

PAUL AXELROD

Moulding the Middle Class: Student Life at Dalhousie University in the 1930s

HISTORIANS HAVE STUDIED CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES primarily from the perspective of presidents, principals and administrations. Too many "biographies" of universities extol great men and great buildings but fail to place the study of higher education adequately within the context of Canadian social and intellectual history. In particular, historians of post-secondary education in Canada have tended to devote too little attention to the participation of students in university life. This is unfortunate, since one of the central purposes of the university has been to prepare Canadian youth to fill appropriate social roles in the adult world.¹

The following case study examines the experiences of students at one Canadian university during the decade of the 1930s. Opened on a permanent basis in 1863, Dalhousie University of Halifax was, by 1930, a non-denominational university offering both a liberal arts degree and professional education in medicine, dentistry and law; in addition, King's College, the affiliated Anglican institution, offered degrees in Divinity.² In 1930 the student body was made up

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- 1 Some recent histories of Canadian universities which have broken out of this traditional genre are John G. Reid, *Mount Allison University: A History to 1963*, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1984), Charles M. Johnston, *McMaster University*, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1976, 1981), Frederick Gibson, *Queen's University: To Serve and Yet Be Free, Volume II, 1917-1961* (Montreal, 1983) and George Rawlyk and Kevin Quinn *The Redeemed of the Lord Say So: A History of Queen's Theological College, 1912-1972* (Kingston, 1980).
- 2 There is no full scale history of Dalhousie. Historical information can be found in D.C. Harvey, *An Introduction to the History of Dalhousie* (Halifax, 1938), John Willis, *A History of Dalhousie Law School* (Toronto, 1979), Centenary Committee, Dalhousie University, *One Hundred Years of Dalhousie* (Halifax, 1919), Peter Waite, "Playing at Universities: Dalhousie and the Sectarian Struggles in Nova Scotia", in A. Gregor and K. Wilson, eds., *Higher Education in Canada: Historical Perspectives* (Winnipeg, 1979), pp. 67-81, Judith Fingard, "They Had a Tough Row to Hoe", *Dalhousie Alumni Magazine* (Winter, 1985), pp. 27-30, Robin Harris, *A History of Higher Education in Canada: 1663-1960* (Toronto, 1976), Patrick Keane, "Dalhousie University and the Nontraditional Student: The First Century", *Dalhousie Review*, LXIII (Summer 1983), pp. 277-97. On the development of professional education, see A. Flexner,

of 970 students, 70 per cent of whom were in Arts and 30 per cent in professional programmes. Two-thirds of the students came from Nova Scotia, and women, who were admitted to Dalhousie in 1881, made up 27.5 per cent of the student body in 1930.³ In the following pages the analysis begins with an assessment of the economic impact of the Depression of the 1930s on the resources of the university and its students. The class origins and occupational destinies of Dalhousie's graduates are examined. The intellectual and learning environments of the university are described, and the social life and political attitudes and activities of Dalhousie students are also explored. What emerges from this case study is a picture of an educational institution which weathered the uncertainties of the 1930s with some measure of success in meeting the needs and aspirations of its middle-class constituency.

The Great Depression disrupted and sometimes debilitated Canadian universities, but it did not destroy them. Austerity cost some professors their jobs while many more survived by enduring salary reductions. Enrolments, which had climbed considerably during the 1920s, levelled off. Straitened financial circumstances prevented many aspiring students from attending and compelled others to drop out. But the absence of employment opportunities convinced students, if they could find sufficient funds, to stay in university for as long as possible. Canadian universities initiated few new programmes in the 1930s. With some exceptions, plans for expansion, particularly in professional education, were delayed or cancelled. At best, the universities "marked time", carrying on in a sober atmosphere of diminished expectations.⁴

Medical Education: A Comparative Study (New York, 1925), Colin D. Howell, "Reform and the Monopolistic Impulse: The Professionalization of Medicine in the Maritimes", *Acadiensis*, XI, 1 (Autumn 1981), pp. 3-22, C.B. Stewart, "One Hundred Years of Medical Education at Dalhousie", *Nova Scotia Medical Bulletin*, Vol. 47, No. 5 (1968), pp. 149-52, W.S. Learned and K.C.M. Sills, *Education in the Maritime Provinces of Canada* (New York, 1922), Harris, *A History of Higher Education in Canada*, pp. 259-306, "Legal Education in Canada", *Canadian Bar Review*, Vol. 1 (1923), pp. 671-84, and Vol. 2 (1924), pp. 376-89.

- 3 The figure of 970 students is lower than the actual number of registrants (before drop-outs), 1016, which forms the basis of statistical analyses later in this paper. Official figures can be found in Dalhousie University, *President's Report, 1931-32*, Dalhousie University Archives [DUA]. On the distribution of students in various programmes see Fred Pearson to Carleton Stanley, 17 December 1931, Correspondence — Fees File, President's Office Papers, DUA. The calculation of the sexual distribution of students is based on registrations in September, found in "Registration Book, 1930-31", DUA. See Table One.
- 4 D.L. Thomson, "McGill Between the Wars", cited in Harris, *A History of Higher Education*, p. 353. There were 35,926 full-time students in 1930-31, 35,108 in 1935-36, and 36,386 in 1940-41: *Historical Compendium of Education Statistics: From Confederation to 1975* (Statistics Canada, 81-568, Ottawa, 1978), p. 208. For other accounts of the financial problems of Canadian universities in the 1930s, see Gibson, *Queen's University, Volume II*, pp. 83-155, Johnston, *McMaster University, Volume 2*, pp. 39-83, Michael Hayden, *Seeking a Balance: The University of Saskatchewan, 1907-1982* (Vancouver, 1983), pp. 153-99, John G. Reid, *Mount Allison University*, II, pp. 60-143. In addition, interviews conducted by the author with students in Western Canada and from Dalhousie provided considerable information about the impact of the Depression on their lives.

Dalhousie's experience fit the Canadian pattern. In the absence of government support, a \$400,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundation in 1930 kept the university afloat for much of the Depression, but its accumulated deficit exceeded \$230,000 by June of 1939.⁵ A new gymnasium, replacing the old one destroyed by fire, was built in 1932, and on the strength of a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, the university opened an Institute of Public Affairs in 1936. Apart from the addition of a medical library in 1939, no other capital construction occurred during the decade. Indicative of the financial strain was the elimination for one year of the Depression of funding for the Law School Library. When the Dean informed Stanley that the school could not function without at least \$300 to purchase current journals, Stanley replied, "You say you *have to have more*. I do not dispute that. I only say, and you must treat this as final, that there is no possibility of my finding the money for it".⁶

Several staff members, demonstrators and instructors were laid off in the early 1930s, including a librarian with 14 years' service. These austerity measures were especially hard on female employees of Dalhousie.⁷ Unlike other Canadian universities, Dalhousie never reduced the salaries of its full-time faculty. Carleton Stanley, the university president, was certain that salary reductions would cost the university heavily in academic terms by encouraging good professors to leave, or by convincing them not to come.⁸ However, Stanley was rebuked by the Board of Governors when he offered to subsidize the salary of a new professor out of his own pocket. Appalled by this lack of professionalism, board chairman Hector McInnes declared: "This Board cannot approve any professor's salary being supplemented by the President. I speak for the board when I state this as a principle".⁹

The proportion of educational costs borne by Maritime students increased significantly throughout the 1930s, rising from 29 to 40 per cent between 1926 and 1939, compared to a national average increase from 21 to 33 per cent over the same period.¹⁰ How expensive was higher education? Dalhousie Arts students, who paid lower fees than those in professional programmes, needed \$390 for tuition and lodging in 1938-39. Tuition in Arts, set at \$125, had been increased from \$112 in 1932.¹¹ Books, equipment, library fees, student activity

5 Dalhousie University Board of Governors' Minutes, 24 November 1939, DUA

6 Willis, *Dalhousie Law School*, p. 125.

7 Board of Governors' Minutes, 19 December 1932, 26 January, 26 April 1933; Fingard, "They Had a Tough Row to Hoe", p. 29

8 Carleton Stanley, "Dalhousie Today", *Dalhousie Review*, XVIII (1938-39), pp. 216-28.

9 Board of Governors' Executive Minutes, 2 September 1932.

10 "Financial Statistics of Universities and Colleges in Canada, 1921-1939", in Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Higher Education in Canada, 1938-40* (Ottawa, 1941), pp. 54-6. In a 1931 speech to the National Conference of Canadian Universities, W.E. McNeill from Queen's University claimed that some students were paying up to 50 per cent of costs: cited in Gwendoline Pilkington, "A History of the National Conference of Canadian Universities, 1911-1961", D.Ed. thesis, University of Toronto, 1974, pp. 271-2.

11 Over President Stanley's objections, the Board raised tuition fees in 1932: Carleton Stanley to

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Table One

Number and Gender of Dalhousie Students,
1930, 1935, 1939

	1930		1935		1939		Total	
	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
Male	72.5	737	78.3	692	76.5	686	75.6	2115
Female	27.5	279	21.7	192	23.5	211	24.4	682
Total	100	1016	100	884	100	897	100	2797

Source: Registration Books, 1930/31, 1935/36, 1939/40, Dalhousie University Archives. Based on registrations in September; official registrations are lower after drop-outs.

fees, and personal expenses added at least another 50 per cent to a student's costs, making it difficult for students away from home to live on less than \$600. (More than 70 per cent of Dalhousie students were from outside Halifax).

Increasing costs were not offset by adequate scholarship funds at Dalhousie or elsewhere in Canada. In 1933 Dalhousie reduced the number of awards available, the result of "a substantial shrinkage in income from the investment set aside to produce the moneys for prizes".¹² The president even suggested that students who won scholarships but who did not require the award, be asked to "turn back to the university this money".¹³ In 1938-39, approximately 11.6 per cent of Maritime students held entrance or undergraduate scholarships which were worth an average of \$113 per year. (This compared to 13.7 per cent in Ontario and 6.7 per cent in western Canada, with average annual values of \$121 and \$89 respectively).¹⁴ Emergency loan funds, frequently over-subscribed and

Board Executive, "Matter of Raising Fees", 9 June 1932, Correspondence — Fees File, President's Office Papers. And over the objection of students, the university imposed incidental library and diploma fees of \$5.00 and \$20.00 respectively in 1934: Howard Oxley to Stanley, 16 February 1934, and Stanley to Oxley, 7 March 1934, Correspondence — Council of the Students' File, President's Office Papers. In addition, students from outside the British Commonwealth paid higher fees (\$300) than other Dalhousie students. Law students paid fees of \$250 in 1932. See also Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Higher Education in Canada, 1936-38* (Ottawa, 1939), p. 13 and Stanley, "Dalhousie Today".

¹² Dalhousie University Senate Minutes, 13 May 1933, DUA

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Higher Education in Canada, 1936-38*, pp. 16-18; Jack Chernick, "National Scholarship", *The Manitoba Arts Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Fall, 1938), pp. 30-2.

Table Two
Place of Residence,
Dalhousie Students, 1930, 1935, 1939

	%
Halifax	28.4
Other Nova Scotia	38.7
New Brunswick	9.9
Prince Edward Island	5.1
Newfoundland	4.8
Other Canada	2.9
United States	8.9
British Isles	.2
West Indies	.8
Other	.3
Total	100
Known Cases	2792

Source: Registration Books, 1930/31, 1935/36, 1939/40, Dalhousie University Archives.

later uncollectable, were provided by a number of universities, including Dalhousie. Only students who had attended the university for at least one year were eligible for the maximum annual loan of \$100.¹⁵ Male students commonly helped finance their education through part-time and summer work, but job opportunities for women were scarce throughout the 1930s.¹⁶

At one level the financial obstacles facing aspiring students reinforce the traditional image of the university as a haven for the affluent, particularly in the Depression, when many parents were so badly squeezed. Indeed, Canadian educators were convinced that universities were becoming more élitist than ever. G.J. Trueman, president of Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, admitted that his institution was fighting a losing battle in its efforts to draw students from the small villages and rural areas of the region.¹⁷ President

15 *Calendar, Dalhousie University, 1939-40*, p. 18; C.H. Mitchell to Board of Governors, Board of Governors' Minutes, 7 April 1932.

16 Interviews: Eric Mercer, 11 August 1983; Jean Begg, 13 August 1983; Henry Hicks, 8 August 1983; William Archibald, 12 August 1983.

