

## Reaffirming Our Mission



PHILIP R. SHARP AND EMERY CASTLE

One of the great pleasures and benefits of being president of RFF is the opportunity to interact and consult with my forerunners in the job. Just two months ago, we were delighted to have a visit from Emery Castle, who served as vice president and president of RFF from 1976 to 1986. Today he is a professor emeritus of agricultural and resource economics at Oregon State University. Even now, his beloved rose garden in the RFF courtyard is still in bloom.

Emery talked about one of the most significant challenges he faced as RFF grew to be the multifaceted institution it is today, namely the need to forge our own identity. Foundations wanted us to be advocates, and government agencies were especially aggressive, trying to get the RFF impri-matur on things they wanted. Hard thought had to be given to what was truly important, Emery said. Credibility was number one: RFF needed to be seen as absolutely independent.

Maintaining our scholarly integrity is our highest priority today, coupled with our need to make a difference. RFF has had the most impact when it has identified the emerging issues and shaped the subsequent agenda, in Emery's view.

Emery made a very important point: big intellectual advances come when creative minds take on important *real-world* problems. Emery himself exemplifies this approach.

He is a pioneer in the discipline of place-based economics, having done original research on water issues and rural resource economics, always working closely with engineers, biologists, and soil conservationists. Emery's work brought resource economics to the forefront of U.S. environmental policy, and his interests correspond closely with the thrust of many current RFF researchers tackling real-world problems.

Emery Castle both exemplifies and reminds us of the historic mission of RFF. In the face of daunting economic and energy challenges, we must continue to attract excellent minds and give these researchers real incentives and intellectual freedom. Only then can we continue to provide the seasoned perspectives that will contribute to practical and inventive policy solutions.



### RESOURCES FOR THE FUTURE

1616 P Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036-1400  
202-328-5000  
[www.rff.org](http://www.rff.org)

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