

DALHOUSIE ECONOMICS IN RETROSPECT

A Synopsis of Selected Writings: From Past to Present

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PREFACE

This collection of articles and book extracts reaches back to the work of Robert Maxwell, the 'founder' of the Economics Department at Dalhousie University. The materials provide a fleeting glimpse into a very small sample of the public policy, advisory and curiosity-driven interests of faculty members over some eighty years.¹ Many of these ideas will have doubtless filtered into courses or topics of student thesis research.² As well, some of the writings will have been hinged to 'spill-over' undertakings, in Canada or far beyond, given the Department's numerous links with individuals and institutions around the globe. It must be emphasized that the items included here have not been selected on the basis of any criteria of alleged merit or perceived policy impacts, nor indeed to argue about specific trends over time or even to suggest contemporary relevance. As a group, however, they might provide preliminary groundwork for a response to two main questions:

1. What are some of the topics that Dalhousie economists have been writing about, why and with what kinds of outcomes?
2. To what extent might such past interests help shape future directions?

1. Starting with an article by Russell Maxwell (1936). The list of selected writings included herein can be found on pp. 15–17.

2. The first to complete the economics graduate programs (and their thesis titles were):
MA (1941) Edith Cavell Blaire; Problems and Methods of Studying Costs of Living
MDE (1984) Glenna Jenkins; Regional Development in Nova Scotia (1957-1983), and
MDE (1984) Prithi Nambiar; Canadian Development Assistance to India (1951–1984)
Ph.D. (1972) Tien-Jong Huang, On Optimal Policies and Economic Growth: Two sector
Open Economy Models

EMERGENT YEARS

The founding member of the Economics Department at Dalhousie University (after whom the long-time buildings that currently house the Department are named, Maxwell House) was *Russell Maxwell*.³ His article, “Economic Theory and National Purpose” (1936) somewhat eerily connects today’s reader with debates in the Germany of that time over the influences of political ideologies on ‘education in the field of economics,’ as well as demonstrates his own apparent admiration for the work of Alfred Marshall, in particular. Maxwell described Marshall as “one of the clearest and deepest thinkers ever to write on the subject of economics ... [with] an almost painfully high standard of intellectual integrity.” Maxwell also noted Keynes’ reservation (of his own teacher) that “Marshall was too anxious to do good.” As he demonstrates in his article, the interface between allegedly ‘pure’ science and ‘public policy’ has long reached to the core of debates over economics as an evolving ‘discipline’. [1]

Next, two papers are included by *John Graham*,⁴ in many respects Maxwell’s successor in the Economics Department. Graham’s commitment to the welfare of the Canadian community writ-large (and to the Atlantic region in particular) consistently tempered his interpretations of ‘economic principles’ as applied in his writings and policy-oriented undertakings. Much of Graham’s work hinged to his remarks: “The object of public policy is presumably to maximise the well-being of the people.” It is therefore necessary in speaking of problems of development in Atlantic Canada to establish “what kind of society we want in the region” and “only if the provinces are clear about their interests and positions will they be able, separately or in concert, to negotiate sensibly with the federal government in influencing the nature of federal programmes and be able to use these programmes effectively” (p. 120). [It might be noted that this was written in 1975, shortly after John had chaired a Nova Scotian Royal Commission on education.] Graham’s views on regional development were, it should be emphasized, not at the expense of a strong central government. Indeed, he wrote later in the cited *Policy Options* article, (p. 10) “it would be disastrous retrogression if, by excessive decentralization, we failed to reconcile our particular with our common interests”. [2]

Norman Morse had, amongst other accomplishments, been a pioneer in the development of the wine industry in Nova Scotia. As an economic historian, he long demonstrated a commitment to the Canadian rural sector, not least of his beloved Annapolis Valley. The article included here provides a glimpse of Morse’s insights

3. In 1936 Russell Maxwell was a faculty member at University of King’s College, Halifax, Canada. In 1943 he was appointed a full professor under the partnership agreement between Dalhousie University and King’s. P. B. Waite, *The Lives of Dalhousie University*, Vol. 2 (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), p. 117.

