

Under the Gaze of George Vancouver: The University of British Columbia and the Provincial Government, 1913-1939¹

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A gilded statue surmounts the dome of the parliament building in Victoria. It represents Captain George Vancouver, navigator and explorer. This figure, surveying all below it, can be seen as a symbol of the supervision exercised by the government of the province over the University of British Columbia during its first quarter century.

These years witnessed the progressive undermining of the autonomy of UBC. Acquiesced in by the Board of Governors, this process was the result of overt and covert pressure by the government. It included several amendments to the University Act that increased the powers of the Board at the expense of those of the Senate, the former being clearly more amenable to government pressure than the latter. The outcome of the process, if not its original purpose, was to enable the government to limit its expenditures on UBC while maintaining the desired degree of student accessibility to the institution.

During this period there was a budgetary crisis of a size scarcely imaginable today, as the government grant fell by 60 percent between 1929-30 and 1932-33. The crisis prompted an inquiry into the affairs of the university in 1932; the commissioner's recommendations included the elimination of the Senate. The government did not act on this, but the Board of Governors used the occasion to assert its sole responsibility for everything that touched the institution's budget.

In 1933 the faculty at UBC effectively obtained the right to run for public office. Other provincial universities in Canada denied this right in order to keep professors and their institutions from becoming too involved in party politics. UBC's governors wanted to adopt the same policy, but circumstances led them into another direction. Far from being evidence of tolerance, the decision to permit involvement in party politics to mem-

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bers of the faculty was itself a result of the close ties that had come to exist between the university and the government. To understand why and how these ties developed it is necessary to examine the history of the university from its early years.

I

The University of British Columbia was a latecomer among provincial universities. Attempts in the late nineteenth century to launch a university failed, as an Act passed in 1890 became a dead letter. Even after the passage of a new University of British Columbia Act in 1908 by the Conservative government of Richard McBride, it took until 1915 before the institution registered its first students.²

Amended from time to time, the 1908 Act governed the affairs of UBC during the years before the Second World War. It was drafted with a view to ensuring the sound business management of the university while protecting it against interference by politicians. The Minister of Education at the time, Dr. Henry Esson Young, was probably influenced by the University of Toronto Act of 1906, which gave that university a lay board of governors and freedom from the political control that had plagued the institution in the later nineteenth century.³ Whatever the reason, the McBride government in 1908 departed from the original 1890 Act, which would have given the UBC Senate a dominant position, and in accordance with practice at other universities in Canada and the United States put "the business side . . . in the hands of the Board of Governors," whereas "the teaching portion would be managed by the Senate."⁴ The Board of Governors were to consist of a Chancellor, a President, and nine members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council, the provincial cabinet. Section 31 of the Act provided that "any appointed member of the Board may be removed from office at any time by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council."⁵ In fact, no Board member was ever removed from office.

It is impossible to judge from university sources the extent to which political affiliation influenced appointments to the Board, though it seems

² UBC Library, Special Collections, Frederic H. Soward, "The Early History of the University of British Columbia" (unpublished typescript, 1930). Henceforth referred to as Soward.

³ Young, a graduate of Queen's (B.A.) and McGill (M.D.), received an honorary LL.D. from the University of Toronto in 1907. It seems unlikely that he would not have known of the reforms at the University of Toronto, especially since they were the work of a Conservative government.

⁴ Soward, 68.

⁵ The 1908 Act may be found in Soward, Appendix No. 10, 436-67.

likely that governments favoured supporters or at least refrained from naming known opponents. It is unlikely, however, that anyone regarded appointment as a patronage plum. Board members did not get paid for their labours. What united them was an interest in higher education and a willingness to serve the university and the province. This service consisted chiefly of attending the meetings, which could last for many hours, of the Board as a whole and of its committees. At times the burden of work was very onerous, particularly during the budgetary crises of 1931-33.

Most Board members were men drawn from the circles of business and the liberal professions. At times there was also someone from agriculture, and one from organized labour. After 1917 there was a woman on the Board, the redoubtable Evlyn Farris; from 1935 to 1941 there were two. Throughout the period the great majority of Board members were from Vancouver, but there was usually one representative from Victoria and one from the Lower Mainland outside Vancouver and its near suburbs.

The Board appointed the president; all employees of the university served during the Board's pleasure, though in the case of appointments, promotions and dismissals other than his own, the president's recommendation was necessary. Of the other Board members only the chancellor was not a government appointee, as he was elected for a three-year term by the members of Convocation. This body consisted of all graduates of universities in the British Empire who had resided in British Columbia for at least two years, as well as twenty-five government appointees.

Within two decades, UBC alumni dominated an ever-growing Convocation. They also came to constitute a growing proportion of the membership of the Senate, for Convocation had the right to elect fifteen members to the Senate, and alumni tended to vote for their own kind. The Senate, whose total membership was between thirty and forty (it grew slightly with the passage of time), also included the president, the chancellor, the three deans, two representatives from each of the three faculties and one from each affiliated college, as well as the principals of the two Normal Schools, the Minister and the Superintendent of Education, and three government appointees. Neither these three nor the Minister or the Superintendent could direct the Senate, faced as they were by the six members elected by the faculty and the fifteen elected by Convocation. Indeed, the records of Senate indicate that the Minister and his deputy rarely bothered to attend.

The Senate was slower to get under way than the Board. The former met once in 1912 and did not reconvene until February 1916; the latter met regularly from 1913 on. Once the Senate did get going, however, its affairs came largely under the direction of academics. Attendance at Senate

meetings was easiest for administrators and faculty members, and lay senators tended to take their lead from them. But the Board retained a dominant and ultimately decisive voice. The Act stated that "if any question shall arise as to the powers and duties of Convocation, the Chancellor, the President, the Senate, the Faculties, or any officer or servant of the University, the same shall be settled and determined by the Board, whose decision shall be final."

II

The government in 1907 set aside two million acres of land in the interior of the province as an endowment. They turned out to have scant value: no money had been realized from them when the university in 1920 surrendered its claim in exchange for the present Endowment Lands at Point Grey. Whatever the eventual value of the land grant was believed to be, however, at the outset it was clear that in the early years the university would depend on the government for its income, the more so because tuition was to be free.

In order to safeguard the government against financial surprises, the 1908 Act required that UBC's budgets be presented to the Minister of Education for approval, that the institution stay within its budgetary means and not incur deficits, and that the books be audited annually by the Provincial Auditor or some other person appointed by the government. As well, the Board could not purchase land or erect any building without government approval.

The government of Sir Richard McBride — he was knighted in 1912 — in early 1913 appointed UBC's first president, Dr. Frank F. Wesbrook, and named the first Board of Governors soon afterwards. They consisted of seven prominent citizens of Vancouver and two of Victoria. The chairman was Convocation's choice as the first chancellor, the Hon. Francis Carter-Cotton, a former cabinet minister and prominent Conservative. But Dr. Young apparently did not pack the Board with Tory partisans. Wesbrook acknowledged receiving from him "assurances [of] absolute freedom from politics both in the organization and administration of the University," and noted with gratification that the Board seemed to have been chosen with this same principle in mind.⁶ Not everyone agreed. The

⁶ UBC Archives, President's Office (henceforth referred to as PO), D. IV A 7/1, Box 1, file 9, F. F. Wesbrook to H. E. Young, 15 February 1913, copy. Prof. John Norris, who worked on the official history of UBC in 1957-58, believes that Young protected UBC against other members of the cabinet who might have been more interested in exercising control over the institution. Conversation with Prof. Norris, April 1989.

Vancouver Sun charged three years later that UBC was “an institution conducted along partisan political lines. . . .”⁷ But the *Sun* was a Liberal organ and quick to believe the worst of Conservatives, and it did not try to substantiate its charges by naming names.

The promised freedom from politics outlasted the McBride regime. The other promise that Westbrook got, of regular and generous financial support, proved shorter-lived. The Minister of Education assured him that “ample funds [would be] provided for initial organization,”⁸ and at a meeting that Board members had with the cabinet on 31 May 1913, “the Premier gave informal assurance of the heartiest support, financial and otherwise, of the Government to the University.”⁹ Alas, the government’s funding never met UBC’s needs as defined by its presidents during these years, Westbrook and Leonard S. Klinck, and by its governing Board. Indeed, the gap between expectation and reality contributed not a little to the pattern of governmental interference that evolved. Beset by competing demands for money, saddled with a tax base that shrank in harsh economic times, and committed ideologically if not in practice to balanced budgets, governments came to see UBC as a problem child requiring not a larger allowance but more frugal management. This extended on occasion to suggestions as to how savings might be secured.

The McBride government’s financial problems, which began with the pre-war depression and intensified after the outbreak of war in August 1914, led to a postponement of the move to Point Grey. Construction of the science building had begun earlier in 1914. But when the war began work ceased, forcing UBC in 1915 to commence teaching in the buildings in Fairview that had hitherto been used by the two-year arts college affiliated with McGill University.

The year 1915 also brought the Board their first taste of governmental pressure. Upon hearing a delegation from Victoria, they agreed in July to keep open, for one more year only, the college in the capital. (Since 1903 higher education had been carried out in a two-year arts college housed in Victoria High School and affiliated with McGill.) The Board hoped that the government might fund this college. Young had already written Westbrook about the matter, reporting he had informed a delegation “that the

⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, 25 January 1916.

⁸ PO, D IV A 7/1, Box 1, file 9, telegram, H. E. Young to F. F. Westbrook [*sic*], 3 March 1913.

⁹ UBC Archives, Board of Governors, Minutes (henceforth referred to as BoG Minutes), vol. 1, Memorandum Concerning Meeting of the Executive Council of British Columbia with the Board of Governors of the University of British Columbia, Victoria, B.C., May 31, 1913.

carrying on of the university work in the High School in Victoria, or other places, would be a matter of policy to be determined by the Board of Governors," but "pointing out to them that no provision had been made in the Estimates for the continuation of this work."¹⁰ Now Young informed the Board that "the Provincial Government had no intention of giving financial assistance to University work elsewhere than at the University itself."¹¹ This was enough to make the Board rescind their motion. If the government would not pay for higher education in Victoria, the students there would have to come to Vancouver.

The incident was essentially a demonstration of the power of the purse, and significant only in so far as it pointed out the path that future governments and boards would follow. Young's directive was innocuous compared with the treatment that UBC soon was to receive from the Liberal governments led by H. C. Brewster and John Oliver. (Oliver succeeded Brewster upon Brewster's death in 1918.)

The Liberals came into office in November 1916 on a tide of dissatisfaction with a depressed economy.¹² They had no responsibility for establishing the university, and some Liberal MLAs doubted that the province could afford one. Members from Vancouver Island and Interior communities, of whom the new Minister of Education was one, were critical of the university because its students came very largely from the Vancouver area.¹³ Wesbrook and the Board also soon discovered that the new government, confronted with a large deficit and a growing provincial debt, wanted to cut the university's budget. Furthermore, the Liberals were less inclined than their predecessors to leave the internal affairs of UBC alone.

