

OFFICIAL RESPONSES

ANNEX E

35.07 "I trust I have addressed all of your concerns regarding current legislation. Although the service requirements and benefits differ for civilians from those for veterans, this does not in any way detract from Canada's gratitude for the dedicated service of merchant seamen in aid of the war effort."

35.07.01 *As the Minister of Transport said in 1945, "The government has shown itself fully sensible of the importance and valour of the gallant men who man our ships and subject to the limitations imposed by the civilian status of the Merchant Navy will continue to ameliorate their conditions." The Minister then thought he was providing careers at sea. The opportunities didn't materialize, and only the gratitude remained.*

36. *Merchant seamen ex-prisoners were unworthy by definition. There are too many whose shortened life expectancy, and blighted careers have already led them to inadequate terminal care and paupers graves, as well as leaving dependants living in poverty. They deserve to go to their graves with dignity and respect.*

37. The United States showed the way early in 1945 when they arranged repatriation on exchange for their smaller number of shorter term merchant seamen from Europe. Then in 1988, they showed the way by granting all veterans' benefits to merchant seamen.

38. So much for 700 Canadian man-years as prisoners of war! Merchant seamen prisoners returned without a military halo, and their hardships and sacrifices were deemed unworthy because of it. They had faced the enemy in a hostile sea and on a hostile shore; for many Canada became just another hostile shore.