

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, February 8, 2007

Committee Room 1

Nova Scotia No. 2 Construction Battalion

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VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Stephen McNeil (Chair)
Keith Bain
Patrick Dunn
Chuck Porter
Gordon Gosse
David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)
Percy Paris
Harold Theriault
Wayne Gaudet

[Stephen McNeil was replaced by Keith Colwell.]

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESS

Black Cultural Centre

Dr. Henry Bishop
Executive Director



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2007

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR

David Wilson

THE CHAIR: We'll call the Veterans Affairs Committee meeting to order. Today, we have Dr. Henry Bishop, with the Black Cultural Centre, who is going to do a presentation on the Nova Scotia No. 2 Construction Battalion.

KEITH COLWELL: Maybe before we start the meeting - we don't have a quorum, and this is a really important presentation that's going to be made - we could ask Dr. Bishop if he wants to give the presentation today or if we could reschedule this meeting until we get a quorum. It is a very important topic.

PERCY PARIS: Before we reach a decision on that, I don't know what sort of power we have as a committee when we don't have a quorum. Can we table motions and just not vote on them? We can't even table a motion?

DARLENE HENRY: As far as I know, you can't even do motions because you don't have a quorum to vote.

THE CHAIR: One suggestion is - definitely, I wouldn't want to see Dr. Bishop's time wasted; it's an important issue. We can have him do his presentation and then make him the offer of returning down the road, maybe in a couple of months, or whatever timeline we have - if that's something that's okay with Dr. Bishop - to try to get more of the members here. It has been a hectic time, I think, for all caucuses lately. I do apologize for the lack of numbers in our committee. Usually we're pretty good at attending this committee.

PATRICK DUNN: Just a suggestion, perhaps. Whatever we do - I certainly would like to listen to Dr. Bishop today, but if it's going to happen again, I think it should be a priority over all the other ones. Whenever he's available, then that's when it's going to be.

PERCY PARIS: Still, nothing would preclude us, if Dr. Bishop does stay and make a presentation, which I would be interested in hearing, from making a motion at another meeting of the committee when there is a quorum here, pertaining to this non-meeting, if that makes any sense. So there might be something that any one of us may discover here today that we have in mind for a future motion at a future meeting.

KEITH COLWELL: The only concern I have about this is - and I want to hear Dr. Bishop, as well, today, as long as he's interested in doing that - I really want to see all this information on the record. This is a non-official meeting. It won't go down as a meeting, I'm sure, because we don't have a quorum. I really want to see what he has to say on the record. If there are motions that are brought forward, which there may be, I want to make sure they are on the record, for now and well into the future.

I agree with my colleague across the table to have Dr. Bishop from the Black Cultural Centre back again, as a priority, on the committee - ahead of anything else that there possibly would be. Even to the point, if it's going to change that priority by doing this today, I would rather not have the meeting today and wait until we have a quorum here so this is officially on the record.

THE CHAIR: I think everybody here would like to hear what Dr. Bishop has to say. What I'll do is we'll get in contact with the chairman of the committee and the vice-chairman, and express our concerns with today's meeting, that it is a priority to have Dr. Bishop again. Hopefully the chairman or the vice-chairman can get in contact with all caucuses to arrange that next meeting. Hopefully our next meeting will be to have a legitimate committee meeting where we can make some motions. Is that fair?

What we'll do, Dr. Bishop, is we'll go around for introductions, the members will introduce themselves, and then we'll allow you some time to make your presentation to us. Then, hopefully, you're open to some questions from the members.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: With that, again, I do apologize for the low number of committee members. Usually this committee is quite well attended. I know there are many things, in all aspects, in all caucuses. If you would like to make your presentation, then we'll maybe have some questions for you afterwards.

HENRY BISHOP: Thank you very much for the invitation, first of all, and good afternoon. One thing I would like to mention before I go into the presentation is I believe in quality not quantity. So those who are here are here because they want to be, or they just made the effort a little more and the others didn't. So I'm glad to have the time to do this.