At an initial meeting in early January 1917, the new Minister, Dr. John D. MacLean, who was like Wesbrook a physician, gave the latter a list of questions dealing with university financing, staffing, course loads, and the like. Wesbrook answered them in a series of letters,¹⁴ but if he and the Board hoped thereby to obtain the funds they had requested, they were

¹⁰ PO, D IV A 7/1, Box 5, file 2, H. E. Young to F. F. Wesbrook, 13 July 1915.

¹¹ BoG Minutes, vol. 2, meeting of 2 August 1915.

¹² Margaret A. Ormsby, *British Columbia: a History* (Toronto, 1958), 393.

¹³ In a total enrolment of 410 in 1917-18, the communities of Vancouver, South Vancouver, Point Grey, and North Vancouver contributed 270 and New Westminster 28. There were only 20 students from Victoria, and no other B.C. community contributed more than six. Forty-four students were from outside the province. In the following year no fewer than 395 students out of a total of 503 were from Vancouver and the surrounding communities, with only 18 coming from Victoria. BoG Minutes, vol. 3, meeting of 30 October 1917; vol. 4, meeting of 28 October 1918.

¹⁴ PO, D IV A 7/1, Box 8, file 2, F. F. Wesbrook to John D. MacLean, 7 January 1917, copy; 26 January 1917, copy; 5 February 1917, copy.

disappointed. After meeting him in Victoria on 19 and 20 March 1917, Wesbrook reported to the Board that, in the course of discussing UBC's financial needs, MacLean had been pointedly critical. He "expressed the opinion that the proposed expenditures on the library should be materially reduced," while also reporting "questions and criticisms," which MacLean said he did not share but had to take seriously, concerning the high cost of the Faculty of Agriculture.¹⁵ The Dean of Agriculture, L. S. Klinck, accompanied Wesbrook to a second meeting, after which the two men met the entire cabinet. Its members seemed appreciative of UBC's situation, Wesbrook reported to the board, but the Minister had nevertheless insisted that the library budget be reduced by \$4,370, and had refused to fund five items totalling \$24,000, including a head for the Department of English. Evidently the budget had been gone over line by line.

Having secured the reductions he wanted, and having advised the president not to plan for a move to Point Grey, MacLean did not question the budget of \$294,000 that remained. On the other hand, he made no firm commitment to secure that sum. Three weeks later the Board learned that the government intended to reduce the appropriation from the \$200,000 it had been in 1916-17 to \$175,000 in 1917-18, in spite of accelerating inflation and expectations of higher enrolment. "It is impossible to carry on the work of the University on the appropriation proposed in the estimates," a shocked Board asserted, and requested a meeting with the cabinet.¹⁶

Wesbrook met MacLean in early May. Before the Minister would make any recommendation for supplemental estimates, Wesbrook told the Board afterwards, he desired responses to three further points of criticism of UBC in addition to those he had mentioned earlier. The first was that the salary (\$10,000) enjoyed by the president was too large, the second was that Convocation had not been called since its first meeting five years earlier, and the third was that UBC was not charging tuition fees. MacLean had indicated informally "that he would expect something might be done towards increase of financial support of the University by the Government, when the University had indicated its willingness to show an appreciation of the financial and other difficulties which the province is facing."¹⁷ Wes-

¹⁵ BoG Minutes, vol. 3, meeting of 26 March 1917.

¹⁶ BoG Minutes, vol. 3, meeting of 24 April 1917. PO, D IV A 7/1, Box 8, file 2, F. Carter-Cotton to J. D. MacLean, telegram, 24 April 1917, copy. The increase in the Consumer Price Index was 8.5 percent in 1916 and 18.5 percent in 1917. Canada, *Historical Statistics of Canada*, second edition, Ottawa, 1983, Series K8.

¹⁷ F. F. Wesbrook to the Chancellor and Board of Governors, 11 May 1917, copy in BoG Minutes, vol. 3, meeting of 11 May 1917.

brook had pointed out to MacLean that Convocation had adjourned its first meeting without having adopted rules and regulations governing further meetings, and that to permit fees to be charged in the Faculty of Arts the University Act would have to be amended, as section 102 provided for free instruction in that Faculty. As for the first point of criticism, he recommended to the Board that they cut his salary by \$2,000 in 1917-18. His salary had not changed since his appointment in 1913, and there had been considerable inflation since the outbreak of the war, so he was making a significant sacrifice.

The Board voted to accept Wesbrook's generous gesture, and managed to make cuts in capital and operating expenses of a further \$55,000. This included cancelling instruction in the Department of History in 1917-18 — Professor Mack Eastman was on military leave — but after meeting the Minister on 14 May a Board committee rescinded this cut and reappointed a sessional lecturer. MacLean had apparently thought it unwise to stop teaching history.

The Board's revised budget did not provide for tuition fees. Not only was the statutory authorization to impose them lacking, but both the Senate and students were known to be opposed to them. The Board committee informed MacLean that "it could not recommend the establishment of a tuition fee . . . but on the other hand could not oppose it."¹⁸ The minister undertook to get a supplementary estimate of \$50,000 if it should prove possible to levy fees on students in Arts and Science, and \$60,000 if it should not. The Board was right in its surmise that fees could not be charged in 1917-18, but that did not keep the Minister from renegeing on his commitment to secure an additional \$10,000.

It does not seem to have occurred to either the Board or the Minister that the Senate might prove to be an obstacle. Indeed, there is no evidence that the Senate was involved in deciding what cuts might be made.¹⁹ More significantly, the Board minutes provide no sign of protest against the Minister's intervention in the details of budget-making. Board unhappiness centred on the inadequacy of the funds made available.

In 1914, the Board had stated their understanding that they were "responsible for the expenditure of the amount voted by the Legislature" while retaining "full authority as to the details of such expenditure." But they had added "that the Board will at all times be only too pleased to

¹⁸ PO, D IV A 7/1, Box 7, file 5, Board Committee to Chancellor and Board of Governors, 14 May 1917.

¹⁹ UBC Archives, Senate Records, Box 1, Minutes 1916-1945 (henceforth referred to as Senate Minutes), meeting of 2 May 1917.

afford the Government the fullest information as to the disbursements made by it.”²⁰ As they did not object to submitting detailed budgets and statements of expenditure on the grounds that the cabinet was entitled to know what it was paying for, they perhaps felt unable to complain when the Minister objected to specific items. Or they may have feared that complaints would only make it harder to pry money out of the government. In 1930, another Board would make a clear statement of what they believed their relationship to the government to be; in 1917, there was no such statement. But the governors seem already to have tended to the view that he who paid the piper could call the tune, that the government was entitled to set policy for the university.

Budget-making proved even more difficult in 1918. The new Premier, John Oliver, was “a man of little formal education . . . [who] took great pride in the fact that he was a plain ‘dirt-farmer’.”²¹ Whatever sympathy he had for the university was undermined by the heavy financial demands on the government for roads and bridges and the ever-exigent Pacific Great Eastern Railway. But UBC had its own troubles. Inflation was eroding the value of the salaries paid to faculty and support staff and raising the cost of supplies. As well, Wesbrook’s health was a source of concern. (He died prematurely in October.) In his last budget he once again made the case for the move to Point Grey from the crowded shacks at Fairview. He might as well have been addressing a wall. In the negotiations that followed, the Minister insisted that UBC should stay where it was. MacLean also argued that \$220,000 sufficed for the university’s needs, though this was \$5,000 less than the augmented grant for 1917-18. He no longer insisted on specific cuts, however, leaving these to the president and Board.

Discussions during the summer led the cabinet reluctantly to vote a supplementary grant of \$48,500. In the process the Board asked whether UBC should impose fees at this time, the Legislature having repealed the section of the Act providing for free tuition. There is no record of what was said on this point at a meeting of Board representatives with the government on 4 July. The following day the Senate expressed their opposition to fees,²² and they were not introduced until two years later. But the Board were apparently willing to act in 1918 had the government asked them to do so.

Some Liberal MLAs continued to believe that UBC cost too much. This prompted a visit to Vancouver early in October 1918 by MacLean and

²⁰ BoG Minutes, vol. 1, meeting of 10 August 1914.

²¹ Ormsby, *British Columbia*, 398.

²² Senate Minutes, meeting of 5 July 1918.

John Hart, the Minister of Finance. They carefully went over the estimates for 1918-19, comparing them with expenditures of previous years, and heard explanations by the chancellor, the chairman of the Board's Finance Committee, and Acting President Klinck. MacLean subsequently asked detailed information under fourteen different headings, some of which touched the number and salary of faculty, others the background of students, and others again the purpose of research. His questions reflected division within his party about the value of UBC to the province. Point eight, for example, was "give a few concrete examples of how the work of the University is producing actual financial returns for the people of the Province; for example, your agricultural experiments."²³

The Board did not question the Minister's right to have such information. But they did take issue with MacLean's first request: "That the Minister of Education be notified of all proposed changes in the staff, and reasons for the same." In reply they wrote:

The Board of Governors will, in future, notify the Minister of Education of all changes made in the staff of the University, with reasons therefor. The Board, being entirely responsible for such changes, have not thought that it would be necessary to advise with [*sic*] the Minister about them before they are made, and knowing his disinclination to interfere in any way [*sic*] with the internal economy of the University, feel that the above course of action will meet with his wishes.²⁴

If MacLean noticed the mild rebuke he did not bother to respond.

A few weeks later MacLean wrote to the chancellor, Robert E. McKechnie: "I will be expected to present a very full statement to the Legislature, showing how it is proposed to carry on the work of the University for, say, the next ten years, and the cost of doing it." He wanted to know: "first, the cost of carrying on on the present site for ten years, if that is possible. Secondly, the arguments in favour of the aggressive policy of removing to the permanent site at Point Grey and the erection of the necessary permanent buildings."²⁵ The Board approved a reply at a meeting on 6 January 1919; it argued strenuously for the early relocation of UBC to Point Grey, citing the crowded conditions at Fairview and the need for enlarged quarters to educate and train returned soldiers as the main arguments.²⁶

²³ PO, D IV A 7/2, Box 7, file 12, J. D. MacLean to L. S. Klinck, 17 October 1918.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Answers to Questions . . . , copy attached to: J. D. MacLean to L. S. Klinck, 17 October 1918.

²⁵ PO, D IV A 7/2, Box 9, file 12, J. D. MacLean to R. E. McKechnie, 3 December 1918.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Memorandum from the Governors of the University of British Columbia to the Government of British Columbia, [1918-19].

The estimates for 1919-20 were approved at the same time. Several Board members met the Minister three days later in order to discuss the estimates as well as the issues he had raised in December. The two-hour meeting concluded with MacLean's promise that "careful consideration would be given to the University question by himself and the Cabinet, after which he might ask for another meeting with the Board."²⁷ MacLean was treating the Board as if they were advisory to him.

