

## OFFICIAL RESPONSES

## ANNEX E

16. Many servicemen found the war an escape from the depression. On their return, they were invited to many benefits. They were offered higher education and preference in government employment. Even merchant seaman on disability pension were not offered either of these benefits. The Veterans Affairs Special Committee referred to instances where ex-merchant seamen in the Civil Service were let out to give the jobs to Veterans. The offer, to a disabled merchant navy officer repatriated from Japan in a weak and debilitated condition, of a job in a labour camp was an incredible reward for his three years of slave labour, abuse, and consequent illness. We don't even treat our illegal immigrants that harshly! It is small wonder that some merchant seamen wore their "MN" (Merchant Navy) badges upside down to signify "NW" (Not Wanted). The Japanese view of merchant seamen prevailed.

17. The Department of Transport wanted to reserve seamen for Transport's vision of a deep sea fleet. Senior officers and career seamen were deluded into thinking that they had a promising career ahead. That promise faded quickly, but in the mean time it robbed thousands of seamen of the leadership needed to show their need for education and reestablishment ashore.

18. Merchant seamen did get a number of benefits. However, the Honourable Lionel Chevrier, then Minister of Transport, put it this way in "Canada's Merchant Seamen", Kings Printer, 1945, "Such benefits should not be of a nature which would encourage Seamen to leave the industry at the end of the war to seek employment in other fields . . ." [The kiss of death, bestowed with gratitude].