GRIT

THE LIFE AND POLITICS OF PAUL MARTIN SR.

GREG DONAGHY

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C.D. HOWE SERIES IN CANADIAN POLITICAL HISTORY
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FOREWORD

The C.D. Howe Memorial Foundation was created in 1961 to memorialize the work of Clarence Decatur Howe, an internationally renowned engineer and a senior cabinet minister in the governments of William Lyon Mackenzie King and Louis St. Laurent. Among Howe's accomplishments as a public servant was the mentoring of a generation of Canadian business and political leaders who shared a profound interest in public policy debates and in the importance of understanding the nature of historical change.

In the more than fifty years since his death, the Foundation has played a central role in furthering this rich public debate on important Canadian political and economic issues. Howe family members and leading business and political figures, including Robert Fowler, Bill Howe, Mary Dodge, Adam Zimmerman, W.J. (Bill) Bennett, Raymond Garneau, and John Turner, have done much to shape the Foundation's policies and its legacy, reflecting their own experience in a lively public forum in which business leaders, politicians, and educators have actively participated. In the 1970s, for example, the Foundation commissioned a series, Accent Québec, which made a major contribution to the debate about the economic consequences of Quebec separatism. The Foundation also gave special importance to practical economic analysis, which, with the aid of an outstanding staff of young economists, led to the formation of the independent C.D. Howe Institute.

One of us, Bob Bothwell, was the co-author of the official Howe biography, while the other, John English, wrote a biography of one of Howe's most eminent colleagues, Lester Pearson. After the publication of those biographies, the trustees invited us both to become members of the Howe board. That invitation reflected the Foundation's commitment to the importance of Canadian history and biography in the education of young Canadians and in the framing of Canadian political debate. This commitment was further affirmed by the Foundation's support for the C.D. Howe Series in Canadian Political History, for which we are series editors.

Grit: The Life and Politics of Paul Martin Sr. is the first volume in the series. We were fortunate enough to know Paul Martin Sr. personally and developed a deep admiration for a politician who read history and philosophy with enthusiasm and who enjoyed debating the past and present with academic historians. His library was impressive in size and focus; when one took a volume from the shelves there was always evidence that he had read the book. There was also a less serious side. As Greg Donaghy's book shows, he had a lively wit, a strong sense of fun, and frequently entertained his guests with his mimicry of people he had known and with his caustic opinion of the events of the day. We can recall enjoyable evenings spent around the dinner table at home with his wife Nell, his equal and partner in both wit and hospitality. One of his most notable traits too was a willingness to engage with younger people. "He was a downy old bird," a young British reporter commented after a post-midnight session in Martin's living room in London. Martin, he added, was a man of "real quality," who compared favourably with the British politicians he interacted with during his tenure as high commissioner in London.

Political history was a much more common intellectual pursuit when Paul Martin was a major public figure. It is now much neglected in Canada, and English Canada has fared badly in comparison with the rest of the Western world and with Quebec. The last (and only) biography of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent was published in 1967. Pierre Trudeau's National Energy Program of 1980, which still convulses national politics, has never received serious historical analysis and lives on mostly in the fulminations of its opponents. The Free Trade pact of 1987 got plenty of attention at the time, but the literature on the subject – written within a few years of the event – is sadly dated. The result is that contemporary

Canadians, even those with an interest in history, know less than they should about the history, distant or recent, of their own country.

It is for this reason that the C.D. Howe Foundation decided to endow a series in Canadian political history. Not only was Howe a pre-eminent political figure who deeply influenced the shape of modern Canada, he also flourished at a time when history books were read by more than just specialists. Canada was then a country where biographies of figures like John A. Macdonald and George Brown were bestsellers and where history informed government policy through the work of royal commissions on such subjects as federal-provincial relations or the functioning of the Canadian economy. The point is that history was considered relevant, and history informed public debate.

We cannot make that claim today. Too many contemporary politicians either reject history or reinterpret it to serve their own short-term purposes – adding a new meaning to the term "political" history. When this happens, most Canadian historians remain mute. Often they do not understand what is happening or how to reply to or refute this new kind of history-on-demand.

It is our hope that this series will make a difference. We are aiming at more than an academic audience. To reach Canadians other than academic historians, the books in this series will exclude professional jargon and intellectual obscurantism. We also value clear English and sound argumentation. Finally, we do not wish our books to be uncontroversial, and in every case we want to help contemporary Canadians to connect their present to their past.

Robert Bothwell and John English

PREFACE

Paul Martin's office was in an uproar. In the fall of 1956, the veteran minister of health and welfare was at the top of his game. He could boast of recent triumphs at the United Nations in New York and over polio at home, and he aspired to succeed fading prime minister Louis St. Laurent as head of the ruling Liberal Party. But in October, the celebrated political journalist Blair Fraser dismissed Martin's chances in *Maclean's,* the country's most important news magazine. Fraser suspected Martin's ambition and disliked his liberal politics. The next leader, insisted the influential Liberal columnist, must be a Protestant from English Canada, ruling Martin out. Not for the first time, Paul Martin railed against the ugly realities of race and religion in twentieth-century Canadian politics.

Martin's politics and ambitions were anything but simple. He matured in an era when the Catholic Church, particularly the French Canadian church from which he hailed, represented a conservative bulwark against modern liberalism. Yet the youthful Martin evolved into an unusual sort of Catholic politician. As a university student, he shed the conservative faith of his childhood and embraced a transformative Catholicism that was deeply rooted in the broad Western philosophic tradition. He drew on nineteenth-century British liberalism and the contemporary social teachings of the Catholic Church and its key thinkers, Pope Leo XIII and John Henry Newman, to craft a politics that enjoined government to defend its citizens against both the excesses of free-market capitalism and the depredations of the authoritarian state. He emerged from his youth as a

Catholic idealist, professing progressive, even radical, notions of workers' rights and global order, of an activist state supplying pensions and health care, enhancing peace and international security.

Building this new order was the business of politics, which Martin joyfully embraced as his life's vocation, a professional calling from God. A French-speaking Catholic in a world largely run by and for English Protestants, he was an "outsider," who learned early on to treasure tolerance, compromise, and accommodation as democracy's most vital political virtues.

Martin was an unshakeable Grit, who inherited a strong Liberal partisan identity rooted in the reform traditions of the "clear grits" of pre-Confederation Ontario. The nickname referred to the fine sand valued by Upper Canadian masons – "all sand and no dirt, clear grit all the way through." It was echoed in the American "true grit," conveying pluck and determination. Martin embodied both meanings. He resolutely practised a tolerant and civil politics that sought to unite Canadians in their shared struggle for a more just and equitable social order.