III

The establishment of Victoria College provides clear evidence of the pressure MacLean was able to put on the Board. The three high school principals in the capital city made a request in February 1919 to the Department of Education that the first two years of arts instruction be offered in Victoria High School as they had been until 1915. This request was referred to the UBC Senate. A Senate committee recommended in early September that the request be granted, and another committee was set to work on the terms of affiliation.²⁸ A large minority of faculty members at UBC were unhappy about this, however, and Klinck — he succeeded Wesbrook in July 1919 — opposed it, possibly fearing that an additional claim on government funds would delay the move to Point Grey.²⁹

Klinck's opposition expressed itself in an estimate of the costs of the project, almost \$95,000, that neither the Board of Governors nor the local School Board would pay. There was outrage in the capital: Klinck's bloated estimate and the Board's consequent unwillingness to authorize teaching in Victoria were seen as deliberate obstruction. But public protests were less effective than some quiet string-pulling behind the scenes. The Inspector of Schools for the Victoria district, E. B. Paul, had in the Superintendent of Education (Deputy Minister), S. J. Willis, a friend who in turn was very well-connected. Willis shared with his minister a Prince Edward Island and McGill background, and enjoyed his full confidence. "Willis and MacLean were thus linked by bonds of mutual respect and loyalty," Peter Smith writes, "and, though they were men of scrupulous personal integrity, they were not averse to playing politics in a worthy cause."³⁰

²⁷ BoG Minutes, meeting with Hon. J. D. MacLean, 9 January 1919.

²⁸ Senate Minutes, meetings of 2 September and 15 October 1919.

²⁹ Peter L. Smith, "A College Is Reborn," unpublished paper read in Victoria, B.C., October 1985. I am grateful to Professor Smith for making a copy of this paper available to me.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

The fate of post-secondary instruction at Victoria now became wound up with UBC's grant for 1920-21 and with the hopes for a removal from the Fairview campus to Point Grey. In early March Klinck received a memorandum from Willis offering detailed suggestions as to how some \$50,000 might be cut from the proposed budget of \$431,000. "You may, of course, pay as much or as little attention to these as you wish," Willis wrote. "I may add, however, that I have discussed these several points with the Honourable the Minister of Education."³¹

Klinck once again took the ferry to Victoria in order to confer with MacLean. The latter informed him that the cabinet might authorize bonds for three million dollars to pay for construction at Point Grey, on condition that "the Board of Governors decide to charge fees at once to all students," that Victoria's demands for instruction in the first two years of arts be granted, and that the grant of \$420,000 for operating and capital purposes which he was prepared to recommend to the cabinet "be not under any circumstances exceeded by the Board of Governors." The fees would provide UBC with the additional funds it wanted. The second condition was "necessary in order to get the support of the Victoria and Island members" for the university and its move to Point Grey.³²

At a meeting with MacLean and Willis on 27 March, Board representatives declared themselves willing to impose fees "similar to those levied at other provincial institutions," but balked at re-establishing higher education in Victoria. MacLean now used the heavy artillery. As reported to a full meeting of the Board two days later, he said "that the refusal of such affiliation to the Victoria High School might imperil the proposed appropriation for the construction of University buildings at Point Grey."³³ Not surprisingly, the Board caved in. Without even asking the opinion of the Arts faculty — Klinck had said at the meeting of 27 March that this would be desirable — the Board passed a motion stating they "reluctantly accept the conclusion that it is better to concede the affiliation sought by Victoria than to cause a further postponement of the establishment of the University at its permanent site."³⁴

Although the Board believed that they were yielding to *force majeure*, the Minister did not like this interpretation. Commenting on the Board

³¹ PO, D IV A 7/2, Box 15, file 21, S. J. Willis to L. S. Klinck, 9 March 1920.

³² PO, D IV A 7/2, Box 15, file 19. Notes on interview with the Honourable the Minister of Education on March 23, 1920; BoG, vol. 5, meeting of 25 March 1920.

³³ BoG Minutes, vol. 5, meeting of 29 March 1920.

³⁴ Ibid.

minutes of 29 March — he received a copy as a matter of course — he wrote:

I note with interest the resolution on affiliation and feel that the wording of some of these paragraphs might convey the impression that I was dictating to the Board the course of action which should be followed. Unless considerable change is made in the tone of the resolution I should not like to see the various clauses incorporated in the Minutes.³⁵

It seems the Board resisted MacLean on this point at least.

Victoria College, its classes taught in Victoria High School, came into being in the autumn of 1920. But the prize that Klinck and the Board had hoped to gain from acceding to the government's wishes, the move to Point Grey, receded once more. Klinck learned in the course of midsummer meetings with the Ministers of Education and Finance that it might not be possible to float the three million dollar bond issue, and that the government wanted to keep UBC at the Fairview site for an indefinite time.³⁶ Paradise was again postponed.

IV

The government continued to be reluctant to fund UBC at the level the Board thought necessary. In 1921 the Minister informed Klinck that the Board's request was too high, and that he proposed in 1921-22 to limit the University to \$445,000, the same amount that the University of Saskatchewan received.³⁷ He did not explain his choice of Saskatchewan. (In 1921 the population of the prairie province was almost half again as large as British Columbia's, 757,510 compared with 524,582. The functions of the two institutions were comparable, with instruction in Agriculture, Arts and Science, and Engineering, although the University of Saskatchewan also offered some courses in Law and Pharmacy. However, the calendars of the institutions show that Saskatchewan had only 659 full-time students in 1920-21 while UBC had 962.) The Board responded by cutting salary increases that had been intended to repair some of the damage inflation had done to salaries, by leaving positions unfilled, and by asking the Senate to approve fee increases.

In 1920 the Board had imposed fees in the Faculty of Arts and Science for the first time. (Senate's approval for this step was evidently not sought,

³⁵ PO, D IV A 7/2, box 15, file 19, J. D. MacLean to S. D. Scott (Honorary Secretary, Board of Governors), 15 April 1920.

³⁶ PO, D IV A 7/2, box 15, file 20, Notes on Visit to Victoria, July 22nd, 1920.

³⁷ BoG Minutes, vol. 5, J. D. MacLean to L. S. Klinck, 7 February 1921, copy in minutes of 15 February 1921.

as there is no record of any discussion of fees in the Senate Minutes between July 1918 and February 1921.) MacLean thought the \$40 per session that the Board had introduced was “somewhat too low,”³⁸ but the Board had been influenced by the fees charged at the prairie institutions. In 1921 the Senate initially turned down the Board’s proposal that fees be raised by a further \$10, a proposal due to budgetary stress but also to MacLean’s suggestion that fees should be higher. Although the Senate did not share this conviction, it ultimately acquiesced in the Board’s (and the Minister’s) wishes.³⁹

The Board again asked the Senate for a fee increase in 1922, held to be necessary because “there was no prospect of any increase in the government grant.”⁴⁰ Discussion of UBC’s budget in the autumn session of the Legislature had featured continued criticism of the cost of the institution. A motion by Kenneth Duncan, an Independent MLA representing Cowichan on Vancouver Island, to reduce the grant to \$200,000 had failed, but in the course of the debate a Liberal member from Victoria who was by no means an enemy of UBC, Joseph B. Clearihue — he later served on the Board of Governors — had expressed the opinion that the Faculty of Agriculture cost far too much.⁴¹ The grant for 1922-23 was frozen at the previous year’s amount of \$445,000. MacLean in April 1922 joined the Board’s discussion of how UBC might cope with the resulting financial difficulties; raising fees to \$75 or even \$100 seemed the answer.

This time the Senate refused to go along. Inflation had given way to deflation as the post-war depression deepened; under these conditions a fee increase lacked any obvious justification. The Senate asked the Board that their motion refusing a further increase be forwarded to the Minister.⁴² Caught between the government and the Senate, the Board took a novel step. They proposed increases to \$90 per session in Arts and \$100 in Applied Science and Agriculture, “subject to the Board receiving assurance from the Government that this action will be validated at the next session of the Legislature.”⁴³ Klinck reported in June that the Minister of Education and the Attorney General had said that “the Government

³⁸ PO, D IV A 7/2, box 15, file 19, J. D. MacLean to S. D. Scott, 15 April 1920.

³⁹ Senate Minutes, meeting of 16 August 1921.

⁴⁰ BoG Minutes, vol. 6, meeting of 11 April 1922.

⁴¹ “University to Get \$445,000,” *Vancouver Province*, 26 November 1921.

⁴² Senate Minutes, meeting of 24 April 1922; BoG Minutes, vol. 6, meeting of 26 April 1922.

⁴³ BoG Minutes, vol. 6, meeting of 29 May 1922. The fees actually imposed were \$75 in Arts and Science, Agriculture and Nursing, and \$100 in Applied Science.

would bring in legislation validating the resolution of the Governors in raising fees."⁴⁴

The Faculty of Arts and Science deplored the increase, and Senate members associated themselves with the faculty in their concern about "the results both as regards the quality of the University work and as regards the place of the University in the esteem of the province, if a policy is adopted which will leave University classes open to sons and daughters of the rich and exclude the children of parents whose means are less ample."⁴⁵ Klinck seems to have shared this concern, which he put on record in 1923. The benefit of education to the student was largely a by-product of education's benefit to the state, he wrote: "as such, the fee should be kept low. . . . Universities are in favour of higher fees only because it is imperative that they get more money. The last thing they wish to do is to make the University a preserve for the well-to-do."⁴⁶ But the Board, politically more sensitive than the faculty or the Senate, did not go back on their action. Later that year, even before the amendment to the Act had been prepared, MacLean wrote to Klinck: "I think that the fees to be charged students should be subject only to the dictation of the Board of Governors, and that no recommendations from the Senate should be necessary in order that the same might be altered at any time."⁴⁷

MacLean's interest in the university at this time was not limited to fees. In November 1922 he forwarded a table containing "a comparison of the salaries shown in the estimates of the University and salaries for similar positions in the Civil Service." He regretted that "the difference in salaries paid has been the subject of unfavourable comment."⁴⁸ In fact, UBC faculty and administrative salaries had deteriorated significantly in real terms since 1915, and Klinck defended them vigorously on the basis of duties per-

⁴⁴ BoG Minutes, vol. 6, meeting of 9 June 1922.

⁴⁵ Senate Minutes, meeting of 19 June 1922.

⁴⁶ PO, microfilm (mfm) reel 6, file U.71 Sp., Fees at Other Universities. A survey of the fathers of UBC students, carried out in 1922-23, noted that 247 were professional men, 232 were businessmen, 155 were labourers and other blue collar workers, 101 were bookkeepers and clerks, 102 were farmers, 48 were government officials and employees, 101 were retired, and of 189 the occupation was unknown, for a total of 1,175. Although the children of professional and business people were over-represented, the university was not just a playground of the wealthy. *Ibid.*, file Student Data, Session 1922-23. For a comparison with the students of another university a few years later, see: Paul Axelrod, "Moulding the Middle Class: Student Life at Dalhousie in the 1930s," *Acadiensis* 15 (Autumn 1985): 88-92.

