



William Parish is seen at the center of ADHS Alumni's 50th anniversary of the school's Student Parliament. The first Prime Minister, Bruce Stone, is seen on his left and the present Prime Minister at that time, Antje Baumann Earl on his right.

CELEBRATING 70 YEARS OF THE ADHS STUDENT PARLIAMENT

By Sally Smid

Atthens District High School may be small, but it is distinguished in many big ways, apart from having graduated many famed alumni, perhaps little known prominence is that ADHS has the oldest continuous Student Parliament in Canada! This year the school celebrates the 70th year of their Parliament, along with a large homecoming event in June.

that would form a student parliament in which the members of the "House of Commons" would be elected by the students. Executive decisions would be carried out through a "Cabinet" which would have authority over all extra-curricular activities and student activities. It originally met in the cafeteria until the new gymnasium was built.

Mr. D. C. Crowe was also instrumental in



From left, ADHS Student Parliament Prime Minister Zach Tedford and Speaker of the House Nicholas Brunshaw, holding the ceremonial mace, pose

The teacher that initiated the idea of a Student Parliament was William Parish, who went on to be a school administrator and has many fond memories of Athens. Parish wrote a letter to former ADHS Prime Minister Evelyn Saunders 20 years ago in preparation for the Parliament's 50th anniversary. In it he explained about his decision in instituting such a plan of student government. "I wanted students to learn through direct practical experience about how our Canadian Parliamentary system and politics work by forming political parties and having students make real choices," explained Parish. He also felt that it would help students to be more involved and accountable in the operation of student affairs. He noted: "The fact that the ADHS Student Parliament has continued successfully for so many years is a tribute to past students, teachers, and principals who have worked to maintain it and it also says a lot about all of the people in the school's community." He attended the 50th anniversary, but now in his 90s, he is not able to attend the upcoming celebration.

Parish was a history teacher 70 years ago, when he took his students to Ottawa to sit in on a session of Parliament and to meet with a few members of Parliament including John Diefenbaker. After the trip students returned with enthusiasm about creating a constitution

launching the Parliament. A speech that he delivered in 1954 indicated his pleasure with its success after 3 years. "Our Parliament has grown from an experiment to the best run, most powerful, democratic and widely known student government in Ontario!" he proclaimed. It's interesting to note that the ADHS parliament system was later recognized in an article in Maclean's Magazine.

ADHS' Parliament still consists of two parties, the Blue and the Gold. The school has held regular parliamentary sessions since 1947, meeting on the last Wednesday of the month and the individual parties have regular planning meetings. Zach Tedford is the current Prime Minister. When asked about how the ADHS Parliament might compare to the one in Ottawa he responded, "Ours is quieter." A visit to a session would reveal that it also seems much more orderly in many ways, with decisions being made in a speedy and efficient manner. Students also seem in

Branshaw, holding the ceremonial mace, pose together following a recent session of Parliament.

agreement that most student "ministers" feel the pressure when they report in parliamentary sessions and strive to be accountable and follow through with promised tasks knowing they will be confronted at parliamentary sessions. Leaders of both the party in power and opposition are elected by a majority vote. There are about a dozen ministries with specific mandates including athletics, staff-student relations, publicity and finance. The school's civic classes help provide preparation for student parliament and underclassmen gain an understanding of its operation from their attendance in the gallery. There is also a staff adviser that helps in organizing elections and assists the Speaker of the House.

For 70 years the ADHS Parliament has been an effective way of bringing civics classes to life as well as preparing students for their future roles as Canadian citizens. **LH**

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Athens District High School Homecoming, including the 70th anniversary of Parliament, will take place June 10th weekend and will include an open house, golf, displays and more. You can register on line at <http://www.adhs2017.weebly.com/> or purchase tickets for \$20 at the Athens Municipal Office. Visit the ADHS Homecoming 2017 Facebook page.