

*Denis Healy*

## THE UNIVERSITY OF HALIFAX 1875-1881

### *Perspective on the University*

Defunct but not abolished the Body Corporate of the University of Halifax survives on the statute books of Nova Scotia as "The University Act, 1876".<sup>1</sup> At that time the Liberal Government, under the Hon. P. C. Hill, introduced a "bill for the establishment of an Examining Board on the model of the London University".<sup>2</sup> The intention, given public support, was to have it become a provincially-supported teaching university in five years. However, the Government which succeeded Hill's was Conservative. It believed that public support for its predecessor's "political kite" was not forthcoming from the majority of Nova Scotians. Accordingly, the Hon. S. D. Holmes moved to abolish the university in April 1881. His Colleges Bill also legislated for continued government grants to denominational colleges. Although only one vote was cast against the proposal in the House of Assembly, the bill was thrown out by the Liberal Legislative Council.

Two consequences resulted from T. F. Morrison's one-vote victory in the Upper House.<sup>3</sup> The six colleges favoured by grants from the government in 1876 were cut off from any further government assistance. Indeed, provincial grants to universities ceased in Nova Scotia from that time and were not generally resumed until 1963. The second consequence was that the design for one provincial university endured only "on paper". Some remarks in the debates surrounding the decision seem far-sighted. In 1876, the Hon. Mr. Moseley declared the "University would never be known except for occupying some six or eight pages on the Statute Book". The Attorney General "believed five years would settle the question definitely".<sup>4</sup> In fact his "cherished idea of a Provincial University" has never been much more than

a dream in Nova Scotia. It has shown itself to be a perennial panacea to the educational idealist, a practical impossibility for the administrator or the politician.<sup>5</sup>

The controversial passing of the University Act, 1876, exposed two issues long discussed in the province and raised a third question relating to higher education. Since the founding of Dalhousie in 1821<sup>6</sup> the question of "a central university, which was needed in order to place this Province on a par with others"<sup>7</sup> has been continually discussed. Up to 1881 the matter of the province's indebtedness to the denominational colleges "for the advance which has been made"<sup>8</sup> in higher education was debated in the House of Assembly. Finally, there was the moot point relating to the value of setting up a university, not for the purpose of teaching but of examining, that is the Halifax University.

Despite contemporary confusion on matters of higher education policy that appeared in the public press and in the debates of the Upper and Lower Houses, the Government of 1876 was tolerably clear as to the purpose of its University Act. When introducing it to the Assembly on March 8, 1876, the Hon. Provincial Secretary sought co-operation from members on both sides of the House saying,

. . . the Government would be happy in Committee to receive suggestions from members on both sides of the House to perfect its details. The Government would be only too happy to listen to suggestions with that object, provided the great object of the bill was not encroached upon, namely, to establish a central university free from denominational control, and at the same time do justice to existing institutions.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the ensuing debates the Leader of the Government intimated that the measure was, in the words of the Hon. Mr. McKinnon, intended "to pave the way for a teaching University". It did not actually go so far as to set one up immediately (which possibly prompted the Hon. Mr. Longley's remark that the bill "was neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring"). To further the paving of the way a second bill, "constituting one measure" with the University Act, made grants to the existing colleges ranging from \$3,000 to \$1,500 as final payments to them. "These grants were to continue for five years, when they would cease and determine".<sup>10</sup>

State support for denominational colleges thus became interlocked with the feasibility of what Hugo Reid had proposed in 1859 "a complete and highly useful central Institution in the capital . . . the University of Nova Scotia",<sup>11</sup> which would be provincially funded. The compromise measures of 1876 were then passed with the Hon. P. C. Hill repeating:

. . . the object the Government had in view was one—that the two bills he had laid on the table were one and indivisible, and constituted one measure, and that the Government looked forward to the establishment of a university—a teaching university, if you will—but that they felt that in the present position and circumstances of the country it would be unfair and ungenerous towards existing institutions to cut off the supplies on which they depended without the amplest warning and that, therefore, the grants were continued for five years; but that was intended as a solemn warning to them to set their houses in order and be prepared for the contingency which would arise at the end of five years, that those grants would no longer be continued and that this paper university should then have been for five years in existence to test the feeling of the people of this country with regard to a central undenominational university; that the interest and affections of the people were attracted towards it and young men of ability went up for examination, then the way would be clear for the legislature and government of that day either to introduce a further measure to establish a teaching university, or perfect that which they found in existence, if it better suited the opinions of the people. Could anything be plainer than that, or any course more clearly chalked out for the future?<sup>12</sup>