4. John Graham joined Dalhousie University in 1949 from the University of British Columbia and became chair of the Economics Department in 1960. Waite, id., p. 390.

into both sectoral trends over time and the specifics of key components of the agricultural sector — from the raising of poultry, pigs and foxes to the cultivation of blueberries, potatoes and apples. [3]

Zbigniew Konczacki was one of the earlier Dalhousie faculty members to provide first hand perspectives beyond North America and Western Europe. This, for but one example, is reflected in his paper on “Nomadism and Economic Development of Somalia” (1967). His cautionary comments, bringing together insights from experiences in both Africa and Poland, illustrate benefits from his wide-ranging background in economic history. As he warned, in the context of a Somalia of the 1960s, “Care must be taken ... not to overstep the bounds of permissible change. In the framing and the implementation of the strategy of economic development particular attention must be paid to the pace of sedentarisation and the rate of expansion of animal husbandry.”[4]

“Public Goods, Private Goods and Ambiguous Goods,” by *John Head* and *Carl Shoup* [5] and “In Place of Fear,” by *John Cornwall* and *Wendy MacLean*[7], suggest a flavour of the ‘economic reasoning’ that would have been shared with their students of those times, as well as with the broader readership of their many publications. In the case of all four (then) faculty members, their writings and advisory roles reached wide audiences, not least in the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan (in the case of Shoup), and Australia (in the case of Head). [David Pringle’s interesting note is attached to item 7]

Boatai Wang, *Erwin Klein* and *Gouranga Rao*, three other earlier Economics Department members, were authors of “Inflation and Stabilization in Argentina.” [8] Dr. Klein later retired back to his beloved Argentina and his shared-analytical work continued to provide provocative background perspectives, if not policy advice, to successive governments struggling with inflationary pressures and structural adjustment dilemmas. It should be remarked also that Erwin’s contributions to mathematical economics included a well-received textbook entitled *Mathematical Methods in Theoretical Economics: Topological and Vector Space Foundations of Equilibrium Analysis* (Academic Press, 1973). Further, Gouranga Rao’s insights from his Indian professional experiences were of widespread benefit across the Economics Department. He had the gift of making data ‘come alive,’ not least through his numerous journal articles on aspects of economic theory.

REGIONAL IMPACTS

Alasdair Sinclair's article, "Problems of Underdevelopment in Atlantic Canada with Special Reference to Nova Scotia" [6] succinctly and refreshingly examines "(1) the various types of models which economists have used to characterize and describe the Atlantic Provinces in the past, (2) ... some of the crucial differences in the assumptions underlying these various models with respect to the causes of and remedies for underdevelopment and (3) ... some recent economic trends in the area, with particular focus on migration." As always in Sinclair's writing and teaching, be the situations in Canada, Europe or Africa, the clarity of his arguments demonstrates an all-too-rare ability to connect theory to practice, in a manner that penetrates disciplinary boundaries and provides policy option insights coherent to politicians and their colleagues, as well as far beyond.

The selected writing of *Roy George*, in fact the closing chapter of his well-recognized book, warns that "we should not ... become so engrossed with economic policies that we lose sight of the fact that the continued retardation of Nova Scotia manufacturing industry relative to that of Quebec-Ontario does not seem to be primarily the result of economic forces." As with the extracts of John Graham's and Alasdair Sinclair's work, the observations have a currency that cuts through much of the clouded, would-be explanations that are the fodder of more recent electioneering, be that in the United States or in Canada. [9]

"The Economics of Bargaining Rights in the Fisheries of Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada," by *Charles Steinberg*, stemmed from his Ph.D. dissertation (1973) at Columbia University. His work represents an insightful blend of economic and legal analysis that explored, in a still (for 2018) constructive way, the 'bargaining handicaps' faced by fishermen on Canada's East Coast. [10]

Michael Bradfield has long been committed to the study of regional economics, as witnessed by his numerous publications. Much of his work has demonstrated a concern to improve public policies in quest of greater social justice and equity. His hard-nosed review of an Economic Council of Canada report (*Living Together*, 1977) still warrants further exploration today and follow-up. A few extracts are suggestive of Mike's style:

- "Much of what is wrong with *Living Together* stems from the basic lack of theory in the report ..."
- "The lack of an explicit theory leads the Council into empirical traps ..."
- "Even if one were to accept the Council's measure of labour quality ..."

