ROWLANDS, Sir ARCHIBALD (1892 - 1953), administrator

Name: Archibald Rowlands
Date of birth: 1892
Date of death: 1953
Spouse: Constance May Rowlands (née Phillips)
Parent: Sarah Rowlands (née Thomas)
Parent: David Rowlands
Gender: Male
Occupation: administrator
Area of activity: Public and Social Service, Civil Administration
Author: Evan David Jones

Born 26 December 1892 at Twyn-yr-odyn, Lavernock, near Penarth, Glamorganshire, one of the three sons of David and Sarah (née Thomas) Rowlands, who kept a grocer's shop. He was educated at Penarth county school and from there proceeded in 1911 to the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. At the end of his first year Professor Hermann Ethé foresaw a brilliant career for him in German, and he graduated with a first class in that subject in 1914; he took the same class in French in 1915. During his time in college he displayed the characteristics that led to his brilliant career. He was one of the most popular students of his time, a champion 100 yards runner, full back and captain of the rugby team (there is a sketch of him in the *Dragon*, XXVI, 221), an able oarsman and student President in 1914-15 (there is a photograph of him in his robes in the *Dragon*, XXVII, 18). Professor Ethé tried to persuade him to go on to Cambridge to study oriental languages but he chose to go to Jesus College, Oxford. He spent only a short time there as he joined the army and turned his back on academic life. He served in the Cyclists Corps and rose to the rank of captain and was mentioned in despatches. He was information officer in Baghdad and took part in planning the truce with the Turks in 1917. He won the M.B.E. (military).

In 1920 he joined the administrative department of the Civil Service and by 1937 was an assistant secretary. He was private secretary to three successive Secretaries of State in the War Office, Viscounts Hailsham and Halifax and Duff Cooper. He spent the year 1936 at the Imperial Defence College. In 1937 he went to India to take charge of defence expenditure there. He was called back to London in 1939 as Deputy Under-Secretary to the Air Ministry, and in 1940 was appointed first Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Aircraft Production. Much of the praise for the success of that work during World War II is due largely to his inexhaustible energy and incisiveness. In September 1941 he was on the Beaverbrook and Harriman mission to Moscow. In 1943 he was chosen to advise the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, on military arrangements in India faced with war against Japan. Following the famine in Bengal he was appointed chairman of the enquiry into the administration of the province. He won the admiration of the Indians. In 1945 he was appointed a financial member of the Governor's Working Party. He played a prominent part in the arrangement which led to the end of imperial government. In 1946 he was made Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Supply, but for the last five months of 1947 he was on his third visit to India, this time as financial and economic adviser to Quaid-i-Azam Mahomed Ali Jinnah, the Governor-General of Pakistan. This was another indication of the Indians ' trust in his organising ability. The fruit of the advice he gave was seen in the centralisation of government in Karachi, though he foresaw that problems could arise in east Bengal. Until his retirement at sixty years of age in 1953 he was a member of the Economic Planning Board. He was regarded as the most brilliant and most constructive of his generation in Whitehall. When he retired from his posts he was invited by Beaverbrook to join the Board of the Express newspapers.

He had a strong and attractive personality. Though he was a hard worker himself who expected the same commitment from his assistants, he was loyal to them to the end. He was an easy person to warm to, without guile and a respecter of traditional ideals. He had no patience with impoliteness, ingratitude, niggardliness or taking unfair advantage; he was an interesting and humorous companion. His colleagues saw a poetic streak in him and an eloquence, they thought, that related to his Welsh background. He was made president of the Welsh Society in New Delhi. He was made K.C.B. in 1941 and G.C.B. in 1947.

He was married in Swansea on 15 September 1920 to Constance May Phillips, one of his college contemporaries and daughter of Phillip Walter Phillips, Controller of the port of Swansea. They were childless. He died of a stroke at his home in Henley-on-Thames on 18 August 1953, before realising his intention of retiring to the vicinity of Llangadog, his ancestral home. There he had hoped to tend his garden, to renew his relationships with his old friends in Welsh Wales, and find nourishment for his soul. Had his wish been realised he would, no doubt, have thrown himself into the national struggle alongside his old college friend, D.J. Williams.

Author

Evan David Jones, (1903 - 1987)

Sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Who was who?

The Times, 20, 24 August 1953

D. J. Williams ' tribute to him in *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 6 April-18 May 1955

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: Archibald Rowlands

Additional Links

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