

“The following is an extended text of an address given before the Thirty-First Annual Convention of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities at Digby, Nova Scotia, September 2nd to 4th, 1936.”

The Dalhousie Institute of Public Affairs

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It is a pleasure and an honour to be invited to address this organization, of which I have heard very favourably ever since I came to live in Nova Scotia.

I think it one of the encouraging signs that representatives of the various municipalities of the province do meet annually to discuss their common interests and welfare. Like an Englishman I have always believed that unless there is local patriotism, unless there is pride in sound, clean, progressive local government, there can be no good government anywhere in the country. But that does not mean either that a municipality should take its own independent line, or that it should be uninterested in other localities. In these matters, as always, much can be done by pooling knowledge, much can be done even by emulation.

I have just returned from a tour of Scotland and everywhere, in large cities and in small towns and villages, I was struck by the strength of municipal patriotism and enterprise, by the highly developed civic sense of responsibility. I am not speaking of the many excellent services rendered to municipalities by the central government, I have in mind what the towns do for themselves.

Civic pride! But civic pride in this complex modern world is not enough. Patriotism must be informed, intelligent, even scientific in these days. Of course the will to live well, the will to be governed well, must be there. But after that one must take thought, anxious studious thought, if waste and mistakes are to be avoided. How can this be secured? I think that every

one who has had to do with municipal government will agree that all this cannot be secured easily. The very fact that you meet here in this annual conference is evidence that you are aware of the difficulties. I congratulate you on this organization. I have gladly accepted your invitation to be present, to say something of a plan we have been evolving in Dalhousie University for the past two years, and which we are presently going to initiate. I want to say something of it, because I am sure that some of you can help us with it, and also I have hopes that we may do something to help you.

In our Canadian universities, government, politics, economics have long been subjects of study. These things have been studied abstractly, but not, I should hope, in an impractical way. Certainly some former students in Canadian universities have gone on later to make contributions to our government, including municipal government. The late Morley Wickett, of Toronto, is a good example of a great leader in municipal government, who got his impetus in that direction from his university studies. But hitherto no Canadian university has consciously set itself to give a special training for those of its students who look ahead to the civil service, or to direct participation in government of municipalities, or provinces. Hitherto, strange as it may seem, Canadian universities have rarely set themselves to do field work in the Canadian governmental problems, municipal, provincial, federal. (Individual students and professors have of course done this). And finally, up till now, virtually no Canadian university has conceived the idea of ranging itself with Municipal Associations to promote mutual cooperation and assistance. All these three things Dalhousie University will now try to do. Our plan has met with the warmest approbation on the part of leading public men, with those who have to do with various civil services, and also with the social science department of the Rockefeller Foundation. The plan did not originate with any of the university authorities, let me say, so I can speak of it frankly, with no immodesty. It was first evolved by a small group of professors, who then consulted with me and with other colleagues, and so it widened out. The group of professors now includes men in the three faculties of Arts, Law and Medicine.

I need not say much of the scheme on its educational side because that will concern a number of our own undergraduate

students. Our aim there will be to give the students who have in their first two years shown some proclivity towards the study of social and economic questions, the proper background for participation later in the actualities of the civil service; or, it may be in journalistic discussion of these questions, and above all, for participation in the political life of their country, their province, or their municipality. The course mainly consists of advanced lectures in Political Science, Economics, and the elements of Law. Hitherto, many students of government in Canadian universities have not given enough attention to the legal aspects. That is a serious mistake: perhaps we see it reflected in legislators who have been in too much of a hurry, and whose schemes have later suffered shipwreck in the courts. We shall try to avoid one-sidedness of this kind. We intend also to keep in view the whole important matter of public health in our study of public questions. Hence the pooling of our teaching resources in the three faculties. A new feature will be a course on practical problems of Public Administration, given partly by public officials and others in public life—the co-operation of some municipal officers has already been secured—and partly by teachers of the University. At the end of the course a comprehensive examination may be held. Steps have also been taken to link the course up with the examinations held from time to time by the Civil Service Commission for university graduates. The prospects for students who pass that examination seem not unfavourable provided that they are really well qualified. It is hoped that some of these graduates may find their way to the municipal service.

