

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, July 9, 1998

Committee Room 1

Canadian Merchant Marines Navy Veterans Association

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VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Murray Scott (Chair)
Hon. Wayne Gaudet
Hon. Russell MacKinnon
Charles MacDonald
Frank Corbett
Peter Delefos
William Estabrooks
Gordon Balser
James DeWolfe

[Frank Corbett was replaced by Kevin Deveau.]
[Peter Delefos was replaced by Donald Chard.]

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

Rodney Caley
Hansard Editor

WITNESSES

Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans Association

Capt. (Ret'd) Earle Wagner
Acting Chair

Capt. (Ret'd) John Samson
Secretary, NS and PEI Region

Roy Thorne
Service Officer



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, JULY 9, 1998

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

1:00 P.M.

CHAIRMAN
Mr. Murray Scott

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will call this Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to order. I will begin by introducing myself. My name is Murray Scott and I am the Chairman of this committee. Maybe the other members would like to introduce themselves to our guests.

[The members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you gentlemen like to introduce yourselves?

CAPTAIN EARLE WAGNER: My name is Earle Wagner. I am acting as chairman.

CAPTAIN JOHN SAMSON: John Samson.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Welcome, gentlemen. Do you both have a presentation to make?

MR. WAGNER: We feel that to get the full concept of this, the understanding of it, it should be read because, as you know, the planning of this whole thing was a little uptight and we just finished the copying this morning. We had to research it on the weekend but the whole brief plus the annex to it is very relevant. So if you would have time, it would probably take 25 minutes but I think it is important, really. The annex part of it sums up the whole thing by one of our special advisors who is Professor Griezic from Carleton University and he has been a special advisor for us for at least a decade.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, sir, you can start off.

MR. WAGNER: Well, good afternoon, gentlemen. We expect to have two other committee members. Unfortunately, they didn't make it. I would say that Captain John Samson and myself, then, will carry on in their absence.

Just to give you a little brief overview of what the Canadian Merchant Navy Association is and who we represent, we have 2,000 members across Canada who are all veterans of the Canadian or Allied Merchant Navy during World War II. How many are living, we are not sure and statistics were always in question anyway, particularly with regard to Merchant Navy veterans even in wartime.

The context of the brief is this. The brief is presented by both Captain John Samson and myself, Captain Earle S. Wagner, in the absence of any known official history of the Canadian Merchant Navy's role in World War II. Both of the above are veterans of World War II, members of the Company of Master Mariners of Canada, and the Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans Association.

Canadians of many walks of life, including many veteran mariners, wanted to serve their country during World War II. They had a choice of joining the army, navy, air force or Merchant Navy. Many young men volunteered to enter the service either willingly or being subject to military call-up. Although Canada's Merchant Navy initially started small in 1939, it grew into a major Maritime fleet by 1945 with most being modern ships.

During World War II, an estimated 12,000 Canadians served in the Merchant Navy. Most Canadians served as crew members on Canadian ships but a number volunteered and served on various Allied merchant vessels. They served in various capacities such as seamen, firemen, oilers, victualling staff, deck, engineer and radio officers, including gunners aboard merchant vessels so equipped.

Ships at times sailed independently but most were grouped in convoys escorted by naval vessels. Ships in convoy were confined to their space in columns and the entire convoy travelled at the speed of the slowest member. Ships in those days were largely built in the inter-war years and time had taken its toll. The ships were relatively large, under-powered and hence slow. They ranged from cumbersome oil tankers through cargo vessels down to the old "tramp" steamers that had been plying the world's oceans before that last war to end all wars, which was World War I.

The ships carried the lifeblood of the Allied armies in Great Britain and later in Europe. Explosives, fuel, oil, gasoline, food, tanks, airplanes, iron ore for Britain's hungry steel furnaces, bacon and beans, butter and flour for the beleaguered British civilian population, it all had to be transported by sea from North America to Europe and the Canadian Merchant Mariner was there to man the ships.

Most merchant vessels were fitted with an obsolete breech-loading deck gun, fitted to a steel platform welded to the stern deck or deckhouse of the ship. The purpose of this antique, cast off by the Royal Navy or the American Navy as too old, was to act as a defensive measure as the merchantman turned and ran away from a surfaced U-boat or a German surface raider.

Manned by a few members of DEMS - that is defensive equipped merchant ships - and supplemented by somewhat heroic - or maybe naive is a better word - members of the crew, these were the only defensive measures these ships would ever know, outside of protection afforded the convoy by the navy and occasionally aircraft of the RAF or RCAF when in range.

Ships sailing alone or in convoy were subject to many hazards. Locked into rigid columns and rows and spread for miles over the rolling Atlantic, their greatest enemy were Donitz's grey wolves, the dreaded U-boats. Charging through the thin lines of escorts in the early years of the war, the U-boats tore into the orderly columns of deeply-laden merchantmen and firing while still on the surface, sent torpedo after torpedo into the helpless columns of ships.

Closer to Europe, long-range German FW-200 Condors bombed and strafed merchant vessels and a variety of aircraft-dropped or ship-laid mines could provide the coup-de-grace to an unsuspecting merchant vessel with only seconds or a few minutes to scramble over the side before the mortally cripple slid beneath the surface.

The weather and the sea were traditional enemies too. Gales, storms, ice, fog, rain and snow resulted in ship collisions, stranding, foundering, grounding, sinking and the loss of life. Combined with the close proximity of ships in convoy formations, complex zig-zag patterns governed by the clock, weather could create a seemingly never-ending nightmare of black looming shapes in the dark, strident blasts of whistles and sirens and when nerves were stretched to their breaking point, collisions occurred that left ships limping cripples, fodder for the trailing U-boats and their guns or torpedoes.

When attacked, the merchant ship was lucky if she ever got a shot off in her own defence. Later armed with light, but obsolete machine-guns or perhaps a couple of 20 mm Oerlikons if they were extremely lucky, this fire was usually ignored by the U-boats who, after all, were normally just a fleet darker patch on a coal-black sea, covered by an overcast and dismal night sky.

Later, with their ship in flames or sinking beneath their feet, these same men tried to save their lives in a sea of burning oil in a North Atlantic storm, from the decks of their doomed ship, struggling to man and lower lifeboats or rafts, many a man was injured, burned or lost his life. Indeed, in the case of ammunition ships and some iron ore ships, never a trace of a member of the crew was ever found, vaporized by the explosion or sucked beneath the waves before they could struggle to the open decks.

