



# IN APPRECIATION

## A TIME FOR REFLECTION

Joel Darmstadter

Celebrating our 50th anniversary this year was bound to evoke a sense of pride in accomplishments but also some feelings of nostalgia and poignancy. A year ago, we noted the passing of Allen Kneese, one of RFF's intellectual pioneers. Here, we remember several other major figures of an even earlier era. A seminal RFF work, *Energy in the American Economy* (1960), bears the names of three RFF researchers— each a notable scholar— who have died within just a few months of each other: Hans Landsberg in October 2001, Bruce C. Netschert on February 20, and Sam H. Schurr on March 4. (Two other contributing authors were Vera Eliasberg and Joseph Lerner.)

The American economy in RFF's first decade was confronted by major concerns, such as the Cold War, the end of the Korean War, and persistent anxiety about resource availability. Schurr, Netschert, and Landsberg recognized the necessity of integrating empirical data and interpretive analysis in order to gain a comprehensive perspective on the linkages between the demand for and supply of energy and other resources on the one hand, and economic growth, on the other. Fundamental research into the economics

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of natural resource commodities got much of its foundation from books by these men and their colleagues, with companion studies that include *Trends in Natural Resource Commodities* (1962), *Resources in America's Future* (1963), and, in part building on the contributions and insights of these works, *Scarcity and Growth* (1963).

The uniqueness of the historical reconnaissance provided in *Energy in the American Economy* was recognized by the U.S. government, when the book's database, along with statistical data on minerals, became a core historical time series in the Census Bureau's *Historical Statistics of the United States*, first published in 1949.

To be sure, in the decades since publication of *Energy in the American Economy*, development of such major quantitative efforts has increasingly become the responsibility of government agencies and other entities with large-scale computing facilities. At the same time, one would be badly mistaken to view the work by Schurr and his co-authors as primarily numerical. A mere glance at that book would reveal insights that analysts concerned with long-term energy trends might well ponder today.

Let me mention just one example of an energy issue treated in uncommon depth in *Energy in the American Economy*.

In a 45-page chapter, the book dissects the energy consequences, over the course of a century, of both structural changes in the U.S. economy and productivity-enhancing technological progress, particularly the role of increased electrification. The resulting relationship between energy and gross domestic product is nothing like the "coupled" phenomenon that some analysts, whose historical perspective seems to be limited to a few decades, confidently characterize as the long-term picture of the country's energy experience.

### SAM H. SCHURR

Sam H. Schurr, one of RFF's leading scholars and a pioneer in energy and mineral economics, died peacefully in his sleep on March 4 from



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cardiac arrest. He was 83.

"Though it's been a long time since Sam Schurr served on the research staff at RFF, his impact is felt every day," said RFF President Paul Portney. "Not only was he a leading light in the fields of energy and mineral economics, but he also helped establish the tradition here of even-handed and empirically grounded analysis."



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The author and co-author of many major works on energy economics, Schurr gained widespread recognition for his pioneering insight into the pivotal importance of fuels and power as part of technological progress and economic growth.

Schurr was born in 1918 in Youngstown, Ohio. After earning degrees at Rutgers and Columbia Universities, he spent the war years working as a research economist in various government settings. In the early 1950s, he worked for the U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Mines, where he was chief economist, and the RAND Corporation. His career at RFF as the director of the energy and mineral resources program started in 1954. In 1973, he joined the Electric Power Research Institute as the director of the energy systems, environment, and conservation division. He subsequently returned to RFF as a senior fellow in 1976 before once more joining EPRI. He retired in 1989.

Throughout his professional career, Schurr served on a number of distinguished advisory panels for the National Academy of Sciences and the Federal Power Commission, among others. He was honored by the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers with its Mineral Economics Award in 1968, and by the International Association of Energy Economists for his contributions to the literature of energy economics in 1981.

His wife of 50 years, Beatrice Gray Schurr, died in 1992. He is survived by his second wife, Sally N. Schurr.

### BRUCE C. NETSCHERT

Bruce C. Netschert, a distinguished energy economist and early member of the RFF research staff, died of cancer February 15. He was 82.

Among Netschert's specialties was energy pricing and forecasting. He regularly testified before Congress

on energy markets and also served as an expert witness in federal and state courts.

He was born in Newark, N.J. and received a bachelor's degree and a doctorate in economics from Cornell University. During World War II, he served in the Army, specializing in communications and cryptography. From 1951 to 1955, he worked for the President's Material Policy Commission, whose chairman, William Paley, was the catalyst for RFF's establishment. From 1955 to 1961, he served as a senior research associate at RFF where, in addition to *Energy in the American Economy* mentioned in the accompanying commentary, he authored *The Future Supply of Oil and Gas*. Netschert joined National Economic Research Associates in 1961, where he rose to the rank of vice president before retiring in 1989.

He is survived by his wife, Katherine Bock Netschert, and several family members.