
Richard N. Hunt
University of Pittsburgh

What follow are some personal remembrances of Bob Wheeler. Since I was his doctoral mentor, it seems appropriate that I leave to others a more formal assessment of his scholarly work.

I first met Bob Wheeler when we both arrived together at the University of Pittsburgh for the fall term in 1961, he as a beginning graduate student, myself as a beginning assistant professor. A less likely future historian of international socialism could scarcely have been imagined: crew-cut and clean shaven, he had recently finished summer training as a lieutenant in the Marine Corps Reserve and had been graduated that June from Niagara University, a small Catholic school just downstream from the falls in western New York. Niagara's History Department had recommended him to Pitt as a person "of neat appearance and of trustworthy character." But Bob was also a summa-cum-laude history major and had won an NDEA Fellowship to undertake graduate study in European history.

In that field he worked principally with Robert Colodny, Seymour Drescher, and myself. He was also introduced to modern concepts of social history and quantification by Samuel Hays. Oddly, perhaps, he did not work with David Montgomery, who has become Pitt's best known labor historian and who is now taking over the editorship of this newsletter. By the time Bob passed his Ph.D. comprehensives he had decided his interest lay in German history and thus within my domain at Pitt, but I imagine he chose to work on the USPD only for the expedient reason that I could offer him the most help on a subject such as that. I remember presenting him with a copy of my SPD book inscribed, "In hope of a companion volume," and with that I sent him off to Europe in 1964 for an expected twelve months of dissertation research.

The twelve months stretched into twenty-four and then thirty-six, and I began to wonder if he would ever come back. But in fact it was during these three years in Europe that Bob really blossomed as an historian, revealing the two qualities which—to my mind—made him stand apart. First was his insatiable appetite for archives: he seemed never more content than when rummaging in search of some undiscovered document; never more frustrated than when he could not gain access to the next archive. In 1967 he wrote me, in jest I trust, of a scheme to parachute into the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow. This came after he had already labored in more than *eighty* other archives scattered through seven or eight different countries. Bob's incurable archivomania nonetheless produced that rock-solid foundation of primary evidence that became the hallmark of his scholarly writing. It also gave him a degree of familiarity with European archival holdings that was the envy of all his colleagues.

Second was his personal charm and gregarious nature that led him to make contact, and then make friends, with every scholar—young or old, famous or undiscovered—he met along the way in this archive or at that conference, such that after a few years there was scarcely a European labor historian on either continent who did not know and admire him. I soon found that when I met such scholars myself for the first time, I could win the most immediate and universal recognition,

not by mentioning where I taught or what I had written, but by saying I was Bob Wheeler's mentor. Among other things it was Bob's gregarious affability that made him an ideal editor for this newsletter—he simply knew everybody.

Bob did find enough time between archives to court and win the hand of Vera Borchart, a native Berliner and translator of Russian, who as Vera Wheeler is known to the readers of *ILWCH* as one of its dedicated editors. The newlyweds came to California in fall 1967 where Bob had accepted an instructorship in Stanford's highly reputed Western Civilization program. It was during these years at Stanford that I realized how much of the USPD had rubbed off on Bob. He seemed to move quite unselfconsciously into the political activism of the late 'sixties': he wrote me of being elected to the steering committee in a junior faculty organizing drive, of mounting a protest rally over the shooting of Rudi Dutschke, and of the peace-spangled American flag he flew from his office window until it was confiscated by the local police. "Apparently the USPD has gone to my head," he wrote me. If any further proof of this were needed, it came when his son, Daniel, was born on March 18, 1971—the hundredth anniversary of the Paris Commune. Now *that's* what I call socialist planning! And "three guesses," he exclaimed, "which Berrigan he's named after."

In 1970 Bob moved to the University of Southern California, where he would remain until his death. In the same year he also completed his dissertation on the differences within the USPD over the question of an international affiliation, differences that would lead to the fatal split at Halle in 1920, when the more radical half of the party chose to join Lenin's Third International, leaving the more moderate half to limp slowly back into the SPD and the Second International. This schism seemed to dry up any serious possibility for a political course between the compromises of Weimar Social Democracy and the authoritarianism of the Communists, seemed to leave no room for a mass socialist party that would be both militant and democratic at the same time. How and why the Halle schism came about is what Bob set out to explain.

