

JOHN, BRYNMOR THOMAS (1934-1988), Labour politician

Name: Brynmor Thomas John
Date of birth: 1934
Date of death: 1988
Gender: Male
Occupation: Labour politician
Area of activity: Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: John Graham Jones

He was born on 18 April 1934, the son of William Henry John, a painter and decorator, and Sarah Jane John. He received his education at Wood Road elementary school, Treforest, Pontypridd Boys' Grammar School and University College, London. He graduated Ll. B. (Hons.) in 1954. He was an articled clerk, 1954-57 and he became a solicitor in 1957. He was on National Service, 1958-60, serving as an officer with the education branch of the RAF. As a partner from 1960 to 1970 in the firm of Morgan, Bruce and Nicholas, Pontypridd, John specialised in industrial accident cases.

He had joined the Labour Party at the age of eighteen, and was secretary of the Labour Party at University College, London. He was active in the local Labour Party in Pontypridd. He was elected Labour MP for Pontypridd in the general election of 1970 as successor to **Arthur Pearson** and he continued to represent the constituency until his death. He had first come to prominence in his opposition to the visit of the Welsh hockey team to South Africa and he was a committed devolutionist. Brynmor John was Under-secretary of State for defence for the RAF, under Harold Wilson, March 1974-April 1976, and then Minister of State at the Home Office during the **Callaghan** government of April 1976-May 1979. He was regarded as a safe pair of hands who seldom ran into controversy. He served as chairman of the Welsh Labour Group, 1983-84. He was also opposition spokesman on Northern Ireland, 1979-80, defence, 1980-81, social services, 1981-83, and agriculture, 1984-87.

He was a fierce anti-unilateralist who stormed out of the Labour Party conference at Brighton in 1981 when chairman Alex Kitson refused to call him to speak. He was then quickly replaced in that shadow portfolio by John Silkin. Subsequently Brynmor John was not prominent in the party councils. He was named as a possible defector to the SDP in 1981, but deeply resented the insinuation, telling students at the Polytechnic of Wales that the actions of the SDP were designed to ensure the triumph of the hard left. He was also a bitter opponent of the Labour Party's Militant infiltrators. He had backed Roy Hattersley in the 1983 Labour Party leadership contest, and was promptly sacked by Neil Kinnock from the shadow cabinet. During his last years he had thrown himself into his constituency work with renewed vigour. He was a grey-haired, bespectacled figure, somewhat lacking in charisma. But it was easy to underestimate him, and he had a witty felicity in debate.

He married on 6 August 1960 Anne Pryce Hughes, the daughter of David L. Hughes. They had one son and one daughter. They lived at 'Yalehaven', Church Village, near Pontypridd. His hobby was watching rugby football. He died on 13 December 1988 at St Thomas's hospital, London after suffering a heart attack and was cremated at Glyntaff Crematorium. He was succeeded by Kim Howells MP.

Author

Dr John Graham Jones

Sources

Who was who?

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The Times, 15 December 1988

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Further Reading

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

Wikipedia Article: [Brynmor John](#)

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