- “The Economic Council’s jobs at any price is exactly the philosophy which has led to industry hand-outs, environmental degradation, unsafe working conditions and increased dependency in the lagging regions ...”
- “Suffice it to say that the report has done little to advance our knowledge of the problems of regional disparity...” [11]

Robert Comeau’s long-standing interest in monetary theory and policy is well-reflected in his article (linked to one by Michael Walker) entitled “The Budget: Two Views” (1979). As usual, Comeau’s arguments are lucid and policy relevant. His blunt conclusion speaks for itself:

In the last count, I would conclude that the recent budget is a bad budget because it is part and parcel of a general package of policies adopted in conjunction with OECD partners which have failed to secure the results expected of them. It is time to reassess those policies and give some consideration to an old-fashioned dose of Keynesian expansionism for the macro concerns of the economy. Structural problems leading to inflation require structural solutions not aggregate demand policies that override the growth and employment objectives [12]

INTERNATIONAL IMPACTS

Shortly after the Economics Department established its Master of Development Economics Program (MDE), Ghana experienced a coup. As from 1975, several members of the department had been advising and helping coordinate (under the sponsorship of the Canadian International Development Agency) that government’s public service training programs. As an outcome of a later coup, CIDA sponsored Amon and Gloria Nikoi to join Dalhousie’s faculty for a three-year period. Amon had been Ghana’s central bank governor and (at the time of the coup) was Minister of Finance. His wife, Gloria, had been Minister of Foreign Affairs. What a privilege it was for the University and the Economics Department to have them join Dalhousie. The paper included here, by *Amon Nikoi*, reflected his views on “The Theory and Practice of Economic Development.” His concluding paragraph well captures the message that Nikoi infused into his life work and his teaching to MDE students at Dalhousie:

The end of all our endeavours as development economists, particularly those working in the developing world, is to bring some improvement in the human condition. Ideally, we should be motivated by the conviction that we can use our own technical skills together with appropriate administrative abilities to do some good. Without this conviction, I think we work and labour in vain. [13]

Paul Huber's many professional interests, while rooted in Europe and North America, also took him to West Africa and (reflected in the article included here) to a period in Nepal, on behalf of a Dalhousie program of cooperation with Tribhuvan University (funded by CIDA). [14] This program had originated with a request from Byas Poudel (of Nepal's Finance Ministry) following his time at Dalhousie while studying in the MDE program. Indeed Poudel's thesis was later published (with Huber's assistance) as a small book, *Canadian Development Assistance to Nepal* (Kathmandu, 1989).

Paul Huber's insights from the field are interestingly hinged to *Barry Lesser's* observations from his experiences conducting Dalhousie's economic management training project with the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Lesser's introduction succinctly challenges those sceptics who might view international work as irrelevant to a university's responsibilities for the welfare of its own region:

It is common place to hear the view expressed that universities doing work with countries outside of Canada should be paying more attention to the local community; that the time and effort devoted to international development initiatives represents a diversion of resources away from a concern with regional development at home. In other words, there is a perceived trade-off between international development work and local development involvement. This perception is an overly simplistic one that ignores the important spin-offs that international work can generate for the local community. In reality, international and regional development concerns are not substitutes but complements... [15]

Barry's commitment to this philosophy has continued to be well-expressed through his subsequent work with the Ukraine and China (2018).

