

Text of Dr. Hicks Inauguration Speech

Mr. Chairman, Your Honor, Mr. Premier, Honorable Ministers, My Lords, Distinguished visitors from other universities, Members of the Dalhousie Board of Governors, Senate and Faculty, Students of the University, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The ceremonies which have just taken place leave me with a sense of pride and honor, which I frankly acknowledge to you. Nevertheless, I can say with all sincerity that it is the feeling of humility which dominates my thoughts at having just been installed as the 7th president of Dalhousie University.

Unlike most of Dalhousie's Presidents, I am neither of Scottish extraction, of the Presbyterian faith, nor from Pictou County or Cape Breton, and I am sure that those of you who recognize these admirable qualities in yourselves will think that this alone gives me ample cause for a feeling of humility. Nevertheless, I must assert that my English and Acadian French forebears have also made their contribution to this Province, and I shall endeavour to acquit myself in this great responsibility as creditably as possible.

It is indeed an honor to follow in the footsteps of men like McCulloch, Ross, Forrest, Mackenzie, Stanley and Dr. Kerr, for these are stirring times in the universities of the Western World and we are presented with great opportunities for exciting growth and development and, of course, have to face and do our best to solve the many problems that attend great periods of change in our social, political and educational institutions.

In the kind of growth which can easily be measured, it is remarkable to recall that since the close of World War II and during the Presidency of my predecessor, the size of this University has increased nearly five fold, and the revenues and expenditures of the University have had to increase nearly ten fold in order to accomplish this (indeed, the expenditures have been increasing somewhat more rapidly than the revenues!); and what is more startling to me, on assuming these responsibilities this year, is that our rate of growth is now substantially greater than it was at the time of Dr. Kerr's inauguration in 1945, leaving out of account the exceptional measures which were resorted to in order to educate the veterans of World War II in the years immediately following 1945. Does this mean that we, and our sister universities, face a further five fold increase in numbers in the next two decades and the seemingly impossible feat of multiplying our present revenues by a factor of ten during that period?

No matter what difficulties the future may hold for us, we must be determined to maintain the reputation and good name of our University and to uphold the high quality of scholarship, teaching and research which we think has usually been associated with our efforts here.

FOUNDATION IN RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

Dalhousie University was founded nearly a century and one-half ago, on the basis of religious toleration — a factor much more significant than it is today. At that time in Nova Scotia, my non-conformist ancestors could not gain admission to any institution of higher learning, and the same held true for Nova Scotia's Roman Catholics, as well as for those of Jewish faith and of other religions. The circumstances of our founding, however, do not imply that we have negated or neglected the spiritual side of man, but it ought to mean that our University should nurture an atmosphere of tolerance and

objectivity among as diverse and wide-ranging a community of scholars as may be assembled here.

Today we find ourselves as one of a very few universities in Canada not associated directly with a particular government or a particular religious denomination. This of course, has its disadvantages as well as its advantages, which ought to ensure to us a greater measure of freedom and independence, coupled, of course, with a greater responsibility for the shaping of our own destiny, which must be assumed by the Board of Governors and the Senate of a private university. I for one believe that the preservation of at least some institutions of this kind is a vital factor in maintaining the health of a free society.

RENOWNED PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS

Perhaps we did not come into our own at Dalhousie until the founding of our professional schools. It may be that our lawyers, who practice in every court in Canada and in many other countries, and our medical doctors, who are scattered all over this Continent and beyond (indeed one can say without exaggeration all over the globe) — it may be that these, our professional graduates, have been the ones who have been most responsible for carrying our name and our tradition far from our Province by the sea. We are now engaged in expanding further the size of our University in the field of professional education, and in a wide range of Graduate Studies. We must also maintain the quality of our work and reputation in the professional studies, and we intend to do so.

By the references I have been making to our own position, I do not for one minute suggest that we exist alone or in any exclusive way among the universities of Nova Scotia, or indeed of the Atlantic Provinces. We prepare students for further studies at Pine Hill, at the Nova Scotia Technical College, and for graduate work in specialized fields in the other universities, for example in Forestry at the University of New Brunswick. And we are glad to have students from the other universities in these Provinces come to our professional schools and to our rapidly growing Faculty of Graduate Studies.

We Nova Scotians may now recognize that our fathers builded better than we have hitherto acknowledged in founding at some considerable sacrifice the numerous colleges that it has been customary to say Nova Scotia has been burdened with. Now, however, with the rapid growth in university enrollment, we may rightly and proudly boast that in this part of Canada we are blessed with such well established universities and colleges as King's Dalhousie, Pine Hill, Acadia, Saint Mary's, Saint Francis Xavier, Le College Sainte-Anne, Nova Scotia Technical College, Mount Saint Vincent and Mount Allison. You will note that I have included Mount Allison among the Nova Scotian universities because it does in fact contain more students from Nova Scotia than from New Brunswick. In any event, we do have colleges sufficiently established and sufficiently well regarded to maintain the highest percentage of university students in relation to population to be found anywhere in Canada.

On his inauguration, a new university president is expected to declare something of his views on the nature and purpose of a university and its relationship to the community it serves. This morning, we had the rich experience of listening to distinguished

educators from England, from the United States and from Canada discuss the relationships of the university in the modern state.

