

Regulatory Economist Michael Crew

Memories by Faruqui and Littlechild

Michael Crew, one of the most influential regulatory economists of recent decades, and a professor at Rutgers University, died peacefully on September 26.

His books, articles, journals and conferences were familiar to very many in utility regulation. For example, the California Public Utilities Commission passed a resolution last year acknowledging his contributions to regulation.

Dr. Ahmad Faruqui from the Brattle Group wrote us this memory of Crew:

“I got the very sad news yesterday morning that Professor Michael Crew of Rutgers University passed away a couple of days ago after a short illness. He had been an informal mentor to me since I first met him in 1979 – 1980 at EPRI.

Michael ran the very successful CRR [Center for Research in Regulated Industries] conferences on the two coasts and edited the Journal of Regulatory Economics. He was the author of several landmark works on public utility economics and had taught scores of students during his academic career at Rutgers.

I had first encountered his name during my college days at the University of Karachi while reading the compilation, *Public Enterprise*, by Ralph Turvey. Among its many chapters was one called *Electricity Tariffs*. It was by Michael.

When I met him at EPRI, I asked him if that was his paper. He said yes. I still have the book. I wish I had gotten it autographed.

Somehow I had assumed he would always be around to bounce off ideas



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in regulatory economics, talk about cricket, discuss what it was like to grow up in Bradford (England), share stories from the road (he was an avid traveler) and chat about the state of the world.

Dr. Stephen Littlechild, the U.K. economist who literally developed price-cap regulation (RPI – X), wrote this



memory of Crew on a Rutgers website:

“I first met Michael nearly fifty years ago. We took the same undergraduate degree course at Birmingham University, one year apart. Throughout our careers, we shared interests in public utility economics and regulation. I followed his writings, and attended several of his postal conferences. He was my favorite journal editor.”

Of course by far the most frequent co-author was Michael’s great friend and colleague Paul Kleindorfer. [Paul Kleindorfer was a mentor to the Editor-in-Chief of this magazine, *Public Utilities Fortnightly*, while at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.]

Presumably they met during Michael’s year visiting Carnegie-Mellon in 1968 – 1969. I remember first meeting them both there at that time. They were intellectually curious, interacting, working on the same sorts of issues that interested me, focused on modeling and assessing public utility pricing. Their first joint publication (*A Note on Peak Loads and Non-Uniform Costs*, *Economic Journal*, June 1970) followed soon after.

This was just a short note but it answered a question recently posed in the literature: how to incorporate non-uniform running costs into the peak-load pricing model? It was the start of a lifetime’s joint work with Paul, that produced some seventy more joint papers (by 2010), three books, many jointly edited conference volumes and perhaps hundreds of workshops and conferences organized together. [PDF](#)