In Memoriam: Gordon Tullock and William Sellers

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Gordon Tullock, an influential economist who served as Karl Eller Professor of Economics and Political Science at the UA Eller College of Management [1] from 1987-1999, died in Des Moines, Iowa, on Nov. 3. He was 92.

Tullock made significant contributions to the study of voting, interest group lobbying, jury trials, the economics of authoritarian regimes and more, with a sphere of influence that extended beyond the field of economics to law and political science.

Tullock is best known for applying economic principles to the study of politics. He co-authored the 1962 book "Calculus of Consent" with longtime collaborator and Nobel Prize winner James Buchanan. In it, they laid out an intellectual framework for the case in support of smaller democratic government. They found that a system of majority voting by participants who voted their individual interests tended to put decision making in the hands of those who cared least about the outcome — a rationale for doubting the wisdom of relying on voters with disparate views to produce attractive collective decisions.

In 1999, the Department of Economics hosted a conference in Tullock's honor at Hacienda del Sol, which resulted in a volume edited by Gary Libecap and Edward Zajac, "Public Choice Essays in Honor of a Maverick Scholar: Gordon Tullock."

"Gordon Tullock was the quintessential academic for whom the life of the mind was paramount," said Don Heckerman, professor emeritus of economics at the UA. "A lifelong bachelor, Gordon was a voracious reader, prolific writer and a spirited debater."

During his time at the UA, Tullock was editor of the academic journal Public Choice, the voice of the field of study that he and Buchanan founded.

"All authors seeking to have their work published in Public Choice sent those articles to Gordon, and he actively awaited the arrival of each day's mail delivery," Heckerman said. "If the mail had not been distributed by 10 a.m., Gordon wanted to know why it was late and what, if anything, could be done to accelerate its distribution. By lunchtime, Gordon had absorbed the ideas in each of the day's submissions and was prepared to aggressively solicit from his luncheon companions their thoughts about some of those ideas."

Feeding the life of the mind was also a priority for Tullock.

"Gordon never tired of reminding those around him that among the advantages of
bachelorhood was more cash to spend on such discretionary pleasures as fine dining and travel," Heckerman said.

Tullock had a list of top five local restaurants at which he dined sequentially each week. "When one of us managed to treat our spouse to a night out at one of Tucson's restaurants, that spouse would inevitably observe Gordon at his regular table at Le Rendezvous, Anthony's or Charles, where he sat, book in hand and reading light on, while dining."

William D. Sellers, a former professor in the Institute of Atmospheric Physics and a founding member of the Department of Atmospheric Sciences in the UA College of Science, died in Tucson on Aug. 27. He was 86.

Sellers joined the institute shortly after he was awarded his doctorate in meteorology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1957, under the guidance of professor Ed Lorenz, the creator of chaos theory. Sellers spent his entire professional career at the UA, retiring in 1997.

"Dr. Sellers was an inspiring and highly popular teacher and mentor of both undergraduate and graduate students," said E. Philip Krider, professor emeritus in the Department of Atmospheric Sciences and Institute of Atmospheric Physics. "There is no question that Bill Sellers was a pioneer in climate research. He was also one of the most unselfish people I've ever known."

Electronic message boards normally serve as clocks, but can be used to display alerts in the event of an emergency.

Sellers was widely known for his textbook "Physical Climatology," which was published in 1965. It was the first English-language textbook on the subject and instantly became a classic used by universities throughout the United States and the world. In a 1990 review of the textbook, professor J. Graham Cogley wrote:

"W.D. Sellers' text 'Physical Climatology' was published in 1965, 25 years ago; it has remained in print ever since, and has sold over 10,000 copies. The first energy balance model or EBM was described by M.I. Budyko in 1968 in "Gidrologiya i Meteorologiya;" Sellers independently described another EBM in Journal of Applied Meteorology in 1969 ? for those of us who were schoolchildren or undergraduates 25 years ago the relationship of Sellers to his subject matter may resemble that of Columbus to the Vikings and the Carthaginians."

Along with his co-authors, Sellers is also known for the definitive compilation of the climate of Arizona, "Arizona Climate: 1931-1972," first published in 1964, and regularly updated thereafter.

Sellers studied the theory of climate long before it became fashionable. He created some of the first global climate models based on the surface energy balance of the Earth-atmosphere system, and published numerous papers on climate change, including a 1974 paper, "Reassessment of the effect of CO2 variations on a simple global climate model," which was
one of the first to recognize the possible effects that carbon dioxide could have on climate.

Sellers also was an experimentalist. For many years, he made daily observations of solar radiation using a pyrheliometer installed on the roof of the UA Physics and Atmospheric Sciences building for purposes of quantifying the effects of atmospheric aerosols on solar insolation.

A fellow of the American Meteorological Society, his research interests also included micrometeorology, techniques of climate modeling, atmospheric ozone and El Nino phenomena and their effects on precipitation in the Southwest.

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