



Jaroslav Vanek

April 20, 1930 – November 15, 2017

Cornell and the Department of Economics mourn the loss of Jaroslav Vanek Professor Emeritus who passed away in Ithaca, New York on November 15, 2017. He was born in Prague.

Jaroslav Vanek is known for his contributions to the theory of international trade and the theory of labor-managed market economies. The Hecksher-Olin Model of international trade develops Ricardo's idea of comparative advantage by explaining the pattern of trade between countries as the consequence of differing endowments of raw materials, labor, and other factors of production.

The original model from the early 20th century focused on the exchange of finished products. Vanek reformulated the model to understand trade as the international exchange of the factors embodied in the traded commodities. This idea transformed the model into the workhorse of international trade theory that it has become today, so much so that on account of his 1968 publication the model is now often referred to as the Hecksher-Ohlin-Vanek Model.

Soon after he arrived at Cornell, Vanek created the first doctoral program on labor-managed economics, the Program on Participation and Labor Managed Systems (PPLMS). The idea of labor-managed economies has roots in the post-war Yugoslav economy. Vanek's work on this socialist economic system had a huge influence on neoclassical economics in the 70s, including important work by Nobel Prize winner James Meade. His work, along with that of the Croatian economists Branko Horvat, greatly influenced World Bank recommendation on the creation of economic institutions in developing countries. PPLMS brought students from around the world to Cornell to study the Yugoslav and other comparative models of economic management. PPLMS also supported research through conferences and workshops. Former student Derek Jones reports that, "Such was [Vanek's] influence that when I was at Cornell (1969-1972) it seemed that about one in two students had him on their dissertation committee." "His classes were astonishingly international with students from the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Peru, Chile, FR Yugoslavia, Denmark, Germany...He was really a big draw".

Vanek's family left Czechoslovakia shortly after the Communist coup d'état in 1948, first for Germany and then to Geneva and Paris. He earned a degree in Economics from the University of Geneva in 1954. Invited to Massachusetts Institute of Technology by Charles Kindleberger, he completed a Ph.D. degree in 1957. After working at Harvard University and the U.S. Department of State, he arrived in Ithaca in 1964. He and his wife, Wilda, of 60 years, immediately occupied a home on Triphammer Road, where he remained as renter and later owner for the rest of his life. Longtime Ithacans will remember the solar energy collectors deployed in the front yard, part of his and Wilda's work with the S.T.E.V.E.N. Foundation, "Sustainable Technology and Energy for Vital Economic Needs".

Vanek is survived by his wife, Wilda, children Joseph, Francis, Rosie, Steven, and Teresa and six grandchildren.

Written by Lawrence Blume