

Brian Hindley In Memoriam



By Fredrik Erixon, Hugh Corbet, Philip Booth, John Blundell, Claude Barfield, Razeen Sally, Patrick Messerlin, Seev Hirsh, Ray Richardson, Meir Pugatch

Fredrik Erixon, Director and co-founder of ECIPE

OUR COLLEAGUE AND friend Brian Hindley passed away last month. Many people have been in touch with us at ECIPE to express their sadness and to share some of their memories of Brian. We are very pleased that many of them agreed to put these memories on paper for a wider readership.

Brian left this world too early. As a scholar of trade policy – with a particular expertise in creeping, murky, crisis-infected protectionism – Brian would have been much in demand in the coming years. He made seminal contributions to several fields. Brian, to pick one area where his work had a visible effect on policy, was one of the chief critiques of voluntary export restraints. And he understood early that the rise of antidumping, which he considered to be disguised protectionism rather than protection from predatory competition, would clog world trade.

In this tribute of Brian Hindley, we have collected memories from some of his friends and colleagues. Martin Wolf, who got to know Brian at the Trade Policy Research Centre (TPRC), had a wonderful obituary in the Financial Times. And Hugh Corbet, who was the Director of the TPRC, shares with us some memories of the trade policy debate from the 1970s and 1980s. Brian's active engagement in the TPRC was his first sojourn in the think tank world. He was later an active participant in the activities of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in London, and Philip Booth and John Blundell tell an amusing story of Brian's work on Britain's role in the European Union. Claude Barfield, the doyen of trade policy at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), often collaborated with Brian and provided a platform for him in the United States. And, closer to home, our colleague and ECIPE co-founder Razeen Sally recalls how Brian got involved in ECIPE and shares some fond memories of Brian's talent for "cutting out the bullshit".

Some of Brian's most quoted work was done together with Patrick Messerlin. In the mid-1990s they published a book (with the AEI) on antidumping as industrial policy, which is still in demand. Patrick Messerlin tells us how they became close friends – partly a World Bank connection – and how he appreciated Brian's forensic approach to scholarly work. Another alumni of the World Bank, Seev Hirsch, recalls how Brian and Seev had been engaged in a discussion over trade policy right up to the entrance to the hospital where Brian's wife was about to give birth to their twin daughters.

Ray Richardson, a close friend and colleague at Brian's academic home for most of his career, the Department of Economics at the LSE, writes about Brian's views on a constantly controversial issue in the UK: the EU. Brian

did not let idealism get in the way of a dispassionate analysis of intrusive government interventions emanating from Brussels. He did not make many friends in the corridors of Brussels or among Britain's "Europhiles". But his forensic approach and grasp of policy details also antagonised "Europhobes" and, as we could see at our end in Brussels, made him a trusted sounding board for those in the EU institutions who shared his free trade ideology and appreciated his deep understanding of law, economics and policy.

Ray also recalls Brian's style as teacher. Some students had difficulties with his heavy intellectual demands, but he developed strong friendship with many of his former students (several of them are now part of the ECIPE universe). One of them is Meir Pugatch, who did his doctorate under Brian's supervision at the LSE. They became close friends and Meir gives us some memories of Brian as a kind and trusted comrade.

All of us at ECIPE miss Brian very much. Our thoughts have been with his wife, Professor Anne Hindley, and four children that have lost their father and husband. We take comfort in the many good memories that we, and the contributors to this tribute, have of Brian. They all testify about a life lived to the full.

Hugh Corbet, President, Cordell Hull Institute, Washington, DC

BRIAN HINDLEY, OF the London School of Economics, was appointed Counselor for Studies at the Trade Policy Research Centre in 1976 until it closed in 1989. Nearly a decade earlier he was one of the half dozen economists Harry G. Johnson identified as promising trade-policy analysts to work on the centre's studies.

When Johnson returned to Britain from Chicago in 1966 "he readily fitted into the British trade-policy network". Among other things, he helped me establish the TPRC in 1968, becoming chairman of its advisory board and director of studies – on top of holding two chairs, one in Chicago and the other at LSE.

