

ROBERT G. DIXON, JR.: IN MEMORIAM

PHILIP B. KURLAND*

Eddy has just gone, leaving me the usual feelings: why aren't I holding a small round substance, say of the size of a pea, in my hand; something I can put in a box & look at? There is so little left. Yet these people one sees are fabric only made once in the world; these contacts we have are unique; & if E. were, say killed tonight, nothing definite would happen to me; yet his substance is never again to be repeated.

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I did not know Bob Dixon well. We had broken bread together but once, and then in a large company. He had written an article for me¹ and I had participated in an extraordinary symposium on *The Quest for Equality*, which has been published in the pages of this journal.² And yet he remains a vivid figure for me. Small in physical stature—like many giants of the law, such as Felix Frankfurter and Daniel Webster—he, too, was a bundle of energy. And like the dynamo he was, he energized the minds and pens of all with whom he was associated, students, scholars, government associates. And he has left with them more than a regret that his like will not pass this way again, more than the “small round substance” that would epitomize his individuality.

Just as a parent lives on through his children—never mind whether they adopt or reject or modify and adapt the parent's precepts and examples—so, too, a teacher, especially a teacher of Dixon's intellect and commitments, lives on through his students and colleagues, not because they are epigones but because their minds have been touched by his precepts and examples. A professor's students, not merely his pupils, are his hostages to posterity.

Dixon's mind touched those of many, both great and small. The ideas and contentions to which his vibrant personality gave life in his classrooms and his writings remain with us. It is an inheritance which

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1. Dixon, *The Warren Court Crusade for the Holy Grail of “One Man-One Vote,”* 1969 SUP. CT. REV. 219.

2. Kurland, “*Brown v. Board of Education Was the Beginning,*” *The School Desegregation Cases in the United States Supreme Court: 1945-1979*, 1979 WASH. U.L.Q. 309.

puts us in debt to him, a debt that cannot be paid except by emulation of his standards for critical evaluation of the worlds of law and public policy. For he brought to his work standards from the disciplines of political science and law, in both of which he had rigorous training. It is not that he revealed Truth, whatever that may be, but that he showed us how to seek it: by reasoned discourse.

His uniqueness as a husband and father and friend is, as Virginia Woolf suggested, a quality lost forever, except as cherished memories which will take on significant meanings of their own for those who knew him well. These are matters for others than myself to discourse on. Certainly they are not to be discounted because they cannot be reduced to substance even the size of a pea. They live on in those for whom and with whom he lived.

There are, however, tangible evidences of his life, far larger than a pea, in his own writings and the writings of others which he affected, which will continue to live as important elements in the thinking of those who survive him and even of those not yet born who will have access to his ideas. We mourn his departure not because we have lost what he has already given us, but because his premature death pretermitted the possibility of continuing to add to our wisdom in the future as he had done so well in the past.

Ave atque vale.



ROBERT GALLOWAY DIXON, JR.

