

# Building Wilkinson's University

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*No one who accepts the Restored Gospel will question the prophecies of the Prophet of the Lord that this will become the greatest University in the world ...*

—Ernest L. Wilkinson, 1954<sup>1</sup>

DURING HIS TWENTY YEARS FROM 1951 TO 1971 as seventh president of BYU, Ernest L. Wilkinson molded the lackluster Provo school into a showplace of LDS educational values. "More than any other single cause," his successor observed, "[Wilkinson's] remarkable and relentless leadership ... is the key to the present stature of Brigham Young University."<sup>2</sup> Under the scrappy Wilkinson's guidance, the student body grew five-fold to more than 25,000, the number of full-time faculty tripled to over 900, the number of faculty holding Ph.D.s jumped 900 percent to 500, faculty salaries more than doubled to an average of nearly \$9,000 a year, the number of undergraduate colleges nearly tripled, the number of academic departments doubled, the first of some twenty doctoral programs was inaugurated, library holdings rose nearly 500 percent, use of the library climbed ten-fold, the physical size of the campus more than doubled, the number of buildings grew more than twenty-fold, and the amount of floor space increased 500 percent—with a total of over \$143 million invested in land, permanent structures, and landscaping. And as the most tangible manifestation of the church's commitment to Wilkinson's university, annual church appropriations rose twenty-one-fold, from \$1 million to \$22 million, annual expenditures soared thirty-fold, from \$2 million to \$65 mil-

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1. Wilkinson, "Address to the BYU Faculty at a Workshop Preceding the Opening of the 1954-55 School Year," 17 Sept. 1954, 17, University Archives, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, hereafter BYU archives.

2. Dallin H. Oaks, quoted in "A Final Tribute: The Wilkinson Era Comes to an End," *BYU Today*, May 1978, 15.

lion, while church appropriations as a percentage of total BYU income actually decreased from nearly 70 percent to 33 percent.<sup>3</sup> In all, Wilkinson's unprecedented impact on BYU is most evident today in the areas of enrollments, funding, and infrastructure.<sup>4</sup>

### RECRUITING NEW STUDENTS

Central to Wilkinson's ambitious vision of the future of BYU was a concerted three-pronged strategy of attracting more students, increasing expenditures, and establishing the need for greater income, especially appropriations from the church. In fact, Wilkinson believed that expanding the size of the student body was integral to BYU's fulfilling its destiny as the university of the Kingdom of God on earth.<sup>5</sup> While annual enrollments jumped from just over 1,800 (in 1945) to more than 4,300 following World War II (in 1946),<sup>6</sup> Wilkinson believed that such growth, especially with the onset of the war in Korea, could not be sustained without a church-sanctioned outreach program directed to student-age Mormons in local congregations throughout the United States. He also realized that while church appropriations had jumped as well due to much-needed capital improvements following the influx of veterans after the war, the year he took office church appropriations had actually decreased by more than 27 percent from \$2.1 million to \$1.5 million.<sup>7</sup> Clearly an adroit ad-

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3. The added growth beyond church spending has come from a combination of fund raising, student tuition, and income from auxiliary services.

4. The academic or intellectual development of BYU under Wilkinson is not treated in this essay. For Wilkinson's personality, managerial philosophy and style, and relations with his board of trustees, faculty, and family, see my "Wilkinson the Man," *Sunstone*, June 1997.

5. This is according to Wilkinson's authorized biography, Woodruff J. Deem and Glenn V. Bird, *Ernest L. Wilkinson: Indian Advocate and University President* (Salt Lake City: Alice L. Wilkinson, Aug. 1978), 302.

6. *Brigham Young University Enrollment Resume, 1977-78* (Provo, UT: BYU Office of Institutional Research and Planning, Sept. 1978), copy in BYU archives.

7. See "Self-Evaluation Report I, Submitted to the Commission on Higher Schools of the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools," 1 Oct. 1956, BYU archives. Wilkinson's immediate predecessor, acting president Christen Jensen, had complained to trustees that the cuts would "seriously [impair] the efficiency of the institution." The board ignored him. See Jensen to Joseph Fielding Smith, 1 May 1950, Ernest L. Wilkinson Papers, Archives and Manuscripts, Lee Library. Copies of virtually all documents from the Wilkinson Papers cited here are in private possession, which is my source for them. Additionally, many are referenced in Wilkinson, ed., *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, Vol. 2 (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 497-723; Wilkinson and Leonard J. Arrington, eds., *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, Vol. 3 (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 3-789; Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen, *Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 429-759; and Deem and Bird, *Ernest L. Wilkinson*.

ministrator of Wilkinson's acumen could use a boom in student population as his most persuasive argument for securing increased funding from the church.

Thus two months after arriving in Utah Valley in early 1951, Wilkinson notified the chair of the executive committee of BYU's board of trustees, composed of the church's ranking general authorities, that unless enrollments increased, operating income from tuition and fees would drop significantly. For example, he explained, a decrease of 1,000 students would mean a loss of some \$150,000, a shortfall the church would have to make up. He then proposed that carefully selected faculty members accompany church leaders on speaking tours to Mormon stake conferences throughout the western states to extol the virtues of BYU and encourage increased attendance among the faithful.<sup>8</sup> Church leaders liked the idea, and from May to August 1951 BYU faculty members attended nearly 180 stake conferences at a cost to the school of more than \$4,000.<sup>9</sup> "The policy will be that of encouraging Latter-day Saint boys and girls to attend our Church Schools, that is, Brigham Young University and Ricks College [in Rexburg, Idaho]," Wilkinson explained to the church's institute teachers, not all of whom liked the plan, "except where there are definite reasons for them attending other Universities."<sup>10</sup> As a direct result, fall 1952 enrollments at BYU jumped more than 25 percent over the previous year's, from 5,082 to 6,359.<sup>11</sup>

Early the next year Wilkinson expressed appreciation to the board for supporting his recruitment efforts and asked permission to repeat the program.<sup>12</sup> Because of criticism that the program could adversely impact attendance at other Utah colleges as well as at the church's institutes, the board referred Wilkinson's request to the First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve Apostles.<sup>13</sup> In addition, some Mormons worried that the successful program would overwhelm an unprepared BYU with too many undergraduates<sup>14</sup>; while others felt that Mormon students could receive

8. Wilkinson to Joseph Fielding Smith, 18 Apr. 1951, Wilkinson Papers.

9. Wilkinson to Joseph Fielding Smith, 23 Feb. 1952; Wilkinson to Keifer B. Sauls, 17 Apr. 1952; Sauls to Wilkinson, 18 Apr. 1952, all in Wilkinson Papers.

10. Wilkinson, "The Place of the Institute in the Church School System," 20 Aug. 1953, 3, copy in Sterling M. McMurrin Papers, Western Americana, Marriott Library, University of Utah.

11. *Brigham Young University Enrollment Resume, 1977-78*. BYU's official history identifies this increase as 14 percent (Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 2:603). I cannot account for the difference.

12. BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, Jan. 1952, BYU archives; Wilkinson to Joseph Fielding Smith, 23 Feb. 1952, Wilkinson Papers.

13. BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 28 Mar. 1952.

14. See BYU Deans' Council Meeting, minutes, 10 Apr. 1952, BYU archives.

an equally effective religious education at the church's institutes adjoining state universities and colleges. "Bishops all over the state are trying to make the young men and women feel that it is a religious duty to go to the Y and help make it the greatest educational institution in the state," wrote one unhappy Mormon from northern Utah. "We have LDS Institutes in connection with all the schools and institutions of higher learning. Why must the Y take advantage of church influence and practically demand that young people of Cache Valley and elsewhere go only to the school?"<sup>15</sup>

Influential critics of Wilkinson's aggressive approach included Henry Aldous Dixon, president of Weber College in Ogden, Utah,<sup>16</sup> and Elder Joseph F. Merrill, one of the church's twelve apostles, former dean of the College of Engineering at the University of Utah, and former commissioner of LDS schools. Merrill favored the church's seminaries and institutes but not separate church schools such as BYU or Ricks, and bluntly told Wilkinson early on, "Apparently, President Wilkinson, you want to make the BYU a great university, great in numbers and great in repute as a graduate school. This is a noble ambition, but under governing conditions is it a wise ambition? Decidedly not, I think."<sup>17</sup> Merrill did not believe the church could fund both its seminaries and institutes and a large university. In fact, he condemned Wilkinson's efforts in a public act of defiance Wilkinson never forgot:

When we began sending teachers to stake conferences to urge students to come to the BYU, I personally showed up at the Glendale [California] Stake conference where Brother Merrill was the visiting Authority. Having been tipped off in advance of the meeting that he was somewhat antagonistic to our recruiting students in that way, I spoke for only five minutes or so, so there could be no criticism of my trespassing on his time. He said nothing about it in the meeting, but I learned that at a subsequent meeting that day at which I was not present, he urged all those present to keep their children at home rather than send them to the BYU.

I made an official protest to [church] President [David O.] McKay about this. I considered it insubordination on Merrill's part, because the stake conference visits had been agreed upon by the Board of Trustees. President McKay agreed that because of this he [Merrill] would be released as a member of my Executive Committee. In the process, however, the First Presidency completely reorganized the Executive Committee, removing also Brothers [Albert E.] Bowen and [John A.] Widtsoe. The latter I regretted very much,

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15. Quoted in Stephen L. Richards and J. Reuben Clark, Jr. (counselors in the First Presidency), to Wilkinson, 22 Apr. 1952, Wilkinson Papers.

