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President Stanley's Convocation Address - May 16, 1933.

We are all very pleased to have with us here today so many old students, parents of students, and friends of the University. If time permitted we should like to greet each one of you severally. As it is we hope that all those who have come to Halifax from a distance, to participate in this ceremony, will attend the reception, after this Convocation, in Shirreff Hall.

and as encouragingly as I can,  
I wish now to address myself particularly to the members of the graduating classes in the various faculties. It seems to me that I have never heard so much, as I have in the last twelve months, about the preparation of leaders for society. And I am sorry to say that a good many of the voices one hears are cynical. Some think that in the army of youth that is coming forward there are too many generals, and not enough privates. There is a general conviction that there are too many engineers and applied scientists.

- 2 -

Certainly there is no denying the fact that a large portion of those who have graduated from universities in the past three or four years have as yet found no regular occupation. I should not advise any of you to blind your eyes or stop your ears to the present situation, nor to the rumblings of our present discontents. Indeed I shall go further and advise you to give the most earnest heed not only to the clouds on our own horizon, but to the dark shadow of War which now covers the earth. If that Fate can be averted then all other burdens can lightly be borne. Some have been surprised at university undergraduates, in England and elsewhere, taking up a pacifist attitude. But to me it is not surprising that in this serious time university students realise that just as schools and colleges exist in order that civilisation may continue, just so surely does wide-spread war mean the destruction of civilisation.

But to return to the difficulties which immediately confront us: You will not, I think, if you have caught the spirit of Balhousie, give way to despair or cynicism. Think of the condition of the northern part of this continent, eleven decades ago, when this University was founded. It was then a trackless wilderness, uncharted and even unimagined. Today, though it is for the most part explored, and its distances tamed, it is still a vacant empire, rich beyond all the needs of our present population. We and our fathers have been wont to call ourselves courageous pioneers. Are we now so craven as to admit that ten million people cannot find sustenance in half a continent? Put that way, the absurdity of the present position is transparent. Yet it does not require much effort in thinking to put it that way. Nor should it require much effort of imagination and thought to visualise the enormous amount of happy

human activity there might be, say, in draining "barren" lands in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. In the last few years employment, and agricultural land, have been found for tens of thousands of Italians who have drained the Pomptine Marshes - formerly one of the plague spots of Europe. And this is only one of the many things that might and ought to be done in Canada. I have been advising all my friends to read the first volume of Garvin's Life of Joseph Chamberlain, and to imagine what he would now be doing in all our Canadian cities, so many of them slum-ridden and plague-stricken, so many of them requiring clean water and other services.

It may be that ours is not an imaginative age. It may be that we have become too much the tools of our own tools. When constructive work of this kind is mentioned, too many of us stop to ask: "Where will the

capital be found for such enterprises?" But, as Chamberlain demonstrated for all time, great municipal and social reforms can be so managed as to yield dividends, and lessen taxation instead of increasing it. And further, let me remind you that when our forefathers first came to these shores there was no such thing as capital. Banks had not yet been founded. Yet those pioneers went forward to tasks much greater than the tasks lying before us. They remembered, of course, that they were a society. They did not consider that one man's gain was another man's loss. I do not mean for a moment that their lives were idyllic, or perfect, or completely unselfish. But imagination and a capacity for bold thinking they undoubtedly had.

Now, my young friends, if our age is to recapture such qualities, it will do so through your efforts. You are part of the spring of our year,

in which new blooms and fruits may grow. And more: of all our youth you have been set apart, fenced off for a season, from the practical and immediate tasks of life, to be trained not in particular instances, but in principles; to accustom yourselves to long, and historic, and philosophic views of life and the world. University men and women should know that no race has grown or continued in greatness by gathering last year's rose leaves in a jar, or gilding time-honoured conventions. You Dalhousians, at least, with the sea and exploration in your blood, will show us that Knowledge is still a growing tree; and that new tasks and problems can bring with them new devices, a new birth of social thinking, and a new baptism of courage. I conclude by wishing you every good wish.