

Jesse Thomas Carpenter

December 11, 1899 — September 15, 1986

Jesse came to the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell in the fall of 1947. Thus he joined that faculty in the years of its infancy, and he stayed until his retirement in 1966. As a bachelor when he came to Ithaca, he lived on the campus at 1 East Avenue, in the house where a number of venerable faculty members lived, until he married Dr. Martha E. (Patty) Stahr, assistant professor of astronomy, in August 1951. They had two children, Martha Alice and Sarah Margaret.

Jesse was born in Durham County, North Carolina, and attended Duke University, where he majored in history and economics, earning his A.B. degree in 1920. He spent two years as a high school principal and the following two years as an instructor of economics at Duke University. He earned an A.M. in government at the University of Iowa in 1925 and followed that with a Ph.D. in political science at Harvard University in 1930. It is to be noted, however, that from 1927 to 1942 he was an associate professor of political science at New York University, where at various times he taught public administration, constitutional law, municipal administration, and international law. While at NYU, he published *The South as a Conscious Minority* (NYU Press, 1930), which won the Mrs. Simon Baruch Prize in 1931.

Jesse's wartime service was first as a senior personnel research analyst in the Industrial Personnel Division of the U.S. Army. From 1943 to 1946 he served in military government, working with the U.S. Navy. Following his wartime service he was employed as a labor economist with the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the Department of Labor in Washington, D.C., where he was in charge of the management section in the Union and Management Division of the bureau. While there, he produced a manuscript, "Employer Associations and Collective Bargaining," which was released by the Division of Industrial Relations in 1947.

It was that study that led directly to his appointment at Cornell to the faculty of the School of Industrial and Labor Relations and also to his first activity there. It resulted in publication by Cornell University Press, in 1950, of *Employer Associations and Collective Bargaining in New York City*. It was a very interesting and revealing book dealing with the multiplicity and variety of arrangements for collective bargaining in the City, particularly among small businesses and their respective unions. It revealed, something of a surprise to many, that negotiations were primarily done on an association basis as a way of equalizing power; that is, employers organized, too, in order to meet with their unions. Jesse described the development, composition, powers, internal organization, methods

of operation, and responsibilities of these employer associations. He showed the patterns of employer alignments for bargaining purposes and compared those patterns with structures prevailing among union organizations. He disclosed that multiple-employer bargaining lessened competition for workers by creating marketwide standards of employment and produced uniform interpretations of the master agreements. He analyzed grievance machinery and showed how multiple-employer contracts were enforced to produce peaceful settlement of local disputes, and he pointed up the opportunities for self-government that such arrangements supplied.

Jesse was also a teacher who, throughout his stint at the school, taught a very well organized course for non-ILR students, the predominant group being engineering students. The course was carefully developed and thorough in content and method in presenting industrial and labor relations. The directors of the various schools of engineering always spoke highly of that course.

Jesse and Patty spent a sabbatical year, 1954-55, in Australia on a Fulbright grant. His primary purpose was to study the Australian system of compulsory arbitration, hailed by some as an alternative to collective bargaining as we know it in the United States. His letters attest to his powers of insightful observation and are full of humor about life “down under” as he saw it.

Jesse was a person with diverse interests. He was a very competent contract bridge player and a dedicated gardener. He was a person whose basic goodness and integrity stood forth always. He was a man who stood by his principles.

During the time Jesse was completing work on his book on employer associations in New York City, Dr. Paul Abelson had been invited by the school to give a series of lectures, “The Evolution of Collective Bargaining and Agreement Administration in the Needle Trades.” This visit led directly to the acquisition of Abelson’s voluminous files, accumulated over the forty years he had served as adviser, negotiator, mediator, arbitrator, impartial chairman, or umpire in more than a score of different industries in the needle trades, and in several other industries as well. Without a doubt the Abelson papers are one of the most significant collections on the origins and development of collective bargaining in New York City, and Jesse took on the task of organizing and codifying the material, cooperating with Dr. Abelson personally during the latter’s remaining few years. Jesse at first had it in mind to write the biography of Dr. Abelson, who liked Jesse very much and was impressed with his sense of humor, industry, thoroughness, objectivity, and meticulousness. But as the work of organizing, codifying, and analyzing the papers went on, the project grew in size and complexity. Besides the gigantic archival task that Jesse undertook, the work he did led, even beyond his retirement, to the very meritorious and definitive book, *Competition and Collective Bargaining in the Needle Trades, 1910-1967* (published in Cornell Studies in Industrial and Labor Relations, 1972).

There are precious few books on collective bargaining that are better researched or more meticulously, fairly, and objectively written than this one. It is a great monument to Jesse's dedication to his work and the thoroughness with which he did it.

Donald E. Cullen, Maurice F. Neufeld, Vernon H. Jensen