

OBITUARY

LOTHAR RICHTER (1894-1948)

DR. RICHTER, editor of the quarterly *Public Affairs* from its inception in 1937, died in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in November, 1948, as a result of a road accident. He had held the rank of professor at Dalhousie University from 1936, and was the executive director of its Institute of Public Affairs.

For many Canadian students of economics and politics, the sum of their acquaintance with Dr. Richter and his work was through his quarterly—I believe the other members of the editorial board of *Public Affairs* will agree that it has been “his” quarterly. Its success as a forum for the discussion of public questions was due, not alone to Dr. Richter’s persuasiveness with potential contributors, but rather to his main conviction. He had learned that democracies survive only so far as the men and the groups that comprise them know themselves and the issues facing them. The journal he designed and developed towards this end. The Institute of Public Affairs was a second, and his teaching a third of the instruments which to him represented, if not the only, at least the most hopeful, means of preserving the sort of society in which freedom and justice might remain among human values.

Richter’s views on education and society emerged from his academic and practical training. The son of a German barrister, he had left school as a classical scholar and had proceeded to philosophy and Lutheran theology before turning to political science and law. He studied at the Universities of Berlin, Breslau, and Leipzig and left with doctorates in both political science and law. Then followed a year in England and France to improve his knowledge of the other significant languages of his time. Such were the academic influences that prompted his interest in all fields of research in social administration. His remaining European experience he got in the practice of administration, as a civil servant.

For two years he was a municipal officer, then with a provincial government until he was called to the Reich Department of Labour in Berlin in 1920, where he remained until deposed by the Nazis in 1933. As a senior civil servant, he was close to the Germanic attempt to build a democratic country in the fateful years. First in the Welfare Branch of the Department, and later in the Social Insurance Branch, he helped draft the new Poor Law, the laws relating to health and unemployment insurance, and workmen’s compensation, and of course learned their administrative difficulties. Throughout this period, his own interest in education grew: he lectured at St. John’s College in Berlin (an institution of the Lutheran Church) and was a Board member of the International Folk High School in Elsinore, Denmark. His extensive writings at this time reveal further his concern with information and education.

He came to Canada in 1934, after a year in England, singularly well equipped to contribute to the understanding and the administration of the social issues that faced her. He knew well the strengths and weaknesses of the democratic system and saw its need for improved organization and education. At Dalhousie University, the creation of the Institute of Public Affairs

in 1936 provided the chance for the use of his knowledge and experience, and Richter threw himself into the operation with initiative and energy. Through it he believed he could help to close the gap between research and application in public administration.

In the years that followed, and particularly during the war, his racial origin set things against him, but he never relaxed his efforts for he knew what his job ought to be, and why it was significant. Despite the war, the Institute expanded as did the journal and his teaching. The Institute fathered the Nova Scotia Municipal Bureau, the Maritime Bureau of Industrial Relations, and the Maritime Labour Institute—three bodies that grew out of the work being done in different fields in co-operation with government, industry, and labour. As these affiliates emerged to handle the application of the principles of social science to government and industry, the Institute proper was able to devote itself further to research. Here as in the above, the value of the work was attracting attention from outside. The research programme on health was supported by both the Rockefeller and Carnegie authorities. At Richter's death two other important studies were in progress, one on housing (financed by federal, provincial, and municipal governments) and one on provincial-municipal relations (containing the fruits of his long experience in German governments). The recognition of the value of Richter's work was becoming general, in the United States as well as in Canada. In a short time, his work had proved its worth, and he was lost to Dalhousie and the Maritime community in the fulness of his power and opportunity.

He left a wife—the teacher of German at Dalhousie University, and one son—a student at Dalhousie.

STEWART BATES

Ottawa.

PUBLICATIONS

(In German)

A. BOOKS

- Organization of Public Welfare in Rural Districts.* Berlin: Carl Heymann. 1919.
Pension Laws for Disabled Soldiers. In collaboration with O. WEIGERT. Berlin: Voss. 1920.
Emergency Measures Supplementing Old Age Pensions. In collaboration with O. WOELZ. Berlin: Carl Heymann. 1923.
Public Assistance: The New German Poor Law. In collaboration with RUPPERT and WOELZ. Berlin: Carl Heymann. 1924.
Encyclopaedia of Public Welfare. In collaboration with KARSTEDT and others. Berlin: Carl Heymann. 1924.
The Compulsory Employment of Disabled Men. Berlin: Reimar Hobbins. First edition 1927, second edition 1931.
Medical Treatment and Vocational Rehabilitation in the Workmen's Compensation Act. Munich: Rechts-und Wirtschaftsverlag. 1930.
Workmen's Compensation and Industrial Diseases. Munich: Rechts-und Wirtschaftsverlag. 1931.

B. ARTICLES

- "American Group Insurance" (*German Ministry of Labour Gazette (Reichsarbeitsblatt)*, Berlin between 1930 and 1933).
 "Workmen's Compensation in Great Britain" (*ibid.*).