

# Report of the Annual Meeting

## Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada

Report of the Annual Meeting

# Aims in the Study and Teaching of History in Canadian Universities Today

R. G. Trotter

Volume 22, numéro 1, 1943

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/300245ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/300245ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

### Éditeur(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

### ISSN

0317-0594 (imprimé)

1712-9095 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

### Citer cet article

Trotter, R. G. (1943). Aims in the Study and Teaching of History in Canadian Universities Today. *Report of the Annual Meeting / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, 22(1), 50–62. <https://doi.org/10.7202/300245ar>

All rights reserved © The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada, 1943

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

**é**rudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

## AIMS IN THE STUDY AND TEACHING OF HISTORY IN CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES TODAY

By R. G. TROTTER  
*Queen's University*

THE fact that our Association is devoting this-morning's session to discussion of "The Social Significance of the Study of History in the Contemporary World" is indication enough that we who profess history are aware that we need to re-examine our relation to society. The social sciences and the humanities, not excluding history, have lately been on the defensive in our educational system. It has been necessary, of course, that liberal studies should suffer some war-time curtailment in our universities by depletion of staff and student body, but that is not to admit that these branches of education are lightly to be thrown on the scrap heap even for the time being. The holding of an historical conference may seem to us to be all the more necessary because of the times in which we meet, and our profession all the more important, but our own belief does not serve to establish as a self-evident truth in the mind of the general public that our work is vital to the community of which we are citizens.

If we would justify to the public our role as practitioners of the liberal arts and, more particularly, as educators and scholars professing history, we may well consider what our position is and what it ought to be. Our functions are complex. We are recorders and purveyors of information, facts if you like, and something of their meaning. We are practitioners and instructors in certain techniques and so-called disciplines. We must remember also that we are trustees of liberal culture. If in all these matters we perform our functions adequately, if we show our faith by works as we should, their performance should presumably do more than earn us a livelihood; it should have some appreciable effect on the society which supports us. And incidentally we should then have in large measure the well-earned sympathy and unquestioned support of the public.

At present, however, history holds a place less high than it ought to hold in popular estimation. Perhaps there is ample reason. Diagnosis is indicated. Perhaps we need to examine ourselves as history's professional apostles. Never has history been so extensively purveyed to the people in our own country and elsewhere as in the decades between the great wars. Yet in the rulers of the democracies in that era or at any rate among the people whose attitudes limited the policies of the rulers, one fails to find commensurate wisdom in meeting the problems of their age. I am not trying to suggest that historians could have saved the world all its growing pains, but I do wonder whether, had we been fully true to our trust, we might not have helped our contemporaries to a prompter view and a clearer view of the issues that were at stake in the growing world crisis, and helped them to see earlier than they did the futility of trying to win through by policies of permanent evasion of issues and repudiation of responsibilities.

Have we—again I mean those of us who have got our living out of society by professing history in one way or another—have we been worth our salt? Perhaps we have been innocuous, but I fear that at times we may also have been inept. What really have we tried to profess? Is it possible

that sometimes we have been little more than misers in antiquarianism, interested in our own preserve and valuing it in proportion as it could be kept exclusive? Is it possible that sometimes even when we became commentators on past issues and thus by implication on issues of the present, we were so solicitous to guard the sanctity of our special preserves that we tried to refrain from expressing convictions about the basic issues involved in the facts of our study or indeed to avoid forming them lest by unhappy chance we might voice them? When we did venture to give utterance to ideas about matters touching present issues, however remotely, were we too often content to be mere echoes of the spirit of our time, to present our contemporaries, in fact, with an apologetic for their shortsightedness and their evasions?

