

SECOND HISTORY OF ECONOMIC THOUGHT SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (HETSA)
CONFERENCE - UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY: 12-14 MAY, 1983

CALL FOR PAPERS

As decided at Armidale, May 1981, the second Conference of Historians of Economic Thought will be held at the University of Sydney in May, 1983. In order to maintain the high standards of the first conference, I hereby issue an invitation to those interested in giving a paper at this conference to provide me with the following information by July 1, 1982,

- 1) Title of Paper
- 2) Short Abstract of Paper

and in addition, to undertake to provide a copy of the completed paper to the Convenor for duplication by 31 March, 1983. This will allow papers to be sent to all conference registrants prior to the conference thereby enabling 1 1/2 hours to be set aside for discussion of each paper. I envisage a possible 6-8 papers to be accommodated in the programme.

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GRAHAM SHARDALOW LEE TUCKER (1924-1980) - SOME MEMORIES OF THE 1950S

BY

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Most readers of this Newsletter will have read the appreciative obituaries of Graham Tucker in the Economic Record (September 1980) and the Australian Economic History Review (March 1981), by Noel Butlin and W A Sinclair respectively. They pay adequate tribute to his meticulous scholarship, to the immense care and thought which went into the preparation of the relatively few publications which nevertheless made his name widely known throughout the English-speaking world as an authority on the history of economic thought and on historical demography, his qualities as a teacher, and (after his move to the Australian National University) his interests in academic planning.

Graham was my friend and colleague from the beginning of his academic life as a teacher in the University of Melbourne in 1950, and later in the ANU, until his death in 1980. Since both Noel Butlin and Gus Sinclair have referred to our shared interests in the history of economic thought, it may be useful to give here a few recollections of him as I knew him in the 1950s. His formal

'concern with the subject preceded my arrival in Melbourne in January 1950, as Professor of Economic History, to find him, an outstanding graduate in the Faculty of Economics and Commerce in 1949, already appointed to a senior tutorship on my small staff. In his final Honours year he had chosen the Economic History 'option' for his degree which included a course on the history of economic thought conducted by my predecessor and friend, Herbert Burton, who had just moved from Melbourne to be Principal of what was then the Canberra University College.

Though I was already well acquainted with most of the senior members of the Faculty, I knew nothing of Graham's background except what they told me - that he had come to the university after war service, was already married, and that they expected much of him in the future. We soon became not only happy colleagues but - allowing on his side for his natural good manners and the formal respect due to me in those long-ago days of the god-professor - close friends. I soon found that he was much better at economic 'analysis' than I was; but there was a good deal he could learn to his advantage about the literature, the background, even the personalities, of the old economists before Keynes. When the award of a university travelling scholarship enabled him to leave for Cambridge towards the end of 1951 I felt confident that much more would be heard of him.

Among old letters I find several from Graham, written in the second half of 1952. Apparently I had recently provided a formal certificate about his work in Melbourne, presumably required by the degree committee, and he had been granted exemption from one year's research for the PhD, enabling him to submit a thesis in May or June 1953. I give a few extracts from this and later letters.

(June 1952) ...Allowing for my innate pessimism, I have little confidence that I shall be able to complete my work by June 1953... I have found only one 'error' in the Ricardo volumes - a comma missing from the title of Trotter's pamphlet on page 386 of volume III. Recently I have been working on the origin of Ricardo's theory of profits, from the page-proofs of Sraffa's sixth volume. Sraffa became very interested and generously gave me a letter from Malthus to Horner, hitherto unpublished, which is relevant. I have tried to write the results up into an article. This has been re-written six times and has reached a stage when Sraffa says that 'there may be something in it'. He allows that it may be good enough to submit for publication - if I put it away for two months, and then consider revision. [See Economica (NS), XXI (1954.)]

(July 1952) ...There are only a handful of us working at the library now, mainly historians of one sort or another. They are a very interesting group, working on a splendid diversity of subjects, and I enjoy the chats over morning and afternoon tea. I have a rough plan of the whole of my thesis now, and have drafted slightly more than half of it...

(August 1952) ...Sraffa has been seriously injured in a climbing accident in Norway...I shall be supervisor-less for a while - I hope that Sraffa does not decide to pass me on to someone else. It seems that I am about the only research student in Cambridge who likes his supervisor.

(October 1952) ...I have just finished reading the Ricardo letters and I feel very full of love for Ricardo, who was really the finest of men....It is rather lonely with Mr Sraffa away; I miss his enthusiasm....Even the prospect of winter does not diminish the pleasure of life at Cambridge....I have made some very good friends here, particularly amongst the historians, and the times we spend together are perhaps in themselves sufficient justification for our pleasure in being here.

It is obvious that by this time Graham was devotedly attracted to Sraffa, who (as I found next year in Cambridge) was much impressed by Graham. I was mostly in London, and then Oxford, in 1953. When I first saw Graham again the winter had passed. I remember sitting with him on a fine warm sunny April day on the Backs at Cambridge; and finding him happy and busy in his work, his friends, his association with various economic history discussions (such as those in an Oxford-Cambridge-London joint seminar group), and proud of the ready and trusted jobs in which his wife Lois had been engaged.

I saw him several times again that year, before we - the Tuckers and I - left on the same boat for Australia in December. Before we left, Sraffa had written to tell me in confidence that the examiners' reports on Graham's thesis were so unconditionally favourable that he would certainly be granted his doctorate early in the new year, and that they were making an attempt to persuade the University Press to publish it. Lionel Robbins, who had been one of Graham's examiners, writing to me in January 1954 about other matters, added a postscript: 'Please remember me to your colleague, Tucker, of whom I expect a brilliant future in the field of our common interest.'

Graham's thesis was ultimately to be published by CUP in 1960 as Progress and Profits in Britain Economic Thought, 1650-1850. The process of revision was by no means completed when, at the end of 1955, I left the Department of Economic History (in Commerce) for the Ernest Scott Chair of History (in Arts). We still saw a good deal of one another, and often exchanged 'inside' stories which could be appreciated only by students of the history of economic thought. Thus I remember his delight in discovering an examination question in an old London University College paper, which followed a long quotation from J S Mill on "Demand for commodities is not a demand for labour", with the simple instruction: 'Extract the grain of truth from this farrago of nonsense.' We once resolved to add a new rule to the game of scrabble - to admit proper names as legitimate, provided they appeared in Palgrave's Dictionary of Political Economy - after we had realized that QUESNAY would make a useful seven-letter word.

I recently looked again at Progress and Profits. Since Graham's preface is dated from Melbourne in June 1959, and he mentions my assistance in proof-correction, the finished manuscript of the text must have been sent off to Cambridge a good while before this, perhaps in 1958 or earlier. I do recall his reporting that he was carrying on a leisurely correspondence with one of CUP's editors about typographical conventions and such matters, and I have the impression that he would have been content to continue it indefinitely. I am quite clear about the proofs. Suddenly he rang me in alarm. His Cambridge correspondent had written to say that by some mistake (or so Graham represented it) the manuscript had been moved up on the list of work to be set, and the proofs themselves would arrive almost immediately. When he did, on my insistence, reluctantly hand them over to me after he had corrected them to his own satisfaction I expected to find few errors, for it was the work of CUP's compositors, and Graham would have brooded over every word. He had found the

few 'literals', and I was regretting my confident assertion that no author could be trusted to correct his own proofs perfectly, before I came across the first unmarked error after, perhaps some twenty galleys. There were half a dozen or so more before the end. He was at first incredulous; then generously grateful. If these had been someone else's proofs he would not have missed a thing.

G S L TUCKER'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

BY COURTESY OF

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