

The Student Campaign of 1922 to "Build the University" of British Columbia

JOHN RODENHIZER

Struggle between the universities and the provincial government of British Columbia for increased assistance to higher education is not new. In fact, many problems similar to those of today existed forty-six years ago in 1922, when the students of the University of British Columbia conducted a well-organized campaign to persuade the government to provide the necessary funds for construction of new buildings at the present site on Point Grey.

UBC was established in 1915 to replace a western extension of McGill University in Vancouver. Endowment lands at Point Grey had been set aside in 1911 and buildings were planned. However, construction was halted in 1914 with the outbreak of the first world war, and students were forced to remain in the "Fairview Shacks," located on the grounds of the Vancouver General Hospital at Tenth Avenue and Laurel. In 1920 an act was passed enabling the government to borrow funds to construct buildings for the university, but no action was taken. The bleak skeleton of the Science Building at the Point Grey site remained a symbol of the desperate plight of the university, and an annual road race between Fairview and the Point served as a reminder to students of an eventual move to "the Promised Land."¹

By the 1921-22 session conditions at Fairview were becoming unbearable: "Rats were seen in classrooms. The roofs were thought to be falling in. Overflowing [*sic*] students in the 'Auditorium' were seated on the rafters. Classes were held in shacks, tents, a church basement, attics, and nearby homes."² Enrolment had grown by 211 per cent between 1916 and 1922, while accommodation had only increased by 25 per cent

¹ The race was changed to a route around Point Grey when the move was accomplished in 1925 [*Alumni Chronicle* (Autumn 1966), p. 19].

² Norman Klenman, ed., *The great trek: Twenty-fifth anniversary, October 29, 1947* (pages not numbered).

during this time.³ Students in the agricultural college were wasting 6000 hours going to and from their fields at Point Grey.⁴ Something had to be done, and the initiative was taken by students under the leadership of A. E. (Ab) Richards, president-elect of the Alma Mater Society.

In February 1922, Richards, Hunter Findlay, and Jack Grant discussed plans for a publicity campaign to inform the public about conditions at Fairview. They envisaged a comprehensive blitz, including circulation of a petition, public meetings, and press publicity. The petition was drawn up by Bruce Fraser, Jack Clyne, and Professor Henry Angus and was presented, along with publicity plans, to the students' council for approval. A pro tem committee, consisting of Richards (campaign chairman), Grant (campaign manager), and Findlay, was officially appointed in March.⁵ Before the term was over, Percy Barr (deputy chairman), Marjorie Agnew (secretary), Aubrey Roberts, and Jack Clyne were added to carry the work forward during the summer. Early in the autumn term of 1922 the Campaign Committee was enlarged to eleven members with the addition of Betty Somerset (assistant secretary), R. L. "Brick" MacLeod (treasurer), Joe Brown, Al Buchanan, and John Allardyce (alumni president).⁶

Ab Richards was born in Port Simpson, British Columbia, and attended high school in New Westminster.⁷ He was noted for his executive ability and for his high scholastic achievements, having been awarded a Returned Soldier's Scholarship for the previous year and two more scholarships for the 1922-23 session. He was a member of the Players' Club and served as president of the Literary and Scientific Department, secretary of the Agriculture Undergraduate Society, and as debates manager.⁸ The *Ubysey*, commenting on Richards' election as president of the Alma Mater Society, declared that "the University will have no cause for disappointment in its choice of a man who has always been a cheerful, capable, willing and ardent worker for the welfare of his Alma Mater. . . . Under such a leader we can look forward to a year

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Vancouver *Daily World*, October 28, 1922, p. 15.

⁵ Personal letter from A. E. Richards, March 10, 1969.

⁶ The appointment of Miss Somerset is interesting: she came to Miss Agnew one day and volunteered her services, suggesting that the secretary had an overabundance of work. Miss Agnew feels that perhaps Miss Somerset may have had more than simply an interest in the success of the campaign — she later became Mrs. J. V. Clyne. (Interview with Miss Marjorie Agnew, February 26, 1969.)

⁷ Richards' letter.

⁸ *Ubysey*, March 16, 1923, p. 1.

which will make history in the annals of U.B.C."⁹ Subsequent events proved the accuracy of this prediction.

The campaign was designed to convince the general public of the need to "Build the University," and through the people of the province to persuade the government to take immediate steps to ensure construction of the university. A directive from Richards, Grant, and Findlay to all UBC students stated:

As your personal contribution to this movement you are asked during your summer vacation to obtain the signatures and addresses of twenty-five electors. . . .