His critics, both Liberal and otherwise, questioned his ambition and willingness to compromise, and denounced his nakedly political tactics, often disparaging him as an unsophisticated ward-heeler. But there was nothing cruel or dishonourable about Paul Martin's politics. Dialogue and discussion, sometimes endless but always earnest, were key to brokering the alliances and bargains that were required to bring Canadians together in search of community and compassionate nationhood. His political imagination conjured pathways in the 1940s to new meanings of citizenship, pension reform, and health care.

Martin's politics reached beyond, and broke down, borders. This was true within Canada, where, he believed, accommodation and compromise could reduce barriers between French and English Canadians, dissolve divisions among ethnic and religious groups, and even bridge differences between Liberal and Conservative in aid of a greater good.

This was equally true for the world beyond Canada. Based in Windsor all his adult life, perched on the edge of the United States, Martin paid little heed to borders. From the bitter legacy of the First World War and the recurring crises of the interwar years, he drew a dynamic faith in the inevitability of world government and the international rule of law.

Neither the Second World War nor the brutal nuclear Cold War that followed dented his strong and active internationalism. Through the 1950s and into the turbulent 1960s, he harnessed his capacity for hard work with his patient faith in the value of dialogue and set out to build a better world, one free from war and want. He took a generous view of Canada's obligations to the world, savouring his wins and finding inspiration in his setbacks. "It only means we have to work harder to be more effective," he said of one reverse.[1]

Paul Martin was a complicated man. His faith, politics, and burning ambition remained inseparable. His career signals the best that politics can be: a tolerant dialogue bringing citizens together in search of active, compassionate government, at home and abroad.

1

SWEET PAUL, 1903–30

Race, religion, and class defined the young Paul Martin. His paternal grandfather, James, was the youngest son of Irish immigrants who settled around Beauharnois, Quebec, during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Born in 1833, James was married in 1858 to a francophone, Emma Lemaire, who gave birth to Paul Martin's father, Joseph Philippe Ernest Martin, in Ottawa in 1876. Philippe, as he was commonly known, was raised in Thurso, Quebec, before leaving home to attend Rigaud College. Armed with the school's short course in commercial studies, he returned to Ottawa in 1896 to work as a clerk in a furniture store and later as a bill collector.[1]

Strong and athletic, standing almost six feet tall, Philippe was a "relaxed and easy going" man who "never worried about a thing." His children, who called him "Daddy," absorbed his love of sports, his obvious warmth, and his steadfast good humour. They delighted, too, at his speech, a kind of "broken French and broken English" that Martin would later wryly describe as "perpetually bilingual."[2] When chided in French by his wife, Lumina, for wasting the family's money on a cigar – "Le voici, avec un cigare dans sa bouche!" – his cheerful retort in English became a family favourite: "Well, where do you want me to put it? In my hass?"[3]

Martin's mother came from different, tougher stock. Lumina Chouinard hailed from a sprawling Quebec City family, which had spread to Ottawa in the mid-nineteenth century to take advantage of its booming lumber industry and post-Confederation prosperity. The Chouinards were a

close-knit family of small-town lawyers, priests, and storekeepers, whose feet were planted precariously on the lowest rungs of the middle class. A petite woman, who barely reached five feet, Lumina was born in 1880 and raised amid a network of aunts, uncles, and cousins who occupied a warren of small, cheap dwellings that stretched from Bronson Avenue to Booth Street in Ottawa's LeBreton Flats district.

Lumina inherited the upward aspirations of the Chouinards. Employed before marriage as a schoolteacher in rural Embrun, just east of Ottawa, she spoke "beautiful English and beautiful French." Unlike Philippe, she fretted constantly about the family's finances and impressed forcefully upon all her children the vital importance of an education for getting ahead in this world. She was, her son Paul recalled candidly, "a very aggressive woman … the activist in the family." Above all, he added, she was "very ambitious for her children."[4]

Lumina and Philippe Martin were married in February 1901 and set up house at 63 LeBreton Street, one in a row of small red-brick houses near the southeast corner of Somerset Avenue in Ottawa's west end. Their early married life was not easy. A first-born daughter died tragically at nine months in 1902. The young couple had other burdens to bear, as Lumina's father, Guillaume, and then her young cousin Thomas, moved into their cramped accommodations. Their responsibilities grew even heavier on 23 June 1903, when Lumina gave birth to their second child, Joseph James Guillaume Paul Martin. Eight months later, finding it hard to make ends meet, and perhaps grateful to escape the confining house on LeBreton Street, the Martins left Ottawa for Pembroke. Generously described by a popular tourist guide of the time as "an industrious little town" of almost six thousand souls, Pembroke was, in reality, a rough and ready lumber town, 120 kilometres up the Ottawa River, propped on the edge of the vast and sparse Canadian Shield.[5] There, Philippe found work as a clerk in the small grocery store owned by his sister's husband, Isidore Martin.

The Martins prospered in Pembroke. When Isidore's store collapsed in 1909, Philippe quickly found similar work with J.B. Kemp, which provided the family with a steady income for many years and ensured that Paul's childhood passed in what he later described as "relative tranquility." The family expanded quickly as devout Catholic families usually did: Paul was

joined by a brother, Emile, in 1906, and then by five sisters; the twins, Lucille and Marie, in 1909; Aline in 1912; and a second set of twins, Anita and Claire, in 1915. A second brother, Charles Henri, was born "a blue baby" and died in 1914 at just two months.

The Martin family stood "very close to the Church in devotion, belief, and association," fasting and attending daily Mass during Lent and normally ending each day with the rosary.[6] Although such devotions were not unusual, their significance was reinforced in the Martin household by more immediate evidence of divine intervention. At the age of four, Paul contracted a severe form of polio that was sometimes fatal and often left even its surviving victims badly crippled. The prognosis was poor. "Goose oil and prayer," recommended the local doctor, "that's all that can help that boy."[7]

Martin's mother, Lumina, trusted in prayer. When Paul recovered enough to travel, she bundled him onto the train and set off for the popular shrines of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré and the new chapel of St. Joseph on the slopes of Montreal's Mount Royal, where Brother André Bessette prayed with the faithful. Paul's recovery was slow, and for the next few years his father and brother pulled him around Pembroke in a small wagon. Eventually, however, he walked again, but he was permanently burdened with a weak left shoulder, an impaired left arm, and a partially blind left eye. Lumina was steadfast in her belief that "it was Brother André, who made other cripples walk, who made it possible for Paul."[8]

During Martin's childhood, the family lived in a number of houses clustered close to Pembroke's St. Columbkille Cathedral and rented from the local Catholic bishop. Neither the house on Moffat Street, with its low-slung veranda, nor the dwelling at 329 Isabella Street, where the family moved just before Paul left for secondary school, were luxurious. But neither were they impoverished by local standards. The house on Isabella, to which Martin frequently returned as a young adult and recalled most clearly, lacked running water, depended on a wood stove for heat, and was certainly cramped, with the nine family members squeezed into two bedrooms. But the upright Heintzman piano in the dining room – bought on credit for two dollars a month – sounded a distinctive note and signalled Lumina's ambition and middle-class yearnings. "We were not rich," recalled Martin's youngest sisters, "but we were happy."[9]

