

# GORDON TULLOCK

## 1922 – 2014

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW  
*EMERITUS PROFESSOR*



A CELEBRATION OF  
“ONE OF THE MOST  
CREATIVE THINKERS OF HIS TIME”

APRIL 27, 2015

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

# PROGRAM

4:00 pm

## **WELCOME**

Daniel D. Polsby

4:05 pm

## **PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

Robert Gunderson

Mary Lou Gunderson

Gordon L. Brady

James C. Miller, III

Daniel E. Houser

Tyler Cowen

Todd J. Zywicki

Alex T. Tabarrok

Walter E. Williams

Henry N. Butler

5:00 pm

## **TRIBUTES**

Gordon L. Brady

5:15 pm

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

Daniel D. Polsby

# IN MEMORIAM

Professor Gordon Tullock (February 13, 1922 – November 4, 2014) was internationally known and respected for his foundational contributions to the fields of public choice and constitutional political economy. Gordon co-founded public choice (along with Nobel Laureate James M. Buchanan), developed the theory of rent-seeking and made seminal contributions to the economic theory of majority voting, constitutional economics, fiscal federalism, bureaucracy, redistribution, demand revelation, bioeconomics, monetary history, and in law with focus on the economic analysis of pollution, crime, punishment, and litigation.

Gordon's formal academic work spanned nearly six decades beginning with his first publications with Colin Campbell in the *Journal of Political Economy* (1954) and in the *American Economic Review* (1957). A Google search of "Gordon Tullock" yields some 237,000 hits (citations or name mentioned) while his academic record in Google scholar found 19,100 hits. Certainly there will be more as time goes by. He produced a steady stream of high quality papers published in major economic journals. For nontraditional work like some of his own, Gordon, along with James Buchanan, founded new journals including *Public Choice* and the *Journal of Bioeconomics*.

Gordon's career was characterized by provocative challenges to the conventional wisdom in areas not traditionally considered the province of economics. He was quick-witted, sharp, and incisive, never shy or reluctant to speak his mind. He had unique views formed by vast reading, observation, and keen insight.

Gordon was born in Rockford, Illinois and received his basic education in the public schools. His higher education was at The University of Chicago and its law school. Gordon was drafted by the US Army in 1940 during the semester of his only formal economics course, taught by Henry C. Simons. He served honorably and was in the first wave of foot soldiers of the US First Army which captured the Bridge at Remagen in March 1945.

After military service, he completed his JD in 1947 at The University of Chicago and practiced law for a short time before joining the US State Department. In late 1947, he was posted to Tientsin, China where he remained until it fell to the Communists in January 1949. Gordon was sent to the US for advanced study in Chinese and Asian history at Yale (1949-51) and Cornell (1951-52). From 1952-55 he served at the US consulates in China and Korea. In January 1955 he returned to the US and resigned in the fall of 1956. During the interim between diplomacy and academia, Gordon served as editor and research assistant to Karl Popper and worked for the Princeton Panel, a precursor to the Gallup Organization, in Princeton, NJ.

In 1958 Gordon was awarded the first research fellowship at the Thomas Jefferson Center for Studies in Political Economy and Social Philosophy at the University of Virginia. He renewed his acquaintance with G. Warren Nutter and James M. Buchanan, and developed a new set of colleagues and friends. Gordon had first met Nutter when both were members of the student debate team at the University of Chicago. Nutter introduced Gordon to Buchanan at the annual meetings of the American Economic Association in Philadelphia in December 1957, and Gordon gave Nutter and Buchanan copies of his manuscript on bureaucracy which both then read before offering Gordon a post-doctoral fellowship. This was the springboard for his contributions to the fields of public choice and constitutional political economy.

Gordon held appointments at the University of South Carolina, University of Virginia, Rice, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, University of Arizona, and George Mason University in both the economics department and the law school. His many honors include an honorary doctor of laws, University of Chicago (1992); recognition as distinguished fellow of the American Economic Association; fellow of the Public Choice Society; member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; and recipient of George Mason University Law School's Award for Outstanding Contributions in the Field of Law & Economics. He served as president of the Public Choice Society, Southern Economic Association, Western Economic Association, International Atlantic Economic Society, and Association for Private Enterprise Education.

# REFLECTION

It is hard to know what to say—Gordon was a colleague of ours for many years and we all were very fond of him. He was one of the most creative thinkers of his time. His contributions include not just the seminal chapters of *Calculus of Consent*, but a wide range of ideas ranging from law and economics to monetary theory to the economics of insect societies. Many of Gordon's best ideas remain somewhat unmined, such as his analyses of jury trials, or his question why there is so little money in politics, relative to what is at stake. Almost everything Gordon wrote was worth reading and he was also a wonderful critic of the work of others. He knew a remarkable amount about history, including Chinese history, and was one of the quickest people I ever have met. Just about everyone has his or her favorite Gordon Tullock story. Gordon, by the way, took only one class in economics in his life, from Henry Simons, he was otherwise entirely self-taught.

TYLER COWEN

HOLBERT L. HARRIS CHAIR OF ECONOMICS, GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

GENERAL DIRECTOR, MERCATUS CENTER

Please join the Tullock and Gunderson families for a reception in the Robert A. Levy  
Atrium of Hazel Hall.