

# **In Memoriam – Professor Michael Burgess (1949-2018)**

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Michael Burgess passed away on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2018 as a result of heart failure at the age of 68. At the time of his passing, Michael was Emeritus Professor of Federal Studies at the University of Kent, where he was Director of the Centre for Federal Studies from 2005 up until his retirement in 2014. He was on the Academic Advisory Board of several leading journals, including *Publius* and *Regional and Federal Studies*. He served as the Vice President of the Association of Centres for Federal Studies (IACFS) and played a key role in setting up and developing IPSA's Research Committee 28 (at the time called Comparative Federalism and Federation).

Michael Burgess is best known for his work on Canadian federalism, the British tradition on federalism, comparative federal studies and his insights into the European Union (EU) as a federal model. Indeed, it was his focus on the EU, which became prominent first through his 1989 book on *Federalism and European Union* and in 1996 he published a special issue of *Publius – The Journal of Federalism* titled “Federalism and Building the European Union” (Vol. 26, Issue 4). He took European integration theory to a new level, arguing that the integration process should be understood through the lenses of federalism, since Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet were federalists, who always intended to build a federal Europe.

In addition to his work on the EU, he will be remembered for his work on Canadian federalism, best symbolised by his 1990 edited collection on *Canadian Federalism*. He understood Canada's version of federalism better than any other non-Canadian scholar, and had a lot of respect for the demands of Quebec, which brought him respect from English and French-speaking Canadian scholars.

His work on the *British Tradition of Federalism*, published in 1995 with Leicester University Press remains of key relevance for those interested not just in positioning the current devolution process in the United Kingdom into wider historical debates about home rule and federalism, but also for scholars who want to understand the legacy of British colonialism in countries such as Nigeria, India, and Myanmar.

Finally, Michael Burgess will be remembered for his extensive work on comparative federalism. His most-cited work *Comparative Federalism: Theory and Practice* has become standard literature for anyone interested in studying federalism. His edited volumes on *Multinational Federations* (with John Pinder) and *Federal Democracies* (with Alain-G. Gagnon), as well as his work with Alan Tarr on *Constitutional Sub-national Autonomy in Federal States* (2013) remain of importance for all of us, who are interested in how federal systems operate, which dynamics unfold in different federal states, how federal systems can be compared and contrasted. His most recent monograph, *In Search of the Federal Spirit* (Oxford University Press 2012) combined his interests in federal theory, political culture and the rise of new federal models. Sadly, he was unable to finish his latest work on *Footprints of Federalism: Periodic Revivals of the Federal Idea in World Politics*.

Coming from humble beginnings, Michael Burgess grew up in Liverpool, studied at Lanchester Polytechnic in Coventry, and at the University of Leicester, where he completed an MA in "European Political Studies" and his PhD titled "The Imperial Federation Movement in Great Britain, 1869-1893" under the supervision of Professors Murray Forsyth and Christopher Hughes. He worked at Plymouth Polytechnic, Keele University and the University of Hull, before coming to the University of Kent to set up the Centre for Federal Studies in 2005.

It was at Kent that I met Michael when I started my MA degree in 2005, and he would later become my PhD supervisor (between 2007 and 2010) and a close family friend. In recent years, Michael contributed less to academia, mainly due to several health issues, but he remained active as a scholar and a mentor. The British decision to leave the EU in June 2016 came as a shock to him, as he always saw it as his mission to educate the British (particularly the English) about the EU and the importance of Europe for the UK. He will be remembered as a fine scholar, a 'giant' in his field, who took his work extremely serious, but did not take himself too seriously in the process.

Professor Michael Burgess is survived by his wife Marie-Louise, his son Adam, and a generation of scholars that he trained, mentored and supported, and that will continue to follow in his federal footsteps.