

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Thursday, March 8, 2007**

**Committee Room 1**

**Nova Scotia No. 2 Construction Battalion**

**Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services**

**VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

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

[Patrick Dunn was replaced by Alfie MacLeod.]

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry  
Legislative Committee Clerk

**WITNESS**

Black Cultural Centre

Dr. Henry Bishop  
Executive Director



**HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 2007**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**9:00 A.M.**

CHAIR  
Stephen McNeil

THE CHAIR: If I could call the meeting to order. I want to thank and welcome Dr. Bishop for coming. I wanted to extend the apologies of the committee for last month. There were a number of things happening and MLAs were away, so we really appreciate the fact that you came back and are going to give us a great presentation today.

Before we start I will ask the committee to introduce themselves.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Dr. Bishop, the floor is yours.

DR. HENRY BISHOP: Thank you very much. Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to be back, I guess you could call this a second coming. (Laughter)

A lot of things have transpired since the last time we had the pleasure of meeting but I'm very happy to be here again and a little worse for the weather, but bear with me, I think I can get through it. The other benefit of coming today is that I just came from a meeting yesterday with the military of the DND, they had a special event in honour of African Heritage Month. I was invited to attend that and it was well received.

There is a lot of attention given now, as we all know, about the Fenton Medal. As you can see, the media is here, I think as a result of that. At this stage, I would like to just say for the record - we are not giving any interviews about the medal. We are still waiting to gather funds for it and it is still an ongoing process, but we are looking at doing a press conference in the near future to explain all that has gone on since finding out about this very interesting situation with the Percy Fenton Victory Medal on eBay.

So I am here today really to talk about the Number 2 Construction Battalion. For those who weren't here the last time - possibly a month ago - I brought this wonderful photograph of the No. 2 Construction Battalion which is very clear to establish what these men were about, in terms of if you look at the different groups that appear in the photograph. This was in 1916 and I am sure you all know that the First World War was in 1914; however, due to racism and issues relating to Black men being given an opportunity to fight for their country, they were denied access at the recruiting offices. However, it took two years of lobbying and a lot of hard work and perseverance by many people, Black and white, all over the country, and they finally were able to secure a unit called the No. 2 Construction Battalion.

It is established here as four different groups, A, B, C and D, and you can see that if you look at this photograph and examine it carefully, there's something that is pretty blatantly missing, which obviously was something that had to do with these men being of African heritage. I would assume you would know what I mean when I say that, if you look at the photograph, they do not have firearms by their sides. They were not allowed to carry firearms into the war, due to the fact that there were considered a labour force. They were given instead - once they reached their destination - picks, shovels, axes and saws. That was a great insult, in many ways, to these individuals who were so patriotic and wanted to fight for their country.

One in particular, personally speaking, was my great uncle and his name was Arthur Benson Cromwell, from Weymouth Falls where I originally came from. On the way overseas, in that particular period, he had joined up at the age of 17 and when he got on the ship to go over to Halifax to overseas in France, unfortunately they didn't allow on the ship medical supplies and there wasn't a convoy to protect the ships that the Black men were on, and because of the rough seas and poor conditions, he contracted consumption, which today they call pneumonia. Unfortunately he died at the age of 17.

Just recently, in the last little while, we were able to secure some notification of where his body is, for all those years my family didn't know what happened to him. We knew he was MIA, that he was buried somewhere overseas and that was a great burden for our family to know one of our loved ones was not being honoured somewhere properly. So we finally got the information through Ottawa. I brought some information today, just to show you how things can happen, almost divine intervention, as we say in our community. This is a booklet that was produced by the National Art Gallery and at some point we can pass that around so you can see some of these individuals and the struggle they had to endure to become soldiers for this country of Canada.

Having said that, it is indeed a great honour to be a descendent of these men who served their country well. From 1916 to 1920, they were able to produce a number of great feats against incredible odds at the front lines. They were the men who dug the trenches, they were the men who built the barracks, they were the men who actually planted mines during the wars between the different groups overseas. They were also medical details who went on the battlefields and collected the wounded and buried the dead. On the other hand,

if anything happened to them negatively, if they got involved with any fighting or some drunkenness, they were put in separate detention halls. In other words, even as a criminal, they were treated as second-class. So if you think about that whole ideology behind their notion of being in the war, what were their purposes?