The opinions of the people had, of course, been variously interpreted ever since the days in 1829 when T. C. Haliburton wrote:

The sum of £9,750 is invested in the British 3 per cents as a fund for its (Dalhousie's) support; . . . It is generally regretted that so much money should have been so injudiciously expended. One College, with the Academies already established, is at present sufficient for the Provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The latter colony, with the sectional feeling so peculiar to America, has already provided means for the support of one at Fredericton and if this institution should ever be completed we shall have three insignificant, instead of one respectable institution.<sup>13</sup>

In 1843 Joseph Howe turned "to some arguments respecting the question of one or several Colleges". He admitted "that he was in favour of making Dalhousie the one College".<sup>14</sup> Six years later he was pointing out:

When I voted in 1843 for this bill, and for withdrawing all the collegiate grants, I had Mr. Annand's resolutions in my hand, embodying a consistent scheme of education, the very foundation of which was a general University, to be endowed out of the money saved, and situated in the capital of the province.

However, "since he did not believe that a majority of the people would desire to cripple the existing institutions to endow one" he advocated continued grants to the five existing colleges. The fund for provincial assistance to them would

be "in the hands of commissioners to be appointed by the Governor".<sup>15</sup>

General feeling in the Province, if one is to judge by the educational policy which prevailed, was accurately expressed by the Hon. Mr. Longley in 1863 and by him and the Hon. Mr. Woodward in 1876. The Province could not afford a provincial University. They "looked forward in the event of Maritime Union [sic!], to something of the kind" but for the present were "opposed to a Provincial University for a little country like this". Longley concluded:

. . . with five denominational colleges in this Province, each largely endowed, and receiving the sympathy and support of the people of this country . . . the balance of opinion was in favour of the present system, as applied in this province . . . in advocating the denominational system as the best calculated, both now and in the future, to promote higher education in Nova Scotia, he was confident he was reflecting the sentiments of three-fourths of the people of this province.<sup>16</sup>

A curious feature of the proposal to abolish the University in 1881 is that the manner of the resolutions was as strange as the outcome itself. It was the Legislative Council of twenty one (appointed by the Governor in Council) and not the elected House of Assembly that decided the matter. In the Upper House the Hon. J. S. MacDonald pleaded that "to throw out this bill (Bill No. 35, the Colleges Bill), as contemplated by the resolution to deter, would be to strike down the usefulness of institutions that have earned different treatment at our hands".<sup>17</sup> The Legislative Council nevertheless paid scant heed to the smooth passage of the Bill in the Lower House.<sup>18</sup> The deferral won by the Opposition certainly appeared at the time as part of what J. Murray Beck calls "a Liberal Council's obstruction of a Conservative government's legislative programme".<sup>19</sup> The Legislative Council in consequence of this and other "obstructionist acts" was vehemently attacked in the public press and techniques for its abolishment were openly discussed.<sup>20</sup>

The outcome of the parliamentary legislation was equally strange for the province during the subsequent eighty years. If it is true, as members in both the Upper and Lower Houses asserted at the time, that three-fourths of Nova Scotia favoured denominational colleges, it is bizarre that governments from 1881 to 1963 did not legislate any general financial support for such a system. Support for denominational colleges by state aid ceased. Since financial support (\$2,000 per annum to be exact) was also withdrawn a few days later from Halifax University by an act<sup>21</sup> introduced in the Lower House and

passed unopposed by both branches of the legislature, the "state university" was also left to languish. No party to the controversy won victory: neither the supporters of "the dream" that "a Central Teaching University should rise from the ruins of those [denominational] colleges"<sup>22</sup> nor the champions of "the system of having denominational colleges drawing State aid", a system existing since the days of Judge Johnson in 1868 when the country had so chosen.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the withdrawal of government grants the colleges did actively survive. The university did not. J. C. MacDonald's comment during the April debates of 1881 seems justified by events:

University or no university, these colleges, the different sects are determined, shall be maintained. . . The fact that these denominational colleges are in active operation, doing good work, and in every way suiting the people of Nova Scotia, is a powerful argument in favor of the revival of these grants.

