

Elvin Charles Stakman, 1885-1979

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Elvin Charles Stakman, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Minnesota, was born May 17, 1885 in Algoma, Wisconsin and died January 22, 1979. He was partially incapacitated by a paralytic stroke on July 19, 1977. Stakman received the BA degree in 1906, the MA in 1910, and the PhD in 1913, all from the University of Minnesota. In 1909, he was appointed instructor in the Department of Plant Pathology that had been established by Dr. E. M. Freeman in 1908 at the

University of Minnesota, in 1913 became Head of the Section of Plant Pathology within the Department of Plant Pathology and Agricultural Botany and in 1940 was appointed Head of the Department of Plant Pathology, a post held until he retired in 1953. During much of his career he held a joint appointment in the United States Department of Agriculture, under which he organized and directed research at the Federal Cereal Rust Laboratory.

He was president of The American Phytopathological Society in 1922 and president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1949. In 1948, he was a member of the Scientific Mission to Japan under the auspices of the Supreme Command for Allied Powers, was a member of the National Commission of UNESCO 1950-56, a member of the Executive Committee of the National Science Board, 1951-54, and a member of the Advisory Committee on Biology and Medicine, United States Atomic Energy Commission, 1948-54 (Chairman, 1953-54, and Consultant 1954-59). He received honorary doctorates from the Universities of Halle-Wittenberg in 1938, Yale in 1950, Rhode Island in 1953, Minnesota in 1954, Wisconsin in 1954, and Cambridge, England, in 1954. Special honors include the Emil Christian Hansen Gold Medal and Prize, 1928; La Cruz de Boyoca, Colombia, S.A., 1966; The First Award of Distinction, from The American Phytopathological Society, 1967; First Cosmos Club Award, 1964; and the First Honorary membership in the Asociacion Latino Americana de Fitotecnia, 1961. He held honorary membership in learned societies in 13 foreign countries.

In 1941 he (with Drs. R. Bradfield of Cornell University and P. Mangelsdorf of Harvard University) spent several months in Mexico as a special consultant to the Rockefeller Foundation, investigating the feasibility of cooperation between the Mexican Government and the Rockefeller Foundation to improve crop production. This was initiated in 1943, was highly successful, and eventually evolved into the worldwide network of experiment stations now under the general direction of CIMMYT (Centro Internacional para el Mejoramiento de Maiz y Trigo—International Center for Corn and Wheat Improvement). Dr. Stakman continued as an active consultant to the Rockefeller Foundation up to the time of his final illness.

Dr. Stakman solely or jointly authored more than 300 papers in scientific and other learned journals, including several dealing with the philosophy of education, past and present, and with the role of science in society. He was co-author of two books, *Principles of Plant Pathology* (with J. G. Harrar) and *Campaigns Against Hunger* (with R. Bradfield and P. Mangelsdorf, his fellow consultants with the Rockefeller Foundation's Agricultural Program), but his contributions to science and to human welfare cannot be measured by numbers of publications alone. He was, as stated in the Cosmos Club award, a "statesman of science"; to him, one of the obligations of science was to promote human welfare, and he never lost sight of this.

Dr. Stakman was a profound student of nearly all aspects of the biological and social sciences, and he was gifted in clarity of thought and expression, both spoken and written, in several languages. Seminars or discussions in which he participated were lively, interesting, intellectually exciting, and usually highly informative on many subjects subsidiary to those formally under discussion. As a teacher, he was unexcelled. His lectures and discussions not only presented the facts and principles of plant pathology and of agriculture in general and an historical overview of science and society but also instilled in students a love of learning for its own sake. In his passing we, his former students and associates, and men of many degrees in many lands feel a sense of deep personal loss—he was a mighty champion for science, intellectual enlightenment, and the improvement of human welfare.