



association of university and college employees

June 26, 1984

Board of Governors  
University of B.C.  
Campus Mail

To the Board:

We are writing to protest the apparent change of UBC policy as regards the use of non-union construction firms, and the awarding of the Gage Residence contract to a non-union firm. This action cannot help but be perceived, by the large number of UBC employees who are unionized, as signaling a change of attitude on the part of those who ultimately make the decisions that affect us. The Board of Governors is, for example, the body that will decide if the University will make joint applications with the Unions for exemptions from Bill 3. On this last point we've heard nothing since January, when we were told that the Board was deferring its decision on requests for such applications. At a time like this, when the unions are faced with a barrage of provincial government legislation detrimental to them, the maintenance of good labour relations is very difficult. Your decision regarding Gage Residence does nothing to help.

It is our understanding that, until recently, the UBC standard construction contract contained a clause specifying that only union labour was to be used. This was changed, and a contract for the extension of the Gage Residence was awarded to Wilson Industries of Alberta. We have been informed that the second lowest bid — that of a union firm, Beta Construction — would in fact have been cheaper because of the shorter period of construction. Wilson's bid was apparently only 1.4% lower than Beta's, and yet the wages paid to Wilson's workers are not much more than half of union rates. Even leaving aside the ethical considerations, the decision does not seem to have been a sound one in practical terms.

We sincerely hope that this change of policy does not forebode a general change of attitude, on the part of the Board, toward unionized workers at UBC.

Yours truly,

Ted Byrne  
Union Coordinator, for the Executive.

cc Bdlg. Trades