JONES, Sir BRYNMOR (1903–1989), scientist and university adminstrator

Brynmor Jones was born on 20 September 1903 at 4 Roberts Lane in Rhos, Denbighshire, the son of William Edward Jones, a schoolmaster, and his wife Hannah Jane (née Roberts). Welsh was the language of the family home. He attended a local primary school and Ruabon Grammar School before progressing to the University College of North Wales at Bangor where he graduated BSc in chemistry in 1925. He remained at Bangor to gain a teaching certificate in 1926 and a PhD in Chemistry in 1928. He then undertook doctoral work at St John's College, Cambridge, leading to a PhD in 1933. Alongside his studies at Cambridge he spent a period at the Sorbonne in Paris and as a fellow of the University of Wales from 1928 to 1931. He married Dora Jones (1898–1987) in 1933. They did not have any children.

He was briefly an assistant demonstrator at Cambridge in 1930 before taking up a lectureship at Sheffield University in 1931, becoming a senior lecturer in 1937. He remained at Sheffield until 1946 and during his time there he combined lecturing with research in the field of liquid crystals. He was awarded a Leverhume Research Fellowship in 1939 and also undertook war work within the university for the chemical research department of the Ministry of Supply from 1940 to 1946. After leaving Sheffield he received a number of fellowships allowing him to continue his research in the Chemistry Department at Cambridge. Finally, in 1948 he completed a piece of research for which he was awarded the qualification of Doctor of Science.

In 1947 he was appointed to the G.F. Grant Chair of Chemistry at the University College of Hull. At Hull Brynmor Jones led research in chemistry and continued his work on liquid crystals. He established the world-leading team University of Hull Liquid Crystals Research Group which was responsible for the invention of viable liquid crystal materials for LCD technology in 1972. This underlay the subsequent development of displays used in many devices including LCD watches and LED televisions.

In the years following his initial appointment at Hull, Jones rose to the position of Dean of Science and then Deputy Principal. Following the granting of the University's charter in 1954, he was made Pro-Vice-Chancellor before being appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hull in 1956. In this capacity he remained with the University until his retirement in September 1972.

His time as Vice-Chancellor allowed Brynmor Jones to exercise a significant influence over university policy. In the early years, he pushed for the development of the pure sciences and campaigned for the national need for physicists, chemists and mathematicians. He led the development of the University of Hull in response to the Robbins Committee report published in October 1963. The campus was expanded, thirteen new departments were opened, student numbers increased fourfold, and staffing in existing departments was increased. Jones was a great advocate of the need for a strong library within the university, and he supported expanding the library under the librarian and poet Philip Larkin leading to the

establishment of the new Brynmor Jones Library building, opened in 1960. He also saw the university through a significant period of student unrest during the summer of 1968.

Jones was highly influential in the world of education more widely, sitting on many committees and boards outside of the University of Hull. He was involved with the Education Committee of Hull Chamber of Commerce, the Planning Committee of the Open University, the National Council for Educational Technology, and the Committee on Audio-visual Aids (which published the Brynmor Jones Report). In the course of his work for the Inter-University Council for Higher Education he travelled widely to speak out for the cause of higher education overseas. He also served as governor of Bishop Burton College of Agriculture and Pocklington School.

Outside of educational roles, Jones was involved with many bodies including the Chemical Society, the Royal Society of Chemistry, the General Medical Council, the East Yorkshire Local History Society, the Beverley Minster Appeal Committee and the Editorial Board of the Institute of Medical and Biological Illustration.

For his various contributions in the field of education he received many honours. He was knighted in 1968, and received honorary degrees from the University of Wales in Aberystwyth in 1968, the University of Hull in 1972, and the University of Leeds in 1974. He was made a Fellow of St John's College Cambridge in 1969 and of the College of Preceptors in 1973. He was also given Honorary Life Membership of Hull University Union in 1971, and was the first recipient of the Brynmor Jones Award for the Advancement of Educational Technology in the UK in 1973. The University of Hull also established the Sir Brynmor Jones prize for experimental chemistry in his honour.

He was also involved in cultural life during his time at Hull. He sang with the Hull Bach choir and was involved with, and became chair of, the Hull Civic Society and the Hull Literary and Philosophical Society. After retirement he moved to the minster town of Beverley near Hull.

Brynmor Jones died on 16 July 1989 in Hull Royal Infirmary, and was buried in Cottingham cemetery. In his will he left funds to establish a charitable legacy to support the wellbeing of persons connected with the University of Hull and to promote excellence in various departments including chemistry and engineering.

Author

Lyn Owen (Mr)

Sources

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