In 1989, *Ian McAllister* took an extended leave of absence from the economics department to advise the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Federation in Geneva. Much of his time was on missions in complex field situations, often linked to natural or people-made disasters. The paper here included, "The Red Cross and Red Crescent: Development Challenges of the Nineties" was a talk given in Bangladesh, following discussions with World Bank representatives on the future financing and management of cyclone shelters on the Bay of Bengal. Four main themes were focused on in this Dhaka University talk:

1. A brief profile of the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement;
2. Some main issues then being faced by the Movement around the world;
3. As the National Red Cross/Crescent societies take on more of a 'developmental role', what are some of the implications and challenges — both for relief undertakings and in the context of strategic policy approaches, when interfacing with governments;

4. What might be some of the opportunities for future co-operation between the Red Cross/Crescent movement and universities (including in Bangladesh).

Many of the issues raised in the talk have been further explored in his subsequent books and teaching activities. [16]

ECONOMICS FOR A BETTER SOCIETY

Kuan Xu's professional interests are primarily in finding and applying suitable quantitative methods to tackle relevant economic problems. Among his publications, the paper entitled "The Social Welfare Implications, Decomposability, and Geometry of the Sen Family of Poverty Indices" is a result of collaboration with Lars Osberg. In this theoretical paper, the authors investigate the various social welfare implications of poverty measures and decompose the celebrated poverty indices proposed by Amartya Sen (Nobel prize laureate, 1998) into three commonly used poverty measures. [17] This innovative approach is now included in the World Bank Group's Handbook on Poverty and Inequality.

Lars Osberg, among the most published faculty members of the Economics Department over the years, has routinely connected his commitment to a 'fairer society' by exploring and exposing just what that might really mean when one delves into the data over time. His OECD working paper (2014) "Can Increasing Inequality Be a Steady State?" provides an example. His abstract reads:

Historically, discussions of income inequality have emphasized cross-sectional comparisons of levels of inequality of income. These comparisons have been used to argue that countries with more inequality are less healthy, less democratic, more crime-infested, less happy, less mobile and less equal in economic opportunity, but such comparisons implicitly presume that current levels of inequality are steady state outcomes. However, the income distribution can only remain stable if the growth rate of income is equal at all percentiles of the distribution. This paper compares long-run levels of real income growth at the very top, and for the bottom 90% and bottom 99% in the United States, Canada and Australia to illustrate the uniqueness of the post-WWII period of balanced growth (and consequent stability in the income distribution). The 'new normal' of the United States, Canada and Australia is 'unbalanced' growth — specifically, over the last thirty years the income of the top 1% have grown significantly more rapidly than those of everyone else. The paper asks if auto-equilibrating market mechanisms will spontaneously equalize income growth rates and stabilize inequality. It concludes that the more likely scenario is continued unbalanced income growth. This, in turn, implies, on the economic side, consumption and saving flows which accumulate to changed stocks of indebtedness, financial fragility, and periodic

macroeconomic crises; and, on the social side, to increasing inequality of opportunity and political influence. Greater economic and socio-political instabilities are therefore the most likely consequence of increasing income inequality over time. (p. 4) [18]

Melvin Cross joined Dalhousie's Economics Department in 1975, having developed (in his words) "an interest in environmental and natural resource economics, especially the economics of marine fisheries" [and a bit later] "in the history of economic thought." These interests have persisted and enriched his teaching and later publications. Mel's response to a request for background information is included in the extract (on honeybees) of his work in these papers, a brief sample from the popular economics textbook of which he is a co-author. [19]

Leigh Mazany, who joined Canada's federal public service after teaching at Dalhousie, blended her commitment to environmental and natural resource policy issues with an interest in applied econometrics. Her paper (jointly written with Anthony Charles and Melvin Cross) explores some of the more practical problems associated with "The Economics of Illegal Fishing" (1999), not least the challenges associated with the enforcement of fishing regulations. [20]

