



IN MEMORIAM

C. West Churchman
Professor of Business Administration, Emeritus
Berkeley
1913–2004

C. West Churchman, a philosopher and an always-active scholar, had a leading role in developing the worldwide field of operations research/ management science (OR/ MS). Churchman earned degrees, including the Ph.D., at the University of Pennsylvania, and was appointed assistant professor of philosophy there. During World War II he was responsible for methods of testing the quality of small arms ammunition, working at Frankford Arsenal in Philadelphia. This work in quality control formed a bridge to his subsequent involvement in operations research.

Churchman held appointments at Wayne State University and then at Case Institute of Technology. He joined the University of California, Berkeley faculty in 1957, developed courses in management science, and was instrumental in establishing the Center for Research in Management Science at the Haas School of Business. Churchman died on March 21, 2004 at the age of 90, leaving as his written record seven books and an extraordinary range of articles and working papers. He was a leader: a founding member of The Institute of Management Sciences and its president in 1962. In addition, he was founding editor of the journal *Management Science* and was its shepherd through its first 10 years of publication.

Establishing a pioneering program in operations research at Case Institute of Technology, he wrote, with Russell Ackoff and Leonard Aronoff, the well-known textbook *Introduction to Operations Research* (1957), the first to cover this field. This book was the backbone of most university curricula in OR/ MS in the early years.

Churchman wrote a series of books exploring the connections in science among planning, systematic thinking, action, and ethics. These were: *Prediction and Optimal Decision* (1961), *Challenge to Reason* (1968), *The Systems Approach* (1968), *The Design of Inquiring Systems* (1971), *The Systems Approach and Its Enemies* (1979), and *Thought and Wisdom* (1982).

These contributions established the philosophical foundations of his field. Churchman advocated a “systems approach” or a “systems theory”, embracing not only the task of developing a model of a management problem but also its underlying premises, demonstrating the proposed actions its conclusions made possible, and gauging the true impact on humankind of decisions forthcoming from the model. This wider view was characteristic of Churchman’s own values.

At System Development Corporation, Churchman served as research director in 1962-63, and he convinced NASA’s director, James Webb, that NASA should work on society’s problems. Churchman became associate director of UC Berkeley’s Space Sciences Laboratory from the time of its founding.

Typical of his imaginative approach to organizing, Churchman and two colleagues arranged a conference on OR/ MS and decided that it should not be at the usual big city hotel. Instead, they persuaded people and enterprises in the village of Bolinas, California, where Churchman had a summer house, to serve as hosts for

the conference of about 80 people. The work sessions took place in the Bolinas Firehouse – perhaps a metaphor for the sparks that he hoped would fly!

Churchman's early education in Quaker schools and his life of study in the field of ethics led him to a position of deep moral concern. Throughout his life, Churchman had an abiding commitment to the view that human and management systems are incomplete if they fail to include the implementation of proposed decisions, and ethically deficient if they do not contribute to the betterment of society.

In later years, Churchman taught in the program in Peace and Conflict Studies at Berkeley, an interdisciplinary program of broad sweep and conscientious concern. At age 80, he was interviewed by three friends and colleagues, Professors John van Gigh, Burton Dean, and Ernest Koenigsberg. The transcript appears in the *Journal of Business Ethics* (vol.16, 731-744, 1997), and it is testimony to his enduring desire that his field should serve "to secure improvement in the human condition by means of the scientific method."

Two of Churchman's books received organizational awards: the Academy of Management's Best Book Award and the McKinsey Book Award. His work led to election as a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and to honorary doctorates from three universities: Washington University, St. Louis; the University of Lund, Sweden, and Umea University, Sweden.

Professor Churchman is survived by his wife Gloria, who lives in San Francisco, and his son Josh Churchman of Bolinas, California.

Frederick Balderston
Edwin M. Epstein
Ernest Koenigsberg