17 The percentage of Mount Allison students from communities under 1,000 people had fallen from

Stanley of Dalhousie confirmed this trend in a speech to the National Conference of Canadian Universities in 1934:

Canadian university students have always included a number of exceedingly poor boys, some of them even desperately poor. In the last two or three years all of the desperately poor have been obliged to desist altogether. Since, on the whole, the numbers of Canadian students have not diminished, it is obvious that their ranks have been filled...by those who are not so poor.¹⁸

To submit, however, that higher education excluded the children of the "desperately poor" by no means proves that universities were mere bastions of the rich. While there were very few working class youth at Dalhousie, the typical Dalhousie student came from modest means. Lawrence Read, the son of a minister "who had no money", entered Dalhousie only after his father borrowed \$500 from a friend.¹⁹ Gene (Morison) Hicks' father was a civil servant who had taken two salary cuts in the early 1930s. He, too, borrowed money to send his daughter to university.²⁰ Her future husband, and future premier of the province, Henry Hicks, grew up in Bridgetown, Nova Scotia, where his father drew a salary of \$3500 from J.H. Hicks and Sons Ltd. While his was one of the wealthier families of the county, the senior Hicks "lost almost everything" in the crash of 1929-1932, and was forced to mortgage his home. A scholarship and part-time work as chapel janitor helped put Henry Hicks through his undergraduate years at Mount Allison and Dalhousie.²¹

According to William J. Archibald, who came to Dalhousie in 1929, "in those days the farmer would mortgage his farm to send his kids to college". He recalls both the presence of some children from wealthy families "who lived on Young Avenue", and the absence from the university of "blue collar people", who went to school until grade eight and then learned a trade. "Most of us came from middle class families", with limited resources and a strong devotion to self-improvement. Gene Hicks concurred: "My father and mother were both of Presbyterian-Scottish background, and these people put a great emphasis on education. The idea of furthering your education was not strange at all in our family".²²

36.2 to 29.3 between 1930 and 1939, while those from cities and towns over 10,000 increased from 19.6 to 27.7: Reid, *Mount Allison University*, II, p. 143.

18 Carleton Stanley, "School and College", speech to National Conference of Canadian Universities, 6 June 1934, Correspondence — Conference of Canadian Universities, President's Office Papers; also cited in Pilkington, "National Conference of Canadian Universities, 1911-1961", p. 253.

19 Interview with Lawrence Read, 8 September 1983.

20 Interview with Gene Hicks, 12 August 1983.

21 Interview with Henry Hicks, 8 August 1983.

22 Interview with William Archibald, 12 August 1983; Gene Hicks Interview. Other interviews

University registration records from 1930, 1935 and 1939, which include information on the occupations of students' fathers, provide further insight into the class origin of Dalhousie students. The results of this analysis are presented in Table Three.²³

What do these findings reveal about the class backgrounds of Dalhousie students with respect to the population as a whole? Certainly the children of professionals, who constituted between two and three per cent of the Nova Scotian male working force, were over-represented in the university. Farmers, who made up 32.5 per cent of working Nova Scotians in 1931 and 25.7 per cent in 1941, accounted for only 6.7 per cent of students' fathers. And while miners comprised about nine per cent of the labour force between 1931 and 1941, their children included only .4 per cent of Dalhousie students in the 1930s.²⁴

The largest single category of Dalhousie students consisted of children of "Merchants", who made up almost 11 per cent of the student body. Additional information was obtained on 36 per cent of this group from Nova Scotia. According to Dun and Bradstreet business records, 21.3 per cent of them had

which confirmed these impressions were conducted with Dr. Ian S. Robb, 11 June 1985; Dr. Harry D. Smith, 12 June 1985; John Webster Grant, 20 June 1985. Grant, whose father was a minister, recalled, "we were economically poor but respectable".

23 The construction of an occupational scale was made possible by registration forms filled out by students which, among other things, asked them to identify their father's occupation. Before creating an occupational class scale, the following sources were consulted: Bernard Blishen, "The Construction and Use of an Occupational Class Scale", *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, XXIV (November, 1958), pp.519-31, Bernard Blishen, "A Socio-economic Index for Occupations in Canada", *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (February, 1967), pp. 41-53, P.C. Pineo and John Porter, "Occupational Prestige in Canada", *Ibid*, pp. 24-40, Michael B. Katz, "Occupational Classification in History", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, III, 1 (Summer, 1972), pp. 63-88, Donald J. Treiman, *Occupational Prestige in Comparative Perspective* (New York 1977), Allan Sharlin, "On the Universality of Occupational Prestige" [review of Treiman], *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XI, 1 (Summer, 1980), pp. 115-25, Andrea Tyree and Billy G. Smith, "Occupational Hierarchy in the United States: 1789-1969", *Social Forces*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (March, 1978), pp. 881-99. The scale created is similar, though not identical, to a number of those used in the sources cited above. As always, the categorization of some occupations demanded choices which some might dispute. For example, should a self-employed "photographer" be categorized as a skilled worker-artisan or as a businessman? (I chose the former). Is a "foreman" a supervisor or a skilled worker? (I chose the latter). I was guided, in part, by Donald Treiman's book, which argues, on the basis of occupational scales used in more than 60 societies, that with few exceptions, the "prestige" of occupations has been remarkably consistent over time. Treiman's scale was consulted for advice on controversial rankings. However the handful of difficult placements are ranked, the overall percentages would be only marginally affected. Finally, it should be noted that the "Business" category makes no attempt, since the registration forms do not allow for it, to distinguish between "big" business and "small" business. I have tackled this problem by following up those Nova Scotian businessmen identified as "merchants". I would like to thank Gordon Darroch for his advice on this issue.

24 *Census of Canada, 1941*, Vol. VII (Ottawa, 1946), pp. 6-7. Working-class youth may have comprised a larger proportion of students attending Nova Scotian universities such as Acadia and St. Francis Xavier.

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Table Three

Fathers' Occupations,
Dalhousie Students, 1930, 1935, 1939

Occupational Category	%
Professional	28.4
Business	31
Supervisory	10.8
White Collar	8.7
Artisan-Skilled	7.8
Semi-skilled and Unskilled	5.6
Farming, Fishing	7.6

Total number of known cases 2271

Total number of missing cases 526

Source: Registration Books, 1930/31, 1935/36, 1939/40, Dalhousie University Archives.

“pecuniary strength” under \$5000, and two-thirds had assets under \$20,000. On the other hand, 12.4 per cent had assets of over \$50,000. The typical Nova Scotian merchant owned a clothing, grocery, dry goods, furniture, or general store. At the one end of the scale was E.J. Murphy of Halifax (father of Charlotte), whose dry goods business produced an “estimated pecuniary strength” of \$300,000 to \$500,000 in 1934. At the other end of the scale was Philip Kristol of New Waterford (father of Louis), whose assets were estimated to be under \$500.²⁵ When one considers the 64 per cent of merchants of Nova Scotia for whom information and/or ratings were unavailable, and who in all likelihood were proprietors of very small businesses, one is left with the impression that to be a Nova Scotian merchant in the 1930s was to be of modest, though (particularly in light of the times) by no means destitute, circumstances.

Thus a handful of Dalhousie students came from extremely affluent families. The sons and daughters of labourers seldom attended. The majority came from a broad range of middle class backgrounds, for whom a university education

²⁵ Information on the assets of students' fathers comes from R.G. Dun and Co., *The Mercantile Agency Reference Book for the Dominion of Canada*, various issues, 1920-1932 and R.G. Dun and Bradstreet, *The Mercantile Agency Reference Book for the Dominion of Canada*, various issues, 1933, 1934. The limitations of the Dun and Bradstreet records should be noted. Family income or wealth derived from sources outside the individual business are not recorded.

was an expensive proposition. Frequently, students' fathers worked in high status but not especially lucrative occupations, such as teaching or the clergy. These patterns were typical of students' social origins in other parts of Canada.²⁶

When this information is combined with an analysis of the post-university experiences of Dalhousie students, we can draw meaningful conclusions about the role of the pre-Second World War university in the process of social mobility. Without question, some former students secured positions within what sociologist John Porter called "the Canadian corporate elite".²⁷ Donald McInnes (LLB 1926), who later became chairman of the Dalhousie Board of Governors, rose to the presidency of the Eastern Trust Company. Charles Mackenzie (LLB 1928) became President of Canada Permanent Mortgage Corporation and of Canada Permanent Trust, and A. Gordon Archibald (B. Comm. 1933) worked his way to the top of Maritime Telephone and Telegraph. Robert Stanfield (BA 1936 and LLB 1940), apart from his family connection with the successful Stanfields Ltd., later became Premier of Nova Scotia and national leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.²⁸ By virtue of their importance in the political and economic affairs of the region, and occasionally the country, these graduates stand out, but they are by no means typical. The Canadian corporate elite, as defined by Porter, was far too small (985 individuals), and the number of university graduates in the 1930s far too large (more than 56,000), to guarantee the majority of former students such privileged futures.²⁹ What became of the vast majority of them?

Judging from the Dalhousie experience, the evidence is clear. Most of the "middle class" students who graduated in the Depression ultimately, though not necessarily immediately, improved their positions *within* the middle class — though important distinctions must be made between the experiences of male and female graduates. Of the 326 cases of male graduates from Dalhousie in 1931, 1936 and 1940 whose careers were known (representing 75 per cent of all male graduates), virtually all became professionals.³⁰ The Depression, however,

26 Analysis of the background of students at the University of British Columbia and at the University of Alberta shows similar trends, with the exception that at Alberta a far higher percentage of students came from farming families. Though comparable data is not available, students at the University of Saskatchewan appeared to have been the poorest in Canada. According to an ex-president of this university "in 1934-35, [promissory] notes were accepted from 600 students, approximately one-third of the total in attendance", who could not pay tuition: W.P. Thompson, *The University of Saskatchewan: A Personal History* (Toronto, 1970), pp. 124-5. While no analysis has yet been done of the backgrounds of students from the University of Toronto and McGill University, this author would not be surprised to find that students at those institutions were more affluent than those in the Maritimes or Western Canada. See also Gibson, *Queen's University*, Vol. II, p. 110.

27 John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic* (Toronto 1965), pp. 274, 282-3.

28 *The Alumni News* (Halifax) various issues, 1930-1980.

29 *The Canada Year Book, 1941* (Ottawa, 1941), pp. 892-4.

30 Information on students' careers comes from *The Dalhousie Alumni News* (Halifax), various issues, 1920-1927, and *The Alumni News*, various issues, 1938-1980.

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may well have delayed their entry into these fields. Frequently, students spent a year or more after graduation at odd jobs or were unemployed before obtaining work in the fields for which they were prepared. Those graduating towards the end of the 1930s often enlisted in the armed forces and either resumed or took up careers when the war ended.³¹ The Depression was less kind to many others. Approximately 25 per cent of the male graduates from the same three years were unable to be traced. Some of these remained unemployed, died in the war, worked at less prestigious jobs, or simply did not report on their subsequent careers. Similar research methods showed that only eight per cent of the male graduates from 1921 and 1926 fell into the "unknown" category. Fully 92 per cent of the graduates from those two years profited from better times and became professionals.³²

In all likelihood, the women who graduated from Dalhousie in the 1930s also improved their positions within the middle class — but through marriage not through careers. While 72 per cent of the 36 women who graduated from Dalhousie in 1921 were found to have worked for at least part of their adult life in professional occupations (mostly as teachers, librarians, nuns, and nurses), only 29 per cent of the 59 women who graduated in 1936, and 27 per cent of the 41 women who graduated in 1940, were known to have found such work. These figures must be interpreted cautiously. It is probable that the percentage of women who worked, at least for a short time before marrying, was far higher than the figures for 1936 and 1940 suggest. The alumni magazine, from which this information was derived, was clearly more successful at tracing graduates from the 1920s than those from the late 1930s and early 1940s. Even allowing for these statistical imperfections, the difference in the career experiences of Dalhousie women in the 1920s and 1930s is pronounced. Notably, the enrolment of female students at Dalhousie dropped significantly during the Depression. If they worked, women remained in professions that were less well paying and less prestigious than those occupied by men, a conclusion supported by further evidence with respect to the country as a whole. The Depression appeared to impose high costs on women aspiring to professional careers.³⁴ Since women

31 Interviews with Leonard Kitz, 9 August 1983, Eric Mercer, 11 August 1983.

32 *The Dalhousie Alumni News*, and *The Alumni News*, various issues.

33 *Ibid.*

34 In 1930, 31 women graduated as doctors in Canada compared to 27 in 1939, while over the same period, the number of male graduate doctors increased from 518 to 565. Eight women lawyers graduated from Canadian universities in 1930 compared to ten in 1939; by contrast, the number of male lawyers rose from 211 to 254. While the number of male engineering graduates rose from 324 to 629 between 1930 and 1939, Canadian universities produced one female engineer in the former year and none in the latter: *The Canada Year Book, 1941*, pp. 892. According to the 1931 census, 14 per cent of all female teachers, 16 per cent of all nurses, and 90 per cent of all nuns were unpaid. In total, 20 per cent of women in "professional" occupations were unpaid compared to less than six per cent of men. Valuable information on the Canadian experience can be found in Marjorie Cohen, "Crisis and the Female Labour Reserve: The Canadian Depression Experience", unpublished paper, presented to the Blue Collar Workers Conference, Windsor, Ontario, 1979. I am grateful to Marjorie Cohen for providing me access to this paper. For

seldom broke into the prestigious male professions, collectively they probably achieved the same degree of social mobility as men only if they married other professionals. Since it was assumed (without ever being statistically validated) that women students came from more affluent families than men, their relative degree of social mobility may have been less significant.³⁵

Thus while Dalhousie was home to a minority of extremely privileged youth, the "average" Dalhousie student was the son of a merchant, who after facing lean times, became a lawyer or a doctor with a modest, but secure practice. Certainly the university turned out upwardly mobile men, and it rewarded them with privilege that the general population would never know. They were an elite, but of a less exalted status than generally believed. Dalhousie, in the main, was a middle class institution.