The Petition is being sent out with you at vacation time in order that the electors in every part of the Province may be reached. The results obtained in the Petition will be an indication of the attitude of the Student Body toward the Campaign. It will give a more definite idea of the feeling of the Public Mind on this question and will serve as a guide for our future plans.¹⁰

The petition urged the government "to institute a definite and progressive policy toward the University, and to take immediate action toward the erection of permanent buildings on the chosen University site at Point Grey."¹¹ When students returned to UBC for the 1922-23 session, they had collected 17,000 signatures from all parts of the province.

A Varsity Press Bureau was established by the Campaign Committee to communicate with the public via the news media. Don McIntyre served as chairman, and together with Hugo Ray, Aubrey Roberts, and Harry Cassidy, editor-in-chief of publications, prepared and sent news letters to sixty daily and weekly newspapers in British Columbia, presenting the university's case to a potential 200,000 readers.¹² The three Vancouver daily newspapers, *Province*, *Sun*, and *World*, supported the student campaign enthusiastically. Student spokesmen made numerous addresses to various clubs and organizations. The social pages of the Vancouver papers reported that students such as Arthur Lord and Garrett Livingstone were making eloquent appeals on behalf of the university.¹³ On most occasions, resolutions were passed, often unanimously, giving unconditional support to the student campaign.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Original document sent by A. E. Richards to the author.

¹¹ Original manuscript, UBC Archives.

¹² Harry Logan, *Tuum Est*, pp. 90-1. The total population of the province was 524,582 (*Census of Canada, 1921*, vol. I, p. 3).

¹³ *World*, September 12, 1922, p. 7; 26, p. 2; October 2, p. 7; 17, p. 7.

The main student argument consisted of a formula, devised by the Vancouver Kiwanis Club, whereby the government could float a loan to raise the necessary funds to build the university by using three thousand acres of land at Point Grey as security for the loan.¹⁴ Repayment could be made by selling some of the land, whose value would be increased by the presence of the university. A few residential lots could be sold to cover the interest on the loan. This plan avoided antagonizing the public, since it did not involve any direct effect on taxes. There were, however, arguments voiced in opposition to the scheme. Some people contended that the university would benefit only the Lower Mainland area and that outside regions would receive no immediate benefit. They argued that if young people wanted a university education they could go to eastern Canada or the United States. The Vancouver *Daily World* quoted the provincial Attorney-General, A. M. Manson, who described the university scheme as a "half-baked plan" and "a monument of extravagance."¹⁵ "I am a university man myself," he declared, "but I am not sure that we have not just a few too many white-collared, highly-educated persons in B.C." In addition, "there was indifference on the part of the public to the university, a widespread belief that British Columbia could never support a university, that students could go to Toronto or McGill."¹⁶ And there were those who felt that any idea of mass higher education should be abandoned. The best solution was a scheme of government bursaries "to send the best students east to school."¹⁷ Apart from the problem of financing immediate construction of the university, the students' arguments focused on the benefits of higher education for the whole of the province. It was a crime, they said, for students to be forced to go elsewhere to get a university degree. In most cases, their excellence and training were lost to the province for good. Industrial and economic expansion required people with a university education. The province and its people as a whole would benefit, they argued, not just the Vancouver area.

The *World*, in several editorials, told the students that their campaign was wasted on the Vancouver area, contending that the people of Vancouver were already convinced of the need for a new university and that it was in the up-country and Island ridings where the effort should be

¹⁴ *Ubysssey*, October 24, 1922, p. 2.

¹⁵ *World*, October 28, 1922, p. 16.

¹⁶ Interview with Jack Grant and A. E. Richards, at the Bayshore Inn, August 30, 1965 (Alumni Association records).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

concentrated.¹⁸ The *World*, in fact, used the student campaign as the main instrument in its crusade for a redistribution of seats in order to allow for increased representation for the Lower Mainland. The paper, however, had failed to realize how effective the campaign had been in the out-of-town areas. Richards reported that 310 towns and cities were represented on the petitions and that the committee had received resolutions of endorsement from 42 organizations, 19 of which were from outside the city of Vancouver. There were also supporting editorials in 43 newspapers located in all parts of the province. Some of the places represented on the petition were Arrowhead (33 names), Britannia Beach (53), Duncan (69), Grand Forks (56), Kaslo (61), Nanaimo (161), Masset (107), Stewart (45), and Trail (287).¹⁹