Johnson "was unhappy, at the time, with the quality of policy research at existing British sources". He wrote: "One sign of this that puzzled me for a long time was that, aside from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, all the economic and political policy research institutes were under the direction of a former journalist with [an Oxford first degree] and no policy research experience – people who identified research by interviewing top people and misunderstanding a random collection of published statistics".

The atmosphere of policy research was not helped either, Johnson felt, by the attitudes of the British press. He found it "excessively prone to assess news values, and present the news, according to its judgment of what is currently politically acceptable or unacceptable".

Such were the circumstances, affecting the climate of opinion, when Johnson involved himself in TPRC activities, analysis and discussion of Britain's place in international economic relations and identified younger colleagues who might help with the work. As one on the list, Brian Hindley was fiercely independent, tough-minded and could be "difficult" in questioning received wisdom and popular views.

Throughout his career, Hindley was interested in the interaction of law and economics. His first TPRC study was on Britain's Position on Non-tariff Protection (1972), an early analysis of non-tariff measures – the focus of subsequent multilateral trade negotiations.

In the 1970s onwards, the protectionist instrument of choice was the "voluntary" export restraint; and when it was finally "outlawed", the instrument of choice became the anti-dumping duty. Hindley was a persistent critic of VERs to the very end, when he foresaw the growth of anti-dumping actions, of which he then became a persistent critic.

In between, Hindley supervised an important TPRC programme of studies on State Investment Companies in

Western Europe (1983), assessing whether they were actually picking winners or only propping up losers. It began his frequent critiques of the trade and related policies, and of “industrial policy”, in the European Union.

*Philip Booth, Editorial and Programme Director, Institute of Economic Affairs, and
John Blundell, Distinguished Senior Fellow, Institute of Economic Affairs*

BRIAN HINDLEY WAS the co-author of a brilliant study for the IEA called "Better off Out?". The study evaluated, dispassionately, the costs and benefits of EU membership to Britain and concluded that the net benefits were close to zero. It clearly touched a raw nerve amongst the europhile establishment. I remember, once, a Labour EU minister arguing that the Conservative Party was unfit for office because one of its approved candidates had co-authored "Better off out" with Brian. It was rather worrying that the member of the government responsible for negotiating and analysing EU treaties in forensic detail had failed to notice the "?" at the end of the title or, it appears, understood any of the contents. The monograph received very substantial media coverage as, at the time, it was the only study of its type. It also enjoyed very good sales and classroom use.

Brian was a frequent attendee at a range of IEA events although trade was his number one issue. He was always a very convivial and insightful person to have at the table. Brian was a long-standing advocate of free trade in Europe - a position that was just incomprehensible to the more socialist europhiles.

Claude Barfield, Resident Scholar at the AEI

THOUGH WE DID not see each other very often in recent years, I counted Brian Hindley as a good friend as well as professional colleague and collaborator. How we first met is lost in the fog of memory—probably through Jagdish Bhagwati or from reading one of his contributions at the Trade Policy Research Centre. But from the first encounter Brian’s blunt honesty, combined with a biting sense of humor, made him a delight to be with. I eagerly looked forward to visits and encounters here in Washington, or in London, or at some remote conference with the assembled free trade mafia.

Brian’s keen eye for the telling detail and confining institutional and political realities made him an excellent candidate for trade policy studies that went to the heart of an issue in a manner readily accessible to non-economists (It is also true that extracting the rigorous analysis of a final draft from him was often an exercise in good-humored cajoling). We at AEI still get requests for the study Hindley co-authored with Patrick Messerlin, Antidumping Industrial Policy. Their critique of the covert protectionism and industrial manipulation practiced by both the U.S. and European governments under the guise of alleged “unfair” dumping resonates down to our own time—as does their strong call for normal competition policy rules as tests for predation. Brian also researched and wrote an incisive study for us on the perverse trade barriers to the provision airline services. Alas, though somewhat mitigated by technology, these national barriers and distortions (particularly in the U.S. market) remain all too pervasive.

Finally, as the EU seems prepared to lurch further into an ever tighter federal embrace, I shall miss a compatriot for whom Margaret Thatcher’s Bruges speech remained a constant admonition and guide.

Razeen Sally, Director and co-founder of ECIPE

I KNEW BRIAN for almost twenty years – from the time I started teaching the Political Economy of International Trade course at the LSE. But it was a superficial acquaintance for the first decade. Then it grew into a friendship, especially when he became involved in plans to set up ECIPE.

