David Pearce (1941–2005): a tribute

Those working in and around the field of environmental valuation, including the contributors to this volume, owe David Pearce a massive debt of gratitude. This academic field is now burgeoning and is arguably the single most active area of environmental economics. Obviously, this was not always so. In its formative years the subject needed its champions and in David we had a champion of the highest order. He combined numerous qualities that many of us would be content to have in isolation: intellectual agility and clarity, a legendary ability to communicate often complex academic ideas and an undiminished willingness to engage, persuade and not merely be content to preach to the converted. Whether arguing the case for environmental valuation at the ‘frontier’ or more latterly for its extension to the last bastions where economic thinking had previously left little mark, David always carried the conviction that good and broadly accepted environmental policy-making could not proceed without a better understanding of the value that the public placed on environmental improvements.

Sadly, we have now lost our champion. Of course, there are others but as is the way with true innovators each is unique because, to coin a phrase, to make each one ‘they have to break the mould’. David’s sudden passing was a huge loss for all of those in the environmental research and policy community. He is greatly missed already. But our particular condolences and thoughts must go to David’s family who have lost a husband and father far too early. This volume was not intended as a tribute to David Pearce, completed for all intents and purposes only a matter of weeks before his death. We are sure, however, that we echo the sentiments of all of its contributors in acknowledging our gratitude to David for his generosity and encouragement over the years and for what he achieved on our behalves. We hope that the chapters within provide at least a small testament to this achievement.

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