

THE CRISIS IN THE ARTS, LETTERS AND SCIENCES

A precis of the Submission of Dalhousie University as presented by President A. E. Kerr to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences.

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1. *Introductory*

THE awareness of thoughtful Canadians of the crisis facing institutions of higher learning in this country in the aftermath of war has found expression from coast to coast in the Submissions made not only by the universities but by other groups as well to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. Whether the purpose of higher education is to humanize and civilize or whether, as the Swiss philosopher Mueller points out, "our system is perfectly set up for the mass production of morons, philistines and moral idiots", certain it is that the time is ripe not only for an analysis of the critical financial problems presently facing the universities of Canada, but also for a re-evaluation of the function of the university in modern society.

Dalhousie University's purpose in making its own Submission to the Massey Commission has been not to express any divergence of views from the observations and recommendations made by the National Conference of Canadian Universities but rather to provide more detailed evidence of the problems affecting institutions of higher learning generally, as reflected in Dalhousie's own experience.

The Submission of Dalhousie University touches upon a number of topics of concern to institutions of higher learning throughout Canada. The functions and responsibilities of the University in the several academic disciplines and professions are set forth in clear and unequivocal terms. Emphasis is given to the plight of the university student in the post-war period, and reference is made to the responsibility of the universities in the projection of Canadian culture beyond our own borders. It is that part of the Submission that is devoted to the crisis in the Arts, Letters and Sciences at university level, however, that provides the most effective statement of the problems and prospects of institutions of higher learning in Canada to-day.

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It is in keeping with the tradition of Dalhousie that in the University's Submission to the Royal Commission there should appear at the outset a carefully defined set of principles round which the functions of the various faculties revolve. Those principles, which apply with such vigor to higher education in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, may properly be recorded here.

First, a university is an association of scholars devoted to teaching and research.

Second, a university is a school for the training of the mind, based on the assumption that a proper development of the intellect is required for the full life of man and for the improvement of society at large.

Third, a university is an institution which offers instruction in certain kinds of professional knowledge and skill, by which the student may afterwards earn his livelihood and contribute to what Bacon calls "the relief of man's estate".

Fourth, a university is an agency which enables each new age to enter into the fulness of its cultural heritage.

2. Functions and Responsibilities of the University

The report of the University Grants Committee on University Development in the United Kingdom from 1935-1937 states:

A university would in our view fail of its essential purpose if it did not, by some means or other, contrive to combine its vocational functions with the provision of a broad humanistic culture and a suitably tough intellectual discipline.

"If we agree that the ultimate objective of a liberal education is the general training of the mind," states the Dalhousie University Submission, "it is at once apparent that the focal point of such training must rest with the Faculty of Arts. The University which loses sight of this tends to become materialistic in its outlook, and as the grasp of eternal values diminishes the spiritual content of teaching on all levels is gravely impaired".

The emphasis thus given by Dalhousie University to the important role of the liberal arts in higher education concludes with a recognition of the importance of the relationship between primary and secondary education and the development of the Arts, Letters and Sciences in Canada and points to a function

of the University in providing trained teachers as one of the most important methods by which institutions of higher learning contribute to the development of our national culture.

In Pure and Applied Science the Submission draws attention not only to the task of providing the personnel and research facilities required but also points out that the influence of scientific thought upon our present civilization calls for an ever-increasing understanding of the relationship between science and society.

Specifically, the University's Submission directs attention to a recent Resolution of the National Conference of Canadian Universities regarding *Oceanography*, for which, according to the NCCU Resolution, Dalhousie University on the Atlantic Coast and the University of British Columbia on the Pacific Coast are peculiarly well situated. To those who live in seaboard provinces it must be at once obvious that oceanographic research is as important to our development as is agricultural research to those who live in the interior.

In the field of Graduate Studies the Submission reflects a keen awareness of the necessity confronting Canadian universities to strive vigorously to retain a more substantial fraction of our ablest scholars.

From the standpoint of the universities of the Maritimes it is no answer to the problem to point to the existing facilities for Graduate Studies in the larger centres of population in Central Canada . . . We are convinced that the most effective manner in which to diminish the loss of intellectual leadership through migration of our ablest scholars to other lands is to provide greater facilities for graduate research in each of the geographic areas of Canada and, at the same time, to provide larger numbers of research scholarships and fellowships to assist those desiring to proceed to graduate studies.

In its treatment of the functions of the various professional faculties of the University, the Submission stresses their social as well as their vocational aims:

A University Law School must be concerned with the relation of law to the other disciplines taught in the University, such as economics, government and history . . . the study of law in a University Law School may well be regarded as a continuation of the previous study in the realm of general culture.

