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MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY FACULTY MEETING, March 5, 1945

George Simon Wehrwein

George Simon Wehrwein, son of Adam and Dorothea Stoltenberg Wehrwein, was born at Newton, Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, January 31, 1883, and died at Madison, Wisconsin, on January 10, 1945.

George went to high school at Manitowoc and finished a course at the Oshkosh Normal School, after which he, for a few years, was a high school teacher. He next attended the University of Wisconsin, College of Agriculture, graduating in 1913. He was then chosen as an agricultural extension worker at the University of Texas where he stayed for three years, going to a similar job at Pullman, Washington, for one year. He next went to Pennsylvania Agricultural College, where he remained one year, coming from there to the University of Wisconsin for graduate work. He took a Master's degree in 1920, and his Ph.D. in 1922.

Professor Wehrwein became an assistant in the Institute of Land and Public Utility Economics at Wisconsin and then at Northwestern University. He remained there from 1925 to 1928, since which time he was again at the University of Wisconsin.

On the 15th of August, 1915, George was married to Anna Ruby. Three children were born to them, Austin Carl, Dorothea Magdalene, and Annabel Ruby. Surviving him also are three brothers, Adolph of Milwaukee, Walter on the home farm, Carl in Washington, D.C.; one sister, Mrs. James Cranston of Beloit. His mother, nearly eighty years old, is living on the home farm.

As a friend

As a friend and colleague, George Wehrwein's chief characteristic was kindness. If he did not care for a person, it was unlikely that others would know it; he never spoke unkindly. There was a consistency and sincerity about his friendship; it did not need to be tested daily. It could be depended upon and was a source of inspiration and gave a sense of assurance and trust. This is not to imply that he was not critical of the opinions and decisions of his friends or of certain social situations in society. He was critical but with social responsibility as his yardstick, never with bitterness. He had a vivid sense of wholesome humor. These qualities made him a thoroughly fine colleague and a great teacher, beloved by students and lay persons with whom he came in contact.

These attitudes carried over into a point of view regarding the state; it gave him a fundamental confidence in its people. Both his professional and personal life were identified with this interpretation, and it gave a tone to his scholarship that was soundly democratic, and a character to his friendship that was deeply appreciated.

As an investigator

George Wehrwein was an indefatigable investigator. It would indeed be difficult to imagine how he might have spent any greater proportion of his time in the pursuit of knowledge than he did.

His intellectual curiosity was like a perpetually wound spring, and through the years drove him in a persistent search for, and classification of, social facts. The time that he devoted to this pursuit and the range of material that it involved were phenomenal. But it followed a definite pattern of inquiry.

Always Professor Wehrwein's interest was land economics. His approach was that of history

and of economics, or, more appropriately, that of political economy or institutional economics. He combed libraries, book stores, government documents, magazines, bulletins, newspapers, trade papers, and professional journals from many fields--always selecting, listing, and classifying facts that fell within the area of his interest in land economics.

These materials he used in teaching the complement of courses which have made the University of Wisconsin famous in its land economics offering. He used them in courses which he taught at Northwestern, Colorado, Chicago, and Cornell. He used them in lectures and speeches before the many assemblies to which he was called, and these ranged from conventions of notables to Sunday school classes. He used them in writing the only current textbook published under the title of Land Economics. He made use of these sources too in writing numerous articles for various journals, particularly the Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics, for which he was a guiding spirit for twenty years and which he brought directly under University of Wisconsin auspices just three years ago.

After Professor Wehrwein completed the Land Economics textbook, he turned increased attention to certain phases of the broad range of social phenomena in which he was especially interested. These, four in number, show the breadth of his scholarly interests, for they include the land economics of the Bible, the historical significance of the Great Lakes, the development of national land policies, and the problems of Wisconsin's northern cutover area.

He became an authority among the clergy for his excellent grasp of biblical history and the land economy of biblical times. There is little doubt that, had he lived, he would fairly soon have published an impressive volume on this topic.

Having been reared near enough to the shores of Lake Michigan that he could see the schooners pass by, Professor Wehrwein always maintained a live interest in the Great Lakes. He always hoped that this University might center some of its work around the history of the Lakes and their influence on life in this region.

In the field of national land policies, he was especially concerned with the meaning of our national policies as they impinged on the everyday life of the settler. He referred constantly to Turner and Paxson; and he was anxious that the story of our national land policies be someday written in terms of frontier psychology and frontier needs.

Professor Wehrwein's fourth major investigational interest was in northern Wisconsin. He conducted a series of field studies in the northern counties which dealt with isolated settlement, recreational land uses, sources of livelihood, forest taxation, and the progress of land use planning through rural zoning and public land management. These investigations contributed in a large degree to his reputation as a counselor and advisor to groups elsewhere who were struggling with immediate local problems of land use adjustment and land planning.

Yet it is difficult to segregate four special spheres of Professor Wehrwein's investigations; for he tended to drink deep from all the various wells of knowledge which others in his professional field might be satisfied only to sip. It was this proclivity for investigation, this insatiable search for the truth that gave specific reference to the other facts of his life.

As a co-worker

A direct outgrowth of George Wehrwein's scholarship in the field of natural resource utilization was his intense interest in public measures designed to advance, in practical fashion, the ideas and ideals which he had espoused.

Among the public officials and professional colleagues in planning activities, Professor Wehrwein was not only respected for his achievements but welcomed always for a personal quality in which a quiet strength and integrity enhanced the contributions which he made. He was a most

valued committee member; his suggestions, based upon observations which had the tang of concrete experience, helped to crystallize agreed solutions, and called forth the best efforts of his colleagues. They recognized the hard work which lay behind his observations, and appreciated the courtesy and friendliness which he brought to the discussion of the most difficult and controversial problems. He assisted, for example, in the activities of the Wisconsin Committee on Forest Land Use and the Wisconsin State Planning Board, from 1935 on. In the broader sphere of national planning he served on the Land Committee of the National Resources Board and the American Society of Planning Officials (of which he was vice-president at the time of his death). In all of these organizations he contributed greatly. It is moving to find how invariably his colleagues in these organizations have dwelt upon this union of a rare personal quality with professional achievement in their recent messages. That quality of generously contributing of his best to his colleagues has resulted in the continuance of his work and the transmission of his spirit through all who had the good fortune to have worked with him, widely scattered as they are, not only in this but in other countries.

As a teacher

Professor Wehrwein was one of the best of teachers, due largely to the fact that wherever he went, whomever he saw, whatever he read contributed to his teaching. To him the world was full of his subject--man's relation to the land. Few indeed are the people who are able to fill their lives with one subject as fully as did he. Instead of being monotonous it was charming.

Professor Wehrwein knew the history of the world back when the Nile Valley, and the little spot around the Dead Sea were among the most fertile of any known territory. These people fought with their neighbors. The world is still waiting for some gentle soul like Wehrwein to teach us how we may live together, peaceably exchanging our goods, all well fed and well clothed. We need great teachers along many lines, but surely we are in need of a few great ones to take up the work, left by Wehrwein, among other things, teaching us how to live quietly and decently. Then we shall know how to make the earth produce all the goods that humanity can use.

Professor Wehrwein's students were his friends. He knew them so well, and knew his field so well, suggestions made could guide the student along the lines already started. Out of these many minds will some day come a great thinker who can guide the nation into views which at once compass the small farms of the East, the broad acres of the Northwest, the deep soils on Illinois and Iowa, and the lean, but great, soils of the South. It was something of this sort which guided Professor Wehrwein in his life study of the use of our living space, which we, in a broader sense, call the land.