⁴⁷ PO, mfm reel 4, file 21, J. D. MacLean to L. S. Klinck, 4 October 1922.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, J. D. MacLean to L. S. Klinck, 14 November 1922; BoG, Minutes, vol. 6, meeting of 27 November 1922.

formed.⁴⁹ But the issue formed part of the backdrop to budget making for 1923-24. Eventually the Legislature voted \$450,000, an increase of \$5,000 over the previous year, and “passed two amendments to the University Act which abolished the right of Senate to recommend the increase in fees and more specifically forbade the University Board of Governors to expend more than the sum received in a grant from the Government or revenues from other sources.”⁵⁰ The Board then set the fees in Arts, Agriculture and Nursing at \$75 per session, and in Applied Science at \$100. There they stayed for two years.

In the fall of 1924 MacLean and his deputy, Willis, again pressured UBC either to reduce costs or increase the fees. Faced with a request for increased operating funds in 1925-26 to deal with a growing student body and what were expected to be the higher costs of operation at the Point Grey campus, MacLean responded by pointing out “that the University does not compare very favourably with other institutions (from the point of view of economy) when considering the respective rewards for administrative services.” An attached memorandum, probably written by Willis, noted that “the most outstanding feature is the large proportion of the revenue that is absorbed by the Agriculture Department. . . . There would appear to be ample scope for a heavy retrenchment in this department.” The memorandum also scored “the very heavy proportion of administrative salaries to teaching salaries.” Some administrators, and employees such as engineers and janitors, all got paid more than comparable people in the civil service.⁵¹ (Willis had taught classics at UBC before moving into the education bureaucracy; he may have shared a general feeling in the Faculty of Arts that Agriculture and the administration got larger slices of the budgetary pie than they deserved.)

In Klinck’s absence the Dean of Applied Science, R. W. Brock, replied. He offered an uncompromising defence of UBC’s salaries and of the cost of the Faculty of Agriculture. At the same time he countered the suggestion, made by Willis but no doubt reflecting MacLean’s own views, that UBC raise its fees if it wanted more money. UBC’s fees were already higher than those at the prairie universities and institutions like Queen’s and Western, Brock wrote; increasing them would simply discourage students of modest means.⁵² MacLean was unmoved. The grant was increased by only 4.3

⁴⁹ PO, mfm reel 4, file 21, L. S. Klinck to J. D. MacLean, 7 December 1922, copy.

⁵⁰ Soward, 285.

⁵¹ PO, mfm reel 7, File: Minister of Education, J. D. MacLean to L. S. Klinck, 13 October 1924, with attached memorandum dated 11 October 1924.

⁵² *Ibid.*, R. W. Brock to J. D. MacLean, 25 October 1924, copy.

percent, from \$460,000 to \$480,000. The Board then increased the fees in Arts, Nursing and Agriculture to \$100, and in Applied Science to \$150.

It is understandable that the Board tended to react positively to the government's wishes, and that Senate misgivings or infrequent faculty and student protests did not dissuade them. Their financial dependence encouraged complaisance. They tried to protect what UBC was already doing, to secure new faculty in order to teach the growing student body, to get additional money in order to offer new courses or programmes, and, until 1925, to gain the wide-open spaces of Point Grey. Long-range planning was difficult, even impossible, unless the government gave direction and cash. Proposals that cost additional money were subject to what was, in effect, final approval by the Minister. In 1927 the Board greeted the Senate's multi-year recommendations concerning the summer school with the comment that "the Board can only order its finances on the basis of its yearly budget, [and] returns the Senate's recommendations to that body for amendment, confining the operation thereof to the work of the summer session for 1927."⁵³

If the government wanted UBC to do something new, the Board would ask the Senate for a recommendation and consider it, but only if money was forthcoming. In 1919 MacLean asked the Board's opinion as to the need for a School of Forestry. The Board replied that they had earlier asked for funds for that purpose, "but as the Government grants were insufficient, no action has been taken. The Board is prepared to establish a School as soon as the necessary funds are available."⁵⁴ In 1923 the Board were willing to approve a Senate recommendation that arrangements be made for the training of university graduates to become high school teachers, "on condition that the necessary funds be provided by the Government as a supplementary grant inasmuch as the University appropriation is already fully allocated."⁵⁵ Five years later the Board responded in a similar way to requests from interested citizens and groups that home economics and commerce be taught. They would authorize such courses if the Senate recommended them, but only if "the Government will provide the additional funds as same become necessary."⁵⁶

⁵³ BoG Minutes, vol. 8, meeting of 29 March 1927.

⁵⁴ BoG Minutes, vol. 4, meeting of 26 May 1919.

⁵⁵ Senate Minutes, meeting of 17 August 1923; BoG Minutes, vol. 6, meeting of 28 August 1923.

⁵⁶ BoG Minutes, vol. 9, meeting of 22 December 1928. The government funded both forestry and teacher training. Home economics had to wait several years to get funded and then fell victim to the budgetary crises of the early 1930s. Commerce

V

By the late 1920s UBC was breathing more easily. The move in 1925 from the congested shacks at Fairview to the new buildings at Point Grey helped. (The government tried to compensate itself for the money it spent on construction by selling building lots in the University Hill subdivision within the Endowment Lands.) The relative prosperity of the age made an important contribution, for it enabled the government — upon John Oliver's death in 1927 MacLean became Premier while retaining the Education portfolio — to be more generous with UBC. The grants for 1926-27, 1927-28, and 1928-29 came closer to what the Board had requested than had ever been the case before, rising to \$566,000.

What soon came to be regarded UBC's golden age did not last long. In the summer of 1928 the Liberals suffered an unexpected electoral defeat and gave way to Simon Fraser Tolmie's Conservatives. The new Minister of Education was Joshua Hinchliffe, an Anglican clergyman and lawyer who looked on UBC with a jaundiced eye. "He had little sympathy with the ideal of popular education. He was convinced that standards of the University were not high enough, and he suspected that many of the University's activities were wasteful."⁵⁷ To be specific, he thought the Faculty of Agriculture cost too much. (In this, as we have seen, he was not alone.) Moreover, he may have harboured a grudge against UBC dating to 1922. He had attacked the choice of a history textbook in the university, only to be controverted publicly by the head of the history department, Mack Eastman, who got rather the better of the exchange.⁵⁸

If Hinchliffe was ill-disposed towards the university, however, his views did not have immediate effect. The economy was strong, and the new Premier, Dr. Simon Fraser Tolmie, a veterinary surgeon and cattle breeder, at first looked with favour on the institution that an earlier Conservative government had founded. The grant for 1929-30 was increased to \$623,200, accounting for roughly three-quarters of UBC's total income.

fares somewhat better, though almost all instruction was given by part-time teachers, mainly practising chartered accountants.

⁵⁷ Harry T. Logan, *Tuum Est: A History of the University of British Columbia* (Vancouver, 1958) 110.

⁵⁸ "Objects to History for U.S. Students," *Vancouver Province*, 23 November 1922. "Textbooks Are Again Flayed," *Vancouver World*, 2 December 1922. UBC Archives, S. Mack Eastman Papers, D II B 6/2, Box 1, Mack Eastman to J. D. MacLean, 2 December 1922, copy; J. D. MacLean to Mack Eastman, 7 December 1922. S. Mack Eastman, "Textbooks in European History," *Vancouver Province*, 7 December 1922.

But all was not well. The Minister, not convinced the government was getting value for money, in the summer of 1929 set in train an investigation of UBC's financial administration. This turned up nothing of great significance.⁵⁹ Did Hinchliffe then convey his dissatisfaction with the Faculty of Agriculture to the Premier? The record is unclear; what *is* clear is that by the end of 1929 Tolmie was soliciting comments on the research carried out in the Faculty. The provincial Deputy Minister of Agriculture was highly critical of the Faculty, whose scientific experiments he held to be of scant value to the farmers of the province.⁶⁰ The comments of the federal Deputy Minister of Agriculture were more guarded and supported UBC's agricultural research projects in a general way, but they probably did not counter Tolmie's misgivings.⁶¹

Some months later Tolmie and Hinchliffe were shopping around for a commission to investigate UBC. The former confided to the Premier of Ontario, Howard Ferguson, that UBC's affairs were in an unsatisfactory state and asked him to suggest "an Ontario man" to be sole commissioner or one of a commission of three.⁶² Nothing came of this notion, but the mood that gave birth to it boded ill for the university in the years immediately ahead.

In September 1929 some 1,881 students registered. Only four years after the move to Point Grey overcrowding was again a problem. Hinchliffe had an idea as to how to solve this. In December 1929 he asked the Board whether in their opinion "it was better policy to enlarge the existing accommodation so as to meet the requirements of all students who pass matriculation and who may wish to enter the University, or whether it would be better . . . [to] adopt selective measures which would restrict the number

⁵⁹ Soward, 363-66.

⁶⁰ UBC Library, Special Collections, Simon Fraser Tolmie Papers, folder 13-1, Correspondence: General — UBC, S. F. Tolmie to J. B. Munro, 11 December 1929, copy; J. B. Munro to S. F. Tolmie, 13 December 1929; also Munro to Tolmie, 14 December 1929 and an attached unsigned, undated memorandum that begins with the sentence: "It is difficult to pick out any one line of practical agricultural research being conducted by the University of British Columbia that does not in some way duplicate or interfere with similar undertakings in the Federal or Provincial Departments of Agriculture."

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, S. F. Tolmie to J. H. Grisdale, 11 December 1929, copy; J. H. Grisdale to S. F. Tolmie, 116 December 1929; Tolmie to Grisdale, 31 December 1929, copy; Grisdale to Tolmie, 9 January 1930.

⁶² *Ibid.*, S. F. Tolmie to Howard Ferguson, 21 May 1930, copy. See also, in the same file, J. Hinchliffe, Memorandum for the Honourable the Prime Minister, 21 May 1930, and Hinchliffe to Tolmie, 20 June 1930. Tolmie and Hinchliffe were interested in getting Canon H. J. Cody, then Board chairman (and later president) of the University of Toronto.

of students to the present registration?"⁶³ His own preference was clearly for the latter alternative.