If you look at the name, it also indicates something, No. 2 Construction Battalion. About two years ago, we found out that the No. 1 Construction Battalion changed their name as soon as they found out that there was a Black battalion being formed and they changed their name to engineers. They didn't want a checkerboard engineering group, they called it. This was a white man's war - they plainly said that - and so they established a No. 2 Construction Battalion. If you look at it in terms of symbolism, number two means second class and that's how these men were treated. They were given less rations, less pay, less proper supplies, equipment, and they were mainly a cheaper labour force in the front lines. They did extremely hard work under deplorable conditions, by the way.

The beauty of all this, though, is they were very patriotic and very proud men. Many of them did serve on other purposes in the front lines such as Sapper Percy Fenton from Arcadia, which is near Yarmouth. He grew up on Star Road which is near the Greenville area where the Black community is today.

We have a lot of history that has been lost, stolen or strayed. Today I am here, just to attest to the fact that we are constantly trying to build credibility in our communities through giving proper insight to what has happened in the past. We cannot change the past, gentlemen and ladies, but we certainly can change the present and the future. I am here to help do that with your help as well.

The Black Cultural Centre - I am sure you all know - this year is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Actually in 1977, the Black Cultural Society was born. I am sure you know that and then from then on, we have been trying to keep afloat against the cutbacks and other issues of funds. However, the battle hasn't stopped, in our opinion. I am sure we have lost a few of the battles but we continue on to keep up the good fight. If you notice the excellent work of Mrs. Darlene Henry to bring this to your attention, the First World War unit had to battle prejudice as well as the enemy. You can see how, during the course of the history of this group, they made overtures to many of their commanding officers to improve the situations and it didn't happen often but it did happen on occasion, even as to say that when they came back home in 1919, there was no welcoming for these individuals. Many of the people I knew about in my community who had served - we had no clue that they had been overseas and made such a great contribution to the Country of Canada. Many of them didn't talk about their issues. They were afraid to talk about it, they were ashamed to talk about it. They were much like the Vietnam veterans of the United States when they came back home.

So we see today that things have to change. One of the people I would like to mention at this point is the late great Senator Calvin W. Ruck who was a mentor for me and he's the one who got me involved to help maybe set the record straight, so to speak, for the No. 2 Construction Battalion. In 1982, some of you may have been there - I think,

Mr. Paris, you were there - we had a wonderful welcoming and homecoming reunion for the surviving veterans of the No. 2 Construction Battalion. Believe you me, that was the biggest eye-opener in my whole life in terms of how these men, who had no idea that they even existed, were brought back together at the Lord Nelson Hotel. There were about 10 of them, I believe, left at that time. They were incredibly proud. They were decked out for that occasion. They brought their families there for the dinner and with the Black Cultural Society's help, we were able to give them a little token of appreciation whereas this Canadian Government didn't see fit to do that in the past.

Today, I am sure you realize that all of them have perished. They are no longer with us. Their families, of course, are still recognizing them every year at the Pictou Black battalion tribute that we have and that's wonderful to see if you have the opportunity to go there in July. This year, I call it the triple threat. It's three sevens. It's July 7, 2007. So I invite you to come to this occasion to see for yourself what has transpired since 1982, in between 1982 and today; 1993 is also a milestone I want to mention and that is when the monument was revealed to the public at that time, thanks to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Ottawa, thanks to Mr. John Paris - Percy Paris' father - and many others who had been very advent into changing the course of time, these Second World War veterans. Many of them have perished as well. Again, they came out in droves. We had over 1,500 people show up at that occasion in Pictou in 1993. It was incredible to see. We had a parade through the town.

[1:15 p.m.]

In Pictou itself, for those who know Pictou, that occasion marked the lobster festival the same weekend and for the first few years, the lobster festival was separate from the Black battalion tribute. However in the last five years - I call it seeing the light - they now joined forces with us and they promote our event as well during their lobster festival. So people come out for the double whammy. They can get lobster and our tribute is a bonus. So here we are. We are moving forward.

