

was running short then. We had to get our sub-committees organized. We had to bring our report in. Unfortunately we did not include merchant seamen. I agree entirely with the hon. member for Royal and the other members who have spoken, that we intended to include merchant seamen. What I say to the minister tonight is this. It does not make any difference whether it is the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Department of Transport which corrects the wrong, but one of the departments ought to do so. Since it is within the power of the Department of Transport, and since these people are peculiarly the charge of the Department of Transport, I think in all fairness the Department of Transport ought to correct the wrong.

Mr. CHEVRIER: I wish someone would clear up in my mind, and to my satisfaction, whose responsibility this is. When we had a discussion on this matter the other evening it was clearly stated, from the other side of the house and by more than one member, that this was a responsibility, not of transport, but of veterans reestablishment and benefits. This evening the hon. member for Spadina says that he thinks it is the responsibility of the Department of Transport. I am not trying to escape my responsibility, whatever it may be; but I am face to face with the position that the merchant seamen have not been considered as veterans in the same light and to the same extent as members of the armed services. If they had been, I take it that they would have been given the same benefits. Why? I have put on the record some of the reasons, and I do not want to repeat them tonight. But it is a fact that in the United Kingdom—and I think the position is the same in the United States, although I am not sure—they receive no reestablishment benefits. I am not arguing that we should do the same thing, but there is at least an example of what is done in that country. The hon. member for Spadina referred to his interpretation of the bill which was introduced by me last year concerning compensation for merchant seamen, and I shall not dispute what he said in that respect. That may have been his impression. I believe his interpretation may not have been inaccurate, but since that was done several other benefits were established to assist the merchant seamen. There was the act to which the hon. gentleman referred, granting compensation to merchant seamen for injuries, accident and death from 1945 on. Then the Minister of Labour brought in an amendment to the Unemployment Insurance Act, providing certain unemployment benefits for members of that group. Then vocational training was

provided for members of the merchant navy, in their own calling, though it is true it did not go nearly as far as some hon. members would have wished. Then representations were made that they be included under the civil service preference, and my colleague the Secretary of State may have something to say in that respect.

I just wish to point out that the matter has been carefully considered. The other evening, during the discussion of the act to amend the Merchant Seamen's Compensation Act, the Minister of Veterans Affairs and I gave an undertaking that sympathetic and careful consideration would be given to the possibility of amending the Civilian War Pensions Act to cover cases prior to 1945. My colleague gave careful consideration to that point; he consulted with his officers, and they came to the conclusion that the position could not be met by an amendment to that act. It was stated that the act provided for ten different groups of civilians who served during the period of world war II, and in every instance entitlement to pension was conceded only when the disability or death was the result of enemy action or counter-action against the enemy, or the direct result of war service, and consequently to make provision for the position which was referred to at the time would be a serious departure in principle, because it would provide for claims which it is definitely stated would not be the result of direct enemy action or counter-action. That brought the matter down to the position discussed the other evening on the Merchant Seamen's Compensation Act, namely, that in view of the fact that this act was set up at the expense of the ship owners, both as to the cost of compensation and the cost of administration, it would be unjustifiable at this stage to ask the ship owners to pay into the fund money for accidents arising from 1939 to 1945.

Mr. BROOKS: That really is not what we are discussing. We are discussing the rehabilitation benefits, which is something entirely different.

Mr. CHEVRIER: I agree with the hon. gentleman. That is what I discussed a moment ago in reply to the hon. member for Spadina, when I stated the things that were done in the way of benefits for merchant seamen following the introduction of the act of 1946. That brought me to the statement made by my colleague the Minister of Veterans Affairs that he would give sympathetic consideration to amending the Civilian War Pensions Act to cover cases such as those brought up by the hon. gentleman, and I am stating that