

### THE PRIZE WE SOUGHT IS WON

"The lads came through for you, Father - - - They're the National Champs!"

That was the message it was my pleasure to convey late Saturday night, March 8, from Ottawa. From the St. Dunstan's end of the long-distance connection came the triumphant cry of Father Cass, "Hooray!"

How that "Hooray" was taken up and reiterated by hundreds of voices upon the return to Charlottetown of Walter Reid and Allan MacDonald, Canada's Intercollegiate Debating Champions, has been told elsewhere. How Wally and Allan won the championship is our happy concern here.

It is not possible to tell the **whole** story here, for that would mean covering in detail six years of intercollegiate debating competition, during which St. Dunstan's has achieved a record that is truly remarkable. Instead, we must be satisfied with an account of just several of the many highlights in only one chapter of that history—the culminating chapter.

Were even the culminating chapter to be told fully—which is impossible here—it would properly begin with an account of events preceding that gray March 6 morning when Wally and Allan appropriated a corner of the lobby of the Brunswick Hotel in Moncton, and began final preparations for the great campaign.

The T. C. A. plane to Montreal having been delayed for eight hours, Wally and Allan laboured over their main addresses, making revisions, recasting sentences and whole paragraphs, and mapping possible strategy for their rebuttals.

For occasional diversion we paged through a joke book. Though the joke book did not provide any suitable material for the debate, it did help us to recall how a clever Montreal lawyer once won a famous case: As the prosecutor summed up the evidence that might have brought about the defendant's condemnation, the defence attorney "accidentally" placed his fingers in an ink well and proceeded to "innocently" smear his face with ink. The jury, distracted by this action, failed to heed the remarks of the prosecutor and returned the verdict "not guilty."



This story, though, was but an "aside" (so we thought at the time); the main action centered about perfecting, then memorizing, the speeches. Each debater had prepared one negative and one affirmative speech on the topic "That Canada Should Have a Bill of Rights." In addition to memorizing two fifteen-minute speeches, each debater had to try to anticipate as much as possible of the opponents' material and thereby prepare for the five-minute rebuttal period permitted to each speaker. This was a heavy task, demanding time, patience, ingenuity, and hard work; but our boys were equal to it.

Confident but tired we arrived in Ottawa just before midnight. Several hours sleep made the boys ready for another full day of strenuous activity. After Mass and breakfast we set up headquarters in the dining room of our hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Clarke. (Gerry will be remembered by many as the capable and affable Professor of Commerce at St. Dunstan's from 1949 to 1951.) With Gerry and me as critics, and the three healthy Clarke children as an audience (and welcome entertainers, too), the future champions went through their paces.

The first rehearsal was "satisfactory." But it was not **perfect**. Therefore the boys, humble and docile under criticism, went to work again—practicing, polishing, perfecting.

After dinner came the second rehearsal. "Very good," said the critics, "but not perfect." Not at all discouraged, the "Saints" again set to work.

Rather than interrupt their work, the boys delegated me to represent them at the conference that afternoon at Ottawa University. Before leaving for the meeting that was to decide not only our opponent in the semi-finals but also the side each team would uphold in the debate, I asked the boys if they had any preferences.

"If you are given the choice of opponent," they said in effect, "take any one but Montreal. And if you are given the choice of sides, take the Affirmative."

Within the hour they received the slightly discouraging news. We had drawn as our opponent Montreal University, and as our side, the Negative. The news was at most only "slightly" discouraging, though, for two reasons: first, Gerry Clarke, an astute judge in forensic matters, believed that our Negative case was stronger than our



## Domínion Champions



Allan MacDonald, '54

Walter Reid, '52



Affirmative; and second, the Montreal debaters (whom I had met at the conference) did not seem particularly pleased to be upholding the Affirmative side when their personal convictions, apparently, favoured the Negative.

Anyhow, Wally and Allan set aside their "preferences" and concentrated on the task on hand, mastering their Negative speeches.

After supper, we staged our third rehearsal of the day. There were still some flaws, but we offered no criticism. Only prayers.

