Mastermind of legal reform

Pierce begins 19th year as head of NCCUSL

Professor William J. Pierce is something of an enigma—an inscrutable veteran of legal reform who has spent over 20 weekends a year for the past three decades hammering out the words, the phrases, the very punctuation of state laws.

To those who have worked with him, however, Bill Pierce is the mastermind of the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL). "No one can appreciate the full scope of his abilities without having seen him participate in a committee drafting session," notes Law School Professor Lawrence Waggoner, who has served as a reporter for a uniform act. "Bill has an uncanny ability to solve problems that have stumped the so-called experts, no matter what the subject matter."

"He's a marvelous generalist with a wide-ranging intellect," says Richard V. Wellman, the Robert Cotton Alston Professor of Law at the University of Georgia, who formerly taught at Michigan. Wellman explains, 'I've never met anyone who can come at whatever is under discussion from so many different perspectives and with so many different ideas."

The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws is an organization designed to promote uniformity in state laws. The conference is composed of commissioners appointed by the governors (and drawn from the ranks of lawyers, judges, legislators, and law professors) of each state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The commissioners meet annually to consider drafts of proposed uniform legislation. Proposals are referred to a Committee on Scope and Program which makes an investigation, sometimes hears interested parties, and reports to the conference whether the subject is one on which it is desirable and feasible to draft a uniform law. If the conference decides to accept a subject, a special committee of state commissioners with expertise in the area under consideration is appointed to prepare a draft of an act.

Pierce's job as executive director includes overseeing the research and drafting processes, raising hypothetical problems, helping to select the reporters employed by the conference, and assuring that the proposed legislation is practical. "Bill attends every meeting of the drafting committees of the NCCUSL," notes Little Rock

Sandalow appointed to Sunderland chair

Former Law School Dean Terrance Sandalow has been named the Edson R. Sunderland Professor of Law. The position was formerly held by Francis A. Allen, who retired as of June 30, 1987.

Sandalow, who was dean of the Law School from 1978 to 1987, is one of the leading figures in American legal education. He received his A.B. and J.D. degrees from the University of Chicago. He began his teaching career at the University of Minnesota, and joined the faculty of the University of Michigan in 1966.

Professor Sandalow's career as a scholar has covered the fields of municipal government and constitutional law. Besides numerous articles, he has co-authored a groundbreaking casebook, Government in Urban Areas, and co-edited Courts and Free Markets. In addition to his work at the Law School, he has frequently testified before Congress on pending legislation.

In recommending the appointment, Dean Lee C. Bollinger noted, "[Sandalow's] work is marked by his great breadth of learning and interest in virtually all of the areas of social science and the humanities that continually grow in importance in legal scholarship. As colleague and dean, Professor Sandalow has been a vitally important source in shaping the directions that will be followed by the Law School in years to come."