



# Leo Hurwicz Turns 90

On Saturday April 14, 2007 the department hosted a 90th birthday celebration for Leo Hurwicz in the form of a conference and dinner. Entitled "Perspectives on Leo Hurwicz," the event was attended by many colleagues, family, friends, and former advisees. One hundred people came from near and far--as far away as China, Japan and Spain. Held at the Holiday Inn near the West Bank campus, the event started at 1:45pm with opening remarks by University

Provost Thomas Sullivan. Sean McDaniels, representing the State of Minnesota, delivered two proclamations by the Governor and the State House declaring April 14th to be "Leo Hurwicz Day." The program then commenced with half-hour talks, beginning with Kenneth Arrow from Stanford, who spoke on "Limited Communication and the Allocation of Labor," followed by Stanley Reiter from Northwestern, "Remarks on Leo Hurwicz's Work on Mechanism Design." After a break, Jim Jordan from Penn State presented "The Communication Required for Convergence of Equilibrium in Economies and Games," and then Daniel McFadden from Berkeley ended the program with "The Human Side of Mechanism Design." All the speakers emphasized Leo's immense contributions to mechanism design. (And, just last year *Designing Economic Mechanisms*, by Leo and Stan Reiter was published by Cambridge University Press.)

After a cocktail hour, dinner was held, followed by additional speakers. **Dan McFadden** ('62) started off the dinner with a toast to Leo:

"I would like to raise a toast to Leo on behalf of all his former students. Your reputation for placing economics and social science on a rigorous foundation attracted us to the discipline and gave us an appreciation of careful mathematical analysis that threads through and ties together all of economics.



We learned from you that stating and proving theorems is a participatory activ-

ity, not a spectator sport. And, you've vaccinated us for life against the modern disease of showing how clever you are by doing economics without a safety net.

Leo, you have one of the longest resumes in economics, once you add to it all of your students who have prospered on your training and ideas. Thank you."

The emcee for the dinner was Ket Richter. Ket also gave an interesting history timeline of Leo's life, noting that, "Leo was born before the Communist regime, outlasted it and is still going strong." To hear Ket's wonderful tribute with all the amazing details, go to <http://www.econ.umn.edu/hurwicz> and click on "Pictures;" the video clip is then at the top of that next page.

Hugo Sonnenschein, former Minnesota professor, former President of the University of Chicago, and now Professor Emeritus at Chicago, spoke next. Leo helped to hire him in 1964 as an assistant professor on his NSF grant. Hugo

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## Minnesota Alum Geir Haarde is Prime Minister of Iceland

**Geir Harde** (MA 1977) became Prime Minister of Iceland on June 15, 2006 after the resignation of Halldor Asgrimsson. He was born in Reykjavik and received a B.A. at Brandeis University and an MA in international relations at Johns Hopkins before coming to Minnesota for his Master's in Economics. While here, he worked with Anne Krueger. Prime Minister Haarde has been a member of Althing (the Icelandic Parliament) since 1987, and served as the Minister of Finance (1998-2005) and as the Minister of Foreign Affairs (2005-06). Early in his career he worked for the Central Bank of Iceland (1977-83).

In May of 2007, a U of M delegation led by President Bob Bruininks visited Iceland. The U of M has had a cooperative agreement with the University of Iceland since 1982. A very successful student exchange program has ensued with alumni who have close ties to both schools.

### *Hurwicz continued...*

said that Leo argued that the department needed a "critical mass" of mathematical economists, who, if not kept in adequate number, would disappear like whooping cranes! The next speaker, John Chipman, also emphasized Leo's support of mathematical economics--Leo would say "you can't quarrel with logic" -- which John said was Leo's legal background coming to the fore. John added that Leo helped to make mathematical economics respectable and indispensable to the profession, and it was Leo who was mainly responsible for making the department grow to be ranked 5th in the nation. Don Fraser, former congressman from Minnesota, spoke about his friendship with Leo and Evelyn and their political support over the years. Stan Reiter told a charming story of very young Leo's early grasp of mathematics. Leo's daughter, Sarah Kogut, read letters from former students, and grand-daughter Sophie Kogut spoke about Leo's love of family. Ken Arrow ended the program by hopping up to the podium to say that Leo was instrumental in getting former Minnesota professor and (then) current Prime Minister of Greece Andreas Papandreu out of jail after the 1967 coup. Links to video clips of the speakers can be viewed on the above website.

During this trip, Geir was presented with an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Minnesota for his distinguished leadership and public service. The ceremony was held May 24, 2007, the same day that Iceland's new government was announced, with Geir continuing as prime minister. During the presentation, President Bruininks detailed many of Geir's accomplishments, including "playing a critical role in the liberalization and transformation of the Icelandic economy, leading his homeland to achieve one of the highest consistent growth rates in the world with the lowest rates of inflation and unemployment," and Bruininks also mentioned the Prime Minister's work "to establish a global outlook, expanding Iceland's potential for growth in new areas and cultivating beneficial relationships with nations around the world." This award is the highest that the University confers and since 1851 only 200 honorary degrees have been awarded. Congratulations Geir!

It was a wonderful gathering of people important to Leo, including his entire extended family. The department was honored to be able to host this event and it was a festive occasion.

Minnesota alumni who attended: **Shomu Banerjee** ('92), **Paulina Beato** ('79), **Kim Border** ('79), **Bob Dildine**, **Chuen-mei Lee Fan** ('72), **Liang-Shing Fan** ('65), **Lu Hong** ('91), **Hideo Kanemitsu** ('65), **Kunio Kawamata** ('72), **Richard Kihlstrom** ('68), **Meg Ledyard** ('04), **Daniel McFadden** ('62), **James Moore** ('68), **James Quirk** ('59), **Luis Sanchez-Mier** ('04), **Rubin Saposnik** ('59), **Joaquim Silvestre** ('73), **Jim Simler** ('59), **Guoqiang Tian** ('87), **Jose Trujillo** ('80), **Fernando Vega-Redondo** ('84), **Julio Vinuela**, and **Myrna Wooders** ('76).



*Lu Hong and Shomu Banerjee*

Leo's actual birthday was August 21. If you would like to call or send a greeting, he can be reached at:

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-- Wendy Williamson