Between the world wars Canada's non-denominational universities became fully integrated into the secular and material worlds. Unmistakably (in view of the fate of graduates), their main function was to train men (and to a limited degree, women) who would occupy society's leading professions. Universities faced increasing pressure, particularly in lean economic times, to demonstrate their relevance and social utility. The high priority given agricultural studies in western Canada,³⁶ the emergence of Bachelors of Commerce courses in a number of universities,³⁷ the commissioning by government of numerous economists

discussions of the American experience, see Jane Humphries, "Women: Scapegoats and Safety Valves in the Great Depression", *The Review of Radical Political Economics*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (Spring, 1976), pp. 98-121, Ruth Milkman, "Women's Work and Economic Crisis: Some Lessons of the Great Depression", *Ibid*, pp. 73-97, Frank Stricker, "Cookbooks and Law Books: The Hidden History of Career Women in Twentieth Century America", *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Fall, 1976), pp. 1-19, Susan Ware, *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s* (Boston, 1982), pp. 69-72. See also Susan Carter, "Academic Women Revisited: An Empirical Study of Changing Patterns in Women's Employment as College and University Faculty, 1890-1963", *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Summer, 1981), pp. 675-99.

- 35 The occupational-class background study of Dalhousie students showed no significant differences between men and women. But since this study contains very little information on the incomes of students' families, it is possible that such differences did exist. The fact that women found it more difficult to find summer employment suggests that their families needed access to greater resources to keep daughters at university. Most ex-Dalhousians interviewed were under the impression that women came from more affluent families. For example, interview with Grace Wambolt, 13 June 1985.
- 36 On courses in agriculture, see *Report of the Board of Governors and President of the University of Alberta, 1935-36*, pp. 15-16, University of Alberta Archives, Edmonton. The Faculty of Agriculture included Departments of Poultry, Horticulture, Dairying, and Field Crops. See also Robert Newton, "The University: A Laboratory for Alberta", *The Trail* [alumni magazine], Vol. 49 (December 1941). On the University of Manitoba, see F.W. Ransom, "How Has the M.A.C. (Manitoba Agricultural College) Helped the Community", copy included in University of Manitoba: Correspondence, 3210/5-4, President's Papers, University of Alberta Archives. On Saskatchewan, see "Report to Advisory Council on Agriculture", *President's Report, University of Saskatchewan, 1931-32*, and *Calendar, The University of Saskatchewan, 1935-36*, pp. 92-103, Archives, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.
- 37 Queen's University introduced the first commerce course in Canada in 1919: Gibson, *Queen's*

and political scientists to help chart the country's future (accelerated by the creation in 1937 of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations),³⁸ and the near replacement on some campuses of classical and ancient philosophy by American-oriented behavioural psychology,³⁹ all speak to these trends. Dalhousie felt the impact of such demands, and with the creation of its Institute of Public Affairs in 1936, and an Honours course in Public Administration a year later, it even claimed a pioneering role in the preparation of future government employees. "Hitherto", noted the *President's Report* in 1936, "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".⁴⁰

Yet these developments did not proceed with unanimous consent on campuses across the country. "Conservative" academics in English Canadian universities were appalled by, and sometimes tried to thwart, the continental, material and utilitarian influences around them. Like the colonial philosophers of an earlier era, they favoured moral training and classical education over "faddism" and "jargon", a "disciplined intelligence" over "intellectual anarchy".⁴¹ Dalhousie was a prime example of a university embodying this tension, partly because its president, outraged by the 20th century, had heart and soul firmly planted in the 19th.

Carleton Stanley, educated at the University of Toronto and Oxford, taught Greek and served as assistant to the principal of McGill before coming to Dalhousie in 1931. He replaced Stanley Mackenzie who had been president since 1911.⁴² Canadian university presidents in the early 20th century were cast

University, II, pp. 35-7. Dalhousie introduced a Bachelor of Commerce degree in 1928, and the University of British Columbia did so in 1931: *Graduate Chronicle* [University of British Columbia] (April, 1931), p. 12.

38 See Gibson, *Queen's University, II*, pp. 169-71; see also Barry Ferguson and Doug Owrarn, "Social Scientists and Public Policy from the 1920s through World War II", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Winter, 1980-81), pp. 3-17.

39 For example, what had been the Department of Philosophy in 1931 at the University of British Columbia had become, by 1939, the Department of Philosophy and Psychology: *Calendar, University of British Columbia, 1930-31*, pp. 159-62, and *Calendar, 1939-40*, pp. 160-5. Dalhousie's Philosophy and Psychology Departments were also combined. For a discussion of trends in the teaching of psychology, see Peter Hampton, "Schools of Psychology", *Queen's Quarterly*, XLVI, 3 (1939), pp. 287-93.

40 *President's Report, Dalhousie University, 1935-36*, pp. 1-2.

41 On the colonial philosophers, see A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal, 1979), p. 5, 232. S.E.D. Shortt refers to the conflict as one between "idealism" and "empiricism": *The Search for an Ideal: Six Canadian Intellectuals and their Convictions in an Age of Transition, 1890-1930* (Toronto, 1976).

42 F. Ronald Hayes, "Two Presidents, Two Cultures, and Two Wars: A Portrait of Dalhousie as a Microcosm of Twentieth Century Canada", *Dalhousie Review*, LIV, 3 (Autumn, 1974), pp. 405-17. According to material in the McGill University Archives, Stanley's ideas and approach to his work were not popular in all administrative circles at McGill. McGill Principal Arthur Currie initially opposed Stanley's appointment as Assistant to the Principal. After Stanley's

from a similar mould. Mackenzie, Stanley, Robert Wallace, Arthur Currie, Walter Murray, and G.J. Trueman (among others), were austere, Christian gentlemen; kindly, wise and paternalistic, these were the type of community leaders in whom Canadian parents could faithfully and confidently entrust the custody of their children.⁴³ The public image of university presidents expressed the righteousness, sobriety, and “myth of concern” deeply embedded in the high culture of English Canada.⁴⁴ Intellectually, however, the presidents differed. Some, such as Robert Wallace and Walter Murray, were pragmatic, utilitarian men, conciliators with little patience for romantic, philosophical dirges on the poor quality of students or the erosion of traditional education. They presided over universities which enthusiastically embraced “public service”, an approach found wanting by their colleagues, such as James S. Thomson, Hamilton Fyfe, and Carleton Stanley.⁴⁵

Like University of Chicago president Robert Hutchins, who “was at war with the insidious combination of progress, evolution and empiricism in jettisoning the past, in promoting adjustment as an ideal, and in substituting vocationalism for thought as the focus of the university”,⁴⁶ Stanley railed against universities in which “students are struggling during the first two years or so, to compensate for inadequate schooling, and even at a later period they are more concerned with attending lectures, preparing for examinations and the getting of marks, than with the fields of literature or scientific thought. Meantime, faddists, masquerading as educational authorities, fill the air with jargon about technocracy, and researching for a Ph.D degree”.⁴⁷ The dismal state of public education he blamed on the plethora of poorly trained women teachers. Schooling would improve only if “the colleges take it as one of their chief practical duties, if not the chiefest of all, to send back some of the *very best male brains*

departure from McGill, there was considerable resentment at McGill of the media’s portrayal of Stanley as an “indispensable” aide to Currie. See Dalhousie University File, Principal’s Papers, RG2 G43, McGill University Archives, Montreal.

43 Wallace was President of The University of Alberta (1928-36) and Principal of Queen’s (1936-51). Arthur Currie was Principal of McGill (1920-1933). Walter Murray was President of The University of Saskatchewan (1907-1937). G.J. Trueman was President of Mount Allison University (1923-45).

44 McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence*, cites Northrop Frye on “concern”, by which he means “something which includes the sense of the importance of preserving the integrity of the total human community”, p. ix.

45 On J.S. Thomson, President of The University of Saskatchewan (1937-1949), see Hayden, *Seeking a Balance*, pp. 193-205; and on Hamilton Fyfe, Principal of Queen’s (1930-1936), see Gibson, *Queen’s University, II*, pp. 88-132. A revealing exchange of views can be found in Thomson to Stanley, 16 December 1938 and Stanley to Thomson, 21 December 1938, Series II, B-138, Presidential Papers, Archives, University of Saskatchewan. According to Thomson, with the typical university curriculum, students “pay your money and take your choice”.

46 Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (New York, 1965), pp. 479-80. Hutchins’ famous work was *The Higher Learning in America* (New Haven, 1936).

47 Stanley, “School and College”.

into the school....After a certain age boys can be educated only by men".⁴⁸ He considered university students "illiterate" if they had not read the classic works of Thucydides, Aristotle, F.P.G. Guizot, W.F. Maitland, and Sir Paul Vinogradoff.⁴⁹

When Stanley came to Dalhousie, he found an academic programme described to him by one authority "as an example of something worse than anything found in the United States". Matriculation requirements had been loosely enforced, and as Stanley noted, students were allowed to take their 20 credits for the B.A. degree "in any order", with the result that the demanding compulsory subjects (Latin or Greek, Mathematics, French or German) were put off until the fourth year, where they proved to be a "nightmare".⁵⁰ Quality education demanded both more rigour and the restoration of Classics and Mathematics, "the foundations of scholarship", to high priority in the undergraduate programme. Riding the crest of early popularity, Stanley succeeded in reforming the curriculum in 1932. Despite funding restraints, he convinced the Board of Governors to offer two scholarships "for boys only" in each of Honours Mathematics and Classics.⁵¹ In addition, the university introduced an Honours programme of "advanced study" in Mathematics, Classics, and Modern Languages and History, designed for "exceptional" students from Grade XII. Finally, students were no longer permitted to postpone all difficult subjects to their final year. But Stanley's attempt to create a course in Greek and Biology, in which the classics of science would be read in "the original tongue", was, to the relief of many, "successfully resisted".⁵²

Stanley took pride in these early feats of curriculum reform, but his remaining years at Dalhousie were spent in frustration. In an angry statement to the Board of Governors in 1940, he expressed resentment at the energy he had expended in raising money for the university, a task he felt belonged to the Board alone. He deplored the annual drain on university resources by the Public Health Clinic,

48 "Inauguration Address", 9 October 1931, Board of Governors' Minutes, 29 October 1931, DUA. The speech was reprinted in *The Halifax Chronicle* and accompanied by favourable editorial comment under the headline, "The Best Male Brains", 10 October 1931. Stanley's views were shared by Robert Falconer, president of The University of Toronto, who complained about the domination of school teaching by women: Pilkington, "National Conference of Canadian Universities, 1911-1961", p. 222.

49 As cited in Hayes, "Two Presidents", pp. 409-10.

50 Stanley claimed to be citing the views of W.S. Learned, co-author of the 1922 report on higher education in the Maritimes for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching: Stanley to J.S. Thomson, 21 December 1938. According to Stanley, "After announcing that there were seven matriculation subjects, the calendar went on to say that those who had passed English and any other three subjects would be admitted to Dalhousie", with the effect that "the boys looked over the list, of course, and decided that Latin, Mathematics, French or German were the best three subjects to miss. In my first year here 28 per cent of those in the Arts faculty — and this included many in the fourth year — had not matriculated".

51 Board of Governors' Minutes, 29 October 1931, DUA.

52 Senate Minutes, 21 April 1932 reflect some tightening of the rules, though the university did not go as far as Stanley would have liked: Hayes, "Two Presidents", p. 409.

and he decried the high costs of maintaining professional education at the expense of arts and science:

I tried to make you Governors of the University aware...that you had been attempting to do something that had never been attempted elsewhere, that is, maintain Medical and Dental Faculties without endowments and without public assistance. I tried to make you see that such an attempt was not heroic, but foolish, and that it ultimately could not succeed. Finally, I told you that it went against my own conscience, as one of the trustees of the University, to cramp the work of the Arts Faculty in such an attempt, and to bolster up by funds, which in strict rights should be used by the Arts Faculty.⁵³

The priority given to preserving the costly professions was heightened in 1938-39, when Dalhousie, at risk of losing its standing as an accredited medical school with the Association of American Medical Colleges, was forced both to improve clinical training facilities and construct a new medical library.⁵⁴

Although Stanley retained the presidency until 1945, he was far from popular among Dalhousie students. At first intrigued by his provocative, blunt speeches, students grew to resent his rigid, traditional ways. When the university announced a ban on mixed badminton in the gymnasium except on Saturday afternoons, the editors of the student newspaper mocked Stanley in a cartoon and denounced his “reform school methods”.⁵⁵ Viewed in retrospect as an “ivory tower man”, an “egomaniac”, and a devotee of the anachronistic ideal that students “should walk and think Greek”,⁵⁶ Stanley distanced himself in a manner that concealed his true compassion and concern. His former secretary recalls a sensitive, principled man who met personally with all new students (including the women), offered them considered guidance, and found ways to provide financial assistance to the very poor. She admitted, however, that his formality sometimes intimidated the shy.⁵⁷

53 Board of Governors’ Minutes, 26 April 1940.

54 Board of Governors’ Minutes, 7 April 1937, 3 March, 31 August 1938. The new library cost \$106,758, of which \$50,000 was provided by the Carnegie Foundation.

