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"To-day's Youth and Tomorrow's Education"

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MR. PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE CANADIAN CLUB OF TORONTO:—In the first place I desire to express my deep appreciation of the invitation that was extended to me to speak to this organization. I might say it was extended to me so courteously by your Mr. Philp and my old friend Professor Mackenzie. I assure my friend the professor that I use the word "old" in that context as a term of endearment rather than one relating to his age.

I have been a member of Canadian Clubs in eastern and western Canada and I have observed in the various parts of the country the progress and policies of Canadian Clubs and I desire to profess at the beginning my faith in the role that Canadian Clubs may play in promoting the Canadian nation. We should not forget the days of the great war when it was from Canadian Club platforms that national leaders spoke of the common danger and called the people to give their labor and their thought for Canada, when they called the people for sacrifice and devotion. One would be indeed deaf and blind today if he did not observe in all parts of Canada sources which to say the least are imperilling or endangering national unity. Surely today there is a call no whit less insistent than in war years for sacrifice and devotion, for thought and labor on behalf of Canada. And so Mr. President, I leave that with you in your official capacity as president of this club; in this respect Canadian clubs may give a lead to our Canadian thought and Canadian action.

It would be ungracious of me, Mr. President, if I did not acknowledge the very kind introduction that you accorded me. It certainly was kinder than the one extended to me in Winnipeg one year ago, somewhat as follows: "The speaker of the evening was born in the Maritime provinces and that is where they eat fish." A silly smirk came over my face because I thought he would say "Fish is good for the brain." He didn't. He said, "And God knew where they needed fish." It is a kinder introduction than the one given me in Toronto some years ago. It was a very similar group. I knew the chairman and he knew me, too well in fact. He said I am not going to speak of our guest at any length but I am going to tell a story. A professor was going along the roadway and he saw a group of boys playing in the mud and the professor stopped and said, "What are you doing there, my boys?" And the brightest of them said, "We are building a College." Well, the professor was surprised and he rubbed his hands as professors sometimes do and said, "I suppose when you finish the college you will build a professor?" And the bright lad said, "Oh heck no we haven't dirt enough." That was the worst introduction I ever had.

I have taken as my topic today: "Today's Youth and Tomorrow's Education". I have no apology to offer for my discussing youth and education. It is trite to observe before this Club that the success or failure of our educational processes in moulding today's youth will be reflected directly in the Canada, say of 1960. What question could be of greater significance or importance to the members of a Canadian Club?

I am conscious of the fact that there is in some quarters a low estimate of the modern generation. Whatever the reasons for this evaluation may be, I am constrained to point out that the castigation by a generation of their successors is not one of the inventions of the twentieth century. Many illustrations from the literature of all ages may be vouched to warranty: "Let us praise ancient times" the Roman poet exclaimed. The old man mutters that the young people are not like the boys and girls of his younger days and youth retorts that, "they never were".

In surveying modern youth, we must bear in mind that conditions have changed since our younger days.

A public speaker must come, sooner or later in the course of his remarks, to the theme that this is an age of transition. A witty Englishman has stated that Eve while walking hand in hand with Adam in the Garden of Eden must have said: "Adam, this is an age of transition".

But we know that conditions in Canada have changed to a very marked degree since the turn of the century. People have flocked during this period from the country to the towns and cities. Immigration has brought about an increase in urban populations that was not desired by those who formulated before the war the extensive immigration policy.

Let us for a moment contrast the conditions in the rural communities of yesteryear with those which prevail today in our larger towns and cities.

In the country districts fathers and mothers lived in the home; they were more than lodgers for there were few, if any, clubs, lodges, unions, movies and lectures. The serenity and simplicity of the old family hearth bore fruit and good fruit (Let us praise ancient times!) I would emphasize another feature of the homes of Canada around 1900. There was afforded therein a strength-giving discipline which some homes do not offer today. In all seriousness I recall for you the chores in those homes—getting in the wood and the water, tending the fires, etc. There may have been on our part a repugnance towards these tasks but they did accustom us to the necessity of doing things well and punctually. There came to us a realization of the importance of, and the satisfaction from, the performance of small duties. There was, moreover, in these homes a deep appreciation of opportunities paid for—the children knew it—by the hard work of the parents. The boy on the farm learned much that would stand him in good stead. He picked up the rudiments of many trades. He had around him materials for nature study which whetted his curiosity and engendered in him a reverent awe with respect to the universe.

The boy of today in the large town or city lacks many, and perhaps most, of these advantages; he has to be taught much at school that the country boy gets from his normal life. The town or city boy of today is subjected to the multifarious distractions of movies, motor cars, radios, etc. If they appear to be restless and lacking a sense of repose, I do not wonder. I am sometimes sorry for them in a manner which they could not understand.

Today's youth are not far wide of the mark when they say to the older generation: "You are handing on to us a sorry world". The war, and its aftermath, the frenzied pace of the twenties and the social and economic dislocation of the thirties may be laid on our doorstep. Yet today's youth have met these conditions with a clear eyed fortitude to which in all honesty we must pay tribute.

