

THOMAS, JEFFREY (1933-1989), barrister and Labour/SDP politician

Name: Jeffrey Thomas
Date of birth: 1933
Date of death: 1989
Gender: Male
Occupation: barrister and Labour/SDP politician
Area of activity: Law; Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: John Graham Jones

He was born at Abertillery on 12 November 1933, the son of John James (Jack) Thomas, a local head-teacher and Phyllis Thomas, formerly Hile. He was educated at Abertillery Grammar School and King's College, London. He served as President of the University of London Union, 1955-56. He was called to the bar from Grays Inn in 1957. He served in the army, 1959-61, on national service, as an officer in the Royal Corps of Transport in 1959 (Senior Under-Officer), and he was appointed deputy director of the Army Legal Services, BAOR in 1961. He rose to the rank of major. He acquired a busy criminal practice on the Wales and Chester circuit and later in London. He became a QC in 1974 and a Crown Court Recorder in 1975, serving for over twelve years. He retained a great love for the bar throughout his life.

Jeffrey Thomas had joined the Labour Party in 1953, he defected to the SDP in 1981, but never felt completely at home in its ranks and re-joined the Labour Party in 1986. He had stood as a Labour candidate for the Barnett UDC and the Hertfordshire CC between 1964 and 1967. He was short-listed as the Labour candidate for the Abertillery by-election of 1965 and stood in Barry in the general election of 1966, where he came within 1394 votes of toppling the sitting Conservative MP **Sir Raymond Gower**. He served as the Labour MP for his native Abertillery, 1970-83 (as a SDP member from 1981). His majority in the general election of June 1970 was almost 20,000. He also stood, though rather half-heartedly, as the SDP-Alliance candidate for Cardiff West in the general election of 1983. He was a prominent member of the council of justice and of the Fabian Society. He was a member of the Select Committee on the Conduct of Members, 1976-77, a PPS, 1976-79, to John Morris, the Secretary of State for Wales, the vice-chair of the UK branch of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1979-82, and the chairman of the Welsh Labour Group, 1980-81. In 1979 he was appointed opposition spokesman on Legal Affairs and in 1981-83 he served as SDP spokesman on Legal Affairs. Early in his political career, he had appeared destined for high office but this had somehow eluded him. His constituency was completely lost in the 1983 redistribution and he was left politically homeless. He served as chairman of the British Caribbean Association and he became a member of the Court of the University of London in 1981. His hobbies were watching rugby football and travelling. His political papers are in the custody of the National Library of Wales - in two groups donated by each of his wives. He lived at 60 Lamont Road, London, and conducted his practice from 3 Temple Gardens, Temple, London. He married (1) in April 1960 Margaret Jenkins B.Sc., the marriage was dissolved in 1982, and (2) Valerie Ellerington in 1987. There were no children of either marriage. He lived with his second wife at Whitebrook near Monmouth in the beautiful Wye Valley. He died of cancer on 17 May 1989.

Author

Dr John Graham Jones

Sources

Who was who?

Etholiadau'r Ganrif / Welsh Elections 1885-1997 (Talybont 1999)

Welsh Hustings - 1885-2004 (Ammanford 2005)

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The Guardian, 19 May 1989

The Independent, 19 May 1989

The Times, 18 May 1989

Western Mail, 18 May 1989

Further Reading

NLW Archives: [Vote Labour. Jeffrey Thomas, the only REALLY LOCAL Candidate](#)

NLW Archives: SDP Liberal Alliance. Jeffrey Thomas Social Democrat

NLW Archives: Welsh Devolution Referendum, 1979

Wikipedia Article: Jeffrey Thomas

Additional Links

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Published date: 2008-07-30

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APA Citation



Jones, J. G., (2008). THOMAS, JEFFREY (1933-1989), barrister and Labour/SDP politician. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 12 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s6-THOM-JEF-1933>

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