55 “Student Government History, #59”, *Dalhousie Gazette* (Halifax), 8 January 1976. See footnote 77.

56 Interviews with Lawrence Read, 8 September 1983, Leonard Kitz, 9 August 1983, Zilpha Linkletter, 11 August 1983, Eric Mercer, 11 August 1983, William Archibald, 12 August 1983, Dr. Harry Smith, 12 June 1985, Grace Wambolt, 13 June 1985. However, Dane Parker (15 June 1985) liked Stanley because he believed that the president was a defender of those who expressed dissident views.

57 Interview with Lola Henry, 16 August 1983. Files in the President’s Office reveal a good deal of personal interest taken by Stanley in the problems of students. There are several cases of his arranging for bursaries or loans for students who could not otherwise afford to come to Dalhousie. He wrote elaborate letters to students or their parents. His tone was always sympathetic though he was more than usually frank about the academic potential and performance

Stanley's concern about incompetent students and the materialistic, frivolous culture which engaged them, was probably more applicable to the 1920s than the 1930s. The post-war atmosphere of Canadian campuses was frequently raucous, explained in part by the inability or unwillingness of university officials to impose traditional discipline upon those student veterans who had fought life and death battles overseas.⁵⁸ Though frivolity hardly disappeared, during the Depression Canadian students appeared more serious academically. Stanley himself observed that at Dalhousie it was "a matter of common remark that the library is used five times as much as formerly". He noted on another occasion the "common sense which marks our student body as a whole and the high seriousness of our best students".⁵⁹ As *Pharos*, the student yearbook, commented in 1933, "This sudden desire for knowledge is one of the several beneficial results of The Great Economic Depression".⁶⁰ Occasionally, student columnists expressed concern with the very cultural issues that preoccupied Stanley. A *Gazette* editorial in 1930 defended the classical subjects, which, "though regarded as useless and dead, are really courses which inspire thought and give a broad culture otherwise unobtainable".⁶¹ In an article entitled "Something to Think About", one student tackled the central dilemma of higher education; "its attempt to make a compromise between two irreconcilable principles":

The system makes a half-hearted attempt to achieve the glorified trade school ideal as typified by the university that gives a degree in hotel management and at the same time to achieve the classical ideal as typified by Oxford and Cambridge with their prerequisites of Latin, Greek and philosophy. The universities do not make a sincere attempt either to teach students how to make a living or how to live. They give the student a smattering of both and as a result he leaves the university knowing nothing of either.⁶²

Students also debated the quality and methods of teaching, particularly the lecture system, which was defined by one writer, "as a process by which the notes of the lecturer are transferred to the notebook of the student without ever

of students. He had a number to dinner. See the following correspondence: George Sellars to Stanley, 7 October 1935, Stanley to Sellars, 15 October 1935, Margaret Kendall to Stanley, 3 February 1935, Stanley to Mrs. Kendall, 6 February 1935, Student Correspondence Files, President's Office Papers, DUA.

58 See Gibson, *Queen's University, II*, pp. 66-68; Hayden, *Seeking a Balance*, pp. 139-150; W.H. Johns, *A History of the University of Alberta, 1908-1969* (Edmonton, 1981), pp. 92-4.

59 Stanley, "Dalhousie Today", *Dalhousie Review*, XVIII (1938), p. 219; *President's Report, 1931-32*, p. 3.

60 *Pharos* (1933), p. 53.

61 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 29 October 1930.

62 *Gazette*, 2 October 1936. Many columns, including this one, were unsigned.

passing through the minds of either".⁶³ Remembered with special displeasure were those professors, such as Herbert L. Stewart, who read their notes word for word, year in and year out. A stimulating writer and nationally known broadcaster on political affairs, Stewart taught Philosophy I in a notoriously tedious fashion. Lecture notes purchased from previous students, and in at least one case provided by a parent who had studied under Stewart a generation earlier, helped some students through the year. The bold suggestion by one student that Stewart distribute his notes to class and then "talk to us like you do on the radio" was greeted coldly by the lecturer.⁶⁴ More stimulating was the teaching of historian George E. Wilson, whose lectures "painted a vivid picture of the past and of the forces at work".⁶⁵ Political scientist R.A. Mackay was described as an "ideal" professor, whose warm-hearted manner accompanied his determination to have students "think about political matters on their own".⁶⁶ Economist W.R. Maxwell, renowned for his barely audible speaking voice, examined economic issues without dogmatism, "from all points of view, conservative and radical". Wilson, Mackay and Maxwell provided Lawrence Read, who later became a university professor, with the type of quality teaching he never encountered elsewhere.⁶⁷

Dalhousie offered students a strong, traditional, liberal arts education, breaking little new ground in the arts or sciences. With heavy teaching loads, enabling its youthful law faculty barely "to keep one jump ahead of the students",⁶⁸ Dalhousie professors, like others in Canada, had little time and few resources to engage in extensive research and publication. Departments seldom had more than two professors who shared responsibility for up to a dozen courses. The English Department, under C.L. Bennet, focused almost exclusively on the literature of England. The calendar of 1939 offered some 15 courses in British subjects, but none in Canadian or American literature. Until his death in 1933, the dominant figure in arts was the prolific, Archibald MacMechan, professor of English, who taught at Dalhousie for more than 40 years. A romantic, Victorian idealist, MacMechan wrote stories of 18th century privateers, merchants and sailors, imbuing them with a deep sense of "Christian morality", and hearkening back to a more "heroic age", out of which the Nova Scotian community emerged as a noble and spirited British colony.⁶⁹ The imperial connection — always strong in Nova Scotia — was reinforced by the History Department, which in 1939 offered eight courses in European or British history, two in American, and two in Canadian, one of which put special emphasis on the history of the province.

63 W.M., *Gazette*, 3 December 1937. See also Robert F. Legget, "The Lecture System", *Queen's Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 2, (1939), pp. 207-14.

64 Interview with Zilpha Linkletter, 11 August 1983.

65 Interview with Lawrence Read, 8 September 1983.

66 *Ibid.*

67 *Ibid.*; Interviews with Gene Hicks, 12 August 1983, John Webster Grant, 20 June 1985.

68 Willis, *Dalhousie Law School*, p. 137.

69 Shortt, *The Search for an Ideal*, pp. 41-57.

As with political science, where the textbooks included W.P.M. Kennedy's *The Constitution of Canada*, and A.V. Dicey's *Law of the Constitution*, history courses emphasized political and legal developments with the British Empire. Possibly the most enduring publication by a Dalhousie arts professor was R.A. Mackay's classic, *The Unreformed Senate of Canada*.⁷⁰

In science, students received a strong basic training from professors who had been taught by Lord Rutherford, the discoverer of the nucleus. According to William Archibald, a student who later taught physics at Dalhousie, the university in the 1930s was "twenty years behind the times", a common problem at small institutions cut off from the centres conducting new research. Archibald learned nothing of quantum mechanics at Dalhousie, and little about Einstein's theory of relativity — subjects he studied in depth only after he went to graduate school in the United States. The physicists and chemists who did publish (such as H.L. Bronson and G.H. Henderson) "did an awful lot of good work — within conventional areas".⁷¹

Though the teaching styles of professors varied, classes were generally conducted in an air of formality, with students addressed as Mr. or Miss. The men dressed in jackets and ties, the women in skirts and sweaters — never pants. As students "prayed"⁷² for professional employment and worried about their futures, they worked their way through a curriculum which steeped them in the cultural heritage and intellectual traditions of British North American civilization. At Dalhousie Carleton Stanley's academic conservatism was combined with an increasingly utilitarian curriculum in an institution devoted to turning out respectable professionals — young adults who were civil, refined, and respectful of tradition. If students sometimes questioned the university's methods and rules, they did not seriously challenge the socialization process.

Universities and colleges of the 1920s and 1930s inherited children affected by the shifting social and economic forces of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As child labour was mechanized and disappeared, as professional training increasingly found its way into institutions of higher learning, as business diversified and government expanded, demanding better educated managers and supervisors, students spent longer in school, and the period of adolescence, only recently "invented", was prolonged.⁷³ This hiatus between childhood and adult-

70 Dicey's *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution* was published originally in 1889. Mackay's book was published by Oxford University Press in 1926.

71 Interview with William Archibald, 12 August 1983.

72 Interview with Henry Hicks, 8 August 1983: "We used to translate Dalhousie's motto, *Ora et labora* — pray and work — into pray for work".

73 Joseph Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York, 1977), pp. 215-72, John Gillis, *Youth and History* (New York, 1981, expanded ed.), p. 169, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Dependency of Youth* (Ottawa, 1937), p. 9. In Canada the school-leaving age rose from 14 to 16 between 1911 and 1931. See also Selwyn K. Troen, "The Discovery of the Adolescent by American Educational Reformers, 1900-1920: An Economic Perspective", in Lawrence Stone, ed., *Schooling and Society: Studies in the History of Education* (Baltimore, 1976).

hood drew more public attention both to new theories of child rearing, and to the spirited culture of middle class youth.⁷⁴ According to Paula Fass, “the young became more independent and newly dependent; independent of strict adult supervision but dependent for longer and longer periods upon the adult world that made peer groups necessary and upon the peers who made a transitional independence possible”.⁷⁵

Academic training constituted only part of the university’s role. Students spent at least as much time participating in a wide array of “extra-curricular” activities which on the one hand served as a necessary outlet for self-expression, and on the other hand demanded a culture of conformity consistent with the “respectable” middle-class lives for which they were being prepared. In the prosperous 1920s university officials sometimes feared they were losing control of carefree, undisciplined, and cynical students. The Depression, however, dampened the taste for anti-social behaviour, and as even Carleton Stanley noted, the balance between self-expression and conformity was restored: “Student life is always healthiest and sanest when it is spontaneous, and not too much observed and commented upon by elders and authorities. At some risk of infringing this rule, I should like to say that for the most part the life of our students is wholesome”.⁷⁶ If the atmosphere of North American universities was generally subdued in the 1930s, at Dalhousie it was positively tranquil.

For Canadian students, the university was less an ivory tower than a sanctuary, offering welcome if temporary respite from an uncertain world. Dalhousie students may not have loved Carleton Stanley, but they loved their university. They poured enormous energy into the associational network available to them. Clubs, drama groups, fraternities, student government, dances, journalism, and athletics — as participants and cheering spectators — occupied their time outside the classroom. Peer culture placed a premium on “belonging”, and most students, craving acceptance and fearing exclusion, joined something.

Loyalty to the university, encouraged by the administration, was expressed in a variety of ways, notably through celebrations carried on during “Munro Day”, an annual event commemorating the university’s past and optimistically revelling in its prospects.⁷⁷ The student newspaper greeted with jubilation the

74 Norah L. Lewis, “Creating the Little Machine: Child Rearing in British Columbia, 1919-1939”, *B.C. Studies* 56 (Winter 1982-83), pp. 44-60; Norah L. Lewis, “Physical Protection for Spiritual Welfare”, in P.T. Rooke and R.L.Schnell, eds., *Studies in Childhood History: A Canadian Perspective* (Calgary, 1982), pp. 135-66; Veronica Strong-Boag, “Intruders in the Nursery: Childcare Professionals Reshape the Years One to Five, 1920-1940”, in Joy Parr, ed., *Childhood and Family in Canadian History* (Toronto, 1982), pp. 160-78; Robert Stamp, “Canadian High Schools in the 1920s and 30s: The Social Challenge to the Academic Tradition”, *Historical Papers/Communications historiques* (1978), pp. 76-93.

75 Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York, 1977), p. 57.

76 *President’s Report, 1931-32*, p. 2.

77 “Student Government History, #48, #50”, *Dalhousie Gazette*, 27 March, 2 October 1975. Some

announcement of the \$400,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundation in 1930, as it did the news in February 1938, that the Rt. Hon. R.B. Bennett, "Dalhousie's Most Distinguished Graduate", who had recently endowed a chair in the Law School, would be visiting the university. According to the *Gazette*, "Dalhousians will rejoice to hear that such a distinguished son and sturdy supporter of the University is to be in our midst, and we will no doubt give him a hearty welcome".⁷⁸

The dates of upcoming sporting events, and particularly the football, hockey, or basketball victories they produced, bellowed from the front pages of the *Gazette* throughout the 1930s. When school spirit showed signs of flagging, the newspaper, along with the student council, lectured Dalhousians on the need to restore it. University-wide pep rallies sent the teams off to battle and greeted them upon return.⁷⁹ However popular their teams, Canadian universities devoted far less attention to inter-campus sports than did their counterparts in the United States, where the 1920s witnessed the appearance of a rash of "million dollar stadiums" and lucrative athletic scholarships, and where sports became some colleges' biggest businesses.⁸⁰ Lacking both the financial resources and the inclination to corrupt academic life with "professionalism in athletics", Canadian universities could celebrate their teams' victories but take equal pride in keeping sports in its proper place.⁸¹ Instead, Dalhousie students successfully agitated for compulsory physical education, which was instituted for freshmen in 1934. Carleton Stanley opposed the new regulation, viewing it as yet another example of the university yielding to a popular demand outside its legitimate prerogative: "Why any of you should wish compulsion in the matter of taking exercise and the enjoyment of young health I cannot understand". Students told him that compulsory physical education logically followed from compulsory mental preparation, and that it might increase participation in university sports.⁸² Eventually, the Senate concurred.

