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# The Vitality of Oxford

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One of Oxford University's most distinguished products, Dr. Samuel Johnson, claimed that when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life. The same could be said for a student who is tired of Oxford: the last criticism one could make of Oxford is that it is boring.

My strongest impression of Oxford is its vitality. Interesting and important events are always taking place; intelligent discussion abounds; and in most academic fields, impressive things seem to be happening.

This vitality is most evident on the surface, in the university's undergraduate activities. I counted 146 non-athletic university clubs in a guide to university events; on top of these there are countless college clubs and flimsy organizations which exist for a few months while a few people maintain some common interest.

A freshman can become a member of anything from the Communist Club to the Tercenary Society, which exists "to uphold all rightful monarchy"; from the Humanist Group to the League for Christ the King; from the Classical Society to the P. G. Wodehouse Society, "which exists to entertain its members."

The most important undergraduate organization is the Union — the Oxford Union So-

city, which is the world's most famous debating club (the Canadian Senate aside). It is expensive to join the Union — about \$16 a year — but most freshmen do join.

Not only does it offer debates, but club facilities as well as a lounge, a bar, a dining room and so on.

Debates are held each Thursday night, and the debating hall, which holds about 500 in generally packed. Debating style is

by  
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very different from that in Canada, but the standard is high. Here the successful debator is the entertaining one.

Whereas in Canada a logical but dull argument can usually win the day, at the Union an amusing but not necessarily relevant talk is what is called for. In addition to four undergraduate speakers there are always two guests — usually noted figures in public life. Nehru spoke in the Union last academic year, and Harold Macmillan, himself former member of the Union's executive, was a guest in recent years.

Ambitious undergraduates make a point of being heard in the Union, and set their sights on election to one of the executive

positions. It has often been said that the presidency of the Oxford Union is the surest way to a cabinet post in this country — many of Britain's leading political figures in the past century faced their first cries of "Shame! Shame!" on the Union floor.

Along with the host of extra-curricular activities, I mention people and studies as other sources of Oxford's vitality.

A much smaller percentage of young people attend university in Britain than in Canada and one finds a more intelligent undergraduate population as the result. This is especially true here at Oxford, since it and Cambridge are the most selective of the universities.

Of every five schoolboys writing entrance exams to Oxford, only one manage to get a place and only a small proportion of the country's youth can even think about writing these exams.

Therefore, undergraduates here are on the whole more impressive intellectually than undergraduates in North America, where the tendency seems to be to let as many people into university as space will permit, and then, fail out those who are inadequate.

On the academic side, one gets the feeling here that one is at the centre of things. List of new books on academic subjects printed in this country almost always include several by Oxford dons, and many of the university

M.P. IN SESSION

## FROM MODEL PARLIAMENT HILL

Over the weekend, the N.B. Legislature was the scene of the UNB Model Parliament. Ceremonies began on Friday at 6:30 pm when Dean Ryan of the Law Faculty read the Speech from the Throne, which was vigorously debated.

Although the Christian Atheist party had no Piercing Bill(s) to introduce, they supported the Conservatives in their refusal to adjourn the Friday night session so that the members of Parliament could attend the Hockey Championships.

Parliament continued on Saturday. The Liberal Government with Charles Hubbard as Prime Minister fell at approximately 11 o'clock due to a coalition between the Conservatives and CAs. The P.C. Bill that Canada accept nuclear arms was torn apart by Greg Knight and defeated by an overwhelming majority.

However the Conservatives continued in power (by devious methods) during the afternoon session. In the afternoon two more bills were discussed. The CAs introduced a bill that a causeway to P.E.I. not be built. The debate on this bill was boring and degenerated to pure folly an hour later.

The Liberal bill that the Chignecto Canal be built was hotly debated. The PCs proposed an amendment to the effect that a commission be set up to determine the feasibility of the Canal (many commissions have already reported on this question and all have come out in favour). The amendment was rejected by the Speaker. The bill in its original form was passed by a 31-21 vote that saw several PCs support the measure.

The Leader of the CA party again displayed his wit and wisdom. During the entire ceremony he was dressed in a Canadian Army field uniform with a toy cap pistol that he kept pulling from his holster and clicking.

One insurgent member of the SA party rose and announced his resignation. He said that due to the irresponsible leadership of the Grand Patriarch he would leave and form a new independent party. Three other CA members followed. A former Patriarch, Terry McClusky, also showed his disapproval of his successor's lack of parliamentary know-how and left the proceedings early.

lectures are given by top men in the various fields.

What is the attitude of most undergraduates here towards the university? Overseas students aside, the fashionable attitude here is one of cynicism and depres-

sion.

Typical comments describe Oxford as "a shadow of its former self" and a "sordid place." It is the thing for undergraduates to be miserably unhappy. They must be tired of life.

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