

SAINT THOMAS MORE SOCIETY

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THE MASSEY REPORT IN ITS RELATIONS TO UNIVERSITIES

by

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THE MASSEY REPORT IN ITS RELATION TO UNIVERSITIES

1. The Royal Commission on Natural Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences was created in April, 1949, under an Order in Council which (inter alia) recited that "it is in the national interest to give encouragement to institutions which express national feeling, promote common understanding and add to the variety and richness of Canadian life."

Its Report - known as the Massey Report - was issued in 1951 and is the result of the Commission's consideration of 462 written briefs and the evidence of over 1200 witnesses heard in 16 cities across Canada, and of reports of four advisory committees, and of 40 critical studies of selected topics.

The primary duty of the Commission was to "examine certain national institutions and functions and to make recommendations regarding their organization and the policies which should govern them". But to understand these the Commission had to study them as they exist in the context of national affairs. Accordingly it "found it necessary to attempt a general survey of the Arts, Letters and Sciences in Canada to appraise accomplishments and to forecast future progress". This stock-taking appears as Part I of the Report; Part 2 consists of more particular references to the subjects involved and the Specific Recommendations in relation to each.

The spirit of the Report appears from Chapter one entitled "The Nature of the Task". Therein it is stated that the study was concerned with human assets and spiritual resources of the nation. Two underlying assumptions were stated to be (1) that there are important elements in the national life which are intangible, such as traditions and habits and convictions born of our history; and it is these intangibles which give Canada its essential character and vitality; (2) that the traditions of the future are now being formed by institutions, movements and persons interested in arts, letters and science, in conjunction with the facts of race, religion, language and geography.

Two basic problems exist:

- (1) How can government aid projects in the fields under consideration without stifling individual desires?
- (2) How to extend that aid consistently with our federal structure, and in harmony with internal diversities?

Consideration of these brings forth another problem - The Question of Education. Control of formal education in a jurisdictional sense is a Provincial matter; but there is no prohibition against the federal government contributing to the development of education or the assistance of individuals. Moreover the life-long process of education of the individual is a matter of national culture and therefore in its widest reaches a matter of national interest which the national government should foster by means which do not impinge on provincial jurisdiction. No difficulties can arise if one bears in mind the distinction between formal education and culture. Formal education is itself only one facet of Education - which is the progressive development of the individual in all his faculties, physical and intellectual, aesthetic and moral. Culture is that part of Education which enriches the mind and refines the taste.

It occurs in formal education, but it is not confined to it, and bears its chief fruit during adult life largely through what may be called general or adult education. In this sense education as a matter of national culture - and the various agencies which contribute to that cultural development of mind and taste - are within the scope of the Commission's work.

In its chapter on "The Forces of Geography" the Report refers to certain inescapable facts which explain and condition our national culture, and in varying measure effect the development of the institutions and activities which contribute to its formation. These are, for example, such facts as Canada's small population in relation to its vast area, - its scattered distribution along the border of a far larger country which speaks the language of the majority of Canadians - the great distances separating settled areas, which militate against the easy spread of ideas from area to area - our traditional dependence on English culture - the growing effect of American culture and habits, resulting from American publications, radio programs etc. - certain disadvantages inherent in the receipt of benefits from great American Foundations - the losses incident to the easy accessibility of American universities, which attract Canadian students who either do not return or who return imbued with the culture of a foreign country - and finally the realization that American influences are so great as to threaten the development of a distinctively Canadian and independent culture.

There follow in Part I chapters relating to Mass Media, i.e. Broadcasting, Films and Press and Periodical Literature; Voluntary Bodies and Federal Agencies, i.e. galleries, museums, libraries, archives.

Under the head of "Scholarship, Science and the Arts" are various chapters one of which is headed The Universities. Before proceeding to consider this subject I may note that two of these other chapters have a relation to the universities. One is concerned with National Scholarships and is followed up by recommendations for the provision of National Scholarships for post-graduate students in the humanities, the social sciences and law; and for scholarships to undergraduate students and for grants to persons engaged in arts and letters.

Another of these chapters "The Scholar and the Scientist" is concerned with the growing schism between the Humanities and the Natural Sciences, with the factors which result in the enervation of the former and the magnification of the latter in the Universities; and with the need of restoring the balance and of seeing to it that Science and Professional Studies shall be "humanized" by exposure to that philosophical attitude and method which properly characterize the Humanities or Social Sciences.

The Universities

In addition to providing formal education the universities serve the national cause in many ways - and theirs is the finest contribution to national strength and unity.