Public health in general, particularly in Halifax with the memories of the 1917

of the information on student activities comes from a remarkable series of 69 articles by Dan O'Connor, published in the *Dalhousie Gazette* from 1974 to 1976. I am grateful to Michael Lynk for bringing this series to my attention.

78 "Student Government History, #46", *Dalhousie Gazette*, 13 March 1975, and *Dalhousie Gazette*, 24 February 1938.

79 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 8 November 1935, 10 January 1936, 30 October 1936; "Student Government History, #47", *Dalhousie Gazette*, 20 March 1975.

80 Robert Cooley Angel, *The Campus: A Study of Contemporary Life in the American University* (New York, 1928); Michael Pearlman, "To Make the University Safe for Morality: Higher Education, Football and Military Training from the 1890s through the 1920s", *The Canadian Review of American Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring, 1981), pp. 37-56; Calvin B.T. Lee, *The Campus Scene, 1900-1970: Changing Styles in Undergraduate Life* (New York, 1970), p. 7; Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, p. 182.

81 *President's Report, 1931-32*, p. 2.

82 Senate Minutes, 11 October 1934; *Dalhousie Gazette*, 18 October 1934, 1 December, 23 November 1932.

explosion, the flu epidemic of 1918, and the physical costs of the First World War, received growing attention in universities. Educators increasingly viewed this aspect of adolescent development as part of the school's responsibility. In 1931 Dalhousie instituted compulsory medical examinations for all students, when, if necessary, they were immunized against smallpox, diphtheria and scarlet fever. In addition, doctors and nurses inspected "the living quarters of every student".⁸³ After it was reported in 1933 that 11 per cent of students were not in good physical condition, the university sponsored, beginning the following January, a series of lectures on Hygiene and Health, compulsory for all new registrants. Students stayed away in droves.⁸⁴

The university's involvement in the preparation of responsible leaders extended to student government. An elaborate organizational system, complete with bureaucracy, constitution and electoral process, provided interested students with managerial and political skills. In a characteristic editorial, the *Gazette*, playing the role of the Council of Students' watchdog, outlined the qualities that student leaders should possess:

Upon the makeup of the student council will depend its efficacy. Its members should be conversant with the university and with university life and problems, for without these attributes it cannot act with authority and efficiency. The members should be "level-headed", that is, they should be capable of dealing circumspectly with problems. Haphazard and snap judgments leave many pitfalls in their train. On the other hand, the council should have initiative or stagnation will be the results of its rule.⁸⁵

Once elected, the Council of Students' main function was to collect student activity fees and distribute them responsibly to approved campus organizations, ensuring that spending was in the "best interests of the student body as a whole, and [not] detrimental to the name of Dalhousie....The Council shall be the only recognized medium between the student body and the University authorities and also between the student body and the general public".⁸⁶

The Depression imposed special challenges on student councillors acting out their role as managers-in-training. In the spirit of "professionalism", the council appointed veteran student leader and alumnus, Murray Rankin, to the position of "permanent secretary-treasurer" at an honorarium of \$350, and in 1934, like

83 Stanley to Frank G. Pedley, 26 November 1943, Correspondence — Student Health Service, President's Office Papers. This letter reviews health service activities over the previous ten years at Dalhousie.

84 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 1, 8 February 1933; H.G. Grant, Chairman, Committee on Student Health, memo. to Stanley, 5 January 1934, Correspondence — Student Health Service, President's Office Papers. See also *Canadian Public Health Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (1940), p. 146, which reports on "Students' Health Service at Dalhousie University".

85 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 17 February 1928.

86 "Revised Constitution of the Student Body of Dalhousie University, Approved by Senate, 14 May, 1938", Council of Students' File, President's Office Papers.

the university, the council grappled with the problem of diminishing revenues. Foreseeing a \$2,000 drop in income, the result of declining enrolment, it ordered the *Dalhousie Gazette* to distribute the paper off-campus only to those with pre-paid subscriptions. To save money, a less expensive printer was hired.⁸⁷ In addition the council could not afford to publish *Pharos*, the student yearbook, in 1934.

Despite its professional pretensions, the student council functioned within well-defined boundaries. Consistent with its role as overseer and guardian of student affairs, the University Senate exercised its power to approve the student council's constitution and any revisions. Student activity fees could be increased only with Senate sanction — which was withheld in 1936.⁸⁸ When student organizations occasionally failed to behave in a business-like manner, particularly in their relations with the public, the university was forced to bail them out. One such incident occurred in 1937, when the Dalhousie Glee and Dramatic Society performed three plays without paying the required copyright fees to a Toronto company. President Stanley's intervention eventually resolved the problem, but it left him exasperated with the student's irresponsibility, and he offered this advice to companies dealing with them: "I cannot understand why business organizations give credit to any student organization, whatsoever....A student organization, from the nature of things, has a personnel that changes annually and consequently is incapable of corporate responsibility....Any dealings with an organization so constituted should be on a strictly cash basis".⁸⁹

Well beyond childhood, students were still at a stage of life demanding from their elders sometimes an iron hand and sometimes a velvet glove. Every fall a handful of Dalhousie "men" began the year by making a nuisance of themselves in the Halifax community. According to the Chief of Police, they "interfered with traffic, pushed cars from parking places, and accosted people on the streets".⁹⁰ In the latest incident they tossed an apple through the window of a doctor's home on Coburg Road. Understanding that boys would be boys, the Chief told Stanley that "we have always endeavoured to deal with them as leniently as possible". The president was grateful: "You have been very human and tolerant about the pranks of young blood, and we have tried to see to it that you will have few pranks to overlook".⁹¹

Mindful of its public image, and resolved to police itself, the university groped for a formula allowing students an outlet for animated but socially acceptable behaviour. The preferred approach on Canadian campuses involved a process through which student councils would voluntarily enforce university rules, act-

87 "Student Government History, #50, #60", *Dalhousie Gazette*, 2 October, 11 December 1975.

88 Senate Minutes, 26 March 1936.

89 Stanley to Samuel French Canada Ltd., 11 June 1937, Correspondence — Council of Students' File, President's Office Papers.

90 Judson Conrad to Stanley, 2 October 1939, Correspondence — Student Misdemeanours, President's Office Papers.

91 Stanley to Conrad, 3 October 1939, *ibid.*

ing as their own policemen. According to the Dalhousie calendar, “students conducting themselves in an unbecoming manner on or beyond the premises of the University during the session, may be fined, suspended, or expelled from the University. Since the formation of the Council of Students in 1912, that body holds an investigation and reports its findings to the Senate for action and may recommend penalties to be inflicted”.⁹²

Although student antics seldom got out of hand at Dalhousie in the 1930s, there was some confusion over the responsibility for establishing and administering regulations. In the mid 1920s, the university had created a “Committee of Nine”, consisting of three faculty, three students, and three alumni, whose purpose was to act as a “final authority” in the “interpretation, construction and application” of rules governing student activities. By 1935, however, the Committee, though officially alive, was in practice “defunct”.⁹³ In its place rule-breakers were punished usually by the Senate and occasionally by President Stanley or the Council of Students. Smoking in the halls or gymnasium earned a \$2.00 fine for first offenders. A student who tore pages from several books in the medical library was fined \$100. At the insistence of the Council of Students, the Senate took measures to eliminate “cribbing” or cheating on examinations by “giving more attention to seating of candidates in the examination room”. While students were required to attend lectures, and subject to fines if they did not, it was an open secret that this regulation was enforced only loosely, if at all, during the 1930s.⁹⁴ Drinking was prohibited on campus, though some students in Shirreff Hall, the women’s residence, were known to imbibe in the privacy of their rooms. When prohibition ended in Nova Scotia in 1930, men who were old enough did their drinking openly and legally in Halifax hotels. While university officials frowned on the practice, they could not prevent it. Public drunkenness, however, was condemned by students, professors, and administrators alike.

Indicative of growing sober-mindedness in the 1930s was the elimination of the practice of hazing. This initiation ritual, in which freshmen were put through a series of humiliating and “sadistic” indignities by those in upper years, officially ended at Dalhousie in the fall of 1933.⁹⁵ Universities had tolerated this practice as part of freshmen orientation because it quickly integrated new students into campus culture. But violence, injuries, and a successful \$50,000 law suit by one victim at the University of Alberta, convinced administrators and students at a number of Canadian universities that the socialization of students could be effectively conducted through less extreme methods.⁹⁶

Dancing, the most popular extra-curricular activity, aroused the most discus-

92 *Calendar, 1930-31*, p. 18.

93 Committee of Nine File, 17 March 1927, Stanley to W.M. Rogers, 23 March 1935, Correspondence — Committee of Nine File, President’s Office Papers. The Committee was officially disbanded in April 1935: Senate Minutes, 18 April 1935.

94 Senate Minutes, 14 February 1939, 13 December 1934, 11 April 1935, 2 February 1939.

95 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 28 September 1933.

96 Johns, *University of Alberta*, pp. 139-42.

sion in the early 1930s. A *Gazette* editorial in 1930 claimed that Dalhousie was “on the verge of going dance crazy”. Though Carleton Stanley tried to reassure the public that the problem had been exaggerated, he reported in 1933 that in February alone “at least sixteen dances had been held by Dalhousie students”, the vast majority of which took place off-campus.⁹⁷ Dances were sponsored by various clubs and fraternities, and any attempt to deny them met with stern resistance. Facing enormous pressure from students in the professional schools, the Council of Students was forced in the fall of 1932 to rescind a ban on all off-campus dances.⁹⁸ While the socially less confident students avoided such events, confining their entertainment to such things as movies, for others they were the main forums through which the sexes mingled, where women were courted, and social graces learned. Aside from the more casual sock-hops in the gymnasium, dances were usually formal events, with men dressing in tuxedos and women in gowns. Orchestras were hired, dance cards were filled before the programme, and men enhanced their prestige by dancing with the most popular women. Officially, dances ended at 1:00 a.m., though special events, such as the Delta Games Ball, might go until 2:00 a.m. Customarily, faculty who were willing served as chaperons.⁹⁹

Sexual activity among Dalhousie students remains something of a mystery. An American study on the sexual habits of college students concluded that in comparison with the more free-wheeling 1920s, students in the 1930s were more conservative and certainly more discreet. According to one American magazine, “sex is no longer news. And the fact that it is no longer news is news”.¹⁰⁰ American college women evidently believed that intercourse with one’s future husband was acceptable, though with anyone else it constituted promiscuous behaviour. One survey found that while half the men had had intercourse, only one-quarter of the women had, indicating that American students were more liberal in attitude than practice.¹⁰¹ At Dalhousie the rules may have been broken occasionally, but men were not allowed to visit women in their residence rooms at Shirreff Hall. According to one former student, some men found sexual partners off-campus. Another claimed that there was little peer pressure to “go all the way”.¹⁰²

97 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 3 December 1930; *President’s Report, 1932-33*, p. 2. Stanley said that he was convinced that one-third of the male students did not attend dances at all: Senate Minutes, 23 March 1933.

98 “Student Government History, #54”, *Dalhousie Gazette*, 6 November 1975.

99 Interviews with Jean Begg, 15 August 1983, Henry Hicks, 8 August 1983, Leonard Kitz, 9 August 1983.

100 “Youth in College”, *Fortune Magazine* (June, 1936), p. 101.

101 Ware, *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s*, pp. 61-3, “Youth in College”, p. 155, Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, p. 76, Maxine Davis, *The Lost Generation: A Portrait of American Youth Today* (New York, 1936), p. 83. The major survey to which these accounts referred was Dorothy Dunbar Bromley and Florence Haxton Britten, *Youth and Sex: A Study of 1300 College Students* (New York, 1938).

102 In the interests of discretion, these interviewees will remain anonymous.

Almost as controversial as the amount of dancing was the appropriateness of university fraternities and sororities. Fraternities were first formed in the United States in the 1820s, as self-governing social groups that “released students from the once stringent supervision that obtained in American academies”.¹⁰³ They grew rapidly at the end of the 19th and in the early 20th centuries, reaching a total of 3900 chapters by 1930. While never as widespread in Canada, throughout the 1920s and 1930s Canadian students established “branch plant” chapters, receiving permission to affiliate with American fraternities. The first began at Dalhousie in 1930 and by 1937 there were seven fraternities and two sororities. Approximately 20 per cent of Dalhousie students were fraternity members.¹⁰⁴ Dalhousie never actually recognized fraternities. Instead, the administration chose not to ban them. Carleton Stanley despised the institutions, believing them “discredited almost everywhere” in the United States and that they acted as a wasteful drain on the energies of students. That their members behaved irresponsibly by sometimes failing to pay their bills or by creating “grave disorders” on and off-campus, also aroused Stanley’s ire.¹⁰⁵ The *Gazette* also debated their value, opponents finding them guilty of making “invidious” distinctions among students, and of attempting to control campus politics.¹⁰⁶

Despite these objections, fraternities thrived for two reasons. First, they provided a practical solution to the problem of residential housing for male students. Because Dalhousie had no male dormitory (though some men boarded at the Pine Hill Divinity Hall residence), students depended in part on the lodging provided by fraternity houses to help fill that need. There was no possibility of finding funds for the construction of a male residence during the Depression, though everyone recognized the need.¹⁰⁷ Secondly, the fraternities served as additional agencies by which the energies of students could be channelled and controlled, particularly at poorly facilitated campuses. In the absence of dining rooms and common rooms, they were an outlet for “the healthy, gregarious instinct of the college students”.¹⁰⁸ Despite their periodic excesses, fraternity men and women projected an image of confidence, leadership, and wholesome competition that university officials and parents generally admired. “Conformity to what was believed to be a collegiate style epitomized by fraternity men and women was already self-imposed before a youth ever became a

103 Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, p. 142. Gillis, *Youth and History*, discusses the European origins of fraternities, pp. 77-90.