Methodologically, he stood at the juncture between traditional kinds of labor history and the newer social and quantitative approaches. He was concerned to explain a major political event within one of the principal Weimar parties, but he was never satisfied to examine the opinions and behavior of party leaders alone. Here was a split that divided the party membership and voters in almost equal halves. Were there underlying social determinants that might help to account for so profound a split? This was the question that led him to so many local archives all over Germany and into the social-quantitative sphere.

Bob published a number of articles on different aspects of his topic and then in 1975—with the Verlag Ullstein—a substantially revised version of the whole, titled *USPD und Internationale: Sozialistischer Internationalismus in der Zeit der Revolution*. Significantly, it was dedicated jointly to Salvador Allende and Alexander Dubcek. By the time his book saw the light of day Bob was already at work on a still more ambitious project—an overall social history of German labor in the Weimar Republic, based on the most sophisticated computer analysis of its social and political structure. Simultaneously, his wide-ranging and fertile imagination led him in other scholarly directions, into religious factors in Weimar labor politics, for example, and the political behavior of German women, or the history of the German film, and finally the social history of sports.

His untimely and tragic death at 37, just when he seemed to be developing his full powers as an historian, is a grievous loss to the profession as a whole and to the readers of this newsletter in particular. For those who knew him personally—as so many did—the loss is far more than just a professional one.

David W. Morgan
Wesleyan University

Not only will Bob Wheeler be sadly missed personally, by the hundreds of us who knew him through research contacts, conferences and conventions, but his passing leaves a palpable gap in American research efforts in twentieth-century European labor history. To those who have perhaps tended to think of Bob primarily as an editor, organizer and gadfly among labor historians, the accompanying analysis of his publications may come as a surprise. Bob had earned his position at our head not only by his energy and other personal qualities, but also with a very substantial record of creative scholarly contributions.

The first qualities of Bob's work were exhaustiveness and a really exemplary meticulousness. "Mere" carefulness and determination in accumulating source material are taken for granted in researchers, but not in the measure Bob practiced them. The amount of carefully directed work that went into his studies of the USPD was stunning, and some of his lasting scholarly legacy lies in this quality of his research. The "Bibliographie und Standortsverzeichnis der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Presse von 1917–1922" (1968), the age statistics in "German Labor and the Comintern: A Problem of Generations?" (1974), and the membership tables included in "Die '21 Bedingungen' und die Spaltung der USPD im Herbst 1920" (1975), to name three of the most important, represent achievements which probably no one else would have thought possible at the time Bob did them. Persistence led him to the discovery of unexpected, illuminating information and to the accumulation of telling individual and local examples, and these give a special flavor to his writings. It is not too much to say that by himself he raised the standards for research in Weimar labor history by a significant notch.

Bob was by no means content with the results obtainable only by imaginative detail work, such as lay at the foundation of his thesis (1970). Within a few years after the thesis he was sufficiently "retooled" in statistical methods, computer techniques, and the concerns of contemporary social historians that he could set forth important programmatic statements in two symposia papers of 1973, later published as "Quantitative Methoden und die Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung" (1974) and "Zur sozialen Struktur der Arbeiterbewegung am Anfang der Weimarer Zeit: Einige methodologische Bemerkungen" (1974). The first of these advocates the extension of labor history into true social history, from the ground up, with the application of computer technology—an idea that was newer in German labor history at that time than we can easily realize now. The second piece, far more specific, sets out a program of research into quantifiable variables—sex, age, trade or occupation, place of work, and place of residence—that may help us understand certain features of working-class

politics, in particular the tendencies toward radicalism or conservatism. Bob himself carried out valuable studies in two of the variables in his articles "German Labor and the Comintern: A Problem of Generations?" (1974) and "German Women and the Communist International" (1975). The more general programmatic theme, that labor history must incorporate the questions and methods of up-to-date social history, that it must try to see the base as well as the upper reaches of the movements it investigates, underlies nearly all of the published work of Bob's last five years. It remains to be seen whether the reorientation he urged will come about; but he certainly exemplified it.