It may be interesting to compare some statistics of Canadian merchant vessels with those of the Royal Canadian Navy and personnel of both services during the last war. The RCN lost 24 ships in World War II. The Merchant Navy lost 67. The RCN had 95,000 personnel by 1945. The Merchant Navy had 12,000 personnel. There were 1,990 men killed in the RCN and

in the Merchant Navy there were 1,600 Canadian and Newfoundland men killed, that is in the records of the Book of Remembrance.

From these basic statistics, it can be seen that the loss of life of Canadian merchant seamen, proportionally, was far greater than that of the RCN. Both Merchant Marine and the RCN were present in the front line actions during the vicious struggle at sea that is now known as the Battle of the Atlantic. Most damning from these figures is that the greatest loss of life in any Allied operation during World War II proportionately was suffered by the Canadian Merchant Navy.

No peace, post-war. After the cessation of hostilities in 1945 the Canadian Government enacted legislation for the rehabilitation of ex-service personnel. Most Acts and regulations benefit veterans of the three Armed Forces. Programs for retraining and education permitted Armed Forces veterans to attend upgrading courses in high school, technical schools, and universities. The one glaring exception was the Merchant Navy, whose members were disallowed this privilege.

The government early in the post-war period identified a sufficient number of ships for the Canadian Merchant Navy veterans to continue a career at sea, but a few years later the ships, then in private hands, were either sold or flagged out to other countries. Seamen and officers alike lost their jobs overnight. Careers were destroyed and many lacking the training or education for integration into Canada's booming economy fell by the wayside, trapped in menial, dead end jobs.

For those few Merchant Navy veterans employed in the federal Civil Service it was soon made apparent that promotions would be difficult, if not impossible. The Veterans Preference Act was for veterans. The Act excluded merchant seamen because they were classified as civilians. As a consequence, many merchant seamen of the post-war era were trapped in the lowest end of the employment ladder and were forced to remain there.

Another roadblock over the years that prevented the recognition or assistance required by ex-Merchant Navy veterans was the lack of a special group or organization to understand their problems and represent them nationally and in Ottawa. The Royal Canadian Legion has accepted them as full members but they did very little to represent them. Indeed, in 1966-67 there were so many letters to the editor of Legion Magazine concerning the plight of merchant seamen, the editor banned further correspondence on the subject and refused to print anything further on the matter. As a result many ex-merchant mariners who belonged to the legion felt that they were indeed second-class legionnaires. However, during the past few years this attitude has changed and the legion now supports their cause.

The lack of recognition across Canada is apparent too, unfortunately. On such occasions as Annual Veterans Parades, Remembrance Day services, Battle of the Atlantic

Sunday services, up until the 1990's there was a total omission of the role of the Merchant Navy and, most disgraceful of all, except for one time when the mother of a fallen merchant seaman was chosen as the Silver Cross Mother, Merchant Navy veterans have not been recognized or even allowed to take part alongside their naval comrades in the memorial services held at the National War Memorial in Ottawa. There is no official history of the Canadian Merchant Navy. The lack of data, omission of historical facts about the role of Canada's Merchant Navy during World War II, leaves an aching void for future generations. Only prompt actions by Maritime historians can resolve this national disgrace. Unfortunately, all efforts have been fruitless and only recently has some lip service been paid to the Merchant Navy's role.

Merchant Navy veterans as a group were few. There was no organization or association championing their cause. They presented too small a voting block for any politician of the time to seriously consider. Responses from the Department of Veterans Affairs to queries and presentations were mostly negative. The end result has been a lack of recognition, the least amount of benefits accorded any other group of World War II veterans.

It should be noted that some 1,700 Merchant Navy veterans or their dependents now receive the Civilian War Allowance. The average age of these veterans is 78 years. Many, through no fault of their own, were unable to provide for themselves and their families. Causes were being unemployable through lack of necessary skills, lack of employment, and being locked into low paying, menial jobs that robbed them of their pride and what they had done for their country. The government estimates 2,200 Merchant Navy veterans are still alive in Canada.

All of these could be attributed to a lack of government assistance needed in those long lost, younger years for specialized training, improved job skills, better jobs, and the chance for upward mobility in the work place. In turn this would have provided more income, a better standard of living, and the opportunity to provide pension income in later years rather than needing civilian war pensions.

The least we could do now for this dwindling veterans' group is to enact legislation which would help remaining survivors or their dependents live a better life in their remaining years. Some who survived suffered from physical and psychological scars for the rest of their lives. Some died prematurely from the effects of warfare. Their country, for whom they served at wartime, either by neglect, uncaring or omission did not provide adequate rehabilitation assistance with many ending up in low-paying jobs with little hope; unemployed, enduring a low standard of living; and eventually subsisting on meagre pensions.

The Department of Veterans Affairs still insists merchant seamen were not legal veterans or active servicemen. Departmental responses over the years to queries about recognition and equality of benefits are consistently negative. It seems that natural attrition will eventually resolve the issue.

Other organizations or individuals such as the Prisoner of the War Association, Gordon Olmstead, President; the Master Mariners of Canada, Professor Foster J. K. Griezic, G. S. Robertson and Bill Ridell have researched and presented excellent briefs or articles identifying Merchant Navy veterans problems and how to resolve them. Even the Royal Canadian Legion, at their convention in Vancouver in 1990 supported merchant seamen.

In 1990, the Senate of Canada's Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, chaired by Senator Jack Marshall received submissions from various veterans groups and published a report, *It's Almost Too Late*. It outlined inequities and omissions about World War II merchant seamen, and recommended recognition and full access to all benefits equal to other service veterans.

Senator Marshall's report was presented to the Commons parliamentary committee on Veterans Affairs. The Commons committee heard well-researched facts, specifically from Gordon Olmstead and the Master Mariners of Canada, which revealed glaring discrimination of benefits between merchant seamen and other World War II veterans. This information became public knowledge and created a national media blitz across the country. The strong public support for the recommendations from both the Senate and the Commons committee influenced the Honourable Gerald S. Merrithew, Minister of Veterans Affairs to present an omnibus bill to Parliament. Effective July 1, 1992 government legislation declared World War II merchant seamen as veterans under the Civilian War Act with equal benefits to other service veterans.

The Merchant Navy Coalition Group for Equality consisting of various Merchant Navy veterans groups identified some 40 differences between them and veterans who served in the regular forces. These variances have limited merchant seamen access to some benefits. Over several years, the coalition group has been negotiating with Veterans Affairs Canada for full veteran status under the War Veterans Act to correct this inequity without success.

