

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

No. 54/7 Text of address given by Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary-General of the United Nations, at a Convocation of Carleton College, Ottawa, on February 26, 1954. At this Convocation, Mr. Hammarskjöld received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

(See also Supplementary Paper 54/6 containing Mr. Hammarskjöld's speech in Toronto on February 25, 1954.)

It is with gratitude that I accept the honorary degree which you have just conferred upon me. To receive the first such award given since the founding of Carleton College twelve years ago is for me a distinct honour. I am happy to have become in this manner associated with the unique history and splendid record of this young and flourishing institution.

It is also a privilege for me, on my official visit to Ottawa as Secretary-General of the United Nations, to have this opportunity of being with you and speaking to you here today. I particularly appreciate this as I regard your invitation as an expression of your interest and faith in the United Nations.

With your fellow students at other universities in the western world, you share the extraordinary responsibility which our times put on all who by ability, education, experience or position are called upon to provide moral and intellectual leadership. Let me address myself this afternoon to a few aspects of this responsibility.

In modern publicity we find a persistent tendency to present our age and the world in which we live in headline terms and emotional slogans. This melodramatic aspect of the mass media with which our eyes and ears are assailed on every hand tends in some respects to dull our awareness of the real problems and blunt our interest in the essential issues. Nevertheless, these slogans, these pointed headlines, can be taken as a starting point for a brief review of the challenge of our time since they do indicate basic problems even if, too often, they are exaggerated in form and superficial in their perspective.

It is said that our time is the age of the decisive fight between freedom and tyranny. It is true that such a fight is going on. But it has always been fought and I don't believe that I could justifiably be called a pessimist for expressing my belief that this fight will never be over.

In that fight those who have had the privilege of a broad education and who have been trained in free and independent thinking carry a special responsibility. They must go beyond the surface and find what are the real issues. They must see the dangers to our civilization where they really rest and recognize the elements on which we can base our hopes. History and environment have shaped different peoples and nations in very different ways.