Again, I am emotional about this because I see there are a lot of issues that haven't been dealt with in terms of our history and we talk about value all the time and we talk about brand all the time in Canada and in Nova Scotia in particular. In our history, in our heritage, the words "value" and "brand" have a whole different concept.

If you look at the Atlantic slave trade and you see that we were valued for what? For our brawn, not for our brain.

We were valued for what? We were valued for the work that we could accomplish against the incredible systems that were put in our faces and hopefully that we would die off.

We were valued for what? We were valued because we could withstand the pain of torture and the whip. I also look at the incredible triumph that we have come through as

our ancestors were put on auction blocks and sold and yet we still continue to thrive and make a difference in society.

We still haven't got what we rightfully want in terms of value. So if you think about how this group has been given less than what they are due, we are still trying to struggle for funds and that is another issue that we are constantly trying to look for money every time we put this event on. I talked about it last time and those who weren't here, you could see how difficult it was. When we first started out we had funding and then we had no funding. We had tried to get more funding but again, it's a value.

Again to brand, when I hear that word "brand", guess what? They used irons and put on our skin and put brands on us and they scarred us for life. When you talk about a Nova Scotia brand, aren't we part of that or are we just branded? So I still find that there are issues that we have to raise about our past and get those skeletons out of the closet and maybe try to get some flesh on them and let them see what changes are necessary for the common good.

I talk about a lot of things with children and I believe that is the key why we are here on this planet, to do things for the betterment of our future and our greatest resources are children. So children have to know the truth. Today I had a class from Mount Edward school. They were Grade 5 and Grade 6 children. One of the things, when I mentioned this whole information source about the Black battalion, the hands went up to the air and said, what happened to the Fenton Medal? The children were more conscious than some adults I've met in the last few weeks. The children said, can I give you a dollar, can I give you 50 cents, can I give you 25 cents? I didn't take it - I thought about it (Laughter) - but the fact is, these children had hearts of gold.

In a contrary way, I was at this military function yesterday, as I mentioned earlier. Not one of the military people came to me and said, here is a cheque for you to help with the Fenton Medal. So what does that say? It hurt me. It made me emotional about the fact that these are military people, and yet the value and the whole aspect wasn't there. Maybe things will change now that you are hearing what I am saying. Maybe things will change for the better.

I have a few items that I brought with me today to pass around. This book, For My Country, came out about two years ago, through an organization in Ottawa which Kevin Junor was head of. It showed Canada's contribution through the Black eye or the Black community. It is in bilingual format and it shows heroes and sheroes that have made a contrast and contact in our society throughout time. This is a very valuable piece of literature and it is not in the school system. What are we doing with our educational system in that regard?

What I want to do today is appeal to you, just to give you an idea of what we're up against. We are now facing more cutbacks and we don't have a budget for this event in July. I know this committee can't offer funds, I realize that, I am not here for that reason.

I'm here just to see if we can maybe develop some kind of a plan, an action to put in place to subsequently secure something in the future.

I still feel that justice is not done, it is just us, not justice, and we're still doing things, I think, piecemeal. A case in point; when people contact me, they still do it in the context of this is African Heritage Month, or this is something that deals with Black people only. My work is not just for Black people, it is for you and everyone else. So I'm here today to appeal to your heart, as a human being, that when people called me about the medal people were saying, you know, Henry, this whole thing was a perfect storm because it made me feel that I forgot about my own ancestors. One guy from the Secretary of State called me and he was the assistant to the minister and he said, Henry, I have family who have medals and I don't even know where they are. I think we should try to find those medals. So things have changed for a lot of people.

Today I hope I have touched your heart, I hope I can touch your pocketbook, too, but it's a way to make you feel that we're in this together. There is an old saying, ladies and gentlemen, that we all came here on different ships but we're in the same boat now. So we have to find a way to change it - not for ourselves, it is for our children. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for the enlightenment. We'll open the floor up for some questions. Mr. Paris.

PERCY PARIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Dr. Bishop. I want to talk a little bit, and I don't want to get confused with the last time you were here and I know we had some questions around that, that it might be important to reiterate some of those questions and answers.

With respect to the reunion that is held in July in Pictou, do you have a budget line as to what that cost is?

