An Open Letter to Reed Dickerson

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ment of Support, and the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Act. Proposed uniform laws are drafted by committees of eight to ten commissioners and are then carefully considered by the entire Conference at two annual meetings. At the annual meetings, the Conference, acting as a Committee of the Whole, reads aloud, criticizes and debates proposed laws line-by-line, section-by-section. It is commissioners with the background, the intellectual capacity and the lucid reasoning of Reed Dickerson that make intelligent, coherent drafting and debate possible.

Reed Dickerson has been a commissioner for over twenty-two years and has participated actively, effectively and with distinction in the Committee of the Whole, on Conference committees and on special drafting committees. He has rendered outstanding service on the Legislative Committee, one of the most important committees of the Conference, the Study Committee on the Proposed Plain Language Act, the Committee on Law School Research, the Drafting Committee on the Uniform Consumer Sales Practice Act, the Drafting Committee on the Model Public Defender Act and the Drafting Committee on the Metric System Procedure Act. In recognition of his eminent service to the Conference, Commissioner Dickerson has been designated a life member.

The Conference is pleased to join in the dedication of this issue of the Indiana Law Journal to this outstanding lawyer, teacher, draftsman, writer, commissioner on uniform laws and trumpet player.

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An Open Letter to Reed Dickerson

SIR NOËL HUTTON*

My dear Reed:

They tell me that you are about to retire from your distinguished office and that they are dedicating to you this issue of the Indiana Law Journal. I was offered the opportunity to contribute

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an article, which I should very much have liked to do. But time is short. In one of your works, the draftsman poses the question how long he has to do the job. The answer, you said, was the same as Abe Lincoln’s answer to the question of how long a man’s legs should be—“Long enough to reach the ground.” On this occasion, the ground is uncomfortably close, so I must content myself with writing this brief open personal letter, for which the Board of Editors may perhaps find room at the end of the issue.

I write from 36 Whitehall, the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel of the United Kingdom, where, as it happens, I am presently doing a fair amount of work more than ten years after retiring. May I, in passing, express the hope that you will make better use of the leisure provided by your own retirement. However that may be, this gives me the opportunity to bring best wishes from two colleagues here, namely Henry Rowe, now my third successor in the post of First Parliamentary Counsel, and Terence Skemp, who is just about to retire and take up the post of Counsel to the Speaker. Henry was the first to flush you out, in the course of a sabbatical trip to the United States gathering information about the way you all organise your legislative drafting over there. We have had your successive publications over here since 1956, and I for one have greatly valued and enjoyed them. Terence was instrumental in persuading you to come over here around 1969, I think, in order to preach the gospel to the group of Commonwealth lawyers to whom he and others from here were imparting some theoretical advice and practical instruction on legislative drafting. I vividly remember attending just one session of one hour in which, armed with a little sophisticated machinery, you not only gave them the essential principles to be followed in the production of legislative drafts but also dismantled and reconstructed in accordance with those principles a short Act of Congress. This was a demonstration of virtuosity which really opened my eyes. To you, I suppose, it was run of the mill, but I wondered then and wonder now whether there is anyone who could have matched the performance.

Later on, I in turn engineered your arrival over here to give expert evidence to the Committee on the Preparation of Legislation, presided over by David Renton, now a Peer of the Realm. This was a refreshing experience for us, and I for one was comforted to hear

that you found no great difficulty in understanding the language of
the British Acts of Parliament, at least when you were familiar
with the subject.

This has been a two-way traffic, and I have the warmest recollec-
tions of a couple of visits to Bloomington, Indiana, and not least of
the National Conference on Federal Legislative Drafting held in
Washington, D.C., in 1971, for which you fetched me over. I find it
hard to believe that you and I met for the first time as recently as
1966—I feel we are much older friends than that, but the date is
taken from your kindly introduction, printed at page 110 of the
record of that Conference. This began “I am a little sentimental
about this next fellow.” On the eve of your retirement, allow me to
say that right back to you. I hope you and Jane will have a
splendid time, richly earned as it is.

Yours ever, Noël

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COLLEEN K. PAUWELS†

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