

ARNO BECHT—FROM A FORMER COLLEAGUE

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It is an honor to have been invited by the *Law Quarterly* to contribute these words in tribute to Arno Becht. The occasion is the retirement of Arno from active teaching in 1978; but my vivid memories go back to 1940 when he came to the faculty of the Washington University School of Law as a budding, but already experienced and wise, scholar and teacher. Many were the late afternoons and evenings when I, as a colleague, observed him bending over his desk or absorbed in a book, pursuing with singleness of purpose the learning and the conscientious preparation for class which were to mark his entire career.

Vivid in my memory also are the early evidences that here was no mere closeted academic, but a man who loved his fellow human beings, adhered steadfastly to the basic values of our legal system and of the republic that serves society, and was ready to make personal sacrifices, if need be, for the common good. He stood firmly for civil liberties and for reasoned foreign policies in a time when repression and waves of emotion were abroad in the land. When the time came to serve the nation in war against tyranny and conquest, he put aside his books to do so. Through it all and in the subsequent years, his wife LaVerne, whom also it has been a delight to know, has been Arno's constant support and collaborator, even while she pursued lively interests of her own. Together they have built stately mansions of achievement in law and legal education, and of appreciation of the best in other areas of life.

Published products of Arno's scholarship display the rigor and meticulousness of thought and expression that also marked his teaching and served as a screen through which only the best could pass into public view. His early work on the relation of corporate changes to the protection of established stockholder interests¹ combines a thorough

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1. Becht, *The Power to Remove Accrued Dividends by Charter Amendment*, 40 COLUM. L. REV. 633 (1940); Becht, *Corporate Charter Amendments: Issues of Prior Stock and the Alteration of Dividend Rates*, 50 COLUM. L. REV. 900 (1950); Becht, *Changes in the Interests of Classes of Stockholders by Corporate Charter Amendments Reducing Capital, and Altering Redemption, Liquidation*

exposition of legal authority with recognition of policy considerations in a realistic and illuminating way. His carefully crafted product also includes the noteworthy book on factual causation, written in collaboration with Frank W. Miller,² which contains an effective printed dialogue with earlier authorities on a basic problem in legal thought.³ Even partial physical disability in later years did not end Arno's creative work, which extended to the editing of a pioneering coursebook on environmental law⁴ in a time that, although recent, was early in the entry of that subject into the mainstream of American legal education.

The current movement back to basics in education and public policy toward education demands no change of position on Arno's part; for he has been there all the time, setting an example of intellectual integrity which generations of students have appreciated to their benefit. In his love for the developing common law, his fondness for American history, and his attachment to effective communication he has subscribed continuously to fundamental values and to proven means of cultivating them. Such, after all, is the rightful mission of those who spend their lifetimes in the service of law and the advancement of learning through university teaching. Arno, and LaVerne with him, have played this role well. They will not relinquish it in retirement, as they discover new ways to fulfill it.

and Sinking Fund Provisions, 36 CORNELL L. Q. 1 (1950); Becht, *Alterations of Accrued Dividends (I)*, 49 MICH. L. REV. 363 (1951); Becht, *Alterations of Accrued Dividends (II)*, 49 MICH. L. REV. 565 (1951).

2. A. BECHT & F. MILLER, *THE TEST OF FACTUAL CAUSATION IN NEGLIGENCE AND STRICT LIABILITY CASES* (1961).

3. See generally RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF TORTS §§431-42 (1965).

4. A. Becht, *Cases and Materials on Environmental Controls* (1970) (unpublished course materials).