

1973

## Professor Milton Handler

Michael I. Sovern

*Columbia Law School*, [msovern@law.columbia.edu](mailto:msovern@law.columbia.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty\\_scholarship](https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship)



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Michael I. Sovern, *Professor Milton Handler*, 73 COLUM. L. REV. 413 (1973).

Available at: [https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty\\_scholarship/2184](https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/2184)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Publications at Scholarship Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of Scholarship Archive. For more information, please contact [scholarshiparchive@law.columbia.edu](mailto:scholarshiparchive@law.columbia.edu).

## PROFESSOR MILTON HANDLER

Milton Handler taught his first class at Columbia four years before I was born. Because of my parents' tardiness, he was beginning his twenty-sixth year on the Faculty by the time I was old enough to register for his course in Trade Regulation in the fall of 1953. I have been an admirer of Milton Handler ever since.

It has been my good fortune to know him in many ways. As a teacher, he was truly extraordinary—a penetrating analyst, a builder of grand syntheses, a master of the Socratic method. Though his courses were usually electives, most of our living alumni chose to study with him. I reveal my own prejudice when I say that perhaps it is here that Milton has made his most enduring contribution. There is a sense in which a great teacher's gift lasts to infinity. What he transmits is in turn transmitted by the next generation and so on for all time.

Milton Handler has also been my boss. When I was a very junior, and inexperienced, member of the Columbia Law faculty, he invited me to spend some time working at his firm. Though I was paid the same salary as my contemporaries, in every possible way Milton helped me use the time to learn and to grow as a professional. He selflessly sought to make the experience a period of advanced training for me. And again I learned from him.

During this time and for many years thereafter, we were, of course, also colleagues on the Columbia Law faculty. I could see the pride Milton felt in belonging to this body of scholars who esteem excellence and whose respect he earned by meeting, and sometimes even exceeding, their very high standards. They gratefully acknowledged his contributions in a reverent resolution that appears elsewhere in this issue. The paragraph summarizing his scholarly career bears repeating:

First, Professor Handler consistently has produced teaching materials in the field of trade regulation of extraordinarily high quality, innovating, and introducing new insights, from publication of the first edition of his work in 1937 to the most recent edition and its supplements. Second, he has taken whole areas of the law, such as trademarks and corporate mergers, and developed the essential relationships in one or a series of groundbreaking law review articles. Third, he has maintained continuing surveillance over new developments in antitrust through a series of lectures (which will conclude with the 25th next fall), evaluating important new cases and significant trends in the light of his broad knowledge of the law. Finally, he has undertaken several overviews of the entire field of antitrust, in the famous TNEC Monograph No. 38, *A Study of the Construction and Enforcement of the Federal Antitrust Laws* (1941), and in his 1957 book, *Antitrust in Perspective*. It is virtually impossible—in the fields of antitrust, unfair competition and trademarks—to discuss any problem in depth without according recognition to one or another of Professor Handler's scholarly contributions.

Though many of Milton's admirers do not know it, he was also a pioneer in the field of Labor Law. As a student of the subject, I know the creative work he did as General Counsel of the National Labor Board, an NIRA creature that broke much of the ground later built on by the National Labor Relations Board. He played a large role too in the formulation of the Wagner Act—still the centerpiece of federal labor regulation. And he wrote one of the earliest casebooks in this field too.

More recently, as Dean of the Faculty of Law, I have watched proudly as this distinguished teacher-scholar-lawyer, so much a part of our School, has received honor after honor, all deserved. His beloved Hebrew University awarded him an honorary degree. Columbia conferred her Bicentennial Silver Medallion upon him. A lovely bust of him, donated by his grateful partners in the distinguished law firm he helped to build, adorns the Law School. He has been praised by scholars and statesmen, lawyers and judges, and by countless others who defy categorization. Now, almost half a century after his own days as a law review editor, the present Board of Editors is honoring him with this issue. And even as we write, dozens of friends and admirers are raising funds to endow a Milton Handler professorship in recognition of his extraordinary accomplishments.

There is yet another way in which I have known Milton Handler. He is my friend. I have seen the beauty of his family feeling and the warmth of his devotion to his lovely wife Miriam. I have seen him give generously again and again to causes he believes worthy. And I have seen him give fully of himself to the many lucky enough to share the privilege of his friendship.

In his remarks on receiving the LL.D. from Hebrew University, Milton quoted this passage from a letter written by Oliver Wendell Holmes to Benjamin Cardozo:

I always have thought that not place or power or popularity makes the success that one desires, but the trembling hope that one has come near to an ideal.

For myself and for the Faculty of Law he graced for 45 years, I congratulate Milton Handler on his success.

MICHAEL I. SOVERN

*Dean of the Faculty of Law  
Columbia University*