However, it is Joseph Howe who may be said to have placed "this great subject of Education" in historical perspective for Nova Scotia. He concluded his earnest speech of 1849 with these remarks:

Experience has taught me this—that we may make education a battle ground, where the laurels we reap may be wet with the tears of our country. That we may outvote each other by small majorities, to have our decisions reversed every four years. But without mutual forbearance, and a spirit of compromise, we can do little good, and make no satisfactory and permanent settlement of these questions.<sup>24</sup>

#### *Halifax University In The Act of 1876*

In its day Halifax University was a move towards what we might today describe as an "Open University". The preamble to the Act clearly intended to open academic opportunities to students in the Province who might otherwise be deprived of the chance to take university degrees. *The University Calendar* for 1880 lists students who worked towards their degree by private study.<sup>25</sup> Certainly the preamble represented some educational idealism:

Whereas, it is desirable to establish one University for the whole of Nova Scotia, on the model of the University of London, for the purpose of raising the standard of higher education in the Province, and of enabling all denominations and classes, including those persons whose circumstances preclude them from following a regular course of study in any of the existing Colleges or Universities, to obtain academical degrees:

Be it therefore enacted by the Governor, Council and Assembly . . .

The Act firstly set out what constituted "the body politic and corporate" of the "University of Halifax". Articles 1 and 3 of the Act legislated for a Chancellor, a Vice-Chancellor, twenty-four Fellows and Graduates, other than those with degrees in theology, from member institutions up to the time of founding the new university. Included also were all future graduates of the new university. Articles 1 and 30 listed the institutions that were to have official connection, "that is to say, King's College, at Windsor; Dalhousie College, and Saint Mary's College, in the City of Halifax; Acadia College, at Wolfville; the College of St. Francis Xavier, at Antigonish; and Mount Allison Wesleyan College, at Sackville, New Brunswick". Provision was also made for the Senate of the university "to alter and amend" the list "by adding any other Institutions thereunto". By 1880 the university Calendar listed three other Institutions as affiliated, namely The Halifax Medical College, The Technological Institute, Halifax, and Trinity Medical School, Toronto.<sup>26</sup>

Responsibility for the operations of the university lay with the Senate. That body was constituted of the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor and the Fellows. A Senate "quorum" was "six Fellows at the least" (Act. 15). In the absence of the Chancellor who was the Senate Chairman, or the Vice-Chancellor, his substitute, the Fellows could elect a Chairman from among themselves for the meeting. The Chairman had a vote, and "in case of an equality of vote, a second or casting vote".

The Chancellor was nominated and appointed without term by the Governor in Council. The Vice-Chancellor was an annual appointment by election by and from among the Fellows. The Fellows themselves were either elected by the Senate itself or chosen by the Governor in Council. In both cases Convocation submitted three names for every vacant Fellowship. The Governor had the right to appoint six of the Fellows.

The government had other means, too, besides appointments to control the Senate. Article 40, provided that:

The Senate shall annually report to the Governor in Council, at such time as he shall appoint, upon the transactions of the university during the year preceeding . . . the Senate shall also, whenever required so to do, by the Governor in Council, report specially upon any matters or subjects connected with the University; and every such annual or special report shall be laid before the Legislature of Nova Scotia at its then, or next ensuing Session.

There is evidence that in the Legislative Council at least checks were kept upon the university returns. In April, 1881, Mr. Creelman, for the Govern-

ment, had to answer Mr. Cochran's charge that the returns for 1878 were hidden away in "a pigeon-hole in some public office".<sup>27</sup>

A further check upon the Senate was the stipulation in Article 37 that "the accounts of Income and Expenditure of the University shall once in every year be submitted to the Governor in Council". To meet expenses the University was granted a sum of \$2,000 each year and was permitted to charge fees for examinations.

The Convocation was, by Article 11, made up of all future graduates of the university as well as graduates who had at the time of the Act already had degrees conferred upon them by their affiliated universities and colleges. However, no graduates of such affiliated institutions were to be admitted as a member of Convocation unless they expressed a wish to be so and signed the University Register. The Regulations for convocation later laid down by the Convocation called for a registration fee of \$1, an annual fee of \$1 or a Life Membership for \$5. By 1880 there were sixty-eight members, thirty-seven of whom were Life Members.<sup>28</sup> The "quorum" for Convocation was set at fifteen. Its Chairman was chosen by majority election in Convocation and held office for three years. Its main responsibility seems to have been general care for the welfare of the university. This responsibility was discharged essentially through the nomination of its membership for seats on the Senate.

