

JONES, JOHN EDWARD (1905 - 1970), secretary and organiser of Plaid Cymru, 1930-62

Name: John Edward Jones
Date of birth: 1905
Date of death: 1970
Spouse: Olwen Jones (née Roberts)
Parent: Jane Jones (née Williams)
Parent: Rice Price Jones
Gender: Male
Occupation: secretary and organiser of Plaid Cymru
Area of activity: Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: Gwynfor Evans

Born 10 December 1905 at Hafoty Fawr, Melin-y-Wig, Meirionnydd, the third son of Rice Price Jones and Jane (née Williams). His father died before J.E. was a year old, and his mother, assisted by his two eldest brothers, farmed the homestead afterwards. No doubt the splendid location of his home and the rich musical, literary and religious culture of the district bound him to Wales from a young age. One of his grandfathers was imprisoned during the tithe war.

He was educated in the primary school at Melin-y-Wig - a name revived by him - 1910-18, and Bala grammar school, 1918-24, before entering the University College of Wales at Bangor in 1924. There he became secretary of the Students' Union and succeeded in making Welsh jointly official with English. He was a leading member of the society of the three G's - 'Y Tair G' - one of the three streams that united to found Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru - in August 1925. He was appointed secretary of the college branch of the Party when it was formed in November 1926, and topped the poll when he stood as a nationalist in a mock election. He graduated in 1927.

After he had taken a post as a teacher in London in 1928 a branch of the Party was founded there with J.E. again as secretary. As a result of his extraordinary organising talent the branch flourished and became the largest in the Party. He returned to Wales in 1930 as secretary and organiser of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru. In Glan-rhyd (Presb.) chapel on 27 July 1940 he married Olwen Roberts, the sister of [John Iorwerth Roberts](#), and they had a son and daughter.

He possessed a tough character, a strong mind and patience. The great strength of his personality was often camouflaged by his gentleness. In addition to his work as secretary of the executive committee of the Party, he organised the annual conference and summer school, and also rallies. He developed these into strong organisations but he also stimulated the formation of branches up and down the country. Apart from his responsibilities at local and parliamentary elections (he himself stood as a candidate in Caernarfon in 1950), he organised many special campaigns, such as those for radio and television, for a development corporation, against the extreme schemes of the Forestry Commission and against the appropriation of land in Wales by the War Office; the military camp at Trawsfynydd was twice surrounded by members of the Party. The campaign against the flooding of Cwm Tryweryn became very strong; but no doubt the campaign against the Bombing School in Llŷn in 1935 was the most notable, with the imprisonment of [Saunders Lewis](#), Lewis Valentine and [D.J. Williams](#). These numerous operations demanded great effort in gaining the country's support. He contributed more than anyone to the great feat of keeping Plaid Cymru together during World War II.

He took care of press releases and all publicity, and occasionally he had to shoulder most of the load in publishing the Party's papers, *Y Ddraig Goch* and *Welsh Nation*. More than a hundred books and pamphlets were published during his term as secretary. He also built up the St. David's Day Fund as the Party's main financial source.

He lectured and prepared television series on gardening, on which he was an expert. In addition to a valuable volume on the subject, he wrote a travel book about Switzerland. But his most valuable work is *Tros Gymru*, which is a mine of information on Plaid Cymru up to 1945. In addition to all this, he was the Sunday school teacher of a large class of young women in Heol y Crwys (Presb.) chapel, Cardiff.

In 1962 ill health compelled him to relinquish his post as secretary of Plaid Cymru and take a lighter position as its advisor. He was on his way home from the office, during the general election, when he died suddenly, 30 May 1970. He was buried in Melin-y-Wig cemetery. He is regarded as the chief architect of Plaid Cymru.

Author

Dr Gwynfor Evans, (1912 - 2005)

Sources

Personal knowledge

dates provided by his widow

Further Reading

NLW Archives: Etholaeth Caernarfon 1950. Oddiwrth J. E. Jones, Ymgeisydd Plaid Cymru
NLW Archives: Gwahoddir chi yn garedig i Ffotio dros Gymru i "J.E.", Ymgeisydd Plaid Cymru
Wikipedia Article: John Edward Jones

Additional Links

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