It is somewhat of a national tragedy that the Law Schools of Canada have been denied that measure of public and private support with which they could increase the contribution that

their students make to the national welfare in the realm of professional practice, business and government and that, as institutions of research maintaining sustained investigations in important aspects of law and government, they would make to the national life of Canada.

In Medicine, Dentistry and Public Health, the Submission emphasizes the onerous financial burdens arising from increasing public demand for fully effective public health services, and urges that ways and means should be sought to assist those universities having faculties of Medicine and Dentistry, to enable them to provide the skilled personnel as well as research facilities, which form so important a part of any national health programme.

Recognition of the relationship of the Social Sciences to the life of the community is reflected in the Submission's reference to the Institute of Public Affairs, whose task it is to provide for students inside the University and outside, instruction in social, economic and governmental problems, to assist public authorities in the solution of these problems, and to undertake and encourage research directed towards this goal.

The Institute of Public Affairs has made a lasting impact upon the consciousness of leaders in industry, labour and government. With the increased complexities of public administration and of management-labour relations, demands upon the Institute's facilities are constantly growing. If the Institute is to serve the community and the country as Dalhousie University's major activity in the field of University Extension, added research personnel, library facilities and scholarship funds and grants for study and research in political, social and economic problems will be required.

3. *The University Student in the Post-War Period*

University authorities have frequently expressed concern that many able high school students are not proceeding to university. This trend has been particularly noticeable in those areas of Canada where a large proportion of the population live in rural areas and in towns and villages remote from centres of population. Pointing to the DVA Scholarships scheme as one method whereby inequalities of educational opportunity might be rectified on a nationwide basis, Dalhousie's Submission to the Massey Commission records the conviction "that a system of national scholarships based on the general experience and precedent of the DVA scheme would

provide the most effective solution to the problem of equality of opportunity for deserving students . . . we desire to emphasize that one of the inevitable weaknesses inherent in relying entirely on private endowment for scholarship aid to deserving students, is that the number of scholarships available to students desiring to attend regional universities is inevitably smaller than the number available to universities in larger centres of population."

4. *The Projection of Canadian Culture*

The awareness of the responsibilities of institutions of higher learning in fostering good international relations through closer cultural ties with the people of other countries is reflected in the Submission's proposal for the establishment of a two-way scheme of international exchange for university professors, technicians, government experts and others.

5. *The Crisis in the Arts, Letters and Sciences at University Level*

Against this background of the functions and responsibilities of the University in modern society it is important to recognize that Canada faces a crisis in the Arts, Letters and Sciences at University level.

The changing social and economic concepts of our time have brought in their wake problems of ever-increasing complexity, particularly for those institutions of higher learning that have traditionally looked to private endowment and benefactions for the funds needed to carry out their tasks. The rising level of taxation has greatly impaired previous sources of revenue from private endowment. The onerous impact of succession duties has most seriously diminished the number of benefactions according to privately endowed institutions. At the same time, the increasing scope of governmental activity, the constantly mounting realization on the part of the public of the importance of higher education, and an expanding interest in the Arts, Letters and Sciences have combined to impose a great financial burden upon the universities of Canada.

As long as 25 years ago the Learned-Sills Report on Education in the Maritime Provinces of Canada drew attention to this burden:

The requirements of plant and personnel in providing a good modern university education seem fabulous when compared

with the equipment of forty years ago. The burden of increased expenditures usually assumes one of three forms. Most striking is the enormous initial cost of adequate laboratories and apparatus for proper instruction in all branches of science. In the physical and biological sciences these needs are familiar, but they are only a little less imperative in psychology, in the social sciences, and in education . . .

Closely allied to the laboratories are the libraries and other indispensable collections. None of the "small" New England colleges already mentioned presumes to operate with a working book collection of fewer than 100,000 volumes, while the presence of professional schools would necessitate large additions to the number . . .

Last, and most important, is the matter of professors' salaries, which constitute the major item of current expense. All that is accomplished in any university is done through the agency of selected men and women, broadly trained, and provided with sufficient leisure and compensation to permit them to maintain their training by means of travel and study.

With the passage of time, the problems of the university have increased rather than diminished.