They act as local centres of adult education, and as patrons of many important cultural and scientific movements and their faculties

are constantly laboring in the service of the public.

Universities play a national as well as a community role, e.g. by the provision of graduate and specialized schools drawing students from the whole country. They provide for the national services in government and in defence a large bulk of the technical and higher personnel. They provide the basic training for scientists and engage in many phases of scientific research.

In short, the universities render an indispensable service to the community and the nation in many important phases of Canadian life.

The Plight of the Humanities is due first to the tendency to discount them (including the social sciences) as not concerned with practicalities. One result of this is that many subjects have been crowded out of the curriculum; another is that they have almost disappeared from the equipment of the scientist.

The true view, of course, is that the liberal arts are not needless embroidery of education but the very fabric of it, aiming as they do to train the mind, cultivate the judgment, and give capacity for clear expression, than which nothing could be more practical.

Moreover, humanistic studies should pervade the professional schools; for properly taught they give greater breadth and depth for professional practice. Similarly scientific courses have eschewed liberal subjects to an extent that produces technicians rather than scientists able to see the significance of their own work.

The humanities are of intrinsic value in providing the essentials of true education, and in giving that intellectual curiosity which enriches life. They facilitate the living of full and rich lives and are also essential elements in the efficient practice of a profession or of scientific research.

The humanities have become poor relations. Starved as to library facilities their professors are both fewer and less well paid than their scientific colleagues.

The Financial Crisis of the Universities.

This is grave. It is compounded of falling revenue and rising costs and increased enrolment. The universities are essential institutions of higher education, of general culture, of specialized and professional training, and of advanced scientific research. Inadequate income - which long characterized them - has given way to crisis; and enforced economies have curtailed necessary developments and expansion, and impaired the quality of their present services. Contemporary demands for expanding facilities for technical training and to emphasize technology in their curricula have led to growing stress on purely utilitarian subjects. These factors - combined with waning real income - have largely produced the neglect and distortion of the humanities which the Report regards as relevant to its task. To the extent that financial stringency prevents the universities from being nurseries of a truly Canadian civilization and culture, it is a matter of national concern.

The Commission feels "that effective material aid from the nation is necessary to enable universities to carry out their original, and still essential, purpose of providing a liberal education."

Suggested Formula

The Commission ventures only to suggest how this aid might be given. "If a grant were made on the basis of population in each province, it could be distributed among institutions in the province in accordance with the number of students. For example, if the grant were at the rate of 50 cents per head of population, then on the basis of the 1949 estimates, Manitoba would receive \$389,000. which would be divided among the university institutions of Manitoba in accordance with their certified registration."

Recommendations

- "a. That in addition to the help already being given for research and other purposes the Federal Government make annual contributions to support the work of the universities on the basis of the population of each of the provinces of Canada.
- b. That these contributions be made after consultation with the government and the universities of each province, to be distributed to each university proportionately to the student enrolment.
- c. That these contributions be sufficient to ensure that the work of the universities of Canada may be carried on in accordance with the needs of the nation.
- d. That all members of the National Conference of Canadian Universities be eligible for the federal grants mentioned above."

Government Action

The Government accepted the principle of these recommendations; but in translating them into a formula of distribution it adopted the "suggestion", made, and the "example" given, by the Commission in the passage above quoted.

By a money vote passed in June, 1951, the sum of \$7,250,000 was made available to the universities upon the following basis:

"699 To provide grants to institutions of higher learning recognized in each province by the Government of Canada and the government of the province as being universities or institutions of equivalent standing equal to an amount, for each province, not exceeding 50 cents per head of its population as certified by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, divided among the recognized institutions of the province proportionately to their enrolment of full time intramural students in personal attendance at the recognized institution, or at an institution

in the same province affiliated with it who are registered in courses of university level recognized as leading to and counting year for year toward a university degree awarded by a university in Canada and the Minister of Finance may for this purpose more particularly define the terms "university level" and "university degree" \$7,250,000"

By Order in Council of January 9, 1952, a more detailed method of distributing the grants was provided, but without affecting the double-barrelled principle of granting to the universities of a province a total sum equivalent to 50 cents per head of the population of that province; and the internal division of that total among the universities of the province in proportion to their individual registrations of full time students.

The incidence of these grants is shown in the following table which shows the grant to each province, the number of eligible students, and the amount payable in each province in respect of each student.

