

## Obituary: Robert N. McRae (1948-2006)

By Christopher J. Bruce and John Helliwell\*

*Canadian Journal of Economics* Supplement, June 2006

---

This obituary represents solely the views of the author(s). It is neither intended nor implied that this obituary expresses an official opinion of the *Canadian Economics Association* or the editors of the *Canadian Journal of Economics*.

---

© MMVI Canadian Economics Association.

Bob McRae was a native of Vancouver, British Columbia, where he attended UBC, obtaining a B.Sc. in honours mathematics in 1970, an M.Sc. in computer science in 1972, and a Ph.D. in economics in 1977. His dissertation, completed under the supervision of John Helliwell, was entitled "A Quantitative Analysis of Policies Affecting Canadian Trade in Crude Oil and Natural Gas."



Bob joined the Economics Department of the University of Calgary in 1977 as an assistant professor but quickly rose to associate and then full professor. His area of specialization was energy economics, with a focus on estimating systems of fuel consumption equations and analyzing the implications of energy policy initiatives. In his early career, he concentrated on Canadian energy policy; but, later, he became known internationally for his work on Asia and Latin America—thus combining his love of travel with his work. Also, he was co-author of one of the first and most respected statistical packages for personal computers, SHAZAM.

His many contributions to Canadian energy analysis are best reflected in his 1989 Canadian Tax Foundation book (with John Helliwell, Mary MacGregor, and Andre Plourde) entitled "Oil and Gas in Canada: The Effects of Domestic Policies and World Events."

Through his work on energy economics, Bob was actively involved in the Canadian Energy Research Institute, the International Association for Energy Economics, the Canadian Economics Association (where he was

---

\*Christopher Bruce is with the University of Calgary; John Helliwell is with the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research and the University of British Columbia.

a member of the Executive Council from 1994 to 1997), and OLADE (the Latin American Energy Organization – Organización Latinoamericana de Energía).

Despite his ongoing involvement in research, Bob never forgot the other two roles of the well-rounded academic: administration and teaching. As an administrator, he was best known for taking on the position of Head of the Economics Department from 1991–1996, during a period that was particularly crucial for the development of the department as it exists today. But he was also highly respected throughout the university for his participation in many other high-level university bodies—most importantly General Faculties Council.

He will also be remembered with the greatest respect by his students. He was an enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and sympathetic instructor, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels, and was one of the department's busiest supervisors of graduate theses.

Bob is survived by his wife, Ann, and his children, Scott and Kate. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him.