are so generous. The explanatory note to section 4 of the bill states that the naval service benevolent trust fund is used to relieve distress and promote the well-being of members or ex-members of the naval forces of Canada or their dependents.

One of the objections raised is that many of the men in the service today would not have contributed anything toward the actions which produced these prizes because they are new recruits who came into the navy since the cessation of hostilities. It is little use to continue this argument which has been continued at some length. The minister and the government have made up their minds to distribute this money in the manner indicated. I repeat that I regret that they have reached that decision as I consider it unfair and breaking an ancient tradition which might well be preserved. I submit it would have been much better to have taken a little time and distributed the amounts accruing to the individual men. Therefore I am opposed to this bill.

Mr. E. D. Fulton (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I wish to indicate that I am also opposed to this bill for the reasons outlined by the hon. member for Nanaimo (Mr. Pearkes). However, one thing strikes me particularly about this matter and that is that whereas the minister has pointed out that in the United Kingdom it has been decided not to continue the distribution of prize money in any wars which may subsequently take place, they are going on to distribute all prize moneys which accrued as a result of the war just concluded. We in Canada have gone a step beyond that and have decided not only not to distribute prize money in any subsequent war in which we may be involved but not to distribute prize money of the war of 1939-45.

That being the case I would have expected to find in the bill some concrete provision that hereafter no prize money would be payable, that notwithstanding whatever source it might come from in the future no prize money would be distributed to Canadian sailors or members of the air force. There is no such provision in the bill. It seems to me that that should have been made clear in the legislation so that men who join the forces in the future will know exactly where they stand. To me that makes the bill twice as objectionable as it otherwise would be.

We are legislating to lay down a principle to be applied now and in the future and are also denying to a group of men what would otherwise have been theirs. It seems to me that the bill is so utterly devoid of principle that it becomes nothing more or less than—

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Theft.

[Mr. Pearkes.]

Mr. Fulton: I was going to use that word but the hon. member for Greenwood has supplied it for me. The minister has said that it is difficult to get in touch with these men to find out how they feel about it and so the government decided to take the law into their own hands and pass legislation which has a retroactive effect, which is always objectionable. It is particularly objectionable in this case because it denies to men who served through the war money, small though it may have been, which they felt they were entitled to by virtue of their service and the vessels which they captured. I think this is a most objectionable and fraudulent piece of legislation, and I am opposed to it.

Mr. Ray Thomas (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a word in protest against the bill. As the hon. member for Nanaimo (Mr. Pearkes) said, I feel that no organization is more deserving of this prize money than the benevolent funds if it is not going to be distributed individually. The amount of money involved for each individual would probably be very small indeed. Nevertheless it is the principle involved. In future wars it will not be distributed individually, and possibly it should not have been during the past war as the minister has said that no assurance was given that it would be. On the other hand, no statement was made to the men that it would not be distributed, and they expected it and looked forward to it as a matter of tradition and right. After they have waited for some word about this matter for the past five years, the government has now decided that it will not give it to them. I honestly believe that the whole matter of awarding prize money is out of date, but nevertheless during the period of the past war every sailor in the Canadian navy had a right to expect the payment of prize money in line with the traditions of the navy. If he was not going to get it he should have been told prior to his enlistment. If the bill dealt only with future wars I might be in agreement with it, but I do not believe in taking their prize money away five years after they have earned it—something that has been traditionally theirs.

Mr. James Sinclair (Coast-Capilano): Mr. Speaker, in view of the remarks of the last two speakers I think I should present the opposite point of view. I do not pretend to speak for the air force but I know the feelings of my colleagues with whom I served in that force. Their general feeling is that the method proposed by the bill is the only sensible way to distribute this prize money. The practice of distributing prize money goes back to the days of the privateers when crews were enlisted forcibly by letters of mark. These men were sent abroad and they