The paper by *Talan Iscan* (a chapter from his Ph.D. dissertation at Cornell University), covering the period 1970 to 1991, was selected because of its relevance to the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) during 2018. In addition to culling available data to explore apparent trends within the Mexican automotive industry, Talan looked far beyond for comparative indicators of change. Thus, for example, he notes that "the big three U.S. automobile producers located numerous plants in Mexico in response to fierce competition with Japanese auto producers" and observed that "as the production becomes more global, the competition that the Mexican auto parts producers face will intensify" (p. 127). Talan's conclusions are not solely drawn from 'relatively accessible data sources', but (as noted in footnote 19) were gleaned from on-site observations. Thus, influenced by conversations during a factory visit in Mexico, he writes, "whether the Mexican auto parts industry will manage to survive the repercussions of the global sourcing will depend on its achievement of higher product quality and also its capacity to reduce delivery lags." [21]

In a 2018 paper, *Andrea Giusto* and *Talan Iscan* joined forces to explore issues of common interest, not least the key determinants behind aggregate savings, income, and wealth inequality. Tracking back to the 1970s, they seek to demonstrate, in their words, that "when markets are incomplete, higher markups [can] substantially reduce the aggregate saving rate ... due to endogenous changes in the distribution of income and wealth." Furthermore, the authors "find that, [while] market power has considerable influence on income and wealth inequality," their model "fails fully to explain the increased inequality in the United States." [22]

Catherine Boulatoff and Carol Marie Boyer recently (2017) made a most welcome contribution (through the *Journal of Sustainable Finance and Investment*) to a more informed understanding of the competitive performance of firms pursuing clean technologies. Their paper included here is cautiously optimistic (based on a well-presented analysis) “that the overall performance of clean technology firms [within the particular frameworks they carefully specified] has been quite healthy compared to firms in the [Morgan Stanley Capital International] World Index.” Their painstakingly researched work is a daunting example of the challenges faced when efforts are made to assess the benefits and opportunity costs of more environmentally responsible approaches. [23]

Daniel Rosenblum’s interest in the better understanding of development challenges facing less prosperous nations is illustrated by his study, “The Effect of Fertility Decisions on Excess Female Mortality in India.” His 2013 paper “focuses on how economic incentives cause excess female mortality, and, in particular how these incentives [can] drive fertility decisions that exacerbate discrimination against girls.” But Dan does not stop with this analysis, rather he usefully raises “a number of potential policy implications.” These, in turn, warrant further exploration. The paper serves to illustrate how more recent economic ‘analytical platform-building’ can serve as a foundation for better informed policies. The next challenge, as Dan has suggested, is how better to construct the bridges. [24]

Teresa Cyrus and Lori Curtis, in their article “Trade Agreements, the Health-Care Sector and Women’s Health,” demonstrate the value of the Status of Women Canada’s Policy Research Fund. While published in 2004, their conclusions warrant extremely careful recognition as Canada today (2018) engages in the renegotiation of NAFTA. They found, for example, that “[t]wo areas of the Canadian health care system may be [adversely] affected by Canada’s participation in multinational trade agreements. ... Once [health care] services become commercialized, the safeguards inherent in NAFTA will fail. ... [I]f the service is offered privately or involves competition, then the market can be open to foreign investors. ... [A]t that point, it may be too late to protect the public nature of the Canadian healthcare system” (p. vi). The particular vulnerability of female industry and service-sector workers “[having] the lowest rates of [insurance] coverage, as well as those reporting no occupation,” is especially noted (p vii). [25]

Peter Burton and Shelley Phipps have long been committed to seeking to understand and better tackle issues pertaining to child poverty. This is illustrated in their Canadian Public Policy lecture at the June 3, 2017 Canadian Economic Association conference in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Their extremely readable and challenging use of comparative data generates insights that demand more public attention, not least by politicians. Thus, for but one example, they “compare the economic well-being of Canadian children with that of children in other equally affluent

countries,[noting that] it is clear that inequality of income is greater in Canada than in Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands or Germany." At the same time, they find "important differences across the provinces in the extent to which taxes and transfers [actually do] reduce the rate of poverty for children in two-parent families" and demonstrate that "poverty rates are dramatically higher for children living with lone-mothers in every province," though several (most notably Manitoba and Saskatchewan [2014]) stand out as significantly worse, even after tax and transfer processes (Figure 31). [26]