Further, we feel that we must work with those civil servants who are already practically engaged in the job. We propose to offer instruction and opportunities for study not only to our own students, but to those who wish to attend extramural courses. Conferences or refresher courses will be held for public servants to make them familiar with new developments in their field. The first course of this type will be held for Relief Officers of the Province and the municipalities in November, in cooperation with the Canadian Welfare Council. Another short course has been planned for Municipal Engineers, to be conducted together with the Nova Scotia Technical College.

In order to interest wider groups of our people in the cause of administration, a series of lectures will be held in various parts

of the Province. The subject of these lectures this winter will be Current Problems of Government in Canada. It is hoped that some leading men in that field, well known all through the Dominion, will be among the speakers. But as Nova Scotia is predominantly a rural and agricultural province, the administrative problems of rural areas will receive proper attention. It has been planned that a model course of lectures dealing with subjects of interest to rural communities should be given in one or two rural districts of the province.

It is further planned that a series of short studies dealing with the important problems of modern administration should be published by the Institute. There is any amount of literature about business administration, but the administrative problems of the Dominion, the provinces, and the municipalities, have been rather neglected by the universities. We shall endeavour to make a contribution in that direction.

The first book which it is hoped will be published during this winter will deal with the administration of unemployment relief in Canada. Further publications are planned about Social Insurance, Public Health and Administrative Law. You may be assured that problems important for Nova Scotia will receive due consideration in these publications.

These are only a few of the problems which we hope to tackle. There are other plans which are in the stage of preparation and about which reports may be made at later conventions. Among them is the establishment of a Reference Library on Public Administration in Halifax, to be undertaken, we hope, in cooperation with the Provincial Government, and available for all the municipalities of the province. I would like to mention here that we have, from the very beginning, been in close touch with the Provincial Government and have found encouragement and help from its members.

We hope also to cooperate with our neighbouring provinces and with Newfoundland and with the maritime universities which are interested in the cause of Public Administration. We hope that all these groups will be represented in the Institute of Public Affairs which we hope to organize. But above all, we shall need to cooperate with such organizations as your own.

We may want to study your records, and other records you can help us to. We may want to know from you not only what you have been able to accomplish, but also about those things which you consider obstacles to progress. In our surveys, which we hope from time to time to conduct, we cannot overlook municipal and county activities. School boards, local boards of health, agricultural societies, women's institutes, county fairs—these are as much the material of our study as is the Dominion Civil Service, or the balance of our foreign trade.

But some one may say, cannot all these organizations carry on and improve themselves without academic interlopers looking them over? Or, whether any one is rude enough to say that or not, does something like that suspicion lurk in your minds? The answer is, I think, that all these tasks are becoming more and more complex, more and more in need of scientific study. Whether we like it altogether or not, the whole tendency is towards increased governmental control of our activities. In the old days a man planted an apple orchard, and it was a duel between him and fate whether the fruit escaped the pests and blights, and finally came to a profitable market. He did not complain if his neighbours, by neglecting their own trees, spread ruin to his, or if they spoiled the market by unsocial practices. We live in a different world today, and our attitude to government is different. The individual owner of an orchard feels helpless in our complicated world. But if the government is to deal with the complexities, it too will need to have a highly and widely trained personnel. That is where the university, with its scientists and scholars, comes in—not as an interloper, but with a humble desire to assist, and feeling its moral responsibility to assist.

Another important function the university may perform by making a contribution to what is rather pretentiously called "education for citizenship". Modern democracy is based on the assumption that the majority of citizens are aware of their political responsibilities and take a real interest in the work of their government. But how can you expect them to live up to these responsibilities and to keep up their interest if they are not properly informed about the facts, about the aims and functions of governments be they central, provincial or local and about the part they are to play themselves in political life?

They will either abstain from politics altogether thinking it a dirty game that should be left to the professional politicians or they will, uninformed as they are, become the prey of political slogans and other propaganda. Post-war Europe has given many examples of what may be said to and believed by uninformed voters in election times.

Once more, we sincerely ask your assistance. Perhaps I can best illustrate the need for mutual assistance by relating what happened to Noah when he sailed to the Hebrides and invited the people to come aboard the ark. The people of the larger islands listened to him, but when he came to a small islet he met with the response: "The Chief of this island has a boat of his own, what-fer?" Too many of us are paddling about in our small canoes, when we all need a larger vessel, with a more composite crew.