104 Correspondence — Fraternities’ File; President’s Office Papers; *Pharos, the Dalhousie Yearbook* (1938).

105 *President’s Report, 1933-34*, p. 13; Stanley to J. William Fisher, Treasurer, Delta Tau Fraternity, 7 March 1934, Stanley to P. Oyler et al., Phi Kappa Pi, 2 May 1933 — where he scolds them for not paying bills; Correspondence — Fraternities’ File, President’s Office Papers.

106 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 12 October 1934.

107 *President’s Report, 1933-34*, p. 13; Stanley to Sherwood Fox, 21 February 1935, Correspondence — Fraternities’ File, President’s Office Papers.

108 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 12 October 1934.

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member".¹⁰⁹ Because fraternity leaders were anxious to gain credibility, they sponsored good-natured events on and off campus, and usually agreed to abide by university regulations with respect to smoking, drinking and initiation. If they confined their reckless activities to unsupervised fraternity houses, no one was the wiser. While Stanley believed that fraternities "added little to the progress of the University", he conceded they were under control at Dalhousie, "interfering much less with study" than elsewhere. As on other issues, he resigned himself to a youthful mode which he could temper but could not change.¹¹⁰

Fraternities at Dalhousie and elsewhere in Canada shared one set of values with the white, Anglo-Saxon culture around them. They were steeped in racial and religious prejudice. When critics denounced fraternity "cliquishness", they were referring not simply to the criteria for admission, which included a "good" family background, fashionable clothing, high grades, and a "friendly manner", but to unwritten codes barring non-whites and Jews. The Pi Beta Phi Sorority at Dalhousie officially rationalized its anti-Jewish policy on the grounds that the group's ritual was based on the New Testament, which Jews could not accept. Thus, even those who satisfied other admission standards, including a Jewish girl from Shirreff Hall "who everyone liked", could not make the grade because of their religion. The Law School fraternity, too, was "opened to everybody except Jews".¹¹¹ While the university made no attempt to challenge these prohibitions — indeed Jewish students themselves responded not by petitioning for entry, but by forming their own fraternity — Dalhousie's own admission policies were considerably more liberal than those of the fraternities.

Most Canadian universities began as religious colleges, and in the early 20th century, even non-denominational institutions in English Canada, including Dalhousie, would have been pleased to think of themselves as "Christian" institutions. Indeed, Dalhousie officially required all students "not residing with parents or guardians...to report to the Office on or before October 15th the churches which they intend to make their places of worship during the session".¹¹² Issued probably more in prayer than conviction, this regulation seemed mostly designed to reassure parents, since failure to attend chapel was one student sin that the university tended to overlook.¹¹³

Still, amid an aura of Christian tradition and morality, how did Canadian universities deal with those outside the Christian faith? Some universities, notably McGill and Manitoba, actively, if not openly, discriminated against Jews by requiring them to achieve higher grades out of high school, or by imposing rigid

109 Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, p. 152.

110 Stanley to W.E. Thompson, 26 February 1935; Stanley to Sherwood Fox, 21 February 1935. Correspondence — Fraternities' File, President's Office Papers.

111 Interviews with Gene Hicks and Leonard Kitz.

112 *Calendar, 1930-31*, p. 18.

113 Interview with Eric Mercer.

quotas limiting their numbers in professional programmes.¹¹⁴ Dalhousie's record compares favourably. There is no evidence that it followed such practices in the 1930s. Certainly, continuing concern about declining enrolments had some bearing on this policy of openness. Yet the figures speak for themselves. In a province where Jews made up .37 per cent of the population in 1941, Jewish students comprised about 11 per cent of Dalhousie's student body.¹¹⁵ Since a very high proportion of Dalhousie's Jewish students came from the eastern United States, where quotas in universities were notorious,¹¹⁶ Dalhousie obviously did not follow the University of Alberta's policy, which refused admission to the medical school to Jews who lived outside the province.¹¹⁷ In 1939, 14 of the 36 graduates from Dalhousie medical school were Jews, all but one of whom were American. While these students were not welcomed socially, the university did not thwart their academic progress.

With respect to "coloured" students, very few went to Dalhousie during the 1930s. A small number (most of whom were Indian not Black) were admitted each year from the West Indies, a practice followed in other Commonwealth universities.¹¹⁸ Black youth from Halifax, however, virtually never attended the university. In 1920, President Mackenzie admitted that "if there were coloured men here in large numbers we might have [difficulties] develop". In Mackenzie's period the university denied black students who were not "British subjects" entry to the medical school.¹¹⁹ In the 1930s all but one of Nova Scotia's hospitals (the Tuberculosis Hospital) refused to allow Blacks to practise. Because of this the university chose in 1932 to refund tuition fees to a black student who was unable to do his internship.¹²⁰ Like other white Canadians, Nova Scotians recoiled at the prospect of physical contact with black doctors.

At one-quarter of the student population, women were Dalhousie's largest

114 Percy Barsky, "How Numerus Clausus Was Ended in the Manitoba Medical School", *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, Vol. I, No. 2 (October, 1977), pp. 75-81. For a detailed discussion of the exposure of anti-semitism in the admission policies of the University of Manitoba, see *The Winnipeg Free Press*, 16 March, 14 September 1944, 20 March 1945. See also Frost, *McGill University*, II, p. 128. Amazingly, one learns far more about the McGill policy from Gibson, *Queen's University*, II, p. 199-202, than from Frost's superficial and apologetic treatment of McGill's anti-semitic admission policies.

115 *Census of Canada, 1941*, Vol. IV, pp. 58-60; "Registration Book, 1930" and the same document for 1935 and 1939, Dalhousie University, DUA. The average annual figure was probably less than 11 per cent, since 1935 was an exceptionally high year; 19.6 per cent of the students were Jewish.

116 Marcia G. Synnott, "The Admission and Assimilation of Minority Students at Harvard, Yale and Princeton, 1900-1970", *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Fall, 1979), pp. 285-304, John Kenneth Galbraith, *A Life in Our Times: Memoirs* (Boston, 1981), pp. 19-20, 51.

117 R.C. Wallace to Sidney Smith, 13 February 1936, University of Manitoba: Correspondence, 32/10/5-4, President's Papers, 1928-36, University of Alberta Archives.

118 Reid, *Mount Allison University*, II, p. 102.

119 Stanley Mackenzie to Andrew T. Drummond, 24 November 1920, Correspondence — Admission of Coloured Students, President's Office Papers.

120 The case is discussed in Board of Governors' Minutes, 9 June 1932.

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Table Four

Religious Affiliations of Dalhousie Students,
1930, 1935, 1939

Religious Denomination	Dalhousie Students 1930, 1935, 1939 %	Nova Scotia Population 1941 %	Canadian Population 1941 %
United	34.4	21.5	19.2
Anglican	22.6	17.9	15.2
Roman Catholic	15.1	32.7	43.4
Jewish	11.3	.4	1.4
Presbyterian	7.6	8.2	7.2
Baptist	6.3	15.4	4.2
Lutheran	.5	1.6	3.5
Other	2.2	2.3	5.9
TOTAL	100 (2794 known cases)	100	100

Source: Registration Books, 1930/31, 1935/36, 1939/40, Dalhousie University Archives; *Census of Canada, 1941*, Vol. IV, pp. 56-60.

minority group. By the 1930s, the phenomena of women at work and in university were no longer novelties, though feminism as a political movement diminished in Canada following the achievement of universal suffrage at the end of the war in all provinces except Quebec. Magazines of the 1920s and 1930s devoted attention to the young business woman, to the profession of social work in which women were newly engaged, and to the remarkable lives of accomplished pioneers such as Agnes Macphail and Cora Hind.¹²¹ At the same time advertising,

121 Mary Vipond, "The Image of Women in Mass Circulation Magazines in the 1920s", in Alison Prentice and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, eds., *The Neglected Majority* (Toronto, 1977), pp. 116-24, Katherine M. Caldwell, "College and Then What?", *Canadian Home Journal* (September, 1929), James Struthers, "Lord Give Us Men: Women and Social Work in English Canada, 1918-1953", *Historical Papers/Communications historiques* (1983), pp. 96-112, Mollie McGee, "Four Women in Parliament", *Chatelaine* (May, 1938). On working class women in the 1920s, see Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s", *Labour/Le Travailleur*, IV (1979), pp. 131-64, and on women doctors, see Strong-Boag, "Feminism Constrained: The Graduates of Canada's Medical Schools for Women", in

features, and advice columns addressed women where most actually were — at home performing the roles of wives and mothers.¹²²

The issue of “co-education” was discussed from time to time, usually with jocularly, in the *Dalhousie Gazette* — and more seriously by academics in the *Dalhousie Review*. Because their presence made the social life of the campus far more interesting, men appreciated having women at the university. Still, males tended to accept the prevailing view that women were primarily interested in being “social butterflies”, which made them both light-hearted and light-headed. “The Women — Ah, God Bless all of ’em”, declared Thomas A. Gouge, “but keep ’em away when we are trying to study”.¹²³ Men had only to cite the more respectable views of *Dalhousie Review* contributors such as J.A. Lindsay and William D. Tait to confirm their prejudices: “The maternal instinct...makes [the woman’s] view of life more personal, more bound up with the activities and sanctities of the home, likelier to be that of the family than of the tribe or the nation, more partial in judgment, less willing to be guided by the canons of abstract justice than the male”. According to Tait, men had a greater facility for abstract thought owing to the larger size of their “frontal lobes”.¹²⁴

Periodically, outspoken women felt compelled to defend both the principle of co-education and their intellectual integrity, but feminism, as a philosophical issue, did not preoccupy them. Most were not interested in professional careers. At best, they intended to work for a short time after graduation until they married.¹²⁵ And without question, they cared intensely about campus social life (as did men); among them was a minority of upper class “peacocks” who fit the stereotype for whom the university was merely a “finishing school”.¹²⁶ But to dismiss university women as “social butterflies” was a demeaning exaggeration. What most Dalhousie women sought from the university was not full equality but the type of independence and social skills that would improve their lives as women — whether at work or at home. To the degree that the university provided this, they cherished the experience and tolerated discrimination, both on and off-campus, as a fact of life.

Linda Kealey, ed., *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s* (Toronto, 1979), pp. 109-29.

122 The March 1937 issue of *Chatelaine* contains the following items: “Kitchen Idea Contest”, “Home Improvements”, “Housekeeping”, “Recipes”, and “Fashion”. There are ads for soap, cleanser, and drapes.

123 “A Feminist World?”, *Dalhousie Gazette*, 11 January 1929; *ibid.*, 8 November 1929, 2 March 1932, 16 November 1933, 8 November 1934.

124 J.A. Lindsay, “Sex in Education”, William D. Tait, “Some Feminisms”, *Dalhousie Review*, X (1930-31), pp. 148-9, 52-3.

125 Interviews with Gene Hicks, Jean Begg, Zilpha Linkletter. Jean Begg, who became the first woman bank manager in Nova Scotia in 1962, recalls that the idea of getting a job in the 1930s “never entered my head”.

126 For an attack on female “peacocks” in universities, see Frank Underhill, speech to the National Conference on Canadian Universities, 1930, cited in Pilkington, “National Conference of Canadian Universities”, p. 220. See also Carleton Stanley, “Inauguration Address”, Board of

Women encountered special paternalism with respect to living arrangements. Unlike men, women away from home were required to live in residence (at Shirreff Hall) “except in very unusual circumstances”.¹²⁷ Because Shirreff Hall was never fully occupied, the university had an economic incentive to increase the enrolment of women, which declined in the mid-1930s.¹²⁸ Within the residence they lived under a variety of regulations, mostly self-policed, and not considered especially oppressive, though they did carry on under the watchful eye of a “Warden”. They were allowed to be out four nights a week until 11:00 p.m. (10:30 on Sundays), and later on weekends and dance nights. Those who broke curfew were punished with extra telephone duty, though chronic violators faced more serious discipline.¹²⁹

As at other campuses, all Dalhousie women belonged to a single organization — the Delta Gamma Society (as distinct from the exclusive Delta Gamma Sorority). No such body existed for men. Delta Gamma was responsible for the initiation of “freshettes”, and sponsored a variety of teas and dances throughout the year. Though men sometimes ridiculed its preoccupation with these social activities, women jealously guarded and defended Delta Gamma. It was the one institution in which they had exclusive autonomy and which addressed their interests uniquely.¹³⁰

Those few women who studied “male” subjects such as law or commerce were perhaps viewed as “oddities”, but they were not ostracized. If they openly expressed interest in a professional career, this too their female peers could accept, even if the men who controlled the professions were less open-minded. But these women were assumed to be choosing a vocation over marriage, a choice still considered by the majority to be second best.¹³¹ On the other hand, working for a year or two after graduation as a teacher or secretary was deemed a useful and admirable way of making the transition from youth to full adulthood. The university facilitated this passage. Because women were not expected to become

Governors’ Minutes, 29 October 1931 and *President’s Report, 1932-33*, p. 2. Stanley laments the fact that some parents encouraged daughters at Shirreff Hall to attend dances in order to learn “social graces”.