Life in Pembroke was unsophisticated and isolated. "I cannot recall ever seeing a stranger having a meal at our house," Martin recalled with obvious wonder.[10] Life revolved around the family, and the Martins were close-knit. Encouraged by Philippe, who flooded the yard for an ice rink in winter and umpired local ball games in Dominion Park, the children enjoyed plenty of outdoor play. Philippe and Emile often managed some of Pembroke's lower-tiered sports teams, reflecting a family interest that Paul also embraced. Paul and Emile swam together in the nearby Ottawa River and were very good friends. Martin doted on his sister Lucille, to whom he was particularly close. All his siblings remembered him as "a great tease," who would provoke his little sisters into giggling fits during silent retreats and roar laughing at their roughhousing during Mass.[11]

His relationship with his mother was most significant in shaping the young Paul. His polio set him apart and reinforced his isolation, perhaps making him, as he later mused, "lonely by nature."[12] It left him with a craving for company that persisted throughout his life. He had few close friends of his own age in Pembroke, and because of his illness, he spent a great deal of time with Lumina, absorbing her fears, her faith, and most importantly, her strong ambitions. Like his mother, Paul worried about the family's finances and considered himself poor, a haunting insecurity that he never entirely escaped. Even as a teenager, he greatly resented the differences in wealth and influence that divided Pembroke's affluent mill-owners from its poorer citizens, and he recalled being deeply affected when his own father lost his job in 1921: "He was a strong man physically, and I can see yet the agony, the frustration, the sorrow, the disappointment, the bitterness that he experienced."[13] This sensibility fuelled a progressive social and economic outlook that grew stronger as Martin matured.

He was something of a "worrywart" too. School exams were "nightmares," and his good humour was frequently offset by a solemn seriousness and sense of purpose. Lumina often spoke to her children about "the nobility of public life," and even when Paul was a small child, his family told reporters in the 1940s, he wanted to be a politician. Mostly, however, Lumina spoke about the priesthood, and she was deeply gratified when Paul showed early evidence of a priestly vocation, daily rising at the crack of dawn to serve as an altar boy at the 6:30 Mass at the local Convent of Mary

Immaculate. When Pembroke bishop Patrick "Paddy" Ryan offered to pay Paul's secondary school fees to follow his calling, a time-honoured route upward for ambitious and devout Catholics, Lumina and Paul seized the chance. Paul was just fifteen when he left home in September 1918 to study at the Collège Apostolique St-Alexandre de la Gatineau in the small Quebec town of Ironsides, just a few miles north of Ottawa. When his father dropped him off on the gravel drive amid the college's lush green fields and imposing red-brick clock tower, Paul, who would always struggle to conceal his emotions, burst into tears.

He did well at St-Alexandre over the next three years, though he was never at home there. Nicknamed the "Holy-Ghost-Up-the-Gatineau" after the Spiritian fathers who ran it, St-Alexandre was a bilingual "petit seminaire," training priests for English- and French-speaking parishes on both sides of the Ottawa Valley. Run by a tough and athletic Alsatian priest, Joseph Burgsthaler, college life was meant to be shaped by a driving "thirst for a disciplined liberty."[14] There was lots of discipline but little liberty. The clock tower bell tolled the passing of each monotonous day: prayer, study, meals, play. Students, confined to the isolated campus on the banks of the Gatineau River, rose at six o'clock for daily Mass, breakfasted on porridge, toast, and jam, and ate dinners of pea soup, meat, and pudding.[15] This was not the life that Martin wanted, and when he encountered a former teacher decades later, he was unusually bitter in his reminiscences, telling his wife that "we all thought he was a son-of-a-bitch."[16]

The school's impact on Martin's politics was much more fundamental. By 1918, his attachment to the Liberal Party and its leader, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, was already firmly in place, inherited from his father. St-Alexandre, however, would sharpen Martin's identity as a French Canadian. Like many communities in the Ottawa Valley, Pembroke was deeply divided along linguistic lines between its French- and English-speaking inhabitants. Endless conflicts with the larger anglophone population and provincial restrictions on French-language education, embodied in the infamous Regulation 17, created pressures that made assimilation almost inevitable. The Martins were headed in that direction. Neither of Paul's two youngest sisters spoke much French, and the family often recited its daily rosary in English. Martin himself was educated in English at the local separate

school and learned to read at Pembroke's Carnegie Library, where he was introduced to Mark Twain and Gladstone's collected letters. The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and the imposition of conscription in 1917 in the face of fierce opposition from Laurier's Liberals and their French Canadian supporters sparked a crisis in Canadian unity.

The crisis echoed through Pembroke and in the Martin household on Isabella Street. When Grandmother Chouinard was refused Holy Communion at the Irish Canadian church of St. Patrick's in downtown Ottawa, the family was scandalized and unsure how to respond. "I can remember feuds around our family table," Paul recalled, "meal after meal, month after month." His father preferred discretion and raged against his Ottawa relations, who joined the local riots. Martin's mother was less accommodating and more determined to see "the French fact recognized and furthered."[17] This "nasty" division was doubtless uncomfortable for young Paul, and St-Alexandre represented an avenue of adolescent escape and self-definition. There, like most of his French Canadian classmates, he embraced the wave of nationalist enthusiasm that swept through Quebec's classical colleges in the wake of the First World War. The students he met "were very Quebec … They were very French, very nationalistic." "I was a Nationalist in those days," he later boasted, and "prejudiced against English-speaking people."[18]

The school's curriculum served Martin well, and his studies were both broadly based and useful. Traditional Catholic theology dominated, as did Latin and Greek composition and literature. He also devoted much time to English and French grammar and literature, and to Ancient, British, and Canadian history. After his third year, when he changed his mind about joining the priesthood, the college generously added arithmetic, algebra, and geometry to his program to meet the admission requirements for St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto.[19]

In June 1921, Martin returned to Pembroke for a summer of work in the mills. Three months later, he boarded the train for Toronto. The product of an isolated rural parish, he left his childhood home for the last time, driven by a conscious and striving ambition, instilled early by his mother and reinforced by his miraculous recovery from polio. He carried with him a devout Catholicism, vague notions of social justice, and an unfamiliar

and untested identity as a French Canadian nationalist. All these characteristics would be enlarged and refined in the coming decade.

