In Memoriam: André Vanoli

1930 – 2022

André Vanoli passed away on 20 February 2022 at the age of 91 years. He was elected ISI member in 1985 and continued to remain member until his last days despite his age.

After obtaining the diploma of the Institute of Political Studies in Paris, France (well-known under its nickname “Sciences-Po”), André Vanoli was recruited in 1957 by the Department of Economic and Financial Studies (SEEF) at the French Ministry of Economy, where he was in charge of the first national accounts for France and developed pioneer input/output accounts. In 1962, a part of the SEEF merged with INSEE and André joined it. He had a brilliant career at INSEE where he was for years responsible for statistical and accounting coordination, and Secretary General of the Cnis, the National Council for Statistical Information.

Early on, André participated in the derivation of the European version of the 1968 UN System of National Accounts (SNA) that became the European System of Economic Accounts (ESA) and helped to establish the duality between the worldwide SNA and the European ESA. He coordinated the reworking of the French accounts to bring them into full consistency with the SNA 1968 and ESA 1970.

During this time, André quickly became recognised internationally as an expert in national accounting. He was a long-standing member of the International Association of Research in Income and Wealth (IARIW) and was President of this association between 1977 and 1979. Participants at numerous meetings of IARIW will remember his many contributions and always relevant commentaries. His election in 1985 as an ISI member strengthened the ties between these two associations.

André was one of the core experts appointed by the five organisations participating in the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (UN, IMF, World Bank, OECD, European commission) who ensured the internal consistency of the 1993 version of the SNA by updating its 1968 version but above all by incorporating several associated handbooks. He had a wide-ranging and ambitious understanding of the principles of national accounting which, in his view, should form the structural foundation of the statistical system of a country. However, conscious of the limitations of their core tables, he was a strong promoter of complementary tools such as satellite accounts, which widen the scope of the accounts without breaching their consistency.

He had a very demanding view of the quality of statistics and national accounts. He was exacting with his staff but always ready to help if necessary and was patient and skilful in expounding his thinking. His repartees in international debates were sometimes tough but always proportionate and never flippant. Up until nearly the very end of his life, he continued to show interest in new developments of national accounting, focussing on the very topical debate on
the relation between the measurement of economic activities and their impact on the environment.

In 1983, he created the Association de Comptabilité Nationale (ACN) as a collaboration between INSEE and the University of Paris 1, modelled on IARIW but catering mainly for French-speaking participants. His major and lasting contribution is his book on the history of national accounts: first published in French in 2002, it appeared in English in 2005 as A History of National Accounting (IOS press). It is a rich mine of information on how various developments were initiated and brought to conclusion, and vividly portrays many of the personalities involved.

Away from his work, André Vanoli was convivial company. He had a real interest in cinema, played tennis long after many others would have given it up and enjoyed good food and wine. He will be immensely regretted by the worldwide community of statisticians and national accountants, both those who knew him personally and those who do and will know him through his work.

Jean-Louis BODIN

A very large part of this obituary is taken from an article prepared by Anne Harrison, François Lequiller and Jean-Paul Milot for the IARIW’s Review on Income and Wealth.