The last point to be made about Bob's writings in this brief space is the drive and commitment that informs them. He was involved with his subjects. Politically, he found a connection with the frame of mind of the radical socialists whom he principally studied that went beyond mere scholarly penetration; he did this without dogmatism or narrow partisanship, in a way that is not only attractive in itself but enlivens our understanding of these men. (His thesis is dedicated to two Independent Socialists, one of whom he had known; his book is dedicated to Salvador Allende and Alexander Dubcek.) But his more-than-intellectual involvement shows in other ways than political sympathy. His very advocacy of the methods of the new social history had more than a tinge of the enthusiasm of discovery. His support of women's history, in "German Women and the Communist International" (1975), communicates a concern with justice as well as with scholarly balance. In general, his best articles commonly have a strongly argumentative tone with value overtones—the issues that are addressed *matter*, the process of scholarly investigation matters, too. In short, Bob's writings communicate warmth and generosity, energy and enthusiasm. These were the qualities of Bob as a person; they are the qualities of his written legacy.

Gerald D. Feldman

University of California, Berkeley

I first met Bob Wheeler about ten years ago in Berlin, where he had already become something of a legend because of his repeated trips to the most obscure East German archives to gather materials for his studies of the Independent Socialists. He took great relish in letting his long string of visas hang from his passport and gave the impression that he would some day wallpaper a study with them. Bob's capacity to move with such ease across that uncomfortable border, however, was but an external manifestation of his extraordinary tenacity as a researcher and his exceptional accomplishments. He never seemed daunted or frustrated by the difficult problems of securing sources for his work, remained convinced that worthwhile and telling materials could be found if one hunted them out, and then proved that he was right. The need to do regional and local studies belongs to the standard liturgy of the labor historian these days, but Bob was one of the very few labor historians in the German field who acted upon this insight and, as his analysis of the support for the Twenty-One Conditions of the Third International shows, fruitfully applied local and regional data to the illumination of a major historical problem. Here, as in his use and promotion of quantitative techniques, Bob was a pioneer in the field, but he did not make a fetish of local studies, counting, or his

imaginative work on special aspects of worker culture such as sports. Neither did he pursue them to the exclusion or suppression of their political implications. He combined a broad understanding of the range of problems faced by the labor historian with a sincere, thoughtful, but passionate commitment to the ideals and the goals of the labor movement as he understood it. That is, labor history was for him an enterprise of great scope and high moral purpose, and it was because of the breadth of his conception that his work is so interesting and that he made the rest of us more interesting by taking the lead in organizing us through the *Newsletter* and his other activities. He was the ideal person to undertake his projected "Social History of German Labor in the Weimar Republic (1918–1933)," and one wonders if the job will ever be done with quite the breadth and vision he would have brought to it.

Personally, one of the things I will miss most about Bob is his friendly but telling criticism. At the 1976 Montreal symposium on revolutionary situations in Europe, for example, he forced me to think much harder about one of my favorite modes of explaining worker behavior, namely, the alleged "buying off the workers," and I do not believe that I will ever use that phrase quite as loosely or imprecisely again. It was a true pleasure to debate with him on political and historical questions because he was an engaged intellectual and a democratic spirit. Above all, he was a warm and concerned human being, and it is no surprise that so many of his colleagues were also his friends.

Jean H. Quataert

University of Houston, Clear Lake City

The *Newsletter* of the Study Group on International Labor and Working Class History is a testament to Robert Wheeler's professional and personal vitality. It expresses his ideal of what it means to be a scholar in the academic community. That this ideal was translated into reality attests to Bob's enthusiasm, his perseverance, and abiding interest in and way with people. Bob strongly felt that scholars in similar fields too often work in isolation; scholarly bonds transcend national boundaries, and he saw to it that researchers on both sides of the Atlantic came to know one another and shared research and information. His conception eventually broadened to include scholars working in both Latin America and Middle East labor history and was signified by the change in the *Newsletter's* title from European to International Labor and Working Class History.

The *Newsletter* issued from the Study Group which was formally constituted during the 1971 American Historical Association meeting. Seventy individuals initially responded to Bob's request for information and financial support; the number receiving the journal now stands at over 450. The first volume came out in May 1972 and provided information on work recently completed and in progress, reports on meetings and conferences, archival references, as well as bibliographical analyses. The response was very positive: "Glad you're in business" and "very impressive" were typical reactions to the first issue of the *Newsletter*.

Over the past six years, the *Newsletter* has evolved into a publication of considerable import in the field. It not only grew larger as greater numbers of individuals joined in the venture but its

focus shifted. While information on archival materials and conferences dealing with topics of interest to labor historians are not neglected, more attention is now devoted to book analyses and to reports and essays of substance. These are stimulating and provocative, and the journal provides a unique forum for scholars to offer preliminary findings and air hypotheses. In the latest volume, for example, one finds seven essays dealing with a wide variety of conceptual issues such as the problem of defining "artisan" and "skilled worker," the role of the working class family in changing values, and the relationship between education and class in Germany. The publication has been greatly enriched by the new direction.