In discussing the place of history and our aims in studying it and teaching it, it would be futile to conceive the task as one of defence. We need self-criticism rather than sympathy and must ask ourselves why we have fallen short. I would suggest that some explanation if not excuse for the inadequacies of our guild may be found by recalling three determining facts. First—we have been of our generation in the world; second—we have been of the wider historical fraternity of our generation; third—we have been of our own generation of Canadians. In some respects our work has been the better for these facts, but in some other respects our shortcomings can be attributed to them. The historian, like any other human being, is necessarily of his time and place, but his vocation calls him peculiarly to see beyond the restrictions that these categories impose upon the laity. It is his obligation to work for that truer perspective on human affairs which ought to be attainable through his studies, from their very nature. His responsibility is not merely to get such a clearer view himself but to help his students or his readers also to attain it. In so far as he fails in this he falls short of fulfilling his trust.

The generation between the wars, in our world of the western democracies, may well be called the prototype of deluded generations. It followed slogans of "safety first" yet denied the existence of abiding values in human life because all things were now said to be relative. Through extreme alternations of boom and depression it devised new restrictions on international trade yet talked about permanent prosperity "just around the corner." With international order crumbling before its eyes, it yet dreamed of permanent peace, to be attained by denying realities and evading responsibilities and repudiating commitments.

It was a generation prone to avoid unpleasant realities by building maginot lines and then taking for granted their successful functioning under all conditions. These maginot lines might be built of concrete and steel, or they might consist of documentary formulae and neatly devised institutions. In either case, once the blue prints were passed and the structure set up more or less in accordance with them, people tended to assume that the end had been gained. It is true that the general wish that the last war had brought Utopia gave way, upon the general realization that it had not done so, to disillusioned cynicism about the war and about the peace, for people tended to forget the perils from which victory had saved them. Nevertheless they acted in many ways as if, in fact, Utopia had been established.

The existence of a new international organization, admittedly highly effective for certain non-contentious purposes but an unreal shadow as a means of security, did not lead to a mobilization of power to make it effective but was seized as an excuse for the evasion of responsibilities. War was formally outlawed and deemed thereby to have been banished, notwithstanding that by the Kellogg Pact it was outlawed in a manner that sanctioned, instead of effective action to prevent it, only negative passivity. If our wishful thinking could only be sufficiently negative, we were assured that what we did not want to happen would not happen. Where men would not look, there no peril lay for them. So when nations made war, claiming that this was not war, others acquiesced, rationalizing their failure to act with prompt determination in the face of obvious menace, by insisting that it was immoral to take up arms against aggression except after being so directly hit oneself that counter-action would satisfy a kindergarten definition of defence.

Far be it from me to attempt here to dissect the manifold causes for such delusions as these that were rife in the years between the wars. But among relevant points one or two may be mentioned. Despite the insecurity of a revolutionary epoch, delusions of security were carried over from its comparative reality in the late nineteenth century, when even the more serious squabbles within our civilization had not seemed to threaten its very foundations. Perhaps, too, our generation's optimistic evasion of unpleasant realities came naturally as a false conclusion through the apotheosis of the nineteenth century's democratic dogma. Ours was the first generation in Western lands generally to see the adoption of universal suffrage and an approach to universal literacy. The assumption was easy and popular that out of the new power of the masses and their new knowledge must come promptly new wisdom in high places and effective action such as could and would inaugurate a democratic Utopia. It was also readily assumed that out of the progress of our age in transportation and in communications, as well as in production, would come speedily universal contacts and interdependences that would ensure peace because it would be so obviously a necessary and universal condition of prosperity.

One might continue on such lines. Was there ever a generation as a whole less aware of impending realities? Yet no generation, as I have already remarked, was ever so instructed by its pedagogues in what were called the lessons of history. Could it be that the professors in the democracies were too much part of their generation to be capable of seeing history's really important lessons for it, or, if sometimes they saw the lessons, that they were helpless to get them effective hearing in the face of popular delusions? We are asked sometimes to excuse the politicians of the appeasement era on the ground that they were helpless in the hands of an inept generation. Were historians hardly less the victims of their times? How otherwise account for the failure of their much instructed contemporaries to learn more than they did of the wisdom of the ages at their hands? If the politicians deserve condemnation, what of the historical profession? The analogy is by no means perfect, but perhaps it is good enough for some discomfort. At any rate we have been a part of our generation. Even if we let it go at that the unsatisfactory position of history is partly explained.