16. See Wilkinson to Henry Aldous Dixon, 14 May 1952, Wilkinson Papers.

17. Merrill to Wilkinson, 14 Nov. 1951, Wilkinson Papers.

but since both of them died shortly thereafter, the reorganization was probably as it should have been.<sup>18</sup>

Out of deference to such concerns, church leaders decided not to approve a second round of high-pressure recruiting.<sup>19</sup> With characteristic pugnaciousness, Wilkinson responded: "We shall, of course, be guided by the decision of the Brethren, but I just can't restrain myself from making the comment that we don't withdraw our missionaries in the field because other churches complain of them."<sup>20</sup> Instead, Wilkinson could send two school representatives into the church's North American mission field to act as BYU boosters.<sup>21</sup> "With the right kind of salesmanship on your part and cooperation from the Mission Presidents," he beamed, "I should think that we ought to get at least 50% of these returned missionaries."<sup>22</sup> Following unification of the church's worldwide school system under him the next year (1953), Wilkinson received permission to send representatives from BYU, Ricks College, and the institutes to stake conferences "in the hope of stimulating young people to attend Church schools, institutes and seminaries," not just BYU.<sup>23</sup> Sensitive to charges of empire-building, he counseled institute teachers not "to proselyte students for our Church Schools," but "if students ask for your advice," he instructed, "then we must ask that you restate the policy [of encouraging them to attend church schools]."<sup>24</sup>

Still, criticism mounted. Weber president Dixon thought the program "insidious,"<sup>25</sup> and University of Utah dean Sterling M. McMurrin complained: "The policy ... to proselyte for the Brigham Young University represents a serious breach of faith by the Church with those universities which grant university credit for institute work, and constitutes a most unfriendly attitude toward other non-credit universities, such as our own, where institutes are located."<sup>26</sup> Consequently, in mid-1955 Wilkin-

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18. Wilkinson Diary, 19 May 1959, original in Ernest L. Wilkinson Papers; see also photocopy in Ernest L. Wilkinson Collection, Special Collections, Marriott Library. See also the account in BYU Centennial History Meeting, minutes, 4 June 1973, BYU archives. Wilkinson thought that Bowen "and I probably saw closer on social, political, and educational problems than anyone else," while Widtsoe "had a great vision and was very helpful to me" (Wilkinson Diary, 19 May 1959).

19. See Joseph Fielding Smith to Wilkinson, 28 May 1952, Wilkinson Papers.

20. Wilkinson to Joseph Fielding Smith, 17 June 1952, Wilkinson Papers.

21. See Wesley P. Lloyd to J. Melvin Toone, 8 Dec. 1952, Wilkinson Papers.

22. Wilkinson to Harold Glen Clark, 8 Nov. 1952, Wilkinson Papers.

23. BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 30 Oct. 1953.

24. Wilkinson, "The Place of the Institute in the Church School System," 7.

25. Wilkinson, memorandum of a conference with Henry Aldous Dixon, 3 July 1954, Wilkinson Papers. Yet compare Wilkinson Diary, 20 July 1954. See also Sterling M. McMurrin to A. Ray Olpin, 20 Apr. 1955, McMurrin Papers.

26. McMurrin to A. Ray Olpin, 1 June 1955, McMurrin Papers.

son's program was officially shelved. Later attempts to resurrect it proved short-lived, and recruiters shifted their attention away from church meetinghouses and into public high schools, where they competed with other colleges and universities for graduating seniors. Admissions officials also obtained the addresses of LDS missionaries, sent them promotional material praising BYU, and usually accepted them regardless of previous academic achievement.<sup>27</sup> Another targeted group was Native Americans, but the first wave of Indian recruits dropped out at a rate of nearly 60 percent. Special tutorial programs proved moderately successful in helping them adapt, and later efforts succeeded in reducing drop-out rates by 20 percent.<sup>28</sup> Even so, increases at BYU were never again as large as during the early years of growth, and in 1958 Wilkinson confessed: "The trouble is the divided loyalty of President McKay between the BYU on one hand and the state institutions on the other. As I gather it, he wants the BYU to grow, but not at the expense of the other institutions."<sup>29</sup>

Because of Wilkinson's efforts, coupled with the fact that during the 1950s admissions criteria were virtually non-existent and the percentage of applicants denied entrance never rose above 0.7,<sup>30</sup> BYU enrollments

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27. Wilkinson Diary, 19 May 1959, 14 Mar. 1968; BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 1 Sept. 1965; Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:509, 512-23.

28. See Vernon Pack, "A Study to Determine the Effectiveness of the Indian Education Program at Brigham Young University in Meeting the Needs of the Indian Student," M.S. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966; Anthony F. Purley, "Comparison of the Results of Scholastic Aptitude Tests and College GPA of Two Indian Populations at the Brigham Young University," M.S. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1962; Carolyn Seneca Steele, "The Relationship of Cultural Background to the Academic Success of American Indian Students at Brigham Young University," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1968; BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 2 Feb. 1972; L. LaMar Adams, H. Bruce Higley, and Leland H. Campbell, "Academic Success of American Indian Students at a Large Private University," *College and University*, Fall 1977, 100-10; and Grant Hardy Taylor, "A Comparative Study of Former LDS Placement and Non-Placement Navajo Students at Brigham Young University," Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1981.

29. Wilkinson Diary, 16 Jan. 1958. At the end of the first ten years of Wilkinson's push for increased enrollment, a survey of BYU undergraduates revealed that as many as one-fifth had enrolled as a second choice or because of pressure from parents and church leaders. Subsequently, school administrators tried to provide students with a variety of extracurricular activities, which, together with the emergence of the school's reputation as a highly "socialized" university, also helped attract undergraduates. See "BYU's Image Distorted?" *Daily Universe*, 11 Apr. 1963; Scott Grant Halversen, "A Survey of the Image Utah High School Seniors Have of BYU and Other Four-Year Colleges in Utah With an Emphasis on the Two-Step Flow of Communication," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974; G. Robert Standing, "A Study of the Environment at Brigham Young University as Perceived by Its Students and as Anticipated by Entering Students," M.S. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1962; and Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 2:615-17; Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:206-207.

30. See information in "BYU Enrollment Profile," n.d., BYU archives.

jumped more than 100 percent from 1950 (4,510) to 1956 (9,050). During the next three years, as Wilkinson anticipated implementation of his proposed network of junior colleges to promote LDS teachings to Mormon freshmen and sophomores before transferring to BYU, enrollments increased only 12 percent (from 9,201 to 10,305).<sup>31</sup> Nationally during the ten years from 1949 to 1959 American university and college student bodies grew 54 percent,<sup>32</sup> half of BYU's 108 percent. (Closer to home, growth forty miles to the north at the University of Utah from 1950 to 1960 was 30.5 percent.<sup>33</sup>) However, attendance at the church's institutes was the reverse: 29 percent from 1950 to 1955 (4,309 to 5,558), but 69 percent from 1956 to 1960 (6,092 to 10,270).<sup>34</sup> Clearly Wilkinson's program *had* privileged BYU at the expense of the institutes.

TABLE 1.  
Fall Enrollments of Daytime BYU Students, 1950-71

Year	Total Students	Percent Increase	Year	Total Students	Percent Increase
1950	4,510	<-8.6>	1961	11,178	8.5
1951	5,082	12.7	1962	12,399	10.9
1952	6,359	25.1	1963	14,236	14.8
1953	6,618	4.1	1964	16,444	15.5
1954	7,213	9.0	1965	18,725	13.9
1955	8,184	13.5	1966	20,028	6.9
1956	9,050	10.6	1967	20,375	1.7
1957	9,201	1.7	1968	22,304	9.5
1958	9,903	9.4	1969	24,144	8.2
1959	10,265	3.7	1970	25,021	3.6
1960	10,305	0.4	1971	25,116	0.4

Source: Brigham Young University Enrollment Resume, 1977-78.

From 1961 to 1965, when Wilkinson's junior college program was abandoned ostensibly due to financial obstacles, enrollments again rose

31. Student retention proved difficult, however. Almost one-half of new students dropped out after the first year; only one in five remained after four years. See "Survival of Freshmen Who Were Enrolled Autumn Quarter, Numbers Serving," and "Survival of Freshmen Who Were Enrolled Autumn Quarter, Percentage Surviving," BYU archives. By 1970 the percentage of students completing their undergraduate studies had increased to nearly 50 (see BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 2 June 1971).

32. U.S. Office of Education, *Digest of Educational Statistics*, 1970 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Office of Education, 1970), 78. The growth in student bodies per institution was only 11.4 percent.

33. Paul W. Hodson, *Crisis on Campus: The Exciting Years of Development at the University of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Keeban Corporation, 1987), 316.

34. William E. Berrett, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Printing Center, 1988), 245.

at BYU, from 11,178 to 18,725, or nearly 68 percent.<sup>35</sup> During the last five years of his tenure, however, church authorities determined that such growth rates could not be accommodated, set an increasingly rigid series of enrollment caps, and began encouraging high school seniors to attend universities nearer to their homes.<sup>36</sup> School administrators also tightened entrance standards and in 1967 consolidated admissions criteria to include a combination of high school grade point averages; ACT scores; ecclesiastical interviews; scholastic, creative, and athletic talents; and "other personal circumstances."<sup>37</sup> Consequently, the student body rose only 25 percent, from 20,028 (in 1966) to 25,116 (in 1971), while enrollments at the institutes mushroomed: growing 125 percent (13,331 to 30,052) from 1961 to 1965, and more than 60 percent (33,027 to 53,395) from 1966 to 1971.<sup>38</sup>

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35. Still, the academic competence of BYU's students was problematic. During the years 1962 to 1968 nearly one-quarter of the student body was on academic probation or suspension because of poor grades. See Attachment I, Academic Standards Committee Meeting, minutes, 11 Apr. 1972, and Attachment III, Academic Standards Committee Meeting, minutes, 4 Apr. 1972, BYU archives.

