941-42	5,757.09
1942-43	nil
1943-44	nil
1944-45	nil
1945-46	5,240.23

The main estimates were prepared at the end of 1946, and there were no expenditures up to September 30 of that year. This is the usual \$10,000 vote to cover possible expenditures for 1947-48.

Mr. HACKETT: I believe it was when the Volstead Act was in effect that the department had the greatest amount of work of this kind. In those days ships sailed for Mexico seven times a day from Windsor.

Item agreed to.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

402. Departmental administration, \$544,000.

Mr. MERRITT: Mr. Chairman, I wish to raise the question of the bringing of merchant seamen who served during the war under veterans benefits. The minister has had representations made to him several times already during the session, so that on this occasion I shall state my case briefly.

The committee will be aware that the merchant seamen who served in Canada's merchant marine during the war received very few of the benefits which were awarded to the veterans of the war. For instance, their benefits in respect of educational training were limited to vocational training, if they were to continue at sea. Their benefits under the Veterans' Land Act were available only to those merchant seamen who had suffered disability during service.

In all those respects the merchant seamen were not treated as veterans. Tonight I am asking the minister to subscribe to the principle that merchant seamen were veterans. I am not saying to him that there should not

[Mr. McMaster.]

be differences between the treatment accorded the men who served in the armed forces and those who served as merchant seamen, because the conditions of service were different, and there may be some cases in which there should be slight differences. However, it is my intention to ask the minister to change from the principle under which merchant seamen have some veterans' rights arising from their war services, but with those rights definitely limited, to the principle that they have all rights, less those it is necessary to except in order to bring about fairness and equity among all those who served.

I have seen various figures quoted as to the number who served in the merchant marine during the war. One set of figures shows that there were 1,400 in the merchant marine in 1939. One of my colleagues places the figure at 1,000. My figures indicate further that in 1945 there were 12,000 in the merchant marine. Therefore eighty-eight per cent of those who served during the war were temporary merchant seamen for the duration of the war only, and who had not chosen the sea as their career. If evidence were needed, I believe that is sufficient to indicate that their service was a war service, and their intention in going to sea was to contribute to the war effort.

The minister knows that many of them are young chaps. Some are right out of school, and their normal education was interrupted by their desire to serve their country during the war. May I give one illustration of the nature of the service they performed. A spokesman for the group now attending the university of British Columbia got in touch with me and told me there were eighteen ex-merchant seamen studying at that university. He pointed out how members of the armed forces in much larger numbers were receiving educational benefits, while the ex-merchant seamen had to work their way through university. I asked him how many of the eighteen were actually in a convoy subjected to torpedo attack during the war. He did not know exactly, but found out and telephoned me later to the effect that fifteen of the eighteen had been in convoys which had suffered torpedo attack and in which ships had been lost.

I believe that gives a good indication of the nature of the service performed, and the risks run. The two sets of figures I have given can leave little doubt that this was a war service and should be treated as such.

I have in my hand a statement by one of the officers of the merchant navy veterans