

# SERVING SOCIETY'S NEEDS

A HISTORY OF  
RYERSON POLYTECHNIC  
UNIVERSITY

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*The original Normal School building, before the addition of a third floor.*



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18th, and 19th century Ontario history, he has published extensively in this area. As well as twenty biographies of historical figures published in seven volumes of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, he has contributed biographical sketches to *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, and biographical articles to other collections. With Colin Read as co-author, Dr. Stagg published *The Upper Canadian Rebellion of 1837*. As well as contributing articles and reviews to other scholarly historical publications, and delivering papers at conferences, Dr. Stagg wrote articles for the magazine *Horizon Canada*, and a monthly historical column for *York* magazine. He also enjoys his frequent presentations to historical societies and museum groups.

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# *Introduction*

It was a time when radio had been in people's homes less than a generation and television was not yet a part of people's lives. It was a time when radar had been in use only for a decade. Canadian factories still depended heavily on unskilled and semi-skilled workers, yet there was a shortage of skilled tradespeople. Environmental concerns, business ethics, and planning as to how to place retail enterprises in the most advantageous location were largely left to the individual. Very few Canadians went on to post-secondary education, and most that did graduated with a degree in Arts or Sciences. Any graduates with a professional degree were guaranteed employment, as were skilled workers.

It was in this period of the mid-1940s that Howard Kerr, supported by similar thinking on the part of a few other individuals, conceived of an alternative form of post-secondary education to that provided by universities. These individuals saw the need for graduates with particular skills suited to the growth of old and new industries and businesses in the post-World War II period.

Their belief was that there would be a growing sector of the workforce, between those workers who received skills through apprenticeship or on the job training and those who graduated from professional programs at universities. As envisaged by Kerr, this new form of education would be flexible, in order to adapt as society's needs changed. It would provide graduates with a combination of theory and practice in particular fields. What programs of study would be offered and how long these programs would be, would vary as the needs changed. Combined with this training would be a measure of education in the humanities and the social sciences, in order to produce graduates with the ability to adapt as their jobs changed over time, and to rise to management positions.

How these ideas originated and how they have evolved over the last fifty years is the Ryerson story.

## *The Ryerson Tradition*



*Egerton Ryerson*

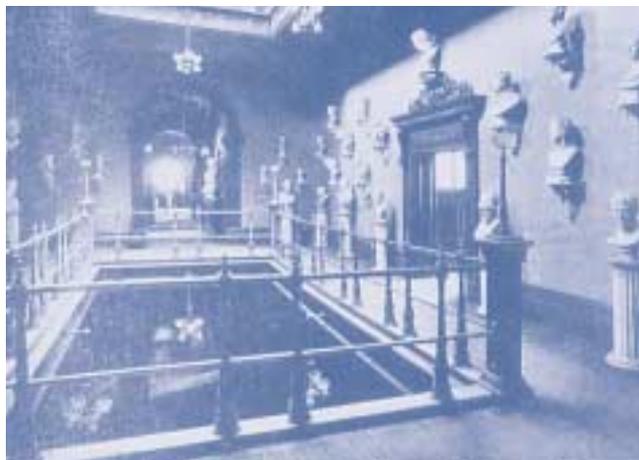
When the Ontario government authorized the creation of a multi-program technical school in Toronto, in 1948, Howard Kerr, the first principal, chose a name that would give the school a measure of instant tradition. The Ryerson name tied the new school both to the man, Egerton Ryerson, and to the location, St. James Square, which Ryerson had made the centre of education in Ontario. Each could be associated with what the Ryerson Institute of Technology was trying to do.

Ryerson was a prominent supporter of free and compulsory education, whose report of 1845 on European education systems had formed the basis for the School Act of 1846, in effect creating the foundation of Ontario's modern school system. As Chief Superintendent of Education from 1846 to 1876, Ryerson advocated a diverse curriculum for primary schools, including not only the three Rs, but also subjects as varied as political economy, bookkeeping, experimental science, and agriculture, in order to produce well-rounded citizens who could help the nation advance. While the teaching of science suffered in the early years because of the need to provide good basic education where little existed, Ryerson never lost sight of the goal of creating citizens with a variety of skills. In 1865, for instance, at his suggestion a new course in civil engineering was introduced at the secondary school level.

The School Act of 1846 authorized the construction of a Normal School to train teachers. Ryerson chose as the site for this building (completed in 1852) a piece of semi-rural land known later as St. James Square. More than simply a school for teachers, this was to be the centre of education for the province. The Department of Education offices were housed there and a Model School was built behind, to give teachers practical training. For a brief time a Model Grammar (Secondary) School also operated. In addition to these, Ryerson opened an Educational Depository, to provide approved books and instructional materials to schools at cost, and a museum (1857), which was to serve an educational function for schools and for the general public. While purchasing materials in Europe for the museum, Ryerson also bought scientific instruments so that teachers could carry out meteorological experiments, to aid agriculture.

Agricultural experiments, involving the testing of grains to find suitable crops for the Ontario climate and the planting of foreign trees, were carried out around the buildings. These experiments were used to educate teachers about botany. After Ryerson's retirement, the final aspect of his plan for the St. James Square site was completed when the art school founded by the Ontario Society of Artists in 1872 moved into the former site of the Educational Depository. This became the Toronto School of Art, controlled by the Department of Education, in 1885-86.

As well as Egerton Ryerson's concept of education, it was this history of multi-faceted educational experimentation at St. James Square that Kerr hoped to capture in the name "Ryerson". He could also point out that the site had made a further contribution to the fabric of Ontario as the various functions had moved elsewhere. When the Department of Education moved out in 1912, the large Departmental library was dispersed to the Legislative library and the Ministry of Education library. The art school, by then the Ontario College of Art, moved to its own location in 1920. During the 1920s and 30s the extensive collections of the museum, the first publicly funded one in Canada, were dispersed, with most going to the new Royal Ontario Museum. Of the education facilities, only the Normal School and the Model School remained by the late 1930s. But another education experiment was about to begin.



*The Provincial Museum.*

# *The War Years: The Germination of an Idea*

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Federal and Provincial governments had created a youth training program. With the coming of war, this program became the Dominion-Provincial War Emergency Training Plan. The man selected as the director for Ontario, in 1940, was Howard Hillen Kerr, then Head of the Technical Department of Oshawa Collegiate and Vocational School. Kerr in later years professed surprise at being asked, but with degrees in engineering and in education from the University of Toronto, a variety of teaching jobs, and work as a drafting inspector for the Department of Education, he had been noticed.

