

# Arson suspected in gymnasium fire

Student Government History #51

Late in the spring of 1931 students were glad to see the temporary gymnasium (which had been used for about ten years) burn to the ground. It has been used less and less for student activities, and arson was suspected as the cause. The loss was regarded as a blessing (perhaps in disguise) since it hastened the university's plans to build a new gymnasium with the recent donation from the Carnegie Corporation. In September the GAZETTE hailed the new building as one "Which bids fair to overshadow any gymnasium in the Maritimes." The temporary gymnasium had been on permanent foundations, since a twin to the Science building was planned for the site. Those foundations now support the Arts Annex.

As the Students' Council began its work in September 1931 the trend towards professionalism appeared through typed minutes on a Council letterhead, and the taking of minutes at executive meetings. The Council's first action was to reject a plan by three students to run the newspaper for \$150. Instead it was decided that anyone could apply for the regular payment of \$100. The Council moved to control the dance situation by scheduling all of the pre-Christmas dances and insisting that there be at least two weeks between each major dance. Perhaps reflecting the influence of Board Chairman Fred Pearson, publisher of the Chronicle, the Council ordered two Heralds and three Chronicles for the reading rooms.

Further attempts to control expenses led to a decision that all team managers would be chosen by the Council from among its members, and that other athletic workers would be chosen from among those nominated by the student societies. After two weeks during which no one applied for the GAZETTE Editorship, Council gave in to the group led by Tom MacDonald and appointed them at the \$150 salary level.

The delays in finding newspaper staff meant that it was October 23 before the campus media reported that Carleton W. Stanley was the university's new President. He was born in Rhode Island, educated at U. of Toronto and Oxford and had spent most of his career at McGill as a Professor of Greek and acting Principal. The inauguration at the Capitol Theatre was co-sponsored by the major university bodies, including the Students' Council. In his first address to new students Stanley outlined their duties: "guardians of the purity of the English language on this continent"; preservation of true science by studying mathematics before science; practicing virtues, especially freedom - which would be understood through its development in Greece and Britain.

As times worsened it was no longer possible to ignore the Depression, but people at Dalhousie still gave it a try. The number of expensive formal dances had been greatest in 1930-31. President Stanley's address acknowledged that, "The world has fallen on evil days, and I cannot conscientiously

omit to mention that." He gave the Depression two sentences and rearmament three sentences.

As well as participating in the inauguration, the Council passed an informal letter of greeting for Carleton Stanley. Returning to the usual fare, Students' Council added its voice to a Medical Students' Society appeal to Senate for admission of Gerald Tanton who was turned away for registering three days late. There is no record in the student documents of the appeal's result. Victor Oland, the future Lieutenant-Governor, was a leader in the reorganization of the Dalhousie Tennis Club. It had no trouble receiving an advance grant from Council.

The newspaper remained opposed to hazing, but council seemed unwilling to reimpose a ban on this activity. Of more interest was the upcoming disarmament conference. Petitions were circulated at Dalhousie, one addressed to R.B. Bennett asking for Canada to take a proper position, and the other more general in nature. The paper carried front page endorsements of the petition from student president Gerald Stewart, Carleton Stanley and Law School faculty, including Horace Read and Sidney Smith. The week's editorial suspected that all the windy discussion about peace was a mass of hypocritical platitudes.

As the cornerstone ceremony approached it was announced that the gymnasium would be Dalhousie's World War I Memorial, a gesture late by only a decade. The basement walls were finished by the

beginning of November, and the total construction time would be about five months. The cornerstone laying on November 10 would replace the usual Armistice Day service. The pressure for a professional football coach continued as the 1931 season proved disastrous.

The Dalhousie unit of the Canadian Officers Training Corps had been defended by most students when pacifists questioned in during the 1920's. Concern about rearmament seems to have hardened the anti-COTC attitudes, and a November 12 editorial stated, "the fact remains that a university is not the place for the preparation of defensive forces." Perhaps in the realization that Dalhousie could not save the world the newspaper gave better coverage to attempts at stopping gambling on the Studley campus.

Perhaps as a result of the turmoil inevitable when a university Presidency changes it was mid-November before the main budgets passed Council. Most requests were satisfied and men's athletics continued to receive the lion's share of funds. Girls' athletics were beginning to catch up. As sports injuries increased Council tried to shift financial responsibility for them to the university. The public criticism of an unrestricted number of dances in 1930-31 was still fresh in memories, and reacting to it the Council would only give tentative approvals to post-Christmas dance scheduling.




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