It would, then, be of interest to modern academics to learn that real power in the university lay with the Senate. In Article 14 the Act laid down that "The Senate for the time being shall have the entire management and superintendence over the affairs, concerns and property of the University of Halifax; and in all cases unprovided for by this Act, it shall be lawful for the Senate to act in such manner as shall appear to them best calculated to promote the purposes intended to be promoted by the University".

Modern students might also be interested in two features of the Act that guaranteed a measure of academic freedom for the student. Although Senate had full powers regarding examinations for degrees, there were two specific limitations. First "it shall not be lawful for such Senate to impose on any person any compulsory religious examination or test"; secondly, "nor to do or cause or suffer to be done anything that would render it necessary or advisable with a view to Academical success or distinction, that any person should pursue the study of any materialistic or sceptical system of logic or mental or moral philosophy". In the latter regulation we see that even the rights of the excellent student going for top honours were protected from over-demanding examiners, interested in their pet form of atheism, as mentioned

in correspondence of the time.

Finally, the range of degrees offered by the University was most impressive. Articles 31 to 36 cover these powers of the Senate. It was permitted to confer Bachelor, Master and Doctor degrees "in any department of knowledge whatever, except Theology". The exception of Theology was made in order to reserve that field to the existing denominational colleges. Examinations were held in the Faculties of Arts, Science, Law, Medicine and Engineering. In addition the Senate had power to confer "any of such degrees as *Ad Eundem* degrees". This enabled settlers from the United States and others similarly situated to have their previous work, certificates and degrees evaluated and recognized by the conferring of a suitable University of Halifax Degree.

The scope of the University was broadened for the benefit of the public to include the awarding of Certificates of Proficiency. The Act declared that "Such Senate shall have power to examine for and, after examination to grant, in such mode and on compliance by the candidates with such conditions as they shall from time to time determine, Certificates of Proficiency in such branches of knowledge as such Senate shall from time to time by regulations made in that behalf determine".

As a plan "The University Act, 1876" contained possibilities for several innovative educational practices in Nova Scotia. The practice was another matter.

#### *The Halifax University in Operation, 1876-1880*

The new university Senate first met in September 1876; its last official meeting was in December, 1880. After meeting for part of two days to review their work, "it being now half past one of the clock, and their being no further business, the Senate adjourned *sine die*". (No special significance should be attached to the adjournment "*sine die*", since previous meetings were frequently concluded in the same manner!) This information and much more relating to the four years of activity by the university are recorded in the finely kept *Minutes of the Senate* written in the hand of its Registrar F. C. Sumichrast and kept to-day in the Nova Scotia Public Archives.

The Chancellor of the University was the Rev. Dr. G. W. Hills. At his first Senate Meeting he used his casting vote to have F. C. Sumichrast elected Registrar by 12 votes to 11. Thereafter Sumichrast was annually re-elected and gave an annual report to the Senate, he being the only paid executive. In December, 1877, he reported, "It is still too early to judge definitively of the value of the University. . . . Its curricula have not yet been tested in full".<sup>20</sup>



In December 1878 the Registrar's annual "Report on the State of The University" indicated "progress in the second twelve months" and "enquiries from students, not only in other parts of the Dominion, but also from Newfoundland and the United States. . . ." <sup>30</sup> The following year he was reporting, "Everyone of the affiliated colleges with the single exception of Acadia, sent up candidates to one or more of the examinations". <sup>31</sup>

Until the final Senate Meeting of 1880, it operated in the manner outlined by the Chancellor in his report at that time:

Briefly, the University of Halifax—a non-teaching, examining and degree-conferring institution, modelled after the University of London—was designed to simplify and to render uniform the collegiate system of Nova Scotia, and to bring into harmonious co-operation the highest educational forces of the Province.

The work was carried out by examiners appointed from various affiliated colleges. The candidates were from a variety of educational backgrounds. The Senate Minutes for January, 1880, give us the following table:

Statement showing the number of Candidates from the affiliated Colleges and other Institutions, who have presented themselves for Matriculation and for Degrees. <sup>32</sup>

College or other Institution	Number of Candidates			
	1877	1878	1879	Total
King's	0	0	1	1
Acadia	0	0	0	0
Dalhousie	0	1	3	4
St. Mary's	0	0	1	1
St. Francis Xavier's	0	0	3	3
Mount Allison Wesleyan	0	3	2	5
Halifax Medical	0	1	1	2
Halifax High School	0	0	1	1
Truro High School	0	1	0	1
Truro Public School	1	0	0	1
Pictou Academy	0	1	4	5
Liverpool Academy	0	4	0	4
Dartmouth Public School	1	0	0	1
Galt (Ontario) Collegiate Institute	0	1	0	1
Private Study	6	12	9	27

By late 1880 the Chancellor reported that 57 had been examined, of whom 17 could not pass. Twenty more had applied during the "past year" he said and included one applicant from St. John Grammar School, New Brunswick.