This left president and Board in a quandary. What sort of budget should they be preparing? In January 1930 Klinck wrote to Hinchliffe that the Board wanted an early meeting with the cabinet: "The Board . . . is waiting to ascertain, before giving consideration to the revised estimates, whether or not the Government wishes to express its opinion with respect to the educational policy of the University, or to submit statements bearing on that policy." Hinchliffe pointed out in reply "that the University Act very definitely places the educational policy of the university in the hands of the University authorities."⁶⁴ Strictly speaking this was true. But Hinchliffe knew the reality was different. In April 1930 he wrote to the Premier, apropos of a protest by the Leader of the Opposition against the political control of UBC: "I am afraid it is too late to begin anything of that kind for, in my opinion, the University has been under political control for years."⁶⁵ It should not be thought, moreover, that Hinchliffe was opposed to this development. In the debate on UBC's grant for 1923-24 he had agreed with Premier Oliver that "if the government was to spend large sums for the University the government should retain control."⁶⁶

What explains Hinchliffe's reluctance to give a lead to UBC? Were enrolment to be limited, life would be easier for the Minister if the university were seen to be doing the limiting. Still looking for guidance, the Board now put the question to the Senate. A Senate committee soon decided that no sensible recommendations were possible without knowing the financial prospects, and it asked the Board to try to obtain from the government a statement indicating the minimum amount of money which UBC might expect, over a period of five years, for capital expenditures and operating costs.

The Board considered a request of this kind inadvisable "at the present time, more especially since the policy of limiting attendance is so directly related to the academic policy of the University."⁶⁷ Perhaps so, but it also had financial implications at a time when UBC's finances were becoming a source of grave concern. By the summer of 1930 the Depression had the

⁶³ BoG Minutes, vol. 9, meeting of 10 December 1929.

⁶⁴ PO, mfm reel 28, file E-21 special, L. S. Klinck to Joshua Hinchliffe, 15 January 1930, copy; Joshua Hinchliffe to L. S. Klinck, 20 January 1930.

⁶⁵ Simon Fraser Tolmie Papers, folder 7-2, Minister of Education, J. Hinchliffe to S. F. Tolmie, 30 April 1930.

⁶⁶ "Objects to History for U.S. Students," *Vancouver Province*, 23 November 1922.

⁶⁷ BoG Minutes, vol. 10, meeting of 28 April 1930.

province in its grip. The government's growing fiscal problems — its deficit in 1930-31 was almost \$5 million, approximately twenty percent of current revenue, and the provincial debt grew by \$16 million in the course of the year — were bound to affect UBC.⁶⁸ The grant for 1930-31 had been cut from \$623,200 to \$587,700. And the Minister's preference for the limitation of enrolment through higher entrance standards was consistent with further reductions.

The governors were still reluctant to take responsibility for that step. At the end of 1930 they sent Hinchliffe a long and carefully worded statement that summed up their view of the relationship between themselves and the government. They understood the Minister and the cabinet to want the Board's views on three issues: "(a) the relation of the Government to the University; (b) the academic policy as to what persons shall be entitled as of right to become members of the student body; and (c) the attitude of the Board towards any change in the existing policy."

The Board believed that "the University is a state institution, created by a statute of the Province in order to afford facilities for higher education to the young men and women of the Province. The Board is a body created by that Statute to administer the University funds so as to best advance the purposes for which the University was called into existence." The university had two sources of income, the provincial government grant and student fees. The endowment lands had never provided any income to UBC, and other endowment income was negligible. If fees were raised too high many students would not be able to attend no matter how well qualified they were.

The question involved in deciding upon university policy, insofar as that policy determines admission as of right to the student body is therefore simple and clear-cut. . . . It is this: how far do the people of the Province wish to go in providing facilities, at the expense of the tax-payers, for university training for the youth of the Province having the requisite academic standing?

It was up to the government to resolve this matter, because it "must take the responsibility to the people for the answer given. . . . The Board's opinion is that the questions under discussion are exclusively for the Provincial Executive." If Board members could not accept the government's policy they were bound to resign their positions; if they continued in these positions they had to work for the welfare of the university within the guidelines laid down by the government.

⁶⁸ All provincial financial data cited here or later come from: British Columbia, *Public Accounts*, Victoria, 1931ff.

When UBC opened its doors, the statement continued, the policy of the government of the day had been that “the institution should be open, free of charge, to all students with the requisite academic standing” — that is, Junior Matriculation or its equivalent. Except in the matter of fees, no government had indicated a change in this policy.

From time to time, various Ministers of Education have officially suggested . . . that student fees should be imposed, and, later, that such fees be raised. These requests, although not purporting to be made pursuant to an official adoption of policy by the Administration, have always received the careful attention of the Board . . . and have been acted upon.

But the Board had declined to raise fees so high as to exclude “any considerable number of the sons and daughters of the people from the University,” because of the belief that “the question of exclusion was one of Government policy” and must not be decided by the Board.⁶⁹

This statement left limited room for institutional autonomy. Some months earlier the Board had seen admissions as part of academic policy and therefore the primary concern of the Senate. Now the Board, with some artful rewriting of history, assigned responsibility for admissions policy to the government. It is hard not to infer that they did so in order to force the Minister to make a difficult and unpopular decision. But in doing so the Board also reduced the university’s freedom of action.

Hinchliffe received the Board’s statement at a special meeting on 5 January 1931 and said he would respond later. He did outline his own views as to UBC’s future. There was no prospect of increased accommodation for years. Enrolment should be limited to 1,500 students. The limitation of enrolment was the responsibility of the university. The educational system was unsatisfactory, but only with UBC’s co-operation could the high schools be improved. There should be a generous system of scholarships and bursaries for “those who may reasonably be expected to profit thereby.”⁷⁰

Three weeks later Hinchliffe attended a meeting of the Senate in order to inform his fellow senators about the government’s ideas on enrolment. The university was overcrowded, and the Board had “taken the stand that the duty of deciding what shall be done in regard to this matter lies entirely with the Government.” Very well, here was the government’s decision.

⁶⁹ Quotations in the preceding three paragraphs are from the text of the Board’s memorandum to the Minister, reproduced in *BoG Minutes*, vol. 10, meeting of 30 December 1930.

⁷⁰ *BoG Minutes*, vol. 10, meeting of 5 January 1931.

Ending the overcrowding by expanding the accommodation was out of the question because there was no money. This left but one course of action.

The Government takes the position that conditions are now entirely different from those which prevailed at the time the former administration laid down its policy, and that it is now absolutely impossible for British Columbia to provide a University "open and free of charge to all students with the requisite academic standing."

The government wished, therefore, that student numbers be reduced and "that students be admitted in order of merit as their names appear on the Matriculation list."⁷¹

Having heard the Minister talk of a maximum enrolment of 1,500 students at a time when enrolment in the fall-winter session was just over 2,000, Klinck and the Board were nevertheless stunned by the news, received in early March, that the grant to the university for 1931-32 would be cut by almost a quarter. The Board had requested \$587,000; the estimates that the cabinet submitted to the Legislature contained an item of \$462,700 for UBC. (A further \$25,000 was earmarked for scholarships.) But enrolment could not be cut proportionately, i.e., by more than 400 students, unless UBC registered virtually no first year students in the fall of 1931. With student numbers expected to drop only moderately, how was the university to make the savings required to balance the budget in 1931-32?

This is not the place to describe the budgetary crisis of the early 1930s, fascinating as the details are.⁷² But several aspects of it help to clarify the nature of university-government relations at this time.

The Senate, aware of the Minister's view that the research programme in agriculture was not central to the university, recommended to the Board

that the cost of the research work hitherto carried on by the Faculty of Agriculture, other than such work as may be necessary to teaching, be assumed by the Provincial Government and coordinated with the work of the Department of Agriculture of the Province and that such cost be provided in addition to the University appropriation.⁷³

⁷¹ PO, mfm reel 32, file E.21 Sp., Salient Points Brought Forward by the Minister of Education at a Conference Held by him with the Senate of the University of British Columbia on January 27th, 1931. See also; Senate Minutes, meetings of 27 January and 18 February 1931. At the latter meeting the Senate discussed and tabled a motion disagreeing with the Minister's position. The motion was raised from the table at a meeting on 18 March 1931 and carried.

⁷² They are ably dealt with in H. T. Logan, *Tuum Est*, chapter 5, written by John M. Norris.

⁷³ Senate Minutes, meeting of 18 March 1931.

This recommendation led the Board in April to cut the appropriation to the Faculty of Agriculture from \$129,000 to \$50,000. The purpose of this was at least in part political: the Board intended to inform the various delegations of farmers' groups who had appeared before them to defend agricultural research

that the result of this action will be to destroy the work of the men whom the delegates so highly lauded when they were here; that the only possible remedy is a further appropriation from the Government; and that if the representatives decide to approach the Government the Board will be very willing to join such a delegation if requested to do so.⁷⁴

The government probably objected to this step; there are cryptic references in the Board minutes for the meeting of 29 May to unhappy responses from the Minister of Education and the Provincial Secretary. Furthermore, Klinck was strongly opposed — he had been the Dean of Agriculture and believed in the programme of basic research carried on in the Faculty — and in mid-July the Board rescinded their motion, setting the Agriculture budget for 1931-32 at \$101,000.

They did so partly because they had decided to increase tuition fees by \$25 per year or 25 percent, whichever was less, and because they had managed to make several economies.⁷⁵ On 4 July they had met Hinchliffe at the Court House in Vancouver to present what they hoped was the final draft of the 1931-32 budget. Klinck drew Hinchliffe's attention to four main points: (1) although the budget was based on a maximum of 400 students in First Year Arts and Science, the Board favoured admitting 500; (2) the budget showed a deficit of rather more than \$28,000; (3) it was based on the assumption that fees would be raised by \$25 per student; and (4) the Minister should devote particular attention to the revised budget for the Faculty of Agriculture. No doubt the Board was hoping to have Hinchliffe express approval or disapproval of the estimates for agricultural research.

Hinchliffe replied that he did not wish to see enrolment limited to the point that the available facilities were under-used, that in view of the Board's actions in cutting the budget he would arrange to have the grant increased to cover the deficit (this he failed to do), and that "the suggested increase in fees, the division of the University grant, and the proposal that a Department of Home Economics be established, . . . were matters which

⁷⁴ BoG Minutes, vol. 10, meeting of 27 April 1931.

⁷⁵ BoG Minutes, vol. 10, meeting of 13 July 1931. The effect was to increase significantly the share of university revenue paid by students. Indeed, by 1932-33 student fees accounted for more than half of UBC's income.

came within the jurisdiction of the Board.”⁷⁶ He said nothing about the budget of the Faculty of Agriculture.

Possibly Hinchliffe was learning. The Board’s attempt in April to use the drastic cut in agricultural research as a lever against the government may have demonstrated to him that there were dangers in simultaneously reducing the budget *and* indicating where cuts might be made. It was better to let the Board make the cuts or raise the fees, and let them take the heat for doing so.

