

An Address by
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Carleton College

at

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From the board of trustees I bring you greetings and a hearty, if nervous, welcome as the 102nd academic year at Carleton opens. As a new chairman with only nine months' experience, I have about the same number of apprehensions as I contemplate this new school year as I did at the outset of each year when I was an undergraduate. I suspect each of you approaches the year with much the same feeling -- a feeling not unlike that of a ski jumper about to make the first leap of the year.

But there is solace for all of us in the realization we are part of a continuance^{ance}, with its beginning in the shadows of the mid 19th century, and stretching in front of us into the equally shadowy future. At the moment, time and physical presence place us here, but imagine if you will the much greater company of scholars, trustees, faculty, and administrators who have come this way and gone on, to whom must be added those generations of Carletonians who will follow. To paraphrase Ecclesiastes, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the college abideth." May I add I have deliberately dropped the "forever" from the quotation because I no longer share the old preacher's conviction that even the earth will abide forever before the avalanche of humanity. Certainly, although Carleton has enormous momentum, it would be foolish of all of us to assume its continuing into perpetuity is assured simply by the affection and respect each of us has for the college. Its structure must be infinitely accommodative to the complex pressures of you students who are here now, those who were here in years passed and are now alumni, and the aspirations of faculty and administration; all of which must be resolved within the context of contemporary society and the intellectual and financial support it is willing to extend.

The process of accommodation has a critical time factor -- in fact, timing is everything in changing the policies of a college, even as it is for a nation. In this decision-making, human judgment -- the judgment of the policymakers -- is all important. At Carleton, the ultimate policy responsibility rests with the board of trustees -- not by their random choice, but by law, for Carleton College is a creature of law. How did this happen - what precisely is the trustees' responsibility - who are they? These are questions you are entitled to have answered.

To start with, Carleton College is a Minnesota corporation, incorporated November 13, 1866 as "Northfield College." There were twelve trustees required initially, with a stipulation that three-fourths of the initial board had to be members of the Congregational Church of Minnesota. By their own action, they could increase their number to twenty-four, which in 1933 was increased to a maximum of thirty-six. Along the way, the name was changed to Carleton College, but neither then nor now was the authority of the trustees specified in any way in the Articles of Incorporation, which is the charter - birth certificate - call it what you will, of a corporation. There is somewhat more help in the by-laws, where an attempt was made to spell out in a more specific way than the general statutory laws of Minnesota the responsibility of the trustees. The by-laws are simply stated and give us this authority:

- 1) To elect trustees, the executive committee, and the officers.

This means we are self-perpetuating as a board, subject only to a maximum age limit of seventy. There are no other criteria for membership.

- 2) To be finally responsible for the acquisition, conservation, and management of the college's funds and properties. This means the buck

(in a figurative sense only, for we are not paid) stops here. We have just embarked on a \$40,000,000 campaign designed over the years to come to provide the ~~the~~ % of the cost of education at Carleton not paid by the cash fees. To make a perfectly terrible pun - to which I am addicted - I can rephrase my earlier statement: the bucks - forty million of them - start here.

3) To oversee and approve the kind of education offered and make certain that its quality meets the highest standard possible. This means my apprehensions are fully justified, for every element of this particular charge involves subjective judgment. We are in an area in this charge where there are no universal yardsticks. Not the least of the frustrations is that you, the current inventory in process, will demonstrate our success or failure only over your total lifetimes. It is scant comfort, given the seriousness of our decision for you and for us, that we won't be around to answer to you.

4) To approve the major policies and programs of the college. This means we must not only approve new directions proposed for the college, but reaffirm, modify or reject existing policies.

5) To contribute, wherever possible and appropriate, to the accomplishment of the college's objectives. This is an omnibus clause, reflecting the concern of architects of legal instruments, whether it be a trust, a by-law, or the Constitution, that they avoid being restrictive in the enunciation of specific powers. Implicit is the culpability for failure to act; or having acted foolishly, the failure to have acted wisely. A legal entity can do only those things either specified in those documents that give it life, or in the general statutes of the state pertaining to that type of organization. An omnibus clause is not carte blanche.

It makes sense, it seems to me, to give broad general powers to corporate bodies, and then pick good people to interpret them in a systematic and visible way. I realize this is offensive to the mechanists who prefer a world that appears symmetrical and orderly -- even though this appearance does not go beyond a chart of organization -- but this ignores the real world. Shakespeare had Henry IV say, "Presume not that I am the thing I was." Institutions, once created, must, and do if they survive, adapt to their environment like a volume of gas to the changing walls of a container. On the other hand, the walls, while they may be flexible, must be strong enough to always contain the contents, no matter how volatile they may be, because we start with the assumption the contents are worth preserving. Trustees are the final arbiters of the size, shape and strength of Carleton College.

Who are we? Well, we are an appropriately diverse lot as befits a liberal arts college. There are 33 trustees currently serving out of a total possible of 36. These are the statistics:

- a) Sex.
There are 4 women and 29 men.
- b) Age.
2 are 40 or less.
5 are 41 - 50.
15 are 51 - 60.
11 are 61 or over.
- c) Schools.
17 spent their undergraduate years at Carleton.
1 at Michigan State.
3 at Yale.
1 at the University of Michigan.
2 at the University of Washington.
1 at Bryn Mawr.
1 at Sarah Lawrence.

Schools (cont'd.)

2 at Williams
2 at Harvard.
1 at Stanford
1 at the University of Pennsylvania.
1 at the University of Oregon.