The government was the Liberal administration of Premier John Oliver, a rancher who represented the rural riding of Delta. His own personal views on the university subject are not clear. In his history of UBC, *Tuum Est*, Harry Logan says Oliver "lacked enthusiasm for the cause of higher education" and that "his natural reluctance for implementation of the 1920 Loan Act was strengthened by the fact that he was not sure to what extent the electorate was in favour of larger money grants to the university."²⁰ Richards remarked that he believed the Premier "was genuinely interested in building the university at Point Grey but he wanted to be sure that he had public support and support within the government."²¹ The Minister of Education, Dr. J. D. MacLean, was a graduate of McGill Medical College and had been a teacher for eight years;²² he was also provincial secretary and later became minister of railways. MacLean was thought to be generally sympathetic with the students but had hastened to remind Dr. L. S. Klinck, president of the university from 1918, that his department was continually receiving complaints about the high cost of the university.²³ Of the 46 members of the provincial legislature, only 13 had university degrees.²⁴ Also, although there were 6 members elected from Vancouver, 5 of whom were Liberals, the city was not represented in the cabinet. The Liberals held 25 seats and the Conservatives 14 with a variety of Independents and

¹⁸ *World*, October 25, 1922, p. 4; 28, p. 16; 30, p. 4.

¹⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, November 8, 1922, p. 9.

²⁰ Logan, *Tuum Est*, p. 90.

²¹ Richards' letter.

²² *Canadian Parliamentary Guide*, 1921, p. 454.

²³ Logan, *Tuum Est*, pp. 89-90.

²⁴ *Canadian Parliamentary Guide*, pp. 446-59.

Socialists, who usually supported the government, accounting for the remainder.

One of the biggest problems that had to be overcome by the Campaign Committee was student indifference towards the project. To be effective, the whole student body would have to participate. Richards says today that he thinks students were not much different then than now and that apathy had to be overcome.²⁵ The UBC annual, *Totem*, recognized that one of the biggest questions facing the committee was: "Will we be able to work the student body up to the proper pitch of enthusiasm?"²⁶ Student indifference to the campaign was, however, virtually impossible. Each person was given a petition and all other activities were subordinated in favour of the campaign. The *Ubyyssey* constantly reminded the students that the success of the campaign depended directly upon the amount of student involvement. "Get Behind the Student Campaign" appeared in one of the first *Ubyssseys* of the year.²⁷ A "Campaign-Box" was placed in the lobby for students to contribute ideas for the publicity campaign.²⁸

"Varsity Week," from October 22 to 28, was planned as the highlight of the campaign. "With some difficulty the Committee obtained permission to attach banners to the cowcatchers on the city trams, bearing the slogan 'Build the University.' The committee also had a stencil made and stamped the slogan on downtown buildings."²⁹ Students addressed audiences in downtown theatres, and a film revealing conditions at Fairview was made, but a showing was prohibited by the government. Jack Grant, who was in charge of all publicity, made a seven minute speech on radio station *CKCD* at 9:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 24.³⁰ A cartoon depicting President Klinck appeared on the front page of the *Province*:

The U.B.C. President lived in a shoe
 He had so many students, he didn't know what to do,
 He cramped them, and squeezed them, and trusted to luck,
 While the government dawdled,
 And passed him the
 "BUCK".³¹

²⁵ Richards' letter.

²⁶ *Totem: Eighth Annual of UBC, 1922-23*, edited by Lilian Cowdell (Vancouver, 1923), p. 95.

²⁷ *Ubyyssey*, October 5, 1922, p. 5.

²⁸ *Ubyyssey*, October 12, 1922, p. 8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Vancouver Province*, October 24, 1922, p. 22.

³¹ *Province*, October 27, 1922, p. 1.