The program, designed to train personnel for war industries and to give training in the trades to armed forces personnel used regular schools around the province, after 4 p.m. A branch was also set up in the Normal School buildings which it and the Model School vacated in 1941. The old buildings, surrounded by wartime prefabricated buildings, also housed No. 6 Initial Training Centre of the Royal Canadian Air Force. A mess hall, drill hall, barracks, and other modern buildings now occupied space used in the nineteenth century for agricultural experiments. Cots even appeared in the Normal School building.

Kerr's program, which he supervised from Queen's Park, trained over 100,000 men and women. By 1944, it was felt that industry and the armed forces could soon train any additional personnel needed and Kerr moved to Ryerson's old office at St. James Square, where he began planning for the post-war period. In 1945, the first Training and Re-establishment centre opened at St. James Square. This, another joint Federal-Provincial program, was designed to train returning military personnel for post-war society.

Advances in science and technology brought on by the War, and continued Canadian industrialization, which had been interrupted by the Depression, created a demand for a more highly trained population. Kerr was given control of this and eight other Ontario Training and Re-establishment centres. In two shifts the returning military were trained in a variety of trades, were given an intensive secondary school education, or earned a commerce diploma. Some 81 courses

were offered at St. James Square, with those taking trades training combining classroom training with subsequent industrial experience. To accommodate the substantial numbers, a large hangar was moved to St. James Square, to join the other military buildings.

As the need for this type of training for veterans declined (over 40,000 went through just the Toronto centre), discussions were already underway as to the future use of the buildings at the Square. During the War years a number of influential individuals, such as the Dean of Applied Sciences and Engineering at the University of Toronto and the Superintendent of Schools for the Toronto Board of Education had been suggesting that a new type of graduate was needed, one who had a limited post-secondary technical education of about 2 years and who could work as a technician or supervisor in industry.

Kerr, who had the support of the two top civil servants in the Department of Education, used this outside interest to press for the establishment of technical institutions. His vision of what these institutions would do was broader than what others were suggesting. In 1943, he had visited the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and came away convinced that Canada could develop its own MIT over a period of one hundred years. Along the way, such an institution could respond to the then current needs of the society. While the training of technicians, or technologists as Kerr preferred to call them, was to be the initial goal of the school, needs for practical training in other fields would also be addressed.



*The Link Trainer Room, one of the Normal School rooms used to train air force personnel.*

To Kerr, the ideal training for someone like the person who made engineers' designs work, as opposed to simply fixing the products of these designs when they broke, was a combination of theoretical studies and practical experience in the field such as was done in the retraining program. To make students even more adaptable, Kerr believed in the broadening influence of education in the humanities and the social sciences. If the technology or the job requirements changed, or a chance occurred to move up to a supervisory position, the graduate would not be held back by a narrow technical training.

When the Province finally approved the idea of technical institutes, in 1946, it proposed to found several (a School of Mining already existed in Haileybury). It turned out though that all but one would be special purpose schools, such as the mining school. Only the Toronto retraining centre would become a multi-program campus, Kerr's future MIT of Canada.



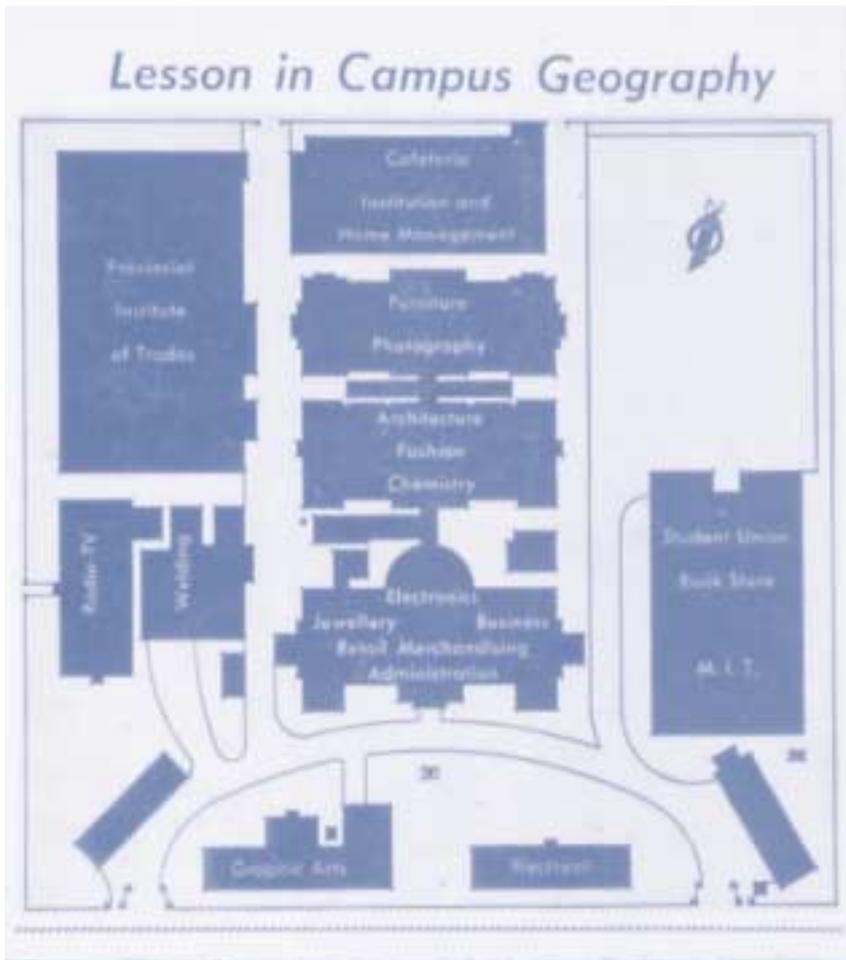
*View of the Normal School and wartime buildings, late 1940s.*

# *The Foundations Established: The Kerr Years 1948 – 1966*

Premier and Education Minister George Drew was concerned about the possibility of another war, this time with the Communists, which might necessitate further military use of the campus, and he did not approve the technical institute for Toronto until August of 1948. With scant weeks to go before the term would start Kerr, who was both principal of the new institution and Director of Technical Education for Ontario (the other technical institutes) worked with his staff to attract students. Advertisements using the coat of arms of the province and the names of the minister and deputy minister of Education were placed in Toronto newspapers. Like the choice of the name Ryerson, the use of the names of government officials and the coat of arms was designed to give instant prestige to the new institution.

