

[1983 HES Distinguished Fellow citation for George J. Stigler. Published in the History of Economics Society *Bulletin*, vol. 5, no. 1 (July 1984), pp. 5-6.]

George J. Stigler
History of Economics Society
Distinguished Fellow

George Stigler, in all his writings, whether or not they are directly concerned with the history of economic thought, uses his profound knowledge of the history of economics to enrich the argument and to deepen our understanding. His writings are never dull and always perceptive. But he is never better than when he writes about the contributions of the great economists and their place in the evolution of economic analysis. His first book, *Production and Distribution Theories*, published in 1941, is a masterly treatment of the work of economists in the period 1870 to 1895 and occupies a secure place as a classic of economic literature. Time has not diminished Stigler's powers and in his book, *Essays in the History of Economics*, published in 1965, which reprints a large number of Stigler's historical papers, he throws new light on every topic with which he deals.

Stigler does not simply confine himself to an exposition of the views held by economists over the years. He tells us how the problems under consideration ought to be tackled and also instructs us on even larger questions, the factors which influence the way in which a subject such as economics develops.

Stigler in his first book tells us that at that time most writers of standard works on the history of economic thought "suffer either from ignorance of the literature or inadequate theoretical equipment for critical analysis or from both these handicaps." Such a reproach could not be levelled at Stigler. With a superb theoretical equipment and an extraordinary knowledge of the literature, his writings represent the history of economic thought at its best.

Professor Stigler was not able to be present to receive the Distinguished Fellow award. Instead, he sent the following letter to be read at the Wednesday night banquet at which the preceding citation was read:

May 16, 1983

Professor John Whitaker
University of Virginia
Department of Economics
Charlottesville, Virginia 22901

Dear John:

What a generous citation, careful to display virtues and conceal vices! I hope that Bill Grampp does not blush visibly as he reads it. I much regret Chicago's penchant for having us teach after most schools are closed, and I shall miss both your collective company and your reports on new work. I thank you for an honor I am proud to receive.

Cordially,

George J. Stigler