Every effort was made to choose a fair mix of examiners from affiliated colleges. The figures given in the same Senate Minutes<sup>33</sup> indicate the following totals for the years 1877, 1878 and 1879:

Statement showing the number of Examiners appointed from the affiliated Colleges, from Schools, etc.

College, School, etc.	1877	1878	1879	Total
King's	3	3	3	9
Acadia	0	1	1	2
Dalhousie	4	2	4	10
St. Mary's	0	1	1	2
St. Francis Xavier's	2	1	1	4
Mount Allison Wesleyan	2	4	5	11
Halifax Medical	0	8	8	16
Halifax High School	0	2	2	4
Presbyterian Theological Hall	0	1	1	2
Montreal High School	1	0	0	1
Outside of Colleges and Schools	8	15	18	41
	—	—	—	—
	20	38	44	102

The university did not survive its fifth year. Several factors contributed to its failure as an educational experiment. There were disputes as to the fairness with which examiners were chosen. Students did not generally take kindly to examinations outside their own university. There were problems related to travelling to Halifax for the examinations. By 1880, however, progress was being made towards "local examinations", for which both Saint Francis Xavier College and Mount Allison were granted permission in 1880 for the year 1881. In fact, the university was given little co-operation from the affiliated institutions, although individual faculty members were most helpful.

In his report to the Senate at the final Senate meeting Chancellor Hills sought

... to inquire whether the University has fulfilled the purpose of its organization, and on the data thus acquired form a conclusion as to its utility in the past, and so be enabled to draw a fair inference as to its utility in the future.

In fact it was decided, though not by the Senate, that the Province had no further use for it. The Chancellor himself gives the impression that he, too, felt the experiment a failure, a failure due principally to "these colleges refusal to co-operate". The positive facts were:

With the exception of Mount Allison College, we may say that not one of the six colleges, specially referred to in the Act of the Legislature, have considered it wise or advantageous to take advantage of the opportunity afforded them of having their students tested by examiners outside of their own institution . . . however disappointed I may be as to the line of policy adopted by the colleges concerning that which I am fully persuaded is for the true well-being of this country in its relationship to higher education, the University, for some reason or other, has failed to enlist the practical sympathies, and even the luke-warm co-operation of the chartered colleges of Nova Scotia.<sup>36</sup>

Later in his presentation Dr. Hills wondered if, apart from private study, they would have any candidates at all. It seemed worthless to spend time and ability for a work against which the other institutions had set themselves. He left it to the Government to decide whether it was desirable for them to continue their work.

The Senate finally agreed to submit the Chancellor's report to the government and await developments. The Senate Minutes record that the Hon. Judge Johnston and Dr. Reid regretted, but were not surprised, that the colleges "had shown themselves tardy". Since those institutions possessed their own powers for conferring degrees both University Senators were of the opinion that "feelings akin to jealousy" were not unnatural. Professor Lawson and the Rev. T. J. Daly moved to inform the Government that the co-operation of the colleges was necessary. The implication taken from such a suggestion by more ardent supporters of the university was that colleges should be coerced into co-operation. Such was part of "The Grand Design" later outlined in the *Halifax Chronicle*.<sup>37</sup> The Senate did not act on the suggestion, and its thirteenth meeting ended with a series of withdrawn motions, indicating, perhaps, the Senate's own indecision. Consciously or unconsciously the phasing out of university operations had begun.

#### *The University Controversy in 1881*

At that final Senate meeting Dr. Hills had counselled and consoled his colleagues that "whether the colleges acknowledge or ignore the fact, it has created more attention to the subject of higher education *per se*". The controversy that filled columns of the local press bore him out. From late December on into late April there were letters to the editor or editorials on "The University Grants" and "The College Question" in the *Morning Herald*, the *Chronicle* and the *Evening Mail*, as well as in the provincial press.

There appeared little support for the non-teaching university as it had been constituted. The *Herald* and several of its correspondents such as A. D.