Sustaining the *Newsletter* was Bob's personal achievement; this involved great rewards but also, for sure, thankless tasks and paper work filling several filing cabinets. Continuing publication now falls to all of Bob's friends and colleagues. I cannot think of a more fitting testimony to his achievements, a lasting tribute to his memory, and one which will be of continuous benefit to all of us in the field of labor and working class history.

Gordon M. Berger
University of Southern California

When we lost Bob Wheeler suddenly last December it came as a terrible, stunning shock. How severe that loss would be to me personally, I could not have known prior to the very long period of mourning and grief which has ensued in my life. He was at once a deeply respected and stimulating colleague in my department, a neighbor, and my best friend; but I really had no idea how very much I would miss his presence. That endearing/maddening combination of sincerity, wit, irreverence towards the absurd, and brash energy is gone; and how we lament his absence!

But I want here to set aside the lament—though it still is virtually everpresent—and write to celebrate Bob's life and the gifts he left to those who knew him. I say gifts because if I were asked to summarize the quality of his life in two words, they would be "He gave." He gave, and therefore left a rich legacy to those who were the beneficiaries of his generosity. He gave, and therefore transcended the limitations each of us has on our own self-contained existence. It is when we see what he gave, what his legacy to us was, that we first begin to make some sense out of this tragically brief period in which he blessed us with his presence.

To his family, friends, colleagues and students he brought a firm set of personal values and ethics, seasoned with love, honesty and charity. These were all blended together in the twin crucibles of an enduring religious faith and a profound skepticism towards the superficial, the hypocritical, and the false. Human relationships were of exceptional importance to Bob; he cherished them and nourished them with fervor. It was he, more than anyone else, who worked to bring a sense of community to the junior faculty of our department when he arrived at the University of Southern California eight years ago. It was he, more than anyone else, who opened his home not only to faculty but to graduates and undergraduates on a regular basis. Friends—even friends of friends—were always welcomed, even when unexpected and intrusive. At school, he made a practice of dividing his large

courses into several sections, and met personally with all sections regularly in order to know his students and have them know him. The extra hours such an approach entailed were never an obstacle to his commitment to personalized teaching.

And then there was *ILWCH*. How very much Bob gave of himself through the newsletter, how many hours and days each week and month the business of commencing and sustaining *ILWCH* demanded! How often did he set aside activities or requests to the university more immediately related to his professional advancement and personal gain for the sake of continuing *ILWCH* and soliciting support for it. How surprised we were to see him doing this regularly, and how easy it now seems to see that such behavior on behalf of his field was only part of his general pattern of selfless generosity.

Bob's charity extended to traditional areas as well. The sheer volume and diversity of requests for contributions to one cause or another that even now fill his mailbox, and the number to which he responded, are staggering testimony to his willingness to share of himself. He cared deeply about those around him, those less fortunate than he, anyone in genuine need. Little wonder, then, that his professional interests should have focussed so closely on the oppressed and exploited, and that he should have written with such empathy about them.

He gave, he lectured, he wrote, he committed himself to action from a desire to make his world a more just and humane place. He was passionately critical and intolerant of injustice and inhumanity; and never resigned himself to compromising with them at any level. For all of his irreverence, he was never cynical, cherishing to the end the good he found in his fellow man and demanding more.

Those less strongly committed than he were inspired to re-evaluate the quality of their own lives. Those touched by his generosity were reminded of the importance of looking beyond self-fulfillment to social responsibility. Those who despaired of finding honesty, selflessness and empathy were cheered and encouraged by his presence.

This, and so much more, Bob gave us; and perhaps we may be pardoned for our anger that it is no longer forthcoming. But it *was* there; even now, we have what he was able to give in the time he had. It was, and is, so good. And for that, we rejoice that he was a part of our lives.

Bernard H. Moss,
Los Angeles

In an academic field largely dedicated to the proposition that the masses make history, it is sometimes embarrassing to admit that they do not always make it without the Herculean efforts of great individuals. Just as we all know more or less that the Russian Revolution would not have occurred without Lenin, it is no secret that the Study Group on Labor and Working Class History would never have been without Bob Wheeler, who conceived it, organized it and virtually carried it on his shoulders for eight years.

