

EVANS, IOAN LYONEL (1927-1984), Labour politician

Name: Ioan Lyonel Evans
Date of birth: 1927
Date of death: 1984
Gender: Male
Occupation: Labour politician
Area of activity: Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: John Graham Jones

Ioan Evans was born at Llanelli in July 1927, the son of Evan Evans, a builder and clerk of works, and his wife. He was educated at Llanelli Grammar School and the University College of Wales, Swansea. He earned his living as a clerk for the Midland Bank, 1943-45, served in the army, 1945-48, and was a lecturer under the auspices of the WEA and the National Central Labour College from 1948-50. Evans was secretary to the Birkenhead Co-operative Party, 1950-53, and to the Birmingham Co-operative Party, 1953-64. He held a large number of public offices including serving as chairman of the Labour League of Youth from 1948 until 1950. He also served as the director of the Birmingham Printers Ltd, a co-operative venture. He acted as a Labour Party agent in Birmingham during two parliamentary elections in the 1950s - in 1955 and 1959. He was a JP for Birmingham, 1960-70, and for Middlesex from 1970.

He served as the Labour MP for the Yardley constituency, 1964-70, when he was defeated by his Conservative opponent Derek Coombs, and subsequently, as the successor to **Arthur Probert** MP, for Aberdare, 1974-83, and the re-named Cynon Valley constituency from 1983 until his premature death. From 2 May 1966 to 26 September 1966, Evans was a substitute member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. He served for two years, 1964-66, as parliamentary private secretary to Tony Benn as Postmaster-General in Harold Wilson's first administration. In 1966 he became an assistant government whip, achieving promotion to chief whip and Controller of the Household in 1968.

Following his defeat at the polls in June 1970, Ioan Evans became the Director of the International Defence and Aid Fund. Immediately upon his return to the House of Commons in February 1974, he was chosen as secretary of the Welsh Labour group of MPs. At the end of 1974 he resigned as parliamentary private secretary to the Secretary of State for Wales, John Morris, in protest against his party's commitment to Welsh devolution. His chief objection was that an additional sum of millions of pounds would be spent each year and that an additional number of some 1300 civil servants would be necessary. He also feared that, if a national assembly for Wales was set up, this would lead not to the real devolution of power but to the centralization of local government authority exclusively at Cardiff. He did, however, advocate the holding of a referendum on the matter.

From 1977 he returned to his work as secretary to the Welsh group of Labour MPs, and continued in this position until 1982 and was most active on an array of Labour backbench committees. In 1982 he became a Labour front-bench spokesman on the EEC, and in 1983 was appointed Junior Welsh Affairs spokesman working alongside Barry Jones MP.

At the June 1983 general election he was returned by a majority of more than 13,000 votes over his Liberal Democrat opponent. Throughout his period at Westminster he also chaired a number of parliamentary committees and groupings. He was considered an authority on Welsh issues and Welsh affairs. Evans was also much interested in European affairs, and thus served on a number of committees associated with the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Western European Union and the Parliamentarians for World Order. In 1982 he returned to the front bench of the House of Commons, after twelve years on the backbenches, now as number two to Eric Heffer, the opposition spokesman on European and Community affairs.

Ioan Evans was always viewed as a conscientious and hard-working constituency MP and a staunch supporter of the Labour Party and the labour movement. Although a front bench spokesman for much of his parliamentary career, he never allowed this commitment to restrict his frequent, and often telling interventions in the House, sometimes during Prime Minister's question time. At the time of his untimely death, he was secretary of the Tribune group of left-wing Labour MPs. During the last week of his life, Evans had spared no effort to attempt to ensure that Wales should be excluded from the government's controversial new Rates Bill in standing committee and also made a major speech in the House of Commons during a debate on the Welsh Rate Support Grant Settlement.

In 1949 he married Maria Griffiths JP and they had one son and one daughter. They lived at 169 Eastcote Road, Ruislip, Middlesex. Evans died at Hillingdon, 10 February 1984, at the age of 56. His funeral service was held at St Elvan's church, Aberdare.

Author

Dr John Graham Jones

Sources

Who was who?

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The Times, 13 February 1984

Western Mail, 13 February 1984

Further Reading

NLW Archives: [Vote for Ioan Evans. Your Labour and Co-operative Candidate for Aberdare Constituency... 1974](#)

NLW Archives: [Welsh Devolution Referendum, 1979](#)

Wikipedia Article: [Ioan Evans](#)

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