HENRY BISHOP: The previous budget we had was about \$300, believe it or not. It went from there to last year, about \$1,500. That's the bare bones, that's the skeleton budget that we used. If you want me to say what kind of budget I would like to have, I'm looking at - to give it the cadillac version - about \$20,000 to do a proper job on it.

The reason I say that is because I want people from across this province to come out for the event. Many people will want to but they can't afford to, in the Black communities, other communities across the country have come to the event. It is an international event now. People have come from the United States, we have even had the Tuskegee Airmen - some drove up from Florida to be at the function, at that event in July. So it may be as you say, it is a big fund source or money but I think that it's a value again, that needs to be put forth that we can disseminate for buses and others who want to come out - children and cadets and Boys and Girls Clubs and parades. We can celebrate properly the greatness of our past, the heroes of our past.



PERCY PARIS: Can I continue, Mr. Chairman? To date, this has obviously grown into somewhat of a tourist attraction as well, so in the past years, has the committee made any requests to the Province of Nova Scotia, like to the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage or to any of the departments within government at the provincial level?

HENRY BISHOP: We made attempts through our annual budgets. We put down all our programs and we have earmarked certain funds for each program but we haven't received funds specifically for the Black battalion tribute.

PERCY PARIS: My colleague just scribbled a little crib note here to me with respect to the Ministry responsible for Military Relations, which is a new portfolio. It might be another avenue.

HENRY BISHOP: Just to add - in previous years, we went to the Department of Veterans Affairs in Ottawa and they flatly refused to give us any funds. It's like, oh no, we don't do these kind of things but we see other things that you do give for. What's the difference?

PERCY PARIS: I've been there and I think my dad has been there every year.

HENRY BISHOP: Every year, yes.

PERCY PARIS: I think I probably missed a couple of years for whatever reason. One was, I think, because of an election.

HENRY BISHOP: That's a good reason.

PERCY PARIS: Is there anyone either at the provincial or at the federal level, a political individual, because I can remember - correct me if I am wrong, but Peter Stoffer, does he make a financial contribution to this?

HENRY BISHOP: Yes.

PERCY PARIS: Is he the only one?

HENRY BISHOP: From my recollection, he's the only who has publicly acknowledged the fact that this event is crucial to our society and public relations. So he has sent letters. He has always sent letters. He has always given us a donation, which is a private donation, of course. But no other.

PERCY PARIS: When you talk about going from \$1,500 to \$20,000, that's a huge increase.

HENRY BISHOP: That's right.

PERCY PARIS: So what's your vision? You mentioned something about transportation.

HENRY BISHOP: Transportation is a big one. If you look at how much it costs to bring a group in, we had the Governor General's visit here on February 12<sup>th</sup>, as you all know. The bus that come up from Birchtown, which is in Shelburne, it cost them \$1,800 to \$2,000 for the bus just to back and forth that one day. There were 40 people on the bus. They had meals, et cetera. So at the end of the day it was about \$5,000, roughly, for their transportation and all that good stuff included. That's what, one-fourth already of \$20,000.

So there are a lot of things that you can do but you need a lot of money to do it. Transportation costs, I guess gas is going up tonight at midnight again. That's what I hear. I mean, who is fooling who here, right? Dollars don't make any sense - pardon the pun. So we have to look at how value is being placed. We all know what happened with the Commonwealth Games - a lot of money was spent. Do I need to say more?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson.

DAVID WILSON : Just a couple of questions, Dr. Bishop. I know I asked you a few last time but just for the record - I think I might have asked you this last time - but there is no charge for individuals to come to this tribute, correct?

[1:30 p.m.]

HENRY BISHOP: We don't like the idea of charging. In many cases these things, we think, should be public domain, allowing anybody to come in, child or adult. We have a donation system put in place and those who can give, will.

DAVID WILSON: We all know we celebrated the Year of the Veteran in 2005. Were you able to get any funds through either the federal or provincial government for that year?

HENRY BISHOP: That's what I just mentioned, the Department of Veterans Affairs. We did apply for that, the Year of the Veteran. They sent us the flag. They sent us some memorabilia, they sent us some handouts, some nice pins . . .

DAVID WILSON: But no money.

HENRY BISHOP: No money.

