JONES, JOHN DAVID RHEINALLT (1884 - 1953), philanthropist, founder and Director of the South African Institute of Race Relations

Name: John David Rheinallt Jones
Date of birth: 1884
Date of death: 1953
Spouse: Helen Clare Norfolk Francis Jones (née Verley)
Spouse: Edith Beatrice Jones (née Barton)
Parent: Sarah Jones
Parent: John Eiddon Jones
Gender: Male
Occupation: philanthropist, founder and Director of the South African Institute of Race Relations
Area of activity: Philanthropy; Politics, Government and Political Movements; Public and Social Service, Civil Administration
Author: Gwilym Arthur Jones

Born 5 July 1884 in Llanrug, Caernarfonshire, the youngest son of John Eiddon Jones and Sarah Jones. He was educated at Friars School, Bangor, but in 1897 became a boarder at David Hughes' grammar school, Beaumaris. It was there, in 1900, that he won a School Certificate in English, history, arithmetic, Latin, Welsh (with distinction). He emigrated to South Africa in October 1905. According to G.J. Williams, Bangor (20 May 1905), he had a strong constitution and was an energetic person. He threw himself into philanthropic work becoming prominent in the effort to establish the South African Institute of Race Relations. He was its director from 1930 until 1947. That year he was appointed consultant on native matters to the Anglo-American Corporation. Prior to that he had been editor (1915) of *The South African Quarterly* and remained in post until 1926. In 1919 he was appointed secretary of the Witwatersrand Education Council - an unofficial body established by the uitlanders at the end of the preceeding century to promote education. He came into practical contact with the campaign to transform the South African School of Mines and Technology (1910) into a university college (1920). It was from this effort that the University of Witwatersrand was established (1922) [in Johannesburg]. Between 1928-30 Rheinallt Jones was assistant registrar of that university. In 1931 the university conferred an honorary M.A. degree upon him in recognition of his services to the university and of his work on behalf of racial problems. He is referred to in *African Studies* (5 December 1953) as pioneering the idea of studying African life and institutions as an academic discipline. With the assistance of his wife and Professor Alfred Hoernlé, he emphasised the need to establish a department of Bantu studies within the university. That vision was realised. It was Rheinallt Jones who founded the journal *Bantu Studies* in October 1921 and he became its editor. He lectured on native law in the department of Bantu studies from 1929 and was a guest lecturer on racial relations. In 1937 he was chosen as the first representative of the Africans of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State in the South African parliament. He also established the Inter-university Committee on African Studies to promote and co-ordinate research. He arranged a national conference of European and Bantu representatives in Cape Town in 1929 and that year, with the assistance of the Phelps-Stokes Institution and Carnegie Corporation (later), he established the South African Institute of Race Relations. This was an important event as henceforth it was possible to set up research and welfare plans on a firm foundation. He established the journal *Race Relations* and was its editor. In addition to this quarterly he was also involved with *Race Relations News* (monthly). He lost his parliamentary seat in 1942 to a candidate who had more radical views. In 1947 he accepted a post as counsellor on native affairs to the Anglo-American Corporation in South Africa without completely severing his work in connection with the Institute, though he had to resign as Director. In 1950 he was elevated president of the corporation and this gave him an opportunity to travel extensively throughout the continent of which he had become such an authority on its problems. He wrote many reports and detailed articles on every subject relating to racial and social problems. He had connections with the Jan H. Hofmeyr School of Social Work, the Y.M.C.A. and especially the Pathfinders (the South African scouts). He became the Chief-Pathfinder-Master in 1926 and in 1947 was honoured with the Silver Lion by the Chief Scout of South Africa. He was scout commissioner for Africa on behalf of the Chief Scout. In spite of the many calls on his time as a member of numerous committees he continued to maintain his connection with Wales and with his brother Gwilym Cleaton in particular. He visited Wales in 1936 and 1952. Rheinallt Jones ' contribution towards improving relations between the coloured and white populations was truly remarkable. His wife, Edith Beatrice (née Barton) whom he married in 1910, died in 1944. He married (2) Helen Clare Norfolk Francis (née Verley) in 1947. He died 30 January 1953 and his remains were buried in Braamfontein crematorium.

Author

Gwilym Arthur Jones, (1925 - 1998)

Sources

Who was who?

Alan Paton, *Natal*

African Studies

Edgar H. Brookes, *R. J.- In appreciation of the life of John David Rheinallt Jones and his work for the betterment of race relations in Southern Africa* (Johannesburg 1953)

information from Mrs. Clare Rheinallt Jones, librarian of the South African Institute of Race Relations

information from R. Musiker, librarian of the University of the Witwatersrand

Errol Byrne, *The first liberal Rheinallt Jones* (Johannesburg 1990)

Further reading

John David Rheinallt Jones, South African History Online website, viewed 28 June 2019

Additional Links

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