Our semi-final debate was held in a large classroom at the Catholic Center, Ottawa University. As the semi-finals were not widely publicized, the audience numbered but a few dozen. At the front of the classroom was a table, about twenty feet long. The chairman sat at the center, and at each end two debaters and an interpreter. Interpreters were necessary as the Montreal debaters spoke little English and the St. Dunstan's debaters spoke very little French. Our interpreter was Maurice Goulet, Gerry's brother-in-law. He jotted down in English a precis of each point presented by our opponents in French. This very difficult task Mr. Goulet handled with exceptional efficiency.

The University of Montreal was represented by two very fluent speakers, who seemed especially effective in rebuttal. Their main speeches, however, seemed to lack conviction. Furthermore, they lost "contact" with the audience due to frequent reference to notes.

The St. Dunstan's debaters, on the other hand, appeared to **believe firmly** in the ideas they expressed. Furthermore, they had their speeches quite well memorized. Far from losing contact, Wally and Allan achieved an "intimacy" with the audience by standing **in front of the table** instead of behind it as the Montreal speakers did.

The diplomatic master-stroke, however, which seemed to win over the predominantly French-speaking audience was Allan's introduction (recited in French, of course), apologizing to his opponents and to the audience for his team's inability to debate in the beautiful language of the French Canadians. From that moment the audience that might otherwise have tended to favor Montreal was dis-



posed to admire the efforts of the gentlemen from Prince Edward Island. When the verdict was rendered the warm applause of the audience signified their approval.

Though the judges did not comment personally on the debate (the comments above are strictly my own), the closeness of the competition was indicated by the fact that St. Dunstan's had an advantage of but one point.

After the debate Wally, Allan, Gerry Clarke and I retired to the Chateau Laurier for lunch. Though happy over their victory, the boys were quick to admit that they were not "at their best." Leo MacIsaac—our host, incidentally at this lunch—who was present at our debate, made several helpful suggestions, as did Gerry Clarke. The content of the St. Dunstan's speeches was good, it was agreed, but the delivery was not fully satisfactory.

About midnight we received a 'phone call from the president of the C.U.D.A., informing us that St. Patrick's College had defeated Manitoba University in the other semi-final contest, and that St. Dunstan's would be given the option of selecting the side we wished in the finals. The decision was not easy to make, especially within a few minutes.

That was a crucial moment. The championship may indeed have hinged on that decision. Wally and Allan themselves—without any prompting—chose to uphold the Negative.

Saturday morning the Clarkes' dining room was again transformed into headquarters for the debaters. As it was decided not to alter the content of the main speeches already committed to memory, most of the day was spent in preparing notes on material likely to be of value in the rebuttals. So determined were the boys to perfect their work they even excused themselves from a scheduled luncheon at the Parliamentary Cafeteria, where the delegates from the four competing universities were introduced to Prime Minister St. Laurent. Late in the afternoon Wally and Allan were still hard at work—spurred on now by a dozen telegrams from "home"—and, therefore, they did not take part in a radio program publicizing the championship debate.

During the final rehearsal, our debaters were tense, nervous, uninspired, and showed signs of over-work. No-



body, though, was discouraged. Just before leaving for the University, they made a short visit to the parish church.

In the vestibule of the Ottawa University auditorium a score of Islanders-in-exile greeted the team and wished them success. Among the well-wishers was Brother Lorne MacDonald, O.M.I., one of our most brilliant debaters before his graduation two years ago. Several other Island students at the Oblate seminary in Ottawa were present to cheer Brother MacDonald's young brother, Allan, and his colleague to victory. Though the seminarians' loyalty may have been divided (as St. Patrick's College is conducted by the Oblate Fathers), this was not evident from their applause and their rejoicing over the success of the St. Dunstan's team. Truly, the Spud Islanders are among the world's most chauvinistic people.

The championship debate was a real battle of wits.

Jim Touhy, from St. Patrick's College, was the initial speaker. His first action was to move the lectern back a few feet, to permit full freedom of movement across the front of the wide stage. Sauve, confident, almost condescending in manner, Jim was a competent, persuasive orator.