36. See BYU Executive Committee Meeting, minutes, 29 Jan., 23 Apr., 24 Sept. 1970; Wilkinson Diary, 29, 30 Jan. 1970.

37. For drop-out rates and ACT scores, see figures in Printed Material 34, e-3, BYU archives; "BYU Enrollment Profile"; "Brigham Young University Fact Book, 1978-79," BYU archives; *The College Handbook*, 1983-84, 21st ed. (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1983), 1513; "Survival of Freshmen Who Were Enrolled Autumn Quarter, Percentage Surviving"; "Composition of Student Body by Class and Sex—Fall Semester, 1958-64," Printed Material 32, BYU archives; BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 2 June 1971; and *Peterson's Annual Guide to Undergraduate Study* (Princeton: Peterson's Guides, 1983), 305. The three major reasons for student drop-out have been (and remain) marriage, finances, and employment; see Lillian Clayson Booth, "A Study to Determine the Reasons for Student Mortality at Brigham Young University for the School Year 1948-49," M.S. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1950; D. Garron Brian, "A Study to Determine Some of the Reasons for Student Discontinuance at the Brigham Young University for the Year 1950-51," M.E. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1952; "Reasons Given for Discontinuance, 1950-51 to 1960-61," Printed Material 34, e-2, BYU archives; and L. A. Campbell to Wilkinson, 22 Oct. 1970, BYU archives; see also Robert W. Spencer, "BYU Admissions: Past, Present, and Future," *BYU Today*, Feb. 1984, 5.

For at least two "special exceptions" to BYU's admissions requirements, see Verdon Harwood, Oral History, 26 May 1981, 16-17, BYU archives, and J. Elliot Cameron to Wilkinson, 23 May 1966, Wilkinson Papers. School officials also ruled in the mid-1960s that excommunicated or disfellowshipped Mormons would not be allowed entrance and checked the names of all applicants against monthly lists from the Presiding Bishop's Office identifying all excommunicated church members (BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 1 Nov. 1967, 4 May 1960). For a time they also precluded the admission of handicapped students (see *ibid.*, 2 Mar. 1960).

38. Berrett, *Miracle*, 245. BYU's enrollment cap was raised to 26,000 in 1980, "with the understanding that this increase from the previous level of 25,000 would not be the subject of formal publicity" (BYU Board of Trustees, Special Executive Committee Meeting, minutes, 12 Mar. 1980). While full-time enrollment has remained at about 26,000 students, total enrollment now exceeds 30,000.



(In comparison, while enrollments increased nearly 400 percent at BYU from 1951 to 1971, they doubled at the University of Utah.)

In fact, bowing to the financial realities of funding American higher education as well as of meeting the needs of its own growing membership, the LDS church essentially reversed its recruiting policy in 1972, the year after Wilkinson left office: "[S]tudents should not feel it is a matter of Church loyalty to attend a particular Church college, University, or institute of religion."<sup>39</sup> Wilkinson greeted these developments with mixed feelings. While he believed that "except for this [enrollment] limitation we should now have 40,000 to 50,000 students," he also lamented that "as far as over all school spirit and over all friendliness is concerned, we have lost."<sup>40</sup>

### RIISING EXPENDITURES

As enrollments rose, so did annual expenditures, jumping more than \$56 million from 1950 to 1970, an increase of more than 3,300 percent. (Annual church appropriations during the same period rose \$17.4 million, or 821 percent, one-fourth the rate of increase in expenditures.) Expenditures per student increased more than 600 percent during the same twenty-year period. By 1970, Wilkinson's last year on campus, annual expenditures comprised the following expenses:

Educational/general:	
General administration	\$ 1,390,722.17
General expenses	4,441,917.67
Instruction and department research	21,144,562.77
Organized activities relating to departments	400,653.18
Organized research	3,665,782.67
Continuing education	252,000.00
Libraries	1,886,637.09
Physical plant	3,469,352.04
Auxiliary funds:	
Operating expenditures	25,751,374.43
Capital equipment purchases	567,375.65
Student activities funds:	1,530,055.11
Student aid:	1,462,865.17
Total annual expenditures:	\$65,963,297.95 <sup>41</sup>

39. BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 6 Dec. 1972. See also BYU Board of Trustees, Executive Committee Meeting, minutes, 17 Aug. 1972, when church leaders decided that "financial limitations would make it impossible to duplicate existing school systems, even when the teachings of some of these systems are offensive to the members of the Church."

40. "[Auto]biography of Ernest L. Wilkinson for High Priests Quorum in 17th Ward of Salt Lake Stake," 27 Nov. 1977, privately circulated; "Loss of Friendliness due to the Growing Studentbody," BYU Centennial History Meeting, minutes, 24 Aug. 1973.

41. "Annual Financial Report" (1971).

TABLE 2.  
BYU Budget: Annual Expenditures, 1950-70,  
in 5-Year Intervals  
(rounded to nearest thousand dollars)

Year	Total Annual Expenditure	Percent Increase	Expenditure Per Student	Percent Increase
1950	\$ 1,698,000	n.a.	\$ 376	n.a.
1955	3,769,000	122	461	23
1960	11,370,000	202	1,103	139
1965	35,619,000	213	1,902	72
1970	65,963,000	75	2,636	39

Source: Combined from *Seven Year Report of the President [1950-51 to 1956-57]*, Brigham Young University; "Self-Evaluation Report I," 1 Oct. 1956; "Proposed 15-Year Plan for Unified Church School System," 10 May 1960; "Total Breakdown of All Church Monies," 1957-64; "Report of the Visitation Committee to the Commission on Higher Education of the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools," 26-29 Apr. 1966; "Annual Financial Report," 31 Aug. 1971, all in BYU archives.<sup>42</sup>

Evidence of this increase in spending was most obvious in the unparalleled growth of the university's physical plant (real estate, buildings, and infrastructure). The influx of new and continuing students created a serious need—bordering occasionally on crisis—for additional classrooms and dormitories especially. At times it must have seemed to Wilkinson that he and his staff could not move quickly enough to accommodate the growing student body. In fact, according to the director of BYU's physical plant, "President Wilkinson claimed that one of the things that brought on his heart attack [in October 1956] was the fact that he couldn't get his building program going fast enough."<sup>43</sup> And when it became apparent that the cost of land bordering the campus sometimes exceeded appraised value by as much as 60 percent, Wilkinson spearheaded legislation in 1957 granting all Utah colleges and universities, including

42. These sources do not always agree on exact dollar amounts. For example, the *Seven Year Report* gives total expenditures for 1955 as \$4,325,000; and the "Report of the [1966] Visitation Committee" gives total expenditures for 1965 as \$15,706,428 (expenditures two years previous were listed at \$23,415,972 in "Annual Financial Report," 31 Aug. 1964). Also the amount of total expenditures for 1950—\$1,698,000—is considerably less than the amount of LDS church appropriations for the same year—\$2,120,480 (see Table 6). Presumably the larger amounts include capital improvements outlays (e.g., for 1950) and/or expenditures associated with the school's auxiliary services, sums which sometimes did not figure into the school's official operating budget. In any event, I have used figures that make the most sense to me.

43. Sam F. Brewster, Oral History, 29 Nov. 1983, BYU archives. See also BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 8 Oct. 1954, where Wilkinson "reported his concern about the continued delays in the [church] architectural department which has hampered the progress of the University's building program."

BYU, the power of eminent domain.<sup>44</sup> Among state legislators, the eager Wilkinson became known as "Julius Seizure."<sup>45</sup> While BYU officials never resorted to court action to resolve land negotiations, for sixteen years they relied on the "psychological advantage afforded by the statute" to help curb inflated prices.<sup>46</sup> However, in his haste Wilkinson also allowed several buildings to be constructed without benefit of a comprehensive master plan, as the need for new construction sometimes exceeded the school's own ability to plan sufficiently for future development.<sup>47</sup>

TABLE 3.  
Investment in BYU Physical Plant, 1951, 1957-71  
(rounded to nearest dollar)

Year	Beginning Balance	Net Additions	Ending Balance	Percent Increase
1951 ***	\$ 6,350,000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1957	17,520,250	\$ 8,544,262	\$ 26,064,512	n.a.
1958	26,064,512	6,154,846	32,219,358	23.6
1959	32,219,359	2,603,367	34,822,726	8.1
1960	34,822,726	7,111,963	41,934,689	20.4
1961	41,934,689	5,170,813	47,105,502	12.3
1962	47,105,503	8,536,370	55,641,873	18.1
1963	55,641,873	9,581,935	65,223,808	17.2
1964	65,223,808	14,706,615	79,930,423	22.5
1965	79,930,423	10,115,552	90,045,975	12.6
1966	90,450,975	3,526,610	93,977,585	3.9
1967	93,977,585	3,859,635	97,837,220	4.1
1968	97,837,220	6,546,684	104,383,904	6.7
1969	103,928,904	10,515,005	114,443,909	10.1
1970	114,493,909	12,201,175	126,695,084	10.6
1971	126,695,084	16,515,214	143,210,298	13.0

Source: From Ephraim Hatch, "A Survey of the Department of Physical Plant, Brigham Young University," BYU archives.

44. Clyde D. Sandgren to Dallin H. Oaks, 2 Feb. 1972, and Sandgren, "Eminent Domain Amendment," 22 Jan. 1973, BYU archives; "Domain Stand Taken by BYU President," *Daily Universe*, 10 Mar. 1953; "Eminent Domain Bill Introduced in State Senate," *Daily Universe*, 14 Feb. 1957; "Certain BYU Purchases in 1956," BYU archives. For earlier efforts, see BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 14 Nov. 1952, 18 May 1953; "Domain Stand Taken by BYU President," *Daily Universe*, 10 Mar. 1953, 3.