As a close colleague who followed the progress of the Study Group from a gleam in Bob's eye to the regular biannual publication of the *Newsletter*, I was rather awestruck by the single-minded and

often fierce determination with which he labored to put our field of interest on the academic map. Often spurning offers of assistance, he was the one who had to canvass departments for support, badger writers for articles, find the right combination for conference panels, collect dues and edit, proofread and mail the *Newsletter*!

I frequently wondered what personal qualities it took to manage it all. Satisfying a learned society of scholars with strong convictions and sensitive egos required both tact and fortitude. In a field of great intellectual diversity, it took someone of truly catholic persuasion to show proper deference to reigning authority while encouraging the efforts of the innovative and unorthodox, to placate representatives of diverse methodological schools and accommodate competing ideological approaches. Forever beating the bushes for new ideas and talent, Bob had a sympathetic ear for the eager graduate student and his project. Distinguished visitors from abroad as well as local students all found welcome in his little house on Greene Street where the earnest talk and beer would never last long enough for Bob's satisfaction.

I wondered too what had brought Bob, a practicing Catholic from a fairly conservative background, into the vaguely subversive field of European labor history and an identification with the German Independent Socialists, the subject of his major work. Whether because of religious conviction or temperament—both truculent and gentle as it was—Bob was a defender of the underdog and a fighter for justice. Though he never identified with what passed for the American Left, he was always to be found with his combative ardor and argumentative skill in the struggle—for peace in Vietnam, rights of the farm workers, democracy in Chile, salary increases for junior faculty, and—alas—better medical care for U.S.C. faculty.

Like many loose radicals of the Sixties, Bob was difficult to peg politically. Uncomfortable with Marxist theory and ideology, he was a liberal Catholic and a humanist socialist. Yet, his convictions were strong enough for him to declare that if he had lived in Germany in 1921 he would have voted for the Independent Socialists. He and I frequently disagreed about politics, historical interpretations and his stewardship of the Study Group. That is why I was so gratified when a month before he died, at a talk I gave before a skeptical assemblage of "left" academics on Euro-Communism, he alone rushed up to lend his moral support. Had he heard echoes of the Independent Socialists? Had the prospect of socialism with democracy sparked some hope? Or was he simply taking up the cudgels for another underdog? A little of each, I'm sure.

Peter Lösche
Georg August Universität, Göttingen

It is still inconceivable to us that Robert F. Wheeler, a historian of the German and international labor movement, died the day before Christmas Eve at the early age of thirty-seven. His death, which was completely unexpected, cut short an extremely rich creative life. The editors of the *IWK* and the staff of the Consortium of the Labor Movement at the Historical Commission in Berlin were closely associated with him. Robert F. Wheeler not only contributed articles and research essays to our journal, he was also one of our closest advisors.

Wheeler studied at a number of universities in the United States, then at the Free University in Berlin, the Free University in Amsterdam, the University of Lund in Sweden and St. Anthony's College at Oxford. He also studied and did research as a Visiting Fellow of the International Consultation Program of the Historical Commission in Berlin.

He knew well many of the historians of the German labor movement. We met Bob in the archives or at historical conferences, or we simply asked for his advice on our own research projects. His excellent knowledge of the relevant archives and libraries, as well as his acquaintance and friendship with historians of the labor movement, served as the basis of Wheeler's editorship, since 1972, of *Newsletter: European Labor and Working Class History* (since 1975 *International Labor and Working Class History*). In this journal, as in the *IWK*, regular reports on research projects, and archival and library holdings appeared, as well as recent publications.

Robert F. Wheeler was himself an outstanding scholar who succeeded in working intensively over many years with original sources, without ever losing sight of the essentials of the question he was investigating. Today Wheeler ranks among the most important historians of the USPD (Independent Social Democrats), the earlier KPD and the Second-and-a-Half and Third Internationals. His treatise *USPD and the Internationals: Socialist Internationalism during the Revolution* (1975) is based on his dissertation (1970), considerably expanded and supplemented by further research. Prior to its appearance, publications about the USPD were based extensively on Eugen Prager's book of 1922. In recent years the results of Wheeler's research have been adopted in publications on the USPD. Today Wheeler's book is considered the standard work in the field.