Allan MacDonald introduced the case for the Negative by returning the lectern to its original position on the stage, and casting a glance at his opponents that implied, "Keep your hands off the furniture." Highly amused, the audience applauded. The youthful sophomore then captivated the audience with his stirring address, flawlessly delivered.

Jack Manion then resumed the case for the Affirmative. He was a commanding speaker, sometimes smooth, sometimes forceful, but always successful in making his points. Obviously "at home" on the platform, Jack was effectively witty.

The final speaker, Wally Reid, appealed to the audience by an orthodox oratorical style. His strong, clear voice held their attention for the full fifteen minutes. A determined, impressive speaker, Wally's performance was excellent.

At the conclusion of the main speeches, I believed that—considering both the content and delivery of those



speeches—St. Dunstan's led by a fair margin. To encourage Wally and Allan, during the intermission the chairman was asked to hand them a telegram I had received earlier in the evening. It was from Father MacKenzie. Beaming broadly over the knowledge that the rector was "pulling for them", they confidently entered the most difficult phase of the contest, the rebuttals.

After cleverly and clearly defining the function of the Negative side in any debate, Wally proceeded to punch holes in the Affirmative case. In staccato fashion he fired point-blank at several of the Affirmative arguments, not without telling effect. Permitted only five minutes in rebuttal, at least one minute was taken up by frequent outbursts of applause from an audience highly pleased with Wally's method of attack.

Jack Manion's defense, however, was still formidable. As a matter of fact, he went on the offensive, deftly pointing out a serious contradiction in the Negative case. Add to this his clever rebuttal of some points asserted by the Negative, and you may understand why the Negative partisans became slightly gloomy.

They were not gloomy for long. Allan came to the rescue with a fiery, colorful demonstration of debating skill and showmanship. His spirited opposition to the resolution reached its climax when, to illustrate the disintegrating effect a Bill of Rights would have upon the nation, he carefully tore a large sheet of paper into dozens of pieces which he dramatically cast out into the audience. As the confetti settled in the front rows, Allan stood with shoulders squared and announced conclusively, "Canada should **not** have a Bill of Rights." Judging from the ovation he received, the majority of the audience agreed.

But Jim Touhy did not agree. In the final rebuttal, he plunged into the Negative's arguments. His tactics, however, were rather unorthodox, for he was building his case by misquoting his opponents. After two minutes of such tactics by Mr. Touhy, Wally Reid, well versed in parliamentary procedure, rose to a point of order and thundered defiantly, "Mr. Chairman! I am being misquoted!"

The chairman, apparently frightened by this unexpected outburst, and, unfortunately, not knowing how to deal with the situation, said nothing. Wally, rightful in-



dignation showing on his brow, glared for a few moments at his visibly-shaken opponent, then sat down. The audience, shocked by the explosion, murmured excitedly.

The speaker, obviously unhinged by this clash just as he was reaching the climax of his speech, managed to regain his composure. But when he resumed his misrepresentation of the Negative case, Allan MacDonald took the situation into his own hands. Or, rather, he took an ink bottle into his hands, "accidentally" spilled part of the contents on his fingers, and "innocently" smeared it on his face.

What effect this action had upon the judges is not known, but the audience's attention was completely diverted from the speaker and centered on Allan. The speaker, having lost control over the audience that was now whispering and tittering, finished his dubious refutation and sat down.

Fifteen minutes later, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, Thibaudeau Rinfret, acting as honorary chairman of the debate, announced the verdict of the three judges: by a split decision, the title of "Debating Champions of Canada" was awarded to the team from St. Dunstan's University.

After the debate the modest champions correctly insisted that all their work would have been in vain had it not been for the treasury of prayers offered for their success by the students and faculty at St. Dunstan's, the good Sisters of St. Martha, the patients at the Charlottetown Hospital, and countless friends scattered across the nation. Father Cass is not alone in having to restore himself to the good graces of St. Patrick, for having prayed for the defeat of Ireland's patron saint at the hands of an Englishman, St. Dunstan.

—BRENDAN O'GRADY, M.A.

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A great memory does not make a philosopher any more than a dictionary can be called a grammar.

—John Henry Newman.