

Econometric Society

In Memoriam

Leonid Hurwicz

President of the Econometric Society, 1969

On June 24, Leonid Hurwicz died at the age of 90. He was elected a Fellow of the Econometric Society in 1947 and served as the Society's president in 1969.

Leo made seminal contributions to economics. In particular, he created the modern theory of mechanism design, the study of economic and political institutions for achieving society's goals. For this work he received the U.S. National Medal of Science in 1990 and shared the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics in 2007, among many other honors. He was also an institution designer in the practical sense: he bears major responsibility for turning the Economics Department at the University of Minnesota into one of the great departments of the world.

But it is Leo's personality that will be remembered most fondly by those who knew him. A warm and charming man, he had a deadpan sense of humor that could turn somewhat sharp on occasion. Once a visiting seminar speaker wrote a theorem on the blackboard. Asserting that the result was "obvious," the speaker looked around the room, daring anyone to challenge him. Leo piped up immediately: "Is that proof by intimidation?"

Here is the link to the obituary that I wrote for the Guardian:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2008/jul/21/economics.usa?gusrc=rss&fee=worldnews>

Eric Maskin

2003 Econometric Society President