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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Island Educationist Had Notable Career

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I HAVE written about several outstanding Island educationists in the last few years. This week I want to talk a bit about William Everett MacNeill, an Islander who "rendered conspicuous service to Queens University" in the words of Principal R. C. Wallace who was paying tribute to the Lower Montague native when he retired as vice-principal in 1947 after 38 years of valuable service as teacher, administrator and benefactor.

I'm indebted this week to a modest friend who has done virtually all of the research on Dr. MacNeill although he insisted that I should not use his name.

It was a former Queens principal, R. C. Wallace, who reportedly told a mutual friend (of my researcher and myself) that Mr. MacNeill had left more money to Queens than the total of the salary he had received during his many years of service there.

"An exponent of English prose pure and undefiled, a financier of unusual sagacity, a careful husbender of university funds, a wise counselor and a warm-hearted friend" was the way Principal Wallace described W. E. MacNeill at the time of his retirement.

DR. MACNEILL was born in November 29, 1876. His parents were Mr. and Mrs. Charles MacNeill. He won the Kings County scholarship on matriculation to Prince of Wales College, and the Governor General's medal at Acadia University as he completed the work for the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

He was principal for one year in each of the Heatherdale, Malpeque and Montague schools. W. A. MacPhee, formerly in charge of teacher training at Prince of Wales College, who went to Heatherdale school recalls that "Mr. MacNeill was young when he taught in our school but he was successful."

Mrs. Nellie Fraser, Montague attended Lower Montague school 1900-01 when he was principal, and recalls that three Montague girls boarded in Lower Montague to prepare for the "Entrance Examinations" as they were called at the time. They were Annie MacLean who later married J. W. Carruthers, Addie MacDonald who later married L. M. MacKinnon, Montague and Marie Spenser, now Mrs. A. C. Sinclair, 14 Brighton Road, Charlottetown. Mrs. Harold MacDonald of Georgetown is a cousin.

Following his teaching in Island schools, Mr. MacNeill studied at Harvard University and Oxford and taught at Bates College in Maine.

He went to Queens in 1909 as assistant professor of English. From 1920 through 1930 he held the combined posts of registrar, treasurer and secretary of the board of trustees. He died on May 8, 1959.

Honors paid Mr. MacNeill included a DCL from Acadia University, an LLD from Western and from Queens, and a Fellowship of the Royal Society of Canada.

'Have You Anything To Declare'

THE FIRST men's residence at Queens was opened in 1955 and was named for him to honor a man whose efforts had so richly served the university. On that occasion Dr. MacNeill delivered an address "HAVE YOU ANYTHING TO DECLARE" and that talk, now in pamphlet form will be distributed to the libraries of our Regional High Schools in this province, I am informed.

The speech has been included in a text of English prose for senior students and has been republished by Queens University for distribution to secondary schools, on the suggestion of a group of Ontario teachers.

I liked this reference to MacNeill for it shows his human quality. It is in Dr. MacNeill's own words:

"A candid friend sitting on the platform when recently shown my Harvard graduation photograph of over 40 years ago exclaimed: 'Why you used to look like a scholar.' What do I look like now, I asked. The quick reply was 'a business man'"

"Thus" added MacNeill "even in appearance I have conformed to the will of the trustees. My heart's desire had always been to look like a professor of English."

But the loyalty to the University to which he had contributed so much of himself and his money through the years, broke through when he added "I should like best of all, however, to look like a Queens' man".

Care, Accuracy, Wealth of Detail

THERE ARE many stories about this interesting Islander. A former Queens principal observed the university "will long remember the care and accuracy and the wealth of detail which characterized the work of Dr. MacNeill as secretary of the board of trustees . . . a wide experience and wise judgment."

He chose, among other things, inscriptions for the students memorial union, and the style of gowns for the principal and vice-principal.

He was sent all the way to England to study the style of gowns. At one college he saw gowns that trailed behind the men who wore them. It's understandable that the man who was born in Lower Montague quickly turned away from such pretentious and impractical arrangements.

I was interested in the reason he chose "Have you anything to declare?" as the title of the address which will be presented to Island high schools. Speaking to the Queens graduating class of 1947 he said in part:

"I speak mainly to students, who are highly resistant to advice. I shall therefore put the pith of my talk into five words in the hope that if all else is ignored these may ring a bell . . . have you anything to declare?"

University men and women, Dr. MacNeill believed, should be able to declare durable gains in "character" in "skills or knowledge" and finally in "a cultural heritage."

Scholarships Perpetuate Memory

UNDERSTANDABLY he never did forget his native province, or the young people who would, like he had done himself as a youth, seek an education. The result is the W. E. MacNeill scholarship. It has been available to graduates of Prince of Wales College who wish to continue their education by enrolling in either the arts or the

science faculty at Queens University. The scholarship provides \$1,000 in the first year at Queens, and \$500 in each of the second and third years, provided that a suitable standard of studies is maintained.

(The reference here is to the honours course which requires three years after senior matriculation, which is one year longer than the general course leading to a Bachelor's degree.)

The scholarship was set up in 1953 and the man who has done so much research on Dr. MacNeill tells me that the following students have qualified for the award:

1953-54 Clara M. Simmons, Wilmot Valley, now Mrs. John Marett of Guelph, Ontario; 1957-58 Hodge MacEwen, Stanley Bridge, now University of Alberta, Edmonton; 1959-60 William Alan Anderson, St. Peter's Bay, now Department of Biology, Mass. Institute of Technology; 1962-63 John L. Gosbee, Murray Harbour; 1963-64 Elaine Walker, Charlottetown and in 1964-65 Betty Carol Matheson, Southport.

Canadian Seed Growers Here

THIS PROVINCE had some close associations with the early beginnings of the Canadian Seed Growers Association, which meets here in annual session next week. My farm column – it appears on Tuesday – will carry a story of some of the more interesting events of the CSGA's pioneer days.