

Address
of
Hon. T. A. Pattullo, K.C., M.L.A.,
Prime Minister, British Columbia,
at the
Congregation of the University of British Columbia,
October 27th, 1937.

Mr. Chancellor, Mr. President, Members of the Board of Governors, Members of the Senate, Members of the Faculty, Graduates, and Friends of the University:

I appreciate very deeply the honour conferred upon me by the University of British Columbia.

It has been suggested that I merit this recognition and expression has been given in all too kind words. May I say that whatever I may have done or accomplished has all been in the way of duty as I saw it. In any event, the permutations and combinations which make up the kaleidoscope of life seem to have so willed it.

Looking back upon the problems with which our University has been confronted, I think that we owe a tribute of appreciation to those men and women who, throughout the years, have sought to create and to maintain a university that may legitimately claim to rank with the best of our institutions.

I know something of the vicissitudes which the University encountered in its early stages, and I know also something of the struggles and arduous work that has since been necessary to maintain and improve the University's standards.

I think that all who have opportunity to attend a university are fortunate. I am not suggesting that success does not attend in innumerable walks of life where there has been no opportunity of university training, but achievement means training, whether in institutions especially designed for the purpose or in the wider and, may I say, harder university of life. The knowledge and information which may be acquired at a university bears small relation to the sum total of all knowledge and information, but a university is not an information factory, rather is it an institution where the mind can be trained and disciplined to think, to study, to differentiate, to separate the wheat from the chaff, the false from the true. What greater asset than a mind intellectually honest and trained to think!

You, young graduates, are embarking upon a sea of adventure. Notwithstanding the innumerable beacons of experience with which life's sea is charted, you will run into many passages where only your own judgment can guide you. Then should your training and general outlook on life stand you in good stead.

How many times have we heard it asked: "Why doesn't the Government do this or why doesn't the Government do that?" I will tell you why. The ship of state is the largest and most difficult ship in the world to navigate. Everybody wants to be captain, the crew is sometimes mutinous, while the passengers, to whom governmental navigation is a simple process, want to go everywhere all at the same time.

The first thing is to have a destination, the second is to get there, and the third is to get there as easily and pleurably as possible to all concerned.

The trouble is that just as no two people look exactly alike, so no two people think exactly alike. While this is one of the chief difficulties of life's progress, it is also one of its chiefest interests.

A few years from now you will all be scattered to the four corners of our Province, as well as elsewhere. No one can foresee all that you may be called upon to face, but whatever circumstances may be in store for you, what you will be is largely within yourself.

In a world that is torn with strife and discord and physical combat, I look upon this student body to-day with an inspiration of confidence.

Notwithstanding the many activities which seem to contradict our hopes and belief in a more spiritualized world, I am not to be persuaded that the young people of Canada are less determined and less qualified to cope with the responsibilities and exigencies of life than were the young people of previous generations. We must admit, however, that the rising generation are facing problems that will require all their resourcefulness, all their energy, and all their determination and unqualified integrity of purpose, to meet the world problems of to-day.

From the tendencies of the present drift, it is beginning to appear that instead of the older generation worrying over the problem of youth, youth will be worrying over the problem of middle age.

Experience may be a great teacher, but, with all that it has taught, it has not been able to eradicate prejudice, selfishness, avarice, greed, and revenge. Materialism is rampant and in numerous parts of the world there is ample evidence that many high in authority believe that the end justifies the means. Never should we let the holocaust now transpiring dull our conception of high morality, yet, while holding true to the eternal verities, we must prepare ourselves to meet the ruthless challenge of the subversive forces which seek, at any cost or sacrifice of life, to dominate.

While I believe that he is thrice armed who hath his quarrel just, I also believe that in a chaotic world which appears to place so little value on life, we must be prepared to defend life—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

When I was a boy, I had some regrets that I was living in a too prosaic age. Adventures of the past were gone and the immediate prospects of the present offered very little surprise. Then suddenly we were injected into the most interesting period of all time. Surprise after surprise met us and surprise is always an element of interest.

What, then, is there left for the future, because nothing would surprise us now. Yet what a marvellously intense interest there really is. In a world made small by discovery and invention; in a world with all its information, suffering from too little knowledge; in a world torn with racial and economic prejudices and jealousies; in a world where moral concepts have been badly mauled; in a world where might masquerades as right, and ruthlessly disregards and destroys all opposition; in a world where both the word and the bond are so often disregarded, there is a challenge to test the stuff that is in us. Notwithstanding so many seeming contradictions, down in our hearts there is still the hope, the determination, and the belief that ultimately all shall be well.

When you go out of these halls into new spheres, may I counsel you to associate with those older than yourselves, as well as those of your own age and younger. I believe it is well for young people to have their organizations, but old and young should fraternize and foregather together. Old people are not all old fogies and young people are not all young irresponsibles. To men and women of mature age and experience, may I say, be patient with youth, encourage his initiative. An admixture of the driving power of youth and the experience of age would seem to be a worthy desideratum. It ought to make for forwardness and safety at the same time.

In closing, let me say this: Always stand steadfast and true, and in whatever avenue of endeavour you may choose, make up your mind that you are going to at least equal, if not excel, any one else in similar undertaking. It is probably well to be able to do a number of things, but it is also essential that one should do some one thing superlatively well.

In a long experience, I have found that the hardest man to place is the man who does not know one single thing well. When you undertake to polish up the handle of the front door of this seat of learning, see to it that it is done well and some day you may be Chancellor of the University of British Columbia.

I reiterate appreciation of the honour conferred on me by this University. I trust that the University may expand with increasing usefulness, and that all who leave its halls shall be messengers of benefaction.