Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison
On the Death of Professor Emeritus David B. Johnson

David B. Johnson, age 97, Professor Emeritus of Economics and Industrial Relations, died on February 16, 2016 at Oakwood Village, University Woods in Madison Wisconsin.

Born in Madison on July 24, 1920, to Helen Fay Johnson and Paul Browning Johnson, he lived with his parents in several cities, including Wauwatosa, Wisconsin where he attended elementary and junior high school. Returning to Madison in 1933 he graduated from Wisconsin High School in 1935, and later from Antioch College in Yellow Springs Ohio in 1942. He married Marjorie Kaun in December 1941. Enlisting in the Army Signal Corps, Dave served in the European Theater of Operations in World War II.

After his discharge, he joined the staff of the National Labor Relations Board in Cincinnati, Ohio, but opted to enter graduate school at the University Wisconsin in 1947. He and Marjorie lived in Badger Village for three years before he accepted a position as an industrial relations officer in Washington, D.C., with the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission. While in Washington he completed his doctoral dissertation under the direction of Professor Edwin E. Witte and received his PhD in 1955.

Dave joined the faculty in the Department of Economics, University of Wisconsin in 1957. He served as associate chairman and chairman of the department from 1962 to 1968. This was a period of growth and revitalization of the department which he helped to direct as associate chairman (1962 – 1965) and chairman (1965-1968). Johnson’s affability set a standard of collegiality in the department which he led during the turbulent period (1967 – 1968). It began with the Dow Demonstration in the fall and continued with the Black Student Strike in early 1968.

After a year of leave at the National University of Singapore, Dave returned to the Department of Economics of the University of Wisconsin and later became Dean of International Studies and programs from 1972 to 1980. He served simultaneously for two years as Director of the Industrial Relations Research Institute from 1978 to 1981 and as Director of the Center for Development from 1984 to 1988, when he retired from the university. Johnson was national Secretary-Treasurer of the Industrial Relations Research Association from 1962 to 1973. A longtime labor arbitrator, he was elected to the National Academy of Arbitrators in 1980 and continued to arbitrate until 2000.

Dave Johnson was loved and admired by family and friends for his intellect, sense of humor, compassion and generosity. An avid gardener and writer, he traveled widely with his wife Marjorie, and remained civically and politically engaged until his health failed toward the end of his life.

Survivors include one of his three children, Timothy E. Johnson of Burlington, Vt; six grandchildren, and one great grandson. His wife Marjorie died in 2012; their younger son, David Demcey, in 2007; and their daughter, Deborah Dodge Durkee, in 2014.

W. Lee Hansen, Chair
Edgar L. Feige
Jeffrey Williamson