An impressive picture of the chemistry tent also was shown in the *Province*.³² Advertisements placed in the Vancouver papers carried "Build the University" slogans and the university crest. David Spencer Limited, The Arbour, Mason and Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, O. B. Allan, and the Owl Drug Company all donated window display space, and the BC Electric Company even gave space in its *Buzzer* pamphlet.³³ Clergymen also made appeals for support of the student campaign. The *Sun* reported: "The Students' Council of the U.B.C. has sent letters to the clergymen and have received replies stating that these announcements will be made."³⁴ Percy Barr, addressing a student meeting, stated that "the Trades and Labour Council is also behind us solidly."³⁵ The events of Varsity Week were given full coverage in the downtown papers, and the most significant points made were that the university was "not for the sons of the rich only — present day students come from the homes of: Professional Men, 27.9 per cent; Business Men, 26.2 per cent; Labour Men and Office Workers, 28.9 per cent; Agriculturists, 11.8 per cent; Government Officials and Employees, 5.2 per cent. Lower Fees — Will give a greater chance to sons of working people."³⁶

On the Wednesday of Varsity Week (October 25), the students organized a house-to-house canvass of the city of Vancouver to add more names to their petition. The *Muck-A-Muck*, the literary section of the *Ubyyssey*, made certain suggestions:

To the Manager of the Student Campaign:

1. All co-eds to wear their prettiest clothes, and canvass office districts.
2. All men to canvass residential districts, and to ask for the lady of the house. If she who answers the door appears to be over 30, say: "Is your Mother at home?" If she is under twenty call her Madam. If she is somewhere between these ages — figure it out for yourself.
.....
4. Portraits of the Chemistry tent, the arts corridors, and the Science men, may be offered as proof of the necessity for removing the University from the city.

³² *Province*, October 26, 1922, p. 2.

³³ *Sun*, October 27, 1922, p. 5.

³⁴ *Sun*, October 21, 1922, p. 10. A further indication of the attitude of the churches to the university is given by their allowing classes to be held in church basements. French was given in the basement of a Baptist church and history in St. George's (Anglican) church. (Richards-Grant interview, 1965.)

³⁵ *Sun*, October 21, 1922, p. 12.

³⁶ Most of this type of information was compiled by Jack Clyne.

Whether or not the students followed any of these suggestions is debatable, but whatever the methods, the canvass was overwhelmingly successful. The number of names on the petition swelled to over 50,000 electors.³⁷ Additional signatures were added by Brick MacLeod, who set up a booth at the fair (what is now the Pacific National Exhibition) and offered to push baby carriages while mothers signed the petition; another enterprising student rode the Fairview Belt Line collecting signatures. A tremendous response prompted the *Ubysssey* to observe: "If all the signatures were put end to end they would reach to Victoria and back to Point Grey; if they were put on top of one another — they would be as high as the smoke from the hospital chimney."³⁸ Only one event served to mar the canvass; it was reported that certain individuals, posing as students, were soliciting contributions for the university; the committee hastened to inform the public that these people were not students.³⁹

A downtown parade and a march to Point Grey were planned as a climax to Varsity Week.⁴⁰ On Saturday, October 28, students lined up in classes at the east end of the Georgia Street Viaduct under the direction of Varsity marshal Al Buchanan. The students marched in classes carrying hundreds of banners and signs emphasizing the crowded conditions at Fairview. Thirty-five floats, including entries from the Alumni Society, the Rotary, Kiwanis, Gyro, and Native Sons' organizations, and Committee floats displaying the work being carried out in the various departments and needs of the university, swelled the parade to a considerable length. The agriculture float was drawn by a team of prize horses and the Chemistry Society had a tent mounted on their float with the words: "Actual conditions at the University. Is this fair?" Another float depicted a large sardine can bearing the inscription "University Students Packed in Fairview: Sardines Have Nothing On Us," and another showed a large radio set with "Our Station Call Is N.S.F." The graduating Arts class wore mortarboards, while Arts 23 contributed a float representing a large pot crowded with students and the sign "We Need a Larger Pot." Some other interesting slogans were "Even the Weather Favours Us"; "We're Packed, Let's Move"; "United, But Crowded"; U.B.C., N.S.F., S.O.S., P.D.Q."; "We're Not Dead, Don't

³⁷ The objective was 50,000 signatures. In the final count, approximately 56,000 were collected.

³⁸ *Ubysssey*, November 16, 1922, p. 7.

³⁹ *World*, November 1, 1922, p. 32.

⁴⁰ The best description of the parade appears in the *Province*, October 28, 1922, p. 1, and October 30, p. 3.

Keep Us Buried"; "Educate Your Children, Don't Wait for Ours"; "The War Baby Has Outgrown Its Cradle, Move It To the Point"; and "Life in a Tent Is all Very Fine, But It's a Mighty Poor Place for Chemistry 9."

