

that position by the fact that the provinces do the same thing. The provinces have compensation for merchant seamen, and what do they do? They do not make their legislation retroactive. I cannot at the moment think of all the provinces which have compensation for merchant seamen, but I know British Columbia has.

Mr. GREEN: They did not have it until 1944 or 1945, did they?

Mr. CHEVRIER: It was quite recent; but they did not make it retroactive, and their reason for not doing so is the same reason as I have given.

Mr. GREEN: It was not their responsibility to look after the merchant navy men.

Mr. CHEVRIER: It was their responsibility to look after merchant seamen within their own province. The legislation we enacted last year had nothing to do with merchant seamen within the confines of British Columbia or Ontario or Quebec. It had to do with merchant seamen on foreign vessels and in certain waters mentioned in the act. So if the provinces came to that conclusion, having had a great deal more experience than we have had in regard to workmen's compensation, I think we can take a leaf out of their book.

Mr. GREEN: Is it not a fact that the provinces cover only the men who are in the coastal trade? What we have been complaining about today is the treatment meted out to the men who were crossing the Atlantic or the Pacific, in the war areas. They are no responsibility of the provinces.

Mr. CHEVRIER: I agree; but that does not detract from the force of the argument I am attempting to make, which is that if the provinces decided against making compensation retroactive, whether it be for merchant seamen or whether it be for workmen in industry or elsewhere, they must have had reasons for it; and the reasons were those I gave. That is why we have followed the same course, because it would be impractical and impossible to establish, by means of evidence today, claims which might have arisen prior to the time the regulations came into force.

Mr. GREEN: The pensions people had the same problem after the last war.

Mr. CHEVRIER: The hon. member made a statement which I certainly think he did not mean, when he said that Canada had treated its merchant seamen shamefully. I am surprised that the hon. gentleman would make such a statement.

Mr. GREEN: I will repeat it right now.

Mr. CHEVRIER: All right; I will prove to the hon. gentleman that it is not so. Perhaps I should not say that; I may not be able to prove it to his satisfaction—

Mr. GREEN: I do not think you can.

Mr. CHEVRIER: —but I intend to place on record what Canada has done for her merchant seamen, and I think the house will agree that we have gone a long distance in coming to their assistance. If Canada has not done more my hon. friend has a share of the responsibility.

Mr. GREEN: Why?

Mr. CHEVRIER: It is not only the government that has the responsibility, because, if I understand the matter aright, a committee was set up, the veterans committee—

Mr. MERRITT: You do not understand it rightly.

Mr. GREEN: You do not understand a thing about it, then.

Mr. CHEVRIER: Let me go on, and we shall see whether or not I do. The director of merchant seamen was asked by that committee for his advice. He was asked what was being done for merchant seamen, and he wrote the acting chairman giving him a list of the benefits that were granted. He sat in that committee for some time waiting to be called to give evidence, but he was not called.

Mr. BROOKS: Was it not understood in the veterans affairs committee that the Department of Transport would bring in a bill which would give merchant seamen treatment commensurate with that given other branches of the service? For that reason the veterans affairs committee did not press for those benefits. That was our understanding in the committee.

Mr. CHEVRIER: There was certainly no such understanding as far as I was concerned.

Mr. GREEN: But there was in the committee.

Mr. CHEVRIER: I was never approached, nor was I ever told, either directly or indirectly, that was the understanding. I want to make that quite clear.

Mr. BROOKS: If the minister will go back over the evidence given before that committee I think he will find we had an understanding to that effect.

Mr. CHEVRIER: I am not denying that there may have been an understanding, but I