

DEDICATION

When Dr. H. Rupert Theobald, chief of the Legislative Reference Bureau, retired in May 1994, his tenure as director of a legislative service agency was the longest in the country. His career at the LRB was remarkable not only for its length, which was without precedent and not likely to be surpassed, but even more significant for the selfless dedication and extraordinary accomplishments recorded during 37 years of service to the Wisconsin Legislature and the people of Wisconsin. In recognition of these contributions, the 1993 Legislature directed that the 1995-1996 *Wisconsin Blue Book* be dedicated to Dr. H. Rupert Theobald. We, as the staff of the LRB and the beneficiaries of his leadership, are honored to fulfill this directive.



**DR. H. RUPERT THEOBALD, CHIEF, LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU
1964-1994**

As a 20-year-old, Rupert Theobald came to Wisconsin in 1950 from his native Germany to study at the University of Wisconsin. The winner of a journalism scholarship, he had hoped to complete his degree and apply his skills as an interpreter and free lance reporter in pursuit of a career as a journalist. Fortunately for the Wisconsin Legislature, things did not work as planned. Marriage, a lack of jobs in his field, and the need to support a growing family resulted in a re-ordering of priorities and necessitated a variety of part time and temporary work. Dr. Theobald eventually found a civil service position as a research associate with the Legislative Reference Library in 1957. He proceeded to spend the next 37 years at the LRB, where he performed every

job in the bureau from cataloging library materials, researching and writing reports, to drafting bills. In so doing, he placed an indelible imprint on the agency and redefined its role of service to the legislature and the public.

Dr. Theobald was named coordinator of reference and research in 1960 and, after a national search and civil service competition, was appointed bureau chief in 1964. He somehow found the time to earn both a master's degree and Ph.D. in political science while working long hours supporting the work of the legislature. As the bureau's fifth chief, he led the agency through the greatest changes in the agency's 94 years of existence. These involved not only technological advances and the use of computers, but a redefinition of the LRB's mission in order to provide additional support to the legislature as its workload increased and the issues confronting it became more complex.

Dr. Theobald provided an invaluable resource to the legislature as its institutional memory and source of nonpartisan, reliable information on a wide range of topics. The expertise he amassed in redistricting, state government reorganization, constitutional law, parliamentary procedure, legislative rules, and computer applications – all highly technical subjects which required much dedication and discipline to master – reflected both his intellect and his willingness to do whatever it took to get the job done.

As editor of the *Wisconsin Blue Book* for much of his career, he applied the same attention to detail that defined all of his efforts. He contributed articles on Wisconsin state government (1966), redistricting (1970), and parliamentary procedure (1985-1986) to inform Wisconsin citizens about the lesser known, but nonetheless important, aspects of how government functions.

He was generous with his time and knowledge, and over his career he helped many both inside and outside the legislature. He assisted the Wisconsin Supreme Court with redistricting, the executive branch with state government reorganization, served with great distinction on numerous national committees and assisted other states as a consultant.

Constant throughout his government service were the unwavering dedication, professionalism, and nonpartisan objectivity that he brought to every task. Although he was recognized for his leadership and contributions to good government many times during his career, including being honored by the Council of State Governments in 1986 as the first recipient of the Charles McCarthy Award for Leadership in Information Services, it was not until he announced his intent to retire that the full extent of the admiration and respect that he had earned from those both in and outside of the Legislature became apparent. Numerous awards and tributes were bestowed by a wide variety of groups. In an unprecedented action, the Wisconsin Supreme Court met to pay tribute to Dr. Theobald's contributions to the operation of the court and state government in general. Legislative leaders hosted a reception attended by former and current legislators and public officials in tribute to his service to Wisconsin.

In recognition of his lifetime of service, the Legislature passed 1993 Enrolled Joint Resolution 12, which dedicated the 1995-1996 *Wisconsin Blue Book* to Dr. H. Rupert Theobald and directed that the Legislative Reference Bureau library be named the Dr. H. Rupert Theobald Legislative Library. The Legislature also ordered that a bas relief portrait of Dr. Theobald be cast and installed in the Assembly Chambers. Thus, the LRB's fifth chief will join Charles McCarthy, the bureau's founder and originator of the concept of professional legislative support staff, as a recipient of this rare and high honor. Charles McCarthy initiated and advanced a vision of professional service to the legislature; Rupert Theobald built that vision, devoting his life to making it work. The legislature has lost the long memory and powerful intellect of someone who cares deeply about the institution. For those who were fortunate enough to work with him, Dr. Theobald's standards of excellence, which he set by diligent example, will continue to guide us in the future.

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU STAFF
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