CLOISTER

Those of you who know me will not be surprised if my own remarks also relate to the university and its relationship to Government and to society in the free world. Sometimes there is much talk and conflict of opinion about the so called "Ivory Tower" or "Cloistered Hall" concept of the university. I think all I need to say about this is that I earnestly believe that the university must provide this type of sanctuary for the scholar and teacher to engage in the pursuit of knowledge and the attainment of excellence without regard to

important things. Such an education will produce mere technicians: by a mere technician I mean a man who understands everything about his job except its ultimate purpose and its place in the order of the universe".

BRIDGE BETWEEN DISCIPLINES

He then goes on to talk about the relevant merits of basing education on either the social or the physical sciences and the defects inherent in either approach. This, of course, has been a subject of great concern to scholars and men of affairs alike in the years since World War II, and I do not propose this afternoon to say too much about it, because I think it is abundantly clear that one of

generation, indeed of each decade. Just as it is more difficult in our complex society to repeat careers, such as those of Thomas Edison or Alexander Graham Bell, so in many other fields of human endeavour the exclusive domination of one great mind or personality will, I believe, become rarer in the years ahead. I do not mean to imply that Edison and Bell worked alone. Of course, their inventions were based upon scientific knowledge developed by others, but both Edison and Bell were relatively uneducated men, according to the formal standards of our universities today, and I do not believe that in the future as many opportunities for this type of scientist or inventor will remain available even for exceptional individuals as these men were.

INTEGRATING ROLE

Hence, the university as a community of scholars has a great unifying or integrating role to play in our society. I believe this can be accomplished while preserving the freedom and independence of the individual, and at the same time recognizing the interdependence of scholars in a university. The passion of the individual scholar contained in such an environment, will contribute more abundantly to the wisdom which ought to emanate from the universities of the world. In this way, the university, as one of the great persuasive agencies, can more effectively counteract the hatred and violence which have played so terrible a part in the 20th century to date.

I have already referred to the importance of the university's role in revealing to its students the idea of excellence in human endeavour, whether scholastic or otherwise. An ever increasing minority of citizens in a free society must grasp the significance of this concept, must sense or even see the beauty of excellence, if we are to make further progress.

Aristotle understood this well when he observed:

"All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth."

This of course seems self-evident, but have we really understood the full implication of this statement? Aristotle could feel convinced of this in Athens at a time when many of its glories were dependent upon the labor of slaves. How much more vital does the education of our youth become in the 20th century, when all men can be free of much burdensome labor, but when at the same time, human relations at the international and national levels, as well as at the community level, have become vastly more complex; indeed, when the penalties resulting from wrong actions based upon ignorance of the whole human situation can be catastrophic for the whole of humanity.

MORE & MORE EDUCATION

It is thus clearly evident that we need better trained workers and a larger proportion of better educated men and women, merely to keep the machinery of our complicated 20th century society running smoothly. But, more than this, the human situation has changed since Aristotle's time, and no group within a community, and no city within a nation, and indeed no nation within the community of nations can exist in isolation or without taking note of the whole human situation.

Aristotle could face the enslavement of his fellow human beings with a degree of composure and indifference not possible to us today. Even apart from moral considerations, the world situation has changed so that we cannot

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the immediate, practical or mundane considerations of contemporary society.

...AND PRACTICAL EDUCATION

Certainly the universities must provide this refuge and maintain this atmosphere as part of their function and this should be so, not only for the benefit of the academic recluse but also so that the good student, not destined to remain in the university environment, may at least, as part of his education, gain some understanding of the difficulty of pursuing knowledge and the disinterested or unprejudiced or unconcerned attitude which is necessary to the attainment of real wisdom. Nevertheless, we should recognize that the university serves most of its students, not in order to turn them into academics but to prepare them for the great and heavy tasks that make ever-increasing demands upon the leading citizens in a free society: as politicians, as business and professional men, as men of affairs, in the wide range of activities that require more preparation, more wisdom, better exercise of judgement and discretion in the world of the 1960's than was the case a century or even a generation ago.

Sir Richard Livingstone makes a relevant observation in one of his lectures:

"It is the weakness of rich and complicated societies like our own that they tend to live in externals, to concentrate on the techniques of their life. But education, while it must provide for these, can only base itself on them at the expense of neglecting more

the major tasks of our times if to bridge the gulf between different disciplines of learning, most notably between the physical sciences and the humane studies. Surely we can all agree with C.P. Snow, who says in relation to this gulf between the physical sciences and humanities that:

"The degree of incomprehension on both sides has become the kind of joke which has grown sour."

This is a major challenge to the universities of the world, and, if they do not make progress in resolving these problems and developing better relations between the natural sciences and the applications to mankind of their great discoveries in the 20th century, then I do not know how other institutions in our society are going to do so. Here I cannot help but urge those who are concerned with the humanities — the economists, political scientists and others — that they should develop their own disciplines with confidence and assurance and should not feel that all problems affecting the life of man must be resolved according to the techniques of natural science. I do feel, however, that there must be greater co-operation and interdependence in the disciplines concerned with humane studies just as there has been in the research that has led to such wonderful additions to human knowledge in the physical sciences since the turn of the Century.

Today the task of adding usefully to the ever expanding store of human knowledge becomes vastly more complicated and difficult with the passing of each