

War Veterans' Allowance Act

veterans allowance board be empowered to consider as eligible widows who would be qualified had the veteran made application during his lifetime. I do not think this house will regard that as being an unreasonable request.

The deletion of section 8 of the War Veteran's Allowance Act has been long overdue and is more than welcome as is the raising of the equity in a home from \$6,000 to \$8,000. I sincerely hope that in cases where a veteran actually owns his home and does not merely have an equity in it the assessed value will be taken and not the market value.

An hon. Member: That is what it is.

Mr. Irwin: I believe that former merchant seamen and T-124 agreement veterans should come under the provision of this act. They are in the same category as the men who never got out of Britain. They offered their services with no strings attached and I fail to see why they should suffer now.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind hon. members of this house of the immortal words of Laurence Binyon:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left
grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years
condem.

At the going down of the sun and in the
morning

We will remember them.

At this time, on the eve of Remembrance Day, let us remember them by adequately looking after those who fought and served in that noble company.

Mr. E. J. Broome (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, I am glad I received the applause hon. members have just accorded me before I started speaking rather than after I had concluded. I would like first of all to congratulate the minister on this most excellent legislation. I hope his head has not been turned by the compliments he has been receiving from all quarters of this house. The minister has moved with the utmost of speed to correct manifest injustice and, in fact, certain cases of rank discrimination for which he deserves the thanks of all veterans and all those who are concerned with the interests of veterans.

This legislation is to a great degree consistent with the brief of the Canadian Legion which hon. members received today, a brief which by its thoroughness and its temperate and considered language should recommend itself for study to all hon. members of this house.

I am pleased that we have been assured that at the next session a standing committee on veterans affairs will be established because I believe there must be time provided

to consider this matter and to hear from interested bodies before the next amendment to this legislation is brought forward.

I was keenly interested in the remarks made by the previous speaker, the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond (Mr. Irwin). Perhaps this is to be expected because he comes from a coastal point and I am from a port city and we who are close to the sea have the interests of our merchant seamen very much at heart.

I would like for the benefit of this house to read an excerpt taken from the *The Legionary* of May, 1942, which was written by the Hon. P. J. Cardin who was then minister of transport:

The courage and devotion to duty of the merchant seaman has been officially recognized and the merchant marine—or the merchant navy as it is now called by gracious consent of His Majesty the King—has now been accorded the distinction of becoming known as the fourth arm of the fighting forces. In an order-in-council passed last year, authorizing the formation of a wartime branch under a director of merchant seamen and coming under my jurisdiction as minister of transport, this fact is written in the official records as follows:

"The merchant marine, on which our seaborne commerce depends, is under present conditions virtually an arm of our fighting services, and the provision of merchant seamen, their training, care and protection is essential to the proper conduct of the war, and vitally necessary to the keeping open of the sea lanes on which the successful outcome of the present conflict so largely depends."

As I said, this was written in 1942 and we are now in 1957. I managed to dig up the case record of one merchant seaman. His service included action at Gibraltar, Naples, Southern France, Bizerte, Toulon and Marseilles and while aboard H.M.R.T. *Athlete* from July 10, 1944 to January 20, 1945 his ship took part in the assault landings in the south of France, being employed in towing of assault ships and craft off the beaches.

Before I left to come to Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, I visited one of my constituents who had served in the North sea on a drifter. He was honourably discharged; he was unfit for further service because of rather severe privation he had suffered when his ship was sunk. He became a fisherman and began to lose the sight of one eye. His skipper would not let him go to sea again because he was a danger to himself and to his ship. When I saw him he had been unemployed for a year.

I was told of the case of another man who walked 40 miles in Newfoundland to enlist but he had tuberculosis of the spine. Therefore, he went to sea as a merchant seaman. His ship was sunk and he was the only small-boat sailor on board. For 22 hours he handled the tiller. When they were picked up by a United States ship he complained of pains in his back and he has suffered from disability caused by this experience.