45. J. Reuben Clark III, Oral History, 19 Jan. 1982, 10, BYU archives.

46. Sandgren to Oaks, 2 Feb. 1972. At the insistence of Wilkinson's successor, Dallin Oaks, school administrators backed legislation in the early 1970s to repeal portions of the statute which had extended the state's power of eminent domain to "private educational institutions." Oaks was concerned that this privilege jeopardized BYU's status as a private institution (see Sandgren to Oaks, 26 Jan., 29 Jan., 1 Feb. 1973, BYU archives). Wilkinson's biography contends, "When Wilkinson had obtained all the land he thought necessary, the law was repealed, with his acquiescence" (Deem and Bird, *Ernest L. Wilkinson*, 512), without also noting that this change occurred two years after he left office.

47. See Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:274-75.

Beginning in 1951 with a total cumulative investment in the physical plant of \$6.35 million, by the end of the decade this amount had grown to nearly \$42 million, an increase of 560 percent. By 1971 this had climbed another \$84 million to over \$126 million. In all, from 1951 to 1971 the total investment in the Y's campus grew nearly \$137 million, or 2,155 percent. Despite periodic protests from area residents,<sup>48</sup> Wilkinson saw his campus more than double in area during his twenty years. New buildings included a library, a fine arts center, numerous classroom buildings, an administration building, a student health center, a student union building, a stadium, a physical education building, a 23,000-seat activities center, and five student housing complexes.<sup>49</sup> At the time of his departure in August 1971, the university boasted a total of 349 buildings (excluding five off-campus storage facilities), which provided more than 4 million gross square feet of floor space. Following completion of two more buildings, including the Marriott Center, the amount of available square footage grew to 5.4 million.<sup>50</sup>

Of the more than 200 buildings erected on campus, the most important to students was a new student center, constructed in the early 1960s. More than ten years earlier Wilkinson had reallocated funds raised by students for the complex to cover the cost of a fieldhouse. He had then arranged for a \$10 per student increase in church appropriations to offset the imbalance.<sup>51</sup> Early polls showed that students hoped the proposed building would include a ballroom, theater, swimming pool, hobby center, car repair workshop, lounges, and a meditation area. When asked their reaction to naming the building after Wilkinson, students answered that they preferred "Memorial Union," in honor of BYU's war dead. Other suggestions included "Cougar Union Building," "The Commons," "Peace Memorial Union," and "Everyman's Memorial."<sup>52</sup> In early 1965, after several years of delays, the \$7-million project, two-thirds of which had been paid for by student building fees,<sup>53</sup> approached completion. The six-story edifice housed a bookstore, cafeteria, two theaters, lounges,

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48. See Lloyd L. Cullimore, Oral History, 23, 27 Feb. 1974, 15, 32, BYU archives; and Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 2:680.

49. Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 2:394, 610, 616, 683-707; Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:28-49, 245-58; Hatch, "Survey of the Development of the Physical Plant," 1:31, 10.

50. Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:271.

51. *Ibid.*, 37.

52. "Building Recommendations," *Daily Universe*, 15 Apr. 1957; "Controversy Developing on Naming of Proposed Student Union Building," *Daily Universe*, 8 Apr. 1957; "About That Center," *Daily Universe*, 30 Sept. 1960; "New Building Poll Results Favor 'Memorial Union,'" *Daily Universe*, 22 Apr. 1957; "What's Happening to Student Building?" *Daily Universe*, 29 Apr. 1960; "Student Center Plans Shrouded in Secrecy," *Daily Universe*, 5 May 1960.

53. "Financing the 'Y' Center," in ASBYU Student Body History, 1963-64, BYU archives.

bowling alleys, student body and student newspaper offices, a barber shop, and games and hobbies centers. Still, a consensus regarding its name had not been reached. Finally, during a trustees meeting shortly before the dedication, Wilkinson learned that church officials had decided to name the center after him.<sup>54</sup> Other buildings had been named after living trustees, and David O. McKay had presided at the dedication of a classroom building named in his honor in 1954. However, some students were incensed. One asked pointedly in a letter to the student newspaper, "If it is genuinely a student building, should we not at least have the right to decide what it shall be called?"<sup>55</sup> Trustees refused to budge, and Wilkinson later sat for a larger-than-life portrait to adorn the walls of one of the new student lounges.<sup>56</sup>

Also aided by increases in spending were faculty salaries and benefits (which in 1970 comprised more than half of all annual expenditures<sup>57</sup>). At his inauguration in October 1951 Wilkinson, a self-made millionaire at the time, had tried to soft-pedal BYU's historically low salaries, admitting that while the faculty had "not become rich in the material things of this life," they nonetheless had "stored up riches in heaven where moth and rust doth not corrupt and where a kind Providence will reward them for their service to thousands of students." He continued: "I believe that the members of this faculty will continue to make great sacrifices for this school in heavy class schedules, long hours, and extracurricular character building activities. Indeed, since this school came into existence through sacrifice, it must continue to retain its influence through the same kind of Christian sacrifice. We can never have union hours."<sup>58</sup>

In fact, Wilkinson inherited in 1951 a salary schedule that, compared to ten neighboring institutions, underpaid its teachers at virtually every level by almost 19 percent. "Competent faculty members are continually

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54. BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 3 Mar. 1965. Wilkinson had returned to campus only two months earlier after losing a bid for the U.S. senate.

55. Dorothy Hall to Editor, *Daily Universe*, 17 Mar. 1965.

56. Over the years trustees have named a number of buildings after living church authorities who presided at ground-breaking and dedication ceremonies, including the Heber J. Grant, David O. McKay, N. Eldon Tanner, and Spencer W. Kimball buildings. See "New Grant Library Will Be Dedicated," *Y News*, 16 Oct. 1925; Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 2:706-707; "Flying Rock Injures Woman," *Daily Universe*, 10 Nov. 1980; "SWKT Dedicated," *Daily Universe*, 10 Mar. 1982.

57. See figures in "Annual Financial Report," 31 Aug. 1971. BYU's official history adds that on average during Wilkinson's presidency, more than 72 percent of the budget was spent on salaries, Social Security, health insurance, and retirement benefits (Wilkinson and Arington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:545).

58. Quoted in *The Messenger* 1 (Nov. 1951): 5:21-22.

leaving our institution," complained one professor, "to accept positions of lesser rank and opportunity but for markedly higher salaries in high schools, junior colleges, and other universities."<sup>59</sup> In response, the board of trustees could only express "its appreciation to the teachers and President who have shown their loyalty to the Church and the University as evidenced by their self-sacrifice in accepting salaries less than they had opportunities of obtaining elsewhere."<sup>60</sup>

TABLE 4.  
BYU Faculty Salaries Compared to Those  
at Ten Other Western Universities, 1950-51

Rank	BYU	Average of 10 Western Universities <sup>a</sup>	Difference
Deans			
Min.	\$5,565	\$6,602	-\$1,037
Max.	6,342	7,892	- 1,550
Full Professors			
Min.	4,032	4,777	- 745
Max.	5,481	7,186	- 1,705
Associate Professors			
Min.	3,531	4,092	- 561
Max.	4,730	5,698	- 968
Assistant Professors			
Min.	3,306	3,294	+ 12
Max.	4,426	4,961	- 533
Instructors			
Min.	2,760	2,589	+ 171
Max.	3,767	4,123	- 356

a. University of Utah, Utah State Agricultural College, University of Wyoming, Colorado A&M, University of New Mexico, University of Colorado, University of Arizona, University of Nevada, Montana State University, and University of Idaho.

Source: From information in Adam S. Bennion Papers, Archives and Manuscripts, Lee Library.

Convinced that an open salary system would only exacerbate faculty dissatisfaction, Wilkinson stressed that such financial information be kept confidential. "I do not believe any one is qualified to judge himself in comparison with others," he lectured school employees. "That must be done by objective third parties," such as college deans and other univer-

59. Wayne B. Hales to Ernest L. Wilkinson, 13 Jan. 1951, Wilkinson Papers.

60. BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 18 May 1953. Five years earlier the board had rejected a plea from Wilkinson's predecessor to increase salaries by 25 percent, fearing that such a jump would generate unrest among other teachers in the church school system. See *ibid.*, 29 Apr. 1948.

sity administrators.<sup>61</sup> Nor did he feel that faculty salaries overall were as low as some thought: "The main difficulty with teachers' salaries is that the teachers invariably think of them for 12 months' work, when in fact they are for not more than 9 months' work. Further, they are not as bad when compared with certain other salaries as some teachers think."<sup>62</sup> Still, he knew that more competitive salaries tended to attract better qualified applicants, and at one point even resolved to "propose to my Board of Trustees that we pay unusually good salaries at the BYU to unusually good teachers—teachers who would not only inspire but who would take large classes; and that we would try on the other hand to gradually replace our mediocre or average teachers. If we can do this at the BYU, we can build up a great institution."<sup>63</sup> Consequently, faculty salaries on the average almost doubled during Wilkinson's first ten years, rising at rates that reportedly outpaced inflation by more than 45 percent.<sup>64</sup>

TABLE 5.  
BYU Faculty Salaries, 1950-56, 1962-65

Year	Average	Full Profs.	Assoc. Profs.	Assist. Profs.	Instrs.	Percent Average Annual Increase
1950	\$3,999	\$5,083	\$4,381	\$3,922	\$3,398	n.a.
1951	4,266	5,396	4,702	4,134	3,613	6.7
1952	4,623	5,789	5,113	4,541	3,874	8.7
1953	4,594	5,764	5,184	4,634	3,951	-0.6
1954	4,774	5,854	5,258	4,765	4,141	3.9
1955	4,910	6,056	5,476	4,915	4,266	2.8
1956	5,237	6,431	5,829	5,282	4,517	6.6
***						
1962	7,350	9,025	7,890	7,010	5,720	n.a.
1963	7,645	9,665	8,430	7,445	6,255	4.0
1964	8,116	9,916	8,674	7,754	6,449	6.2
1965	8,445	10,685	9,260	8,205	6,705	4.0

Source: Adapted from attachments to BYU Faculty Meeting, minutes, 18 Sept. 1956; "Brigham Young University Salary Comparison," 1963-64, 1964-65, and 1965-66; all in BYU archives.