In the early evening of 25 September 1921, Martin disembarked from the train at Toronto's Union Station. Marvelling at the grand Eaton's Department Store, where his mother shopped by catalogue, he rode the tram north along Yonge Street toward St. Michael's College. The deliberate result of a sustained policy of "scholars before buildings," the unprepossessing set of spartan buildings huddled between Queen's Park Crescent and Bay Street to the east, in a small block extending south from St. Mary's to St. Joseph's Streets.[20] Above the campus loomed the towering neo-Gothic spires of St. Basil's Church, erected in honour of the patron saint of the Basilian fathers, the Catholic teaching order that ran the college. The City of Toronto was just beginning to widen Bay Street, tearing down the college buildings on the eastern edge of the campus and transforming St. Michael's, which had so far enjoyed the "quiet seclusion of a Muskoka island," into a construction site. Disgruntled students and faculty dubbed campus, "the sand heap."[21]

The college's intellectual pedigree was more impressive. Founded in 1852 as a joint Catholic high school for boys and a seminary, "St. Mike's" had joined the much larger University of Toronto in 1910 as a semi-autonomous, federated college. Nevertheless, it remained profoundly Catholic in inspiration and outlook. It was staffed almost exclusively by priests and religious, and continued to enrol significant numbers of students who were headed for religious life, even in the 1920s. Many pupils, including Martin, regularly attended daily Mass, and a three-day silent retreat during the Lenten Holy Week was compulsory for all college members. Women students, admitted only in 1911 and housed in the nearby Loretto and St. Joseph residences, were segregated and generally took their classes by themselves. "It was," an early female student recalled bitterly, "a man's world."[22]

The masculine Catholic environment eased Martin's transition from the rural, bilingual St-Alexandre to the urbane and English-speaking St. Mike's. "It was very foreign to me," he admitted. "It was all very strange, but very exciting. I was happy almost from the first day I put my foot on the grounds

of St. Michael's."[23] He delighted in the college's more liberal discipline – enjoying the freedom to go out at night and to choose courses – and at the prospect of expanding his horizons. In this respect, the outward-looking college he encountered in 1921 fitted him to a tee. Increasingly confident and ambitious, Toronto's English-speaking Catholics were actively shedding their immigrant Irish past and embracing a modern identity as loyal, upwardly mobile, and civic-minded Canadians.[24] Under the guidance of Father Henry Carr, a young and liberal-minded Basilian, St. Mike's worked hard to embrace the Protestant university and the city around it. Carr, who became superior and college president in 1915, encouraged his students to pursue sports, especially football and hockey, and other intra-university activities as a means of breaking out of the Catholic ghetto.[25]

St. Mike's welcomed Carr's ambitions for a Catholic elite that was prepared to lay siege to the exclusive social and economic bastions of Protestant Toronto. Although the United States was making its cultural presence felt through magazines and movies, Toronto was still an Anglo-Canadian city. Eighty percent of its 522,000 people were of British heritage, with more than a quarter born in Britain.[26] It was city of stolid conservative values, favouring temperate tea dances at the King Edward Hotel and private home ownership. The Protestant Orange Lodge, feverishly loyal to Britain and intolerant of Catholics, dominated its political culture. But a new generation of Irish Catholic Canadians tested that orthodoxy. Led by Archbishop Neil McNeil, Canadian-born Catholic community leaders, priests, and educators advocated denominational peace, Catholic-Protestant reconciliation, and greater civic participation by Catholics. Conscious of their minority status, they shied away from doctrinal purity and embraced pragmatic compromise, adaptation, and accommodation to ensure the continued prosperity of their faith.[27] These values would mark Martin deeply.

Federation, too, was changing St. Mike's. Under pressure from the university, the college was moving away from the rigid and authoritarian Catholic theology that had dominated its curriculum since the mid-nineteenth century. Carr delighted in the change, pressing his younger staff to pursue the growing interest among Catholic theologians in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. Thomism flourished at St. Mike's. Pope Leo XIII, a scholar and intellectual, had championed the ideas of St. Augustine and St. Thomas to construct a modern philosophy of state that

was robust enough to tackle the false philosophies advanced in defence of laissez-faire capitalism and socialism. Under Leo XIII, Catholic social thinking embraced a "centralist" position that was intended to maintain individual rights and freedoms within a communitarian social framework. Among the results was Leo's 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum,* on capital and labour, which offered Catholics a worldview that legitimized the state's role in protecting private property, while strongly defending the principles of a right to a just wage and labour's right to organize.[28]

As he built up the college staff, Carr looked to Europe, where these ideas were being worked out most fully in a range of movements, including distributism, solidarism, and personalism. In 1919, he lured the Thomist philosopher Maurice DeWolf from Louvain, a leading centre of liberal Catholic thought. Prominent Catholic thinkers Sir Bertram Windle, the outgoing president of the National University of Ireland, and Fathers Léon Noël and Gerald Phelan from Louvain followed. Philosophers Jacques Maritain and Étienne Gilson joined them in the 1920s, eventually helping to found the renowned Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies. The work of Maritain and Gilson on the right relationship between state and individual, the vital importance of Christian social responsibility, and the centrality of individual freedom represented the "finest flowering" of Leo's Thomistic legacy and gave St. Mike's the country's most vibrant department of philosophy.[29] "The intellectual temperature here," recorded one faculty member, "rises ten degrees when these men are around."[30]

Martin was unaware of these currents when he encountered Father E.J. McCorkell during his second day on campus. Facing tuition and residence fees of $350, the new student had only $40 in his pocket. He needed help, and he got it from McCorkell, St. Mike's amiable and imperturbable registrar, who found him a part-time job at a local student hang-out, the Bluebird Cafe, and arranged for a loan.[31] Martin cleaned furnaces, too. And during the summers, he flogged magazine subscriptions in northern Ontario and took bets at horse-racing tracks in Windsor, whose Catholic community was closely tied to St. Mike's.

McCorkell, who became a mentor and life-long friend, had a more significant role to play, steering Martin toward the study of philosophy. By the early 1920s, St. Michael's saw philosophy as essential for the education of a "cultured Catholic gentleman." Its "creative potential" was also viewed

as especially good preparation for the rigours of law school, which St. Michael's graduates entered in increasing numbers each year, and which Martin already planned to attend. It had the added advantage that one could proceed from the first year pass arts course directly into the second year honours philosophy course without having to take an additional first year's honours course, an important consideration for poorer students like Martin.[32]

Martin's undergraduate courses were a fundamental part of his education, and they profoundly shaped his politics, his faith, and his identity. In sharp contrast to the otherworldly Catholic orthodoxy at St-Alexandre, the philosophy program at St. Michael's was broad ranging and comprehensive. It began with the Greeks, Plato and Aristotle, and moved steadily forward through the early church fathers, St. Thomas Aquinas, and mainstream Western thinkers such as Descartes, Mill, and Kant. McCorkell's lectures on nineteenth-century thought introduced Martin to the liberalism of John Stuart Mill and gave an intellectual foundation to the Laurier Liberalism of his childhood.[33]

The Thomism instilled by St. Mike's was equally bracing and just as lasting. Martin was especially drawn to Cardinal John Henry Newman, the "slippery and often elusive" English divine whom the Anglican historian Owen Chadwick shrewdly labelled a "conservative innovator."[34] Newman's reverence for authority and tradition suited Martin's particular heritage and his cautious personality. "One generation," Martin sometimes insisted, "had no right and no capacity to pass judgement on the traditions of mankind."[35] But mostly he was inspired by Newman's demands for an order in which Christianity – changing "to remain the same" – retained its force as a "governing factor in society."[36] Thomism provided Martin with a theological justification for challenging authority, secular or religious, rationally criticizing the existing order, and proposing reforms. Engaged in the world about him, Martin's Newman was a liberal reformer, whose probing, critical mind forged new tools for new problems, ever guided by Christian revelation. In an increasingly secular age, when many progressives were shedding their religious faith, Thomism gave Martin grounds to hold tight to his.