Smith, D. A. Steele, E. D. King, and J. W. Brass were in favour of abolishing the University of Halifax and continuing with "the little colleges". Others, like J. G. MacGregor, R. Sedgewick and A. H. McKay argued for the formation of one teaching university for the Province. Several of these went on to found the Society for Promoting University Consolidation. (The *Chronicle* appeared to favour the continuance of the University of Halifax for a variety of reasons, among which the *Herald* mentioned the fact that the university Registrar, who was receiving a salary of \$800, was a *Chronicle* editor!)

In early April *The Morning Chronicle* published a proposition that was interpreted by the *Herald* as a last ditch stand for Halifax University. The proposal, which the *Herald* waggishly called "The Great Plan", made three main points. The six existing universities were to surrender their degree-granting rights to the "paper university". The University of Halifax was to examine all students for degrees, with the possible exception of theology. Only co-operating colleges would be eligible to receive government grants, which would be made on the "sound basis of payments by results".

It was precisely with the results of the non-teaching university that Dr. J. G. MacGregor of Dalhousie took issue. In more than half a dozen lengthy letters to the press he presented the position of the anti-university group. He argued that there were already too many "degree factories dotted over the province". "Another factory" such as the recently created one "could expect nothing but starvation". In consequence there were few candidates for the new institution. Naturally the other colleges could not simply say to their students "Go", and ensure that "They goeth". The lack of candidates seemed to imply "that the students considered the old degrees better than the new".

Even if there were more candidates, MacGregor continued, "good degrees mean good schools and good teaching at college". He maintained that the system in Nova Scotia was just not good enough:

As to facilities for study, we all know only too well that they do not exist in Nova Scotia. . . . Now our High Schools are in their infancy, and with our six universities supported as to men and means by a population of about 500,000, it is impossible for us to have higher teaching power which can be compared except by way of contrast with that of the colleges which have supplied London with her undergraduates for the last fifty years.<sup>39</sup>

The province, he maintained, had neither the specialist teachers nor sufficient competent examiners to indulge in the kind of rotation of chosen examiners that the colleges demanded to ensure fairness in examinations.

The pith of his argument appeared to be that while the constitution of the university was no doubt satisfactory, the circumstances made what was suitable for London, quite ineffective in Nova Scotia. London University served a vast community of well-trained students attending non-degree-granting institutions. It had also been founded to counteract the effect of the religious tests imposed upon students by the traditional English universities. There were excellent facilities for study in the constituent colleges and adequate specialists and examiners. Halifax University was serving none of these purposes. It must necessarily fail.

In fact London is a University founded for examining under the most favourable circumstances large numbers of men who can get the best of education, but can get no degrees elsewhere; while Halifax offers to examine under the most unfavourable circumstances, men who can get degrees more readily than they can get good education.

MacGregor concluded that the University of Halifax should never have been founded. If judged by the tendency of its own system, it was bad. If judged by its performance, it was useless.

On March 23, 1881, Prof. Schurman of Dalhousie indicated that the Halifax University was not needed. If the University of London were so prestigious that Nova Scotia should imitate it, why should her most ambitious students not use it? Already students were taking the matriculation examination for London in Halifax. They could take degrees in Arts and Law. Prof. Schurman had just been assured of that in a letter from the Registrar of the University of London and from Mr. Langevin, Under-Secretary for the Secretary of State for the Dominions. A mere examining board was superfluous and quite unprestigious in the province.

A further block to the university's continued operation was placed by the response of the college presidents to a letter sent them by the Provincial Secretary, the Hon. Mr. Holmes. He enquired if each would work with the University of Halifax "by surrendering degree granting powers to it". Saint Francis Xavier College and Saint Mary's agreed to hold their own powers in abeyance so long as they continued to receive grants from the Provincial Treasury. Acadia, King's and Dalhousie refused to surrender any powers. Dr. Inch, President of Mount Allison, and his university would agree to hold its powers in abeyance but the Board of Governors had not yet met to consider the matter at the time of writing. The Halifax press then pointed out,

when the news was made public, that the Nova Scotia government should know that it was not possible for Mount Allison to act in such a manner since its charter was from New Brunswick, which would not allow such bartering away of rights from one province to another.<sup>40</sup>

The attack upon the non-teaching university included its considerations in attack upon the existing system of higher education in the Province. A marriage between Dalhousie and King's was suggested, and all the old controversies that had surrounded the idea of a central teaching university since the days of Dr. Crawley in 1838 and the 'new Dalhousie' of 1863 were raised. D. A. Steele came out in favour of his institution and suggested the best site for the new university would be Acadia. It was pointed out that both King's and Dalhousie were in practice as denominational as any other college and the general "educational question" became once more a struggle by denominational colleges for funds.