The parade was led by a Campaign Committee float followed by the band of the Irish Fusiliers, who, together with four members of the Police Pipe band and the Elks band, provided ample accompaniment for the students' songs.⁴¹ One song concluded: "There's one thing certain, clear and plain, We ne'er shall drop this great campaign, Until the stones are fairly laid, Upon the site of Varsity." Another favourite was "We Ain't No Government's Darling," and the official marching song, composed especially for the occasion, was:

We're thru' with tents and hovels,
 We're done with shingle stain,
 That's why we want you to join us
 And carry our Campaign.
 The Government can't refuse us,
 No matter what they say,
 For we'll get the people voting
 For our new home at Point Grey.⁴²

The boisterous students gathered the attention of large crowds as they proceeded down Main to Hastings, along Hastings to Granville, and south on Granville to Davie Street. "Blue and gold was everywhere in evidence and the collegians cheered lustily as they passed along."⁴³ A CPR train insisted on having the right-of-way at Carrall Street and neatly cut the parade in half.⁴⁴ (Interestingly enough, the parade, while in the planning stages, had to be rerouted so as to avoid passing in front of the Vancouver Club, whose wealthy members wanted nothing to do with the campaign.)⁴⁵ At Davie, the marshals directed the floats south, while the men turned east to board the Broadway West cars, and the women boarded cars for Tenth Avenue. Members of the Varsity rugby and soccer teams, who marched behind the float of the Athletic Association, had games scheduled for the afternoon and were excused from the

⁴¹ The Musicians' Union allowed them to participate free of charge.

⁴² Quoted originally in *Ubysey*, October 17, 1922, p. 2; also appears in Logan, *Tuum Est*, p. 91.

⁴³ *Province*, October 30, 1922, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Aubrey Roberts, "The Great Trek," *Alumni Chronicle* (October 1947), p. 17.

⁴⁵ Miss Agnew interview, February 26, 1969. She says that there was a conflict between a student named Miss Bee Wood and her father, who belonged to the Vancouver Club, over participation in the campaign.

parade at this point. The men disembarked at Alma Road and marched from there, along what was no better than a wagon road, to the barren university site where hundreds of people swarmed around to witness the ceremonies.⁴⁶ The women went to the end of the Tenth Avenue line and walked from there to the Point, arriving a few minutes after the men, who greeted them with a "Skyrocket" cheer when they appeared. The streetcars were provided free of charge by the BC Electric Railway.

The students gathered on the west side of the Science Building and climbed its empty frame structure for the benefit of the movie cameras. Movies were also taken of the event by three newsreel cameramen, and it was planned to distribute the films through the Fox Company throughout the United States and Canada.⁴⁷ After this ceremonial occupation of the classrooms of the future, everybody filed out of the building skeleton and formed a large U.B.C. "Perfect order marked the whole proceeding and hardly a minute was lost."⁴⁸

The pilgrimage was culminated by the Cairn Ceremony. As the students had filed by, they had thrown stones onto a pile in the hollow centre of the cairn, a symbolic gesture of each individual's contribution to the campaign. The suggestion to build the cairn came from Professor Paul Boving. The frame of the cairn was set up before the Trek by Angus MacRitchie of the Art Monument Company after the site had been surveyed by P. W. Pawelt, a member of the Civil Engineering Staff, and Hunter Findlay. It was designed by the university architects, Sharpe and Thompson,⁴⁹ and the teams and labour to build the foundations were donated by the agronomy and horticulture departments of the Faculty of Agriculture. The *Ubyyssey* had taken the Publicity Committee to task for not following the proper bureaucratic channels in allocating campaign funds for construction of the cairn and questioned the usefulness of spending one hundred dollars on it.⁵⁰ But the cairn was built, and an account of the campaign was sealed in a glass tube. The simple inscription "To the Glory of our Alma Mater Student Campaign 1922-23" was placed on the cairn.

Jack Grant and Ab Richards made brief speeches at the Cairn Ceremony, Richards' remarks summing up the student campaign:

⁴⁶ *Province*, October 30, 1922, p. 3.

⁴⁷ *Ubyyssey*, October 26, 1922, p. 1.

⁴⁸ *Province*, October 30, 1922, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Roberts, "Trek," p. 17.

⁵⁰ *Ubyyssey*, October 26, 1922, p. 4.