In 1944 the *Report on Education* of the Royal Commission on Provincial Development and Rehabilitation in Nova Scotia recalled and reaffirmed the observations of the Learned-Sills Report in the following terms:

We are at the beginning of a period which will see an increasing emphasis being placed on the natural sciences, brought about as a result of the impetus imparted through war needs and by war inventions which have opened up vast fields for further investigation and development. We are also unmistakably at the beginning of a period which will see an increasing emphasis being placed on the social sciences as well, brought about also by the war and the resulting realization of the outstanding importance of these studies in terms of human welfare and happiness. The unavoidable consequence will be that laboratories, libraries, and personnel will be taxed even more than heretofore, and a university which is to keep abreast of these demands must anticipate far greater expenditures than it has yet contemplated.

The truth of the observations of both these Commissions may be impressively illustrated from the current situation of Dalhousie University as reflected in its Submission to the Massey Commission—a situation that confronts most other similarly situated institutions of higher learning.

One of the most substantial factors in a budget of most Canadian universities is the payroll cost of teaching. The calibre of the teaching staff is usually directly related to prevail-

ing salary scales. Further, annual operating costs have increased enormously during the past decade.

Finally, Canadian universities in general, and privately endowed institutions in particular, to which the country owes so much and which have no access to the public treasury, are facing serious difficulties in providing pension benefits for faculty commensurate with the contribution that they have made to the university and to the country.

In a discussion of the importance of providing adequate pension benefits for university staff, the observations of the University Grants Committee of the United Kingdom to the effect that "universities would lay themselves open to criticism if Exchequer moneys were used for the supplementation of pensions on a more generous scale than the Government had adopted for their own employees" is applicable. Supplementation of the present resources of the universities is essential in order to enable them to provide retirement benefits for faculty members commensurate with pensions enjoyed by members of the public service occupying positions of equal responsibility. Such retirement benefits should be no more generous than pension benefits available to the public service of Canada.

In the United Kingdom, the Submission records, the crisis in higher education, with its inescapable consequences for the development of the Arts, Letters and Sciences has been recognized as a truly national problem. The concern felt by the people of the United Kingdom for the difficulties confronting the universities has already been met in a positive and imaginative manner by the British Government.

This is reflected not only in the very substantial grants for capital expenditure by the United Kingdom Government to the British universities but also by the fact that the proportion of total university income derived from governmental sources has risen from 34.3% in 1935-36 to 52.7% in 1946-47, and it is officially reported that it will probably exceed 60% in 1951-52.

In recommending grants to universities for capital expenditure for plant and equipment, the University Grants Committee of the United Kingdom pointed out with some emphasis that "the drying up of many sources of private benefaction has caused us to recommend to Your Lordships that separate and ample provision should be made by Parliament for non-recurrent grants." The Committee's Report also states that by far the

greater part of the funds required for capital expenditure "would have to be found, if at all, from the Exchequer."

The importance attached by the Government of the United Kingdom to higher education is also reflected in the generous scheme of national scholarships. Some 50,000 of the 76,000 university students in the United Kingdom are receiving aid in the form of scholarships and bursaries, most of which are provided out of funds made available from the Treasury.

After thus reviewing the factors contributing to the crisis in higher education not only in Canada but abroad, the Submission of Dalhousie University records satisfaction that "our own Government should, at this time, recognize the desirability of seeking ways and means of giving encouragement to those institutions devoted to the task of national development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. It is likewise a source of gratification to note that the Prime Minister's recent observation that the status of education in Canada is a matter which the Federal Government cannot safely ignore", and that ways and means must be sought for equalizing opportunities for all Canadians desiring and worthy of general university training in the Arts, Letters and Sciences."

The crisis in higher education in Canada (the Dalhousie Submission adds) is a matter of common concern alike to Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments. While some of the problems of the university lend themselves best to solution through one level of government, others clearly point to the need for direct participation on the part of other levels of government.

Institutions devoted to the promotion of the Arts, Letters and Sciences at university level should not rely solely, or even primarily, upon Federal aid. To do so might easily result in diminished vigor in academic life, and at the same time impair our traditions of academic freedom and independence.

The Report of the University Grants Committee of the United Kingdom in 1948, in referring to the very substantial encouragement that the government of that country is giving to universities, declared:

University affairs have never become a matter of political contention and successive Governments have shown themselves scrupulously careful to avoid even the appearance of interference with academic liberty. The very large sums voted by Parliament are entrusted to the universities without the detailed control of expenditure which is no doubt proper in some other fields of Government subvention . . . on the side of the Government, there is full recognition of the over-riding duty of those

who follow the academic path to ascertain the truth and to proclaim it without respect to the convenience of Governments.