Federal Aid to Higher Education
Grant per student figures for the Ten Provinces 1951-2

<u>Province</u>	<u>No. of eligible students</u>	<u>Grant</u>	<u>Grant per student</u>
Newfoundland	374	\$ 180,700	\$ 483
Prince Edward Island	267	49,200	184
Nova Scotia	3,425	321,250	94
New Brunswick	1,893	257,800	136
Quebec	19,273	2,027,800	105
Ontario	18,203	2,298,750	126
Manitoba	3,932	388,250	98
Saskatchewan	2,301	415,850	181
Alberta	2,844	469,750	165
British Columbia	5,664	582,600	103

Like all general formulae, this particular formula of assistance has worked unequally because of the differences between Provincial populations (which determines the total fund available in a province) and the relative proportion of university students therein.

Point out some of these from the table.

Complaints.

Not unnaturally those universities who profit in small measure have been clamorous in their demands for a rectification of the formula. Some at least of the Nova Scotia universities urge that there be substituted the simple principle of a uniform sum per head payable in respect of eligible students throughout Canada, and wherever registered, as in the case of the grants in respect of Veterans after the last war.

In this way they contend that a university in one Province

(e.g. Nova Scotia) would not receive less per student than a university in another province (say Alberta) simply because there are more university students in proportion to the provincial population in the former compared with the latter. Again, some universities, notably some in the Maritime Provinces, contend that they render an unrecognized service to Canada, in that they attract students from other Provinces, thereby lightening the educational load of the universities in those provinces; or are engaged to an unusual degree in training students who depart for other provinces which they enrich to the detriment of the province which gave them natural and educational birth.

Cf. Editorial Halifax Chronicle, December 20, 1952.

Comments.

1. The grants do provide financial aid to the Universities of Canada which materially improve their financial ability to maintain and extend their services.

2. The grants do not affect the discretion of the universities as to the purposes to which their new sources of revenue shall be put.

3. The implication of the Report is that this addition to university income will enable the universities to effect marked improvement in their courses and activities in relation to the Humanities, and the Social Sciences. In addition the Report contains a very powerful analysis of factors of a non-financial character which have demoted and distorted these subjects in a way inimical to liberal education as such, and to the character of the education furnished to students of the Professions and of Science. Greater bulk of income will of itself not rectify these evils unless the universities themselves resolve to devote more attention and talent to subjects of general education in their Arts courses and to permeate their courses of professional and scientific instruction with that spirit of liberal and philosophical engrossment with methods and purposes which is the mark of true education in any discipline.

4. The Report in my judgment does not do adequate justice to the fact that in the better professional schools, particularly in law, there already exists a full appreciation of the necessity of teaching in a liberal manner the history, theory and ultimate purposes of the basic subjects and not merely their technical techniques. Indeed I can truly say that in most of the Law Schools of Canada there is a conscious effort to permeate professional studies with the spirit of the humane studies; and that in no other department of the universities is there more concern with fundamentals of method and object or more striving to produce a product both skilled and cultured.

Most of the Law Schools would have no difficulty in subscribing to the words of the Prime Minister of Canada recently spoken in Vancouver:

"I have never been able to persuade myself that a knowledge of legal techniques is enough to make a good lawyer, though I do not for a moment disparage technical knowledge. Technical knowledge, technical know-how, is just as necessary

to a lawyer as it is to an engineer or to an architect, but by itself I do not think that it is enough. ...

For myself I regard law as a form of social and political economy. To me the study of law is really the study, from a special point of view, of what experience has shown to be the behaviour best suited to good economic and social relations of men living within a political framework. It is the law, whether statutory or unwritten, that gives form, order and, indeed, reality to our basic social relationships. ...

The study of law, properly conceived, inevitable involves an attempt to understand the natures of men and the nature of the society in which men live. We lawyers regard, of course, the law as a profession, but, before being a profession, it is one of the humanities, and, as I conceive it, the first function of a law school is to emphasize the humane aspect of legal training."

Lest these remarks suggest any invidious inference let me say that I am quite aware of Canadian institutions which approach professional and scientific studies in the same liberal method. I have said so much on this phase of the Report because I believe the spirit of liberal education is no less manifest in the professional and scientific faculties than in the Arts Faculties which are its professed exemplars; indeed, I think it could be said with considerable truth that many of our professional and scientific men owe more of their cultural education to their professional and scientific studies than to their previous studies in Arts Faculties.

All this is debatable, of course. It is not intended to rebut the thesis of the Commission that the teaching of the humanities needs to be restored to its former position; it is a mere footnote to the effect that the spirit of cultural study is not confined to the Faculty of Arts.

Finally it remains to be seen how the Universities will utilize their new source of income; and whether they will so expend it as to advance the cause of national culture. For myself I am sure that that advance will come in direct proportion to which men and books are preferred to mortar and stone.