A number have graduate and honorary degrees. They attended these graduate schools:

3 Rhodes Scholars.
2 the University of Michigan.
8 Harvard.
1 the Chicago Art Institute.
1 Yale.
1 Stanford.
1 California.
1 McGill.
1 Columbia.
3 University of Minnesota.
1 University of Chicago.

I have counted only the graduate schools granting the highest degree received.

d) Residence.

19 live in the Twin Cities.
1 in Pittsburgh.
3 in Illinois.
2 in Michigan.
1 in Massachusetts.
1 in New York City.
1 in Philadelphia.
2 in California.
2 in outstate Minnesota.
1 in Washington, D.C.

e) Occupation.

There are 3 practicing lawyers, and at least 2 other lawyers who have other occupations; there are 4 who are board chairmen of industrial corporations; there is the vice chairman of the Mayo Clinic; there are 6 corporate presidents; one presiding judge of a federal circuit court of appeals; a research scientist with NASA; an Episcopal Bishop; a distinguished Congregational clergyman; a college president; a professor of economics; a professor of medicine; 7 corporate vice presidents; 4 housewives, and a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System in Washington.

The list of organizations served by your trustees in a similar capacity include a number of colleges, some hundreds of charities, and a significant number of public advisory boards.

f) Ethnic and racial.

We have one black man; the rest are whites. The ethnic and religious backgrounds of the board are as maverick as American society at large. I boggled at running geneologies on the others because of the complexity of my own.

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We are concerned, interested people with a range of interests on the board that spans virtually the entire range of contemporary man. It is as pluralist in its way as our wildest dreams for the student body at Carleton.

We meet three times a year. Because of the extraordinary complexity of a modern college, most of the matters considered come before the full board as recommendations from standing committees of trustees. There are ten of these. One is empowered to act for the board between

meetings of the full board, and is called the executive committee. This committee meets almost every month during the school year. The others are concerned with specific subjects such as academic affairs and development.

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So much for who we are and what we are. Why we are trustees is a much more important question -- and indeed the only question of any substance. Obviously it is not for the money. Not only are we not paid, but the time and direct financial support we contribute is substantial.

There is a measure of glory surely, for Carleton is a school of national distinction. The company of scholars is a good thing -- except I find myself a little wistful when I look at the splendidly gaudy robes of some - that Penn was founded by the good grey Quakers who eschewed bright colors and ribbons bravely flying. Most of us, I suspect, never really got our fill of academia and its ivied halls. In a sense we are renewing our love for the community of learning. It is an indiscriminating affection for most of us, for my guess is that at least half of the board are serving other colleges and universities as well in this or similar roles.

There is a timelessness about a college that is immensely appealing to people like your trustees, who are concerned for the most part with a world where now becomes yesterday before the sun has set. A college is a process, a state of mind -- not a place of things and specific individuals. It is the past, present and future of the best of humanity. It is a place where human scale can be learned, and a sense of proportion made an involuntary response. There is no human experience you or I can ever have, whether it be a racial confrontation or the reconciliation of nations, that has not been experienced over and over in man's history. Unfortunately, wisdom is

meaningless until your own experience gives it meaning, but still there is comfort even after the fact in knowing you are in distinguished company in your mistakes. It is in the discovery of your anonymity in the great stream of human history that you discover yourself. This is the objective of the educative process, and it is the overwhelming importance of the recognition of this objective that draws us into service on college boards.

Carleton has a very special place, though, even among the other distinguished colleges some of your trustees serve. It is small, uncompromising in its standards, and yet possessed of a tradition of innovation and experiment. Because the presidents of Carleton and the board members have been aware of the enormous responsibility of the board, members have been carefully chosen. The current board is an exciting one, composed as it is of people with only a single common denominator -- a dedication to the principle that the small liberal arts college and the undergraduate are an important human resource. Unlike almost any other board, ~~public or private~~, with outside trustees or directors, I have ^{known,} these people do their homework and come to the meetings prepared to discuss ideas on their merit, even though they may be totally foreign or even repugnant to their personal beliefs. We enjoy each other's company. We respect the right of each to be heard, even though the diversity in our backgrounds is an automatic assurance there will be no unanimity on most issues except the central one which brings us together -- the absolute necessity that Carleton continue as a center of excellence.

For every trustee there is a beneficiary. "A trustee is one to whom property is entrusted for the benefit of others." In this sense, and this is the thought I hope to leave with you, none of our formal roles -- student, faculty, administration, members of the board of trustees -- can be precisely

defined. Trustee and beneficiary -- we partake of each in this shared experience. We on the board have the legal charge, but each of you is, in a philosophic sense, a trustee as well for the generations past and those to come. In the same sense, we are all beneficiaries. Carleton today is living witness to the efforts of literally thousands of now nameless people whose belief in the principle of the small liberal arts college they supported with their money, their hearts and their minds to our benefit today. Your benefit, as students, faculty and administration, are direct - and, I hope, measurable. The benefits from board membership may be less apparent, but they are as real. John Gardner suggested them in the title of his book, Self Renewal. It helps keep our sense of perspective in repair to be involved in the timeless process of man's education - where personal identity, position, and contribution we realize at the outset will be anonymous in anything other than the shortest of time spans.

I hope as this year goes on I can meet many of you as individuals -- a hope I share with my fellow trustees. We will be experimenting with different institutional ways to bring this about with both faculty and students. We will be totally unsuccessful in settling Viet Nam, the urban crisis, the price of gold, or the role of Mayor Daley in contemporary society in this forum. Parenthetically, I might add - prospects don't look very good anywhere else for near term answers to these questions. But the dimensions of Carleton we can and must discuss seriously and patiently in the dual roles we all share as trustee and beneficiary for one of this country's finest liberal arts colleges.