TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR BRIAN BERCUSSON

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This issue of the Stanford Law & Policy Review—devoted to some of the papers delivered at the Second International Standards Conference at Stanford Law School on August 14 and 15, 2009—is dedicated to the memory of Professor Brian Bercusson of London. Until his death on August 17, 2008, Professor Bercusson had been one of my collaborators in organizing the conference and he was scheduled to deliver a paper here last year.

Brian Bercusson was one of the brightest and best of the European labor lawyers and law professors in the past century and in this one as well. I first met Brian in 1975 when he was a Research Fellow at Christ’s College and I was based at Churchill College as a Visiting Scholar. For more than three decades, he was that rarest of individuals who was first-rate professionally and simultaneously full of personal warmth and good-natured wit. In the 1980s, we had considerable contact at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy where twice I visited at his invitation. We renewed and strengthened our friendship and worked together here at Stanford Law School where he was Visiting Professor of Law in 2002 and a Visiting Scholar in 2007.

Professor Bercusson was an original and independent thinker, writing extensively in articles and books about British labor law and European labor law, publishing the leading book, European Labour Law, in 1996. As the Guardian noted, this work became the “seminal text” and the “most comprehensive treatment of the subject he helped to create.” Brian, subsequent to his work as a professor at the European University Institute, returned to a chair in European law at Manchester, before becoming professor of European social and labour law at King’s College London in 2000. His work on the European Union charter of rights was published in eight languages.

But Brian was not only a leading scholar—he was a man of action as well. As I discovered when I stayed in his London guest flat in 2005, he was deeply involved with European Trades Union Congress matters in London and abroad—continuously on airplanes as he traveled to all major European cities. Brian was involved with important European Court of Justice judgments in 2007. He always had a sense of optimism in his work and formed strong
intellectual and personal relationships with scholars in Germany, Finland, Sweden, Italy, and his own country, Great Britain.

Brian and I were at work on an international labor law casebook when I visited with him in Florence. This was his principal reason for returning here to Stanford that year as a Visiting Scholar. We began to refine our work in ’08 when I spent time with him again in Florence shortly before his death.

An accomplished scholar and a proponent of labor rights in Europe and the world, above all Brian Bercusson was a genuine human being. He was a great friend to me. I shall never forget him—and I am honored that the Stanford Law & Policy Review has dedicated this issue to his memory.