

Personal Notes on Gordon Tullock, based in part on remarks made at the final dinner at the Liberty Fund Conference on Tullock's works, January 2002.

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I have known Gordon Tullock longer than anyone at the conference, and in fact longer than any of his colleagues at George Mason University, or even among his peers in the Public Choice Society. I first met Gordon in December 1957, at the American Economic Association meetings in Philadelphia. Warren Nutter and I had both joined the faculty at the University of Virginia in 1956, and we had established the Thomas Jefferson Center for Political Economy and Social Philosophy, with some external funding, which included support for a postdoctoral fellowship. Warren had known Gordon Tullock as an undergraduate in pre-war days at the University of Chicago, where they had both been members of the university debating team, along with Shirley Letwin.

Warren introduced me to Gordon Tullock with the suggestion that we might want to consider Gordon as the first recipient of the postdoctoral fellowship. I learned that Gordon's candidacy was based on a book-length manuscript he had been peddling, a manuscript on bureaucracy motivated in part by his nine year experience in the foreign service. I took the huge manuscript home with me, after learning that it had been rejected by 38 publishers. Somewhat to my surprise, I found that the book did have very solid analytical content, provided that a prospective reader was willing to wade through the jungle of undisciplined anecdotal personal commentary. And I joined Warren Nutter in processing the offer of the fellowship to Gordon Tullock, thereby rescuing him from the status he claimed as the world's only genuinely independent scholar.

Needless to say, Gordon Tullock stirred up the animals in Charlottesville, so much so that I am sure some of ideological animus against our program there found its origins in personalized pique at some of Gordon's deliberative insults. Within our research group, however, Gordon's contribution was immense, and was so acknowledged. We commenced to work together on what was later to become *The Calculus of Consent* (1962), completed during Gordon's tenure at the University of South Carolina and before he returned on the Virginia faculty. Our sense of success with that book motivated

Gordon and me to organize the now-famous research conference at the Old Ivy Inn in April 1963, from which ultimately emerged the Public Choice Society and the journal, *Public Choice*.

The events in the 1960s at the University of Virginia are well known, but, again, Gordon no doubt exacerbated the ideological split by his deliberative effort to embarrass the incoming dean, Robert Harris, by simply pointing out that the two books written by Harris were directly contradictory, one with another. Harris vowed openly that Tullock would never be promoted while he remained at the university, a commitment he held to, despite the fact that Gordon Tullock, singly or jointly, published more papers in professional “Political Science” journals over that period than the *whole faculty in Political Science*.

One additional story. The allegations about the jointly-authored paper on polluters’ profits (AER 1975) are true. Gordon and I wrote that paper over one weekend. The basic ideas emerged from a conversation in Gordon’s office on Saturday morning; I wrote out a draft which I showed to Gordon on Sunday; we revised it and the paper was typed and sent off on Monday. Ah, those were the days.