127 *Calendar, 1930-31*, p. 18.

128 “It was hoped that the course in Household Science [at the Halifax Ladies’ College] might also be a means of increasing registration in Shirreff Hall”: Florence Blackwood to Stanley, 21 January 1939, Correspondence — Halifax Ladies’ College, President’s Office Papers. The percentage of women dropped from 27.5 to 21.7 between 1930 and 1935 and rose to 23.5 in 1939.

129 Interviews with Jean Begg, Zilpha Linkletter and “General Report” by Margaret E. Lowe, Warden of Shirreff Hall, Shirreff Hall — General, President’s Office Papers.

130 *Halifax Daily Star*, 22 January 1938.

131 Interviews with Gene Hicks, Jean Begg. Willis, *Dalhousie Law School*, p. 139, points out that there were one or two women in the law programme every year. Grace Wambolt, the first woman to open a law office in Halifax, recalled some of the difficulties that women lawyers faced breaking into the legal profession. Davis, *The Lost Generation*, pp. 89-90, claimed that women in the 1930s were less anxious to secure careers than those in the 1920s, no longer viewing a career as ‘the be all and end all’.

professionals in high status occupations, they lacked the reinforcement and reward network that motivated — and probably increased the pressure on — men. Still, society viewed highly educated women as more refined, better conversationalists, and even better homemakers, all qualities which made the university degree a valued commodity in middle class families.¹³²

Neither feminism nor political radicalism in general fired the souls of most students in the Depression. Despite the propaganda of media barons, such as Randolph Hearst, who claimed communism was rampant in North American universities, more serious journalists and social psychologists in the United States found little evidence of “dangerous” ideas percolating among the vast majority of college youth.¹³³ Undeniably, American organizations such as the League for Industrial Democracy, the National Student League, and university-based “social problems” clubs actively campaigned for fundamental and sometimes revolutionary change; and periodically, pacifist groups organized impressive demonstrations, drawing thousands of students.¹³⁴ But militant political activity in the United States was sustained only among the ranks of the committed minority. At best students were found to be more “intellectually curious” and “slightly” more liberal than their parents; at worst they were “sheep-like”, “apathetic”, and “fatalistic”. The “Fitzgeraldian cockiness” of the 1920s, the passion for self-expression without ideology, had not congealed into a broad collective movement for political change in the 1930s.¹³⁵ The Depression made

132 Allison Richards, “Are You Spoiling His Chances?”, *Chatelaine* (March, 1937). Also, “As well as making her life more enjoyable and providing a more profitable way of spending unemployed hours, a higher education enables a woman to be a more interested and interesting companion of her husband. A college career does not change the woman to a pedant; her education is a social asset”. This typical defence of co-education appeared in *The Sheaf* [student newspaper, University of Saskatchewan], 21 January 1929.

133 “Youth in College”, *Fortune Magazine* (June, 1936), p. 99, also cited in *The Manitoban*, 3 February 1937. See also Davis, *The Lost Generation*, pp. 39-46, C.L. Morgan and H.H. Remmers, “Liberalism and Conservatism of College Students as Affected by the Depression”, *School and Society*, Vol. 41, No. 1067 (8 June 1935), pp. 780-4, Vernon Jones, “Attitudes of College Students and the Changes in Such Attitudes during Four Years in College”, *The Journal of Educational Psychology*, XXIX, No. 1 and 2 (January and February, 1938), pp. 14-25, 114-34.

134 Ralph Brax, *The First Student Movement: Student Activism in the United States during the 1930s* (London, 1981), R.L. Schnell, *National Activist Student Organizations in American Higher Education, 1905-1944* (Ann Arbor, 1976), Philip Altbach, *Student Politics in America: A Historical Analysis* (New York, 1974), John P. Diggins, *The American Left in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1973). Probably the largest demonstration occurred on 13 April 1934, when something between 500,000 and 1,000,000 American students staged peace demonstrations across the country. See also Eileen Eagan, *Class, Culture, and the Classroom: The Student Peace Movement of the 1930s* (Philadelphia, 1982), Louis Filler, *Vanguards and Followers: Youth in the American Tradition* (Chicago, 1978), Frederick Lewis Allen, *Since Yesterday: 1929-1939*, (New York, 1965 [1940]), Seymour Martin Lipset, *Rebellion in the University: A History of Student Activism in America* (London, 1972).

135 Davis, *The Lost Generation*, pp. 27, 39; “Youth in College”, p. 156; Filler, *Vanguards and Followers*, pp. 77-8. As *Fortune Magazine* (June 1936) put it, students “are passive more than

American students more serious, not more radical. Similar attitudes prevailed north of the border, where political activism was even more tempered, less threatening, and more easily contained by university officials when it did erupt. Dalhousie students were generally peaceable.

While Canadian campuses were sometimes illiberal, they were by no means consistently oppressive.¹³⁶ Universities normally faced little provocation from their students, and with notable exceptions, allowed debate on a wide variety of topical issues. In a period offering numerous possibilities for political discussion, debating was in fact a popular pastime on Canadian campuses. Judging from the issues argued at Dalhousie between 1933 and 1937 — sometimes before very large audiences — the anxious observer might have concluded that heresy permeated student life: Resolved that “this House deplores the policies of the Bennett government”, that “this House would rather live in Moscow than Berlin”; that “Democracy in the past ten years has been proven to be a failure”, that “the sit-down strike is a just weapon in the hands of organized labour”, that “this House approves an order based on socialist principles”, that “Hollywood should be razed”.¹³⁷ Even if their supporters lost the arguments, Bennett, big business, and Hollywood need not have feared. Debating, like football, initiation, and student council elections was a spectacle — judged more on style than substance. Students enjoyed the intellectual tussle, they were impressed by the articulate, intelligent, and witty debaters — all social skills prized by cultured and educated middle class youth. When Dalhousie’s debaters defeated those from Mount Allison, McGill, or better yet Oxford, students thrived in the glow of institutional superiority. But they did not make plans to move to Moscow.¹³⁸

The main forum for the expression of student opinion was the *Dalhousie Gazette*, a weekly publication that reflected well the mood of the campus. Student newspaper editors in Canada sometimes ran into trouble with student councillors and university presidents if their printed opinions violated discretion and good taste. Publicly supporting petting cost a *Varsity* editor his position at apathetic. They know more but act less”, p. 100.

136 For discussion of academic freedom in Canadian universities in the Depression, see Frank Abbott, “Academic Freedom and Social Criticism in the 1930s”, *Interchange*, Vol. 14, No. 4/Vol. 15, No. 1 (1983-84), pp. 107-23, Douglas Francis, “The Threatened Dismissal of Frank Underhill from the University of Toronto, 1939-41”, *CAUT Bulletin* (December, 1975), Michiel Horn, “Academic Freedom and the Canadian Professor”, *CAUT Bulletin* (December 1982).

137 In March 1929, the debate between Dalhousie and the Methodist College Literary Institute in St. John’s, Newfoundland, drew 650 to 700 people: J.M. Barbour to Stanley Mackenzie, 15 March 1929. A 1934 debate at Dalhousie drew 500: Sodales File, President’s Office Papers. Carleton Stanley was a debate enthusiast. See *Dalhousie Gazette*, 1, 15 March, 9 November 1933, 23 October, 27 November, 12 November 1937.

138 The political attitudes of Canadian students were reflected in a poll conducted at the University of Saskatchewan in 1935. Asked whom they supported federally, the students gave the Liberals 45 per cent, the CCF 25 per cent, Conservatives 21 per cent and Communists 8 per cent. According to the editor of *The Sheaf*, 21 March 1935, the straw vote “will certainly put an end to a very popular misconception of the university as a hotbed of radicalism”.

the University of Toronto, probably the least tolerant university in the country. When the editor of the *Ubyyssey* at the University of British Columbia criticized the provincial government's spending policies in 1931, he was suspended by the Board of Governors. When such incidents occurred, a code of solidarity was expressed in student papers across Canada. Like the *Dalhousie Gazette*, they normally took the side of the punished editors, and nobly defended the principle of free speech.¹³⁹ However, this was about as overtly political as the *Gazette*, under a variety of editors, ever became. Apparently, no such major confrontations occurred between the *Gazette* and its readers in the 1930s, though the paper closely and critically evaluated the performances of student politicians. Over the years, the tone of the *Gazette* was less feisty than that of other student papers.¹⁴⁰

The *Gazette* took a back seat to no one in its role as a campus booster. Criticized on one occasion for its content, the paper explained its publishing philosophy. It claimed to be caught between those who wanted it to be a "tabloid, Winchellian" type of journal, and those who sought a mere literary publication. The editor claimed that the *Gazette* was neither. It was instead a "glorified bulletin board for student activities", and an organ of "student opinion". The paper's platform in 1936 called for such developments as a "vigorous arts and science society", a college band, a skating rink, friendlier relations with other colleges, and more efficient management of student affairs.¹⁴¹ News, per se, played a minor role in this brand of journalism.

Muckraking did not interest the *Gazette*. Asked why the newspaper refused to identify students caught smoking in the gym in January 1935, the *Gazette* explained, somewhat melodramatically: "The policy of the *Gazette* is to keep scandal out of its columns. We might print the actual names, if say, the parties concerned were dismissed from the University. The students have a right to such news. But the harrowing details that mark the wreck of someone's reputation or life are not news; they are always abnormal and often debasing. We feel that the wreck of a reputation is bad enough, but to pry among the wreckage is ghoul-ish".¹⁴² The *Gazette* preferred good news, and let nothing, not even the outbreak of the Depression, stand in its way. The New Year's editorial called for 1930 to be "another wonderful year of progress", and the Depression itself was not deemed worthy of comment in the *Gazette* until 28 January 1931.

Student activism was muted at Dalhousie, but it was not absent. As institu-

139 *The Globe* (Toronto), 4, 8 February 1929 described the University of Toronto incident. On the UBC conflict, see *The Ubyyssey* (Vancouver), 10 to 28 February 1931, and *Dalhousie Gazette*, 4 March 1931. The *Gazette* also sided with student journalists at the University of Saskatchewan who were forced to resign following the publication of anti-war statements in 1938: *Gazette*, 25 November 1938.

140 Other newspapers examined include *The Ubyyssey*, *The Sheaf*, *The Gateway* (University of Alberta), *The Manitoban* (University of Manitoba), and selections from *The Varsity* (University of Toronto).

141 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 19, 2 October 1936.

142 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 31 January 1935.

tions which dwell in the world of ideas and which temporarily free young people from the drudgery of earning a living, universities have always inspired a degree of unorthodox thinking. Circulated in the 1930s, the provocative writings of F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, Sinclair Lewis, Thomas Wolfe, and Bertrand Russell captured a mood which combined cynicism, alienation, black humour and the spirit of reform.¹⁴³ Once touched by radical thinking, some students became deeply committed to political action, particularly if their iconoclasm received positive reinforcement from a tight network of family and peers.¹⁴⁴ For these students — the socialists, communists, humanitarians, and pacifists — the substance of political debate mattered far more than the style.

The most enduring of such groups at Dalhousie was the Student Christian Movement. Founded in Canada in 1920 amid a post-war quest for permanent peace and moral order, the SCM was a creature of the social gospel, a Christian reform movement “seeking to realize the Kingdom of God in the very fabric of society”.¹⁴⁵ SCM study groups convened on campuses across Canada, and gathered at conferences throughout the 1920s and 1930s. While other reform groups came and went during the Depression, the SCM’s moderation and righteousness earned it a secure place at “Christian” institutions such as Dalhousie. A number of faculty members, including Carleton Stanley, regularly donated money to the organization. Some of SCM’s members participated in seminars led by H.L. Bronson, who conducted sessions on the “synoptic gospel”, or the search for the true meaning and applicability to contemporary social problems of the life of Jesus.¹⁴⁶ Though nominally evangelical, the SCM did little aggressive recruiting among Dalhousie students. With an annual membership of 25 or 30, it sponsored talks on the “world in crisis”, and “practicality and Christianity”, and provided an important outlet for the minority devoted to combining Christian living with social change.¹⁴⁷

Less interested in social change than student services, the National Federation of Canadian University Students (NFCUS) received the regular support of student councillors and editors. Established in 1926 in the spirit of inter-

143 Filler, *Vanguards and Followers*, pp. 77-8; Hugh MacLennan, “What it Was Like to be in Your Twenties in the Thirties”, in Victor Hoar, ed., *The Great Depression: Essays and Memoirs from Canada and the United States* (Toronto, 1969), p. 152.

