

A TRIBUTE TO LOUIS H. POLLAK

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I take great personal pride in accepting the invitation of the *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* to pay tribute to my good friend Louis Pollak. However one defines "Renaissance Man," one would be hard pressed not to include within the definition of that elusive term, Lou Pollak. He is an accomplished author, a leading educator, a superb lawyer, a determined humanitarian, and now a pillar of the federal judiciary. His accomplishments during the past thirty years bear witness to his extraordinary gifts. As a distinguished graduate of both Harvard and Yale, he served as law clerk to Supreme Court Justice Wiley Rutledge. During the next years Lou Pollak could be found working briefly in private practice, then in the State Department before becoming Assistant Counsel to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. Later, he became both a professor and Dean of the Yale and University of Pennsylvania Law Schools.

And these are only the highlights. Lou Pollak has been involved in causes not well known but in the long run truly characteristic of the man: a director and vice-president of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and Chairman of the New Haven Human Rights Commission.

Justice Benjamin Cardozo once wrote that a great judge is half historian and half prophet. That statement, written many years ago, is still true today. Its truth is at the heart of the promise that Lou Pollak holds for our Federal judiciary.

And yet, at first blush, one might wonder why this distinguished scholar would want to be a judge. After all, he has already achieved more honors and success than one could reasonably search for in a lifetime.

The answer, I believe, can readily be found by examining his accomplishments. Lou Pollak's entire career has been guided by one underlying principle—the challenge and rewards of public service. It is in the public arena that he is most comfortable. He has witnessed first-hand the importance and value of the law as a sword to rid the Nation of injustice. He recognizes that the law must grow and change in order to react to modern society.

Lou Pollak has spent thirty years searching and working toward a better and more just society. This larger vision has led him to

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challenge laws that served as barriers to racial and economic justice, to defend Ralph Abernathy and the other freedom riders, and attack Florida's anti-miscegenation law; this larger vision has prompted him to question both the constitutionality and efficacy of the death penalty and unregulated wiretapping; this larger vision has led him to deplore Soviet treatment of Russian dissidents; this larger vision has led him to deplore American involvement in Viet Nam.

Nor does Lou Pollak limit his involvement and commitment to national issues. His vision of a just America resulted in his working as a member of the New Haven Board of Education to desegregate local schools and raise the level of education.

One should not, therefore, be surprised by Lou's recent decision. It is as obvious and consistent as his accomplishments of the past thirty years.

Lou Pollak's measured voice is truly half that of a historian, half that of a visionary. And since judicial decisionmaking, in its highest form, is both discovery and creation—a process requiring both an understanding of the past and a vision of where decisions will and should lead in the future—Judge Pollak will be an exceptional jurist. His ascension to the federal bench brings honor to one of the nation's most distinguished law schools, and it is a major victory for our Nation and for the principle of equal justice under law.