The Senate regretted the increase in fees in a resolution which the Board politely received and filed.⁷⁷ After all, the Senate’s authority in this matter had been ended almost a decade earlier. In April 1931 they also lost their authority over admissions policy. No doubt aware that the Board were more sensitive to pressure than the Senate, Hinchliffe asked Klinck in March to inform the Board “that if they would send the Minister a letter to the effect that they would limit attendance. . . , the Minister would undertake . . . to introduce an amendment to the University Act giving the Board of Governors full power to make regulations governing the number of admissions to the University.” The Board responded guardedly: the Board could not presume to advise the government on any legislation affecting the powers of the Board and Senate except after consultation with the latter, but the proposed legislation was entirely within the power of the government to enact.⁷⁸ The amendment to the University Act soon became law.

The Board decided that total entering enrolment in all faculties should be limited to 500 in 1931-32. (This included first year enrolment in Arts and Science and Agriculture, and second year enrolment in Applied Science and Nursing; in the 1930-31 session the total had been 718). A committee of five academics, appointed to work out the method of limitation, recommended two weeks later that preference be given to those who had an average of at least 60 percent in the Junior Matriculation exams. The Board agreed.⁷⁹ In the fall of 1932, total entering enrolment was 566, well in excess of the Board’s target. But in the fall of 1933 total entering enrolment fell to 368, more than a quarter below the target. The effects of the Depression probably had more to do with this than the higher entrance requirements.

⁷⁶ BoG Minutes, vol. 10, meeting with the Minister, 4 July 1931.

⁷⁷ Senate Minutes, meeting of 29 July 1931.

⁷⁸ BoG Minutes, vol. 10, meeting of 25 March 1931.

⁷⁹ BoG Minutes, vol. 10, meeting of 27 July 1931.

VI

Hinchliffe had used his power to impose his solution to the problem of overcrowding. In 1931 this was not the only way in which he made his influence felt. Early in August he lectured Klinck on the subject of political partisanship in the university. "Since so many complaints had been made to him and the pressure had become so great," Klinck noted for his own files, "he felt he should tell me about it."⁸⁰ He mentioned C. W. Topping of the Department of Economics, Sociology and Political Science, who was alleged to have made comments in support of free trade and against protection, and the university librarian, John Ridington, who had publicly praised the former Canadian Minister to Washington and well-known Liberal, Vincent Massey. Hinchliffe also produced an essay submitted in an English course in 1927 on the subject "Conservatism and Its Influence in Society," on which the instructor had written: "This essay, in my opinion, is full of 'hokum', but it is about a good a case as can be made for a very bad cause." Given the Minister's view that UBC had been under political control for years, he was perhaps predisposed to find evidence of rampant Liberalism.

If Klinck thought it worthwhile to pursue the Minister's complaint there is no evidence of it in the records. But Hinchliffe's misgivings and his belief that the institution and particularly the Faculty of Agriculture cost too much found further expression in his treatment of the university later in the year.

The deepening fiscal problems of the government led Tolmie in November to inform all of his cabinet that "the finances of the Province are exceedingly critical, in fact, with falling revenues and no indication of improvement, immediate and severe retrenchments are essential." (The deficit on government operations was more than \$7 million in 1931-32, or almost a third of revenues; annual debt charges increased to \$5.9 million, and the provincial debt rose by \$13 million to \$128.6 million as the government had to spend \$4.1 million on unemployment relief alone.) The hostility to UBC of Hinchliffe's reply is startling:

I am going to quote from a letter to Dr. McLean [*sic*], written by the Honourable John Oliver in 1922: "Had I known several years ago what I know now, I would have set my face like flint against the Province having anything to do with the maintenance of this University, but we have drifted into a position where it is almost impossible to recede and where it is absolutely dangerous to go on. Frankly I can see no justification whatever for the

⁸⁰ PO, mfm reel 32, file E.21 Sp., Statement made to L. S. Klinck by Mr. Hinchliffe, August 5, 1931.

Province paying this huge sum of money for the results which are being obtained." You will notice that Mr. Oliver says: "It is almost impossible to recede," but it is possible and now is the time to recede. I do not think that the Government is justified in granting more than \$150,000 or \$200,000 to the University and that should be given on very stringent conditions. This would mean a saving of \$250,000.⁸¹

Hinchliffe's cabinet colleagues may have thought this cut was too ferocious: the grant for 1932-33 was set at \$250,000. But this was little more than half of the money provided the previous year, and only 40 percent of the grant for 1929-30. A January meeting between a special committee of the Board and the Minister of Education, attended also by the Ministers of Finance and Agriculture, elicited the information that the province was in desperate financial straits, and that the grant might be lower yet the following year.⁸²

The cut in UBC's grant was far greater than the reduction in primary and secondary education spending — 21 percent from 1929-30 to 1932-33 — or the 23 percent decline in government revenue. Hinchliffe's hostility to UBC played a part in this; so did the view that the university was something of a luxury, or less important at any rate than the public schools. The Kidd Committee, consisting of five businessmen appointed by the government to investigate provincial finances, proposed in July 1932 that the government should end the grant to UBC. This had some media support on the grounds that a university education was, if not a frill, nevertheless of benefit primarily to the individual, and that the province could save money by encouraging B.C. students to obtain their education elsewhere. However, this suggestion was not widely popular or politically acceptable; nor indeed, were the bulk of the committee's proposals.⁸³ The grant for 1933-34 remained at \$250,000.

In 1932 Hinchliffe offered no advice on apportioning the cut beyond saying that "those departments which contributed most to the development of the natural resources of the Province should be the last to be

⁸¹ UBC Library, Special Collections, Simon Fraser Tolmie Papers, folder 7-2, Minister of Education, S. F. Tolmie to J. Hinchliffe, 4 November 1931, copy; J. Hinchliffe to S. F. Tolmie, 9 November 1931. For Oliver's letter see: Provincial Archives of British Columbia (PABC), GR 1222, British Columbia, Premier, Box 120, file 2, John Oliver to J. D. MacLean, 22 October 1922, copy, attached to J. Hinchliffe to S. F. Tolmie, 27 February 1930.

⁸² For a discussion see: BoG Minutes, vol. 11, meeting of 8 February 1932.

⁸³ *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Government to Investigate the Finances of British Columbia, Presented to the Government July 12th, 1932, with Appendix Containing Comments by the Government of British Columbia*, Victoria, 1932, 36 and 69. There is a file of clippings on the Kidd report in the Special Collections department of the UBC Library.

affected adversely as the result of the decrease in the appropriation.”⁸⁴ This comment did not help. Rev. W. H. Vance, Principal of the Anglican Theological College and a member of Senate, wrote to him in February pointing out that “your statement in the papers following your interview with a special committee of the Board of Governors is being interpreted as suggesting that the Arts Faculty . . . should be sacrificed, if necessary, in order to maintain in their present status certain other Faculties and Departments.”⁸⁵ Hinchliffe’s reply clarified the situation but little. He informed Vance that when the Board had asked him for advice he had told them the apportioning of budget cuts was their responsibility. But he had suggested

that since the University was largely supported by the taxpayers, the desire of the taxpayers, as far as they could be ascertained, should be taken into consideration. I also gave it as my own opinion that the taxpayers would prefer to see continued that education . . . which would enable our young people . . . properly to make use of the resources of the Province. You know as well as I do that a great deal of the information obtained by a student in the Arts Course is absolutely essential as a foundation, if nothing else, upon which can be built the knowledge of the Sciences required for such development.⁸⁶

This explanation, conveyed to the Senate, fed a quarrel between Klinck and Dean Daniel Buchanan of the Faculty of Arts and Science. In this Faculty the feeling was strong that Agriculture should sustain the major part of the reduction in the grant. The Senate, taking a stand generally sympathetic to Arts and Science, in early April voted lack of confidence in the president while pledging co-operation with the Board.⁸⁷

The latter affirmed their confidence in Klinck, but thought it wise to secure an inquiry into the affairs of UBC. At the Board’s request the government appointed Judge Peter Lampman of Victoria; his report, issued in July 1932, constitutes a fascinating analysis of the institution during a period of extreme turmoil as well as an instructive comment on the difficulties of making academic decisions with inescapable financial consequences when the Senate had charge of academic matters while the Board controlled the budget. Lampman thought two governing bodies

⁸⁴ PO, mfm reel 35, Estimates 1932-33, Meeting of Special Committee of the Board of Governors with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education, 27 January 1932.

⁸⁵ PO, mfm reel 32, file E-21 Sp., W. H. Vance to J. Hinchliffe, 3 February 1932, copy.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, J. Hinchliffe to W. H. Vance, 4 February 1932, copy.

⁸⁷ Senate Minutes, meeting of 5 April 1932.

were one too many, and proposed that the Senate be abolished.⁸⁸ The government did not act on this recommendation but, noting Lampman's remark about the difficulties the president had in interpreting the views of the two bodies to each other, amended the Act so as to give the Senate two representatives on the Board of Governors. Another result was that the Board, taking a leaf from Lampman's report, stated that "responsibility for the business administration of the University rests exclusively on its shoulders and . . . in future the Board will act upon this principle."⁸⁹ They were still willing to take advice from the Senate, but abandoned the practice of shared budgetary decision-making, adopted in the crises of the past two years.

What did the latest crisis reveal about the university's autonomy, or lack of it, in its relations with the government? Put briefly, the government, having presented the Board with an unprecedented budgetary crunch, refrained from offering any direction or advice beyond Hinchliffe's ambiguous statement of late January, and assumed no responsibility for the effects of halving the grant. It was known, of course, that the Minister favoured deep cuts in Agriculture, but he would not order the Board to make them. Board members thus enjoyed autonomy when they least wanted it. What they had, after all, was the freedom to choose which healthy limb to amputate. And they got no help in their travails. Realizing that they could not cut the budget without breaking the contracts of some professors who would have to be compensated, the Board asked the Minister "what provision is to be made for the liability so to be incurred by the Board to such members of the staff." Hinchliffe replied "that the provision for making compensation to members of the staff who of necessity are being discharged is one for the Board of Governors to consider."⁹⁰ The Board had asked the Minister for bread. What they got was a stone.

Dismissals of junior faculty and support staff took place in the spring and early summer of 1932. In July the Board dismissed eleven members of the professorial staff (out of a total of 91), six in Agriculture and five in Arts and Science, though none of them with continuing appointment (as tenure was then called). No fewer than six had unexpired contracts, but the Board obtained consent by means of severance pay and promises of reappointment as soon as circumstances permitted. (A few of those

⁸⁸ UBC Archives, Lampman Investigation File, P. S. Lampman to Judge J. N. Ellis, 8 July 1932, and attachments, including Judge Lampman's report.

⁸⁹ BoG Minutes, vol. 11, meeting of 15 July 1932.

⁹⁰ PO, mfm reel 32, file E.21 Sp., L. S. Klinck to Joshua Hinchliffe, 4 March 1932, copy; J. Hinchliffe to L. S. Klinck, 9 March 1932.

dismissed later returned to UBC.) It is likely that the Minister's animosity to the Faculty of Agriculture prompted the cut of \$64,701 or 64.2 percent in its budget, virtually ending research. (The cut in Arts and Science was \$77,549 or 28.1 percent; the cut sustained by Applied Science was \$12,700 or 14.3 percent. Cuts were also made in administrative costs.)