Yulia Kotlyarova, now a popular teacher of econometrics at Dalhousie, currently focuses her research on "parametric estimators" and the strength and vulnerabilities of such. In her paper (jointly written with Victoria Zinde-Walsh at McGill University) a new approach to improving "the accuracy and reliability of non-parametric kernel-based density estimators" is proposed, which uses a linear combination of estimators with different smoothing parameters. [27]

In a paper entitled "Teaching Philosophy," after tracking back to John Dewey's suggestion (1897) that "education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living," *Ruth Forsdyke* courageously spells out her own "understanding of the fundamental inputs of teaching and education," including ideas about curriculum and lesson planning, not to forget "assessing the outputs." Ruth, who is presently pioneering a class on the 'Economics of Global Warming', has approached her studies of economics while researching (in her words) "at the interface between economics, evolutionary biology and psychology." [28]

Mevlude Akbulut-Yuksel, *Dozie Okoye* and *Mutlu Yuksel* recently (May 2017) explored "the importance of socioeconomic circumstances, socialization and childhood events in the formation of adult political behavior and attitudes," using (in their words) "region-by-cohort variation in exposure to the Jewish expulsion in Nazi Germany as a quasi-experiment." They found "that the expulsion of Jewish professionals had long-lasting detrimental effects," a number of which they researched and detailed. Maxwell would have doubtless been encouraged by their research interests. [29]

The extract included here by *Christian Marfels*, on casino gambling, draws from his historical critique of the Bally Manufacturing Company, which was founded in 1932. As he wrote, "The idea to write a book on Bally was born out of the desire to present a fitting tribute to the company and to the people who worked at Bally to make it great". [30] Yet underpinning that study (and indeed Christian's teaching on such themes as the formation of the European Union) was an experience that he cites when writing of his visit to Hans Kloss' office in Berlin in September 1989:

A room with a view of the infamous border that artificially divides a country of one people. ... 'History is in front of our eyes,' Hans Kloss says quietly. 'Yes, we each had witnessed the dark day in August 1961 when this man-made

monster sprang up in front of our eyes. 'Will it come down?' he wonders. 'I'm afraid not in our lifetime,' I mutter in a mood of resignation after 28 years of hoping for this to happen. What a marvellous surprise that the wall collapsed only six weeks later.

ECONOMICS FOR A MORE EFFICIENT SOCIETY

Together with John Kennes and Daniel Monte (in Denmark and Brazil respectively), *Norov Tumennasan* has been studying the allocation processes of children to public day care systems. How, why and with what kinds of outcomes (short and long term) might children be assigned to day care systems? It appears evident from both their analysis thus far (and the cited works) that this is an exceedingly complex issue — one of great importance as both partners seek (and often are forced to) to enter the paid work force in their respective countries. Indeed, as noted from a *New York Times* report (H. Tabuchi, "Desperate Hunt for Day Care in Japan," *The New York Times*, February 26, 2013), evidence from Japan suggests "Some families are so anxious to gain access into public day care that they spend their lives moving to districts known to have the shortest waiting lists." [31]

Swapan Dasgupta's research has centred on the analysis of resource allocation over time, in settings, in his words, "where there is an open-ended time horizon, without a finite end over which agents, individuals or central planners plan their courses of action." Interesting issues are thereby raised, again in *Swapan's* views, "related to intertemporal pricing, the identification of optimal dynamic programs and their behaviour overtime, asymptotic or otherwise. It is broadly speaking, a branch of dynamic optimization models in economics." A 2011 essay by *Dasgupta* (with T. Mishra) "On Optimal Forest Management: A Bifurcation Analysis" is included in the selected writings here. [32]

