

William Burton Hurd
1894-1950

Harold A. Innis

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William Burton Hurd, 1894-1950

By HAROLD A. INNIS

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The academic achievements of William Burton Hurd (1894-1950) were fittingly recognized in his election to the presidency of the Canadian Political Science Association in 1949. The meetings of the Association in 1950 will be saddened by the loss of a president and weakened by the absence of his presidential address.

He was a casualty of the turmoil of this century. Born in Brockville, a graduate of the University of Manitoba in 1913, he enlisted in spite of ill health for service in the First World War. He became an officer in the 52nd Battalion in 1915-16, in the 9th Brigade in 1916-17, and senior Y.M.C.A. officer in the second division and adjutant of the Khaki University in France in 1918-19. His services were recognized by being twice mentioned in despatches and an award of the O.B.E. (Military Division).

After the Armistice, he was appointed a Rhodes Scholar and, studying at Queens College, Oxford, took his bachelor's degree in 1921. On his return to Canada he became professor of political economy in Brandon College in 1921 and dean of arts in 1928. It would not be too much to say that his efforts, linked to those of President Evans, kept Brandon College alive during the depression years but at a heavy cost to the health of both of them. Toward the end of the depression in 1935 he was appointed to the staff of political economy in McMaster University, an obvious promotion since at that time examinations in Brandon College were conducted by the staff of McMaster University and degrees were conferred by the latter institution. His interest in students was again recognized by his appointment as associate dean of arts in 1939. In 1946 he followed Professor H. Michell as head of the department of political economy.

Not only was he concerned with teaching and administration in university work but also with research and with the broader interests of the academic world. He was a member of the Research Council of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs and of the Canadian Social Science

Research Council. As chairman of the committee on publications of the latter body he established an organization which functioned with conspicuous success. The enormous contribution of that body to the publication of scholarly works in the social sciences in Canada was almost entirely a result of his efforts.

In research his mathematical training gave him a great advantage in population studies. He worked with the Canadian government at the British Empire Conference in 1931-2 and with the Bureau of Statistics over a long period. The statistical Atlas of the Prairie Provinces prepared with the assistance of Dr. T. W. Grindley has long been a useful book of reference. Monographs in population statistics prepared by him are among the most valuable published by the Bureau of Statistics and will always stand as fundamental bases for further work in the subject of population. The items listed in the bibliography are a guide to the nature of his interests and his work.

It was inevitable that the war and the postwar periods should impose further burdens on the staff of Canadian universities particularly on members with the conscientious drive of Burton Hurd. The Canadian Social Science Research Council with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation established a professorial assistance committee to enable scholars to obtain a year's leave of absence and the prospect of relief from the increased demands on their time. Professor Hurd was one of the first to whom a grant was given but such assistance was far from adequate. The social sciences will be poorer for the loss of his enthusiasm and energy evident in teaching, administration, research, and above all in generosity and kindness to his students and friends.

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- “No Help Wanted” (summary of “The Immigration Problem”) (*Financial Post*, Apr. 10, 1937).
- “Great Britain Can Supply Canada’s Needed Population” (partial reprint of “The Immigration Problem”) (*Board of Trade Journal*, Toronto, Apr., May, 1937).
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- “Decline of the Anglo-Saxon Canadian” (*Maclean’s Magazine*, Sept. 1, 1937).
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“Population Trends in Canada” (*The Review*, Society of Residential Appraisers, Chicago, July, 1939).

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TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *William Burton Hurd, 1894-1950* by Harold A. Innis]