In 1997, the coalition requested the government to provide a lump sum payment as compensation for lost post-war benefits; an apology for the poor treatment given the merchant seamen veterans, an increase of Prisoner of War Benefits; and new legislation under the War Veterans Allowance Act.

On June 15, 1998 at the 37th Dominion Convention of the Royal Canadian Legion in Winnipeg, Manitoba the Honourable Fred Mifflin, Minister of Veterans Affairs announced expanded benefits for Canada's Merchant Navy Veterans with the following quote:

"In 1992 legislation was passed recognizing the Canadian Merchant Navy as equivalent to Armed Forces and granting all the same benefits as those enjoyed by Armed Forces Veterans. But now we are proposing to go one step further and use the Omnibus Legislation to bring the Merchant Navy Veterans under the same pieces of legislation

as apply to Armed Forces Veterans - namely the Pension Act and the War Veterans Act. 'I will be delighted to put to rest a long-standing concern of Merchant Navy Veterans.'"

This legislation was not placed before Parliament before the summer recess, as the minister intended.

At the Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans Association's Annual General Meeting in Burnaby, B.C. June 5-6, 1998 it unanimously endorsed support for the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality to win full rights and retroactive compensation for lost benefits for the approximately 2,500 survivors of the Merchant Navy.

To bolster their case, the CMNVA will mount a protest in Ottawa in the week preceding Remembrance Day to strongly influence the government to cover the members under the Veterans War Allowance Act.

In summary, Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans of all ages, that would be from the youth of 14-15 years of age, up to people up in their 60's or maybe 70's, of unknown physical condition, loyalty and other reasons volunteered and served their country aboard Canadian and Allied ships in World War II. They conducted and assisted in gunnery operations alongside fellow naval gunners, while transiting enemy-infested waters, carrying wartime cargoes consisting of supplies, ammunition, fuel, troops, food, etc., to beleaguered Britain and battlefields of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Merchant ships with their valuable cargoes were primary targets for enemy bombs, torpedoes, guns and mines. Merchant seamen were in the first line of action, suffering losses proportionately greater than any other wartime service, except the German U-boat crews. In peace time we were the forgotten veterans of an unknown Navy. Our fight now in our declining years is for justice, payment in lieu of lost benefits, full recognition as War veterans, and full equality with our fellow wartime service veterans. Thank you very much.

Now, Captain Samson has an article here that was in the paper. It was recently in the Toronto Star, I believe it was June 26th. As I mentioned before, Professor Foster Griezic is a special consultant to our group, the coalition as well as the Canadian Merchant Marines Navy Veterans Association. He has an excellent article here and Captain Samson will read it to you. Thank you.

MR. JOHN SAMSON: I must first of all apologize for the copying. For some reason or other it would not come out very good and as you look at it you will see that it is hard to read.

"On June 15 at the Legion Convention in Winnipeg, Canada's wartime merchant navy veterans were promised by the Minister of Veterans' Affairs, Fred Mifflin, that sometime this year legislation amending

Bill C-84 will be introduced placing them under the War Veterans Allowances Act and the Veterans Pension Act.

If done, they will finally be recognized as war veterans. If done by December, approximately 80 merchant seamen will have died without access to greater care, any compensation or knowing that they are officially war veterans equal to their military comrades.

Is this enough after suffering 53 years of injustice, and postwar discriminatory treatment at the hands of the Canadian government?

To the minister this is a 'symbolic' gesture. It is significant but is not enough. Because of the restrictive and exclusive rather than inclusive 1992 legislation, they still will not have the same criteria to access the same benefits granted their military comrades.

Is it simply a gesture to mask the refusal to discuss the 1992 legislation with merchant navy representatives? And why make the announcement to the Legion, which has notoriously refused to support the wartime merchant navy demands, rather than the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality?

More important than what was said, is what wasn't. It was a very brief paragraph in the 11-page speech and was included in the press release. No mention was made in the minister's statement of correcting the gaps in the 1992 legislation that needed to be filled if the wartime merchant navy veterans are to achieve equality with their military comrades; or costs for finally recognizing them as war veterans or compensating for the postwar mistreatment and discrimination.

In 1992 they were promised they would be equal to the armed forces and instead were placed in a halfway house as civilian veterans with 22 other civilian groups.

It precluded their access to the same pensionable benefits based on the same criteria used for their military comrades. Indeed, civilian merchant seamen and other civilians have easier access to benefits.

Why nothing on correcting these omissions? Why no comment recognizing this paramilitary service - which was called the 'Fourth Arm of the Fighting Services', during World War II - as a service? The minister knows that they were trained by the navy in gunnery training, sailed under Admiralty Orders, were subject to the Merchant Seaman's

Order, were subject to discipline by the Judge Advocate General (navy) to the military police and the RCMP, travelled to their ships on orders and were locked into their job.

Why no mention of recognizing their service time in training schools, in manning schools, in gunnery training under the navy, in travelling to their ships when on orders?

[1:30 p.m.]

And silence on the merchant navy PoWs who spent on average 50 months behind Nazi or Japanese barbed wire but only 30 months is recognized for pensionable benefits. In the government's eyes, those extra 20 months do not exist.

And nothing on the missing \$100 million allocated in 1992; the minister stated to the Commons committee, April 29, that he did not know where it was and there wasn't any \$100 million. (The press release stated \$100 million, in the Commons \$88 million, the Canada Gazette, \$82.4 [million]) to cover pension benefits, compensation costs for these victims of a half-century of discrimination. According to the government's varied figures, between \$70 million and \$80 million remains unspent.

Not a murmur on the Merchant Navy Coalition for Equality's compensation brief presented to the department on Oct. 7, 1997 which outlined what the coalition wanted, why it should be granted, and how it could be done cost-free to the Canadian government.

The funds allocated in 1992 would cover the proposed compensation package of \$20,000 for each wartime merchant seaman/woman and \$40,000 for PoWs and still leave money for the government which could be used for a Merchant Navy Benevolent Fund or a Merchant Navy University or College Scholarship for wartime merchant navy families.

This is not new; the government has justifiably paid compensation to Japanese-Canadians and to First Nations peoples for discriminating against them.

Or the government could provide a tax-free existence for the few remaining merchant navy personnel whose average age, if alive, is 78, and for the PoWs, 88. (The life span for men is 75, women 81.)

