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ARTHUR LAING

Class of 1925

Arthur Laing was born in Eburne, British Columbia on September 9th, 1904, and obtained the degree of BSA. An interest in studying agriculture at UBC may have been instilled by his father - Thomas Laing - who was a member of the group that initiated the BC Federation of Agriculture. In 1926 Art joined Vancouver Milling and Grain Company, and left the firm in 1933 to become manager of the Agriculture Chemicals Division of Buckerfields Limited. In 1937, he married the former Geraldine Hyland from Essex, Ontario. They had one daughter, Linda Laurine, who married David Billingsley.

Art Laing took up civic duties as a member of the Richmond School Board from 1930-43 and served as Chairman for 8 years. In addition he served as Chairman of the UBC Alma Mater Society. He was first elected to the House of Commons for Vancouver South in 1949. According to reports at that time he made a quick and impressive debut in Parliament and was selected to second the address in reply to the speech from the Throne. Apparently he would have been selected to move the speech but it was not "an English-speaking man's turn". His natural speaking ability had been honed by his affiliation with the Phi Kappa Pi and Sigma Tau Upsilon fraternities at UBC. On one occasion Sigma Tau met with the senior administration of

UBC and Art spoke eloquently and convincingly of the importance of the Faculty of Agriculture, when some differing views were being expressed. On May 1, 1953, he resigned his seat to accept the leadership of the British Columbia Liberal Party and was elected to the British Columbia Legislature to represent the Constituency of Vancouver Point Grey in the election of 1953. In 1962 and 1963, he was reelected to the House of Commons for Vancouver South. In 1963, he was appointed Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources and also held the posts of Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (1966), Minister of Public Works (1968), and Minister of



Veterans' Affairs (1972). In 1972, he was appointed to the Senate of Canada. The Rt. Hon. Pierre Elliot Trudeau, PC, MP, Prime Minister of Canada announced on September 6, 1974, that a new bridge over the North Arm of the Fraser River and connecting Granville Street in Vancouver with Sea Island in Richmond would be named "The Arthur Laing Bridge". The south end of the bridge was located close to his birthplace, Eburne, a part of Richmond. Unfortunately, Art did not live to attend the dedication to the new bridge. He died on February 13th, 1975. The bridge was officially opened on May 15, 1976.

During his lifetime he received many honours. In July, 1967, he was initiated at the Blood Indian Reserve, Standoff, as an Honourary member of the Blood Band of the Blackfoot Indian Confederacy under the name of Honourary Chief Red Crow (Me-kai-sto). On June 13, 1969, a new building in Yellowknife, NWT, was named "The Arthur Laing Building". He was given the Freedom of the City of Vancouver in December, 1974. Following his death the most northerly point on Ellesmere Island and located 420 miles from the North Pole was named "The Arthur Laing Peninsula". On May 25, 1975, the Commissioner of the Yukon (James Smith), at a dinner in Whitehorse which was attended by the Governor General and Madame Léger, announced that a mountain peak near the border of Alaska and the Yukon had been named "The Arthur Laing Peak". The mountain overlooked a spot on the Firth River where Art had fished with the Commissioner for Artic Char and had enjoyed it so much.

Clearly Arthur Laing, an alumnus of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences of The University of British Columbia, had a distinguished career of public service, served under three Prime Ministers (St Laurent, Pearson and Trudeau) and left his mark on

Canada.

R Blair 2000/b