Now for the next point in extenuation, if not in excuse, of some of the inadequacy of history as recently professed in Canada. We have been of the wider historical fraternity of our generation. It was an unfortunate generation in the history of history. It is necessary to recall what had happened to history as a study and as a subject of instruction. It used to be mainly a study for the mature mind. It played little part in elementary education and, till half a century ago, not very much in higher education. The historian when he wrote either provided an entertaining narrative for the general reader or a more soberly analytical and sometimes philosophical study for the select reader. In neither case was he thinking of his audience as made up wholly or even mainly of students taking courses and their teachers.

By the beginning of this century, however, conditions were changing rapidly with the necessity of making intelligent voters out of the masses of newly enfranchised and newly literate citizens. Popular education seized on history as a ready means. Text-books became necessary in large numbers, and profitable. Many books besides text-books would find much of their market as collateral reading in connection with course work. If the benefits of the use of these books were to accrue to a wide circle of students and to their authors, they must deal discreetly with contentious issues and avoid those elements of the subject that might prevent a desirably wide use. Standardized versions of history took shape that would carry a minimum of offence to any element in the community. Facts were the material. Questions of significance and of value were best left to the tender mercies of pupil and teacher. Scholastic demands were to be met by the direct use of evidence discreetly edited in source-books so devised as to ensure little likelihood that any conclusions might be drawn that would not be sufficiently flattering to our own age. The adequacy of the set-up for teaching history to the masses became gauged by the complexity of the pedagogical paraphernalia for teaching facts (the unembarrassing facts) and inculcating ideas (the correct ideas).

History in the universities became something to be taught that the students might in turn teach, or that they might themselves become historians, writing history and teaching it for those who would teach in their turn. It became important in the classroom not only to present history but to teach the techniques of historical scholarship. The necessary attention to the latter sometimes led to over-emphasis upon its relative importance, both in the mind of the instructor and in that of the student, at the expense of adequate attention to such matters as the significance of events and the values of institutions and ideas in relation to the bases of civilization. Productive scholarship, by teacher and by student, tended to become an affair to be gauged in terms of bibliography and notes, the value of the contribution to be measured by the length and weight of the baggage train rather than by the strength brought effectively to bear in the front line. In scholarship as in pedagogy, scholastic paraphernalia tended to become an end rather than a means.

Many university students who had no notion of ever teaching history were nevertheless subjected to this sort of pedagogy. Technical organization and mass production were so widely credited with the world's spectacular increase of new material wealth that they must have their

counterparts in the educational processes by which through the teaching of history the enfranchised masses, and the new middle classes, should be made "the heirs of all the ages, in the foremost files of time."

It was a wholesome sign of dissatisfaction with such a situation that doubts developed as to its adequacy. The system still too often confirmed the young student in his preconception of history as dry as dust. Salvation was sought in the so-called "new history," widely received, if not devised, as a pleasant escape from the difficult to the entertaining. History was enlarged in range till it touched on most phases of human activity. In many ways, however, the "new history" was not as new as its apostles liked to insist, and still too often its essential significance was passed by or evaded. Then came a spate of enthusiasm for "contemporary history," purporting to answer man's questions as to where he was going by focusing attention on the last few steps he had taken. Still the tendency ruled to estimate the successes of history teaching by the encyclopedic competence of the student rather than by capacity to weigh significance, to appraise the essentials of complex situations, and to test the values involved.

Admittedly the shortcomings so obvious in this picture were partly a by-product of the admirable ideal of inculcating open-mindedness and objectivity in the student. Pursuing that ideal it was so easy to avoid the roots of contention and abstain from raising fundamental questions as to the values at issue. The historian, as teacher and writer, became abnormally solicitous lest he lay himself open to a charge of bias. It was because he was so eager to avoid such criticism that he habitually refrained from putting forward convictions reached through his studies, and that sometimes he deemed it a merit to reach no convictions. He proposed to give his reader material for the latter's judgment. He withheld his own, allegedly because for worlds he would not influence his reader's views, but perchance on occasion because he was a timid soul, lacking essential confidence in the validity of his own professional calling as involving any larger responsibility than a recording clerkship.