Bob Wheeler was not a man who followed the rigid path of traditional historical research. This was revealed in the kinds of questions he raised about the basis of the organized labor movement. To deal with these non-traditional questions Wheeler utilized the quantifying method in the science of history. He adopted the necessary tools, learned how to use computers, and reflected upon the accessibility of history to the methodology of quantification. An article he published in our journal in 1974 entitled "Quantifying Methods and the History of the Labor Movement", can be seen not only as a document bearing eloquent testimony to Wheeler's labors, but also as opening new perspectives for European historians in understanding the applications of other sciences to the study of history.

In recent years Wheeler had become involved in two new areas of research. He intended to write a social history of the labor movement and conditions among the workers under the Weimar Republic, and in this connection was preparing for an extensive research year (1978–1979) in Germany. During this year Wheeler had in mind a major enterprise, namely to combine an approach of "history from the bottom up" with a traditional history of the institutions and programs of the labor movement. He planned to study the life and labor conditions of the workers in order to come to a better understanding of the social history of the labor movement as influenced by its political and cultural organizations as well as by its unions. Various articles on this subject have already been published by Wheeler. In April of this year—it was his last publication—an analysis of the workers' sport movement appeared in the *Journal of Contemporary History*. And it is exactly in this subject matter that we find Wheeler's other new research focus in his last years: Sport, Politics and Society.

Robert F. Wheeler's strength lay not only in his solid research; he was also an able and talented teacher. His pedagogical innovations were well received by his students at the University of Southern

California, as were his seminars on "Sport and Modern Society", "Comparative History of Sport, Politics and Society", and "Film and Social Reality in Modern Germany".

For Wheeler, the history of the labor movement was never a lifeless museum. The questions he raised about history arose from his strong awareness of social injustice and political discrimination, which Wheeler saw and experienced not only as history but in his own time and society. He dedicated his dissertation "To Hans Hackmack (1890–1970), editor of the *Bremer Arbeiter Zeitung*, Bernard Schöttlander (1895–1920), editor of the *Schleschische Arbeiter Zeitung*, and the many other Independent Social Democrats who paid the price for their political convictions before and after 1933". His treatise on "Independent Social Democrats and the Internationals" was commemorated to Salvador Allende and Alexander Dubcek. Robert F. Wheeler, Catholic and representative of the Third Way, became a model for many who felt close to his ideals.

Robert F. Wheeler was only at the beginning of a brilliant career. Much could have been expected from him by way of thorough research and outstanding teaching. We were looking forward to a year of mutual work in Germany. Now we have lost not only an excellent historian of the labor movement, but also a friend.

Reinhard Rürup

Technische Hochschule, Berlin

There is no doubt that Germany and especially Berlin had been a second home for Robert Wheeler ever since the nineteen sixties. The focal point of his scholarly work being German history, he spent the greater part of his many years of research in German archives and libraries. He met his wife in Berlin and lived there repeatedly for months and years at a time, lastly from 1973 until 1974. Robert Wheeler had many friends in Germany and acquired an esteemed reputation as an historian within only a few years. He was invited as a guest speaker to lectures and scholarly conferences, was called upon to collaborate in learned projects and was nominated for a professorship of history at the Free University of Berlin. Not only through his *Newsletter*, but also through his own good offices he contributed much to establish and strengthen contacts between German and American historians, particularly those of the younger generation. We had been confidently hopeful that, beginning this autumn, he would again live and work with us in Berlin for a longer period of time.

Bob Wheeler's early published works were already known to me when I met him in 1971, not in Berlin, but at Berkeley. He had come to San Francisco to take part in the Peace March staged during the great Anti-Vietnam Demonstration, and he used this opportunity to discuss with me some problems of his and my research on the history of the German working class movement and of the Revolution of 1918–19. The combination of socio-political and scholarly commitment, which he expressed during this first encounter, was, as anyone who knew him will agree, definitely not accidental. In my opinion, Robert Wheeler was one of an ever-diminishing group of scholars who, in spite of their love of detail and a literally insatiable desire for new untapped sources, do not persist in antiquated erudition, but are aware of the historian's social responsibility. Bob Wheeler was not a partisan in the strict sense of the word, since he remained at all times at a critical distance from his

subject, a necessary prerequisite for any truly scholarly endeavor. However, it appears to me that he consistently tried to write history in critical solidarity with the socialist working class movement, the minority victims of discrimination and oppression and social and national emancipation movements. Accordingly, without belonging to any political party or organization, he considered himself committed as a scholar of the reform policies of Alexander Dubcek on the one hand, and of Salvador Allende on the other. His distinguished profile as an historian was due to this attitude, which also earned him the respect and affection of numerous colleagues and students in Germany.