Outside the lecture hall, he threw himself into college life. During his four years at St. Mike's, he lived in its grey-brick residence, spending two years in the "Jews flat" on the fourth floor before moving to better digs on

the second floor, or the "Irish flat." Unlike most of his classmates, Martin arrived on campus knowing precisely what he wanted to be: certainly a politician and government minister, and possibly even a prime minister. He chose his extracurricular activities accordingly. From the start, he was active in the college drama club, winning a seat on its executive and acting throughout his undergraduate years. He was also an executive member of the college literary club, which invited local worthies to discuss contemporary literature with high-spirited and romantic undergraduates, who cheerfully denounced modern novelists for their "ruthless realism."[37] A voracious reader whose tastes ran mostly to history, philosophy, and biography – subjects from which he could draw practical lessons – Martin never developed a genuine interest in imaginative literature, to the regret of his classmate, the novelist Morley Callaghan.

Sports were important for a well-rounded college career at St. Mike's, whose tiny student body of just over 140 men fielded thirteen "rugby" teams in 1928.[38] Martin, whose polio excluded him from the sports field, managed an intramural hockey team in 1923-24, losing the Jennings Cup final to a team of medical students. At least, Martin's crew consoled themselves, it wasn't "a very big cup."[39] He enjoyed more success the next year, when he managed the intermediate intercollegiate football team, which captured the S.J. Shaw Trophy.

Martin directed most of his extracurricular energies to student politics and debating, whose prestige rivalled athletics at the college. Earnestly focused on his future ambitions, he rounded up a handful of "politically inclined" students in his second year to form a new college discussion club, the pretentiously named Quindecim. Limited to fifteen carefully chosen members, the club hoped to introduce them to prominent political figures. Its reach consistently exceeded its grasp, however, and its guests, who included a Toronto rabbi, the Cuban consul general, and journalist Sir John Willison, were typically local celebrities or political has-beens.[40]

More important, and much more fun, was the college's mock student parliament, which Martin joined in December of 1921, standing as a Liberal. The following year, he played the part of the Liberal premier in the kind of rollicking session that undergraduate politicians have always loved, losing his government on a confidence vote but re-emerging triumphantly in the end.[41] Mock parliament was the springboard to a debating career at

the college and at the University of Toronto, where Martin developed and honed the rhetorical skills that would become a prominent part of his political arsenal.

Although he was not the best speaker of his class (that honour went to Morley Callaghan), he was nonetheless a "bewilderingly formidable" opponent, armed by his philosophy classes with a quiver of memorized quotations from Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas. What he lacked in polish, he made up for in energy, enthusiasm, and volume. In a fictionalized account of his undergraduate days, *The Varsity Story,* Callaghan fondly recalled Martin's energetic style: "The St. Mike's man, speaking vehemently, was having trouble with his boiled shirt, which kept billowing out from the black vest. He kept pounding it in with his fist as he talked."[42]

Martin's enthusiastic approach, which established him as a presence on campus, delighted his listeners. In his second year, he won a college prize, the Gough Trophy, "for most consistent oratorical effort," and he joined Callaghan on the college's inter-faculty debating team in their third year. They lost to Law, beat Victoria College, and won coveted spots on the University of Toronto's intercollegiate team. As part of that team, Martin represented Toronto against McGill in February 1923, when he "fairly carried his audience away by his earnest and convincing style."[43]

His success as a debater reinforced his standing at St. Mike's, where he was admired for his maturity, judgment, and "intellectual balance." Callaghan later wrote that "his vast amiability made him popular."[44] His friends called him "Sweet Paul," a teasing reference to his fondness for desserts perhaps, but also an acknowledgment of his friendly disposition and self-confident manner. In his final year, Martin won that traditional measure of student popularity, election as St. Mike's student council president, using the position to rally student support for the college's first activity fee.[45]

His larger political ambitions, which were common knowledge on campus, marked him out among cynical undergraduates as unusual. As a student recalled, they saw through his "quasi-political techniques" and sometimes derided him as a "serious, somewhat plodding classmate."[46] Behind his back, aware of his pleasure when the campus press noted his successes, they tagged him "The Great One."[47] Persuading his contemporaries of his sincerity would be a lasting challenge for Martin, one that cast a shadow over his entire life.

Martin's professors and teachers, more worldly and more experienced, were less inclined to question the motives of an ambitious young undergraduate. They quickly took him up and happily opened doors for him when they could. Joking with a classmate (though only half in jest) that "influence is a great factor in the so-called successful Career," Martin courted his professors' attention.[48] In letters to his mentors, he was lavish in his flattery and his expressions of gratitude. They responded as well to his guileless and genuine "capacity for admiration," qualities that he retained throughout his life.[49] Like McCorkell and Carr, many at St. Mike's were impressed by his "honest simplicity and true humility."[50]

Martin's network was broadened further through his close friendship with Burgon Bickersteth, the warden of Hart House. His most influential mentor at the University of Toronto, Bickersteth was the son of a leading English Anglican family. Educated at Charterhouse and Oxford, he qualified as a charter member of the British establishment. A decorated veteran of the First World War, where he fought with the Royal Dragoons, Bickersteth was en route home to England after teaching in Alberta when businessman Vincent Massey offered him the warden's post in 1921.[51] Funded by the Massey family, Hart House was intended to introduce Toronto undergraduates to the best Oxbridge traditions and to serve as the university's cultural centre.

The charismatic Bickersteth was an inspired choice for warden. Just thirty-three years old, he was intensely interested in youth, who responded warmly to his "open-handed manner."[52] When he overheard Martin dismiss him as a "damned Englishman," a story that Martin polished to a gem over his lifetime, he invited him for tea.[53] The effect was magical. Hart House overwhelmed Martin. It was, he recalled, "an unforgettable institution – the library, the lovely dining room, the music room, the paintings – all those things young Canadians never saw at home."[54] Bickersteth lectured the French Canadian Catholic on the virtues of tolerance, and the two soon became friends. Martin copied the warden's dress and social mannerisms, and turned to him for career advice.

