IN MEMORIAM

RUTH ALICE ALLEN

Dr. Ruth Alice Allen, University of Texas professor emeritus of economics, passed away October 7, 1979, at the age of ninety. She was survived by a brother, Robert Murray Allen of Austin, and, for only six days, by a sister, Amy Allen Baird of Birmingham, Alabama, and their families.

Ruth Allen was born in Cameron, Texas, July 28, 1889, the daughter of Thomas Franklin Allen and Jennie Adams Allen. She attended various schools in the public school system of Texas between 1902 and her graduation from high school in 1908. With regard to her work between 1908 and 1923, she says in one place that she held jobs of "several kinds." She attended Southwest Texas State Teachers College at San Marcos in 1913 and 1914 and obtained a diploma. She entered the University of Texas in September 1918.

In 1921 she obtained a B.A. degree from the University of Texas, and in 1923 an M.S. degree. She attended the University of California (Berkeley) in 1924. In 1933 she obtained a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. The title of her M.A. thesis was "The Theory and Practice of a Minimum Wage." Her Ph.D. Dissertation was "The Labor of Women in the Production of Cotton." During her graduate work she held a research fellowship from the University of Chicago and a fellowship from the Brookings Institution, as well as a grant from the Bureau of Research in Social Sciences of the University of Texas.

Meanwhile she was an instructor in the Department of Economics and Sociology at the University of Texas from 1923 to 1926, an adjunct professor from 1926 to 1935, an associate professor from 1935 to 1940, and a professor
from 1941 until her retirement in 1959. Specialized courses that she taught during those years included: The Standard of Living, The Economic History of the United States Since 1880, Seminar in Labor Economics, Seminar in American Economic History, and Basic Labor Economics. She served as departmental Chairman in 1942-43. She was the Graduate Adviser in the Department during most of the late 1940s and 1950s. After her retirement at the University of Texas in 1959 at the age of seventy, she taught for several years at Huston-Tillotson College (1962-1968).

Over the years Ruth Allen participated in many activities outside the immediate university setting. During 1934-35, she was supervisor for the Southeastern Region for the Cost of Living Division of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. And in 1936 she worked with the Consumer's Division of the Department of Labor. In 1936-37 she served with a Texas advisory State Planning Board. She was on the Board of the Social Science Research Council and associated with other activities of that Council, especially in its Southern Region, from 1941-1945. She worked with the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington in 1942. She was a Public Member of a panel of the War Labor Board to hear controversies in District VIII (with headquarters in Dallas) during the 1942-1944 period. She was a member of the Women's Policy Committee of the War Man-Power Commission in 1943. During 1943-44 she was also a Public Member of a committee holding hearings on the wage and hours laws. She was the Editor of the Southwestern Social Science Quarterly from 1941 to 1946. She was the representative of the University of Texas on the Universities-National Bureau [of Economic Research] Committee in 1947-1948.
After her retirement she served on committees and commissions of the State of Texas - especially the Technical Review Committee for the Governor's Commission on Aging. Over the years she did considerable arbitrating of private labor/management disputes.

Ruth Allen was a remarkable person.

She obtained a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Chicago when you could probably count the number of women Ph.D.s in Economics in the world on the fingers of one hand. She made her way to the professorship in times when this was close to impossible for a woman. When she became a full professor in the Department of Economics in 1941, she must have been close to unique in economics departments in the world. At that time, among women, only Joan Robinson and two or three others had substantial reputations. She was a labor economist, a student of consumer problems, and an economic historian. And she was a major figure in the Department of Economics at the University of Texas for many years as teacher, graduate adviser, and worker. She did more than her share of the necessary work that holds a department together and that most faculty make a fine art out of avoiding doing.

Her research consisted of some impressive case studies: of a strange labor dispute -- the Great Southwest Strike of the Knights of Labor in 1886, of the role of the labor of women (black and white) in the production of cotton in the 1920s, of the impact of the Great Depression of the 1930s on wage earners, of the history of organized labor in Texas, and especially a
study of the plight of lumber workers in East Texas from the 1870s to 1950. A major episode in the history of organized labor in Texas is the story of the cowboy strike in 1883. Did you know Texas cowboys did such things?

She was a native Texan, born in Cameron in 1889. But she was certainly no born-again Texan. She had considerable contempt for what one might call "the Texas mentality." She did not have much use for the Texas Establishment, nor for university administrations, nor even for the University of Texas football team -- although, toward the end, she did have a kind word to say for local high school and St. Edward's baseball. She had a grandnephew playing for them, and she had a gentle and sentimental side - that she tried to hide. Through the years she cooperated with and was helpful to the organized labor movement in Texas. But the same can be said for her attitude toward and sympathy for unorganized labor.

Ruth Allen concerned herself about the status (poor treatment) of women and blacks. She was a rallying point on this campus for poorly treated women (faculty women especially). In class or office she was a talented devil's advocate and ikon-shaker. She did a good job of getting students to examine their prejudices and preconceptions. She had a genuine interest in individual students, keeping up with their later activities when she could. And she was a splendid influence for "keeping people honest."
She was a remarkable woman: a dedicated, intelligent, honest, cantankerous, courageous person.

Peter T. Flawn, President of The University of Texas at Austin

Bill D. Francis, Secretary The General Faculty

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a Special Committee consisting of Wendell Gordon, Forest Hill, and C. Patton Blair.