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**UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON  
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## **C. WILLIAM O'NEILL IN MEMORIAM**

In the forty years during which he was a prominent Ohioan, C. William O'Neill set many precedents in the field of public service.

He served in the top office of every branch of Ohio government. In 1948, he was elected Speaker of the House during his sixth consecutive term in the Ohio House of Representatives and at 31 was the youngest man ever to hold that position. He served three terms as Attorney General of Ohio beginning in 1951. In 1956, he was elected Governor of Ohio, receiving a greater majority of votes than any previous candidate for that office. He became a justice of the Ohio Supreme Court in 1960 and was elected Chief Justice in 1970, serving in that capacity until his death.

As Chief Justice, "Bill" O'Neill believed very strongly in the maxim that justice delayed is justice denied. Under his leadership, the administration of justice in Ohio was greatly improved: previous backlogs of cases were heard and completed and court dockets were kept current. As a leader in innovation, he was responsible not only for improved efficiency but also for making the courts more responsive to the public interest. It was largely in recognition of his leadership in court administration that the Association of Trial Lawyers of America honored him in 1974 as the outstanding justice of the state appellate courts by presenting to him its Citation of Extraordinary Merit.

His leadership in the public sector was widely recognized outside of Ohio as well. In 1955 he served as President of the National Association of Attorneys General, and, just before his death in August, he completed a term as President of the National Association of Chief Justices. He was serving as vice president of the National Center for State Courts at the time of his death. Among the numerous honors he received were the Ohio Bar Medal, the highest award of the Ohio State Bar Association, in 1961; the National Criminal Justice Award for Outstanding Judicial Administration of the American Society for Public Administration in 1975; the American Judicature Society's Herbert Harley Award for efforts to improve the administration of justice in Ohio, in 1975; and fourteen honorary degrees from colleges and universities in several states.

Although Chief Justice O'Neill is best known for his position of leadership in the public sector, he was equally successful in other endeavors. During his service in the General Assembly, he not only graduated from Ohio State Law School, Order of the Coif, but also served in Europe as a sergeant in General Patton's Third Army. In 1945, he married Betty Hewson of Marietta, and they had two children, Charles William O'Neill and Peggy O'Neill Pokorsky.

The late Chief Justice C. William O'Neill was a truly great man and public servant. Through his untimely death, the citizens of Ohio, the Ohio judiciary and bar, and the University of Dayton Law School have lost one of their most dedicated and exceptional friends. It is to the memory of C. William O'Neill and his contributions to the law and the political process of Ohio, that we dedicate this issue of the University of Dayton Law Review.

*Jerome A. Madden\**

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\*Law clerk to the late Chief Justice C. William O'Neill. B.A., College of Steubenville, 1972; J.D., University of Dayton, 1978.

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In Memoriam: Chief Justice C. William O'Neill

## ARTICLES

- THE DEFENSE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN CIVIL RIGHTS LITIGATION .....*Patricia W. Morrison* 1
- THE MEANINGLESSNESS OF THE PLAIN MEANING RULE .....  
.....*Michael R. Merz* 31
- INVESTIGATIVE DEMANDS UNDER OHIO'S ANTITRUST LAW: A CLOSE LOOK AT THE STATUTE .....*Stanley A. Freedman* 43
- REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE DELAY: TIMELINESS STANDARDS, JUDICIAL REVIEW OF AGENCY PROCEDURES, PROCEDURAL REFORM, AND LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT .....*Gregory L. Ogden* 71

## COMMENTS

- GIFT TAX CONSEQUENCES OF INTEREST-FREE LOANS BETWEEN FAMILY MEMBERS ..... 139
- THE FALSE CLAIMS ACT: POTENTIAL APPLICATION TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ..... 155
- REGULATION OF EMPLOYEE WELFARE BENEFIT PLANS: THE SCOPE OF ERISA'S PREEMPTION AND THE STATE POWER TO REGULATE INSURANCE ..... 177

## NOTES

- IRREBUTTABLE PRESUMPTION DOCTRINE APPLIED TO STATE AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS EXCLUDING FEMALES FROM CONTACT SPORTS—*Yellow Springs Exempted Village School District Board of Education v. Ohio High School Athletic Association*, 443 F. Supp. 753 (S.D. Ohio 1978) ..... 197
- COURT REORGANIZATION: LEGISLATIVE INCURSION ON JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE IN OHIO—*Geisinger v. Cook*, 52 Ohio St. 2d 51, 396 N.E.2d 477 (1977), *cert. denied*, 98 S. Ct. 1451 (1978) ..... 211
- COMMUNICATIONS LAW: A REQUIREMENT FOR AFFIRMATIVE DETERMINATION OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST IN RESTRICTING SERVICES BY FACILITIES CERTIFICATION—*MCI Telecommunications Corp. v. FCC*, 561 F.2d 365 (D.C. Cir. 1977), *cert. denied*, 98 S. Ct. 781 (1978) ..... 223
- LABOR PREEMPTION: STRIKING WORKERS' RIGHT TO COLLECT UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS—*New York Telephone Co. v. New York State Department of Labor*, 556 F.2d 388 (1977) ..... 239

LABOR LAW: A UNION'S DUTY TO FURNISH INFORMATION TO AN  
EMPLOYER FOR PURPOSES OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING—*Oakland  
Press Co.*, 233 N.L.R.B. No. 144 (1977) ..... 257

**BOOK REVIEW**

WATER NEEDS FOR THE FUTURE .....*Ralph B. Lake* 267



C. WILLIAM O'NEILL  
1916-1978