Like McCorkell and Carr, Bickersteth took Martin's political aspirations seriously. As he later wrote his parents, he derived a unique joy from "watching young freshmen, green, underdeveloped, narrow and restricted in their outlook … beginning to play their part on the Dominion [national]

stage."[55] Anxious to bridge the French-English divisions left by the First World War and conscription, he was drawn by the kind of ideal Canadian politician that Martin might one day become. "It's satisfactory to feel that this [Hart] House did something for him," Bickersteth wrote Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, "and that whereas he came here as an undergraduate with sharply developed racial and religious prejudices he has now got rid of those."[56] In due course, as one of Martin's professors put it, the bilingual Martin "may very well find a useful role in mediating and interpreting between us and our French-Canadian brethren of the Province of Quebec, for the promotion of mutual understanding and cooperation for the general good."[57] Bickersteth made sure that Martin met his Liberal friends, including Prime Minister King.

Four years as an undergraduate at St. Mike's and the University of Toronto gave some form and substance to the undefined liberal ideas that Martin had held on his arrival. During the summer of 1925, soon after his graduation, the Pembroke Kiwanis Club invited him to give a youthful perspective on the pressing issues of the day. As his sponsors had hoped, his French Canadian nationalism, though by no means entirely extinguished, had been smoothed over, replaced by a new attachment to tolerance as the central virtue of Canadian democracy. The University of Toronto, he told his audience, had many religions, but it functioned "as one harmonious body" and "teaches us that the solution to our difficulties lies in tolerance."[58]

The youthful Martin could still be provoked, however, especially in debate. Amid a throng of jeering students who were attached to the university's palpable British imperial heritage, he was sometimes tempted to revert to dramatic shorthand. "Canada first and England second!" he baited his audience.[59] But his real views on the imperial connection were more refined. His French Canadian doubts about the subject mixed easily with the dominant views of St. Mike's postwar Irish Catholic majority, most of whom had grown up in Toronto's separate school system, with its dual emphasis on a "love of God and country."[60] Like them, Martin consciously carved out a civic identity that was deliberately and proudly Canadian but not anti-British. In thoughtful moments, he was less inclined to distinguish sharply between the two nations. Although Canada needed its own national

ideals and traditions, he insisted that "full and independent nationhood was in no sense an act of disloyalty to the British Empire."[61]

These views placed Martin on the left wing of his Liberal Party. His other central ideas on leaving St. Mike's were even more progressive. He flirted with proportional representation and denounced the suffocating grasp of party discipline, which stripped individual voters of "independent thought and decision" and replaced them with "the party spirit." That kind of compulsion, he warned, led to Bolshevism and the socialist nightmare that was sweeping across Soviet Russia. While young progressives throughout Canada were embracing fashionable collective doctrines, Martin grounded his economic ideas in his liberalism and Catholic faith. "I believe the only way to remedy conditions [of poverty]," he told Pembroke's leading citizens, "is the adoption of the spirit of Christianity and the acknowledgement of God." He forcefully reminded the town's factory and mill-owners that their "moral duty" as employers was to create the conditions of life that would make people happy.[62]

The virtues of tolerance, liberty, and economic justice animated Martin's talk. They were all values that his studies and experiences at St. Mike's and the University of Toronto had nurtured and reinforced. He was far less sophisticated in addressing the problem of war. Like many of his generation, exposed to the carnage of the First World War, he condemned conflict as "an insult to the intelligence." He embraced the League of Nations, created at the end of the war, simply – perhaps even skeptically – as evidence of a "determined effort for peace and the elimination of war." His remarks on the league lacked idealism and conviction, and reflected a parochial worldview that Toronto had done little to overcome. That was about to change, and during the next five years, as he rounded out his education, Martin's world expanded steadily outward.[63]

Martin's undergraduate experience extended his horizons and bred new ambitions. With encouragement from Bickersteth and McCorkell, he applied for a Rhodes scholarship in the spring of 1925 to study at Oxford. Distracted by his extracurricular activities, however, he had achieved just a "B" average and stood little chance. Instead, he was forced to resume his earlier plans to pursue legal studies at Osgoode Hall Law School in September 1925. Run by the Law Society of Upper Canada, Osgoode Hall

was a relaxed and uninspired institution in the 1920s, where the "prevailing spirit was friendly."[64] The full-time academic staff was small and overshadowed by the part-time teachers, who taught the dreary technical subjects – wills, contracts, torts, mortgages – that dominated the curriculum. Martin attended two dull lectures every morning from nine to eleven, then headed off to complete his professional articles in the "dirty, dusty, ill-decorated" law offices of Henderson and McGuire. He absorbed the practical minutiae of his chosen profession, but Osgoode "was not a happy place."[65]

During the three years that Martin studied law, he found his inspiration elsewhere. Like several other Osgoode students, he pursued a concurrent master's degree, writing a thesis at St. Mike's under Father Gerald Phelan on Cardinal Newman's *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. Newman's seminal work on the importance of personal faith over reason alone in confronting the world reinforced Martin's Thomistic view of contemporary Catholicism and its continued relevance. Indeed, as he told a University of Ottawa conference that marked the 1945 centennial of Newman's conversion from Anglicanism, faith retained its engaged, liberating, and reforming role in modern society. "The interior world, physical and historical, is but the manifestation to our sense of realities greater than itself," he insisted. "These Christian realities must again, as always in time of crisis, be reasserted with their eternal spirit, always dynamic and progressive, always coeval with the human soul and needs."[66] The graduate experience, which included a paid stint as a sessional lecturer in 1927-28, reinforced Martin's view of himself as an intellectual, a status he treasured.

He remained active in campus affairs. During the winter of 1926, he captained the Varsity debating squad in its successful contest with an Oxbridge team; the *Toronto Globe* called his performance a "triumph of eloquence."[67] In the spring, he was elected president of the university's Newman Club, the focus of Varsity social and religious life for Catholic students outside St. Mike's. His campaign was marred by bare-knuckled tactics – the Martin camp tried to close nominations early to exclude his opponent – that bordered on the illegitimate and did his reputation on campus little good.[68]

Martin used the club's speaking program in 1926-27 to enhance his own network, inviting prominent Liberal cabinet ministers Ernest Lapointe and

Fernand Rinfret to speak at its Sunday evening lectures. At the same time, he became increasingly active in Liberal Party circles. After campaigning in the Pembroke riding of North Renfrew during the 1925 federal election, he was elected vice-president of the University of Toronto's Gladstone Young Liberal Club for the 1926-27 academic year and served as its president the following year, his last on campus.