Our slogan during Varsity Week was, "Build the University." We, the students, are building the first unit in the permanent plans of our University. The work that we are doing is significant of the hope that the people to whom we appeal and the Government who represent them will carry on this work. . . . The building of the Cairn to me is full of meaning. It stands for the combined efforts of 1178 students. Each rock represents a personal contribution in a worthy and just cause. As the mason with his trowel shapes and cements the rocks together into a complete and unified whole, so the Campaign has bound the student body together by a bond as strong as the very granite itself. . . . To our successors let it be emblematic of a united student body and honour to our Alma Mater.⁵¹

The ceremonies were completed, and students flocked to a hotdog and coffee stand set up at the side of the road by Miss E. Hansford, who was in charge of the university cafeteria; profits went to the campaign treasury. The march to the Point Grey site was known as "The Pilgrimage" to those who took part; the term "The Great Trek" was first used in 1947 in connection with its twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations. Each member of the class of 1922-23 received a commemorative booklet entitled *The Great Trek* and a pin designed as a miniature cairn.⁵²

The campaign to build the university was strictly a student affair, and no appeal was made to the faculty members for direct assistance. In a welcoming address to students, President Klinck remarked: "The campaign they have carried on is purely educational and as such is deserving of the highest commendation."⁵³ Richards recalls that "at no time was there any suggestion of interference from President Klinck or members of the faculty. Our relations throughout the campaign were most cordial and friendly. We purposely did not seek direction or advice from the faculty and they did not try to direct our activities or influence our planning."⁵⁴ Hunter Findlay, however, relates that sometime after the cairn had been erected President Klinck suggested it be removed because it was proving to be an eyesore as viewed from his office.⁵⁵ Professors Henry Angus and Harry Logan went along on the trek, but on their own initiative,⁵⁶ although Richards thinks "I can safely say that we had close to 100 per cent co-operation from the faculty from the beginning of the campaign. We did not ask the professors to join our parade, to

⁵¹ Logan, *Tuum Est*, pp. 91-2.

⁵² Richards' letter.

⁵³ *Ubysses*, September 28, 1922, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Richards' letter.

⁵⁵ Interview with Mr. A. Hunter Findlay, January 10, 1969.

⁵⁶ Interview with Mr. Harry Logan, January 9, 1969.

contribute money or make speeches on behalf of the campaign. It was entirely a student affair."⁵⁷ The campaign was financed solely by student monies. "No appeal for funds was made to the public and no interests outside the University gave money for the campaign. Each student was asked to contribute \$1.00 and many of the student societies, sorrorities, etc. turned over everything in their surplus accounts."⁵⁸

Following the completion of Varsity Week, a student delegation, consisting of Richards, Grant, Clyne, and Barr, went to Victoria carrying most of the petitions in seven suitcases. As they were boarding the CPR ship, Miss Agnew and Norman Robertson were racing down from Fairview with the latest figures on the number of signatures on the petitions, shouting the final data as the ship pulled away from the pier. On Wednesday, November 1, the students were invited to meet the cabinet and then appeared before the legislature. The student delegation was introduced by Captain Ian Mackenzie, MLA for Vancouver who was actively campaigning on behalf of the university, and the petition was piled in front of him almost obliterating his view. Six page boys were then called to lay it roll by roll before the speaker's chair. The delegation was invited to address the House, which adjourned to the Member's Room for the occasion. "The speech which Mr. Richards made to the House was characterized as one of the most stirring and convincing speeches delivered in some time. According to one member of the Delegation, 'Ab' was better than his best — his speech had the triumph of sincerity."⁵⁹ Within the next few days, the students interviewed individual members and again met with the cabinet. Premier John Oliver was extremely cordial to the delegation. After addressing the legislature the students carried on the campaign in Victoria by organizing the assistance of two or three hundred students at Victoria College, interviewing editors of newspapers, and calling on various trade and business associations and service clubs. One week later, on Tuesday, October 7, the Premier announced that the Liberal caucus had authorized the government to proceed with the construction of the university and that a loan of \$1,500,000 would be floated for that purpose. The student delegation returned triumphant to Vancouver, but according to Jack Clyne there were few people there to congratulate them and they had a let-down feeling.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Richards' letter.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ubysssey*, November 9, 1922, p. 1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

The *Ubysey*, however, proclaimed that the "Government Sees the Point."