Courtney Ward's research in health economics, an Ontario-focused example of which is outlined in the cited article, questions several conventional approaches. One significant example is that "the elderly are often hit the hardest during the [flu] season ... [so they] ... tend to be targeted by vaccination programs." *Courtney* has been exploring whether, "contrary to the conventional literature, which [has] ranked this vulnerable group as the most cost-effective target, expanding incentives for healthy young people to vaccinate might [actually] be the better overall strategy against flu and its associated medical costs." [33]

Michael Gardner and *Tom Pinfold*, both of whom taught within the Economics Department, became widely respected economic consultants, leaving Dalhousie to establish the successful Canadian company Gardner Pinfold. In the example of their work included here, a report submitted to Fisheries and Oceans Canada, they review

“the rationale for implementing market-based approaches” to fisheries management, as well as some of the “barriers to implementation,” including reasons for opposition “in the inshore fisheries in Canada.” Indeed, they write, “fisheries management may be characterized as an ongoing balancing act, involving biological, economic, social and cultural objectives” and “three broad approaches may be distinguished: open access, input controls and rights-based.” As is frequently the case with their work, comparative insights are also usefully drawn upon, in this case from Iceland, Norway, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. [34]

Jeff Dayton-Johnson and *John Hoddinott*, in a conference paper, Quebec (2003), had responded to “a request by CIDA, the Canadian bilateral aid agency, to explore the robustness of the World Bank’s work as an input into a review of Canadian aid-allocation policy.” Their “findings” (in their words) “suggest that aid will have the greatest effect on poverty reduction if it is directed (a) toward sub-Saharan Africa, and to a lesser degree, to South Asia; (b) within sub-Saharan Africa, toward countries with sound macro (fiscal, monetary, and trade) policy; aid to (c) countries with high rates of absolute poverty and lower levels of income inequality in all regions (pp. 23-24). Both authors have subsequently left the Economics Department for international development agencies. However, their ‘findings’ are included here to illustrate that some economists at least are still asking ‘big picture questions’ –albeit the ‘findings’ might be open to considerable further investigation and (regardless of validity) challenge the ‘political inclinations of the times.’ [35]

For a similar ‘big picture’ study, the final paper by *Weina Zhou* (with *Shun Wang* of the Korean Development Institute, Sejong) is entitled “The Unintended Long-term Consequences of Mao’s Mass Send-Down Movement: Marriage, Social Network, and Happiness.” The authors conclude, in a most carefully structured analysis, that “[c]ontrary to many studies on the send-down movement showing positive impacts on youth’s educational attainment and income ... a significantly negative effect [is apparent] on an individual’s non-material well-being, measured by marriage outcome, social network, and happiness.” In the authors’ words, “the non-material aspects of life should not be ignored when evaluating the effect of forced migration.” They “remind policy makers engaging in tragedy relief that the end of a disaster is unlikely to be the end of the story ... Thus, policymakers should consider designing measures to mitigate both short-term and long-term negative impacts” (pp. 19, 20). Their findings, it might be added, are entirely consistent with the views of the more experienced non-governmental organizations (e.g., Oxfam), United Nations agencies (e.g., UNICEF), and the International Red Cross Movement. Yet, frequently, many Canadian and other aid agencies confine much of their emphasis on short-term, quick-fix undertakings. Wang’s and Zhou’s research is both timely and well-supported. [36]

CONNECTING THE PAST TO THE FUTURE?

From Hitler's effort to impose political ideologies on education in the field of economics to nomadism and economic development in Somalia; from the economics of bargaining rights in the fisheries of Nova Scotia to the social welfare implications of poverty indices; from trade agreements, women's health, casino gambling and the Bally Manufacturing Company, to trends within the Mexican automotive industry and the effect of fertility decisions on excess female mortality in India, the selected writings touched upon in this minute sample of works by members of the Dalhousie Economics Department cover a lengthy time span (1936 to 2018). They provide a flavour of but some of the issues that have attracted the attention of economists in this evolving Canadian community. An exploration of biographical records would yet further illustrate the breadth of departmental connections over many years. These biographies would reflect members' active roles with economic associations (e.g., the Canadian Economic Association and Atlantic Canada Economic Association), royal commissions (e.g., education, seals and the sealing industry in Canada), numerous parliamentary and other committees, on university boards, and in advisory capacities across the globe, from Canada to Zimbabwe, China, Argentina, Australia, and (to varying degrees) with NGOs in Atlantic Canada. Further, one cannot fail to mention their many successful ventures within the private sector.