The most striking example of a plea for special funding came from Prof. Robert Sedgewick. He made a claim of \$40,000 for Dalhousie on the grounds of its all-round merits. A more conservative claim is illustrated in his merit table given below. The 1881 government proposal was for grants of \$1,400 to each college. Sedgewick argued that if each Roman Catholic college were to receive so much in view of the Catholic population it served, Dalhousie should be given much more, representing by his calculation a larger denominational group.<sup>41</sup>

*Prof. Sedgewick's Table on Grants to Colleges*

College	Population represented	Proposed Grant	Average of students in attendance 1870 - 1881	Total Number of Graduates 1870 - 1881
Saint Mary's (R.C.)	103,000	\$2,800	55.2	16?
Saint Francis Xavier			52.2	8
King's (Anglican)	55,000	1,495	25.6	76
Acadia (Baptist)	54,000	1,468	52.6	68
Sackville, (Mt. Allison Methodist)	41,000	1,115	42.8	47
Dalhousie (Presbyterians and others)	135,000	3,670	97.1	89

The Dalhousie professor suggested that his university in fact might be considered to represent a population of 388,000 if one included all the Lutherans,

Free Will Baptists, Universalists, Congregationalists and others. He personally would settle for Dalhousie receiving \$2,400.

The notion of a central university, whether teaching or non-teaching, had its serious opponents apart from those concerned with denominational grants. A. D. Smith indicated "a Central University is no panacea".<sup>42</sup> Even if the colleges were to be consolidated into one university there was no guarantee that the province would be able to attract specialists. If such professors were to come there was no reason to suppose that they would be successful in what Mr. Smith called the chore of "painfully drilling students through the comparatively elementary work to which our colleges are largely confined". He was of the opinion that the system in the province was the product of "the poverty, want of leisure and general rawness of civilization, in a thinly populated new country like ours". There could be no change until the social conditions alluded to underwent concurrent change. He was further concerned that the advocates of the new university were planning cut backs in staffing. Prof. Smith felt they "invited us to cut our throats".

Dr. A. H. MacKay, Principal of Pictou Academy, was one of the few who supported the Halifax University. He believed it gave schools such as his own the opportunity of taking uniform public examinations, which would safeguard students from Professors who presently went unchecked while teaching and examining their own hobbies. He considered the little colleges were living in "a golden age of perfect independence and unlimited autonomy". Yet it was the Province that paid the piper. The Examining Board he thought might break "this golden spell and show that there's something rotten in the state of Denmark". (March 28, 1881)

### CONCLUSION

The outcome of all these events and opinions on Halifax University was somewhat negative. Policy on higher education for the next eighty years was not decided by the merits or demerits of the abstract desirability of a centralized collegiate system. On March 17, 1881, the Government confessed that "it was impractical . . . for the denominational colleges would go on as they were doing and would not send their students to the central university". The Government concluded that the University of Halifax should be abolished. However, as it was "the duty of the State to support higher education", the only practical way in the circumstances was to grant money to the existing denominational colleges.

As it has frequently happened in the history of higher education in the Province, the government believed they had made a satisfactory decision. But as it has happened with equal frequency in that same history, there were those "in high places" who disagreed. The Legislative Council reversed the decision to aid denominational colleges while leaving "the paper university" on the statute books. Small wonder that some saw no inevitable educational trend in the events of higher education to that date. The Society for Promoting University Consolidation began immediately to campaign for the ideal which the Carnegie Commissioners again proposed in 1922: consolidation. However, the "little colleges" of Nova Scotia lived on, and by 1963 the piper was being paid once more by the Province. Maritime Union in higher education remains, in 1973, a controversial political issue.