Although the students made a useful presentation in Victoria, there were other political considerations which most certainly affected the government's decision to go ahead with construction of the university. At the Liberal convention held in Nelson before the opening of the legislative session, a motion was passed favouring continuation of the building plans. A similar motion was also passed at the Conservative convention. These events prompted Dr. H. W. Riggs of the Vancouver Kiwanis Club to say: "Both political parties at their annual conventions have endorsed the immediate construction of the university buildings; therefore this is the wish of the mass of people who are taking an interest in the public affairs of the province."⁶¹ Certainly the cabinet had to consider these motions when deciding upon the fate of the university.

On Wednesday, October 18, the Hon. J. D. MacLean became minister of railways in addition to his portfolios as minister of education and provincial secretary. He replaced Premier Oliver, who, having been criticized for his railway policy, said: "My reason for resigning the position is that I had much more work than I could do and I was getting out of touch with much important government work. I intended to devote more time to visiting different parts of the province and to study provincial requirements."⁶² Presumably, he decided within the next three weeks that the university was a "provincial requirement." Since MacLean now had three posts, there was wide speculation that he would give up one of the positions, most likely that of minister of education. The city of Vancouver was not represented in the cabinet at this time and it was assumed that Vancouver MLA Mrs. Mary Ellen Smith, who happened to be a strong supporter of the university cause, would succeed MacLean.⁶³ Also, the resignation of M. A. Macdonald from his Vancouver seat raised speculation that there would be a by-election in the city of Vancouver, the outcome of which could definitely be affected by the government's decision on the university.⁶⁴

On Thursday, October 26, Premier Oliver addressed the Women's Liberal Association in Vancouver and said that the public schools systems should be developed before additional expenditures were made on the

⁶¹ *Province*, October 27, 1922, p. 7.

⁶² *World*, October 18, 1922, p. 1.

⁶³ Mrs. Smith was not appointed to the cabinet; MacLean retained all three posts.

⁶⁴ The by-election was never held. The seat remained vacant until the election of 1924 (*Canadian Parliamentary Guide*, 1924).

university. But he did say that the government was looking into the feasibility of the proposed financing scheme: "The Premier declared that the government was not antagonistic to the University Campaign. But when asked if a delegation could appear before the executive council in Victoria to present the petition [he] was non-committal."⁶⁵ Why then was Oliver cordial in the extreme when the students arrived in Victoria on November 1?

The main reason was probably the necessity to suppress the discontent that was mounting within the Liberal party. The student campaign had convinced a large number of the rural members of the necessity of building the university. On Friday, October 27, all five Vancouver members were absent from the Liberal caucus.⁶⁶ With the session due to open on Monday, all other Liberal members were present. The absence of the Vancouver members may have been a product of the government's inaction on the university question. Two cabinet members, J. W. Jones of South Okanagan and K. C. MacDonald of North Okanagan, chairman of the Liberal caucus, had indicated all-out support from the start of the student campaign.⁶⁷ The *World* reported that "Vancouver members⁶⁸ are campaigning strenuously for the university. Ministers have been waited upon and private members are being lobbied. Captain Ian Mackenzie is very active and has high hopes of success. He has already secured promises of support from several members from outside districts, and, if necessary, will introduce a special resolution dealing with the matter."⁶⁹

After the speech from the throne, Mackenzie expressed his dissatisfaction with the government's university policy. He declared that "if I can not secure the support of the government on the university issue, they can not have my support," and that he was determined to force the issue before the close of the session.⁷⁰ He placed a resolution on the order paper which read: "In the opinion of the House, the time has now come when an immediate commencement should be made on the construction of permanent buildings for the University of British Columbia."⁷¹ The resolution was scheduled to be debated the following week,

⁶⁵ *Province*, October 27, 1922, p. 32.

⁶⁶ *Sun*, October 28, 1922, p. 11.

⁶⁷ Richards' letter.

⁶⁸ The Vancouver Liberal members were Mrs. Smith, Captain Mackenzie, J. W. de B. Farris, and James Ramsey.

⁶⁹ *World*, November 1, 1922, p. 1.

⁷⁰ *Province*, November 1, 1922, p. 25.

⁷¹ *World*, November 2, 1922, p. 1.

so the cabinet could no longer ignore the university question. It is not surprising that the student delegation was well received.

