

CONVOCATION SPEECH  
Saturday, October 18, 1997

Convocation is a celebration of achievement. Exams, experiments and essays are done, the grades are in, the hard work has paid off. To each of our graduates, I'm delighted to offer sincere congratulations. Dalhousie University exists for you -- to challenge you, provoke you, sustain you, to lead you from the certainty of conventional wisdom towards doubt and then understanding. We also exist to introduce you to new worlds of ideas, friends and diverse experiences. I hope that you have taken advantage of all of the opportunities during your years at Dalhousie (and Daltech) and that we have served you well.

Let me also add a word of congratulations and thanks to the families and friends of our graduates who have joined us today to celebrate this wonderful occasion. We understand, as

do our graduates, that your support and encouragement have played a crucial role in bringing us to this day. There are many different kinds of education and I certainly respect and truly appreciate that there is a continuum that links the university experience to the education of home and family and in the wider community.

This is also a special moment for the faculty and staff at Dalhousie because our graduates' success is their purpose. Dalhousie is fortunate indeed to be made up of men and women of talent and commitment to the living idea of the university as a community of learners. Allow me on behalf of our graduates to express my appreciation for your outstanding efforts, sometimes under difficult circumstances.

Convocations often have a theme, a theme that is sometimes reflected in the choice of the university's honorary graduates. The common experience that links our honorary doctoral recipient at this morning's convocation, Mr. John Craig, and this afternoon's recipient, Senator Michael Kirby, is a lifetime of distinguished service to their community on both the local and national stage. (Mr. Craig) (Senator Kirby), I am delighted to welcome you to Dalhousie on this auspicious occasion and to beg your indulgence for taking your achievements as an opportunity to say a few words about the university and service to our community.

I'm not sure that everyone fully grasps the extent of the impact of a university like Dalhousie on our city and region. To start, we're a huge enterprise, spending over a quarter billion dollars a year on salaries, supplies and services. The

economic impact on those around us is profound, creating a ripple effect valued at half a billion dollars a year and generating many, many jobs in our community.

Dalhousie's active research program also links the university to the province and the region's economic development process. With the historic amalgamation of Dalhousie and TUNS this past spring, the university now accounts for over eighty percent of research activity and external research dollars in Nova Scotia. Whether its' Daltech's Centre for Marine Vessel Development and Research working to help re-invigorate the provincial boat building industry or the Medical School's scholars working with biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies to attract new high tech industries or working with the provincial government to expand the delivery of telemedicine across our region,

Dalhousie's faculty and researchers are helping to change the economic map of Nova Scotia.

Beyond the economic realm, this university's social and cultural impact on the city is impossible to over-estimate. To start, this hall where we gather today serves as the city's principal auditorium, home to the symphony, theatre companies, art shows, countless concerts and lectures. As I note on those too infrequent mornings when I struggle to the Dalplex to exercise, we host over 6,000 external community members at our athletic complex and many thousands more attend to watch our championship teams in varsity athletics. For those in our audience who enjoy Halifax's numerous music, literary and theatre festivals or who attend Shakespeare By The Sea in the summer, I'm proud to note the active involvement and leadership at such events of Dalhousie

faculty, staff and students.

Dalhousie's commitment to service, however, goes beyond voluntarism and is built into the core of our curriculum. There are many paths to knowledge and wisdom, but one of the most effective is learning by doing. At Dalhousie, a third of our students participate in co-op job placements and student internships. One of my goals as President is to see that proportion, already high by Canadian standards, rise steadily, because we know that such work experiences deepen our students' grasp of theoretical knowledge and enhance their opportunities to find fulfilling jobs related to their education. While the goal of these activities is primarily educational, the secondary social impact on our community is extraordinary. Nearly everyday of the year a Dalhousie student can be found sharing their knowledge, skills and enthusiasm at our legal aid

clinic, in hospital wards and at our dental clinics. Dalhousie students can be found abroad working on international development projects in third world countries and throughout our region and across Canada, Dalhousie students go to work in co-op job placements lending their talents to the success of their employers and mentors.

The commitment to service starts early at Dalhousie when our frosh students attending orientation sessions before the start of their first day in class fan out across the city to raise money for medical research through Shinerma. It continues through our curriculum and through numerous volunteer opportunities that engage our students' idealism. It is celebrated through university awards for service to various professions and to community. And, of course, it is modelled by faculty and staff, many of whom are community leaders and

tireless workers for many causes.

I mention all of these activities, partly to share my pride in the Dalhousie family's contributions. However, I also mention it on this occasion as a challenge to our graduating class.

Sadly, these are mean times. The concern for fiscal rectitude, reasonable on its own terms, has left many, many pressing needs unmet. As new graduates, most of you will face many personal challenges before you find your way and achieve the success that I am confident will be your measure. I know that it's hard to focus on others when your own anxieties loom large. But please remember that as university graduates you are also privileged and advantaged in our society. Your chances for success are significantly better because your community has invested large sums in your education and development. In the days and years ahead, I hope you will give something back



to your community, wherever you find yourselves. Some of you may someday earn honours for such contributions. More importantly, all of you, I can assure you will enrich your own lives through sharing your talents and your advantages with others. In the final analysis that is the measure of a life well lived and that will be the truest test of whether you have learned something of value during your days at Dalhousie. I wish all of you well in this quest and I am so very, very pleased today to congratulate you on this important first step as new graduates.

Tom Traves  
October 18, 1997