As an historian of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany (1917–22), Bob Wheeler was one of the best authorities on the German working class movement in the period of transition to the Weimar Republic; few German colleagues have a comparable knowledge of the scattered archival records and sources and especially of the published material, newspapers and journals. However, he did not write party history in the traditional sense, but expanded the history of the ISDPG into a history of international socialism, connected with George Haupt's studies of the Second International. With respect to methodology, his dissertation and his book *USPD und Internationale* (published in Germany in 1975), broke fresh ground, also in accordance with the efforts of George Haupt. Here, for the first time, the thought, educational and decision-making processes with regard to the international organization of the socialist camp were investigated on the basis of the membership meetings, local and regional press. This is not a limited case history, but the entire history of the ISDPG, the largest revolutionary socialist party outside of the Soviet Union, from 1918 to 1920.

Bob Wheeler's consistent socio-historical tendency to write the history of the working class movement from the point of view of its members, not only of the party leaders, has earned him the special attention of German historians of the working class movement. His systematic investigation of the social structure of this movement, upon which he elaborated in 1973 at the International Bochum Conference ("The Industrial System and Political Development in the Weimar Republic"), was particularly influential on further discussions and research, since he was able to demonstrate convincingly, in a series of essays, the efficacy of his methodological approach. He also led the way with his views on "capacities and limits" of quantitative methods in researching the history of the working class movement, which were published in a German periodical after having been reported at the Conference of Linz that same year. The social history of the German working class in the Weimar Republic, which he began and for which he seemed so well-equipped, was to have included all these preliminary investigations in a single large new work.

It is still too early to determine how his latest writings on the social history of sports will be received, since the two pertinent essays have been published only after his death. With this area of endeavor, into which he incorporated both his scholarly and sporting talents and inclinations, Bob Wheeler aimed at making historical knowledge and historical thought available to those who as a rule do not have access to the traditional themes of historians. Here, too, he focused his interest above all on the international workers' sports movement and on the importance of sports in the cultural development of the modern working class. But beyond this he succeeded in obtaining his initial insights into the social role that sports have played in the changing course of time and of social and political systems, which show how significant sports can be as a research subject in a science of history which is concerned with the interests and needs of the majority of our people.

Bob Wheeler's scholarly concern with the social history of sports was a result of his educational work, in which he tried, evidently with great success, to open new paths. I would like to add, by the way, that the program of his course "Film and Social Reality in Modern Germany," which he sent me several years ago, impressed me very much and encouraged me to undertake in turn similar attempts in my own teaching work. In this way he also provided the initiative to achieve things which were as a rule beyond the capabilities of others.

Bob Wheeler's scholarly work will long be influential in Germany. He will live on in our memory as a superior scholar who was too soon taken from us. We will also, of course, remember him as a helpful, hospitable and obliging human being who was not only our colleague, but also our friend.

John H. M. Laslett

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I did not know Bob Wheeler well, and so cannot comment on his achievements as a scholar or in other areas of his life as intimately as others may be able to do. Perhaps the only one of those areas which I penetrated somewhat was Bob's love for soccer—he and I both having a passion for it (he served as coach for the Youth Soccer Association as I did—he more successfully, I'm sure). Nevertheless, the news of his untimely death was deeply saddening. I first came to know Bob as a result of our work together in the Southern California Study Group on Labor and Working Class History, or, rather, as a result of my horning in on this group of graduate students and labor history buffs concerned with European labor history which he had founded about 1972 or 1973, I think. Together we made it into an informal gathering consisting of students, faculty and other people in the Los Angeles area interested in U.S. as well as in European labor history, which met every few weeks to discuss our work over beer or coffee in one or another of our houses in West Los Angeles. Bob's death made me realize how much the success of this group owed to his hard work, his widespread contacts, and his easygoing manner. So much so, indeed, that right now I (and others trying to reorganize the study group and keep it going) would give my right hand to have someone remotely as good at this business as he was.