At the same time Wilkinson remained "unconvinced that teachers

61. Wilkinson, "Address to the BYU Faculty at a Workshop Preceding the Opening of the 1954-55 School Year," 17 Sept. 1954, BYU archives. See also "Wilkinson Defends Policies," *Daily Universe*, 30 Oct. 1968, 1, where Wilkinson explained at a public question-and-answer session with students that "faculty wages were not divulged any more because of the problems of explaining salary differentials to lower-paid instructors."

62. Wilkinson Diary, 13 Aug. 1956.

63. See *ibid.*, 18, 19, 20 Aug. 1958.

64. See Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 2:628; Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:754.

can't do more than many of them claim they can. Many of them are now carrying ten credit hours [weekly teaching load], most of it undergraduate. When I practiced law in New York, I carried ten hours of teaching law on the side (essentially graduate work)."<sup>65</sup> In fact, he sometimes grumbled that "the main problem with the teaching profession as such today is that it has become mercenary."<sup>66</sup> After returning to BYU from an unsuccessful bid for the U.S. senate, he observed in 1967:

The matter of fixing salaries calls for a high degree of judgment. The final salaries represent a composite or compromise of the thinking of the Department Chairman, the Dean, the [Academic] Vice President ..., and myself, assisted by two very trusted faculty members who have no axe to grind and are entirely objective. Even then, we do not claim our judgment is invulnerable. The fact is that if we waived all sentiment and humanitarian reasons aside, there would be a much greater difference between faculty salaries than there are. ... In other words, many faculty members get much more than they are worth, on a relative basis.<sup>67</sup>

Despite regular adjustments, salaries during Wilkinson's tenure consistently lagged behind those at comparable private and public institutions by almost 30 percent. Too, salaries were sometimes administered on the basis of need, worthiness, or obedience to authority rather than merit, and women could find themselves particularly disadvantaged. A more equitable salary system would not be established until the 1970s.<sup>68</sup>

#### INCREASING INCOME

As Wilkinson had hoped, with the growth of BYU's student population and rise in expenditures came an overall increase in church appropriations. Beginning with \$1.5 million in 1951, Wilkinson's annual subsidy, often earmarked primarily for capital improvements, totaled nearly \$6 million five years later, an increase of nearly 300 percent. By

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65. Wilkinson Diary, 3 Oct. 1958.

66. *Ibid.*, 15 Apr. 1960.

67. *Ibid.*, 22 Feb. 1967. For Wilkinson's love-hate relationship with his faculty, see my "Wilkinson the Man."

68. "Comparative Average Salaries by Rank: Universities for the Year 1965-66, Nine-Month Basis," BYU archives. BYU salaries even ranked behind those offered at the church's two-year College of Hawaii (although the cost of living was probably higher there than in Provo). Of eleven prospective faculty who turned down employment with the psychology department in the mid-1960s, all cited, among other reasons, low salaries as a factor in deciding to accept offers elsewhere (see Kenneth R. Hardy to John T. Bernhard, 10 June 1966, BYU archives).



1961, after ten years at the helm, Wilkinson had secured an annual appropriation of more than \$16 million, an increase of 167 percent over that of 1956. In all, during Wilkinson's first decade annual church appropriations rose over 950 percent, the church spending a cumulative total of nearly \$71 million on its Provo facility alone. Calculated on a per-student basis, church appropriations rose just over 90 percent. "Ernest comes in here with the most elaborate set of hogwash that I have ever seen to justify his need for money," Apostle Harold B. Lee reportedly exclaimed. "And he always gets it because there is no point at which you can attack it; there is no point where you can show that it is wrong; there is no point where you can show a fallacy in his argument. All you can say is that we just do not have it. ... When we finally had to say that, [Ernest would nod his head and say,] 'Alright, that I understand.'"<sup>69</sup> Following an early board of trustees meeting, one trustee prophesied, "Wilkinson's going to get more money out of us than the others we turned down for the presidency."<sup>70</sup> ("I took the hint," Wilkinson admitted.<sup>71</sup>) Another reportedly exclaimed, following approval of a \$10-million building project Wilkinson had wanted, "Thank God the BYU has at last come into its own."<sup>72</sup> But while the percentage of BYU's annual income supplied by the church rose during Wilkinson's first five years, it decreased during the next ten years, a trend church leaders no doubt welcomed, even if they occasionally groused over total dollar amounts.<sup>73</sup>

Annual appropriations to the Unified Church School System, over which Wilkinson presided as administrator, also grew, from over \$3.7 million in 1957 to more than \$15.7 million by 1964, an increase of almost 315 percent, for an eight-year total cumulative expenditure of nearly \$50 million. In contrast, annual church appropriations to BYU during the same period, while rising from \$9.7 million to \$15.1 million, increased only by 56.6 percent, but still totaled more than \$97 million. As with student enrollments, however, the trend during these years was toward decreasing allocations to BYU and increasing allocations to the rest of the church's burgeoning school system.

69. Quoted in J. Reuben Clark III, *Oral History*, 9-10.

70. Albert E. Bowen, quoted in "Response of Ernest L. Wilkinson at Dinner Given for Himself and His Wife," 3 Aug. 1971, 5, BYU archives. See also Wilkinson Diary, 19 May 1959.

71. Wilkinson Diary, 19 May 1959.

72. *Ibid.*

73. BYU's official history asserts: "[T]he Church has generally supplied about two-thirds of the operating costs of Brigham Young University" (Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:544). Presumably this refers to an average amount over time, not to the years of Wilkinson's presidency, which was not always the case.

TABLE 6.

BYU Budget: Annual Church Appropriations, 1950-65, 1970 (rounded to nearest dollar)

Year	Tot. Annual Approp.	Percent Change	Cum. Pct. Change	App. Per Student	Percent Change
1950	\$ 2,120,480	+145.7	145.7	\$ 470	+168.6
1951	1,540,384	- 27.4	78.5	303	- 35.5
1952	1,589,500	+ 3.2	84.2	250	- 17.5
1953	2,523,751	+ 58.8	192.4	381	+ 52.4
1954	2,616,501	+ 3.7	203.2	363	- 4.7
1955	2,931,637	+ 12.0	239.7	358	- 1.4
1956	5,875,400	+100.4	580.8	649	+ 81.3
1957	9,675,093	+ 64.7	1,021.1	1,052	+ 62.1
1958	9,431,004	- 2.5	992.8	952	- 9.5
1959	10,145,998 <sup>a</sup>	+ 7.6	1,075.6	988	+ 3.8
1960	8,271,153	- 18.5	858.4	803	- 18.7
1961	16,186,322	+ 95.7	1,775.5	1,448	+ 80.3
1962	10,984,777	- 32.1	1,172.8	886	- 38.8
1963	17,552,863	+ 59.8	1,933.9	1,233	+ 39.2
1964	15,147,599	- 13.7	1,655.2	921	- 25.3
1965	13,082,000	- 13.6	1,415.8	699	- 24.1
***					
1970	22,449,000	+ 71.6	2,501.2	897	+ 28.3

a. From 1947 to 1951 the church and its educational system operated on a fiscal year basis: from 1 July to 30 June of the following year. In 1952 the fiscal year was changed to end on 31 August. In 1954 the fiscal year was extended to 31 December and coincided with the calendar year. This continued until 1959 when the fiscal year reverted to end 31 August.

TABLE 7.

BYU Budget: Annual Church Appropriation as a Percentage of Total Income, 1950-70, in 5-Year Intervals

Year	Percent of Income Supplied by Church Annual Appropriation
1950	69
1955	76 (+10%)
1960	59 (-22%)
1965	37 (-37%)
1970	34 (-11%)

Source: "Self-Evaluation Report I, Submitted to the Commission on Higher Schools of the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools," 1 Oct. 1956; "Proposal to Church Board of Education and Board of Trustees of Brigham Young University for Pilot Junior College Program Through 1969-70," 3 July 1963; "Total Breakdown of All Church Monies Distributed to the Unified Church School System, 1957-1964"; "Report of the Visitation Committee to the Commission on Higher Education of the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools," 26-29 Apr. 1966; all in BYU archives.<sup>74</sup>

74. Again, the sources do not always agree on specific dollar amounts. For example, "Self-Evaluation Report I" gives church appropriations for 1950 as \$2,120,480; "Annual Financial Report," 31 Aug. 1964, BYU archives, gives total church appropriations for 1963 as \$10,055,249; and "Report of the Visitation Committee to the Commission on Higher Education of the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools," 26-29 Apr. 1966, BYU archives, gives total church appropriations for 1965 as \$10,180,815. As mentioned in n42, the larger amounts presumably included capital improvements appropriations, which could be counted as loans. In any event, I have used figures that make the most sense to me.

TABLE 8.  
Total Church Appropriations to BYU  
and to the Unified Church School System (UCSS), 1957-64  
(rounded to nearest dollar)

Year	Approp. to BYU (and % Change)	Approp. to UCSS excluding BYU (and % Change)	Approp. to BYU as % of Tot. Ed. Approp.	Approp. to UCSS as % of Tot. Ed. Approp.
1957	\$ 9,675,093	\$ 3,788,293	71.9	28.1
1958	9,431,004 (-2.5)	4,881,117 (+28.8)	65.9	34.1
1959	10,145,998 (+7.6)	4,573,343 (-6.3)	68.9	31.1
1960	8,271,153 (-18.5)	8,251,554 (+80.4)	50.1	49.9
1961	16,186,322 (+95.7)	8,900,102 (+7.9)	64.5	35.5
1962	10,984,777 (-32.1)	8,045,532 (-9.6)	57.7	42.3
1963	17,552,863 (+59.8)	11,366,656 (+41.3)	60.7	39.3
1964	15,147,599 (-13.7)	15,706,401 (+38.2)	49.1	50.9

Source: "Total Breakdown of All Church Monies Distributed to the Unified Church School System, 1957-1964," BYU archives.