Intellectually, I was attracted by the way Brian applied his spare Chicago-influenced analytical framework to real-world policy, cutting out the bullshit (one of his favoured words) in between. That made him dismissive of waffle from non-economists (he would use stronger language), not least International Relations specialists pronouncing on economic issues. But he also felt estranged from mainstream economists who obsessed over theoretical ephemera and formal (mathematical and quantitative) techniques at the expense of a genuine interest in policy and serious policy analysis. He was also very sensitive to how institutions influence policy; hence his favourite academic junction was that between law and economics. Not surprisingly, Bob Hudec was his favourite academic lawyer.

Brian could be abrasive in all sorts of company. That alienated some students in his Trade class, especially non-economists who preferred faddish IR theories to hard thinking. But others, especially those who wanted to blend economic and institutional analysis, took to him quickly.

I was really pleased that Brian got so closely involved with ECIPE from the beginning. After the TPRC folded, he had a long break from think-tank work and the public advocacy it demands. I think he missed that; and his Bruges Group involvement was not a satisfactory substitute. So it was good to see him deploy his skills on trade remedies and other issues for ECIPE. And to take devilish pleasure in the way he demolished Eurocrats' and industry representatives' inflated egos and flatulent minds at ECIPE events – always with a po-face and in a calm, even tone.

I shall also miss his company in social settings – at the Travellers Club on Pall Mall, the cigar section of the bar at the Conrad on Avenue Louise, and, above all, at the Hindleys' kitchen table in north London. There one would enjoy his *obiter dicta* on people (he had strong, immediate likes and dislikes) and things. Academics are generally pretty narrow and boring these days. Brian was quite the opposite.

Patrick A. Messerlin, Professor GEM, Sciences Po

I MET BRIAN Hindley in 1985 at one of my very first conferences on trade policy. After my presentation, Brian came to tell me, with his usual kindness and warmth, that we should work together on European trade policy matters. Such a behavior captures some of his key qualities as a person: curiosity, spontaneity and lack of prejudice—approaching a French economist in trade policy matters did require openness of mind in the mid-1980s, a couple of years after the Poitiers story. It also captured his deep modesty: at that time, the Trade Policy Research Center was at its zenith, a world reference as a think tank in international trade, and Brian was one of its leading figures with Martin Wolf.

A year later, Brian was already in the midst of his visiting stay at the World Bank Trade Division when I joined it. There, Brian was extremely helpful: he was the perfect “bridge” for the French economist who tried hard to adjust to an institution where trade economists were speaking fast—and thinking even faster. We have had innumerable chats on economics and trade. We rapidly discovered a topic of great fascination for both of us: antidumping, anti-subsidy and safeguard, all instruments, which were quite new at that time.

When working together on this topic, Brian taught me the beauty of simple economic analysis and of clear

language. He was a master in these domains. Hearing Brian analyzing an antidumping case—jumping from law to economics and vice-versa, stating carefully and clearly his initial “propositions” (a word that Brian loved)—in his classic and classy English that was “singing” to my ears was always a feast.

Last but not least, Brian was always ready to laugh and to tease. Such people are not too rare. But, and that is a rarity, he also liked to be teased. We used endless opportunities to laugh about Britain and France, the US and Europe. During all these chats, Brian convinced me that there was a world busy to emerge—East Asia. He introduced me to East Asia in a profound, deep way, as the adventurer he was, eager to meet people and not only to talk about economics. He was very proud to have been qualified as an “ally” by Akio Morita, the charismatic Sony’s CEO. I guess, for him, it was one of the best recognitions he ever got of his impact, his independent mind and lack of prejudice. It was another illustration—almost thirty years ago—of his role as a “bridge” between people.