The sort of advanced professional training that was developed as part of this system was rigorously exacting. The Ph.D. was a formidable discipline. But in some ways it spread a blight. It tended to magnify the importance of the particular and the exceptional. Distinction and advancement depended on making what was called a contribution to knowledge. There is nothing necessarily evil in this. But too often the importance of the contribution tended to be measured by the use of "new" materials, or the "originality" of their interpretation that it involved, rather than by the validity or the relative significance of the conclusions reached. The resulting tendency was for young Ph.D.'s. to belittle the historian's main task, in his relation to his students and the public, of helping them to a truer understanding of the large and permanent elements and values in civilization. And yet obsession with the exceptional and avoidance of the obvious by an historian are in fact guarantees of distortion and bias and, in the long run, futility.

It is arguable that in writing and teaching history our generation of historians have too greatly neglected the obligation of presenting the long view and the universal view. This is not a matter of bringing world history into a single treatise or a single formal course. It involves rather the

question of the approach in handling any portion of history. It must be somehow sensed by the student as a part of a longer and wider story. Granted that history can be presented only in fragments; the important thing is that the fragment should be recognized as such and not treated as if it were a self-contained whole, as has been done too much with every national history. Each has been dealt with as an entity in itself. Thus one finds the strange anomaly that one of the most isolationist of great powers in the last quarter century, the United States, was so notwithstanding a very wide scattering of offerings in the way of history courses in the universities dealing with diverse peoples in all ages. The study of any number of national histories, if each be viewed too separately, can do little in enlarging the outlook to take in the long view and the wide view.

During the period between the wars history assumed a much larger place in Canadian universities. Staffs were increased, programmes were expanded. Perhaps the most striking feature of this development was the larger emphasis that was now laid on Canadian history, both absolutely and in proportion to the whole programme. Canadian history was engaging the attention of a large proportion of Canadian historians, both French-speaking and English-speaking. There was also, however, noticeable increase in the scholarly investigation of historical fields beyond the Canadian. The tremendous growth in the range and the quality of historical scholarship on the productive side during the quarter-century needs only mention here. Much of this production has been in the way of specialized monographs, but recently there has also been conspicuous progress in the production of the larger syntheses that are necessary if the specialist's work is to reach others than specialists, and in the production of text-books that blaze new and promising trails. If one may judge by prescriptions in university calendars and by the character of questions on many examination papers, as well as by one's knowledge of the men and women concerned, the results of recent scholarship have entered into university teaching with gratifying speed. The *Canadian Historical Review*, succeeding the earlier annual *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada*, marks the epoch, as do also the enlargement and improvement of archival resources and the establishment and growth of this Association. In short, the historical profession in Canada, taken by and large, does not fare badly by comparison with that in other lands in the matters I have been discussing. If I were not a Canadian addressing other Canadians it would be as seemly as it would be honest to state the case much more strongly than that. (Parenthetically, is it possible, after all, that there has been some advantage for Canada in not being in a position during those years to develop much advanced graduate work in our own universities?)

With all their increased competence as a group, Canadian historians nevertheless did not succeed as well as might be desired. Like our colleagues in other Western lands we have been of our generation and we have been of our profession in that generation. Some of our failings, no less than our virtues, may be attributed to these circumstances. But in seeking the reasons for our shortcomings in the last quarter-century perhaps we shall not find them so much in those facts as in the fact that we have been Canadians. That has been our chief and peculiar trouble. As historians we have been the most numerous group at any period in Canada's

history, on the whole the most intensively and diversely trained, and altogether the most productive, but we have been practising our profession during years when to be Canadian imposed peculiar limitations upon the use of our capacities and the scope and character of our work.