DAVID WILSON: That's good for me.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Bain.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Chairman, just to follow up on what Mr. Wilson was talking about, the Year of the Veteran, I am just wondering about the participation level. Was your battalion asked to participate in a lot of functions during the Year of the Veteran?

HENRY BISHOP: Well, I don't know a lot about what other people in the African community were asked to do for the veterans, for the Year of the Veteran. We weren't

asked anything particularly in the Black Cultural Society, but we encouraged other people to come out as a result of that and there were a lot more people coming out.

I must commend Ottawa's diversity group that came forth and they brought in some of the commanders across the country and some of the officers and they really assisted us in having a greater, robust event. So thereafter there were more people who took interest, so it was great PR.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Chairman, if I could, I guess that's one of the things that the Year of the Veteran did, I think, was make people become aware and want to know more of what actually took place. You referred to the book, *For My Country* - has there ever been an effort made through the Department of Education to include that in the history curriculum in our school system?

HENRY BISHOP: I don't believe there has been, not that I'm aware of, but again, it is something that I think we can always push the envelope on.

The reason I brought this book today is that there are people in here who are alive today. A lot of times, as historians, as we are, we look at the past, saying those are dead people. I don't believe that is the past - I believe that the past is continuous and that it is current history. A lot of these individuals even today can be role models and also be people who can be utilized by the educational system. You can bring them into the classroom and see this person alive and well. So that's the key, children need evidence of greatness. The book is great.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Chairman, I think that's why I bring it up and maybe that's something that we, as a committee, could do - to try to encourage that book as part of the history program in our schools.

HENRY BISHOP: I just want to mention, too, if I may, when again the medal situation really blew this thing out of the water, I got calls from people in Yarmouth and they were saying, what a wonderful thing, we got the medal, whatever, whatever, I didn't know anything about the No. 2 Construction Battalion. These are people in Yarmouth who have the Memorial Hospital. I mean that is what it is named after - the veterans, right? There are schools down there that are named after these veterans, but no one who called me from the communities outside of the area of the Black community knew anything about the No. 2 Battalion. What does that say? The best kept military secret. A scary thought.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Gaudet.

WAYNE GAUDET: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Bishop, I want to say I really appreciate your presentation this afternoon. I want to focus again on this tribute event - when did it start?

HENRY BISHOP: It was in July, 1993.

WAYNE GAUDET: So annually, every year it is a different program? Is it basically to remember the people who were in this battalion? Is it for family members? I'm just looking for a little bit of background.

HENRY BISHOP: It's for anybody and everyone. It's definitely for family members, definitely for the community to take and embrace the memories of these veterans. We've also had people who have come forth to be guest speakers and again showing that there are achievements in the ranks of the Black communities. We have also had children from the Cadet Corps come in and we've had women's groups come in - IODE women's groups. We've had other people come in with support from - like the Red Cross or some efforts through either Cape Breton with the UNIA, which was part of the military effort as well. These are all groups that have taken ownership for the event, so it has taken on a life of its own. It has made a big impact on Pictou because it generates revenue for their lobster festival; they love us to come down there now. I don't think they liked it too much in the first place, but that's another story.

There are a lot of issues that we cleared up, there was a lot of healing that happened. The deCoste Centre, at first we weren't allowed to use it and, all of a sudden we asked them to use it because there was a storm there one day and all of a sudden they opened the Decoste Centre to us, so every year now they say, come on back to the deCoste Centre, because it makes us real good. So it has helped that situation.

PERCY PARIS: May I piggy-back on that?

WAYNE GAUDET: Sure, go ahead.

PERCY PARIS: To help out - I've been privileged enough to attend this event on a number of occasions with my dad. My father is a former member of the 87<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

HENRY BISHOP: World War II.

PERCY PARIS: He goes to this, so do other veterans from across Canada who go to this - not necessarily who were members of the No. 2 Construction Battalion. It really has taken on a life of its own, it's a reunion. It's a reunion of veterans who took the ultimate risk in defence of their country and it's just a heartwarming event. Not only is it just a reunion but current members of the military come out to this event, in honour and recognition of past glory. I don't know if that helps any or not.