Seev Hirsch, Emeritus Professor, The Leon Recanati Graduate School of Business, Tel Aviv University

I FIRST MET Brian in the mid 'sixties, when we both did part time work for the Trade Policy Research Centre, directed at that time by Hugh Corbett, an energetic Australian Journalist and, like Brian, avid free trader, who struggled hard to keep the Centre afloat. Several years later we met quite unexpectedly at the World Bank in Washington, where we both happened to have temporary jobs. In later years, whenever I passed through London, I made sure to meet him, if only for a meal, (he loved Indian food) and a review of world events. I was always struck by the simple and forceful way he expressed his opposition to the European Community and by his conservative views, so atypical of his colleagues' at the London School of Economics. On one of these visits, I accompanied him to the hospital where Anne, his wife, was about to give birth to their twin daughters. Despite his obvious concern about the forthcoming birth, he continued to eloquently discuss some trade issues, in which he was involved at the time. I used to remind him of this experience whenever our paths crossed in future years. Brian will be very much missed by those who were privileged to know him.

Ray Richardson, London School of Economics

I FIRST MET Brian at the LSE in 1968 when, like so many others, including Brian himself, I returned from doing graduate work in the USA. Brian had attended the University of Chicago, and it showed straightaway. Chicago must have shaped Brian profoundly. His undergraduate work had a breadth which was very distant from the narrowness so typical in England, and it must have been a powerful source of his wide and complex intellectual hinterland. He understood not only economics but history and politics too, as evidenced by his annoying habit of winning wagers on political events (the stakes could be expressed in wine or cigars or, occasionally, cash).

His graduate work, of course, was in economics and Friedman and Stigler were especially powerful influences. From this background, almost inevitably, he became an applied economist – he was certainly never impressed by mere theoretical formalism. But he was an applied economist in a particular and somewhat old-fashioned sense. He was no great fan of econometrics, suspecting that the available data were insufficiently reliable to yield much even to highly sophisticated techniques. Instead, he operated from a seemingly simple yet subtle analytical framework and he attacked observable problems; his applied economics were then driven by an acute sensitivity to the importance of institutions and by the accumulation of detailed and specific knowledge.

This showed very clearly in his work on international trade, particularly on issues of dumping and

protectionism, and in his analysis of the EU. On trade restrictions he was usually on the side of the angels. But on Europe he was much less predictable. He could, of course, effortlessly upset the Europhiles and the Brussels bureaucrats. But, because he took the trouble to read the relevant legal documents with great care, he could also antagonise the simpliste Europhobes too. He always had a clear intellectual tendency but he had too much respect for the evidence ever to be an ideologue.

To non-economists, Brian's way of doing things, combining theory with an awareness of the relevant institutions and an understanding of the relevant facts, will seem like an obvious way to address many issues. Regrettably, it has become somewhat unfashionable, at least among academic economists. But it made Brian interesting to a wide range of people. Many of these were students, often outside his own department for he also taught courses in both Law and International Relations; students were often made uncomfortable by Brian, both because he made heavy and wide-ranging intellectual demands on them and because he could be somewhat direct, even abrasive, in class; but they were always stimulated, even if some of them understood what he was saying only after they had left university.

Many people will deeply miss Brian, and for many reasons. My own greatest loss will be that I can no longer anticipate our regular weekly lunches, when we would freely pick over the week's reading or events or foolishness – in conversation he was rigorous, caustic, challenging and even a little bit of a bully if he thought he could get away with it; but he was also enormous fun.

Dr. Meir Perez Pugatch, Managing Director at mPugatch Consiliu

I MET Brian for the first time as a young PhD student seeking guidance and supervision. During our very first meeting, Brian - in his very simple, friendly and non-nonsense manner - made me aware that I know nothing about the subject I'm about to explore (intellectual property). Throughout the years the mentor-student relationship has transformed into a warm friendship, although he was always a beacon I turned to in time of needs. He was a brilliant scholar, sharp as a razor and unconventionally direct. He had the unique talent of making things look simple, although his "simple" questions were the most challenging to answer. More importantly he was a man. He loved life and life loved him back. I recall the time when he was staying in Egypt teaching training different government officials on trade policy, while improving his tennis performance at the courts of the Hilton hotel. His love and devotion to his family was second to none. He was able to see the big picture in anything he did, he was brutally intellectually honest and at the same time a pragmatist. The list of big and small gestures and kindness by Brian is too long to mention. For me, it was the time when he gave a copy of his book *Everyman* (by Philip Roth), after my own father has passed away, that marked Brian's unique and special nature to understand and to sympathize with the sadness of other people. He was bigger than life, and will be deeply missed.