

History of Economic Thought Society of Australia Conference 2008

By: Naomi Vidler
Murdoch University
Mannkal Economics Education Foundation

Summary

In July 2008, five student delegates from Western Australian Universities were selected to receive sponsored positions to the 2008 History of Economic Thought Society of Australia conference. Our sponsor, the Mannkal Economics Education Foundation aims to provide students with opportunities to further their studies by exposing them to academic forums which will stimulate free-thought and encourage consideration of libertarian principles and a free market philosophy. The conference was hosted by the University of Sydney at the Rydges hotel in Parramatta over the 9th – 11th July. This paper will outline the experience of the conference attendees.

For an economics student, the opportunity to attend the History of Economic Thought Society of Australia (HETSA) conference is one which can broaden horizons and add depth to studies otherwise confined to books and lectures. Societies such as these are responsible for leading economic thought and policy making. Membership and contribution to such societies is one of the achievements which economics scholars and academics aspire to. The opportunity to attend this conference was given to five students from several Western Australian universities in July 2008. The Mannkal Economics Education Foundation sponsored two delegates from the University of Western Australia, Callum Jones and David Halperin, two students from Notre Dame, Aubrey Poon and Luke McFayden and Naomi Vidler from Murdoch University.

The Mannkal Economics Education Foundation was formulated and is directed by ex miner and business entrepreneur Ron Manners. Ron formed a specific interest in the HETSA after attending a conference several years ago. His decision to sponsor students to attend the event was based upon his appreciation of the society's values of free-thought and academic individualism. Ron and the Mannkal Foundation champion libertarian views and support a free market approach to economic policy. Along with sponsoring students to attend events such as the HETSA conference, the foundation also hosts its own events and seminars aimed at promoting greater understanding of the concepts underpinning free societies.

The HETSA conference took place at the Rydges Hotel in Parramatta, Sydney over the 9th – 11th July, 2008. Included in the program were several plenary sessions, a key note address, a panel review of the discipline of History of Economic Thought as well as several social functions. The guest speaker who delivered the key note address for the conference was Robert Leonard, Head of Department and Professor of Economics at Université du Québec Montréal (UQAM) Montreal, Canada. His chosen topic was 'New Light on von Neumann: Politics, Psychology and the Creation of Game Theory'. Others who are prominent amongst the discipline of History of Economic Thought who presented papers include, Peter Groenewegen, Tony Aspromourgos, Elias Khalil, Steven Kates as well as Western Australian professors, Michael McLure (UWA) and Gregory Moore (Notre Dame). Throughout the conference there were several social events, including a historical tour of Parramatta and the conference dinner. The conference was highly interesting and all the Mannkal scholars had the opportunity to make some good contacts within the economics profession and learned a great deal.

We would all like to thank Ron Manners and the Mannkal foundation for providing us with the opportunity to attend the HETSA conference and for their ongoing support of our academic pursuits.