In our day Canada has moved rapidly from a condition of external dependence, despite internal autonomy, through successive phases of that curious and evolving condition that we have called "status" to national maturity. The process has involved almost infinite adjustments of an official and technical sort that have not always been easily arrived at in the face sometimes of internal differences of view and sometimes of external lack of understanding of our aims and capacities. It has involved, also, large readjustments of attitude on the part of Canadian citizens generally. The latter have been on the whole very conscious that some such transformation was taking place and eager that in its accomplishment the things they most cherished in Canadianism should be safe-guarded, and the ends they desired be realized. They have not always understood the conditions or the purposes determining each specific step. Many have looked askance at some of the changes, either from sheer lack of understanding, or from understanding only too well that the shape of things to come was not in all respects to be just as they desired. These rapid readjustments in the position and institutions of a young nation have involved necessarily the revelation of a good deal of immaturity of outlook, lack of perspective, bumptiousness, and sensitiveness. In other words, in the process of approaching national maturity, Canada passed between the wars through a period of adolescence and Canadians suffered the discomforts of spirit incident to that process.

We historians on the whole, at least in English-speaking Canada, were more affected by this situation than we were factors in moulding it. The chief distinction between us and the laity was often that we were more sensitive to maladjustments incidental to the process and more insistent in the demand for clean-cut, logical, and consistent definitions of the changes. Our guild became indeed the spearhead of an introverted national self-consciousness, hypersensitive about the whole situation.

As historians, furthermore, we were like professional experts in military science in our tendency to assume that current campaigns should be conceived according to the pattern of earlier struggles. We were mostly nineteenth-century liberals in our conceptions of national liberty. We were inclined to define it in absolute terms and in terms involving utter repudiation of external connections, links, ties, responsibilities, loyalties, or what you will. We were often prone to think that Canada's adequate place as a nation could be found only within the limits of old categories of nationalism. Yet interested as we were in the affairs of the world at large we could hardly help being aware that the world of the nineteenth century was unlikely to come again and that, whatever theory of nationalism we might prefer, actually Canada was reaching her majority in a world in which independence, even for great powers and much more so for a small power like Canada, must be qualified or accompanied in practice by an increasing degree of interdependence. Its growth was becoming as essential, indeed, in our external relations as in the internal relations among diverse groups within the nation. Before the official definitions of our national position

could be completely elaborated so as fully to express our own sovereign position, many foresaw and some feared that external threats to our survival would compel us, as in the event they did, to shift our major emphasis from independence to interdependence.

It is an interesting question whether the Canadian people might not have been better helped to an understanding of the trends in our national life by Canadian historians if the latter had not tended to be among the most sensitive and least happy of Canadians in their adjustments to the pace and the character of our national emergence. This whole situation, moreover, has had its influence on our own views of history, an influence not in all respects salutary.

Canadian historians are, of course, not alone in labouring under difficulties imposed by national feeling. National historians in any land in eras of great national consciousness tend to distort the significance of earlier chapters in their country's history, seeing them out of perspective because of attitudes toward current trends. They tend often to romanticize their country's past. The Abbé Maheux has called attention to the influence in French-Canadian historiography of the romantic tradition of historical writing which was so strong in Europe at the time that historical scholars in French Canada set the pattern of their people's view of their own history. It would not be invidious to remind ourselves that English Canadians also have had a romantic tradition which has led them to flaunt the virtues of Canada's heroic role and cast other peoples in appropriately contrary roles. English-Canadian historians have tended to build a tradition of unique national virtue founded on successful defensiveness against outside powers rather than build on a conception of constructive advance in relation to a changing world in which outside powers have counted in many ways positively as well as negatively.