One thing that I do in African Heritage Month is very important to think about why we do these kinds of activities. This event or this occasion today is, indeed, historical, so we've made history today. This is the first time I have ever done this type of presentation for a caucus meeting, so please note that for the record. We are also in the midst of this African Heritage Month and our theme this month is Kumba, and Kumba is Swahili, an African language which means, in English, creativity. So, as an artist, for those who know, I am an artist and I am always trying to do something different, thinking outside the box, so I am going to think outside the caucus today and try and give you a little presentation that is quite unusual, perhaps.

Also, I am a musician and since the Juno Awards are coming up, I am also a Juno Awards judge. So I am adding all these two hats today, for a Chief Curator and a Juno Awards judge and an artist and a musician and so I am going to play some music. This music is very unique. One of the ladies that produced so much music and still continues is Dr. Linda Carvery. You probably know her, she is well known in the community as the Nova Scotia Mass Choir founder. She has created a number of CDs over the years and this one is one of the most profound numbers and I am going to play a little excerpt of that so you can hear this song.

[1:15 p.m.]

Some of you may recall this song, it is written by Sam Cooke and it is called "A Change is Going to Come". I think it is fitting to have this music today because changes are taking place right here and right now. So let's just relax and hear that song.

[A musical portion of the presentation commenced.]

HENRY BISHOP: I trust that will give you the tone that I want this meeting to be in. It helps to understand the significance of the history, in particular of a group called the No. 2 Construction Battalion, CEF, which some people have referred to as the Black Battalion. Today I have been able to bring a photograph - I'm not sure how many have seen this photograph before, of the full battalion. It's a very rare image, called a panoramic view. This was taken in 1916, in July, when they were getting ready to go overseas to fight in the First World War.

If you recall, the First World War started in 1914, so why did it take two years before these gentlemen were allowed to participate? Without getting into a lot of hard-core detail, just look at the group. As African-Canadians, they were denied access to the military. So there was an outcry for many years after the war started to allow Black men, in particular, to fight for their country. They lined up in droves to do that but were refused by the recruiting officers. Many of them heard the words, "This is a White man's war." Of course they were very disappointed and those who were able to make any kind of headway to change that did so and they lobbied the government. So it took two years to get that in effect. This photograph was taken as a result of them, prior to their moving to Halifax to go overseas from Pier 19, here at Halifax Harbour.

If you look on my left, and on your right in some cases, you'll see A, B, C and D Company. Now because of the fact that these men were coming from all across Canada, there was a great deal of difficulty in recruitment, and unfortunately they couldn't get the full battalion. Battalion means 1,000 men, so the number that they have there, as you see, is 675, and that includes the officers. If you look at that component - the officers were right in front of the photograph - if you look carefully, they are quite different looking in terms of their complexions, they are all White. However, there was one Black officer, whose name ironically was Reverend White and he was the first honorary Black captain in the British Commonwealth - not in Canada, in all of Britain. So he became the only Black man to serve as an officer at that time and he was also a minister, so he became the chaplain.

He served along with the other officers, one in particular I would like to mention was Colonel Sutherland who was very important - he is in the centre here - and he was the main man who was controlling the officers. They had gathered in Pictou, outside of the area called River John. The reason Colonel Sutherland agreed to command this group is that it was close to home and that's what he was telling people, he wouldn't mind doing it because he lived close to the area and he would have the gathering or the mustering in Pictou. As you know, today we have the monument there in Pictou Harbour for that reason.

So you can see there, as well, in the background there is an image of some men with band equipment, music equipment and this was the first all-Black military band in history, of Nova Scotia in particular, or you could say in Canada, to go overseas - and these men were from Nova Scotia and across Canada - to muster that group. The image, as well, you see is in Truro. This is an exhibition grounds area in Truro and from what I understand, the grounds are still there today, it is pretty much similar to what you see there, in some cases. So that's just a very nostalgic view of these men who served overseas and were sacrificing their lives.

However, another interesting thing about pictures - as you might know, one picture is worth a thousand words. As you look closely at the photograph you might see they don't have something usually with soldiers and that's normally something that they would carry to war with them. Can anybody tell me what? Guns. The reason why is that they were denied firearms. They were not allowed to have any kind of weapon. It was clearly stated that they were afraid of them turning the weapons on their officers. They were also told that they probably didn't have the intelligence to shoot straight. So there were a lot of inferiority complexes going on at that time to demean these individuals. Some of you may have seen movies on television called *Glory*, for example, which talked about the 54th Regiment of infantry during the Civil War in the United States and they were given less rations. Well, guess what - the same thing happened with these men in Canada in 1916, there were less rations. When they were going overseas, they were put on ships with no convoy to protect them so if any of the enemy ships were going to fight them, there would be no protection for them, they would be sunk at sea.