Bob also gave of himself unsparingly in other areas where European, U.S., or indeed any form of working class history was studied, perhaps the best known to me being the Southwest Labor Studies Conference, where Bob added a crucial comparative dimension to an organization which, without his efforts, would undoubtedly be more parochial than it now is. For me, though, Bob Wheeler's most important achievement lay in his founding, finding material for, and editing single-handedly this journal in which we are all lamenting his tragic and untimely death. Having had a hand in helping Vera Wheeler put together this memorial issue, I have come to realize what an enormous amount of work has to be put into such an enterprise. Journal isn't quite the word, either—nor newsletter. Instead, *International Labor and Working Class History* combines the best elements of both. It lacks the formality and academic pomposity of a full-blown scholarly publication, while being enormously helpful to both scholars and students with its news of work in progress, and its reports on current conferences in labor history, both in Europe and America. And its book review section provides enough

space to enable one to do full justice to a book, instead of having only the measly five hundred words or so of the *American Historical Review*.

Hence, pleasure that the *ILWCH* is in future to be edited out of the University of Pittsburgh by Richard Hunt and David Montgomery—where a concern for viewing the working class experience in its totality, and not just at the work place, will be present in a way that I feel sure Bob Wheeler would have approved of—does not make me regret any less our loss either of Bob himself, or of a forum for discussing labor history of which we in the West already have too few.

Peter Virgadamo

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In the short span of time that Bob Wheeler worked with college students as their teacher and mentor, he provoked them, cajoled them and inevitably earned their respect for his innovation and dedication. He offered courses that seemed heresy and devoted hours to students in a university that emphasized research over instruction. Both his innovation and dedication were transparent testimonies to his role as a humanist in education; he refused to have students suffer through old and tired survey courses, just as he refused to treat students as anonymous numbers on a computer enrollment sheet. When, at the end of each semester, the day of judgment came for him to determine grades for his courses, he sought a multitude of ways to be fair in an unfair process and he suffered through an ordeal that usually lasted until sunrise.

Grades, he believed, were too arbitrary and unfair when a professor had to measure a student's performance. He offered alternative ways for students to earn a grade; students recognized his endeavors to be fair. And they appreciated his extraordinary efforts. They responded with endless questions after class, on his lunch hour and on the run to his soccer games. Even those who earned lesser grades returned again and again to him for help, for friendship and for his thoughts. Office hours with Bob Wheeler evolved into sessions of learning and laughter; an extension of the classroom and a part of the educational process that defied assessment by a letter grade. He preferred those kinds of intangibles as a teacher—the excellent effort rather than memorization and an individual's thought rather than a dry recital of the textbook.

In some aspects, though, he insisted on the tangible and especially on what Bob Wheeler considered "fair". So much of his time focused on efforts to help make life "fair" to those who labored under discrimination, stupidity, or obsolete ways. Bob Wheeler was the epitome of Dylan Thomas' message:

Do not go gentle into that good night
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And he did rage, rage, rage: in a conservative university he challenged all the unfairness in a system that rewarded silence rather than fairness, obedience over inquiry, and loyalty over principle.

His students, in the best of compliments, often imitated his example and raged against their particular problems with the University of Southern California. When the Teaching Assistants threatened to strike in protest of low pay, Bob Wheeler actively supported their cause while his colleagues mumbled apologies or shuffled into their offices for fear of reprisals. At times he was absolutely fearless, and more than one administrator reacted with startled shock at the very vocal challenges from an associate professor.

Of course, if chairmen and deans earned Bob Wheeler's occasional wrath, it would seem likely that students—especially graduate students—would suffer more grievously from his crusade. As a teacher he demanded a quest for quality and hence, issued a constant stream of constructive criticism. He meticulously reviewed each lecture, each exam and each discussion given by his graduate students. For the most part he tolerantly, quietly explained the student's faults and often, over beer and pizza, continued to help and push future teachers to one notch better. For a job well done he offered sincere praise. But there were moments when his voice boomed through the halls and graduate students dared not tread into his domain with shabby work.

For almost a year now the halls have been quiet in the Department of History. There is a conspicuous silence; gone is the rage and the voice that sought to correct all the world's unfairness. And gone is our teacher who guided us through the jungle of Ph.D. exams and enlightened us with a dread of complacency, a quest to be fair, and a belief that education does exist beyond the confines of the classroom. Let us hope that our degrees and our work will be an eloquent testimony to Bob Wheeler as a teacher and a human being.