No one was surprised when Martin decided to seek the Liberal nomination in the June 1928 by-election to fill the vacant provincial riding of North Renfrew, which included his hometown of Pembroke. He had flirted with Ontario politics since arriving at St. Mike's, and he had become friendly with the provincial Liberal organizer, Nelson Parliament. In January 1926, he began to compile a carefully indexed clipping file on Ontario politics.[69] He was clearly ready for battle and was at least as determined to run as the party's organizers, W.H. Moore and Senator Andrew Haydon, were in having him contest the election during the summer's slow political season.

Renfrew Liberals were more doubtful. North Renfrew was a Conservative riding, and the Tory candidate, E.A. Dunlop, was a leading employer in the region and a prospective member of Premier Howard Ferguson's cabinet. Outside Pembroke, as one executive of the Liberal riding association explained, there was "quite a sentiment" to allow Dunlop to stand unopposed.[70] Martin's parents were skeptical, too. His father was particularly uncomfortable with the idea of his son challenging the region's leading industrialist. "I remember having a real row," Martin recalled, "getting up from the table and I was in tears – the idea that he would not support the position I was taking."[71] Martin and his Toronto backers forced the issue, and on 4 June he was selected the Liberal candidate. Next day, a *Toronto Globe* editorial attacked the unpleasant murmurs already circulating that Martin was acting from narrow self-interest, and it praised the young candidate for setting "an example for others of his fellow students to follow."[72]

Martin discovered how tough and nasty a real campaign could be, a lesson he never forgot. He confessed to his diary that the slow start and empty halls were "somewhat disheartening," and after wandering through the small towns and hamlets of the Ottawa Valley, he complained of being so tired that he could barely remember what he was doing.[73] In his campaign stops, he spoke about the daily struggles of the average worker, whose

welfare, he insisted, ought to be the primary focus of government. He promised to support old age pensions, and he attacked Dunlop and other mill-owners for their low wages and selfish refusal to allow the provincial power company, Ontario Hydro, to develop the Ottawa Valley for the good of the community.[74] He promised a minimum living wage to reflect the Christian commitment to justice (while en route, he read Jesuit economist Father F.A. Walker on a livable wage for moral sustenance). The workingman, Martin reasoned naively with his audience, "if he cared to better his condition, could not consistently vote against me."[75]

But elections are rarely about ideas, and Dunlop's response was swift and unforgiving. The Tory attacked the provincial Liberal Party and its moralistic leader, W.E.N. Sinclair, for supporting temperance, an unpopular platform in much of the province. Dunlop savaged Martin's speeches as part of a "whisper campaign of slander" and dismissed his wage proposals as "foolish, childish, [and] juvenile."[76] The charges stuck. The North Renfrew Liberal-Conservative Association bought a full-page ad in the *Pembroke Standard-Observer* to remind voters of how much they owed Dunlop, who had brought the Eddy Match Company, the Shook Mill, and the steel equipment plant to Pembroke.[77] Townsfolk, who nicknamed the Liberal candidate "Paul-Who-Does-He-Think-He-Is-Martin," flocked to the all-candidate debates to see him mocked.[78] Dunlop pummelled his opponent, winning the election by a majority of 2,201, a historic margin of victory.[79]

Martin later claimed that the defeat hit him "hardish" and convinced him not to run again for a long while.[80] Yet he observed in his diary that "the experience was worth the effort," adding that "I have no regrets in having become a candidate at all."[81] The vote established his credentials as an aspiring politician. The right people noticed when the *Ottawa Journal* praised his initiative and assured its readers that "Mr. Martin will be heard from again. He has youth, he has ability and energy, and what is far more finer, he has the true sporting spirit."[82] He boasted to contemporaries of the campaign, even claiming that the Tories tried to bribe him not to run. Within a year, he was already hinting to friends about contesting a federal seat. Meantime, armed with a two-hundred-dollar parting gift from Moore, he caught the westbound train from Toronto in early July 1928 and set out to discover his country. He spent a week in Windsor, renewing contacts he had

made as a summer student, and then headed west to Vancouver, working through a long list of Liberal contacts. It was a joyous trip, Martin luxuriating in his well-earned holiday. "Sleep," he sighed, "is a wonderful thing."[83]

He returned from his western tour with renewed energy, determined to pursue a graduate degree at Harvard Law School. The obstacles were daunting. He could not afford to fund the venture and was forced to beg from his political connections. Senator Haydon found him a six-hundred-dollar scholarship, but Toronto senator Frank O'Connor, the wealthy Catholic candy manufacturer whom he had hosted at the Newman Club, rejected his request for a loan of eight hundred dollars, offering him instead a job in his Boston plant. The encounter left Martin embarrassed and cautious about the sympathies of his fellow Catholics from English Canada. "I can't say that the Irish appeal to me very much," he rationalized in retelling the story, adding that "I never felt myself as a representative of the Catholics or the Irish in particular."[84]

Admission to Harvard was far from certain. Martin's sessional work at St. Mike's and the Renfrew campaign had taken time, causing him to fail a course in his final year and forcing him to write a supplemental exam. But he could be persuasive, and he convinced Donald MacRae, one of his Osgoode law professors and an acquaintance of Harvard dean Roscoe Pound, to back his application. MacRae's help did not rest solely on Martin's scholarly accomplishments. These did not, as the professor dryly put it, "enable me to say much in support of his application." Instead, MacRae emphasized his student's growing "tolerance" as a French Canadian, his active role in the Liberal Party, and his political ambitions. These "unusual qualifications" promised to create a public figure who could bridge the country's French-English divisions.[85] Martin would be "at least an interesting experiment," promised MacRae, "possibly a very successful one." Dean Pound hesitated but finally agreed "to stretch a point" and admitted the aspiring Canadian politician, whose case was clearly "exceptional."[86]

Martin thrived at Harvard, whose atmosphere was certainly different from Osgoode's. As he reflected later, it was "a workhouse … Everybody worked very hard there, and everybody vied with one another. There was no leisure time."[87] His enthusiasm for the law school filled his letters home: it was "truly great," he gushed soon after he arrived, "a great educational

environment."[88] Even his first "lonely" Christmas away from home, mostly spent catching up on his reading in a deserted library, failed to diminish his fervour. "Everything is proceeding smoothly," he assured Bickersteth. "Much work and enthusiasm is still the order of the day."[89]

Harvard's strong faculty inspired Martin. He described Dean Roscoe Pound, with whom he studied jurisprudence, as "brilliant and informative to a degree almost phenomenal."[90] He was equally pleased with his professor of administrative law, Felix Frankfurter (a future US Supreme Court justice). "I like him one of the best," he remarked ungrammatically.[91] Harvard's scholarly and academic approach to graduate law played to Martin's strengths. He liked Pound's philosophical turn of mind and Frankfurter's sociological understanding of administrative law. Most of all, he enjoyed the seminar in international law offered by Manley Hudson, whom he judged "a superb teacher, articulate and theatrical."[92] Martin's engagement was reflected in his results. At the end of the year, he ranked a very respectable sixth out of twenty-nine students, with marks ranging from a low of fifty-nine in Roman law to a high of eighty-four in international law.[93] His Toronto sponsors were pleased. Bickersteth told King that Martin had "done extremely well," and MacRae declared himself "entirely justified."[94]