HENRY BISHOP: Also, just to add to Mr. Paris' comments, is that it is not just the military. I mean, we have the RCMP coming out now; HRM police from Halifax have showed up before. We've had people who are in civilian life who've had fallen heroes. You see, many times people forget that these men died as well, they didn't just go and dig trenches and build bridges and cut forests down - they died as well, like my great uncle. A lot of them are buried somewhere overseas, in France, or some place like that. We don't even know sometimes how many there were.

There are people who have come to me and said, Henry, I'm a collector of items and I'm an historian of military, did you know this muster roll of all these men who died overseas? Do you know any of these names? There are names like Carvery, like Cromwell, like Jackson. Those names are from my community. So people all of a sudden are tweaked, they say wow, this is a revelation, these men should be recognized.

We're trying to develop a memorial list in July this year of all the fallen heroes because a lot of people don't know. It is just a name so now we can put a picture, a face to their name and bring them back and give them some credit for what they did overseas. They paid the ultimate sacrifice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr. MacLeod.

ALFIE MACLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank you, too, for your presentation. I think the MLA for Clare sort of touched on what I was going to ask you. I was just trying to get a sense of what a typical ceremony on - this year it is going to be on July 7<sup>th</sup>, you said - what does a typical ceremony entail? What are the timelines when it starts and what takes place?

HENRY BISHOP: As you know, we all have Remembrance Day events and it is 11:00 a.m., the eleventh day, the eleventh month, right. So, as I say, the triple threat, this year is the 7<sup>th</sup>. We have it at 11:00 a.m. and we have a parade march. The parade usually starts at the RCMP office on Main Street in Pictou and they march to the deCoste Centre in formation. We have the colour guard, we have the veterans from the various Legions who come and these are all different nationalities and backgrounds who come out and they all march. We have the IODE, the women's groups and the cadets from North Preston and other places that come out.

They all gather up and we have a crowd of thousands of people on either side of the streets and they cordon off the streets now. They didn't do that before, so now Pictou says no, no, there are no boat races, there are no cart races. They cut the street off, they let us march down and we march into the deCoste Centre and we have our event. The event is usually opened with a military band. This year, we've been lucky to have the Cornwallis Band come up. We used to have the Stadacona Band - they have the Nova Scotia Tattoo, right - so we can't have that. We have another group that comes in and these are young people who play wonderfully - Mr. Paris has seen that before.

Then we have a speaker and it is usually somebody who comes in on their own. Last year we had a gentleman from Calgary. He was born in New Glasgow and it was his first time home in 20 years. His friend - Mr. Paris again - called me up and said Henry, this guy should be speaking next year. I said okay, whatever - no cost, right? No charge? He said sure, so he flew him in and he stayed overnight and he was happy about this history lesson. He didn't know about the No. 2 Battalion himself and he was a military man for X number of years. So that history again is being relived and rejuvenated.

That is the excitement you see there. You have to come because when people go there, they are never the same again. They are changed. The Tuskegee Airmen - I am not sure if you heard of the Tuskegee Airmen - they drove up because they had heard about it through guess who? General Colin Powell, because he wanted to come when he first heard about it. Unfortunately, because of the Gulf War, he had to go there but he sent a letter and he said listen, Senator Ruck, I definitely want to be here but due to this situation I can't. We have the letter on file.

So you can see that there are a lot of people, big names have come out and I will share this with you really quickly before I forget. There were two individuals in the No. 2 Construction Battalion who were very prominent and they were Reverend William White - I am sure you have heard of him, he was minister of the Cornwallis Street Baptist Church here in Halifax for many years - and when he joined the No. 2 Construction Battalion, he became the first Black captain in the British Commonwealth. Also, there were no Black officers besides Captain White. They wouldn't allow any Black men to be an officer except for Reverend White. How ironic is that?

The other members who were officers, one of them was a very prominent individual. A person you may have heard of is, of course, the Springhill songbird - it was her grandfather and his name was Dan Murray. So Dan Murray is Anne Murray's grandad. Reverend White is Lorne White's father - Portia White, Yvonne White. So during the First World War, Dan Murray, he was an MD, a doctor, became bosom buddies with Reverend William White and they used to stop the fights in the camps against the white and the Black guys. So Reverend White and Dan Murray said, let's be comrades and we will show what this war is all about. This is truth testimony. So during the course of some incidents, Reverend White and Dr. Murray would come out and stand side by side and say, you guys shouldn't be fighting over this or doing this or whatever, and Dr. Murray was the only white doctor to help out with the medical, he would take care of them.