Has Mifflin forgotten that the wartime merchant service was excluded from the post-World War II rehabilitation programs provided for the military forces? They were purposely excluded from becoming part of the Canadian 'leaders of business, professional and public life for the years that lie ahead.' That was reserved for the military personnel who got free and paid university education.

The merchant seamen were dead-ended into vocational training for jobs at sea; there would be no job there as the merchant service was privatized, and the ships sold at bargain prices.

They were excluded, too, from the business loans, homes, land grants, health benefits, civil service job preference, veterans insurance given the military.

Bill C-84 used the term 'high seas' rather than the term 'dangerous waters' for the wartime merchant navy which lost more (one in 8) than any of the armed services (air force: one in 12; army: one in 32; navy: one in 47). This designation effectively excluded merchant seamen injured or killed in coastal waters of Great Britain, the U.S. or Canada from benefits.

They also paid income tax which the military did not, contributed compulsory war savings. The government still retains merchant sailors' unpaid wages.

The 1992 legislation opened some doors to some benefits for some, but not enough, merchant seamen/women.

After waiting more than an half-century for justice, amendments to Bill C-84 must include - besides being placed under the WVA and the pension act - recognition as a service, of all their service time, of all the time spent in PoW camps, and retroactive compensation for the post-war discrimination.

It is a fair and reasonable request. Meeting it would erase a collective shame and re-establish Canada's tarnished international reputation as a fair and just nation.

Canada can follow the lead of other Allies, and honour the proud heritage of its 'unsung (merchant navy war) heros' before they are all dead."

MR. WAGNER: Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce Roy Thorne, he is a member of our association, he is our service officer and so on. He is late but he is here. Thank you. That is generally our presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, we had two members that arrived, maybe they would like to identify themselves just for the record.

MR. KEVIN DEVEAUX: Kevin Deveaux, Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Wayne Gaudet, Clare.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Thank you for your presentation. Do any of the members have any questions they would like to ask of our guests?

MR. GORDON BALSER: I would like to say thank you very much for coming. I guess as part of the committee, I would like to know what specifically you would like to see this committee do? What would you like to have come out of it?

MR. WAGNER: From a provincial level, I would like to see that you could support us actually to the federal level, to the other step. As you know, you go municipal, provincial and federal, and we would like to see you actually, to represent the basic part of our themes that we come up with today, but I think we identified the post-war, the wartime and particularly what resulted afterwards actually. The lack of recognition and the discrimination that we had in benefits, it is a never-ending struggle, and probably Father Time is going to take care of that, you know, because out of 12,000, we are down somewhere about 2,000 or 2,500, in that realm. That is what we would like to expect from the Legislature.

MR. JOHN SAMSON: Very simply Mr. Balser, we are simply asking the same recognition as the other three services received. Nothing more, nothing less.

HON. RUSSELL MACKINNON: Mr. Chairman, gentlemen I would like to thank you for your presentation. There is an old saying, to experience is to know. I suppose you folks have experience that we will probably never know. That is something that you learn through life. I know our family had the misfortune of losing one, but a little more tragic circumstance in the war, being a rear gunner. But I guess to summarize, I would like to put a motion before the committee here today. I think it is only appropriate, as a follow-up to what Mr. Balser has indicated.

I would move that this committee request the provincial government to petition the federal government so as to ensure the Merchant Navy Veterans are extended full rights and retroactive compensation for lost benefits.

MR. JAMES DEWOLFE: I will second that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a motion on the floor, it has been moved by Mr. MacKinnon, seconded by Mr. DeWolfe. Is the committee ready for the question?

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Mr. Estabrooks was next.

MR. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Mr. Chairman, thank you for that motion Mr. MacKinnon. I heard during reference of the material you read, Captain Samson, that other countries have taken appropriate steps that our Allies during the Second World War are in advance of us in terms of obviously proper legislation, recognition and whatever. Can you give us a few details about that? Is this Great Britain, is this the U.S.A.? What have these other countries done?

MR. JOHN SAMSON: The U.S.A. has recognized their seamen, yes. Britain has to some extent but probably not as much as even Africa or New Zealand and Australia. I understand, from what I can learn from those countries, they give full recognition.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Excuse me, sir, and full benefits and the many other things that the other armed services have received?

MR. JOHN SAMSON: I understand that that is true, yes.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Chard.

MR. DONALD CHARD: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the presenters and congratulate you on a very lucid presentation. I have had some experience as an historian dealing with Canadian history. I worked at Parks Canada for some 23 years and in that period did some work on the history of Halifax, and in particular on the defences of Halifax. It always struck me as a great irony that we devoted a lot of time, energy and money to the preservation and restoration of our forts here in Halifax and to, I think, a great extent ignored what the forts were here to protect and the history represented by what the forts were here to protect because the real importance of Halifax was as a port and the defences were really secondary to that role. It bothered me to no end that we would devote time and energy to the forts and neglect this other aspect of our history.

I was very disappointed when we were busy commemorating aspects of the history of the Second World War, that this history of the port, and the history of the convoys in particular, was neglected because the anniversary of the sailing of the first convoys out of

Halifax came and went without any notice at all in the press that I could recall seeing. I think it is something that needs to be redressed. I think we not only need to deal very directly with the neglect of our merchant seamen, we also need to be pressing the federal government for more adequate recognition, through agencies such as Parks Canada, of the significance of this part of our history in a very formal way. It has not been done. There are people who are aware of it but for some reason or another, we have been more preoccupied with these remnants of our forts than we are with the living people who did so much, contributed so much, in the two wars.

Here, in Nova Scotia in particular, you would think that we would have a very heightened awareness of this because not only did we have the so-called fast convoys going out of Halifax, in World War II, we also had Sydney serving as a rendez-vous point for what was called the slow convoys. Even the fast convoys were not very fast by today's standards. The slow convoys must have just crept across the Atlantic at a snail's pace. Of course, many of those ships were sitting ducks. It is not surprising that there was such a terrible toll among the people who served on those vessels and I would certainly hope that we can make some progress in redressing the injustice that has been imposed on men and women who served in the Merchant Navy.

I just want to close by thanking you for your presentation. Mr. Estabrooks answered one question that I was going to ask, which was, what other countries have done to recognize the role of their merchant seamen? I would also like to ask beyond that, if other countries, to your knowledge, once they brought in legislation recognizing the contribution of merchant seamen, have taken the next step and extended benefits to survivors retroactively? What would your expectations be in that regard because, yes, we should be ensuring that benefits are available to the surviving veterans but I would hate to think that family members, survivors, might still be penalized if we neglect them. Would the legislation you are looking for address that issue?