When classes started, between two hundred and two hundred and fifty students were registered. This was a sizeable number, given the short time, but not enough to make the new school viable. While the senior civil servants in the Department of Education were supportive, provincial politicians were sceptical about the need for this new type of education, and, in effect, gave Ryerson five years to prove itself or it would be closed. In addition, many in the universities and in secondary schools saw no need for a third type of education. Even many of the industry representatives on the advisory councils for the rehabilitation courses had been lukewarm or hostile to the creation of a technical school. The general public, on the other hand, seemed to have no idea what Ryerson represented.

In 1948, Ryerson looked like a larger school than it was, because of the teaching it was doing for others. At the request of the Government, Ryerson continued to teach short trades courses for the Department of Labour, such as barbering, hairdressing, stationary engineering, and motor vehicle repair. For the 'needles trade', courses in tailoring were offered. Nursing Assistants were trained for the Department of Health, and University of Toronto students in Physical and Occupational Studies took printing and woodworking courses, while Institutional Management students took commercial cooking. None of these were actually Ryerson students, although they were taught at Ryerson. While these diverse groups improved appearances by making the Ryerson student body seem bigger, the large number of trades students on the St. James Square campus produced a public perception that Ryerson was a trade school, the very opposite image to that which Kerr wanted to create.



*Diagram of the uses of the buildings at R.I.T. in the late 1940s.*

Several factors worked in Kerr's favour. The courses (really programs) offered were easy to develop, being based on some of those offered in the re-establishment program, but were of two years duration, with at least 12 weeks work experience in the appropriate field between the second and third terms. These courses were housed in schools (similar to departments): the School of Architectural Draughting, the School of Business, the School of Costume Design, the School of Electronics, the School of Food Technology, the School of Furniture Crafts, the School of Graphic Arts, the School of Jewellery and Horology, the School of Industrial and Mechanical Technology and the School of Photography.

The expensive machinery necessary to teach in some of these fields was also a holdover from the rehabilitation days. Kerr had persuaded the Ontario Government to pay 50% of the

cost of machinery, in a provincial-federal split, with the argument that the machinery could be used later in technical institutes. This was at a time when the politicians had not even considered, let alone approved, such institutes. The instructors were also holdovers from the earlier training programs. They were one of the greatest assets. Despite being paid very low civil service salaries, below those paid secondary school teachers, they were a dedicated group. As well as working long teaching days, they were expected to call secondary schools looking for good Junior Matriculation (Grade 12) prospects

for Ryerson, to solicit summer and permanent jobs for the students, and to seek scholarship money from companies and individuals in their fields.

Urging them on was Howard Kerr, principal and benevolent dictator. Since Ryerson came under the Secondary School branch of the Ministry of Education, Kerr, as principal, was in charge. He set up a Faculty Council, which included the directors of schools and heads of departments, but made most decisions himself. A man of great energy (for several years he continued to be in charge of the technical schools at Hamilton, Port Arthur, and Haileybury as well), strong moral principles, and a decided tendency to autocratic control, he directed almost every detail in the founding period at Ryerson. So total was his control that he insisted that every work order had to be signed by him, for a series of buildings which required constant repair.

Kerr later maintained that Ryerson had to move fast to survive in the early days and could not afford the time for the committee deliberations which were part of governance at traditional post-secondary institutions. With constant modifications to buildings, to courses, and to whole programs, Kerr was kept busy. He was also very active in the area of student and faculty conduct. Both his sense of morality and his concern about Ryerson's image caused him to be very heavy handed in dealing with this conduct. Faculty chaperones turned up at all student social functions. One faculty member was assigned to patrol the halls looking for signs of drinking

KITCHENER-WATERLOO RECORD, Wed., Aug. 11, 1948 13

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

**RYERSON INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**  
25 GOULD STREET, TORONTO

OFFERS THE FOLLOWING COURSES — COMMENCING SEPT. 21st, 1948

**ELECTRONICS** (Radio Communications, Radio and Appliance Servicing, Industrial Electronics, Electronic Laboratory Practice, Marine Operating, Radio Amusement and Production), **JEWELLERY & HOROLOGY** (Goldsmithing and Gem Setting, Watchmaking and Engineering, BUSINESS (Retail Merchandising, \*Business Machines), **DRAUGHTING** (Architectural and Structural Drafting and Design), **FURNITURE CRAFTS** (Cabinet Making and Design, Upholstering, Wood Finishing), **PHOTOGRAPHY** (Professional, Commercial, Industrial), **FASHION CRAFTS** (Garment Design, \*Fashion Tailoring, \*Man's Tailoring), **FOOD TECHNOLOGY** (Commercial Cooking, Commercial Baking), **MACHINE TOOL TECHNOLOGY** (General Mechanical Tool Design, Tool and Die Making, Mechanical Drafting, \*Advanced Machine Shop), **GRAPHIC ARTS** (Color Composition and Typography, Letterpress Proofwork, Lettering and Intertype, Manuscript Photo Lithography, Offset Proofwork, Printing Design and Layout), **WELDING** (Shielded Metal Arc, \*Shielding Gas), **STATIONARY ENGINEERING**, **CHEMISTRY** (Distillation, \*Advanced Heat Treating), **BAKING**).

**Length of Course:**

1. All Courses marked with an asterisk (\*) are of three months' duration.
2. All other Courses are of two years' duration and under special circumstances shorter Courses may be offered by the Principal.
3. In the first year the Course is general, with specialization in one of the courses in question during the second year.
4. It requires suitable ability for previous attainment in an industry to be entered.

**Admission Requirements:**

1. Ontario Secondary School Certificate, Diploma, or
2. Evidence of the completion of any other Course of Training accepted as equivalent by the Principal, or
3. Evidence satisfactory to the Principal that the applicant is qualified to undertake the work of the Course.
4. Applicants must be not less than 18 years of age.

**Fees:**

1. For residents of Ontario: \$25.00 per session, payable at the beginning of the term.
2. For non-residents of Ontario: \$50.00 per session, \$25.00 per session, or \$100.00 per term, payable at the beginning of the term or terms.
3. For all non-residents of Ontario who do not receive financial aid: \$25.00 per term, payable at the beginning of the term or terms.
4. Application Fee of \$10.00 to be paid at time of registration.
5. Laboratory and other charges of \$10.00 to be paid at beginning of first term.
6. Student Transport Fee of \$5.00 to be paid at beginning of first term.
7. A limited number of Bursaries are available.

For further information apply to the Registrar, at the above address

The Chancellor: G. E. THORN, Minister of Education W. R. ACSTON-PURDIE, Deputy Minister

1948 newspaper ad for R.I.T.

on campus. When empty bottles were found in the parking lot, the gates were locked every night thereafter. Any student who acted up, off or on the Ryerson campus, was put on probation and threatened with expulsion. Students were warned that if they did not attend 85% of their classes they would be prevented from taking their exams. Faculty were warned against coming late to class, and against being unprepared for class. These policies continued into the 1960s.