The unhappiest youths whom I have known were those of my own generation, many of whom served overseas. While in no wise detracting from their courage and their valour and their readiness to sacrifice their all for Canada, I state that they brought back from the horrible scenes of the battlefield a fatalism which gave birth to a cynicism, deep and frequently bitter. So-called realism was the watchword of many of that generation. The book or play which ended with the sentiment, "they were married and lived happily ever afterwards" was anathema to them. Others conscious of the fact that the sacrifice of their fallen comrades had not won peace for a carnage-smitten world found expression for their feelings in blatant jazz and in other exotic ways. I do not blame my generation; I understand them too well.

I desire to testify that the succeeding generation are swinging the pendulum back to centre. Realism, jazz and the flapper are giving place to things more restful, more healthy and more wholesome. Bitter frankness is passing. But modern youth are questioning with fierce anxiety "Why" and the mood of their questions manifests their honesty. They will not be satisfied with mere dogma; they demand the opportunity for free enquiry.

I do find in today's youth a deep longing for wisdom and righteousness. I have characterized them as possessing

fortitude in the face of a disjointed social and economic fabric. I fear, however, that they lack self-reliance. I am concerned about a generation that may hesitate to battle with the dragons in their paths. They are as prone to segregate, to form clubs, to hold conferences and to hunt and think in packs as we are. They fear to be alone.

About three years ago, there appeared in the Atlantic Monthly an arresting article written by Mr. Newton D. Baker, the Secretary of War in the Wilson Administration, who recently died. Mr. Baker in this article told of a young man who applied to him for a letter to the Canadian Immigration authorities to the effect that if the young man were admitted to Canada, he would not become a public charge. Mr. Baker asked the young man what he intended to do in Canada and he replied that he planned to spend the next winter in trapping fur-bearing animals in a region south of the Arctic Circle. Mr. Baker pointed out the hardship and rigour of the undertaking. The young man with a wry smile then said: "Mr. Baker, I suppose that you think that I am crazy". Mr. Baker replied immediately: "No! No! I am wondering, however, if I see in you the last of the pioneers; I wonder if you are not the last young man who will make his own way by the vigour of his own spirit and who wants to stand on his own feet". Mr. Baker then stated in the article that all the other young men who had come to him in recent years to ask a favour of him pleaded for the Government or some other institution to direct them to, or to provide for them, sheltered service against the hazards of individual endeavour.

I know that it is not easy for young people to secure jobs or positions. I remind them, however, that their fathers or grandfathers overcame in the newer, and in the older parts of Canada, difficulties which were not incomparable to those of our day. I am not advocating the so-called cut-throat individualism or the law of the survival of the fittest which prevails in the jungle. But I am pleading with our youth of today for strong individuals who will on their own take places of leadership and at the same time be capable of wise followship, if I may coin a word.

If my summary estimate of today's youth is in the main fair and valid, I may properly ask: What of tomorrow's

education for them? It is difficult to talk about education without running the risk of being platitudinous (Lincoln).

Permit me to interpolate here a preliminary observation. It is addressed to myself and my colleagues in the field of education. We have been prone to discuss primarily, and sometimes exclusively, the details of courses and curricula. In so doing, we have frequently lost sight of our objectives. We have failed to see the woods on account of the trees. If we answer the questions beginning with "why" and "what" the factors involved in the question "how" will fall into their proper places. If we were handed from some Mount Sinai a perfect curriculum it would be a failure unless wise, inspired and inspiring teachers are asked to put it into practice. I plead for a shift of emphasis from the curriculum to the personality and the character of the teacher. It is no accident that the schools of England and Scotland have been known on account of the work of certain headmasters, teachers or dominies.

Time will permit me to touch upon only one or two objectives for tomorrow's education.

It is easy to proclaim that educational processes must be directed towards the training of youth for the responsibilities of citizenship. These responsibilities in a democracy are widely distributed. "An aristocracy", Dr. Lowell, Ex-President of Harvard University has said, "may prepare the rank and file of men to be efficient and so in the words of the catechism to order themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters and to do their duty in the state of life into which it shall please God to call them. But in a democracy where all men partake of the character of rulers, they ought to be trained for that duty". In other words, in a democracy all the people need the education rulers need everywhere. Through education we may ensure wise and orderly evolution.

What do we mean by democracy? It is difficult to define. We cannot define democracy by describing merely the organs of government whether they be executive, judicial or legislative. Democracy lies behind or beyond those ideas. A distinguished Englishman, Ernest Barker, has given what I consider is the best definition of democracy

when he stated that democracy is "a temper and a habit of free discussion of ideas, of full competition between ideas". We may translate Professor Barker's definition into terms of our constitutional law: freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, freedom of the press and that the state was made for man and not that man was made for the state. When we use the term freedom we recognize that unrestricted licence cannot be indulged in by any man unless he goes to some distant and uninhabited island and lives by and to himself. Even there he will be bound by restrictions imposed by nature. A highly developed society must be secured by well-understood limitations upon individual folly or caprice. Democracy contemplates freedom subject to the Rule of Law, that is, subject to recognized legal principles regulating such speech and action by us as may endanger the reputation, economic security and physical integrity of others. Moreover, there must be equality before the law.