MR. WAGNER: The government when they come up with a lot of this legislation, you do not know what is really in it. When we negotiated in 1992, we were hoping that everything would come out under the War Veterans Act, you see, and what did come out was a Civilian Act, so everything would have been covered. There is always a big question mark even when negotiating. We wanted to see their legislation before it comes out so we could peruse it; they would not allow us to do that.

To answer that question, I would think it would come under that but, as you know, there is a ceiling and a limit for those people to get benefits. For instance, for one person, a veteran, is something in excess of \$900 and for a married couple it is \$1,400, right, in that realm, but I know that once the husband, the breadwinner had died, in other words, because I know quite well that his wife does not get anything from the government any more.

If I may, actually though you hit on a very good point on the history of the Merchant Navy and I would like to thank you for that. Using the same vein, and pretty near independently because at that time I was the Director of the P.E.I. and Nova Scotia branch of the Merchant Navy Association, I took it on myself and wrote up a draft, a letter and published it in all the newspapers and what have you. This was in 1995 to be exact, and I thought we should have a history of the Merchant Navy and its impact on Canada, from its evolutionary stages from history, I am talking about the early explorers, from John Cabot and so on and Cartier and Champlain, right up to the present era. I started in 1994-95 and I felt that it would have been an excellent thing to have done by the year 1997 when John Cabot's Matthew arrived here.

The letter went to the highest level of the government and all the Cabinet Ministers, and then I started in sending it out to the universities. I thought I could get some support. I felt that the Atlantic universities could do the research, you see, right, people for a thesis for a Master's Degree and so on, could provide this information and it could be sponsored some by the government really and by the same token the whole thing would benefit the country. In 1993, I was the Chairman of the Memorial Fund actually, and still am, I tried to get a fellow by the name of Gordon Robertson in Kingston, Ontario, to do up an overview about the Merchant Navy and its role in this century, from 1900 to the present date, this was 1995. He went across Canada and could not find a document to research any information. That is what spurred me on and I said, I could not believe that there was nothing in our universities across the country.

Anyway, I spent a lot of time at it, a whole year, but I was not getting anywhere. Last but not least, I even took it to the Irving family. Somebody said, well, try the Irvings on for size. I never even got a response. I also used the professor from the university in Sackville, who had done it for the navy. I just forget his name, the professor's name will not come to me. Anyway, he had done all the research for the navy, excellent research on the navy, and its history during the Second World War. He had a lot of good books out and you probably have read them. His name just leaves me at the present time but he would not touch it with a 10-foot pole. It is something that would have to be government sponsored, but it could be done. I was very sorry, it was a mission I thought could get done.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Balser, did you indicate you had another question?

MR. BALSER: Yes. What would account for the reluctance of Veterans Affairs to address this concern earlier on? It seems as though, and maybe I am misreading it, but it seemed there were two groups of veterans, the Legion was somewhat slow to embrace and then there was the Merchants Navy Coalition Group. Were there two separate groups that were trying to address the problem?

MR. WAGNER: Yes, there are, actually. Initially, we started out in the late 1980's. This was all brought to a head by a fellow by the name of Gordon Olmstead. He was a prisoner of

war, initially, and spent over four years as a prisoner of war. He came back to this country with nothing and so he educated himself and he got a degree and became a civil servant. When he retired, he researched it. He did an excellent job of research and he made the comparison between navy versus Merchant Navy and so on. He found there were a lot of historical myths that everybody felt.

What came out of it at that time, and only because of his excellent research, it was brought it to the attention of Senator Jack Marshall. I don't know if you heard of him or knew him, he was a great advocate for all veterans' efforts and so on. That is when this all started. Nobody before that, no governments, no successive governments wanted to take the blame for it. It was just one of those things.

I remember being down in Florida in 1988 when initially the Americans got full recognition, the merchant seamen. I came back and I wrote to the then Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada probably one of the best we had at that time, and got the same old Party line. This was in 1988. The Royal Canadian Legion only officially came onside about 1990 at this biennial convention in Vancouver. I have been a member, myself, now for 49 years, I will be a 50-year member next year, actually. So it seemed as though while they were telling us they were supporting us, in fact they were not showing where they really were and officially they only came onside at the national convention. So it is still a big question mark.

It is the same way working with the government. If the legislation comes out and we can read it and see what the impact does, because in 1992, when we were supposed to get parity or equal recognition of benefits, the budget made up was somewhere in the realm of around \$80 million or \$90 million to cover a period of five years because they expected it would expand. All these merchant seamen would be making application for benefits. They found afterwards, it was only a limited sum of money, less than \$5 million was spent. So here is this great big sum of money that was put forward at that time, was budgeted but was never spent. It was only a limited amount, very few millions of dollars that was really spent. They were expecting more impact from this, more expenditures.

This is one reason, I think, this coalition group, in the last year, got together, last October and they went to the government and they said individually we want \$20,000 as compensation, in lieu of all these good benefits that the other veterans got, you know for educational grants, land grants and all the other allowances they got in the post-war period. They also wanted equal benefits under the War Veterans Act too. This is basically what they are after but the government haven't really addressed what we asked for and are digressing and are giving us something of a minor nature which we really won't know about until the legislation goes through Parliament. This is the story down through the years. They assuage us a little bit, you know, massage us like. They know we are getting older, give us another five years and we won't ever make presentations like this. That is the best I can answer. I am not sure if I answered you directly.

MR. BALSER: Yes, you did. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Estabrooks.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Captain Wagner, on that topic, I notice that we have, in the mandate of this committee, to make it a more active committee and hear various submissions, and I believe we are meeting with representatives from the Provincial Command from the Legion. I don't know exactly when that is scheduled, Mr. Chairman, but I know they are going to make a presentation in front of us. What is the current relationship between your particular group and the Legion . . .

MR. WAGNER: I think it is an honourable one.

MR. ESTABROOKS: . . . because I am sure it is going to be probably the first question I am going to ask, are you fully supportive of the Merchant Navy Association?

MR. WAGNER: As I said officially, it was in 1990 at a national convention they really supported our cause at that time because we were making a lot of waves, making a lot of noise. The media got behind us too and most anybody, it was like motherhood . . .

MR. ESTABROOKS: Yes, right, and apple pie.