Also, as a personal matter, one of the members of the battalion was my great uncle, his name was Benson Cromwell. He was 16 when he joined - you had to be 18; he lied, a

lot of them did. So he went overseas with the impression that he would get all the medical assistance he required and everything that was due all other soldiers. On the passage he became sick and he had consumption - today it is called pneumonia - and because there was no penicillin on the ship for Black soldiers, he died before he reached France. So it has a personal effect on my family, so you see there are a lot of connections.

These men came from various parts of Canada and also, this is very unusual, a contingent came from the United States. So as you look at the muster rolls, you'll see that there are some members who were born in Alabama or Mississippi, or Illinois or whatever United States there are, and they came to Canada to join. As you may recall, the United States did not join the First World War until 1917, so Black men were so patriotic to fight for their country that they joined the Canadian Army instead of their own U.S. Army.

This is a unique part of history as well, people are aware of that and the historians are still raving about that, a very powerful impression of the bravery of these men who wanted to serve, given the fact that they weren't treated as true men, they were considered second class. The reason I use those words - second class - is because the name of that battalion was No. 2 Construction Battalion.

Now, if you think about that, there was no other war before that, that that battalion served in, so why would they call them No. 2? Well, the No. 1 Battalion was all white men and they were called the engineers. So they changed the name and gave these men the name No. 2 and they called it a construction battalion - think about that. So it demeaned them, that they were what they called the hired help - the servants. They gave them picks, they gave them shovels, they gave them saws and they gave them axes - no guns. So what do you do? You go and dig trenches, you build barracks, you take care of the lumber yards and you serve building the train tracks and you become the medical details and you plant the land mines without any protection from your enemies.

So this was rampant during the First World War. Many of the relatives that I have who came back from overseas and some lived to be in their late 90s, did not want to talk about it. So the reason they didn't talk about it is, they were never given any recognition. My grandfather never got a medal, he never came back home with his chest stuck out with a medal that he served for this No. 2 Construction Battalion. He had his hat badge and that's what he had and we were lucky to get that. But these were things that were, again, the insults to injury that these men suffered.

I'm going to fast-forward now, just really quickly, to one of my mentors, who, God rest his soul, is no longer with us - the late Senator Calvin Ruck. As a result of my working with the Black Cultural Society and the Centre, as you know, I was privy to a lot of information from great people. Senator Ruck turned me on to this battalion and how they were never recognized officially by the Government of Canada. It took a number of years, approximately four years, to get some attention to the matter from the Government of Canada and the military, as well.

Then in 1993, in Pictou, Nova Scotia, on July 10th, we had the actual first ceremony ever in recognition of the Black battalion. For the record, at that time there were only eight men left to serve as the official party for that time. Just to backtrack a little bit - prior to that, in 1982, there was a recognition dinner held, and that was the Black Cultural Society's first dinner for the Black battalion veterans. At that time there were 10 of them still alive.

As we see, the history is very important, that we make the best of it at the time. Timing is crucial. When it comes to age, we have no guarantees of that. We have this wonderful group of men who served overseas, never got recognized, came back and died off, virtually unknown to most people. Once we had the recognition, people came from all across Canada. Since that time, we've had numerous different levels of society come to Pictou every summer, in July, to fulfill our request to honour these Black men who served their country well.

What I would like to say, though, is that we've done it without any financial support. We were very much in denial about how this would blossom. We didn't recognize, even ourselves, how powerful the message was to the people out there, because of the military connection around this country. This is not a provincial event, this is a national event. Many people aren't aware of the magnitude it has on people's psychic abilities to feel that they're part of it.

So, across the country, we've had people from Vancouver to Newfoundland, and some people have come from the United States. One year we even had the Tuskegee Airmen, a couple of them drove up from Miami, Florida, just for this event. We've also had letters from General Colin Powell, when he was the Chief of Staff. He wanted to come to the event. He wrote to us, and because of the Gulf War, he couldn't make it.