The fundamental issues inherent in the relationship between the university and the state will undoubtedly be fewer and less difficult of solution where public responsibility is shared by the three levels of government. The Submission concludes:

We, in Dalhousie would be striking a poor bargain to accept the largesse of the Federal Government, or any other agency of government in Canada if, by so doing, we impaired the habits of self-reliance and independence of judgment which have characterized our history in the past.

We believe that the foregoing principles so clearly enunciated by the University Grants Committee of the United Kingdom apply with equal vigor to Canada and we are convinced that recognition of those principles on the part of government is essential.

6. *Recommendations*

Universities are generally recognized not only in Canada but in other western countries as being fundamental to the preservation and enrichment of our democratic culture and civilization. As Alfred North Whitehead states in his observations on "Universities and Their Function:"

The universities have trained the intellectual pioneers of our civilization—the priests, the lawyers, the statesmen, the doctors, the men of science, and the men of letters. They have been the home of those ideals which lead men to confront the confusion of their present times.

If we accept this statement of the function of the universities in relationship to the underlying causes and immediate consequences of the crisis in higher education in Canada, we are at once confronted with a variety of possible solutions.

Dalhousie University's Submission to the Massey Commission does not attempt an analysis of the many proposals that have from time to time been put forward but rather confines itself to certain specific recommendations that may be regarded as fundamental to any effective amelioration of the present plight of the universities and the the encouragement of the Arts, Letters and Sciences in Canada.

These recommendations are so clear and precise as to require little elaboration. They touch upon salaries; pensions; operating costs; capital expenditure; private benefactors; law

and the social sciences; medicine, dentistry, nursing and public health; university extension; special projects; scholarships and international fellowships. They are as follows:

(a) *Salaries*

THAT annual grants be made to universities to assist in meeting the payroll cost of teaching and to improve prevailing salary levels—such grants to be graduated in conformity with the present salary scale and based in each classification on a percentage of the existing salary level;

(b) *Pensions*

THAT annual grants be made to universities to enable them to provide pension retirement benefits for faculty members comparable with those available to members of the public service of Canada occupying positions of equivalent training and responsibility;

(c) *Operating Costs*

THAT annual grants be made to universities calculated upon a percentage of their annual operating costs, exclusive of the payroll cost of teaching, plus an additional percentage calculated on depreciation value of plant and equipment;

(d) *Capital Expenditure*

THAT non-recurring grants for capital expenditure be made to universities to provide added facilities for plant and laboratory equipment;

(e) *Private Benefactions*

THAT amendment be made of existing legislation affecting Succession Duties and Personal and Corporate Income Tax to encourage private benefactions to educational, religious and charitable institutions, seeing that they depend largely on private support;

(f) *Law and the Social Science*

THAT grants be made to universities to promote encouragement of the study of Law as an important discipline in the Social Sciences;

(g) *Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing and Public Health*

THAT the Federal health program be expanded to provide assistance to Universities Faculties of Medicine, Dentistry and Nursing; and further, that assistance be provided for hospital schools of nursing of collegiate and professional standing;

(i) *Special Projects*

THAT grants be provided to assist the special projects of various universities in the different geographical areas of Canada; in particular that assistance be given for the development of Institutes of Oceanography at the two universities mentioned by the National Conference of Canadian Universities;

(j) *Scholarships*

THAT a system of national scholarships be established to provide equality of opportunity to deserving students throughout Canada desiring to proceed to a general Arts course; and that a system of national scholarships be established for university students wishing to proceed to graduate and professional studies;

(k) *International Fellowships*

THAT a two-way scheme of fellowships and scholarships be established to enable Canada to play her part in international cultural relations through the travel abroad of Canadian scholars and the presence in Canada of outstanding scholars from other lands.

Dalhousie University does not maintain that the foregoing recommendations, important as they are, provide the final answer to the crisis confronting the Arts, Letters and Sciences at university level in Canada today. It is the clear sense of the University's Submission to the Massey Commission, however, that these recommendations constitute a minimum of the requirements not only of Dalhousie University but of most other similarly situated institutions of higher learning if the functions and responsibilities of the university in Canadian society are to be maintained. Vigorous and forthright measures are unquestionably required if the philosophy and traditions that Dalhousie, in common with other institutions of higher learning, holds a fundamental to a free society, are to be maintained. Other considerations apart, it is fair to say that the eloquent yet simple, restatement of the principles upon which Dalhousie University believes the structure of higher education must rest recalls with especial timeliness Arthur North Whitehead's injunction: "Do not teach too many subjects and, what you teach, teach thoroughly."