

Duncan MacIntyre

June 2, 1915 – July 24, 2007

Duncan MacIntyre was among the early faculty of the School of Industrial and Labor Relations. His Cornell appointment in 1950 was a natural fit for a teacher and scholar whose interest in social welfare was deep. Duncan's interest in that field could be seen as occupational inheritance. His father served for many years as Commissioner of Public Welfare in Madison County, New York. Duncan often liked to bemuse inquirers by replying that he was raised in the county poor house! His interest in public policy subsequently was reinforced both by academic study and field practice as a welfare worker. Following graduation from Colgate, he attended the University of Berlin in 1935-36. From 1936-39, he attended the University of Chicago in pursuit of his M.A. degree in Social Work Administration. Following service as a cryptographer in World War II, Duncan was employed in various New York communities as social worker, investigator, and veteran's counselor. In 1947, he enrolled as a Ph.D. student at Cornell where he received his degree in Public Administration.

Duncan's mark as an undergraduate teacher was indelible. His stern demeanor at the first meeting of his classes let students know that this was a no-nonsense course. There was substance as well as theater in his performance, of course. Before that meeting, Duncan learned as much as he could about the personal and social backgrounds of each class member. It was information he used for rapport, and often to stimulate their interest by relating subject matter to student's personal experience.

Duncan's interest in students often continued well after their graduation from Cornell and establishment in their careers. A number of letters received both before and after his retirement reflect that interest. Some were from individuals uncertain about their ability to meet the academic standards but, under Duncan's guidance and encouragement, succeeded to go on to rewarding jobs. Appreciation for that support is reflected in such phrases as treating students with "respect and dignity," teaching "analytical thinking," insisting on clarity of expression in their written work. A letter following his death, from a senior vice president for human resources of a major corporation, epitomizes the views of many such students.

"He was a fair, kind man who was a magnificent teacher, a task master who demanded no less than the best you had to give, a man of principle and integrity, whose moral compass never deviated from the

correct course and a man who became my friend for almost 40 years.”

In 1998, he was honored by the establishment of the MacIntyre Honors Awards Fund to encourage and strengthen teaching in the ILR School.

Duncan’s research encompassed almost the entire field of social welfare, and always with a strong emphasis on public policy. His work on health insurance resulted in a number of well-regarded publications, including a monograph, Voluntary Health Insurance and Rate-Making, which received the ARIA Eleazar Wright prize. He served several times as consultant to various New York State and Federal legislative committees on welfare issues. He was also instrumental in the creation of the School’s resident professorial extension faculty (the Mouse in the Experiment, as he called it), reporting on his experience with the requirement in the ILR School’s early years that all faculty members devote a third of their time to its extension program.

Duncan was a brilliant man devoted not only to his field of study but to his interests in gardening, genealogy, the outdoors and, of course, his family. He regarded his success as a teacher as the most important contribution of his career.

His wife of 66 years, Margaret Ryan, and daughters Elizabeth and Rachel survive him.

Robert L. Aronson, Chairperson; James A. Gross, David B. Lipsky