A 2016 edition of *The Economist* briefly reviewed some of the changes and opinions of a number of Cambridge University economists (some of whom had far-reaching influence beyond the discipline, not least including Marshall, Keynes, and Pigou).⁵ Three penetrating observations might be extracted:

- "The way economics is taught depends on what you think economists are for" (p. 63)
- "Keynes and Pigou established economics as a tool kit to be used by policymakers and pioneered the role of government economic advisers" (p. 64)
- "Now we need to be much more evidence-based ... But the discipline's development has come with a cost. The specialization associated with expertise can encourage narrow thinking ... Disciplines are now defined too much by methods rather than by questions" (p. 64)

Such remarks have doubtless had relevance to Dalhousie's Economics Department over the years. It might also be asked how strategically focused Dalhousie's various programs have (or should have) been on the problems and prospects of Atlantic Canada, including in support of alleged University priorities (e.g., First Nations, health, and oceans). Such issues are not targeted in this brief collection of samples

5. "The Art and Science of Economics at Cambridge," *The Economist* (December 24, 2016).

of past publications, but no doubt would number among questions to be explored in any 'vision paper' for 2020, or thereafter. Six features from past decades (some of which no doubt coloured these writings) might be noted:

- The economics faculty and student body has been drawn from a widening range of people with different cultural and experiential backgrounds.
- In more recent years, women have greatly strengthened the faculty, as well as the student groups. The shared ideas and other forms of help from students for some of these papers cannot be emphasized enough.
- The spread of topics written about (and otherwise pursued) has criss-crossed many sectors, themes, national boundaries, policy issues, disciplines, and theoretical frameworks.
- The department has long been blessed with a most supportive secretariat, whose members have both patiently advised and discretely steered faculty members and students alike.⁶
- The three connected buildings (Maxwell House) that lodge the department provide extremely pleasant and well-situated facilities on the Dalhousie campus. They have doubtless helped foster the friendly atmosphere that has long prevailed within the Economics Department.
- To expand on Amon Nikoi's observations: The end of much of the department's work (as reflected in this cross-section of writings) "has been to seek to bring some improvement to the human conditions."

As emphasized in the brief introduction to this collection, these listed writings provide but a fleeting glimpse into a tiny fraction of the public policy, advisory and curiosity-driven research interests of some of the faculty members over the years. The writings have not been selected on the basis of any alleged criteria of merit or perceived impacts, nor even to argue about specific trends over time or issues of contemporary relevance. Nevertheless, this collection might prove to be of interest to those who ask "What kinds of things have economists at Dalhousie been writing about?" and, perhaps more to the point, "What future 'visions' and (dare one suggest) 'strategic directions' might be anticipated for research and writing by members of the Dalhousie Economics Department in the days ahead?" To what extent might past be prologue?

6. Jura Smith, Monique Comeau, Heather Lennox, Cheryl Stewart, Jodi Lawrence and Poonam Sachdev have been/are most recent members of this extremely helpful team.

SELECTED WRITINGS OF MEMBERS OF THE DALHOUSIE ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT

The articles and other pieces of writings mentioned in the synopsis are mostly available on Dalspace content repository. DalSpace is a digital service that collects, preserves, and distributes digital material produced by the Dalhousie community. The collection is available at dalspace.library.dal.ca/handle/10222/73796.

Due to content guidelines and required permissions, the articles with an asterisk (*) are not posted on Dalspace, but may be available by contacting the Department of Economics at economics@dal.ca

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