"The full competition of ideas!" What has happened in the lands of the dictators whether they be of the right or left? The dictators have used force, or its crafty companion, propaganda, to make their people conform to their mood or thought. Political tyranny of this nature does not tolerate clear thinking on the part of the people. He who opposes dictators is silenced; it is made a crime to disagree with dictators. This is inevitable. To remain in the saddle the dictators must suppress increasingly every form of opinion which seems to challenge their centralized authority.

When the competition of ideas is permitted and encouraged we find that the people regard the state as their servant and there is an emphasis upon rights. On the other hand, under a dictatorship, obligations of the subject are stressed.

In the hands of the dictators, teachers in schools and universities have been throttled or they have been obliged to mouth dogmas and doctrines dictated by those in authority. (Factory process — coloured shirt — raised hand, come out on the belt.) The press in these countries has been muzzled and attempts have been made to stifle the churches.

We can understand why some people, gripped by fear bred of despair and distress, are eager to clasp the hand of the dictator who promises to lead and protect them, and why they are ready to surrender their ordered liberty for security and why in seeking greater equality they are willing to accept less freedom.

Tomorrow's education should be designed more than education in the past, to promote the full competition of ideas. It is the very hope of our democracy that, from the free competition of ideas, evils and abuses may be remedied without sacrificing our birthright that allows the individual to strive for self-development and self-expression. Otherwise, citizens may become chess pieces moved about by some absolute power responsive in very small degree to their ideas.

John Milton described the spirit of his heroic age when he stated: "Give me the liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely, according to conscience, above all liberties". That is the heritage of Canadians which tomorrow's education should preserve and enrich.

Finally, I put forward another objective for tomorrow's education. As we look back over the centuries we find that more knowledge has been acquired with respect to the constitution of matter and the forces of nature during the past one hundred and fifty years than in the earlier period extending into the dawn of history. This knowledge has not been fallow. It has been applied to many and varied uses, to productive industry, to transportation by land, water and air, and to telegraphic, telephonic and wireless communication.

A few years ago the discoveries and inventions of the scientist and the engineer were hailed as the greatest achievements of man and we believed that the road to prosperity and happiness for all leads to more discovery and invention. There has been a halt in the march along this road since 1929; our economic life has been disrupted and in the train of the disruption there have come evils and distress. Many theories with respect to business cycles and other phenomena of the industrial age have been propound-

ed, but in the medley of plans and deals there has come a clearer perception that mankind has failed to reconcile human welfare with the results of scientific research. Sir James Jeans, in his oft-quoted dictum, stated: "We cannot ignore the tragic fact that science has given men control over nature before he has gained control over himself."

The issue may be related to technocracy, capital and labour, hours of work and leisure, congregation of people in cities, production and distribution, international trade and international peace.

It was Wordsworth who said:

"Man now presides

In power where he trembled in his weakness

Science advances with gigantic strides

But are we aught enriched in love and meekness?"

Tomorrow's education should demonstrate that as the state is made for man so the machine is made for man and not man for the machine. Today's youth should be prepared for an attack on this problem in their daily lives, the attainment of efficiency without sacrificing the values of personality in their associates and subordinates. They should be enabled to join, or to lead, in promoting a policy designed to ameliorate the destructive influences of the Frankenstein which science has created.

Educational institutions should admit the right of the propagandist to speak but they should question him. By the propagandist I mean the person who has a closed mind and who puts forward, deliberately, or out of a surfeit of emotion, one side of a case to the exclusion of all other views. They should endeavour to present objectively to their students the pros and cons of any question with one motive only and that is that their constituency should engage intelligently in the free conflict of ideas. Some may suggest that I am advocating a safe, a middle-of-the-road policy for educational institutions. It is not safe if they promote with sincerity and objectively the free competition of ideas for they may be shot at from both sides of the road. They should not put a quarantine placard on new ideas but they should not follow forthwith every Pied Piper who

plays through our streets. They should not so revere the past that they are complacent about the present or be so anxious about the future that they disown the past.

May our educational institutions of tomorrow seek to develop in today's youth the qualities of initiative, resourcefulness and self-reliance with a view to producing young men and young women who will be equipped and eager to do something more than fit into ready-made niches in our social and economic organization. Society needs cogs but surely our educational institutions can turn out a larger percentage of students who will be more than spare parts for society's machinery and who will be self-contained and self-reliant units operated by their own power.

It has been stated that if the temperature of the ocean could be raised it would cover all the dry land. If in tomorrow's education we could quicken the minds and strengthen the characters of today's youth our dreams for Canada would come true.