There was a movie that was done by Anthony Sherwood a few years ago, it's called Honour Before Glory. I am sure you have heard of it and maybe have seen it on television and that movie shows how these individuals got together and they brought Anne Murray and Lorne White together to watch the movie and neither one of them knew about their ancestors' connection and there were tears shed when they were brought together to talk about this whole reunion process that took place. So it just shows you how history is impacting people of today, how they have changed up about it and, as a result of that, just to follow up what I am saying, I am trying to recall this stuff in my head here - it's going a mile a minute.

Anne Murray showed up at one of the events that we had. We didn't know she was coming. She knew Anthony Sherwood was going to be there and Anthony Sherwood had the movie, we were going to reveal the movie, Percy, and then the movie came and next thing you know, we walked out the door and we saw this little lady coming in. That's Anne Murray! And everybody was like, what? Anne Murray is here? People didn't see the movie yet so when the part came where Anne Murray and Lorne talk about their ancestors, it was

like, oh my, that's amazing, Anne Murray is here and she stands up and waves to the crowd but she didn't want any fanfare, she didn't want any recognition. She said, I wanted to be here to see how people reacted. It was powerful and that's the kind of stuff, let's put it this way, you don't know what you don't know. Then people come there and they see this stuff and they say, wow, we aren't so different after all, folks.

ALFIE MACLEOD: You say, you don't know what you don't know. In this business, every day, people tell us what we don't know. (Laughter)

HENRY BISHOP: Well, you know a little more now.

ALFIE MACLEOD: I will tell you, I have learned a lot today. I really enjoyed what you had to say. It's amazing. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Paris, did you have another question?

[1:45 p.m.]

PERCY PARIS: At your discretion, Mr. Chairman, at some point I would like to put forward a motion.

THE CHAIR: First I will go to Mr. Bain, who had wanted to put forward a motion in your comments earlier.

KEITH BAIN: Yes, sure, okay. Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee encourage the Department of Education to include the book, *For My Country*, as part of the history curriculum in our schools.

THE CHAIR: Could I have a seconder for that motion? Mr. Wilson seconds. Is there any discussion on the motion?

WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Chairman, I think the motion should read something to the effect that this committee encourages the minister to review the book and to consider maybe . . .

KEITH BAIN: Yes, and I realize that the department would have to review the book anyway, I guess, that's why - just as part of the process, so whatever the wording of it is, to consider and review the book to be included in the curriculum . . .

THE CHAIR: So we should consider this a friendly amendment?

KEITH BAIN: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Is there any further discussion on the motion?

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

The motion is carried.

Mr. Paris.

PERCY PARIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to put forth a motion that we, as a committee, write a letter to the Premier requesting not only endorsement of the annual No. 2 Construction Battalion reunion, which is held in Pictou, but urging our provincial government to financially support the initiative as well.

THE CHAIR: Do we have a seconder for that motion? Mr. Zinck seconds. Any discussion on the motion?

ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Chairman, I just wonder, where we have a Minister of Military Relations, should this not go to him?

PERCY PARIS: My feeling is that it probably should go to the Premier and maybe a cc to some appropriate members within Cabinet, or maybe to all Cabinet members. That's just my thought.

DAVID WILSON: Just from past experience, I know that we've sent correspondence to the minister and we all know that he doesn't have any budget in his department so maybe with it going to the Premier, he can designate or maybe find a department that might have some funds that would assist in this tribute for the battalion.

TREVOR ZINCK: Perhaps we could also cc it to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Heritage as well.

THE CHAIR: We can cc it to a number of the Cabinet Ministers - just a question, if you're okay with the fact that we'll send it to the Premier. We'll leave the motion as it stands. Is there any further discussion on the motion?

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

The motion is carried.

Is there any further discussion?

Dr. Bishop, thank you very much for coming in and educating us. That is really what this is about. Your entire presentation was wonderful, but what was interesting was when you talked about Colin Powell knowing about your event and many Nova Scotians not knowing about it. It is shame on us that we need to spread the word.

