

Scottish immigrants and their children returning from Scottish universities brought to Canada the legendary respect of the Scot for the practical benefits of education. But they also brought with them the Scottish respect for human values, the ready sense of humour, the habit of modesty and warm neighbourliness, and a quiet determination to build a nation devoted to the pursuit of equal access to security and dignity for every individual citizen. The Scottish influence had a profound impact on the early development of Canadian education systems -- indeed, I suppose it is more to our Scottish ancestors than to any others that we owe the fact we have long enjoyed in Canada the kind of comprehensive school systems that are still in dispute in parts of this country. From our Scottish ancestors we have learned to relax and enjoy comprehensives.

Canadians acknowledge this debt in many ways -- in the thistles and St. Andrew's Crosses that adorn the coat-of-arms of many of our universities, in the continuing links between teachers and scholars, in the growth of Scottish studies in Canada -- as well, I suppose, as in the continuing support of the distillery business, and the continuing disapproval of this habit by some in our Presbyterian congregation!

Two Nova Scotian historians, MacLean and Campbell, have summarized the influence of Scotland on Canada as follows:

"The attitudes of the students in the old land toward education were carried with them and congealed in this new society; the lad of the crofter or tradesman was not turned away from Edinburgh University, nor was he kept out of institutions of higher learning in Nova Scotia because of class distinction."

While the seeds of Scottish education spread rapidly across Canada, the new soil in which they grew inevitably altered the texture of the flower. In a predominantly Scottish area of Nova Scotia -- Pictou County --, the school curriculum at the turn of the century included calisthenics and military drill, vocal music, hygiene and temperance, moral and patriotic duties. Today I imagine that, of that list of subjects, only calisthenics and, perhaps, hygiene survive! Still, the Scottish tradition forms part of the educational bedrock upon which the study of Canada, its institutions, its history, geography, economy and literature have developed.

It is evidence of the maturity of our Canadian nationhood today and the inherent value of Canadian studies that the University of Edinburgh has integrated those studies into its own academic program.