

Obituary for

David Bradford

15. Juli 2005

Dear Gundel, dear Lulu,

dear colleagues and friends of David Bradford,

Others may be more qualified to honour David Bradford. But I, too, would like to testify before this assembly to the tremendous grief and loss felt by myself, my family and my colleagues at the University of Munich, the Ifo Institute for Economic Research and the entire CESifo Network.

When I heard the news about the tragedy, I felt paralyzed, unable to think clearly and welcome the friends we happened to have invited that evening. Without knowing it, I had identified with this great man and friend in a way that I have with very few people in my life. There was too much we had experienced to-

gether, too much I had to be grateful to him for, too much for me to keep my composure.

You, ladies and gentlemen, associate David Bradford with Princeton and the valuable work he has done in the United States. I see him from a different angle, from the other side of the Atlantic, for he left his footprints there as well.

David was a wanderer between the worlds, someone who was at home in different environments and left his mark in all.

- Just think of the distance he bridged between public finance, his true specialty, and environmental economics, to which he turned in later life;

- think of the distance he bridged between economic theory and applied policies in the Council of Economic Advisors;

- think of Princeton and New York University, the two schools at which he taught;

- think also of the United States and Germany, two countries whose people and culture meant equally much to him.

For Germany he had a weakness because he loved his wife more than anything, a woman who is as German as they come. His German was very good, good enough to meet all practical and academic demands, and he was in Germany often.

Germany was his second home. He loved the country and its people, and his German friends admired him. He liked the mountains, the dreamy villages, the music and the romantic flair, for which Bavaria, which he visited often, is especially known. And he enjoyed to be with people. He discussed with them their view of the world and their concerns, but he also laughed and joked a lot, and enjoyed being in that country.

He made many friends in Germany, especially in the economics department of the University of Munich, where he gave courses for doctoral students and was a visitor every Summer of recent years. By giving a number of young assistant professors from Munich the opportunity to teach at Princeton for a year, he created firm bonds between the academic communities on both sides of the Atlantic.

*Liebe Gundel, lieber Theodor, liebe Lulu,  
im Namen aller deutschen Freunde und Kollegen, insbesondere  
im Namen von Gerlinde und den Kindern, möchte ich Euch mein  
herzliches Beileid aussprechen. Nun müsst Ihr ohne Euren Mann  
und Vater zurecht kommen. Aber Ihr müsst nicht ohne Freunde  
leben. Seid gewiss, dass Ihr immer bei uns willkommen seid.*

It is his interest in Germany to which I owe my own contacts to David. David, Gundel, my wife Gerlinde and I have become good friends over the years. Many visits of the Bradfords in Munich and our visits in Princeton have forged close ties. The greater is the pain about the fissure in these ties that has now occurred.

David and I met through our shared interest in economics. Both of us specialized in public finance, and both of us worked on cash-flow taxation, although he did so before me. His work on the

taxation of consumption has made history and has greatly influenced my thinking.

David introduced me to the National Bureau of Economic Research, where he headed the field of public finance. At that time I was able to participate in many conferences and learned a lot from him. I also got to know fascinating economists whom he had assembled in his group.

From the beginning, David was a member of the Scientific Council at the Center for Economic Studies, CES, of the University of Munich that was founded in 1991. Together with Richard Musgrave he was one of the foster fathers of this institution. When he became advisor to President Bush senior, he had to step down, but when his mandate in the Council of Economic Advisors had ended, he immediately re-entered the CES Council. In 1999, he even became head of the Scientific Council of the Ifo Institute and the newly founded CESifo Network, for which I had become responsible. In this function he greatly influenced the

fates of the Institute and the Network, he even used the Council as an instrument of active directing.

David was always very determined and certainly no blind supporter of decisions taken by the management board. He had the rare gift of combining a friendly and conciliatory nature with single-mindedness and assertiveness. When he had made a decision, he pushed it through against all concerns, but those who were of a different opinion never minded.

Much of what was done at CES, at the Ifo Institute and the CESifo Network was beset by risk. David was a master in encouraging all the people involved and in giving them the assurance needed to fight to get their decisions through. I remember, for example, the serious conflict with the Centre for Economic Policy Research in London that had occurred in establishing the CESifo Network. David knew to distinguish right from wrong, and showed the direction in which the CESifo Network had to go even if the competitor did not like it.

To express its gratitude to a great friend and mentor the Ifo Institute has decided to name its main building “David Bradford House”. The inaugural ceremony will take place in July at the meeting of Ifo’s Scientific Council that David would have been chairing.

And we will also have a CESifo memorial conference in Venice shortly thereafter that will deal with environmental subjects and will be organized by Henry Tulkens, Roger Guesnerie and myself.

Despite all his discipline, David knew how to enjoy life. We often wandered in the Alps, together with other members of CES. He enjoyed the rustic life in the mountains and was interested in the foreign customs and traditions.

This also included drinking Bavarian beer. At one time, the landlord had to serve all the different brands of beer he had in store, for David wanted to test them himself, and I can tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that this was no easy task even in a Bavarian mountain cottage.

But David was a serious and concerned human being. A particular event that binds me to him was the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001. At the time David was in Germany. We were shocked to hear the news.

At the Ifo Institute some of us met to pray and David spontaneously said a few words about the events, expressing his grief about the many dead.

Suddenly the church bells started to toll during the prayer meeting. They tolled loud and persistently. The Germans grieved the dead, and David grieved with them.

Together we then discussed the reasons for the attacks and arrived at the conclusion that the causes of such acts of desperation had to be addressed.

But it was only when more precise pictures of the event could be seen the next day, that we understood what really happened. The picture of people, who jumped out of windows to evade the fire, paralyzed us.



We remembered the picture of burning women and children who were the victims of the British firestorms in German cities during World War II. The scout planes first had thrown their markers, and then came the fire bombers to burn the people. The Germans called the markers Christmas trees.

We sat there silently for a long time, grieving together.

We are still silent and grieving.