I was especially pleased to hear when you talked about July 7<sup>th</sup> and then you referenced Remembrance Day being the eleventh and the eleventh hour, that you weren't going to say July 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 a.m., I was a little worried for a minute there. (Laughter)



Thank you once again for coming in and hopefully, we can all learn from Dr. Murray and Reverend White and be the force that helps move us and bring us closer together as a province.

HENRY BISHOP: If I may, Mr. Chairman, one quick thing just as an afterthought, just so that the military is stepping up to the plate, as we say, they have been trying to get more recruiting from the African Canadian communities and African Nova Scotian communities.

One of the issues that was addressed just recently is that they now have occupied a small area in the Black Cultural Centre where they send a recruiting officer every Thursday, which is today, to actually talk about possibilities of options in the military. It is pretty low profile right now but we do have some interesting factors happening with young people coming out and saying, I didn't know I could do this, I can get this opportunity to further my education through the military. It is a reflection of the No. 2 Construction Battalion's tribute. This didn't happen because it just came out of the blue, people started talking.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Bain.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Chairman, if I could, we talked about it being an education for us and I was really surprised when I looked at this article here that back around the time of the First World War that there were 20,000 Blacks in Canada and 7,000 of them were in Nova Scotia. That's amazing but I guess it's probably because of our port and everything.

HENRY BISHOP: The annual migrations over the course of 350 years or so.

KEITH BAIN: When you consider that one-third were in this province, across the country . . .

HENRY BISHOP: We are the oldest Black community in Canada.

KEITH BAIN: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Thank you once again, Dr. Bishop.

HENRY BISHOP: Over and out.

THE CHAIR: For the committee, we have some business to deal with. I don't know if Dr. Bishop wants a few minutes to pack up. We could give him a few minutes or do you want to continue now? Okay, we can just continue.

In front of you, you will see a witness list that was presented by the PC caucus. I don't know if anyone has anything else they wanted to add to that.

WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Chairman, Darlene may recall some years ago we had someone, and I can't remember who it was, I think it is something that would probably be helpful for all of us. We were talking about memorial stones, tombstones for veterans.

THE CHAIR: Last Post Fund.

WAYNE GAUDET: Last Post Fund, that is what it is called?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

WAYNE GAUDET: If we maybe had someone come in to give us . . .

DARLENE HENRY: The last people we had in regarding that was Veterans Affairs Canada, I think.

WAYNE GAUDET: This was a number of years ago, I recall someone was in.

DARLENE HENRY: I can check back in my records.

WAYNE GAUDET: Recently I had a question that came up at home.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to have that added?

WAYNE GAUDET: Yes, add it to the list, please.

THE CHAIR: The Last Post Fund. Okay. Does anyone have anything else they want to add to that list?

There is one on here, the last one at the very bottom, caucus had put on there for Veterans Affairs Canada, re why can't smaller VAC units be placed in nursing homes? Would it be okay with your caucus if we just wrote a letter, perhaps, to Veterans Affairs Canada asking them about that specific question as opposed to bringing them in to deal with that? I think it's just a straightforward question.

KEITH BAIN: It's just a question to get an answer for, sure.

THE CHAIR: Does anyone have a preference in what order we call these committee groups in?

ALFIE MACLEOD: I saw an invitation list recently for Korean naval veterans and I am just trying to remember what it was - isn't that something? I just read it in the last couple of days but there is some kind of a reunion they are having between two military groups and it might be interesting to find out a little more what that is all about. I can't remember it right off the bat. Maybe I could forward it to you.

WAYNE GAUDET: Maybe if there are any suggestions that members have, maybe we could raise those at the next meeting. I would certainly be comfortable to allow yourself and Darlene, whoever is available to come in next. I am comfortable with that. There is no sense of prioritizing.

THE CHAIR: That was my hope, that we would just allow Darlene and I to contact that list because we need to have a little bit of flexibility for the groups as they come in. So if everybody is comfortable with that, that is what we will do. We will inform you when the next meeting is.

Also, you have in front of you a letter that we received from the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations regarding the Remembrance Day Act. I don't know if anyone has any questions regarding that. They have agreed to supply some information to help promote and educate businesses on the Remembrance Day Act. So that is a positive.

Is there any further business for the committee?

The committee is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 1:55 p.m.]