144 For recollections of those who were politically active, see David Lewis, *The Good Fight: Political Memoirs, 1909-1958* (Toronto, 1981), H.S. Ferns, *Reading from Left to Right: One Man’s Political History* (Toronto, 1983), Merrily Weisbord, *The Strangest Dream: Canadian Communists, The Spy Trials, and the Cold War* (Toronto, 1981).

145 Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-1928* (Toronto, 1971), pp. 219-23.

146 *Ibid.*, p. 221; Interviews with Lawrence Read, Eric Mercer, John Webster Grant, Grace Wombalt, Dr. Harry Smith, Dane Parker, Dr. Ian Robb.

147 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 19 October 1933; “Annual Report of the Student Christian Movement, Dalhousie University, 1933-34”, Student Christian Movement File, 8 March 1934, President’s Office Papers; Hugh MacMillan “21st Anniversary, Student Christian Movement”, *Saturday Night*, 27 December 1941. See also Gibson, *Queen’s University, II*, p. 147.

nationalist idealism, NFCUS interpreted its mandate conservatively, and committed itself not to disturbing political convention, but to serving the special material needs of college youth. Best known for its sponsorship of the popular exchange programme, in which students from one part of Canada would spend a year of university in another region, NFCUS also arranged discount travel rates and sponsored debates and other competitions.¹⁴⁸ Each year a small number of Dalhousie students participated actively in the organization.

For some Canadian students, however, the NFCUS approach to students' concerns was too narrow and its actions too timid. As the result of an impressive organizational effort by the SCM, a national conference of students was arranged in December 1937 at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. More than 300 student representatives from 20 campuses attended, and they tackled issues ranging from the quality of education to Canadian foreign policy. They listened to speeches by reformers such as Reinhold Niebuhr from New York, and King Gordon, vice-chairman of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). For many students, the conference represented the first time they had travelled out of their own province, and they were absorbed in debates such as that between Catholic activist students in Quebec (who defended the repressive Padlock Law) and defenders of Communists' right to free speech. Gene Hicks, a member of the Dalhousie delegation, recalls the conference, with its left-of-centre orientation, as a moving and stimulating experience.¹⁴⁹ Out of the conference emerged a left-wing rival to NFCUS, the Canadian Student Assembly, whose major activity, supported by Dalhousie, was a successful campaign for a programme of national scholarships, instituted in 1939.¹⁵⁰ In the period following the Spanish Civil War, communists carried their campaign against fascism onto campuses across the nation. They were especially active in Montreal. While some Dalhousians recall a small number of communists on the campus, and forums sponsored by the communist-led League Against War and Fascism, communists had virtually no impact on Dalhousie student life.¹⁵¹

Some Dalhousie students sympathized with the democratic socialist CCF but

148 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 25 January 1929, 7 February 1935. Also, *Report of the Conference of Representatives from the Students of the Canadian Universities, Held in Montreal at McGill University, 28-31 December 1926*, National Federation of Canadian University Students Collection, McMaster University Archives, Hamilton. The McMaster Archives contains reports of subsequent NFCUS conferences throughout the 1930s.

149 Interview with Gene Hicks; Armour Mackay, "Canadian Students Draw Together at Winnipeg", *Saturday Night*, 15 January 1938; *The Manitoban*, 7 January 1938; *The Ubysey*, 7 January 1938.

150 The scholarships were incorporated into the Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Act. See *The Ubysey*, 22 September 1939, *The Sheaf*, 22 September 1939.

151 Interviews with Lawrence Read, Leonard Kitz, and Gene Hicks. One member of the Communist Party, who knew the Halifax situation at the end of the decade, agreed with this assessment. While the Young Communist League, the youth branch of the Communist Party of Canada, had active branches in Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg, it had no branch in Nova Scotia: Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto, 1975), pp. 122-3.

its influence on the campus was also limited. John Webster Grant, a CCF partisan, attended meetings of the organization in Halifax while enrolled at Dalhousie from 1935 to 1938, but he and others recall that the campus proved to be far from fertile recruiting ground for the CCF.¹⁵² Dalhousians such as Angus L. Macdonald, a law student in the early 1920s and a professor of law later in the decade, channelled their reformist energy into the Nova Scotia Liberal Party, which came to power under Macdonald's leadership in 1933.¹⁵³ On the whole, however, Dalhousie students during the Depression distanced themselves from political movements promoting far-reaching social change.

That the collapsed economy of the 1930s provoked more debate than political activism among Dalhousie students — and others in Canada — is not surprising, and perhaps in a small way reflected the mood in the country as a whole. The Depression was an ordeal requiring from its victims creative strategies for survival. People, especially young people, were cynical of politicians, and as Gene Hicks noted, not conditioned to believe that government could “do much in the field of economics and welfare”. The need to survive overwhelmed any inclination among most students to join movements for social reform — on or off-campus. Socialists, and even communists, were listened to with interest, but then dismissed as well-meaning dreamers. For struggling middle class students, the university was an important part of their formula for survival. It armed them with a degree which, in the long run, they hoped to turn into secure professional employment. In the short term the university was a temporary oasis, which, for most students, helped make the Depression bearable.¹⁵⁴

One issue did spark more than passing interest among Dalhousie students in the 1930s. The legacy and prospect of war hovered over and even haunted the lives of young people growing up in the Depression. Students in North America, and particularly in Europe, were sometimes jarred from political stupour and youthful gaiety to express genuine alarm over the possibility of a renewed blood-letting into which they might be drawn.¹⁵⁵ While a Depression economy was something they quietly endured, the prospect of world war roused active concern precisely because it brought survival itself into question. Though students were hardly obsessed with the issue on a daily basis, it occupied a permanent place in the recesses of their minds, and even before 1939, was periodically pushed to the forefront.

A national petition campaign was organized in late 1931, encouraging Prime

152 Interviews with John Webster Grant and Dane Parker.

153 John Hawkins, *The Life and Times of Angus L.* (Windsor, N.S., 1969), pp. 54-70.

154 Interviews with Gene Hicks, Leonard Kitz, Dr. Ian Robb.

155 Students at Cambridge and Oxford were more active politically than those in Canada, owing in part to the proximity of European hostilities. When a Cambridge student leader was killed in the Spanish Civil War, many students were politicized in the struggle against fascism. For a particularly vivid portrayal of student life at Cambridge, see Victor Kiernan, “Herbert Norman's Cambridge”, in R. Bowen, ed., *E.H. Norman: His Life and Scholarship* (Toronto, 1984), pp. 27-45. See also Ferns, *Reading From Left to Right*, pp. 81-2, 116-28.

Minister Bennett, in rather vague terms, to push for peace at the upcoming Geneva Peace Conference on Disarmament. In urging students to sign, the *Gazette* denounced the “hypocritical platitudes” of politicians who talked peace while preparing for war. That peace was not simply a student concern was indicated by a front page letter in the *Gazette* from President Stanley, urging everyone to take an active interest in the campaign.¹⁵⁶ Another peace plebiscite, following the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, asked Canadian students whether the League of Nations should confront invading powers with economic and/or military sanctions, and whether students would be “prepared to bear arms”. While more than 50 per cent of Dalhousie students answered the questionnaire, the results were far from clear-cut. The *Gazette* concluded that “Dalhousie students...want to punish Italy but they don’t want to have any part in the punishing”.¹⁵⁷ In March of 1936, in solidarity with peace actions elsewhere in the country, Dalhousie students elicited the agreement of the university to cancel classes for a meeting to discuss “Dalhousie’s contribution to the peace movement”.¹⁵⁸

Like others in Canada, Dalhousie students were somewhat slow to recognize the threat of fascism, particularly in Germany. In early 1934, the *Gazette* carried an article defending the German sterilization act, under the headline “Hitler: Scientist of Progress”.¹⁵⁹ Two months earlier, an article by a member of Dalhousie’s Officer Training Corps defended Hitler’s success at bringing the “German people out of their slough of despondency by a system of organization and national thought”.¹⁶⁰ Somewhat uncharacteristically, however, a commentary in October 1936 challenged the British policy of appeasement: “It is difficult to reconcile the tremendous warlike preparation ‘in Germany’, their persecution of innocent Jews, and the suppression of truth as compatible with peace”.¹⁶¹

When war finally did erupt, most traces of isolationist sentiment disappeared. The pro-imperial bias, deeply rooted in the Halifax community, found renewed expression at the university.¹⁶² Just as “Dalhousians” had “Mourned the Death

156 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 24, 31 October 1931.

157 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 10, 17 October 1935. A similar poll in the United States produced equally mixed results: Davis, *The Lost Generation*, p. 99.

158 “Student Government History #65”, *Dalhousie Gazette*, 4 March 1976. See also Johnston, *McMaster University*, Vol. 2, p. 75. This particular campaign was organized by the Student Peace Movement, an organization that founded chapters on a number of Canadian campuses.

159 Interview with Henry Hicks; “Fascism in Italy Not a Dictatorship” [reports on speeches by Italian government representatives who toured Canada in 1934], *Vancouver Sun*, 16 February 1934; *Dalhousie Gazette*, 11 January 1934.

160 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 2 November 1933.

161 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 2 October 1936.

162 Arthur Lower claims in his memoirs that Professor R.A. Mackay was hesitant to support an isolationist organization because he feared that “if he became too conspicuous in such a movement, there would be so much pressure in Halifax that Dalhousie would probably be forced to

of their Beloved Sovereign" in 1936,¹⁶³ so too they enthusiastically joined the national crusade on behalf of the empire in 1939. The Dalhousie branch of the Canadian Officers' Training Corps, in existence since 1915, saw its membership triple (voluntarily) in the fall of 1939 to more than 400 students and graduates.¹⁶⁴ Once compulsory military training was imposed on male students in Canada in 1940, the problem of "conscientious objectors" did not emerge at Dalhousie, though as Carleton Stanley noted, "there has been a lot of trouble at other institutions".¹⁶⁵ When Dalhousie students voted to withdraw from the Canadian Student Assembly early in 1940, along with a number of other Canadian campuses, they disassociated themselves from any political actions that could be interpreted as unpatriotic. The CSA held a conference in January 1940, in which considerable sentiment (especially among Quebec students) was expressed against the possible imposition of conscription for wartime service. Opinions polarized, and the Mount Allison delegation led a walkout claiming that the conference was being manipulated by those who were "anti-British, anti-war, and anti all those principles which form our ties with the British Empire".¹⁶⁶ Though opinions were divided at Dalhousie, the anti-CSA and presumably "pro-British" forces carried the day.

Canadian universities had not been spared the injurious impact of the Depression. But in spite of severe financial difficulties, they carried on their role of reproducing and perpetuating the culture of middle class Canada. By training professionals, universities enabled students from modest backgrounds to achieve lives, not of luxury, but of relative comfort and assured status. In one way, a collapsed economy made this process more difficult by delaying the delivery of secure employment. But in another way it made the process easier, for the Depression took the fight, if not the fear, out of most students. They studied harder, and outside the classroom they lived vigorously within a peer culture approved and overseen by adult educators. When students occasionally got out of hand, a well-defined system of social control restored order. Universities attempted, in ways that would be impossible in future generations, to govern the behaviour of students both on and off-campus. Transgressors were sometimes punished and sometimes protected by the tolerance shown youthful indiscretion. University officials may have worried about the emergence of a broadly based oppositional culture, but the one political campaign out of which this threatened to develop — the peace movement — was, before the war, more respectable than

dismiss him!": Arthur R.M. Lower, *My First Seventy-five Years* (Toronto, 1967), p. 205.

163 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 24 January 1936.

164 Board of Governors' Minutes, 10 October 1939.

165 Stanley to Colonel C.B. Smith, 16 October 1940, Correspondence — COTC File, President's Office Papers. On Dalhousie's other war activities, see *The Alumni News* (April 1943), pp. 16-18.

166 Cited in *The Ubyyssey*, 16 January 1940 and *The Gateway*, 26 January 1940. Dalhousie's response is in the *Dalhousie Gazette*, 26 January, 2 February 1940. See also, Gibson, *Queen's University, II*, p. 182; Reid, *Mount Allison University, II*, pp. 153-4.

menacing. If Canada's Prime Minister could flirt with the politics of isolationism, so too could Canadian students. When the war broke out English Canadian students, like their parents, willingly joined the parade.

Like other universities, Dalhousie weathered the Depression and successfully managed the lives of the middle class youth placed in its custody. The university was neither a narrow-minded nor an irreverent educational institution. Its students inherited the civility, the respect for education, the cultural prejudices, and the liberal-conservative temperament of the community which enveloped them. Undoubtedly they would pass these values on. In December 1929 a *Gazette* correspondent wrote, prophetically:

College students today will be the citizens of the world tomorrow, and the spirit which today seems to flame in revolutionary colors will tomorrow infuse new life and vigor into society. The college man who is the ring leader in the so called "college pranks" may become the strong and just leader of the law court. The co-ed who is forever "on duty" for staying out too late will want her daughter to keep within her leave. The students who kick hardest against the rules and regulations will be the staunchest, the sternest upholders of university traditions against the surging tide of youth.¹⁶⁷

167 *Dalhousie Gazette*, 3 December 1929.