We have recognition on a world scale here, and yet in our province and somewhat in our country, there wasn't the same kind of impact made. We're very much happy with the results of our persistence, however. This year we still continue to plan our event on July 7, 2007. We will have it in Pictou again, at the deCoste Centre. Our budget, just really hardcore financial patterns here, is we started out with a budget of \$500 for this event. Our budget has now escalated to about \$3,000. That's mainly from donations. All the volunteers we get from the military and others in the community, they do it for the grace of God in their own heart to take part in it. We've had some blessings from corporate entities to give funds for certain - transportation or receptions.

We have a lot of people who want to come from the province, but because of financial matters, we can't afford a bus to bring them in. A lot of the veterans - Mr. Paris, his dad, John Paris is a veteran. A lot of times, he comes on his own. I think he's missed one, if I recall correctly, in all the ones we've had since 1993, and we've had them every year. He's very faithful. There are other members like that, as well, but there are very few Second World War vets left, as you know. That's something they look forward to. Mr. Paris can attest to that, that his dad looks forward to coming to the Black battalion celebration every year. He's there with bells on, as we say.

That whole effect on what people have seen here has really blossomed. I must add, too, that it has become a very diverse group. Last summer we had over 500 people show up at the deCoste Centre. It was amazing, we had to bring in chairs and it was a diverse audience. So we always say that this is not for Black people, it is for everyone, it is about the Black battalion. We found that most people recognized that fact even more so than ever.

I just wanted to look at how history really does impact people and if you refer to Page 17, if you have your booklets with the little write-ups in it, it talks on Page 17, about the site chosen is the Market Wharf in Pictou. I'll just refer to that real quick, it served as the original headquarters for the No. 2 Construction Battalion and since 1987 the initiative to acquire national recognition for the battalion has been pursued, with the co-operation of the Town of Pictou.

[1:30 p.m.]

So as a result of them co-operating with the Black Cultural Society, the Pictou Town Council declared the Market Wharf an historic property. You see, that's the partnership - that's the connection that we wanted to continue today. The No. 2 Construction Battalion reflects the strong determination of Black men, as we indicated, and recruitment across the provinces was, hopefully, going to be 1,000. As you see, 600-plus members came but today - just to fast forward again - is the fact that more and more Black people have recognized the military as being an option for recruitment and that's where the military has really stepped up to help us with this event every year - they see it as a potential for recruitment. So there's a lot of segues and a lot of connections that can be made.

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada played an important role, as you know, and of course through historians Dr. Margaret Conrad and Mr. David States and many others who supported us and became active in this, making this an historical site. So I agree with you when you understand the impact of having a large group here today but I'm very keen to come back and to talk to a larger group, hopefully, you'll spread the word - word of mouth is the best advertisement - that I'm pretty good at presentations and that people weren't leaving before it finished. So they can come and listen to some history that is making a difference in our society.

What you have to realize too, ladies and gentlemen, is that Canada's history is still being written. I think if you look at the real world, there are things that happen that we're all connected to. Let me tell you a little story in that regard. Because of this Black battalion recognition, there was a film made by Anthony Sherwood and it was called Honour Before Glory. This was the history of the No. 2 Construction Battalion.

Two men were re-enacted in the movie - one was Reverend William White, the Captain, the honorary Captain; and the other one was a Dr. Dan Murray. Now if you recognize that name Murray, you might think about a lady by the name of Anne Murray, the Springhill songbird, right? So when you think about Anne Murray, you say, well what's the connection? Well, Dr. Dan Murray was Anne Murray's grandfather. He served in No.

2 Construction Battalion and he befriended Reverend Captain William White. You may have heard of Lorne White, who is the son of Reverend White. Well, he is still alive today and he and Anne Murray sang together on a show on CBC-TV, called Singalong Jubilee. You may have heard of it, you may have even watched it. So when they were singing together, they befriended each other and what is so amazing about this is that they never talked about their backgrounds, neither one said there was any connection to each other.