Something of this tradition of preferring to attribute our growth in things good to our own genius in the face of odds and opposition from outside, we have borrowed from the Americans. For them, Britain has played the romantic role of villain, notwithstanding that the American heritage of personal freedom and political liberty stems from England, and from English law and representative institutions as planted in the early colonies, and notwithstanding that since the Revolution, as well as before, the principal factor in the outer world making possible the steady growth of these traditions in American society has been the security of an era of growing British sea-power and a spreading British Empire. We sometimes echo this in our own history, though we have often directed our romanticism toward the United States as an even greater romantic villain than Britain.

Has our nationalism led us to an over-emphasis on what can be summed up in the phrase "loyalist tradition" as defending us from losing our identity in the United States? Have we put beside it in due proportion the debt that we owe for our continued identity to the fact that much of the time the United States itself has provided pressures and resistances from within its own borders against admitting us into its national system, or the more obvious indebtedness to the American people and nation in the spheres of economic and cultural development? Have we, on the other hand, always maintained a just balance in the account of our relations with Britain and the Empire and now the Commonwealth? We have matured as a nation in some

ways in antagonism to influences and controls from across the Atlantic and from across our southern border, but also for our maturity as a nation we are indebted in manifold ways to both Britain and the United States, for profitable example, for leadership, for personnel, and for material means that have come from these two nations. My argument is that if we did not so often see our nation's history through a distorted romantic tradition, we would allow larger place to the advantages that accrued to us from both directions throughout our long period of dependence, and to the continuous and permanent elements of our interdependence with both these peoples. The young person who is over-absorbed in contemplation of his own person, and obsessed by self-conscious sensitiveness about the adjustments of his status, is not the young person who is most quickly treated as an adult by those with whom he has dealings.

In spending so much of my time on the past I have not been unmindful that my assigned theme is our aims today. The past, particularly the recent past, has implications for us at the present time. Some of these are already, I hope, sufficiently obvious for purposes of starting a discussion. May I add certain further observations? First I would say again that whatever our shortcomings and however unfortunate may have been the limitations placed upon us by our times and by our situation in the world and in this country, it is my belief that the historians of Canada need not be ashamed of their professional contribution to Canadian life. It has been growing rapidly in quantity and no less so in quality, with an increasing and fruitful diversification of interest and a maturing capacity in synthesis and interpretation. In all of this there is good promise of growing ability to serve well our Canadian community.

Such service as only historians can give is needed in increasing measure. If our people are not to be taken in by facile nostrums, if they are not to be led astray from their best destiny by the blind, they need as greatly as may be a sense of history. Only with that sense alive and quick and full can they face more realistically the possibilities open before them. Better understanding of the history of the growth of the Canadian people and the development of their internal life and institutions with all their complex diversities is part of the need. No less necessary is the history of the Canadian people and state in relation to the wider world. Canadians cannot understand Canada without knowing the history of those lands and places from which we have drawn our human stock and the bases of our culture, nor those as well which have been important in the world picture or with which we have significant relations. Only in such a large perspective can Canadian history be satisfactorily understood, as only in rich relationship with such a larger world can Canada fully realize her potentialities as a nation.

The people as a whole cannot, of course, assimilate so large a story as a chronicle packed with detail. They will be interested in only a comparatively few outstanding and typical events. But while the popular mind must not be expected to become encyclopedic, it can acquire a sense of the historic tides in their ebb and flow. Indeed, in moments of overwhelming crisis the Canadian people have already more than once revealed their sense of historic destiny with a degree of unity that has surprised the pessimists and disconcerted the outsiders, enemy and neutral. There would, however,

be less of fumbling uncertainty between times of crisis and a quicker growth of conscious unity were the people to attain a larger sense of history in its broader meanings.

In the measure that a sense of history is adequate, does it not involve conscious appreciation of the direction of major trends and a clear distinction between the possible and the futile? An understanding knowledge of history ought to enlarge appreciation of the practicalities of life in a free society sufficiently to save its possessors from too-ready and supercilious condemnation of the fumbblings of well-intentioned human beings and too quick rejection of the second-best. Appreciation of the complexity of the historical process should better prepare one to take a reasonable attitude in face of the complexities of the current scene. It is a grave question if a democratic society based on universal suffrage can long preserve any essentials of true democracy unless its citizens develop a sound historic sense of the genius of its own institutions.