MR. WAGNER: Yes, and apple pie. But there were other strong groups led by Chadderton and Cliff Chadderton headed up about 18 or 20 veterans groups. We did not always find him specifically to be onside either, you know. Eventually it all came around in 1992 when this legislation that came out and I think, the revealing information came out, but it was almost too late. That was a revealing document and showed, in other words, not only ourselves but the other veterans too at the late age we were at and the lack of benefits we were getting, unless they did something immediately. That spurred the Senate Committee to spur the Commons Committee to address it, along with a media blitz besides. So we were meeting then and negotiating with the government on this actually.

They were telling us, well, we can do this, but they would not tell us, exactly until it all came up in a big omnibus bill and it had everything in there, excluding people who were getting benefits who were resistance fighters in Greece. We could not believe it, an omnibus bill. Probably the people in Parliament know what they are but we did not until we read this. But they were even excluding people that were in the resistance movement in World War II. It seemed as though they wanted to put something in, we all felt that the bill was put up as that nobody could vote against it. The Opposition would not vote against a bill like that, and it gave the MPs a good opportunity to get rid of some of these troublesome people who was getting full benefits as veterans like the Greek resistance fighters out of their hair. So we felt it was a case of putting an omnibus bill together and they said, well, let's throw in the Merchant Navy and we will rule today. This is the kind of legislation it was.

Now, he mentions about an omnibus bill again when he spoke out in Winnipeg in June. I am talking about, Admiral Mifflin, Ret'd., he is the Minister of Veterans Affairs. So we really would not know, and it is no good to presuppose what he is going to do until we see this legislation, read it, and see what the ramifications are all about. Does it affect us? How much? I know that is not a good answer but you are dealing with people who are able to parry us off and Father Time is going to win possibly.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Definitely.

MR. WAGNER: All of us.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. MacDonald.

MR. CHARLES MACDONALD: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I just want to say a few words before I have to leave. We changed times on the meetings today but I had a meeting pre-arranged for this afternoon. I am very happy to be here today and to meet these gentlemen. My dad served in the Navy and he served on the corvettes that escorted the merchant groups back and forth across. He told me many stories about it. I would hope that we do put our full support and follow up on what we are talking about today and try to achieve the benefits that you so richly deserve. Why we did not address these issues or why they have not been addressed years ago, I find it impossible to understand. However, I am very pleased to meet with you today and I hope you will excuse me. It is not that I want to leave but we set a different meeting. Thank you.

MR. WAGNER: Thank you for your kind comments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. DeWolfe.

MR. DEWOLFE: Mr. Chairman, first of all I just want to say that I am particularly pleased that you were able to come here today and I am also very pleased with the committee taking a proactive stand. I think that had to be done. Too bad that more could not have been done in years gone by.

My concern was pretty much addressed by Mr. Chard and by Captain Wagner, who expanded a little more on the history, because I was going to suggest that during my schooling the Merchant Navy was not really mentioned too much in the history. I think that is too bad. I was fortunate to have a father who was a serviceman but also to have worked for over 20 years closely with a gentleman who served in the Merchant Navy with the most interesting stories at coffee break that you could imagine. You know most of the stories, and he tells me that a lot of the concerns that he had during those years was perhaps not running into a German ship, but the ships that they were using were often not up to snuff with what the navy was using, and

they weren't as seaworthy, and they were more concerned with the storms than anything at times.

[2:00 p.m.]

Again, I just wanted to say that I wish that there was more brought into the schools. As you say, time is running out, but nevertheless it is a very important part of our history, and as we said earlier, particularly with Nova Scotia's history. I think that we should, as legislators should do all we can before it is too late. Thank you again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gaudet.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Chairman, I too want to express my thanks to the group for having come forward this afternoon with their presentation. Captain Wagner, on your Page 5, I just had a couple of questions here. I guess my first one is how many Merchant Navy veterans are, in Nova Scotia, still alive today?

MR. WAGNER: Alive in Nova Scotia? Probably one of the biggest amounts in the core area, and we feel it is probably a maximum of 2,500 across Canada. I would safely say that if you could ferret out all bodies, I will use that word, it would somewhere in the realm of 400, it could be 400 to 500.

MR. GAUDET: I notice that, again on Page 5, you indicate there are approximately 1,700 Merchant Navy veterans or dependents that receive the Civilian War Allowance. Could you elaborate a little bit, basically, what exactly is the Civilian War Allowance?

MR. WAGNER: Roy Thorne here is probably the most knowledgeable fellow. He is a service officer, and I will pass it over to Roy just to give you an idea, he can give you the exact amounts and so on that is paid.

MR. ROY THORNE: Well, I went on what they called Civilian War Allowance when I retired from the City of Halifax in 1986. At first there was quite a little hassle about it. I sailed under a foreign flag during the war. I sailed with the Norwegians for about five years. There was a little hassle about that, and a lot of it, I guess, could be just maybe talk, why didn't you sail on your own ships, or why didn't you do this. I said I am not here to fight about who I sailed with, I sailed with one group of people, I was a POW, and I was torpedoed twice, and you people are going to give me a hassle about a civilian allowance. You can take it and you know.

So they called me back about two weeks later, after I had submitted all the information, and it was sent to Charlottetown to the board over there for pensions. Then I finally got a letter that I had been accepted to receive the Civilian War Allowance. At that time I was getting \$900 a month, married, for my wife and I and one child, the youngest son I had home. I got that for,

until I reached the age of coming due for Canada Pension, and the OAS Pension, and then that is automatically cut off.

Then they put me on what they called VIP treatment. They took me off the Civilian War Allowance, and then they said I was eligible for certain benefits, in fact all the benefits. I get all the benefits, the same as the army, navy, air force and any other group. The pay for glasses, they pay for teeth, the hearing aid, whatnot, all medical, I get all that, provided my net income is not over a certain amount of money. I believe Captain Wagner mentioned that is was \$977 a month for any veteran. If he makes over that he is not entitled, unless he gets a War Claim Disability. At that time, I didn't have a disability, so I couldn't claim any of those benefits other than the allotted sum of \$1,470 and some a month.

Then they came out with the VIP, which is the Veterans Independence Program. My wife, at her age is not able to do certain housework. They pay me to have someone do this. They also pay my transportation back and forth to the City of Halifax, because I don't know if you have noticed, but I am partially blind. I don't drive any more, my blindness took place last year. Some merchant seamen that I have dealt with, in fact I have helped quite a few of them, just didn't know that they were entitled to certain benefits which they now get, because I have been up with different ones, acting as a service officer when I was able to get around.