The most talked about regulation was the dress code for men, introduced by Kerr in 1954 to try to boost the image of the school. Any male without a shirt and tie would effectively be denied entry to class. Apparently this worked, as numerous employers, and parents thinking of sending their son or daughter to Ryerson, commented on how much more professional Ryerson students appeared than those at other institutions. Kerr also had an elaborate graduation ceremony created, a school crest designed, and a school song written to give Ryerson tradition and, therefore, prestige.

Though thought of as stern rather than warm, H.H. as he became known behind his back, turned up at Ryerson sports events and dances, visited sick faculty in hospital, sent letters of condolence to students who had lost parents, and invited lonely students to his home at Christmas. Until the student population surpassed 1,000, he claimed to know every student by name and, long after his time as president was over, he would attend Ryerson functions and introduce himself to new faculty.

These early years were exciting ones. Courses and programs often changed content in mid-year. Some students started



*Howard Kerr at football game.*

out in two year programs only to see them become three years. The student body was a mixed one, with a few veterans still taking courses and a number of students who had been admitted on the basis of age and experience struggling to keep up with those who had the normally required Junior Matriculation. Many classrooms were very noisy in the wartime prefab buildings, and often rooms were poorly ventilated. It was not unheard of for renovations to take place in classrooms during classes.

The 1950s were a decade of intense school spirit at Ryerson, as at universities, and probably more so as Ryerson was an exciting new experiment. Sports were heavily supported, despite the fact that most teams had nowhere on campus to practice. Dances were much in fashion, with the Blue and Gold being the highlight of the year. The students in the technology courses had their chariot race each year, patterned after those at Kerr's alma mater, the University of Toronto. There was even a Miss Ryerson contest, which featured only men in the first years, since Ryerson was overwhelmingly male. Women had to be invited from the local Y.W.C.A.'s, from Willard Hall across Gerrard Street, and from nursing residences for the dances. Soon, several very active clubs operated on campus. A large band and an orchestra were formed and an annual musical and comedy review, known as RIOT, proved very successful. Many a Torontonians knew of Ryerson because of the innovative RIOT advertising done around the city by Ryerson's students.

Despite worries about the future Ryerson was an instant success. There was a far higher demand for graduates than Ryerson could meet, and enrollment increased very rapidly. In 1949 there were 541 full-time, 273 part-time, and 1530 evening students. Already Ryerson's strength in evening studies to meet the needs of urban workers was beginning to show. In the 1952-53 year, Ryerson prepared for 800 day students and 1300 were accepted. By that year there were 81 full-time instructors and 20 administrative staff (no record exists of support staff numbers), an increase of 21 instructors from the previous year.

This success created another problem, lack of space and overcrowding. Within a year of starting publication in 1949, the campus newspaper published by the Journalism students, the *Ryersonian*, was complaining about the overcrowded conditions on campus. More space was needed for classrooms and for new programs. Room had to be found also for CJRT-FM, which began broadcasting in 1949, one of the few FM stations in Canada and the only one located on a campus. At the end of 1949, the Electronics students broadcast, by cable to the auditorium, the first live television show in Canada for a general audience. In 1953 Ryerson had to make space for its own closed-circuit television station.

In 1952-53 the trades courses moved out to the new Provincial Institute of Trades, but Ryerson continued to grow rapidly and a sizeable portion of the freed-up space was used for a gym, for student government offices, and for other student facilities. Fire and safety standards were so poor in the wooden prefabs and the nineteenth century buildings that the issue appeared in the Toronto newspapers from time to time and even was raised in the legislature in 1954. Since 1952 students and faculty had been pushing sporadically for a new suburban location, owned by the University of Toronto (later the Glendon campus of York University). In 1955 the Government ended this campaign by announcing money for a new building on the Ryerson parking lot, the first of several that would, by 1963, form a square around the Normal School and result in the destruction of the wartime buildings.



*RIOT rehearsal.*

By the mid-50s, there were not many new programs being introduced, although Aeronautical and Gas Technology programs (3 years each) and Medical Laboratory Technology (2 years) were introduced in 1957, the first two because of the boom in the aeronautical field (prior to the cancellation of the Avro Arrow) and the building of the TransCanada pipeline. Most programs had moved to three years by this time and some of the original ones, such as Jewellery and Horology, had been discontinued. Another trend was the upgrading of entrance requirements such as in the Journalism program, which moved to partial and, later, to full Grade 13 (Senior Matriculation). English and

Economics had been joined by other arts and sciences subjects as increased enrollment allowed the hiring of more instructors, and thus an increase in the proportion of programs devoted to non-professional subjects.

As well as program and course changes, there were physical changes. By the early 1960s, Ryerson was a very different place from what it had been in 1948. The Normal School buildings were demolished in 1963, after the Quadrangle, later Howard Kerr Hall, was completed, and with it went a good deal of the tradition that Kerr had cultivated. While Kerr would have liked to keep the buildings, they were in a bad state of repair. English instructors, in their basement office, could literally feel their furniture sinking through the floor. Recycling historic buildings was not in favour at the time, and the Department of Public Works had never liked the Ryerson buildings, letting Kerr know in the early years that he could do whatever he wanted with them since the Department did not want the trouble of maintaining them. Only the facade was retained, with the idea that graduates would march out through it at convocation and link their present with the past.

With the assistance of the Provincial Government, another historic building was acquired in 1960. The Working Boys Home, which incorporated Oakham House, built by Toronto architect William Thomas in 1848-9, was renovated to become the student centre and a residence. In it a tuck shop was installed, to be run by one of the most beloved of Ryersonians, Aurelie Wycik. A refugee from Estonia, she had fled the Communist invasion and had worked in food services at Ryerson almost from its beginning. She and her second husband became “Mama and Papa” Wycik to thousands of students and more than one faculty member, before her death in 1978, and she secured custodial jobs for other Estonian refugees, including one ex-prime minister and a former minister of agriculture.

Night classes continued to be a big success for Ryerson, although registration dipped in the early 1960s as universities,

including the new York University, saw the demand for continuing education. There were about 4000 registrations per year in the mid-50s as opposed to about 2200 day registrations in the peak years of 1957 and '58. As yet the courses offered in the evenings were not co-ordinated with day programs. Little attempt was made to analyze societal trends and a course tended to be offered because someone felt like offering that particular one.

