DAVIES, MYRIEL IRFONA (1920 - 2000), campaigner for the United Nations

Name: Myriel Irfona Davies
Date of birth: 1920
Date of death: 2000
Spouse: Max Davies
Parent: Sarah Jane Morgan (née Jones)
Parent: David Morgan
Gender: Female
Occupation: campaigner for the United Nations
Area of activity: Politics, Government and Political Movements; Public and Social Service, Civil Administration; Religion
Author: T. Hefin Jones

Myriel Davies was born in Swansea on 5 March 1920, the daughter and second child of a Congregationalist (Independent) minister, David Morgan (1883-1959), and his wife Sarah Jane (née Jones, 1885-1953). Her brother, Herbert Myrddin Morgan (1918-1999), had been born two years previously. She spent her early years at Glyn Neath, Caerau, Maesteg and Whitland before moving, aged 12, to Bancyfelin, Carmarthen.

Myriel was educated at Whitland Grammar School and from there went to work as a telephonist with the Post Office in Carmarthen, Tenby and Cardiff. She was appointed chief telephonist at Shrewsbury; there she met the journalist and socialist, Max Davies (d. 1986). Moving to London, they married in 1952. As regulations at the time demanded, her marriage meant that she had to leave her job in the Civil Service and Myriel went to work as a telephonist at Selfridges, London. During the Suez Crisis of 1956, she joined the United Nations Association and, when the crisis ended, she was appointed to work full-time as Campaigns Officer for the Association.

A Christian of conviction, Myriel's faith was her strength throughout her life and she tried to educate people by convincing them of the power of the Biblical verse 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. A believer in the power of negotiation and attempting to resolve disputes in a non-violent way, she would always emphasize the importance of an individual's rights. She managed the United Nations Association shop in London, and was appointed London Regional Secretary and Deputy Director of the UK United Nations Association. Her enthusiasm was such that many people identified her with, and as, the United Nations. Myriel traveled extensively and globally leading various study groups. She often confessed how privileged she felt to have met many national leaders, the United Nations General Secretaries and Pope Paul VI. Three visits made very deep and lasting impressions on her: Greece to observe the country's poverty, Bangladesh to see the effects of vitamin deficiencies on children's sight, and South Africa a few months after apartheid came to an end.

Myriel retired from her post as Deputy Director of the United Nations Association in 1988 but continued to do the work on a voluntary basis for another decade. She was an outstanding speaker whose conviction made a profound impression on her listeners.

A deacon since 1968, from 1982 until her death she was Secretary of Radnor Walk Independent Church, Chelsea in London. She represented the Union of Welsh Independents on the Peace Forum of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and, in 1993, was appointed as Wales' co-President of the ecumenical body itself. As part of her work, she was invited to join a delegation that traveled to Jordan to develop a better understanding between Christians, Muslims and Jews. She served as President of The Union of Welsh Independents in 1994, delivering an address at its Annual Meeting in Bridgend entitled on 'Being a Witness'. Myriel used this position to express her deep concern on matters relating to the work and evidence of the Christian Church, underlining the importance of peace and disarmament. She was often called upon by the media, particularly Welsh language Radio Cymru and S4C, to explain the United Nations perspectives on different issues, something she always did in a balanced and thorough way.

In 1983, the Gorsedd of Bards honoured her with its membership; her name in Gorsedd was Myriel Dafydd. In 1975, she received an MBE for her work with the United Nations Association and in 2000, a few weeks before her death, she was further decorated with an OBE. Myriel Davies died on 20 December 2000; her ashes were buried in Gibeon cemetery, Bancyfelin.

Author

T. Hefin Jones

Sources

'Obituary - Myriel Irfona Davies', *New world*, January 2001

A tribute by Beti Wyn James to her aunt, *Y Cardi bach*, January 2001

A tribute by the Reverend D. Gwylfa Evans, *Y Tyst*, 8 February 2001

'Thank you, Dear Myriel', *UNA-UK London & South East Region Newsletter*, 23 April 2001

Further reading

Myriel Davies, *Bod yn dystion* (Abertawe 1994)

Additional Links

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