Merchant seamen are getting pretty well what they are supposed to get. I can't see where we would get anymore than what an army, air force or navy person would get. We get pretty well the same thing, but it is within certain limits. If you go over a certain limit of money, net money, DVA cuts you off. I think they deal with the Income Tax people and that is how they check if a guy is making more than what he is supposed to be making, then you are automatically cut off. You just get a letter, you are not entitled to medical benefits, prescriptions, unless you are on a War Disability. Then they sort of keep you on.

That is pretty well the whole story as far as merchant seaman go. I am of the same opinion as Captain John Samson and Captain Wagner are, we want to be put on the bill that recognizes us the same as they do army and navy and air force. Why do they keep shoving us around, you know saying, well you didn't do this, you didn't do that? Some of us did a hell of a lot more, but we are still not entitled to be under the Veterans War Act. This is one thing that a lot of people, I believe Captain John Samson and Captain Wagner agree with me too, this sort of hurts.

The Legion now are another outfit. There is a different thing. I was quite involved with the Legion, and there are certain things that come up at the Legion which I didn't think were right, because I was a merchant seaman. A lot of those things are changing. They have accepted us, we don't get no hassles. They wouldn't recognize us, you couldn't become a legionnaire until 1952, before that you couldn't join the Legion. Some Legions accepted, but according to Dominion command, you weren't entitled to become a legionnaire because you weren't a

veteran. You have a branch in Dartmouth that wouldn't take anybody in unless you were an overseas veteran. That included army, navy, air force, and merchant seaman. So that is pretty well my story as far as merchant seaman, as far as DVA go and the Legions.

We know we are getting up in years, we might be around to get a settlement at \$20,000 or \$40,000, whatever they are going to throw at us. I don't hold out any hope for it, because at our age, and the way that merchant seaman are going off, they lose an average of 10 to 15 a month, isn't that right?

MR. WAGNER: The last time at the last service, there were 70 merchant seaman. We always convene at memorial services twice a year at the Battle of the Atlantic and also at Remembrance Day Services. The last one, we had lost 70 merchant seaman in the past year.

MR. THORNE: So you can see that we are slowly but quickly going. I would like to mention that sailing under the Norwegian flag, I have been decorated by their country. I have also applied for benefits. I only found out recently that they were paying Canadian seaman, and you had nearly 1,000 that sailed under their flag. Some for six months, some for a couple of years, some for three, four, five years, like myself. Now the government may give us a monetary benefit for being a POW. I had letters from their government saying that because I was not a national, I had no claim to any money even though I was sailing under their flag, but their country was broke at the time, now they have all kinds. So I am sort of sitting down in hopes of that one too, whether it will ever come, I don't know. Thank you gentlemen.

MR. GAUDET: I just had one further question. Mr. Thorne, you indicated that you have helped other people in order to access benefits they are entitled to. My question is, just to make sure that all 400 or so remaining individuals from Nova Scotia have access to the benefits that they are entitled to, I guess my question would be, would your association, or I guess I don't know exactly who is in charge, but have all those individuals been notified to make sure that they are accessing all the benefits that they are entitled to?

MR. THORNE: A lot of them.

MR. GAUDET: If we come across individuals that would like some further clarification or just to make sure, if we come across individuals through our constituency offices, who should we contact?

MR. THORNE: In my position, I have been asked different times, it has been through word of mouth that a lot of people have called me, throughout Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and even Newfoundland. It seems some of these people, whether their service officers know what they are talking about in order to help them, I don't know. Legions have service officers, we have a service officer just in the sense of word of mouth, and some of these service officers don't seem to know the full criteria, and they usually call up and say, well, it has been passed around, my name has been mentioned different times, and if it is a difficult problem, I usually

switch them over to Captain Wagner because he is a lot more schooled in the writings that are going on with the government. Then there are some that do not seem to want to bother. I do not know why. It is not that they have got all kinds of money to be spending out on medical, drugs and doctors. But some of them just do not bother. They go up there once or twice and some say they get a big hassle but I do not know.

A lot of these veterans do not realize money is what counts. You do not go up there and lie because as sure as hell they find out. Now, I have had two or three complaints from people, they went up to get something and wanted to know why they could not get it, or why they were cut off, and I explained to them what has happened to them. No sense lying to me because I am going to find out what you are doing, especially people who have got RRSP's. They do not say anything about that but they draw the money on it, right, and what happens through the Income Tax Department and the DVA, they both work together, I will get a phone call saying what's his name was cut off, how the hell can they do that?

Then I will say what happened, just tell me what money you have got? Well, you know the guy hums and haws. He does not want to mention that he has got so many thousands in RRSP's or that he has got money in the bank in his daughter's name or his son's name, and they find out about it, I mean that is how they get caught up with. If you do not tell them the truth, somebody is going to find out.

In answer to your question, those people that call, I would say the majority really get looked after because I have been looking after a couple of dozen or so the last few years and I think I have got about maybe four or five that have been cut off altogether because of too much money. Money is the big problem, if you are making that kind of money. A veteran driving around with the big car, his wife got another car, his daughter has got a car, he owns a big house and he wants to know why he cannot get a hearing aid, or a set of glasses, he does not realize all that money those are all taken into consideration when you apply but they go ahead and try. Then when they get curves thrown at them, you cannot do it, so that is when they sort of get mad and call and either me or they might call Earle, or they might call John, I do not know, but most that I have handled are guys that have been making too much money. There are guys that push for the \$40,000 or the \$20,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do any other members have any questions for our guests? Mr. Balser.

MR. BALSER: Mr. Chairman, touching on the point that you have just spoke of and that is a service officer. I will plead ignorance and say that I was not aware of, you know, I had a dim knowledge of marine navy veterans being separate and apart, but I think what we need is a contact person because there are constituents . . .

MR. THORNE: Right, you need a contact person like in the Legion, or in the army and

navy, I would think the army and navy have a service officer, do they not? I am not sure.

MR. WAGNER: Yes, they have them.

MR. BALSER: Our local legion has a service officer and there is a regional representative but I guess what I think may be happening is that other people might be out there with needs or concerns and not sure how to access your organization? You have touched on it. It is sort of hit and miss when they talk to you. Is there a more formal structure, I guess is what I am looking for?