## NOTES

1. *The Statutes and Laws of the Province of Nova Scotia for 1876*, Chapter 28 of the Acts of 1876, 39 Victoria. Province House Library, Halifax.
2. Nova Scotia House of Assembly *Debates and Proceedings* for 1876, March 8, p. 99.
3. The Halifax *Morning Herald*, Monday, April 11, 1881 suggested the Bill's defeat was due to the Hon. Dr. Parker's unavoidable absence through illness when the Opposition refused to "pair" with the absent member "although they all knew that for him to attend and vote would endanger his life". However, the Hon. Mr. Whitman was also absent when the 10-9 vote was taken.
4. *Debates and Proceedings* for March 10, 1876, p. 113 and 127.
5. W. S. Learned and K. C. Sills in *Education in The Maritime Provinces of Canada* (New York, Carnegie Foundation, 1922) recommended a confederated university as their constructive policy for higher education in the Maritime Provinces. This Carnegie Report makes no mention of the University of Halifax, nor of the later Society for Promoting University Consolidation, founded in 1881. The Carnegie Committee's "plan involves a complete reconstruction, and the use of funds, not to strengthen one institution at the expense of others, but to bring together into one new organization at Halifax several institutions with their endowments and equipment" (p. 35). They concluded, "As a contribution to our knowledge of successful educational practice alone, the plan would seem well worth while" (p. 50). In 1972, there were *ten* institutions making a joint submission on behalf of the Universities of Nova Scotia to the Royal Commission on Education, Public Services and Provincial-Municipal Relations. They claimed "Nova Scotia universities complement each other". The



President of Dalhousie, Dr. Henry D. Hicks, in a further submission on *Teacher Education and Nova Scotia's Universities* added "the existing universities of Nova Scotia (with the possible exception of College St. Anne) are viable, and are all capable of doing first-class work within limits". (p. 13 of his Brief)

6. Ralph D. Mitchener, "On Determining the Seniority of Canadian Universities", *Dalhousie Review*, XLI, p. 231.
- 7, 8. *Debates and Proceedings*, 1876, p. 109.
- 9, 10. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
11. Hugo Reid, *Remarks on University Education in Nova Scotia*, Halifax, J. Bowers and Sons, 1859, p. 12.
12. *Debates and Proceedings*, 1876, p. 135.
13. T. C. Haliburton, *An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia*, Halifax, Joseph Howe, 1829, Vol. I, p. 17-18.
14. *The Nova Scotian*, April 17, 1843. From a resume report of the House of Assembly debate "On the College Question", p. 124.
15. Speech of the Hon. Joseph Howe, Provincial Secretary, on the Question of "Colleges and Education", Monday, February 19th, 1849. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, AK LE 83.
16. *Debates and Proceedings*, 1876, p. 115-116.
17. *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of Nova Scotia, 1881*, Halifax, printed by The Morning Herald, 1881, p. 67.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 67. The Hon. Mr. Baker, "It was said that the members of the Lower House, with one exception, were unanimously in favour of the Bill".
19. J. Murray Beck, *The Government of Nova Scotia*, Toronto, University Press, 1957, p. 245.
20. See, *inter alia*, *The Morning Herald*, April 9, 1881, on "Some Dying Freaks", its editorial for April 11, 1881, and quotations against the Legislative Council from the *Yarmouth Herald* and the *Digby Courier* quoted in the edition of April 18, 1881.
21. *The Statutes and Laws of Nova Scotia*, 1881, Chapter 20, 44 Vict. "An Act to provide for defraying certain expenses of the Civil Government of this Province", 19th April, 1881.
22. *Legislative Council Debates and Proceedings*, p. 64. Mentioned by the Hon. J. C. MacDonald.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 68. Mentioned by the Hon. Mr. Creelman.
24. Joseph Howe's Speech, 1849, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
25. University of Halifax, *The Calendar for the year 1880*, p. 101, 102. Nova Scotia Archives, Akins Collection.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
27. *Legislative Assembly Debates and Proceedings*, p. 70, 112.

28. University of Halifax, *Calendar*, p. 107, 111, 112.
29. University of Halifax, *Minutes of the Senate, 1876-1880*, p. 236.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 338.
- 32-33. *Ibid.*, p. 334.
- 34-36. *Ibid.*, p. 396.
- 37-38. Reported in *The Morning Herald*, Tuesday, April 5, 1881.
39. *The Morning Herald*, December 16, 1880; 1881 January 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 22, February 1, April 7.
40. *Ibid.*, Jan. 14 & 15, 1881.
41. The letter of the Hon. S. D. Holmes was dated 28 February, 1881. The text and comment appeared in a *Morning Herald* editorial, April 4, 1881.
- '42. *The Morning Herald*, Jan. 26, 1881.