The area around Ryerson had been known as one of the less desirable areas of Toronto in the 1950s, but it provided a substantial pool of low cost housing. Since Ryerson had only a few residence rooms, this housing was important to the students. The 60s brought redevelopment of the area and much of this housing disappeared, making Ryerson much more a commuter school. With a larger student body there was less of a sense of common identity. These two factors, combined with a general decline in school spirit at post-secondary institutions, led to the end of many campus activities. The band died in 1962, and football, the most supported sport, ended in 1964-65. Ryerson's mascot, Eggy, a ram, who first appeared in 1960-61, lived on, however, in various forms. While large campus dances faded out and RIOT, by the 1960s essentially a Radio and Television Arts show, eventually ceased (1976), to be revived on a small scale in the 1980s, campus clubs continued to flourish. Several sports continue in the 1990s, most notably basketball, with albeit modest student support. What was lost, beginning in the early 1960s, was the high percentage of student participation in extra-curricular activities.



*The Quadrangle built around the Normal School, prior to the demolition of the enclosed buildings.*

By the early 1960s Ryerson had a more serious problem. It operated under an obsolete 1934 act regarding technical schools. Some of what the Institute did was therefore illegal. In addition, the past Chief Director of Education, Dr. J.G. Althouse, had been one of the original backers of the technical institute concept and had given Kerr a great deal of freedom. With Althouse gone Ryerson was increasingly governed by strict civil service rules. Three ministries controlled the Institute; Public Works the buildings, Education the courses, and the Civil Service Commission the staff. On top of all this, Ryerson had grown to such a size that it was difficult for one man, assisted by two or three other hard working individuals, to run all of it. After some discussions with the Ministry of Education, Kerr formally applied for separate governance for Ryerson, with its own Board of Governors, in 1962.

A committee which included Kerr was set up and, clearly influenced by him, agreed to the request, with the proviso that salaries should be raised for faculty, based on a combination of government grants and student fees. The committee also recommended a name change to Ryerson Polytechnical Institute. 'Institute' had been chosen by Kerr in 1948, from the American usage, to distinguish Ryerson from a college or a university. Calling the school a polytechnic was based on the British practice. It was intended to indicate that Ryerson was not, as it was originally, essentially a school for engineering technologists. It now offered a range of practice-based courses with over 50% in non-technology areas, especially business.

The Act of 1964 was another large step on the path to Kerr's dream of an MIT in Toronto. The Board began operating in 1964 but was not fully operational until 1966. Ironically, as Ryerson received the measure of autonomy that he wanted it to have, Howard Kerr left Ryerson. Kerr was 65 in 1966 and the Board felt it appropriate that he retire. It would have been difficult for Kerr with his passion to control everything to coexist with a body which had clear jurisdiction in some areas, and the Board had undoubtedly discovered this in the previous two years.

Kerr was then appointed as the part-time Chair of the Council of Regents for the newly created Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs), a position in which he made his presence felt. In 1972 Kerr was appointed to Ryerson's Board of Governors, receiving one of the Institute's first honorary degrees a year later. In 1978, after his allowable time on the Board was up, he was appointed Honourary Counsellor for life to this body, thus enabling him to continue to participate in developments at the school which he had created, until his death in 1984.



*The O'Keefe brewhouse, located on the east side of Victoria Street, north of Dundas.*

## *Times of Change: The Jorgenson and Mordell Years 1966 – 1975*

Clearly concerned about possible conflict between the president (formerly principal) and the Board, this body chose a very different type of person to succeed Kerr. Fred Jorgenson had previously been principal of the small Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in Calgary. An affable, easygoing individual, he had to deal not only with an institution in transition but also with the height of student and faculty radicalism. Among other demands these groups made was one for a democratic sharing of power. When students demanded a role in Faculty Council, the advisory body to the president, he let them have it. Known in its new form as Academic Council, this body had considerably more power than its predecessor and included student and faculty representation. When students protested the dress code, enforcement was quietly dropped. Students and some faculty found this type of approach refreshing, while traditionalists felt standards were slipping, and power was being diffused.



*Mordell, Kerr and Jorgenson at Convocation.*

Major changes had been initiated before Jorgenson arrived and he helped to carry them out. A consultants' report of 1966 called for a university style administration, with vice-presidents and deans, and a move away from the policy of administrators doing everything to one where secretaries handled the more routine tasks. Jorgenson acted on this. He also participated in a property buying spree. The government, in response to a Ryerson Board initiative to plan for a 10,000 student campus, announced a \$27-million, five-year plan to build four 18-storey teaching towers linked by 3-storey laboratory/classroom/recreation buildings and featuring underground classrooms beneath the grass in the quadrangle. The size of the St. James Square campus was to be doubled.

When enrollment projections changed, the plan was reduced to two smaller linked towers, but the plan to double the size of the campus went ahead. Some 60 properties were acquired, including some bought from the government. The biggest purchase was the O'Keefe Brewing Company buildings. This ended the wonderful, or terrible, smells that had often permeated classrooms on warm days, and also ended stories in the *Ryersonian* about the search for the mythical tunnel connecting Ryerson to the brewhouse.

Fred Jorgenson is most associated with a document known as "The Ryerson Philosophy", which he authored in 1968. Consulting widely both inside and outside Ryerson, he came up with a series of ideas for Ryerson's future. The document recommended dropping obsolete courses, upgrading existing ones, adding post-graduate courses, increasing credit courses at night, and integrating day and night courses into a total education package, thereby providing a flexible answer to the educational needs of working people. The document even hinted at the idea of offering degrees. Since the creation of the CAATs in 1965, some people inside Ryerson, as well as external consultants, had called for Ryerson to distinguish itself from the colleges, some of which had copied Ryerson courses in great detail. One, George Brown College, was based in the old Provincial Institute of Trades, the 1953 spin-off from Ryerson. It was necessary, these individuals felt, for Ryerson to upgrade and move on, leaving the field it had occupied to the CAATs.

Jorgenson left Ryerson in 1969, after only 3 years, and returned to his old job. Clearly the conflicting demands within an institution trying to decide where it was heading did not provide the kind of working environment which he enjoyed. After a search, Donald Mordell, a well regarded dean of Engineering at McGill University, was appointed in 1970. Mordell was the wrong man for the times. He was an autocrat while student and faculty radicalism was still at its peak, and he lacked the human touch of Howard Kerr.

