

## THE CONSTITUTION

It has been the desire of many students over the past years that a revised copy of the constitution be printed and distributed to the student body, not only that the individual student would be well informed of the bases and organization of the various societies, but, also, that he would be sufficiently acquainted with his rights as a student and, consequently, with the resulting responsibilities. The last printing of the constitution, as far as we are able to determine, was in 1947 and that edition is so far outdated and outprinted that a copy can hardly be found to be consulted on any disputable topic.

Every student has a right to know the workings of the organizations to which, for the very reason that he is a student, he belongs, and in which he has or should have an interest. The numerous amendments which have been passed over the last several years are contained in the files and minutes of the Students' Union, and the immediate executive alone know where they are to be found. In fact, they appear to be the only ones, outside of a few other executive members, who are interested enough to talk on this subject at any other time than the few days immediately preceeding and following the annual election day.

In regarding the fact that there appears to be very little interest on the part of the average student, we may attribute this to the fact that he knows comparatively little about the societies, and that he is in no position, being without the knowledge of the fundamental bases of the societies, to stand up and make his position known to the student body. All will agree, we are sure, that such a situation must be cleared up immediately, and, the sooner the better.

We often wonder what becomes of the members of the Freshman class, and the others too, at the general meetings of the student body. That wonder may be turned to knowledge and realization by the contemplation of the fact that the average student knows practically nothing about the societies and is, therefore, not interested, especially after attending two or three meetings and hearing two or three senior students, who have been at St. Dunstan's for several years, dominate the discussion, with nothing apparent being accomplished on either side. This, too, must be cleared up immediately.

We have been informed that the new president of the Students' Union, William Kelly, has undertaken the task of alleviating the present situation by the issuing of a revised constitution next fall. He is to start work on the new copy during the summer months. We feel confident that such a move will be of great assistance in the eradication of the ever present problem on our campus, that there are too few interested in too many things to the detriment of all concerned . . .

—EDITORIAL

## WHAT IS HISTORY?

What is history? Is history science, opinion or rhetoric? Can history and literature be identified?

If history were science, it would have to demonstrate, as science is demonstrative knowledge. But pure history resembles a descriptive catalogue of facts rather than a series of demonstrations. Science requires first principles;

but history in the natural order has no first principles. One of the characteristics of science is necessity but there is no necessity in historical events. They follow after each other in temporal sequence, not from each other. History claims no universality. Every historical event is in the last analysis an individual event, and our knowledge of it is of something singular. Our study of pure history does not rise above space and time to universal and necessary conditions among things as reasoned out from first principles. Consequently, history is not science.

If history were mere opinion, it would share the uncertainty of opinion. If this were the case, then, we should know only probably the date of Charlemagne's coronation, or that Wellington conquered Napoleon. No respectable historian would want to assign all such events to the limbo of probable knowledge. History it seems, gives more than probable knowledge.

If history were mere rhetoric it would be an art of persuasion that is even weaker in certitude than dialectics. If history is not dialectics or opinion, it certainly is not mere rhetoric either.

History and literature can not be identified. True both history and literary are concerned somehow with the individual. But literature involves discourse, whereas in history events follow, not from each other, but only after each other in temporal sequence. Furthermore, genuine history must always be true, but literature need only be plausible. The historian and the literary man are alike in certain respects, and in others they are profoundly different both in interest and technique.

History as a name is not distinguished from its subject matter. The term history is applied to both what actually happened in the past and to our study of such happenings. It designates both the study and what the study is about. History is a stream of events having physical reality outside of the mind and at the same time it is a subject studied by the mind.

The ordinary history book contains both facts and opinions. In any consideration of the nature of history we must make a distinction between the facts of history and opinions expressed about these facts. All opinions expressed by historians claim factual knowledge as their basis. These facts are usually made known to us by the testimony of men who witnessed them. Historical knowledge, however known and whether of the recent or remote past, is usually known on the word of someone else. It depends on extrinsic evidence. Our knowledge of history, then, depends on faith. History, therefore, is a record of the past, compiled from extrinsic evidence and resting on natural faith.

Though history is neither science or art, it serves a function in initiating us to the traditions of which we are the heirs and continuators. It helps us to profit from the triumphs and failures of the human race. It helps us to know what we should think and do. History is a valuable preparation for science. In the intellectual order, it gives us these opinions from which dialectics must begin; and in the moral order it offers us that experience of the conduct of others which helps us to regulate our own behaviour. This is the function of history in the education of man.

—ROBERT MacDONALD '59