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To the Members of Convocation of the University of Toronto:

GENTLEMEN,—

When I asked you five years ago to elect me as one of your representatives on the Senate of the University, I explained to you the objects I had in view, and the nature of the academical reforms I wished to promote. Now that I am asking you to re-elect me, I cannot better indicate the line of policy I desire to pursue in the future than by explaining my attitude during the past five years towards the questions that have come before the Senate.

A brief survey of our recent academical legislation may serve a useful purpose in other respects, since the Senate's proceedings do not obtain that amount of publicity which is desirable in the interest of the University. Before I became a member of that body I held strongly to the view that its meetings should be open to at least the members of Convocation, and five years' experience has but deepened that conviction. There is nothing in the nature of the Senate's ordinary transactions which makes it undesirable to admit to its meetings any one who takes an interest in such matters, and I feel certain that the best corrective of the apathy we all deplore would be the publication of fuller accounts of what is done at those meetings. Acting on this opinion, I have cordially supported all attempts to secure more complete publicity of the Senate's doings, and if I am re-elected I shall continue my efforts with the same object in view.

While I regard membership in the Senate as a high honour, I regard it also as a trust involving serious responsibilities. I have, therefore, endeavoured to be present at as many meetings as possible, and have actually attended 65 out of a total of 73. If re-elected I will continue to discharge the duties of the position with the same industry, and should a time ever come when I cannot give the necessary attention to University affairs, I will cheerfully resign the trust committed to me.

The most important question before the Senate during these five years has been the hampering effect of insufficiency of revenue on the operations of the University and of University College. All proposals made with a view to overcoming this difficulty have engaged my earnest attention, and some of them have received my hearty support. This is particularly the case with the scheme of University federation, which is in process of consummation. While I would have liked to see all degree-conferring colleges brought into co-operation with the University of Toronto, I regard the union with Victoria College alone as a matter of the greatest importance, since it enables the Legislature to considerably increase the revenue of the Provincial Institution. If I am re-elected to the Senate it will be my constant endeavour to see that all departments of university and college work get their fair share of the advantage conferred by additional income.

For purposes of intellectual discipline—and this I hold to be the great work of any university—no one subject can, in my opinion, claim unquestionable superiority over all others. Much depends on the teacher, and much also on the student. I am strongly of the opinion, therefore, that our University course should be made largely practical, and I am glad to see that it is each year becoming more so. By means of options, an intending student of medicine or of theology can now obtain at least one-third of his professional training while he is working for an arts degree, and if our course were what it ought to be in historical and political science, the same proportion of a good law course would be covered by the arts curriculum. To this arrangement I can see no valid objection, and any proposals either to improve the system of options, or to develop closer relations between the University and the professional training schools will always command my most serious consideration. I do not see why the University of Toronto and the Law Society of Upper Canada should not have under their joint auspices a law school equal to any in America, and this at a comparatively trifling cost. Until such a school is established the University will not be doing all it should do for the promotion of higher education.

On the other hand, while I am in favour of making our Arts course highly optional, I am opposed to putting any premium on specialization, as we have been doing for over thirty years. A good general course of training may be the best for some students, and it would certainly be popular with a very large proportion of the undergraduates. It has been proposed to get rid of the discrimination against general courses by substituting the terms "general," and "special," for "pass" and "honor" respectively. That change I am willing to accept, unless some other that is likely to be more effective is suggested. Serious consequences are, I admit, involved in it, but the evil effect of our past policy has been great, and any proposed remedy will be found open to some objection.

In the belief that the Provincial University should do as much as possible in the way of fostering and directing secondary education, I asked the Senate four years ago to admit to undergraduate standing all candidates of both sexes who might pass at local centres an examination on the ordinary matriculation papers. Before the statute I had introduced was finally disposed of, the way was cleared by the abolition of the High School intermediate ex-

amination for the adoption of a still more liberal decentralization policy. Last year the Senate offered facilities for matriculation at all places where the Education Department held examinations for teachers' certificates, and it has this year decided to accept the offer of the Department to make use of the University matriculation papers in the examination of teachers. Henceforth our influence on the teaching done in the high schools and collegiate institutes will be virtually supreme, and we must be prepared to accept full responsibility for the character of that teaching. The success of the experiment depends partly on the choice of examiners, and partly on the way in which the Senate deals with the curriculum for matriculation.

I am strongly in favour of encouraging the cultivation of science in secondary schools, and, with this end in view, of making the science course for matriculation as important as any other department of the prescribed work. At present it labours under disabilities which might easily be removed, and the removal of which would facilitate the establishment of more complete harmony between the work for matriculation and the work for teachers' examinations. Something more might be done for the encouragement also of the study of English in the High Schools, and of modern, and especially Canadian, History. I have no sympathy with the view that the history of Canada is the history that is least worthy of our attention, and that the only portion of Canadian history fit to be studied is that covered by French rule.

With a view to making the course in Oriental Languages more practical than it is, I asked the Senate last year to create a graduating department, of which these languages would constitute the chief part. The Senate acted on the suggestion, and a graduating department, with an elaborate Semitic curriculum is now in existence. In this respect we are only following in the footsteps of other Universities in Europe and America, and recognizing in a reasonable way the great importance which this department of learning has assumed within the past few years.

One of the improvements yet to be made in the Arts curriculum is the introduction of Old English texts. In the Modern Language course, Old French and Old German texts are read with a view to the acquisition of a knowledge of Romance and Teutonic Philology. Gothic has also been introduced, and Scandinavian ought to be utilized in a similar way. At present, in English, we prescribe no text older than Chaucer's, and Chaucer's is, for all practical purposes, modern English. There is not a University of any standing in England or the United States that does not provide for the teaching of Anglo-Saxon, and the University of Toronto cannot afford to ignore any longer their example. No man can become a good English philological scholar without reading old and dialectal texts, and English philology is more important for English-speaking communities than any other.

Another equally important change that should be made is the prescription of English prose masterpieces for critical study. The student whose knowledge of English literature is derived from the reading of a few poems will be extremely one-sided in his development. English should be made compulsory on all students throughout the greater part of their course, whether it is general or special, and part of the minimum requirement should be an intimate acquaintance with a few of the great works of the great prose writers.

During my term of office I have been instrumental in securing the abolition of some useless and vexatious restrictions of undergraduate freedom. One of these was an arbitrary and absurd age limit for matriculation scholarships; another was an offensive penalty inflicted upon those who found themselves compelled to remain out a year or more at some part of their course; a third was the absolute requirement of attendance at lectures, in violation of the spirit, if not of the letter, of the public statute which is the charter of our University. Now a candidate can win and hold a scholarship at matriculation, whatever his age may be; he can, without incurring any disability, drop out for a year or two for the purpose of procuring the funds necessary to complete his course; and if he can show good cause for not attending lectures the Senate may permit him to take his examinations without attendance.

In the matters above referred to, and in others not specified, I have always acted with the most perfect independence, and I have been always more desirous of promoting reforms than of securing popularity. I have been frequently warned that the consequences of some of my proposals would be disastrous to me. In spite of such warnings, I have persevered in asking for changes which I believed to be necessary, and if I am re-elected I shall continue to do so. Much as I prize the honour of representing you, I prize still more highly the satisfaction of having done what I believe to be my duty. I was as active in promoting the University's interests before I became a member of the Senate as I have been during the past five years. If I am left off the list of successful candidates this time, I will be as active in the future as I have ever been in the past in the same direction. I believe that I can be useful on the Senate, and this conviction is my reason for seeking re-election.

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient servant,

WM. HOUSTON.