

Developments at Toronto : Sociology without Sociology Courses. Delayed Independence. A Note on Anthropology.

The University of Toronto⁷, along with the University of British Columbia, are Canada's two largest universities with enrolments in excess of 30,000. McGill University and Queen's University are in the same status group although considerably smaller (16,000).

Anthropology at Toronto has always been strong and its origins go back 150 years. An independent Department of Anthropology was established at Toronto in 1925 under T. F. McIlwraith who was a pioneer in Canadian anthropology. Originally, sociology was located in this Department in 1936 but it was taken "under the wing", in fact, dominated by Harold Innis, an economist and Head of the Department of Political Economy. Innis was both a theoretician and an empiricist who believed, quite strongly, that social science theory in Canada should not be derivative, should not come from the models of industrialised societies, but should be indigenous, based on the complex problems of Canada. In particular, he argued that staples, fur, fish and wheat (with a degree of industrialisation) had created a unique economy and a unique society. Innis inspired theories of communication and transportation which remain an important part of Canada's contributions to the social sciences.

Sociology had been taught in the Department of Social Service (later to become social work) at Toronto by people like R. M. McIvor (a political scientist) who went on to Columbia, and to become a leading sociologist in the United States. However, this activity seemed to have little impact on undergraduate teaching in sociology or on the university as a whole. In the early 1930's sociology was developed by E. J. Urwick (a British appointee) as a good preparation for post-graduate study in social work. No introductory course was given, and sociology was seen a particular combination of courses in the social sciences. The first students graduated from the program in 1937. After a rather ambiguous position in Anthropology it became a part of the Department of Political Economy (Political Science and Economics) in 1939 and it remained there until 1963 when it became an independent department with a faculty complement of 11. Twenty five years later it had well over 50 members, the largest department in the country.

Sociology at Toronto enjoyed the sponsorship of one of the strongest departments in the university, whose head controlled graduate education in the social sciences. It also was controlled by the Department of Political Economy. No introductory courses were offered in the Department until very late and few other courses were offered. Sociology was seen as the product of the integration of the social sciences. (Remember Comte and the Queen of the Sciences). While McGill was independent, and many of its students with master's degrees taught at Toronto, it was the University of Toronto that gave the first Canadian doctoral degree in sociology in 1925.

S. D. Clark, prairie-born and educated in history, sociology and political science and known as the Dean of Canadian sociology, who was the first head, exemplified the discipline in Canada. For Clark, history, economic power, settlement and religion, constituted a dynamic that had created the society. While he could be seen as a disciple of Innis, he was creative in his own right. However, at Toronto, until the 1960's, sociology was social science. In the 1990's, as Canadians ask what Canadian sociology is, that model with its historical base is one of the "touchstones" of the discipline.

Clark has been quoted on his belief about the importance of the sponsorship by Innis and the Department of Political Economy for a discipline that was perceived to be very low status in the university hierarchy. Sociology was suspect at Victoria College, in Victoria University in the University of Toronto when the program was founded in the 1930's. Despite the early interest of the Methodists in social surveys, students were not encouraged to take a degree in the discipline and, if they did so, their academic achievements were not highly regarded. The separation between sociology and religion was complete.

Queen's : A Brief History

While Grant and Watson inspired the clergy and would-be sociologists in Canada at the turn of the century, and while there is some evidence to assume that sociology was taught in the School of Theology