Ryerson had promised to keep its costs at two-thirds that of the universities, in keeping with Kerr's concept of justifying polytechnic education by showing that it could be cheap and good. This policy, combined with the failure of enrollment predictions and higher costs associated with the administrative changes suggested to Jorgenson, led to a deficit of almost \$800,000 in 1972. Mordell fired almost half of the maintenance staff, let go other staff and imposed a freeze on faculty hiring. The faculty felt that he had not consulted faculty, staff, and students about his decision and overwhelmingly passed a vote of non-confidence. Although this censure did not directly affect his position, Mordell resigned in late 1974.

Despite the unpleasantness of the Mordell term in office, there was one major accomplishment. Mordell piloted a request for degrees through the Wright Commission on Post-Secondary Education in Ontario in 1970, and saw the passage of Bill 70 in 1971, giving Ryerson the right to grant degrees, which it did for the first time in 1972, to nine students and Premier William Davis. The degrees had different designations, such as Bachelor of Applied Arts, from those granted at universities, in order to show that Ryerson provided a different type of education, one which included a work requirement. While this was seen as a benefit to Ryerson at the time, these designations later proved a handicap to graduates, as employers did not know what they meant.

Programs had to be upgraded in order to warrant a degree. Usually this involved adding a year to the existing diploma program and revising some courses. By 1979 one-third of graduates received a degree. In 1973 the first all-new degree program, Applied Geography, was approved.

Donald Mordell's term also saw the introduction of Open College on CJRT. Patterned after Open University in Britain, it offered educational courses over the radio, another innovative attempt to reach out to the community. The same year, 1971, saw the introduction of the diploma program in Theatre Arts, long pushed by English teacher Jack McAllister. With the transfer of 3 schools of Nursing from the hospitals to Ryerson, a new Division of Community Services was created. Community oriented programs had existed since the early 1950s when Home Economics,

Childhood Management and Public Health Laboratory were introduced, but the establishment of a separate division recognized that the various programs, including Social Work, which comprised Community Services, were now an important aspect of Ryerson's role in educating to meet social needs as well as industrial and business needs.



*Some of the first degree graduates.  
William Davis is seated second from the right.*



*Walter Pitman meeting with students.*

## *Recovery and Challenge: The Pitman Years 1975 – 1980*

Walter Pitman was appointed Ryerson's fourth president. A prominent N.D.P. politician and, at the time, Dean of Arts at Trent University, Pitman was the right man for the times. While he spent much of his administrative energies on fighting the growing deficit, he is most remembered for calming the feelings of anger and mistrust among faculty, staff, and students.

Pitman called a meeting with SURPI, the student union, and explained the financial situation. He also asked faculty and staff what ideas they had to cut the deficit, which had continued to grow, due mainly to government funding at less than the rate of inflation, to the cost of upgrading programs to degree-granting status, and to a disastrous fire which swept through the Architecture Department, housed in rental space in the old City Hall annex. Most weeks he set aside some hours in a central lounge, where he would meet with any student, staff or faculty member who wished to speak with him. His office door was always open, and he even found time to play as a member of the History Department's team (the department to which he was nominally attached because of his background) in the Arts Division ball hockey tournament. Though it was unusual for a president, he also taught a course, in history.

While making modest cuts, the most difficult of which involved faculty cuts in Nursing, Pitman pushed the Ontario Government for additional funding, based upon the fact that the type of education Ryerson provided was what society needed and wanted in order to progress. He also argued that it was unfair to fund Ryerson's expensive professional programs at the same rate as less expensive liberal arts programs at universities. The massive growth in night courses, by then called Continuing Education, which made Ryerson the largest provider of such courses in Canada, buttressed Pitman's belief in the linkage between education and work, as an alternative to traditional university education. In all of this, he was echoing or amplifying Howard Kerr's ideas, and the ideas in the Ryerson Philosophy.

Innovation came in the late 1970s with the introduction of Centres to experiment with new ideas which might later be incorporated in more permanent forms. The Centre for Instructional Development, the Energy Centre and the Third World Centre were all established. The first centre was later replaced with GREET (Group to Enhance Effective Teaching), which provides workshops and materials on the teaching experience. The second centre was of particular use during the aftermath of the oil crisis of the 70s, and the third centre, which was an all-volunteer operation with diverse aims, evolved into Ryerson International, with a professional staff and sizeable external funding, to assist in overseas educational projects.

For students at Ryerson, the late 60s and the 70s was a period of increased freedom. The economy was in generally good shape, tuition costs low, and financing an education was a good possibility for many. This was particularly important for Ryerson students as a significant proportion were children of immigrants and could not expect substantial family support. With the dress code gone, the casual clothes of the period, often jeans, were worn to class, where students could smoke, and drinking in bars on or near the campus became an accepted fact. In this liberalized atmosphere senior administrators worried about what drunken hijinks would do for Ryerson's reputation.

As a sign of its desire to interact with society, and to enhance its downtown campus, Ryerson planned a community park in the mid-70s. With financing from a group of charitable organizations, especially the Devonian Foundation, and from the City of Toronto, the northern block of Victoria Street was turned into a pedestrian mall. To the south of this, trees, rocks, fountains and an ornamental pool/skating rink were added, to encourage use of the campus by non-students.



*Energy Centre vehicle.*



*Opening of the Academic Computing Centre.*

## *Entrepreneurship in Action: The Segal Years 1980 – 1988*

Walter Pitman's successor was a dynamic young Social Work professor and communications policy expert from Carleton University, Brian Segal. Although he had little experience in administration, Segal proved a quick study. He was anxious to move ahead rapidly and developed techniques to speed up the often slow processes of approval characteristic of post-secondary education. If he had an idea he gave it to the appropriate body or bodies for discussion, with a deadline. If no constructive comments or reasons not to proceed came forward by the deadline, he would proceed. Similarly, any new ideas were welcomed from individuals or committees, but if concrete plans and evidence of support were not forthcoming by a certain date, the idea was dropped. Having persuaded the Board of Governors to carry a deficit, while making some cuts, such as by closing the Library Arts program, Segal tried to innovate by seeking partnerships with, and support from, business and industry. Individual schools and departments were encouraged to seek donations of equipment. The president, himself, also sought such support.

Computers were donated to equip student labs and the Centre for Advanced Technology Education, which was built on top of the existing Technology Annex. CATE offered courses in computer-assisted design and computer-assisted modelling to companies which could not afford their own facilities. Slightly ahead of its time, it later offered more general courses targeted to specific industrial clients. It also provided space for research activity in engineering which helped pave the way for accreditation of Ryerson's Engineering programs.

Under Segal's leadership, Ryerson, which received no government funding for research, used operating funds to promote this activity. Both accreditation and future university status were facilitated by this decision. A number of faculty also assisted, by doing research on their own time, without financial assistance.

