

## **William H. Dodge**

*Professor Emeritus*

*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

William H. Dodge received his Bachelor of Science degree from Syracuse University in 1949 and his M.A. from Washington State University in 1951. After his Master's degree he spent two years as Highway Economist for the North Dakota State Highway Department. And then in 1953 he entered the Ph.D. program at the University of Wisconsin.

His mentors at Wisconsin were Lionel Thatcher and Martin Glaeser two Professors of economics and commerce specializing in regulated industries. Both of these professors had been greatly influenced by Professor John R. Commons the noted Wisconsin institutional economist. They were concerned with bringing the expertise of the University to bear upon practical issues. Bill Dodge continued that tradition embedded in the Wisconsin Idea, devoting his knowledge and energies to help the city of Madison, the State of Wisconsin, the Nation and underdeveloped countries with important transportation issues. His primary focus throughout his career was transportation policy.

His first academic post, in 1957, was Assistant Professor of Business Administration at the University of California-Berkeley and Research Economist in the Institute of Transportation and Traffic Engineering. He returned to Wisconsin in 1959 as a tenured Associate Professor where he concentrated on transportation economics. He restructured, refocused and modernized the curriculum in transportation which had, up until that time, separately dealt with railway, motor carrier and air transportation. His new curriculum of transportation economics, carrier management, logistics, transport in economic development and transportation policy was adopted several years later by other schools with transportation programs.

He was promoted to Professor of Business in 1964 and served in that position until his retirement in 1990 when he was named Professor Emeritus.

In the mid 1960s Bill began to combine two of his interests: transportation policy and transportation in economic development. In 1965 he went to Sierra Leone as a transportation economist with Battelle Memorial Institute to help with highway feasibility studies. He continued this combined interest in development and policy in 1968 when he taught (with Professor Warren Bilkey) an interdepartmental seminar on the Impact of Transportation on the Economic and Social Development of Central America. The seminar had students from business, sociology, political science and law. It met for the spring semester at the University and then moved to Costa Rica where extensive field work based on the Madison seminar was done.

Bill's two experiences, in Sierra Leone and Cost Rica whetted his appetite for more. From 1971 until 1973 he served as Advisor to the Ministry of Transportation and Communications of the government of Ethiopia.

The Ethiopia experience brought out the best in Bill. He had a great sense of accomplishment from his Ethiopian experience. Most importantly it satisfied his ingrained sense of public and social concern. He worked on something that really mattered to him. Shortly before he retired he spent six weeks in Kenya working on the role of transportation infrastructure for the Market Development Program of the United States Agency for International Development.

Bill found time in his career not only to help those in far away places but his fellow citizens at the national, state and local levels. Bill enjoyed the work he did with the City of Madison over a three year period starting in 1967.. In October of that year he assisted Law Professor Nathan Feinsinger in mediating the bus strike in Madison.

When the strike ended Bill was named Chair of the Ad Hoc Bus Study Committee set up by, and reporting to, the Madison City Council. He helped negotiate the purchase of the bus company and later was the President of the City of Madison Bus Utility Commission from July of 1968 to July of 1969.

In 1970 he was given the **Page One** award by the Madison Newspaper Guild for his service during the bus strike and subsequent activity leading to the city purchase of the bus company. The work with the Madison bus issue also inspired the monograph, Elements of Publicness in Urban Transit in which Bill and his co-author Professor Don Harmatuck used Census data and Madison referenda voting patterns to infer the extent to which the potential benefits from urban transit would be unrealized if run as a private enterprise.

With the State of Wisconsin he investigated the influence of the highway system on its economy as well as being a consultant to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue regarding the tax base for interstate trucking companies.

Surely Bill's intellectual mentors, Professors Thatcher and Glaeser, and even their mentor Professor Commons, would be proud of his faithful application of the Wisconsin Idea of bringing the expertise of University faculty to bear on problems in the community, the state and beyond.

Bill's academic contributions in transport economics were significant and wide ranging. He was a critic of wasteful and unnecessary regulations. Rather than calling for wholesale deregulation, when it was common to do so, Bill looked for changes in regulations and the way regulation was practiced that would eliminate inefficiencies in the least disruptive way.

Bill's academic peers recognized his contributions and in 1975 he was named the chair of the Transportation and Public Utilities Group (TPUG) of the American Economic Association.

Four times during the 1960s Bill submitted scholarly papers to the annual essay contest sponsored by the Association of Interstate Commerce Practitioners. Each paper was devoted to transportation policy. Each paper won second prize in the contest. Bill shrugged off his success by using an analogy from baseball: "I batted a thousand, but my slugging average was only 500."

Bill was a valued colleague and friend for 43 years.

Obituary supplied by Howard Thompson