TABLE 9.  
BYU Student Tuition and Fees, 1950-70,  
in 5-Year Intervals

Year	Amount per Student	Percent Increase	Projected Income
1950	\$150	n.a.	\$ 676,500
1955	180	20	1,473,120
1960	260	31	2,679,300
1965 <sup>a</sup>	330	27	6,179,250
1970	500	51	12,510,500

a. In 1964 trustees decided to differentiate between Mormon and non-Mormon students and increased the tuition charged non-Mormon students. Because non-Mormons have always comprised a minority of students (less than 5 percent), the annual income generated from this differential has been minimal.

Source: Adapted from Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:545-46.

Church appropriations comprised only a percentage of total income, the difference being made up primarily from student tuition and fees,<sup>75</sup> as well as some fund raising and income from auxiliary services such as the dairy, bookstore, press, and sports events. (Despite a handful of exceptions, BYU has always refused federal aid.) Expectedly, as the need for money rose, so did tuition and fees, a ready and more reliable source of additional income during these years than BYU's development efforts. But while quadrupling during Wilkinson's twenty years, tuition nonethe-

75. Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:544.

less remained relatively low vis-à-vis other costs, because of the steady increase in the number of students.

Wilkinson hoped to improve the school's financial base through several fund-raising initiatives. "A person's loyalty ought to be judged by response to appeals from the University," he believed.<sup>76</sup> Initially trustees feared that such programs would compete for tithing and other church-related contributions.<sup>77</sup> But when the Ford Foundation unexpectedly gave \$1.2 million to BYU in 1956 as part of a nationwide \$240 million endowment to improve faculty salaries at American colleges and universities, church leaders embraced the possibility of outside revenue and Wilkinson arranged for the appointment of Los Angeles high school principal Noble Waite as director of BYU's new \$5-million, four-year Destiny Fund drive. In explaining the specifics of the drive to trustees, Wilkinson "committed about the worst faux pas that I had ever committed before the Board," he recorded.

I told them that the President of the Board of Trustees of the University of Chicago had informed me that they generally expected the Board of Trustees to contribute about 1/3 of the campaign, the alumni 1/3, and the general public the other 1/3. Before I could even explain that I realized that the members of the Board of Trustees of the BYU were not in a position to do this, the two Counsellors in the [First] Presidency [Stephen L Richards and J. Reuben Clark, Jr.] exploded. Pandemonium almost broke loose. I never heard either of them protest so loudly, especially Brother Richards. Finally, however, President McKay and I both explained that we weren't trying to get any large amount, but rather that as a matter of example, they all ought to contribute. Calmness finally prevailed until Brother LeGrand Richards, who was trying to be helpful, asked me whether, in order to have this carried out, Brother Noble Waite would call on each of them. I in turn inquired of President McKay and pandemonium again ensued. None of them wanted [stake] President Waite to accost them for a contribution, especially the two Counsellors to the Presidency. It was apparent they had a very, very healthy respect for Brother Waite's ability to extract money and they didn't want to be the victims. When it was decided that he would not interview any of them, the meeting adjourned.

Within three minutes President Richards called me to his office and after a vigorous protest against humiliating members of the Board who couldn't afford to give any substantial amount, gave me his check for \$500 which he had just written out. I think that he realized that his impetuous outburst had been a little overdone and this was a demonstration of his true repentance.<sup>78</sup>

As a stake president, Waite found it easiest to raise funds by canvassing

76. Wilkinson Diary, 6 Feb. 1958.

77. "Gifts to the BYU," BYU Centennial History Meeting, minutes, 29 June 1973.

78. Wilkinson Diary, 6 Dec. 1957.

leaders and members of local wards and stakes, not all of whom appreciated the pressure or competition.<sup>79</sup> When trustees learned of the extent of Waite's activities and the reactions of local congregation leaders, they "were fit to be tied" and shortly afterwards called him as a mission president to Scotland in 1962.<sup>80</sup> During his four years as development director, Waite was credited with raising \$2 million, of which \$208,000 (about 10 percent) came from BYU alumni.<sup>81</sup>

In the meantime Wilkinson had learned that many large corporations matched dollar-for-dollar their employees' contributions to colleges and universities, and he persuaded church leaders to allow the tithing donations of Mormon employees be earmarked for use by BYU.<sup>82</sup> Before Wilkinson's innovative program was finally discontinued in late 1971 (it had been suspended during his run for the U.S. senate), donations to BYU from some companies outnumbered employee contributions to all other colleges and universities combined.<sup>83</sup>

Wilkinson also wanted graduating seniors to take out a \$1,000 life insurance policy naming BYU as irrevocable beneficiary. J. Reuben Clark of the First Presidency opposed the idea because "we were already placing altogether too many burdens on our people." Wilkinson "heatedly" replied that he was only asking for "a pittance"—\$2.50 a month for twenty to twenty-five years—compared to what the church had spent for their education. The debate "got quite warm," and when President McKay called for a vote, everyone but Clark supported the proposal. When McKay then asked for a second vote to make the decision unanimous, Clark voted yes.<sup>84</sup>

The next month Wilkinson presented to the board's executive committee two alternative plans for implementing the program. Immediately Apostle Hugh B. Brown objected, "thinking that seniors would not take out a policy of this kind and that they would not keep them up and that it would be too burdensome." Colleague Harold B. Lee agreed, "stating

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79. In the words of BYU's official history: "[I]t was extremely difficult for Noble Waite ... to visualize a fund-raising activity run separately from the Church organization" (Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:567).

80. The quote is from Wilkinson, in "Gifts to the BYU."

81. *Ibid.*, 7-8 Apr., 7 May 1956, 16 Nov. 1957, 7-10 Mar. 1958; BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 17 Dec. 1957, 15 Oct. 1958, 3 June, 2 Sept. 1959, 3 Feb. 1960; Wilkinson, memo of conference with David O. McKay, 1962, Wilkinson Papers (compare Wilkinson, Fund Raising, 28 June 1973, BYU archives); Harold W. Pease, "The History of the Alumni Association and Its Influence on the Development of Brigham Young University," Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974, 319-35.

82. Wilkinson Diary, 6 Feb. 1959, 12 June 1962; Clyde D. Sandgren to Joseph T. Bentley, 26 June 1961, Wilkinson Papers.

83. See Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:568-70.

84. Wilkinson Diary, 6 Jan. 1970; BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 6 Jan. 1960.

that he could not understand why the Board would approve such a plan." Finally, committee chair Joseph Fielding Smith moved that they recommend one of the two approaches, but Lee insisted that the recommendation include the provision that the program be entirely voluntary. "The effect of this," Wilkinson complained, "would be to take away any sales pressure and would nullify the effectiveness of the plan." Lee admitted that this "was exactly what he wanted to do." Lee prevailed, and the amended motion passed.<sup>85</sup> When the full board met the next month, they decided to table the plan.<sup>86</sup> By the next year Wilkinson had managed to secure support for a voluntary insurance plan, but the number of subscribing seniors was low and a "quite discouraged" Wilkinson concluded: "This is not nearly as successful as I had hoped it would be."<sup>87</sup>

These fund raising setbacks, especially J. Reuben Clark's "rebuken" that he was "money mad," prompted a dejected Wilkinson to seek a special blessing of comfort and support from President McKay in April 1960. Following Wilkinson's recital of abuse, McKay recalled his decision in 1951 as newly-appointed church president to name Clark, who heretofore had served as first counselor in the First Presidency, as his second counselor, which many church leaders interpreted as a demotion. "How do you think I have gotten along with him," McKay explained. "If I ever had any inspiration it was when I selected Stephen L Richards as my first counselor against all precedent."<sup>88</sup>

Despite periodic—and usually deferred—donations from wealthy benefactors,<sup>89</sup> school administrators eventually learned that in many ways BYU and its president were their own greatest obstacles in national fund raising drives. One study found, for example, that BYU's parochial and politically conservative image made it unattractive to many large corporate philanthropic foundations.<sup>90</sup> In fact, at Wilkinson's resignation in 1971 BYU fund-raising activities had brought in only \$33 million, an annual average of \$2.2 million.<sup>91</sup> (In contrast, during the next five years nearly \$49 million would be raised, an average annual total of \$9.8 mil-

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85. Wilkinson Diary, 4 Feb. 1960.

86. BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 25 Mar., 4 May 1960.

87. Wilkinson Diary, 23 May 1961.

88. *Ibid.*, 28 Apr. 1960.

89. Trustees were reluctant to solicit large donations from individuals in whose honor campus buildings would then be named (see BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, minutes, 3 May, 6 Sept. 1967). However, the allure of such contributions sometimes proved irresistible (see *ibid.*, 4 Sept. 1968, 4 Sept. 1969).

90. Kenneth W. Porter and F. Charles Graves, "Recommendations Regarding Brigham Young University's Foundation Program," Oct. 1970, BYU archives (compare Wilkinson, memo of a conference with Mark Cannon, 18 Aug. 1966, BYU archives).