Harvard represented the most rigorous legal training that Martin experienced, and it strengthened his exposure to international law. It also reinforced his determination to continue his studies abroad. "I wish I could express adequately the strength of my desire to study in England," he wrote Bickersteth in early 1929, asking for help. "That has always been one of my ambitions."[95] For much of his second term at Harvard, he was preoccupied with finding the money to follow Manley Hudson, who was leaving on sabbatical, to Trinity College, Cambridge. After failing to secure funding from the National Research Council, Martin refused to consider approaching Toronto Catholics and enlisted Bickersteth in an appeal to Vincent Massey, now Canada's chief diplomatic representative in Washington.[96] Though Martin consulted Bickersteth, he drafted the plea himself, stressing his "simplicity and gravity," playing up his radical French Canadian heritage, and reminding Massey that a year in England would "tend to make me more tolerant still."[97] Massey was unmoved, but a similar appeal from Bickersteth to Toronto financiers William Gundy and Percy Parker

produced $1,500 for Martin. "I am happy beyond bounds of expression," he wrote Bickersteth on learning the good news.[98] On 5 October 1929, leaving his father dockside, Martin boarded the RMS *Doric* in Montreal and headed for Liverpool on a third-class ticket.

Cambridge suited him. "I feel perfectly at home," he wrote his St. Mike's classmate Frank Flaherty a month after his arrival. It was not Harvard, he sniffed, but at least initially he considered his tutors "top-notch," describing Pearce Higgins, his international law professor, as "the living Grotius."[99] Although he subsequently revised this assessment downward – Pearce Higgins, it turned out, "read his way dryly through texts he had presented dozens of times before" – Cambridge offered compensations that more than made up for the shortcomings of its faculty. The leisurely pace gave Martin time to enjoy all its offerings, and he delighted in its steady diet of debate and discussion. "Hardly a day passes without fulfilling an engagement for tea, breakfast, lunch or dinner in the rooms of some don or some student," he observed. "More talk goes on here in an hour than in Mrs. Kelly's backyard during an entire day."[100]

He passed his time reading in the Squires Library or attending lectures on campus. He joined several local discussion groups whose mandates embraced contemporary international affairs, including the Royal Empire Society and the Seeley Club, where he chaired its study group on British Empire and Commonwealth affairs.[101] He naturally joined the Fisher Society, Cambridge's Catholic chaplaincy, and the Union Club as well. There, he debated the merits of independence for India and of religious education, favouring both. His style drew applause for its "great vigour and lucidity," but he was an infrequent participant.[102]

His contacts with his British hosts were mostly fleeting, and his closest friends in Cambridge were Canadians. During the Christmas vacation, he and Frank Mallon, a fellow student from St. Mike's, travelled to Brussels and Paris, where life was "cheap and 'sweet,'" and students could dine on potatoes and bread for twelve cents a day.[103] At Easter break, he joined Torontonians Wynne Plumptre and Jack Beer, another "bosom-buddy" from St. Mike's, on a trip through Italy. "We all had the curiosity of students," he later reminisced, adding that "I can't emphasize how happy I was."[104]

One of his few British friends at Cambridge, the undergraduate law student Wilfred Jenks, had a profound influence on Martin. A brilliant

scholarship boy, Jenks, who eventually headed the International Labour Organization in the 1960s, was an inspiring idealist whose faith in the possibilities of the League of the Nations touched Martin deeply. "No man in my life," Martin wrote, "so captivated me by his knowledge and zeal for a new international order based on law and justice."[105] Though he needed little persuading, Jenks convinced him to attend the Geneva School for International Affairs, a summer seminar on world politics run by the British historian and political scientist Sir Alfred Zimmern. Martin described Zimmern as a "cautious idealist" and as his "intellectual hero." With his French wife, he ran a quixotic eight-week course comprised of week-long multi-disciplinary sessions infused with his ardent faith in public opinion and international cooperation.[106] In the summer of 1930, the school offered seminars on world geography, sociology, the United States, education, economics, Asia, history, and law. The course ended with a visit to the opening session of the Assembly of the League of Nations.

Martin briefly returned to Pembroke during the fall of 1930, well rested and very pleased with his year abroad. "I have grown intellectually and corporally," he joked with his friends, who were already amused by his increasing girth.[107] "My year at Cambridge has been most successful and memorable," he wrote Prime Minister King, whose interest in the young Liberal politician had been carefully primed in his absence by Bickersteth. "There has come to me much experience and happiness," added the former French Canadian nationalist, now transformed into a devoted anglophile.[108] "I grew to like the English people and their country," he observed later. "I felt that perhaps there is no higher form of civilization than you find in the best Englishmen. They really are top people. They are strong and superior people."[109]

Cambridge and Geneva cemented Martin's attachment to international law and his commitment to the work of the League of Nations. His education abroad built on his experiences in Toronto and gave him the necessary tools to shape a sophisticated and idealistic philosophy of internationalism (and indeed, of government itself). It reflected the recent and varied influences on his thinking, embracing St. Thomas Aquinas and Zimmern in equal parts. He rejected Hegelian notions that the state was the highest form of association: "History proves the falsity of this idea. Political theory denies its worth. Ethics deplores its recognition." Citing Aristotle and

Aquinas, he based his case on natural law and argued that man was a social and political animal with inherent rights. "Since men have the same human nature," he asserted, "their natural equality gives them title in equal measure to the fruits of the earth." Man's social nature encouraged him to seek peace through cooperation in ever larger communities.

Reverting again to Aquinas, Martin reiterated his view that the proper function of government was to enhance this cooperation to maintain and promote the natural rights of its subjects. By providing justice – the right division of the fruits of the earth – government created the conditions for peace, order, and unity. By extension, world peace would be possible only when the international system and all its member states were subject to laws and legal norms that were capable of delivering justice. In the final analysis, Martin continued, half measures, such as Kant's federation of sovereign nations, would never work. Instead, states must ultimately surrender their sovereignty and join in world government.

He used Zimmern to demonstrate that this step would not diminish individual nations. Real internationalism would reinforce an "ordered nationalism" that preserved the "corporate inheritance" of each nation and formed a bulwark against the worst forms of twentieth-century materialism. "True unity does not involve the obliteration of all the diversities … Internationalism will not affect the diversities seen in individuals and in nations, but through this diversity will come the realization of its thesis … Mere uniformity is not unity; variety is wealth."[110] Bickersteth could not have said it better than the former nationalist he mentored.