So as time went on, they just became friends and went their separate ways. One made much more money than the other. So, when the time came for this movie to happen, Anthony Sherwood and I talked about the history, and I mentioned to him about Reverend White and Colonel Daniel Sutherland. Dr. Murray was connected, and he set it up in his movie that Anne Murray and Lorne would be introduced to their ancestry on the set. It was a real Oprah Winfrey moment. People saw the connection. Tears were shed. Dr. Murray and Reverend White were connected all those years before, and now Anne and Lorne, in the present day. It's one of the really special parts of the movie that you may have seen or hopefully we see in the near future, that connects two cultures, almost behind the scene. You never know who you may be somehow connected with.

That touched me, it touched the people who saw it. You can see how things have changed since then, because about two years after that, guess who shows up at the Pictou Monument celebration? Anne Murray. She came, not because she was invited, because she wanted to be there. It just so happened that she was vacationing nearby. She took it upon herself to contact us and say, I'm coming to your battalion celebration in memory of my grandfather. It was very low-profile. A lot of the audience didn't know Anne Murray was going to show up until she came in with her family and took her seat, and was not given much recognition or hoopla until the latter part of the ceremony.

Just to let you know, there are people like that who have been touched by this event. This is what we call a grandiose event. I always like to use the term Mickey Mouse - it's not a Mickey Mouse event. I daresay probably Mickey Mouse would show up at some point, too, to the event. We are very proud of this whole event that we've put together with bare bones or very little funds to do anything. My plea, I guess you could say, to you is to look at some way of maybe earmarking some funds to help this to be even better than before. The reason I say that is that this year is the Black Cultural Society's 30th Anniversary - 1977. We're going to kind of jumpstart that, probably in July with even a little more hoopla, it's like that 7/7/7 going on here. You have 30 years, in 1977, we were born, it's July 7th, the event, and guess what, it's 2007. Maybe we have a lucky strike going on. It's my lucky number, anyway.

We're trying to look at how this can really blossom and bloom into something that's even more spiritual than ever before. We need the help because we want to bring in young people this year, from across this province, to recognize their ancestry. A lot of the times we forget how our youth don't see their role models, close to them, in the light that they should. They'll recognize the latest basketball players or the latest hockey players or the latest football players or even hip-hop or whatever you can think of, but they don't

recognize the people who are in their own families. We're trying to bring in youth this year, to have them take part in it.

We have cadets every year, don't get me wrong, but we need more than just those children - we need other children who maybe aren't as fortunate as some others, who just can't afford to get to that event. We would like to arrange it through the province, maybe get in touch with some of the schools at an earlier time to arrange school buses to bring them in. So there will be some way to say, look, we want you there, we want you to be part of this, and learn about our past in a significant way.

Those are some of the things that I wanted to just touch on really quick. I'm not sure of my time. It's very important to recognize how we, in peacetime, must pay homage, as well. Paying homage is important to our history of knowledge. Knowledge is power. Whatever we think, we're not here by ourselves, we've come on the backs of our ancestors to get to where we are today. We must always pay respect to them and see them in a better light. How to do that? Well, do it in a celebratory way, to make sure that they are never forgotten.

With the No. 2 Construction Battalion there has been a major change of insight in the military, and I'll tell you how. One of the men that I've worked with, who has come on board in the last four years - his name is Kevin Junor. Now, he was born in Jamaica, he now lives in Toronto, and he is an equity officer for the military. I just got a call from him actually on Monday and he asked me about the Black Battalion celebration this year and he said, well sorry, Henry, I won't be able to make it. I said, what's happening, Kevin, you're off to some place? He just laughed and I said, what are you laughing for and he said, well, I'm going to Freetown, Sierra Leone for six months and I'm leaving next month. What? You're going where? Freetown, Sierra Leone for a six-month stint with the military to help with the equity development there.

Now think about that for a second. There is a connection with Freetown, Sierra Leone in Nova Scotia. For those who don't know, in 1792 Black Nova Scotians sailed to Sierra Leone from Halifax on January 15th, and guess what? They founded Freetown, there is a Nova Scotia connection there. So Halifax is already in the history of Freetown, Sierra Leone and Kevin Junir is going there to even up the ante on that.