Furthermore, while that sound sense may properly contribute to a people's pride in its own past, it is an unwholesome history that finds reason for pride mainly in the belittling of others rather than in emphasis upon constructive achievement. A nation, no less than an individual, may have its perspective sadly warped by too egocentric an outlook. A people that knows history, moreover, knows that history never quite repeats itself, and is wary of absolutes; it realizes that flexibility is an essential of policies and of institutions if they are to be adaptable to new needs and to new purposes in relation to changing possibilities and in the face of practical and necessary limitations.

Large as these claims may be for history as deserving an important place in the culture and in the education of our nation, a still larger and more important claim must be made. In a country like ours, possessing a great and venerable heritage of freedom, history has long been a major means of preserving that heritage and passing it on to posterity. In our day history has become more important in this role than ever in the past. Other studies which once held a major place in the curriculum of school and college have lost standing as instruments for the purpose. It is partly that the heritage of humane civilization is no longer linked so largely as it once was with the study of the classics, partly that in linguistic and literary studies, as well as in the sciences, educational emphasis has tended to be placed more and more on scholastic techniques. Even history, as we have noticed, has been in some danger of falling into technical pedantry despite the greatness of its opportunity and its responsibility for ensuring due place in our world for the permanent values of civilized life. History's peculiar opportunity is to bring these values out of the abstract and unreal by study of the past in which can most livingly be seen and appreciated their valid sanctions.

To meet the challenge of today the historian must abandon the apologetic attitude of the academic recluse. He must come down out of his ivory tower. It is not enough for him to be a seeker after truth; he has no business to keep the results of his work to himself and his kind. He is willy-nilly a citizen as well as a writer or a teacher of history. Of course, he should not let his sense of values, his sense of truth, be distorted by partisan exigencies. He must still strive his utmost to be honest in all

his history. The attempt, it is to be hoped, should promote his honesty in everyday common things as a member of society. At any rate he cannot completely divorce his two roles; each affects the other. For him to pretend otherwise is at best self-delusion, at worst conscious evasion and travelling under false pretences.

We are told today that Canada stands at the airways crossroads of the world of tomorrow. As a matter of fact, she stands at the world's crossroads in more than that. She can become one of the world's great cockpits of conflict, or she can become a major focal centre in the building of a better world society. History has been pointing for a long time to the latter as Canada's opportunity and destiny. Her fate has depended from the beginning upon much that happened in distant places; not only in the days of Pitt was it determined by events on the high seas and in Europe and as far away as India, as well as on Canadian soil. As time has passed, the frontiers of her security have widened, not narrowed. They reach today around the Seven Seas and to the four corners of the world. If Canada would not repudiate her destiny her people need to know such things and to abandon their parochial outlook and the habits of the ostrich. This also is a matter in which historians must come to the aid of the people. Our trust is a great one.

The most Canadian of Canadians today is not merely an enthusiast for Canada. He cherishes the values on which depends the survival of our common civilization with its opportunities for enlarging freedoms. His eyes are open to his country's destiny. With his nation filling a grown-up role in the world, he does not waste his emotions in romanticizing the difficulties that were incidental to the process of growing up. There was a stage in the process when even an ultra-national emphasis could involve a wholesome subordination of provincial and parochial prejudice to a larger national loyalty, as well as a healthy emergence from an outgrown colonial dependence, but his nation has moved on past that stage. The truest Canadian today has lost or is losing his excessive introversions, whether provincial or national. In the awakenings bred of world crisis comes recognition that Canada's national maturity is attained and that opportunity for continued growth depends upon enlarging interdependence with other peoples. I believe we may cherish confident hope that Canada's historians will be whole-hearted and far-seeing Canadians in the years ahead, and that their work as scholars and as educators will rather help than hinder the whole Canadian people to realize to the full the high national destiny that beckons them in an interdependent world.