In 1982 the Centre for Industrial Development was set up with 3 years of provincial funding. Its task was to provide applied research assistance to small and medium sized industries without such facilities. In 1985 the Innovation Centre was created with 3 1/2 years funding to support entrepreneurship and startup businesses. Facilities were provided for embryonic student run companies. In 1986 Academic Council established the Office of Research and Innovation to replace the C.I.D. and supervise the Innovation Centre. Under O.R.I., now the Office of Research Services, administrative assistance was provided for Ryerson research funded from outside, in all fields, not just in the area of technology, as was the case with the C.I.D. As Ryerson has become more research oriented, the emphasis has shifted from seeking outside clients who want assistance to encouraging faculty to seek out research opportunities.

Government funding was secured to build an innovative athletics centre below the lawns inside Howard Kerr Hall (the Quadrangle), using the old Normal School entrance as one point of entry. Preliminary planning was done for other new buildings which would significantly enhance student life at Ryerson. With all of these changes, the internal debate over Ryerson's future began to take centre stage again as some faculty, students, and administrators argued that the Institute must seek full university status, in recognition of program improvements, emphasis on research, and competition from CAATs. Traditionalists argued that Ryerson should stick with the type of education and the status that had made it so successful.

After a short recession, beginning in 1982, the economy picked up again and Ryerson continued to grow. By the late 1980s the day enrollment exceeded 10,000 and the Continuing Education Division processed close to 30,000 course registrations, a record in Canada. The day student population continued to include a high proportion of children of immigrants, who were helped by the buoyant economy, and included a large group who had transferred from other post-secondary institutions, or had come after completing a university or community college education. In 1988-89, Ryerson's operating budget exceeded 92 million dollars. Full-time faculty and staff totalled 1295, while several hundred part-time instructors provided the equivalent teaching of an additional 295 full-time faculty.

Vestiges of the original Ryerson remained. For a while Oakham House provided both a band and a choir at Convocation, until interest waned in the former. The annual Toronto Island picnic, a later introduction, provided an annual, brief display of school spirit. Student groups funded by SURPI, the student union, and by Oakham House, which operated at arms length from Ryerson, maintained the tradition of the original student clubs. The proportion of students participating in these organizations was, however, much smaller than in the early years. From time to time the student newspapers lamented the lack of spirit.

For the majority of faculty, staff, and students, the late 1980s was a period of growth and change at Ryerson. While some had been hurt by cuts and the accumulated debt was high, money was being put into buildings and equipment. When Brian Segal moved on to become the president of the University of Guelph, there was every reason to expect continued progress.



*Devonian park and pool.*



*Gladys Doyle, who has worked at Ryerson's switchboard since 1952, celebrates 45 years service, with Terry Grier.*

## *Retrenchment, Growth, and University Status: The Grier Years 1988 – 1995*

For the first time, the Board of Governors chose an internal candidate in Terence (Terry) Grier, to succeed Brian Segal. A former dean of Arts and vice-president academic, Grier was known for his conciliatory style and congenial manner. With a sudden downturn in the economy in the early 90s and a government very anxious to reduce its own debt, much of his energy was devoted to working, along with the Board of Governors, at absorbing successive cuts in funding. Ryerson, along with other post-secondary institutions, saw increased class sizes, buy out packages for staff and faculty, staff reductions, and increased pressure on the service areas of the Institution to make money. Students also faced problems with summer and part-time work harder to get, parents less able to help, and tuition rising.

Amid all the difficulties, there were many things about which to be happy. With government support Ryerson built its first large residence on the east side of the expanded campus, and acquired a second residence, with the purchase of the Ibis Hotel, which serves simultaneously as a training facility for students in the Hospitality and Tourism Management program. Beside Walter Pitman Hall, as the newly built residence was called, Ryerson constructed the Rogers Communications Centre, the centrepiece of a major fundraising drive begun under Brian Segal. This building, equipped with the latest technology, is home to Applied Computer Science, Journalism and Radio and Television Arts. The latter two programs, which have been around in different forms since the beginnings of Ryerson, as have programs in Film

and Photography and Interior Design, represent portions of another area of particular strength, the Faculty of Applied Arts. In this Faculty, and in that of Community Services, are found a number of programs and a number of educational approaches which are unique to Ryerson in Canada.

It was one of the Community Services programs, Social Work, which marked another milestone in Ryerson's evolution, when it was the first to get a new degree designation, BSW, consistent with that granted at the universities. In 1992 six Engineering programs were allowed to grant BEng Degrees in place of the BTech, and were approved by the accrediting body as fully qualified engineering programs, a recognition of the upgrading that had gone on in many Ryerson programs. Now Ryerson was not turning out technologists, but rather engineers.

This upgrading, and Grier's persistent efforts, resulted in the passage of a bill, in June of 1993, to grant Ryerson full university status, with funding to support research and graduate programs. Since Ryerson had already moved heavily into encouraging research, the added funds were appreciated. The change in status was recognized in the new name, Ryerson Polytechnic University. The new university acquired a new official, a chancellor, in the person of The Honourable David Crombie, ex-mayor of Toronto, and former federal cabinet minister. The selection of Crombie was particularly appropriate because he had taught at Ryerson from 1962 to 1972, and had served as director of Student Services for several of those years.



*Opening of the Toronto Sun Newsroom 1993,  
by President Grier, Lynda Friendly of Ryerson's Board and  
John Downing of the Toronto Sun.*

One of the benefits of the new money, which has been provided in incremental steps, is that a number of centres have been created to support various types of research. Since they are centres, they can easily be closed down if not successful while, if successful, they can solicit outside funding as well as, or instead of, internal. It would be impossible to mention all of the centres, but one example of a particularly successful one is the Centre for the Study of Commercial Activity, set up in 1992, while Ryerson was allocating funds from operating budgets in order to encourage increased research activity. Now funded by a partnership of member supporters from the retail sector, the Centre provides research data, especially digital databases, research reports, education and training, for the retail sector, in order to boost competitiveness. As with many of the experiments in education undertaken by Ryerson since 1948, this is another example of working closely with the external world, serving its needs.



*Representatives of three campus organizations which provided student money for a major renovation join Claude Lajeunesse in reopening Oakham House, Ryerson's campus centre.*

## *Towards the Millennium*

In 1995 Terry Grier stepped down and Claude Lajeunesse, a professor with a background in nuclear engineering and head of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, was selected to succeed him. The tasks at hand were to continue to address the deficit and to plan the next step or steps in Ryerson's evolution. Lajeunesse set up a Vision Task Group, headed by ex-president Grier, to canvass internally and externally and to develop a picture of the directions that the University might take in the next century, based upon an amalgamation of ideas contributed by individuals and groups. From the report of this Group, Lajeunesse has chosen several points upon which to focus, in order that Ryerson retain its ability to move with the times, and to continue to provide the kind of education needed by a changing society.

