

AN EDITORIAL

BY HALIFAX BOARD OF TRADE PRESIDENT

MR. T. JARVIS

The young men and women who enter our universities are quite possibly the most important people in the community.

Practically all speakers who address student bodies grow eloquent as they point out how the future of the country will be in their hands; even though the occasional citizen wonders a bit sometimes over the kind of future these students may create for Canada, on the basis of some less flattering examples of their corporate intelligence, maturity and general character. This, of course, is the normal view one generation frequently takes of another.

On the whole, most people accept as fact the oft-repeated statement that our future is in the hands of young people whose talents and industry, developed through education, have fitted them for leadership. And this is undoubtedly why parents, governments, industry and business are willing to foot the bills.

Even without being too concerned about the ultimate fate of our nation at their hands, it can still be said that university students are important people. Moreover this is a fact of the present, while these young men and women are adding to their educational experience and in this community (or any other) where the university is located.

The Halifax Board of Trade is acutely aware of the importance of the university student body, and for several excellent reasons. The first one can be found in the nature and purpose of the Board itself—a body of public-spirited citizens who having voluntarily banded themselves together to support projects of maximum benefit to the community. Many of them serve on special committees whose duty it is to keep a sensitive and often prodding finger on the pulse of current needs, trends, and developments.

For example, there is one relatively small but important group included among the 4200 students who will this year enter Dalhousie and Kings Universities. These are the foreign students, who will be seeing Canada for the first time. The Halifax Board of Trade, with its 2500 business and professional community leaders, extends a cordial welcome to these visitors from foreign lands, with the earnest hope they will find their studies rewarding and their stay in Halifax equally so. A great deal depends on how well the general public tries to understand their varied backgrounds and meets the special needs of this group. For the Board is well aware that when they return to their respective countries their viewpoint of the entire country will be colored by their experiences while attending our universities. The public, including Canadian students themselves, is urged to keep in mind how effective this transient group can be as promoters of our city and country, when they leave here.

University students, no matter where they come from, are important for another and very practical, economic reason. Together with their professors and clerical staffs, the people who are on campus make up a market of no mean proportions. The Board of Trade as an organization especially sensitive to the welfare of the business community, reminds its members and others who offer merchandise and services, that this market is worth careful scrutiny. The Board itself goes on record as being empathic to the needs of students on many levels, and is constantly calling upon its individual members to share this attitude.

There are the material needs — housing, goods and services, not all of which are supplied on campus. For example, besides the professors and their families 534 students are married, many with families. In the Board's opinion, business has an obligation to recognize the varied needs of the university community, on and off campus. According to recent estimates each student spends an average of \$1,000 in the area, exclusive of room and board. Possibly they could be encouraged to spend more; not through hiked prices, but in a greater variety of merchandise geared to their particular needs. But any way you look at it a market with an estimated spending potential of \$3,000,000 is worth cultivating.

The Board of Trade, as an organization, can express certain of its hopes and define its policies. A student body, through the sheer weight of numbers, can be influential in the community. But the most enduring and most effective contact still remains the one between the individual citizen and the individual student; the merchant and his customer; landlord and tenant; neighbor and neighbor.

Students are usually eager to be accepted by the community as a whole. It is true their ideas may at times be thought brash or unacceptable by adults outside the university. Still they must be permitted to think freely and to express those thoughts freely so their ideas can meet the test of public opinion in the cold light of publicity. The community, by a good-natured but observant tolerance of this exercise, can keep abreast of youthful viewpoints.

The students' eagerness for community acceptance can be readily observed in their comments on the local situation and their initiative in starting things the community can enjoy and benefit from. The Dalhousie Winter Carnival is a case in point. Begun as a purely on-campus activity, the students have tried to interest the public in this colorful mid-winter event. It lends itself to imaginative promotion ideas which could be extremely profitable to the merchants of the city. A full participation, the students believe, could make the event one to attract many visitors to the city at a time of year when visitors are not plentiful.

The students have also taken the initiative in presenting musical programs to the public at no cost; they have invited the public to art exhibits and in many other ways have tried to enrich the city by their presence.

The Board of Trade commends this eagerness to merge interests and experience with the community at large. In return, the community may be expected to help these searching young people in every possible way. And these ways, the Board of Trade feels, includes neighborliness, reasonably priced goods and services geared to this market's special needs, and whenever possible, assistance in obtaining summer and permanent job opportunities. These personal contacts give a warmth and generate a spirit of mutual empathy which financial support, crucial though it may be, can never hope to equal. Both then, are essential so that students and community alike may derive the richest reward from our university.