VII

The issue of professorial participation in electoral politics first arose in connection with one of those dismissed in the crisis of 1932. In May 1933 Klinck informed the Board that Dean Buchanan had recommended J. Allen Harris, sometime Assistant Professor of Chemistry, for employment as instructor in the 1933 summer session. However, Harris had accepted the Liberal nomination in an Interior constituency, a provincial election being expected soon. The Board carried a motion opposing the appointment to the teaching staff of "any person who is entering political life." At the next meeting the president again recommended Harris's appointment. The Board continued in their opposition, and Klinck withdrew his recommendation.⁹¹

Had the matter rested there, UBC would have had the same policy that was in effect, explicitly or implicitly, at other provincial universities, namely that political candidacy was inconsistent with university employment. But in August 1933 the Board had to deal with a request from George M. Weir, head of the Department of Education in the Faculty of Arts and Science, that he be permitted to accept the Liberal nomination in a Vancouver constituency.

This presented the Board with a ticklish problem. More than three years of economic depression had discredited and divided the Conservatives; few people doubted that the Liberals would sweep into office. And Weir was rumoured to be Liberal leader T. D. Pattullo's choice for the Education portfolio. The Board therefore bought time, passing a motion that they "have taken no action nor do they intend to take any action which will in any way curtail the civil rights of any member of the staff, but should any person on the staff be elected as a representative of the people then the Governors will consider the situation thereby created."⁹²

The Liberals won as expected; so did Weir. At a meeting on 18 December the Board had before them Weir's request that he be granted leave of absence without pay, as he had already been appointed Minister of Educa-

⁹¹ BoG Minutes, vol. 12, meetings of 29 May 1933 and 26 June 1933.

⁹² BoG Minutes, vol. 12, meeting of 10 August 1933.

tion and Provincial Secretary. President Klinck had met Premier Pattullo on 7 December and had said that he “expected Dr. Weir to resign.” The Premier had demurred: it was not up to Weir but to the Board to take action. His own view was that “it would not be fair to Dr. Weir to ask him to resign unless the Board should decide to appoint a Head to the Department of Education.” When Klinck said he did not think the Board would take such action “at present,” Pattullo asked him “to re-open the case with him as soon as the Governors felt they were in a position to appoint a man to the post.”⁹³ Having heard this account of the Premier’s thoughts, the Board resolved “that Dr. Weir be given leave of absence, without salary, from the time he became Minister until such time as the Board shall decide to appoint a permanent Head in the Department of Education.”⁹⁴ But the decision was not unanimous. Two members, Judge J. N. Ellis and F. J. Burd, voted against the motion because they held Weir’s ministerial appointment to be incompatible with continued employment at UBC.

Two years later Ellis, upon leaving the Board, replied to the Premier’s note of appreciation in terms bitter and reproachful:

I would have thought more of the thanks had you carried out your promise made to me in the Vancouver Hotel when we both agreed that Dr. Weir’s conduct, in remaining on the Faculty, while a responsible minister of the Crown, was to say the least in bad taste and reprehensible.

At your personal request I remained on the Board relying on your express promise that the situation that I disapproved of would be satisfactorily settled after you were through with your first session. . . . Since that memorable discussion I have never had one word from you but have waited patiently for you to implement your promise.

Believing that Pattullo had reneged on his promise, Ellis expressed regret that he had not followed his first impulse in 1933, namely to resign.

In response the Premier wrote that he did not recall making the promise and saw nothing wrong with the leave of absence Weir had received. He urged Ellis to take a broad view: “Political life is very uncertain and I think it would be an unfortunate thing for the country if capable men must be excluded unless they are prepared to give up their businesses or professions.”⁹⁵

The “wider perspective” that Pattullo urged on Ellis had implications that went beyond Weir’s case, as the majority of the Board recognized.

⁹³ PO, mfm reel 83A, file George M. Weir, Memorandum on the interview with the Honourable the Premier, December 7, 1933.

⁹⁴ BoG Minutes, vol. 12, meeting of 18 December 1933.

⁹⁵ PABC, T. D. Pattullo Papers, Add. Mss. 3, vol. 73, file 7, J. N. Ellis to T. D. Pattullo, 3 September 1935; T. D. Pattullo to J. N. Ellis, 4 September 1935, copy.

Allen Harris, who had been denied an appointment to the 1933 summer school, got one in 1934 in spite of his having gained election (the Legislative Assembly did not sit during the summer months). The following year he benefited from direct political intervention on his behalf. At a meeting in October 1935 the Board heard from Klinck the substance of a telephone conversation with Weir: Harris was anxious to obtain a more permanent position with the university. "It was agreed that if the President is prepared to make a recommendation that Dr. J. Allen Harris be appointed . . . for full time, the Board would approve, on condition that Dr. Harris resign his seat in the Provincial Legislature" and that money were available.⁹⁶

Not long afterwards the Board were discussing a letter from the Premier urging "the appointment of Dr. Allen Harris to the staff of the University while retaining his seat in the Provincial Legislature. . . ."⁹⁷ They assigned the matter to a special committee, then sent a delegation to interview the Premier "with reference to (a) the suggestion that Dr. J. Allen Harris should do research work under the University for the Government; and (b) define a procedure that will be in line with the obligations of the Board and the wishes of the Government."⁹⁸ A few days later Weir requested UBC to employ Harris as a research assistant in order "to undertake certain investigations in the field of industrial chemistry,"⁹⁹ and to grant \$10,000 to this end. This gave the university the money necessary to appoint Harris. The special Board committee now recommended that he be made Research Assistant in Chemistry "for the study of such problem or problems as the Government may indicate."¹⁰⁰ He was to receive the salary he had enjoyed when last employed full time, and to take leave without pay during the legislative session. His salary and the cost of his research were both to be defrayed from the research grant.

The Harris saga ended three years later. He decided not to run for re-election in 1937, and in the fall of that year Klinck recommended "that Dr. J. Allen Harris be re-appointed as Assistant Professor of Chemistry as from September 28th, 1937 . . . , the appointment to be to May 15,

⁹⁶ BoG Minutes, vol. 14, meeting of 4 October 1935.

⁹⁷ BoG Minutes, vol. 14, meeting of 28 October 1935. I was unable to find the letter in the President's Office Papers, but a copy may be found in: PABC, GR 1222, British Columbia, Premier, Box 137, file 2, T. D. Pattullo to L. S. Klinck, 22 October 1935.

⁹⁸ BoG Minutes, vol. 14, special meeting of 20 November 1935.

⁹⁹ PO, mfm reel 44, file E.21 Sp., Minister of Education, Matters discussed with Dr. Weir, November 26th, 1935. See also: PO, mfm reel 43, file E.21 Sp., Minister of Education, G. M. Weir to L. S. Klinck, 23 November 1935.

¹⁰⁰ BoG Minutes, vol. 14, meeting of 20 December 1935.

1938.”¹⁰¹ Half of his salary would be charged to the Research Fund, because he was teaching only half time. Then, in the spring of 1938, Harris rejoined the department of chemistry on a full-time basis at his old salary, no part of which was any longer to be charged to research. He was not the only one of those dismissed in 1932 to return to the fold, but he *was* the only one to owe his re-appointment in part to direct political pressure.

In defence of the Board’s willingness to yield to the government’s wishes in this case, it should be noted that they had employed Harris earlier and were willing to rehire him. Moreover, their acquiescence in Weir’s leave of absence made it hard to insist that Harris resign his seat before returning to university employment. Weir himself remained in politics until 1941 and then obtained a further leave of absence in order to carry out war work in Ottawa. Not until 1944 did he return to UBC, only to obtain renewed political leave in 1945 to run for the Legislature. This time, however, upon being appointed Minister of Education in the Liberal-Conservative coalition government, he resigned his teaching position.

VIII

The Board’s decision in December 1933 to be flexible when George Weir applied for leave may have found justification in a report they heard of Klinck’s meeting with the newly appointed Minister on 7 December. Klinck had had little difficulty in persuading Weir that declining enrolment meant increased financial problems for UBC at a time when fees had come to constitute between 40 and 50 percent of income. Although the province’s serious budgetary problems persisted, the Board felt encouraged at their meeting of 10 December to instruct Klinck to draw up a budget asking for \$297,000 in 1933-34. The following April they got what must have seemed like good news: the grant would be \$300,000, an increase of \$50,000.¹⁰² The university had turned a corner. From 1934 on its finances and morale began gradually to improve.

It might seem fitting, too, that with a professor in the Minister’s office in Victoria the university would begin to recover some of those aspects of autonomy that since 1915 had been weakened or lost. But government’s habit of authority and the institution’s habit of deference were both deeply ingrained. The case of Allen Harris provides evidence that the Premier

¹⁰¹ BoG Minutes, vol. 16, meeting of 27 September 1937.

¹⁰² BoG Minutes, vol. 12, meeting of 10 December 1933; vol. 13, meeting of 12 April 1934.

and Minister of Education could get what they wanted if they pushed the Board a bit. In areas such as tuition fees and admissions policy the governors were used to accommodating governmental wishes and continued to do so.

When economic conditions began to improve in the mid 1930s, enrolments started to rise and the problem of overcrowding re-emerged. In 1935 the numbers admitted exceeded the targets in both Applied Science and Nursing; the prospect was that the demand for places would continue to grow. Should a greater number of qualified students be refused entry? This was a matter on which unilateral action seemed inadvisable, especially in view of the Board's statement of December 1930 to Hinchliffe. After Klinck had a meeting with Weir late in 1935 he reported to the Board at their December meeting that "the Minister expressed the hope that further limitation of attendance might not be thought necessary."¹⁰³ An increase in the 1936-37 operating grant to \$350,000 followed. This was welcome, but did not provide additional space.

For the next few years UBC struggled with the related problems of enrolment and accommodation. Especially in Applied Science applications exceeded by a wide margin the number of places available. In September 1936 Klinck and Chancellor McKechnie met the Premier, the Minister of Finance and two other cabinet members — Weir was absent — and discussed with them the question "... whether the general principle of limitation should be abandoned and accommodation be provided for all qualified students in the future, or whether limitation should be retained and an increasing number of qualified students be debarred each year."¹⁰⁴ The result was a special grant in 1937-38 of \$5,000 "in order to meet the immediate emergency in respect of the Department [*sic*] of Applied Science." But the government wanted it to be understood that "this is not a precedent in any way but is solely for the purpose of meeting the immediate emergency."¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the operating grant would be increased by another \$50,000, to \$400,000, in order to enable the university to hire the staff necessary to teach the growing student body.

The problem of overcrowding grew worse in 1937. Since the move to Point Grey in 1925 no additional classroom, laboratory, or library space had been constructed. Enrolment in 1930-31, when the institution was

¹⁰³ BoG Minutes, vol. 14, meeting of 20 December 1935.