The policies which the President has emphasized include a concentration on the needs of students: general and specific knowledge to ensure employability, high quality and student-friendly student services, and the removal of financial barriers to enrollment. Programs will be evaluated regularly and rigorously and budgets adjusted to reward quality.

Impediments to internal co-operation and inefficiencies in administration are to be identified and removed. The overall goal of these changes is to restore the ability to respond quickly to changes in the educational needs of Canadian society, while striving for continued improvements in the quality of education offered.

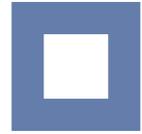
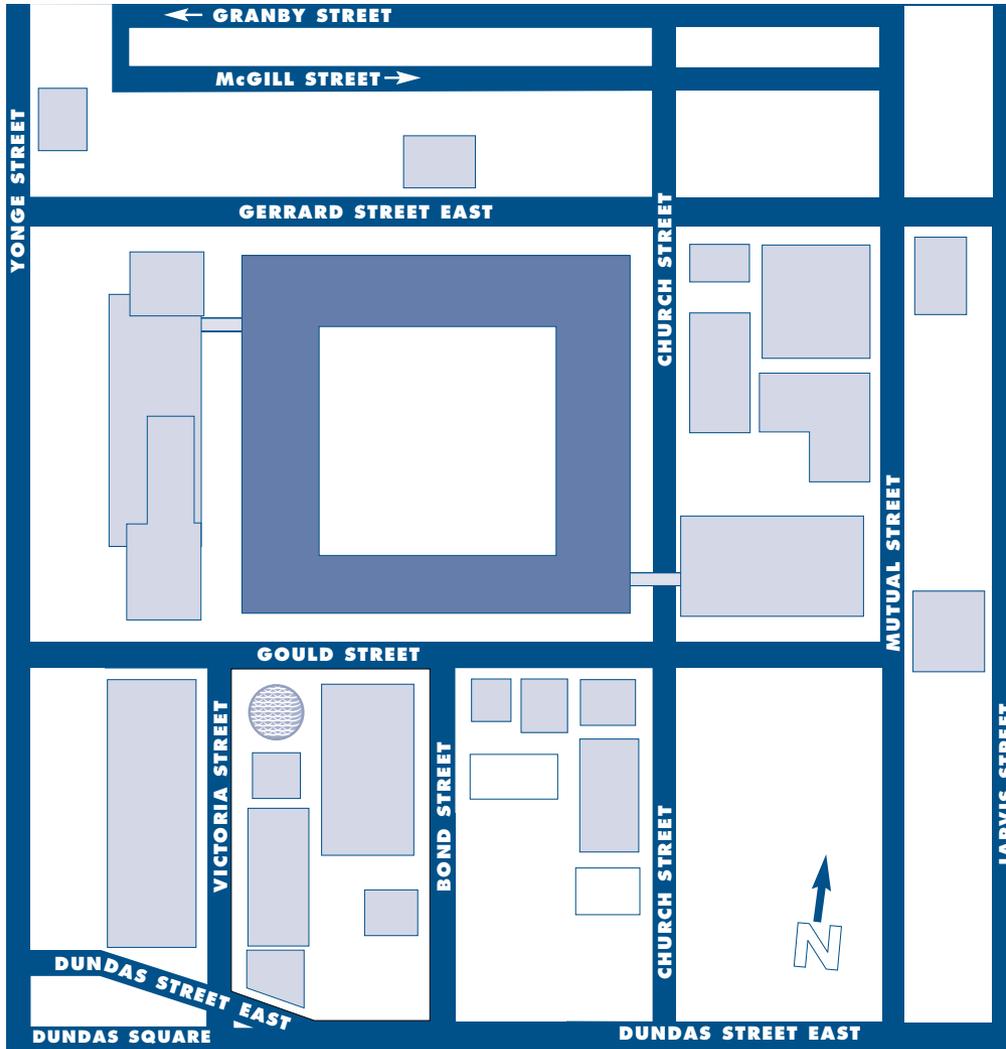
The next stage in Ryerson's evolution is already beginning. Several departments and schools are developing graduate programs. Research, which was, until the Segal years, left up to individual faculty members, who usually also had extensive teaching duties, now receives government funding. For several years, all faculty who are hired have been required to have an active interest in research. While undergraduate teaching remains at the core of Ryerson's mission, these newly supported activities will form the basis for an evolving university. These evolutionary steps were emphasized, in 1996, by the granting of the first honorary doctorates.

Ryerson, as can be seen from its history, is firmly on the path set for it by Howard Kerr, fifty years ago. It is committed to providing an education combining theory and practice in a particular field, backed up by a broadening humanities and social sciences component, designed to provide flexibility in employment. While, until the 1980s, some programs featured a one-year work component, this has been replaced, in recent years, by summer internships, short placements, or case studies. Some programs now offer the option of co-op education as a means of providing practical experience.

The University also strives to be relevant to the present and future needs of society. In 1997, for example, the first graduates in the Midwifery and in the Nurse Practitioner programs crossed the convocation stage, filling a newly recognized societal need. As the end of the century approaches, society is changing rapidly, and Ryerson needs to be flexible in order to evolve in response to these changes. This need has been addressed, in recent years, through the creation of centres and through the actions of the Continuing Education Division. While closely tied to day programs since the early 1970s, C.E. also has maintained and enhanced its ability to respond quickly to perceived needs, and to provide relevant up-to-date courses in emerging areas of study. President Lajeunesse's plans to streamline decision making are designed, among other things, to speed up the approval of day program changes.

The process of responding to perceived needs of the society is not, however, a haphazard process, driven by momentary fads. Ryerson is planning the direction its evolution as an educational institution will take, in line with the direction set for it by Howard Kerr, fifty years ago. One need only look at the newspaper advertisement for the programs offered in 1948 to realize how far Ryerson Institute of Technology has come, while remaining faithful to the ideas of Kerr, and of Egerton Ryerson.

# Ryerson Campus Then and Now



*The original  
1948 Ryerson  
Institute of  
Technology,  
today known  
as the Quad.*

*Film separation by Quebecor Litho Plus.  
Printed by Quebecor MIL.  
Printed on Mohawk Superfine Text paper, available from Graphic Resources.*

RYERSON