

Mourning Mr. Robert Mabro's Death

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On August 2, Robert Mabro, a former director of the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies and a globally famed oil expert, died at the age of 81. He was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1934. As one of the people who learned much from Mr. Mabro, I would like to thank him and sincerely pray for the repose of his soul.

Mr. Mabro was a great energy expert who rose to the top of his profession in energy research, particularly oil market studies. Founding the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies in 1982, Mr. Mabro served as its first director until 2003 and contributed much to developing it into one of the most famous energy think tanks in the world. For his contributions to energy studies, Mr. Mabro received the Order of the British Empire in 1995 and won numerous awards from the International Association of Energy Economics, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other organizations and countries.

The oil market was the field where Mr. Mabro made the greatest contributions by publishing studies on oil producing countries and international oil majors. In the 1970s before founding the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, he launched the Oxford Energy Policy Club and the Oxford Energy Seminar, a globally famous seminar kept until today. As the decade featured two oil crises, oil problems were the center of energy studies. Taking advantage of his vast high-level personal network in the oil industry, Mr. Mabro held center stage in world oil market studies, publishing numerous excellent papers on crude oil price analysis, OPEC policies and other topics. The abovementioned awards given to him indicate that his contributions were recognized in the world.

My full personal exchange with Mr. Mabro began with my participation in the 13th Oxford Energy Seminar in 1991. Attracting more than 70 participants, the seminar featured speeches by state-run and international oil company executives over two weeks. It was a substantial seminar. At the outset of the seminar, he introduced all participants' personal records without memos, surprising the audience. Such introductory speech was customary for the seminar. I remember that I was overwhelmed by his central role in discussions and his vast high-level personal network demonstrated at the seminar.

As I have continued to study mainly oil problems, he has been a living textbook and a great teacher for me. When I visited Oxford and London and met with him at overseas international conferences and when Mabro visited Japan, I had opportunities to ask questions and talk with him about up-to-date oil market analyses and future outlooks. Despite his busy schedule for a top oil expert, Mr. Mabro faithfully accepted talks with me and generously provided me with knowledge based on his abundant experiences with uniquely accented, rapid English speeches strictly, humorously or cynically.

When I studied in Britain for two years under the sabbatical leave from the Institute of Energy Economics, Japan, I selected the University of Dundee to acquire PhD degree. Mr. Mabro, who might have expected that I would choose his Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, jokingly asked me every time we met why I did not select his institute. Then, I thought that he saw his relationship with me as important. I thanked him for such kind remarks and felt sorry about failing to go to his institute to study.

Over recent years, I heard that Mr. Mabro was in bad physical condition and rarely attended events of the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies. Although his flourishing period has passed, I feel that his views, experiences and insight are precious even at present, or very precious for the present world. This is because the international oil market is in the midst of turbulent times as in his flourishing period. This is also because factors behind the present turbulent times include what is common or similar to the dynamism of the international oil market seen in the 1970s and 1980s.

It would be significant to get Mr. Mabro's views from historical perspectives about the most important problems for analyzing today's oil market, including the ongoing U.S. shale revolution, shale oil production with its unique supply elasticity and its impacts, the present and future situation of OPEC that has given priority to market shares and abandoned its oil market balancing policy, Iran's growing presence after the termination of Western sanctions, the future of Saudi Arabia embarking on bold domestic reform with a possible view of its rivalry with Iran, and international oil majors' responses to and strategies on crude oil price plunges.

Mr. Mabro's death has led me to lose opportunities to directly get his comments on these problems. I deeply regret his death when thinking about present energy problems. However, his views and insight will never be lost. This is because the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies is developing energy studies based on his views and insights, with many researchers having been stimulated by his studies and having learned much from him. We are required to base our studies on his great views and further develop his great views. Through this process, we should further promote analyses on energy problems and initiatives to resolve them. Again, I would like to mourn Mr. Mabro's death and pray for the repose of his soul.

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