On Sunday, November 5, Premier Oliver announced that he would have an important announcement to make on the university question early that week.⁷² Presumably, the decision to go ahead with construction of the university was made about this time. The previous week had been hectic for the government. Besides the events already recounted, the Leader of the Opposition, W. J. Bowser, had delivered a bitter attack on the Liberals. Oliver was feeling the pressure. While defending the government in a speech on Saturday, November 4, he twice burst into tears,⁷³ and a deputation of Richmond and Vancouver Liberals arrived in Victoria to support Mackenzie's motion.⁷⁴ Because of these influences, it seems the cabinet did not want the university question to be debated in the legislature. On the very day the university resolution was to be discussed, the Premier announced that funds would be made available to build the university. As he made the announcement Oliver looked up to the student delegation watching from the public gallery. At the same time, copies of the *Victoria Times* proclaiming the university loan were brought into the House. The Premier had leaked the news earlier to the press.⁷⁵

The leaders of the student campaign showed considerable insight in refusing to solicit assistance from any one single party. If the university question had been made a direct political issue, the chances of failure would have greatly increased. This way they managed to avoid incurring the animosity of the government by keeping the campaign non-political. Richards' remarks reveal the students' logic: "We did not lobby cabinet members and we did not ask the opposition party for support in the legislature. . . . We deliberately avoided any direct approach to politicians for assistance. Our appeal was to the public. We felt that if we got the support of the electors, the politicians would soon be with us."⁷⁶

The main reasons for the delay in construction of the university appeared to have been sectional jealousies within the province and the reluctance of the cabinet and Liberal caucus, which was predominantly composed of members representing rural ridings, to expend monies

⁷² *Sun*, November 6, 1922, p. 2.

⁷³ *Sun*, November 4, 1922, p. 1.

⁷⁴ *Sun*, November 3, 1922, p. 1. The leaders of the Richmond delegation are listed in the *World*, November 2, 1922, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Interview with Grant and Richards, August 30, 1965.

⁷⁶ Richards' letter.

which would not be of direct benefit to their individual constituencies. Student action, however, brought the issue to a point where it could no longer be avoided by the government. The publicity campaign revealed that most sectors of the population would not oppose construction of the university. The government, in the end, was forced to make a decision on the matter. Because of the effectiveness of the campaign, the only alternative was a favourable response.

Ab Richards reports that he was optimistic from the beginning of the campaign and that he does not remember any serious setbacks or discouraging situations: "I always thought we would succeed." "The maturity and spirit of the campaign leaders was undoubtedly contagious."⁷⁷ And a certain degree of humour punctuated the campaign: "It is suggested that palm branches be obtained for use in our 'pilgrimage to Point Grey.' Fortunately, a further search for young asses will not be necessary."⁷⁸ The students showed vigour and enthusiasm during the parade and trek and, in fact, during the entire campaign. The Campaign Committee succeeded in mobilizing the entire student body.

The Campaign Committee, above all else, showed remarkable organizational ability. Co-ordination of such an ambitious task took much planning and foresight. The committee met each lunch hour at noon in the students' council room to oversee the activities and to provide a focal point for the operations of the campaign. As the *World* and the *New Westminster Columbian* both pointed out, the experience gained during the campaign would serve the students well in the future.⁷⁹ Time has since justified these statements. Ab Richards went on to achieve his doctorate and made his career as an agricultural economist with the Department of Agriculture in Ottawa; Jack Grant became circulation director of the *Seattle Times*; Marjorie Agnew taught in Vancouver schools from 1924 until she retired, and was responsible for many innovations. The late Percy Barr went on to a distinguished career in forest research and forest tree nursery techniques and became a professor at the University of California. Jack Clyne had a brilliant career in law, became a provincial supreme court justice, and latterly chairman of the Board of MacMillan Bloedel. Hunter Findlay was a faculty member in the Department of Civil Engineering at UBC and later went on to a successful business career. Aubrey Roberts became a business consultant and

⁷⁷ Richards' letter.

⁷⁸ *Ubysey*, October 26, 1922, p. 7.

⁷⁹ *World*, October 28, 1922, p. 16; quoted in *World*, November 2, 1922, p. 4.

public relations counsel and has been an active volunteer worker for the university.

The student campaign of 1922 is brought to mind each year when the Cairn Ceremony is re-enacted with the presentation of the "Great Trekker Awards."⁸⁰ The events of 1922 have served to shape the futures of thousands of students, for had it not been for the campaign, it is likely that the building of the university might have been delayed for many years.

⁸⁰ The award was first presented in 1950 to J. F. Brown. Since then Dr. A. E. Lord, Aubrey F. Roberts, Marjorie Agnew, Dr. Harry T. Logan, Judge J. V. Clyne, and Ab Richards have all been named "Great Trekkers."