MR. THORNE: The idea of a service officer, he looks after everything pretty well, the benefits pertaining to veterans, whether they are in the hospital or out of the hospital, or he is not getting this from DVA, not getting that from DVA, and it is normally his job to check into it to see why not. He can only go so far with it and then when he goes up to DVA and meets with one of the counsellors. The counsellor says, well, are you representing this individual? I usually say, yes, he has asked me because some of the cases I have got. Some of these merchant seamen have been illiterate and I mean that sincerely, illiterate. They are lucky they can even sign a cheque. Yet they went to sea. They started going to sea when they were 14 or 15 years of age.

I get the odd call from a guy, well, will you come up and help me make this out or make that out. Well, in my condition now I have to use a special machine to do it, but I go up with them and get the information, come back home, use my reader machine, and I can pretty well help the guy. You get qualified. That is a service officer's job actually in the Legion, or army, navy and air force, or what have you. That is his job, to look after the veterans that way.

Now, some service officers are there and all of a sudden they get promoted. First thing you know, they come up as executive member of their Legion, which I have been, and different other things that take them away from the quality of service he should be giving the veterans and then you turn around and you take another person and give them the job, or he is voted in for a job of that sort. In some cases he does not know either.

So it is teaching one to the other what goes on and we have quite an excellent service officer in Vimy Branch. He is on the go all the time. He is visiting the hospitals, visiting them to see what they want, what they do not want, can we help you. Funerals and stuff, he looks after that if the party cannot look after, you know, the death of a veteran. We usually take it over and look after it. So that is usually what a service officer is for in the Legion. If he cannot do the job, he should not be in there.

MR. DEWOLFE: Thank you.

MR. WAGNER: If I might add to that, I do not want to belabour the issue. I was quite surprised in revealing - a good friend of mine actually, had a terminal disease and was trying

to get admitted. You see, here is what happens. It gets down to the relatives and their family relatives do not know what to do. They know that I am a lobbyist and have been active in this for quite a number of years and they come to me. It took me quite a little while to get through, but I would go through the Veterans Affairs Canada right here in Halifax, up on Young Street.

He was trying to get admitted to the Veterans Hospital in Lunenburg and only then I found out that they have to pay \$700 a month. I was quite surprised about that, the money. So here was the widow, not the widow, she was a widow about six months later, but we eventually got him in but I was quite surprised. I thought that we had all benefits, you know.

I thought from 1992 when everything we were supposed to get all equality and all these good benefits, but I was quite surprised here, in other words, nearly 6.5 years later to find out it costs that woman \$700-some a month to put her husband in the Veterans Hospital in Lunenburg. They have got 25 beds there. There is one down in Yarmouth and there is one here in Halifax, as you know, Camp Hill and there is one in northern Nova Scotia and one in Cape Breton. I think that is the way it goes.

So these are the things, you know, maybe Roy would have known that but I did go to bat. I found out a lot myself. So if you do not know, you can eventually get information from the government but it is getting more difficult all the time because, you know, it is a listening device there now. If you cannot read and hear, everything is automated today, and it is very difficult to get into provincial government now, much less the federal government. I just want to add that to let you know how you think you have got that benefit coming to you. I thought, well, if anything happens to me and my wife has to put me in the Veterans Hospital, well, home free, you know. That is not the case. You pay.

MR. DEWOLFE: My question was somewhat answered but I guess my concern is do the members know where to go to get information and if they go to the Legion, I have a concern there. With my local Legion there is not one person on the executive that was even a serviceman. That is the way Legions are going now. I would be awfully concerned if I was going to that particular Legion to get information. As long as they know where to direct that person to your organization or to your executive perhaps, but do your members out there know where to go and their families for information?

MR. WAGNER: What is happening now is, as you know, it is because of the age of the veterans, a lot of them are dead really. Out of 1.1 million there is what, 500,000, half of them left, the Legion magazine will give you. So 1.1 million out of 11 million, as you know, served Canada, so we are 10 per cent, you know, there was 10 per cent of Canadians in uniform in 1939 to 1945 and that is where we are losing. As a result, we are bringing in the youth who lack the experience, lack the motivation, and so on, you name all those old things.

They will get it eventually, you know. But it is too late now. A lot of them go, when

they do go to get the information, they say, it is just a young junior officer, politics ruled, the guy was in, he is a veteran 75 years of age, but they want to give it to a younger person to heave the guy out. As you say, they don't get good information. Because I think they get a little remuneration for doing the work. That is what people were telling me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, if there are no further questions, on behalf of the committee I would like to thank you for coming today and making your presentation. For myself, it was very interesting, and certainly a learning experience.

I think the motion put forward by the honourable member for Cape Breton West was a very good one, and I think it is obvious to you, you will see the support you are going to get from this committee in the future. We want to be active, and if we can ever be of any further assistance, we would appreciate it if you would contact us. Once again, thanks for coming. We look forward to seeing you again in the future.

MR. WAGNER: I would like to thank you too on behalf of our committee here. John and Roy and myself, we would like to thank you very much for listening to us, at least, and so on. We would hope that you follow through. We thank you for that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess the only thing left on our agenda is the next meeting date, which is actually a week from today at 1:00 p.m. Darlene has lined up the Veterans Association of Nova Scotia to appear.

MR. BALSER: Mr. Chairman, does this committee typically send letters of thanks to the people who do presentations?

MRS. DARLENE HENRY (Committee Clerk): I do that.

MR. BALSER: Do you? As a matter of course.

MRS. HENRY: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As I said, the people from the Veterans Association of Nova Scotia are in order to come next week. There is no other business.

MR. GAUDET: Mr. Chairman, do we have a sub-schedule for the summer months?

MRS. HENRY: It is basically up to the committee now. At this point I have you booked for July 16th.

MR. GAUDET: I was just looking for further meetings.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any presentations scheduled for next week? Do you have people calling to make presentations?

MRS. HENRY: No, not yet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What are the wishes of the committee as far as after next Thursday then?

MRS. HENRY: I can book in other groups if you want to keep on meeting throughout the summer.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Well, from my perspective as long as we get some lead time, I think Wayne is directing it this way, so that if we can't be here, we have someone else in our stead. I understand that the meeting was moved around a number of times. A little lead time, if we were going to look at other further meetings during the summer, would be my personal view.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So at the meeting next Thursday, we can decide then. Is that okay?

Do we have a motion to adjourn?

MR. ESTABROOKS: I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We stand adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 2:25 p.m.]