PUGH, Sir IDWAL VAUGHAN (1918-2010), civil servant, Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman) (1976-79)

Name: Idwal Vaughan Pugh
Date of birth: 1918
Date of death: 2010
Gender: Male
Occupation: civil servant, Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman) (1976-79)
Area of activity: Public and Social Service, Civil Administration
Author: Mary Auronwy James

Idwal Pugh was born on 10 February 1918 at Blaenau Ffestiniog, Merionethshire, the eldest of five sons of Rhys Pugh (a quarry man, later a bus conductor) and his wife, Elizabeth (a schoolteacher). He was brought up by relatives in Tonpentre in the Rhondda, Glamorganshire. He attended Cowbridge Grammar School and won a scholarship to St John's College, Oxford, where he graduated in Mods and Greats (classics) in 1940 before joining the Royal Army Service Corps. He served in the 7th Armoured Division (the Desert Rats) at El Alamein, in Sicily and in Italy, and was a major when he was demobilized in 1946.

Idwal Pugh then joined the Ministry of Civil Aviation. He was involved in organising the Berlin airlift, and was later a delegate to the International Civil Aviation Organisation in Montreal. In 1956 he was promoted to assistant secretary and became involved with petrol rationing post-Suez which led to heated meetings with road hauliers and commercial travellers. After two years as civil air attaché in Washington, he was promoted to under-secretary in 1959.

Two years later he moved to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. In 1964 he chaired an inter-departmental inquiry into ways of modernising the planning system; the Labour government broadly accepted his report, which called for fewer and more independent planning authorities.

In 1971 he was promoted to permanent secretary at the Welsh Office, but returned to Housing and Local Government in 1973 as it became part of the giant Department of the Environment where he became Second permanent secretary. From April 1976 to February 1979 he was Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman) and Health Service Commissioner. As Ombudsman his main duty was to investigate complaints against Whitehall, and a parallel responsibility for the National Health Service (NHS). As a result he criticised the rudeness and deceit or maladministration which he had found in Whitehall, leading to public apologies from government ministers for injustices inflicted by their staff. In 1979 new rules were issued forbidding civil servants to block benefits to which a claimant was entitled, though not all errant agencies such as the Inland Revenue compensated those who had suffered financial loss by maladministration. He also drew attention to arrogance and ill-treatment in the National Health Service.

He next became chairman of the Hodge Group and Hodge Finance, Cardiff, and chaired the Development Corporation of Wales (1980-83). For nine years he was director of the Standard Chartered Bank and Halifax Building Society (1979-88).

He was an accomplished pianist and after moving from Cardiff to Oxford he took a university course in Composition. He served as chairman of the Royal National College of Music (1988-1992), and was president of Coleg Harlech and the Cardiff Business Club, and vice-presidentof the University College of Swansea.

The honours he received include: being appointed CB in 1967, knighted in 1972 and being elected Honorary Fellow of St John's College, Oxford, in 1979.

In 1946 he married Mair Lewis (she died in 1985); they had a son and daughter. He died 21 April 2010.

Author

Dr Mary Auronwy James

Sources

Who's who?, 2010

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The Independent, 1 June 2010

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Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: Idwal Pugh

Additional Links

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