



The Man in the Ivory Tower: F. Cyril James of McGill

Stanley Brice Frost

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Tracing the course of a serendipitous career -- from a working-class home in London, England, where he was born shortly after the turn of the century, to his death there in 1973 -- the James story sheds light on student and professional life at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1920s, on economic and political changes in the US during the turbulent thirties, and on the development of the US banking industry in one of its most critical periods. James was invited to McGill to direct the School of Commerce but was almost immediately appointed Principal. He guided the university through the constricting years of war and, as chairman of the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, made a major contribution to the ground-plan of Canada's national welfare system. During the post-war years he inspired McGill's response to the knowledge explosion of the forties and fifties and to the huge growth in demand for higher education. He also masterminded the successful endeavour of the National Conference to secure federal funding for all Canadian universities. A great traveller, James played a major role in the Association of Universities of the British Commonwealth, as well as in the International Association of Universities, of which he was elected President in 1960. As James' literary executor, Stanley Frost had privileged access to his private papers and has made full use of the opportunity to reveal the complexity of James' personality: his brilliance of mind, high ideals, and acute self-knowledge, as well as his deep-rooted sense of insecurity and his strange inhibitions in personal relationships. The privileged person in the Ivory Tower emerges in these pages as a very human one.

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