¹⁰⁴ See: BoG Minutes, vol. 15, meeting of 28 September 1936.

¹⁰⁵ BoG Minutes, vol. 15, T. D. Pattullo to L. S. Klinck, 23 September 1936, copy in meeting of 28 September 1936. See also: PO, mfm reel 46, file E.21 Special: Minister of Education, G. M. Weir to L. S. Klinck, 19 November 1936.

already manifestly overcrowded, had been 2,044; enrolment in 1937-38 was 2,481! Meetings with Pattullo and Finance Minister John Hart in April 1937, and with Weir in August and November, produced expressions of sympathy but no promises of another building.¹⁰⁶ Early in 1938 the Premier wrote to the chancellor:

At the moment the Government cannot say yes to your reasonable request for additional accommodation and on the other hand would not like to counsel a too rigid curtailment of enrolment. The Government would appreciate your carrying on within your best judgment in the knowledge that the Government is sympathetic to your request for additional accommodation. . . .¹⁰⁷

Reluctantly opposing the government's wishes, possibly hoping to force its hand, the Board at its meeting of January 1938 passed two motions dealing with enrolment. The first offered justifications: "the limits of effective accommodation have long since been far exceeded"; there was no near prospect of new construction; "the enrolment is increasing rapidly;" the legislative grant for 1938-39 was unchanged from the previous year; and "there has been an appreciable lowering of the academic standards during the past few years."¹⁰⁸ The only new point concerned academic standards, presumably in the province's high schools. The Board minutes and President's Office records offer no evidence to substantiate the claim that standards had in fact declined, and it is possible that it was only introduced in order to try to disarm criticism, the implication being that students who met the allegedly higher standards of yesteryear would still be able to enter UBC.

The second motion set enrolment targets. A committee of five academics, asked to work out the method of limitation, proposed in May that preference be given to applicants who had obtained an average of 70 percent in

¹⁰⁶ BoG Minutes, vol. 16, meetings of 26 April 1937 and 12 November 1937; PO, mfm reel 46, file E.21 Sp., Minister of Education, Memorandum on interview with the Honourable the Minister of Education on August 4th, 1937; PO, mfm reel 49, File E.21 Sp., Minister of Education, G. M. Weir to L. S. Klinck, 7 September 1937; Memorandum Prepared for the Honourable the Minister of Education, October 25th, 1937.

¹⁰⁷ BoG Minutes, vol. 17, T. D. Pattullo to R. E. McKechnie, 7 January 1938, copy in meeting of 20 January 1938. The government's reluctance was prompted by continued financial difficulty. The operating budget moved into surplus as early as 1934-35, the result of an improving economy (until 1937) that brought higher revenues. But the cost of capital projects, the Pacific Great Eastern Railway, and unemployment relief continued to push the provincial debt higher, from \$137 million on 1 April 1933 to \$165 million five years later. Debt charges rose in tandem, absorbing 30 percent or more of government revenue throughout the mid and late 1930s.

¹⁰⁸ BoG Minutes, vol. 17, meeting of 20 January 1938.

the province's Junior Matriculation exams or a "B" average if they had graduated from accredited schools. Ten spaces would be held for students with high matriculation standing from other provinces, but "priority will be given to residents."¹⁰⁹ These were tough requirements, but it took the government a while to respond. A meeting between Klinck and Weir on 27 May produced nothing beyond a vague promise "that the Government might possibly erect a building for Preventive Medicine and Public Health in which there would be more accommodation than was actually needed for these two purposes at the present time. . . ."¹¹⁰ Only when registration for 1938-39 was at hand, and when, we may assume, the parents of some prospective registrants had begun to protest against the exclusion of their children, did Premier Pattullo speak. On 2 September his office issued a press release: ". . . The Government was requesting the Board of Governors not to carry out limitation of enrollment as proposed." The release explained that the Board were concerned about congestion. "The Premier stated that while it was not possible to make any definite commitment as to construction of buildings this year, the Government was quite prepared to take responsibility that the work of the University shall be carried on at its present high standard."¹¹¹

The Board did the expected: the enrolment limits adopted at its January meeting would not be enforced. Students would be crammed in somehow. This course of action continued in 1939, doubtlessly influenced by a conversation that the acting president, Dean J. N. Finlayson, had with Weir in March. Finlayson reported to the Board, in such confidence that his remarks were not included in the Board minutes, that "the Premier had authorized the Minister to state that he was not in favour of the limitation of attendance of students at the University." Weir had concurred in the Premier's opinion. "The Premier and the Minister did not wish to interfere with the University's affairs, but they did wish to express the hope that limitation of attendance would not be enforced next year."¹¹² In this kind of compound sentence the words that follow the "but" are meant to be taken more seriously than those preceding it. The Board's discussion of

¹⁰⁹ BoG Minutes, vol. 17, meeting of 30 May 1938. There were three main categories of secondary schools in British Columbia, public accredited, public non-accredited, and private. Graduating students in the latter two types of school had to write the Junior Matriculation exams; students in accredited schools did not have to write an exam in an examinable subject if they had at least a C+ grade.

¹¹⁰ BoG Minutes, vol. 17, meeting of 30 May 1938.

¹¹¹ PO, mfm reel 53, file E.21 Sp., Minister of Education, G. M. Weir to Evelyn F. Farris (Secretary, Board of Governors), 2 September 1938.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, The Board of Governors, March 27th, 1939. Marked: "Not for record."

Finlayson's report indicates that they understood this. They again suspended the limits adopted in 1938.¹¹³

In June 1939 the government finally announced the planned construction of the building Weir had mentioned more than a year before. Alas, for the second time in twenty-five years the coming of war prevented construction on the Point Grey campus. In September 1939 the Public Health building was put on hold. Overcrowding continued to be the rule.

IX

The over-all record of the relations between the provincial government and the UBC Board during the years before the Second World War was one of control and compliance. This may occasion no great surprise. After all, most Board members owed their appointment to the government and justifiably saw themselves as accountable to it. Much like the Minister they dealt with, they seem to have believed that the province's investment in UBC allowed, perhaps even obliged, Ministers to give it guidance in the expenditure of scarce funds. Young did little in this way, possibly because he had little opportunity. However, MacLean, Hinchliffe and Weir all occasionally allowed their own judgement (or that of the cabinet) to override that of UBC's governing bodies, and asked the Board to do or not do something in such a way as to make of a question a directive, even while protesting their belief in university autonomy. Party identification mattered little: MacLean and Weir were Liberals, Hinchliffe was a Conservative. The common thread was that each managed to control admissions as well as funding policy. The differences were in objectives as well as methods. Hinchliffe used budgetary cuts to secure a limitation of enrolment and the virtual elimination of research in the Faculty of Agriculture. MacLean forced the university to introduce fees in order to reduce its claim on public funds. Both he and Weir used pressure to forestall limits on admissions without committing the capital funds that UBC thought necessary.

Accountability is bound to limit university autonomy. However, a comparative perspective reveals that in British Columbia it did so to an unusually high degree. The dominant model at other provincial institutions in Canada, at least after the reform of the University of Toronto early in the twentieth century, was that of the arm's-length relationship. The best history of a provincial institution, Michael Hayden's *Seeking a Balance: The University of Saskatchewan, 1907-1982*, demonstrates that the gov-

¹¹³ BoG Minutes, vol. 18, special meeting of 21 April 1939.

ernment of Saskatchewan maintained a discreet distance from internal university matters.¹¹⁴ My research suggests that the experience of the University of Alberta was similar to the University of Saskatchewan's.

The University of Manitoba presents a more complicated picture. After its Board chairman, who was also honorary treasurer, was found in the early 1930s to have misappropriated most of the university's endowment, the Manitoba government took steps to exercise close financial supervision.¹¹⁵ Too little has been written about the University of New Brunswick to allow informed comment on the nature of its relations with the government in this century. The University of Toronto after the reform of 1906 experienced occasional pressure from the government, particularly when Mitchell Hepburn was Premier (1934-42). But the institution's autonomy, though perhaps not as wide as the Act of 1906 envisaged, was substantially greater than UBC's in the 1920s and 1930s.¹¹⁶

Like UBC, the other provincial universities generally lacked the money to do all they wanted. Like UBC, too, they sometimes got earmarked grants which they spent as the government had directed on the understanding that, if they did not do so, the funds would vanish. During the Depression, moreover, like UBC they were under pressure to make the same deductions from university salaries that the respective provincial governments were making from the salaries of civil servants, and like UBC they gave in. But with respect to such matters as fees and admissions, as well as the internal allocation of funds, most if not all seem to have enjoyed a freedom greater than UBC's.

Why did UBC's autonomy decline after 1916? Were B.C. politicians given to a greater degree of *dirigisme* than was the case elsewhere? Was UBC subject to pressure because British Columbians, and their political leaders, wanted a university less badly than, say, the inhabitants of Alberta or Saskatchewan? (The first historian of UBC, F. H. Soward, wrote in 1930 that "the University has still to secure from the people of the province the same faith and loyalty which older universities have won and which dispose Governments to be generous, if not daring, in furthering educa-

¹¹⁴ Michael Hayden, *Seeking a Balance: The University of Saskatchewan 1907-1982* (Vancouver, 1984).

¹¹⁵ No good history exists of the University of Alberta, and no recent history of the University of Manitoba. W. L. Morton, *One University: A History of the University of Manitoba 1877-1952* (Toronto, 1957) has limitations but sheds some light on the relations between the university and the provincial government.

¹¹⁶ A recent biography offers valuable insight into the history of the first quarter century of the reformed University of Toronto and its relations with the provincial government: James G. Greenlee, *Sir Robert Falconer: A Biography* (Toronto, 1988).

tional policies.”¹¹⁷ He did not draw comparisons with the universities of the prairie provinces.) Did a lack of broad public support for UBC somehow encourage government interference? Were its first two presidents — particularly L. S. Klinck, who served as acting president and president from 1918 to 1944 — less effective in dealing with Premiers and Ministers of Education than men like Henry Marshall Tory in Alberta, Walter C. Murray in Saskatchewan, or Sir Robert Falconer at the University of Toronto? (Professor Peter Waite has stated that Klinck did not like to deal with politicians and showed little aptitude for the task.)¹¹⁸ Or were Board members in British Columbia less able than their counterparts in other provinces to defend their institution’s autonomy, possibly because their attitudes were more deferential to government than those prevailing elsewhere?

These are fascinating questions, but even were we to know all the answers they might not help to explain the development of the relationship between UBC and the provincial government. Perhaps readers will offer their explanations in response to this paper. The statue of George Vancouver, unfortunately, is incapable of telling us anything at all.

¹¹⁷ Soward, 368.

¹¹⁸ P. B. Waite, *Lord of Point Grey: Larry MacKenzie of UBC* (Vancouver, 1987), 108-10.