

## NATHAN P. FEINSINGER—A SOURCE OF ENERGY AND IDEAS

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Whatever the setting—classroom, seminar, conference room, bargaining table, social evening—Nate Feinsinger brought to people a sense of challenge and stimulation, and a contagious zest for experience. For over forty years he was a member of the University of Wisconsin law faculty. In that time, he made himself felt, not only in the law school but also in the general life of the university and in public affairs beyond the campus, as a source of dynamic energy in the realms of ideas and action. He was a major contributor to the University's standing as a service resource for its society. He did not allow retirement to shelve him, but continued to spark ideas and projects in his prime area of concern—problems of labor relations and dispute resolution—despite burdens of long illness. He died November 2, 1983 in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, at eighty-one.

Nathan Paul Feinsinger was born in Brooklyn in 1902, the son of Israel Bernard and Rebecca Feinsinger. He grew up in Buffalo. He received his B.A. from the University of Michigan in 1926, where he claimed he majored in Old Roman Bank Instruments. Notwithstanding this specialized major, he was there elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He obtained his law degree also from the University of Michigan in 1928, and that University awarded him an honorary LL.D. in 1971. He joined the University of Wisconsin law faculty in 1929. Except for leaves of absence as a visiting faculty member at the Universities of Chicago and Michigan and at Stanford University (1934, 1936, 1953, 1958) and for various public service posts, he remained at Wisconsin until his retirement in 1973 as Emeritus Professor of Law.

In the early years of his academic career Professor Feinsinger centered on two areas of the law remote from the field which in the long run became his principal concern. In 1928-1929 he engaged in research at the Columbia Law School in sociological aspects of the law of domestic relations, and at Wisconsin he taught that specialty

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until 1937. He worked also in the law of commercial instruments and partnerships; in 1937 he edited a new edition of a standard treatise on suretyship, and in 1939 produced teaching materials on partnerships. But in 1937-1939 he took a change of course which proved to launch him into a new career and eventually into the national arena. He became general counsel to the newly formed Wisconsin Labor Relations Board, the local counterpart of the National Labor Relations Board. From that point his work in the law faculty centered on classroom and seminar treatment of problems of the law relating to labor relations.

Few individuals active in the area of management-labor relations during the last forty years could show a record of public service to match that of Nate Feinsinger. Between 1942 and 1946 he was successively associate general counsel, director of national disputes, and a public member of the National War Labor Board in Washington. In the course of the years 1946-1949 he was a special representative of the Secretary of Labor in major labor disputes, and in 1946 and 1948 he chaired Presidential fact finding boards dealing with labor disputes in steel, meat packing, airlines, and the West Coast maritime strike. In 1951-1952 he was chairman of the National Wage Stabilization Board.

Many communities were indebted to him for his skill in tense situations. In 1947 he was a key figure in settling a strike by sugar workers in Hawaii and a grateful Hawaii legislature proclaimed a Nathan P. Feinsinger Day. In 1966 he steered a three-member mediation panel to successful settlement of a New York City transit strike. In addition to these public roles he was among the pioneers in developing the functions of permanent umpire under longterm collective bargaining contracts, including those established in the Allis Chalmers Company, Honeywell, Incorporated, and General Motors.

It was less often as an arbitrator or judge in disputes than as mediator or conciliator that Nate Feinsinger demonstrated talent of the level of genius. Warmly human, delighting in the diversity, quirks and puzzles of human behavior, he possessed also high capacity for realistic, detached appraisal of the interests and motives of contending parties. Self-disciplined and self-knowing, he drew on stores of integrity and patience to win the trust of combatants and to bring them into relations of civility and concern for their own best long term interests. He was the more effective because he did not take himself too seriously or assume a position of superiority to those whom he sought to bring together. Among other qualities, a good mediator to his mind must have "some weaknesses of his own,

to appreciate them in others." But his humane temper and flexibility could not be mistaken for lack of will or courage. Confronting a strike by telephone operators in leading cities at the peak of the war effort in late 1944, as chairman of the War Labor Board he told union leaders that they were defying the government of the United States and that "no union has done that yet and succeeded."

In his later years on campus Professor Feinsinger turned his interest more and more to efforts to adapt successful techniques in handling labor disputes to the peaceful resolution of conflicts of all types, in the national and international scenes. Together with his co-director, Mrs. Eleanor Roe, he embodied this broadened scope of concern in founding at the University a Center for Teaching and Research in Dispute Settlement. An indication of his impact on students through the Center and through his regular teaching was the founding by students in 1981 of the Nathan P. Feinsinger Labor Law Society.

Severely injured in a near fatal automobile accident in 1950 and thereafter living with much pain and relying on a cane and later a wheelchair, Nate Feinsinger never relaxed his indomitable will to apply his skills to reducing conflict and exploring effective means to bring contending parties into working accommodations. His own strength continued to give strength to colleagues, collaborators and friends here and throughout the country.