He is also a Maroon descendant. Now what does that mean? Well, the Maroons were the freedom fighters of Jamaica in the 1790s. So in 1796, they came to Halifax - they were exiled - and they helped reconstruct the third citadel, not too far from here, and helped with the Government House as well as Province House construction, and in 1800 were sent where? To Freetown, Sierra Leone. So he's going to check his roots. He has nothing on Oprah, though. So there's the whole connection that you feel here and he said because of the Black Battalion, because of the history that we had made with this commemoration, that's why the military has taken a second look at looking outside the box of the military eyes.

I feel very proud about mentioning that because it just came at the right time, before Mr. Paris asked me to come for this event. This is meant to be, you see, the ducks are lining up. So I want this to be taken seriously, and I know you will. There are a lot of things I could be doing right now, getting ready for the Governor General on Monday, and that's a non-stop event, but I wanted to be here. I didn't want to cancel. I didn't want to say I couldn't make it for whatever reason and again, it doesn't matter how many are here, you are the ones who are going to have to carry the ball for me, to make something happen for the better, and in memory of our forefathers and mothers who have made the path for us.

The final thing I wanted to say is that this is not the end of it, we're trying to make even more connections in partnerships. A lot of the things that you see around you, like this brochure, for example, is a partnership with Western Union and also one of our hotels, Ramada Hotel. So it's always important to look at how things can be connected there.

We had to find funds for this brochure, even though we do have some provincial funding for it. PR is very important, promotional work is very important. So for all that surrounds the whole veterans affairs matters, we need to connect more with other groups of people who may not know where they can fit in.

So again, I really thank you from the bottom of my heart for giving me the chance to say what I have to say and I hope that we'll continue the relationship. Any questions?

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Dr. Bishop. We'll open it up now if anybody has any questions. Mr. Colwell.

KEITH COLWELL: Well, as I said at the beginning, I think it's important that you come back as soon as possible, to the full committee. I think this is information that the committee should all be aware of. We will carry the message and, as you know, I will and I know my colleagues will as well to their caucuses, but I think it's better to have you back as soon as possible to make sure that the full committee gets this message and gets it very clearly. It's a very distinct message.

Just one other quick question. What's the highest-ranking Canadian officer that has ever been to one of your events in Pictou?

HENRY BISHOP: The highest ranking was a Lieutenant-Colonel. We're still waiting for the Brigadier-General. He does know about it, but we haven't gotten him here yet.

KEITH COLWELL: What section of the Armed Forces is that with?

HENRY BISHOP: That would be the Army.

KEITH COLWELL: And what, particularly in the Army, did they do?

HENRY BISHOP: They were engineers. Last year's was the 100th Anniversary of the engineers, which would have been the No. 1 Construction Battalion. They were very big on trying to set the record straight, and they sent a Lieutenant-Colonel.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a question? Mr. Paris.

[1:45 p.m.]

PERCY PARIS: Mr. Chairman, I don't know if it's so much a question but more in the way of a comment. I thank Dr. Bishop for being here. I think I echo the sentiments of all my colleagues - I'm sorry that there's not a full house as someone who has tried to get to Pictou during this event - although, unfortunately, I haven't been able to make it as often as my dad makes it. I think it's even more important and incumbent on me, because I provide probably the main source of dad's transportation these days. I'll see you in July as usual.

I just want to state, I think, for those who have never been there, that the event itself, when one goes, it's such an emotional day from the time you arrive there until even while you're driving back home, wherever home may be. Certainly there have been people from all over. I've met people from the U.S. and certainly from all over Canada. It just seems the atmosphere in the Town of Pictou just sort of comes alive, more so that day than any other day, but saying that as a non-resident of Pictou. I can certainly feel the excitement.

I just want to say, Dr. Bishop, that you're right on the money, right on the mark on how significant this day is, not only to survivors of the Construction Battalion, but for all Nova Scotians, indeed Canadians. If it wasn't for the Nova Scotia No. 2 Construction Battalion - they fulfilled a role, a necessary role. Regardless of the indignities they suffered, they still did it and they did it very well.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Dunn.

PATRICK DUNN: In our conversation prior to the meeting, you were talking about the possibility of making a visit to the North Nova Education Centre in April. I believe the person I may have been talking to was Liz Ferris; she's on the school advisory council. I would very much like to see you visit the school and talk to as many students as possible, who attend that school. They have a presentation centre which will hold approximately 300 students at any given time. They have three grade levels at that schools - Grades 10, 11 and 12. Since the event is so close to where they live, any information they can receive would certainly be very beneficial. I would look forward to your visit there.

