



The New Home of the Law School

A few of the graduates of the class of 1951 were grouped in the lobby of the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel in Fredericton after the senior class dinner last spring. The topic of their conversation was a natural one, for that dynamic orator, Lord Beaverbrook, had just delivered the address to the graduates. The Beaver was the subject of a comparison with Winston Churchill, another world figure who has made a name for himself in English political life. The comparison was drawn on many aspects of their lives—even the private sides of their characters were included. It was noted that Churchill was not a man to do things in half measures; his speeches during the war were delivered to give the maximum of force and impact; even his trips were made with all the entourage necessary for the fullest comfort. The U.N.B. Chancellor was not to be outdone. The students were given to believe that his adroit handling of aircraft production during Britain's gravest hours was a major factor in the survival of freedom; his trips, especially to New Brunswick, were conducted on a par with any made by the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and these annual vacations usually included a full measure for the University of New Brunswick in the form of a gift for the advancement of education in his native Province.

Numerous are the donations which are forever evidence of Lord Beaverbrook's generosity, usually in the form of buildings 'up the hill.' The Lady Beaverbrook Residence, the Lady Beaverbrook Gymnasium, the Bonar-Law Bennet Library and the Maggie-Jean Chestnut Residence for Women have come in the past along with the valuable Beaverbrook Overseas Scholarships and many priceless books and papers.

One week-end last fall Lord Beaverbrook added another building to the imposing list noted above, which to lawyers and to law students in particular was sweeter than a majority decision. The Chancellor, a former student of the school, purchased the F. P. Starr property in Saint John to house the Faculty of Law—a faculty he says he never would have left if the then Dean had been a little more indulgent. What he proceeded to accomplish after that departure is a glorious chapter in the history of New Brunswick which is still in the writing.

The announcement in the press had its repercussions. Unsuspecting students who, every morning converge on the Provincial Building and climb the three gruelling flights of stairs to pursue the study of law, found themselves the targets of numerous questions as to where the school had been all these years; few people knew that the Law School had its birth in that very building almost ninety years ago.

During the early nineties of the last century the Chief Justice of the Province, Sir John C. Allen joined with others interested in legal education and the group investigated the possibility of forming

a law school in Saint John. The University of New Brunswick was not interested in sponsoring the venture at that time and so the group approached the Governors of King's College, Windsor, N.S. who decided to father the school. This arrangement existed till 1923 when, under the Carnegie Plan, King's College amalgamated with Dalhousie University. King's College Law School then affiliated with the University of New Brunswick as Dalhousie already had its own Faculty of Law. H. O. McNerney, Q.C. present Judge of Probate for Saint John County, became the first professor of law, a position he held until his retirement two years ago.

Lectures have always been given in what is now the Provincial Building. The facilities in the early days were confined to the Equity Court Room on the second floor (in these days it is known as the Chancery Court Room.) Gradually the facilities took their present form; two lecture rooms, a student library and a common room.

The Chancellor's choice for a new building is an unusually magnificent twenty-room structure which, in its forty years existence, has become a dominating landmark in Saint John. Standing at the head of Coburg Street hill it overlooks one of the City's busiest thoroughfares. An observer associates the building as forming one of Saint John's many pleasant sights,—comparable as a view from Charlotte Street, to that of the Old Stone Church viewed from Germain Street, or a view of the waters of the harbor from any of the intersections on Charlotte Street. Although situated centrally, the new school is in a select residential district to which it adds beauty because of its gardens, shade trees, and large expanse of lawns.

The three story structure was built by a prominent Saint John businessman, F. P. Starr, as a colonial mansion. The position of the main entrance at the gable end, looking towards the business section of the city deprived the building of its colonial characteristics. However, this feature will be revived as alternations will provide an entrance on the west side, which actually should be the front of the building.

The edifice is thirty-seven feet wide and seventy-two feet long. The rooms are adequately supplied with natural light and are quite large following the vogue of the time when it was built. The floors are of solid birch and of very fine quality. A beautiful staircase which is both wide and firm, leads from a spacious hall to the upper floors.

When altered the ground floor will be given up to the library; the second floor to three lecture rooms and the top floor to two common rooms and the caretaker's apartment. There will be five offices, one on the first floor and four on the second floor.

The library will advance in quality and quantity in its new surroundings. The added generosity of our Chancellor has increased the total number of volumes to an operative eight thousand, which

have come at an appropriate time. The curriculum has been brought into line with Canadian standards and consequently more books were needed. The new collection consists of law reports, reference works, text-books, legal periodicals, and works of leisure reading.

Beaverbrook, the subject of comparison in that spring meeting of students, who was perhaps the most trusted advisor to that same Churchill in World War II, has made a lasting contribution to legal education in New Brunswick which can only result in time in the development of better Canadians and better world citizens.

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