91. BYU Development Office, "Fund Raising Highlights," 1976-77, 1978-79, BYU archives.

lion.<sup>92)</sup>

Nationally, where BYU's annual budget—income and expenditures—rose some 2,000 percent during the years 1949 to 1965, income and expenditures per average American college or university increased 350 percent.<sup>93</sup> The year of Wilkinson's resignation (1970-71) operating income at BYU came from the following sources:

Educational/general:

Student fees	\$10,873,268.15
LDS church appropriation	22,448,507.00
Gifts/grants	2,455,284.23
Sales and services of educational departments	13,492.83
Organized activities relating to educational departments	404,811.43
Other income	1,585,186.92
Auxiliary funds:	27,775,451.65
Student activities funds:	1,597,346.90
<u>Student aid:</u>	<u>164,277.78</u>
Total annual income:	\$67,317,626.89 <sup>94</sup>

### "A TREMENDOUS RESPONSIBILITY"

Six years into his twenty-year term, Wilkinson frankly, if disingenuously, confessed to his diary: "When I became President and Administrator no one, least of all I, ever thought the budget would become so large in so short a time. It imposes a tremendous responsibility upon me."<sup>95</sup> Not surprisingly, financial considerations became a major preoccupation—and occasionally frustration—of his administration. In comparing original appropriations with actual expenditures for 1957, for example, he was shocked to learn that the university had spent \$88,000 more than budgeted on faculty salaries. "This is really serious," he fretted, "because if we spent this much more last year, this amount will have to be carried over into next year and will substantially deplete the increase permitted for teachers' salaries."<sup>96</sup> With an unexpected surplus of \$175,000 in income, however, revenues still exceeded expenses by \$2,000. But the president remained annoyed: "This is the most embarrassing situation in which I have found myself since I became President, and I am deeply disturbed about it. ... This is the first time anything of any major importance

92. Ibid.

93. See U.S. Office of Education, *Digest of Educational Statistics*, 1970, 78.

94. "Annual Financial Report" (1971).

95. Wilkinson Diary, 25 Oct. 1957.

96. Ibid., 11, 15 Feb. 1958.

has happened to cause the Board of Trustees to have a lack of confidence in my administration, and I will, as President, have to take the responsibility thereof, and properly so."<sup>97</sup>

By the end of the 1950s concern among some of the more parsimonious members of the board over rising expenditures at BYU had begun to surface. "Whenever I go to see [J. Reuben Clark, Jr., first counselor in the First Presidency]," Wilkinson recorded in late 1959, "I try to get the low down on attitudes toward the BYU. He told me that there was criticism of the large spending at the BYU. This undoubtedly was a reflection of President [Henry D.] Moyle's concern, for the latter had urged that I not announce amounts that we were spending, because the public, without knowing the full facts, would get the impression that we were building faster than we needed to."<sup>98</sup> In fact, just that year the church had decided for the first time ever that instead of dipping into its financial reserves as needed, annual expenditures would not be allowed to exceed annual income.<sup>99</sup>

Six weeks later Wilkinson met with the church's budget committee to finalize the Y's budget for 1960. He reported that "for the first time in a number of years the Church last year [1 September 1958-31 August 1959] had spent \$8,000,000 in excess of its income, having called on its reserves for that amount." Total requests for 1960 (1 September 1960-31 August 1961) totaled \$17 million in excess of estimated income, and since the Committee on the Disposition of Tithes, composed of the First Presidency, Quorum of Twelve Apostles, and Presiding Bishopric, had decided that expenditures would not exceed income, they requested that the church operating budget be cut by \$23 million. "As applied to the United Church School System," Wilkinson wrote, "they asked us to cut back our budget around \$8,000,000. We had asked for a total of \$29,000,000."

Wilkinson replied testily that while he agreed with the idea of not spending beyond one's income, he was "shocked to now learn that the Church had done so the last year and that we had not been informed of the same, but on the contrary had been certainly led to believe that we could go ahead planning as we had done." He pointed out that he was

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97. *Ibid.*, 24 Feb. 1958.

98. *Ibid.*, 29 Oct. 1959. Wilkinson assumed that Moyle was his only critic, probably because the second counselor had put an end that year to the church's historic practice of publicly releasing annual financial statements. However, Wilkinson was wrong, for four months later Clark himself would confess to having serious doubts about Wilkinson's spending: "Ernest, I think you are money mad at the Y. I don't know why you continue to worry about financial matters and try to get more money. ... Of course, I know you don't agree with me on this, but I wanted you to know what I thought. You have got many more important problems down there than raising money" (*ibid.*, 24 Feb. 1960).

99. *Ibid.*, 22 Oct. 1959.



only asking for a 2.2 percent increase and that "President Moyle [second counselor in the First Presidency] had specifically commended us for our budget and said he was sure it would be all right."<sup>100</sup> Wilkinson complained that the cuts were being administered across the board "even though in the past we had always lived within our budget and had voluntarily cut down our budget very substantially for the coming year." He noted that earlier that week the board of trustees had authorized the purchase of land for junior colleges in Arizona, California, and Oregon. He questioned the propriety of across-the-board cuts when Counselor Moyle was pushing for the church to finance student housing at Utah State University in Logan, and when the church had recently contributed \$250,000 to the construction of a theater at the University of Utah and another \$250,000 toward construction of the U's Medical Center. Nonetheless, the budget committee asked him to reevaluate his proposed budget and submit a statement "telling just how we could cut it back with the consequences of cutting back each particular item, so that the First Presidency would be able to decide just what they wanted us to do."<sup>101</sup> Compared to the previous year's appropriation from the church, the amount finally authorized for 1960 fell by 18.5 percent.

The next year Wilkinson was chagrined to discover that despite the church's best intentions, expenditures had again exceeded income:

[O]ur figures on the income of the Church were based on expenditures given out at the General Conference of the Church in 1959; that we just assumed the Church was living within its income and that, therefore, we assumed the Church had at least that much income. We were informed, however, that in 1959 and 1960 the Church had spent more than its income. We had put down the income of the Church at \$89,000,000. President Moyle stated it was off \$4,000,000.<sup>102</sup>

The following month Wilkinson presented his 1961 budget for the church school system, asking for an increase of 8.9 percent for BYU and 9.8 percent for the rest. Almost immediately, according to Wilkinson, "President Moyle objected on the ground that that was in excess of the increase of income for the Church." Moyle did not reveal what the increase was but suggested Wilkinson trim his request to 6 percent. "I had been informed, however," Wilkinson later wrote, "that the increase up to date was 7.2%, but I could not disclose my source of information, although in fact I had been authorized by the First Presidency to have this information."<sup>103</sup> By the end of the meeting the board had agreed to Wilkinson's original pro-

100. See *ibid.*, 22 Oct. 1959.

101. *Ibid.*, 4 Dec. 1959.

102. *Ibid.*, 7 Sept. 1960.

103. Wilkinson's source was probably Delbert L. Stapley.

posed increase on the condition that "I go over it in detail with the Budget Committee of the Church to see if any further cuts could be made."<sup>104</sup>

Three months later Wilkinson "got a severe jolt." He learned that Committee on the Disposition of Tithes had eliminated from the Y's 1961 budget a fine arts center, a physical plant building, and architectural fees for a new physical education building. "In short," he groaned, "they eliminated all of our capital improvement projects except a loan of over \$4,000,000 for married student housing." Apostle Delbert L. Stapley, acting chair of the budget committee, had earlier promised Wilkinson there would be no problem with these items, and was now "so sick about the decision" that he relegated notification to a subordinate. Later that day Wilkinson found out that the church had requests totalling \$25 million in excess of income and that "they decided to stay within their income (which they have not done for the last few years) and so a lot of cutting was done in our area." Still, he vowed, "I haven't given up, however, and will see President McKay about this Monday morning to try to get the Fine Arts Center restored."<sup>105</sup>

When Wilkinson managed to meet with McKay four days later, "I told him that he might not agree with me at times with respect to my judgment, but that I was not going to permit him or anyone else to criticize me for not trying to get what I thought was necessary for the BYU." Once in his office, McKay assured Wilkinson that appropriations for the fine arts center would be granted. Wilkinson asked "if that was a decision that had been made so I could rely on it." McKay answered that it wasn't, that "no decision had been made but he was very much in favor of it and would try to get it in." Wilkinson pushed for the other two items, but McKay's tone was such that Wilkinson "[knew] there was no chance to persuade him on these and so I concentrated on the Fine Arts Center."

Wilkinson left the meeting thinking that the \$4-million loan for married student housing would be allocated to the school from an account outside the university's budget so that monies appropriated to the loan could be rerouted to finance the fine arts center. In concluding this, he relied on the church's having funded a similar project at Utah State University by appropriating monies outside the budget of the adjoining LDS institute. When he reported his impression to Delbert Stapley, he was told that the previous day Henry Moyle had ordered the appropriation be reinserted into the institute's budget. "In Brother Stapley's words," Wilkinson recorded, "President Moyle was 'mending his fences,'" since Moyle had previously supported the unusually structured expenditure. Stapley added, however, that \$6 million had not been spent in last year's budget,

104. Wilkinson Diary, 19 Oct. 1960.

105. *Ibid.*, 13 Jan. 1961.

so that even if \$2 million were needed for the Logan project, there was still another \$4 million left. While uncertain as to "whether I will ever get an opportunity to let the brethren know I know about this," Wilkinson "was sure Brother Stapley will do it for us if he gets an opportunity."