#### DISCUSSION

*Professor Sage* found this paper a healthy sign of needed self-criticism. He doubted if there was any such over-emphasis on technique amongst historians as had been stated, saying that the real trouble is that this generation lacks vision. In so far as the nationalist emphasis is concerned he felt that French-Canadian historians are away ahead of other Canadians in this matter. He doubted if Canadian historians are as hypersensitive about Canadian nationalism as Professor Trotter affirmed. He went on to say that Canadians are too colonial, not sufficiently national, that they should get beyond 1867; they emphasize the Loyalist tradition too much because it is

one of the few Canadian traditions upon which to build. This is so true that if the United States had not been there Canada would have had to invent her since opposition to the United States has given us almost the only sense of Canadianism we have. He wondered if Canadian historians teach a need of history; if Canadians have any sense of history; why Canadian historians do not lead opinion. He pointed out that there are no general statements of aims in university calendars, and no agreement on the history courses required in various universities; that there is no liaison between French-Canadian and English-Canadian universities, and that this matter should be investigated further and remedied. In general the problems facing Canadian historians are the same for historians everywhere.

*Professor Lower* observed that historians in Canada had done a remarkably good job during the last twenty-five years. Canadian historians had stood somewhat apart from those of other countries and must not be confused with them. They have been adolescent in outlook and have had problems; they must answer their adolescent questions before they can take their place in society in general.

*Professor Masters* stated that Canadian historians have created great potential historical wealth and have been dynamic. They have been dependent upon the work of the other social sciences, especially economics. The influence of religion in historical development as shown in the President's address offers an important field for investigation. Professor Masters was not as depressed as some others about the historians.

*Professor Prince* said the "new history" has tended to paralyse some aspects of historical writing such as military history, and biography. The "great man" theory has been too much decried, and there has been too much indifference to medieval history.

*Professor Morton* affirmed that historian and poet have more in common than is recognized. Each is a maker of myths, only the historian has neglected his job of making myths in this decadent, analytical age. If the historian has intuition he should not abstain from using it.

*Professor Underhill* said the feeling he carried away from the meetings each year was that we are always just about to become mature. What is this mature point of view? Can historians ever rise above their own generation? What is the new vision? We suffered from extreme nationalism before; now we have a vision of interdependence. Professor Trotter was asking us to sink ourselves in the new vision. There will be just as serious a mis-realization in twenty or thirty years. What we need is a much deeper contact with poets and philosophers. Today they are greatly disturbed. Professor Trotter evaded the real conflict of values. We are too complacent. Philosophers have a good deal of right to despise us.

*Professor Lower* pointed out that the philosophers to whom Professor Underhill referred were also penetrating historians.

*Professor Brown* stated that history should bridge the gap between poetry, philosophy, and the social sciences.

*Professor Lower* said that historians are too apologetic and humble toward economists. Economics is an important subject in Canada because it happens to fit the present situation.

*Professor Sissons* posed the query: Can the social sciences not be philosophic? He remarked that history teaching here suffers from the great

importance of the state in education. Certain gaps in historical writing are due to the same influence, e.g., the story of the Clergy Reserve settlement of 1854. He stated that the late Dr. Skelton had done a very great service to Canada, since he had made his mark as a student, as a teacher, and as a citizen in public life. History would be better off if historians took more part in public life.

*Professor Skilling* stated that history has been narrow in context geographically, and asked if the remedy was not a new geographic extension in history teaching.

*Professor Trotter* said there was point to Professor Underhill's remarks. Probably historians cannot rise far above their generation but they must try or else they will be reflecting the views of our grandfathers' time since it is so easy to think in terms of earlier periods and to transfer outworn views to the present. The mind of the Canadian people has not grown up, but the Canadian nation is in a real sense one of the few mature nations in the world. Historians should help the mind of the Canadian people to catch up with realities, notwithstanding that this is an increasingly difficult task because of the accelerating process of change in the world.