HENRY BISHOP: We can definitely arrange information being disseminated to them as part of the curriculum. Sometimes they forget that this history is citizenship, too. So the new curriculum states that children should be more aware of what citizens do for the right reasons. So this is a good part of that.

Just to mention, to pick up on what Mr. Paris has said, the Pictou Town has now put us as part of the lobster festival. It's kind of comical to think of it that way, but the lobster festival is a grandiose festival of the summer. When we first started it, they didn't want anything to do with that. They were sort of like, oh yes, you can have your little Mickey Mouse affair and we'll do our lobster festival over here. But now it's connected, and on their brochure they mentioned the Black Battalion tribute as a special part of the Lobster Carnival. So I think that's a growth process right there. A lot of people, as Percy says, feel differently about the thing now. We're not looked at with four or five glances anymore when we show up in Pictou.

PATRICK DUNN: Did you say July 7th?

HENRY BISHOP: July 7th, this year. We usually try to have it on the first Saturday in July after the July 1st commemoration day.

PERCY PARIS: I do have a question. I also want to clarify and as I've been told a number of times, this committee - we have a role, but certainly we don't have a pot of money that we have access to. However, that's not saying we can't put forward recommendations and suggestions.

You mentioned, Dr. Bishop, that your budget had escalated to \$3,000 and I'm amazed that with the \$3,000 that's the show you put on. My question is, if you had your dream, if money was no - how much money would it take for you to do all those things that you mentioned, like the busing and having more youth? What is your . . .

HENRY BISHOP: Well, a good question. The person who really does most of that is the accountant who looks at what we spent out, even though it's what we call volunteer time, and estimated about \$25,000 that really, if we had a financial pot, it would cost us that much to put that event on every year, but everybody volunteers so their time is gratis. If we were able to get support in some way up to \$20,000 or \$15,000, we could really shake the roof of the deCoste Centre and I think people would come out in droves to see it. I don't think we could hold it in the deCoste Centre probably anymore - may have to go outside, if weather permits. We used to have it outside.

Again, it would be a lot more quality event, we could do a lot more information dissemination, we could probably do a virtual show of it on the Internet, so you could actually give people at home, or wherever, shut-ins, a chance to see it, or have DVDs done like the Nova Scotia Tattoo. All these things are grandiose but if you don't think big, you'll never get big. That's why we want to do things professionally, because it's a first-class, world-class event and people come out because of that and it's free. We don't want to start charging because we know that people are going to have problems with transportation and whatever else. We ask for donations, so people do give us whatever they can afford and we use that to support whatever needs we have.

THE CHAIR: Actually I had a few questions, if you don't mind, Dr. Bishop. I don't know if you can answer this or not, but have you made any official requests from others - maybe the federal or provincial government - towards funding for the celebration?

HENRY BISHOP: In the past we have.

THE CHAIR: Have you received some?

HENRY BISHOP: No.

THE CHAIR: I think as Mr. Paris said earlier, this committee is unique. Actually, we're the only province in the country that actually has a Veterans Affairs Committee at the provincial level. I think a lot of the members here want to be involved in this committee and we try to bring forward many different organizations, like yourselves and the organizations you're associated with, to hopefully advocate, really, on their behalf. So today we cannot make a motion, but we'll definitely bring it back for another discussion. But a motion could be brought forward to try to encourage, suggest and recommend that government look at this celebration, and I'm sure the members here will advocate for that. So that's a guarantee from myself, our caucus and I'm sure the other two caucuses that are here. So we'll do that.

HENRY BISHOP: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Are there any other questions for Dr. Bishop today? No. So I do appreciate it and thank you for coming in today. I know we all are quite busy, especially from your involvement not only with this celebration and with the Black Cultural Centre, but with your other endeavours. So I thank you again, and we will look forward to hopefully having you return quickly for another presentation. I think some motions, suggestions or recommendations can be followed through at that time. I thank you for that.

HENRY BISHOP: Thank you very much, appreciate it.

THE CHAIR: I guess I call the Veterans Affairs Committee adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 1:52 p.m.]