Wilkinson subsequently learned that increasingly influential Elder Harold B. Lee opposed the Y's fine arts center "because of the present financial situation." In recapping the day's events, the beleaguered university president resolved that if the choice were between married student housing and a fine arts center, he would favor the latter. However, "if I fail in that, I will then ask permission to use money [intended] for the Y Student Center for the Fine Arts Center [instead] with the understanding that the Church will later appropriate money for the Y Student Center."<sup>106</sup>

Before the end of the week Wilkinson was informed that the First Presidency and Twelve had met in the Salt Lake temple and had voted in favor of his fine arts center. McKay, who delivered the good news, reminded a relieved Wilkinson, "I told you to go home and sleep and not worry, and this has come out all right." Wilkinson asked if this also meant that the loan for married student housing would be approved. McKay replied yes. "For the first time in a meeting with President McKay," Wilkinson wrote, "I was really upset<sup>107</sup> and almost wept as he gave me the information."<sup>108</sup>

Later that year Wilkinson met with Stapley "to inform him that I was going over the [1962] budget for the third time to see if I could cut anything out of it." Stapley then revealed that "they had requests for next year of \$60 million in excess of the income of the church. Further, that the reserves of the Church had been spent down to \$10 million." Wilkinson repeated what he was sure Stapley already knew, that "while it was none of my business I had not approved of the manner in which President Moyle had been spending the reserves of the Church, but that I wanted him to know as far as our budget was concerned at the BYU it was not inflated." He sympathized that as one of the members of the budget committee, Stapley "has an almost insolvable problem" because of "the reckless expenditures of the Church Building Committee." Wilkinson felt sure Stapley agreed with his assessment.<sup>109</sup>

Meeting with the budget committee early the next month, Wilkinson found members "sympathetic to us but had a real problem in trying to meet the various demands of the Church." He was informed that "the Church's income was up 7% over last year" and was asked if "we could

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106. *Ibid.*, 17 Jan. 1961.

107. Wilkinson here means he became "emotional," not "angry."

108. Wilkinson Diary, 20 Jan. 1961.

109. *Ibid.*, 9 Nov. 1961.

not get by with an increase of 7% instead of 13% which had been requested." After considerable discussion, Wilkinson offered to trim the requested amount from about \$1.3 million to \$900,000. He knew there would be some "weeping and wailing" on campus, but "I think we can do so. The Church has been very good to the educational system since I have been here. Indeed, the percentage of the Church expenditures for education has increased faster than the percentage of expenditures for any other activities of the Church and I felt it was only proper that I take this proposed decrease."<sup>110</sup>

At the same meeting Wilkinson learned that the church expenditures committee had adopted a policy allocating the cost of new buildings over the period of their construction.<sup>111</sup> Wilkinson, however, continued to push for a physical plant building and for architectural fees for a new physical education building, as well as for single women's housing.<sup>112</sup> On 12 December 1961 the expenditures committee agreed to reallocate unused monies to finance a physical plant building. Six days later Wilkinson met with the First Presidency, minus Moyle who was out of town at a funeral. Wilkinson hoped to solicit President McKay's support for single women's housing, costing \$2.5 million, which the Council on the Disposition of Tithes had disapproved. McKay agreed to authorize construction of single housing units to accommodate 500 students with the understanding that other units would be authorized as the need arose. Wilkinson then proposed that if he were able to gift to BYU a building he co-owned with Moyle's brother Walter, which would net the university \$80,000 to \$85,000, that the money be used to cover architectural plans for a physical education building. McKay said, "You go right ahead and see what you can do. Let's keep this between ourselves and then we will try to work it out."<sup>113</sup>

Henry Moyle's deficient-spending projects continued to draw Wilkinson's and others' ire. "There is real feeling on the part of President [of the Twelve Joseph Fielding] Smith and Brother [Harold B.] Lee and possibly one or two others," Wilkinson divulged to his diary, "that the First Presidency has been profligate in its spending and that this spending should be stopped."<sup>114</sup> His suspicions of Moyle's financial machinations were evident five months later when he, in his own words, "pretty much horned" in on a meeting of the directors of the International Broadcasting Company. Moyle had requested a meeting with these men, all of whom shared a Mormon background, to solicit "their individual advice

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110. *Ibid.*, 1 Dec. 1961.

111. *Ibid.*

112. See *ibid.*, 1, 4, 12 Dec. 1961.

113. *Ibid.*, 18 Dec. 1961.

114. *Ibid.*, 5 Sept. 1962.

as to whether the Church should invest \$40 million in the purchase of a chain of radio and television stations throughout the country." Wilkinson had managed to secure an invitation to the meeting "because I wanted to know in the vernacular of the day, 'What President Moyle was up to.'" Since BYU's 1964 budget had only a few months earlier been cut by \$2 million "on the grounds the Church didn't have the money," he was more than a little interested to discover that Moyle was contemplating a church expenditure of \$40 million. "I know that President Moyle is a promoter and a spender whereas most of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve are not," he wrote. "I sensed at the beginning when President Moyle asked me why I was there that he was not particularly glad to have me there but he warmed up later and I got the information I needed."<sup>115</sup>

Moyle's death seven months later, in September 1963, and the appointment of fiscal conservative N. Eldon Tanner as counselor to David O. McKay the next month, effectively ended the drain on the church's diminishing reserves. Wilkinson's 1964 senate race took him away from all church financial discussions, and his reappointment as BYU president only following his return the next year confined his involvement to that school's budget. The church still funded his university at significant levels; his battle for an ongoing major subsidy had been largely won. Nonetheless, he continued to skirmish periodically with trustees over money. "The greatest surprise of the day," he wrote in early 1967,

which shows that we are still living in the day of miracles, occurred in the Executive Committee Meeting [of the board of trustees]. Brother [Harold B.] Lee first objected to this meeting of the ground that he had other appointments and asked us to hold it on Thursday. I told him that I could not do so because I would be Washington. Finally, under the discreet leadership of President Tanner, it was agreed that this would be held and I explained to them that the one item of business was the approval of our special project budget for the first eight months of this year, which totalled over \$1,500,000, composed of scores of items. As has happened in the past, I assumed that they would go through each item which would have taken several hours. I explained to them, however that these items had been screened by us at the BYU, screened again by the [church] Budget Committee, and they were in our budget. Brother Lee inquired if this was the same group that had been once before the Executive Committee and I told him it had. He therefore moved for approval of the entire budget of special projects. We were so flabbergasted that we got out of the room before the Committee changed its mind.<sup>116</sup>

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115. *Ibid.*, 15 Feb. 1963.

116. *Ibid.*, 9 Jan. 1967.

Three years later Wilkinson was still sparring, but his primary opponent had become more powerful. Apostle Lee now served as first counselor in a new First Presidency, and the strain of a future with Lee as de facto church president was beginning to show. "In the Board meeting President Lee objected to us going ahead with the Engineering Building because of the cost of \$6 Million," Wilkinson confided in mid-1970, "even though it had been approved many times by the Board and before the limitation of 25,000 students we were told to go ahead. We did not, however[,] accept this as a 'no' answer yet and will refer it back to the Executive Committee for further consideration. It will be a tragedy and a repudiation of good faith to those relying on us if we do not get this building."<sup>117</sup>

In fact, Lee's opposition became surprisingly personal. "When President Lee objected to the Engineering Building costing \$6 Million," Wilkinson added,

I responded by saying that the Dean of the College of Engineering had urged a building that cost \$10 Million but we had trimmed it to \$6 Million and that it could be trimmed no more. He replied with the remark that when this came up in the Expenditures Committee he had said that is exactly what my retort would be. I said it was my retort and that I had mentioned it at the time the matter was approved and I mentioned it again. Ben Lewis [BYU executive vice-president] then spoke up and said I was wrong—that the engineering people originally wanted \$15 Million. President Lee then said something that had an inference that the minutes were inaccurate. President Tanner, who was conducting the meeting, asked him pointedly what he meant by that and his response indicated that he thought that I might have had something to do with the making up [of] the minutes in the first place.

After the meeting I was told by one of the highest ranking officials that if President Lee had congratulated me for what I had done it would not have added to my stature nearly as much as his criticism did and that the entire Board was behind me on the matter.<sup>118</sup>

Despite the private expression of support, Lee's charge that Wilkinson had doctored the board's official minutes to suit his own purposes—together with a growing list of other slights real and imagined—must have hurt. His support eroding quickly, Wilkinson knew that Lee's ascendancy, coupled with his own age and health problems, all but guaranteed his imminent departure from campus. Hoping to exit church employ on his own terms rather than be forced out, within three weeks of Lee's stinging accusation Wilkinson personally delivered to members of the First Presidency his handwritten resignation, effective 1 September 1971,

117. *Ibid.*, 3 June 1970.

118. *Ibid.*

or sooner, if the presidency so wished.

### CONCLUSION

If a university's success is measured solely in terms of size (which it isn't), Wilkinson's contribution to BYU was enormous. In numbers alone, his extraordinary accomplishment will probably never be repeated. He took what one of his first administrative appointees termed a "junior college"<sup>119</sup> and turned it into one of the largest private universities in the United States. "He had the ability to set extremely demanding objectives," this same colleague reported, "and to pay whatever price was required to achieve them."<sup>120</sup> If Wilkinson ever regretted the price he paid for his achievement, he never said so.

While in retrospect Wilkinson felt that the growth of BYU was one of his "lesser accomplishments,"<sup>121</sup> he nonetheless took considerable—some would suggest justifiable, others misplaced—pride in the growth he had initiated, encouraged, overseen, and fought for. True, he did not work alone; he gathered around him a tightly-knit coterie of carefully chosen "lieutenants," men who respected and shared his commitment to BYU even if they sometimes disagreed with his methods. "Ernest and I didn't have the same philosophy of life nor did we have the same philosophy of education," his executive assistant remembered. "[But] I made up my mind when I came that I was going to be loyal to him and support him regardless of our differences. . . . If I couldn't, I'd leave."<sup>122</sup> Just as, if not more, important, he also enjoyed the virtually unqualified support of church president David O. McKay. But it was Wilkinson's single-minded drive to transform a bucolic BYU into the kind of educational institution that he hoped would one day command the admiration of American academe that set the direction and guided the future course of Mormon higher education. Whatever place BYU occupies today in the LDS and American educational community, it owes in large part to the efforts of Ernest Leroy Wilkinson.

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119. William F. Edwards, quoted in Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 2:626.

120. William F. Edwards, quoted in Deem and Bird, *Ernest L. Wilkinson*, 520.

121. See Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:271.

122. Harvey L. Taylor, Oral History, 12 Feb. 1979, 12, BYU archives.