

Dr. Kenneth Lawson

The death has occurred of Dr. Kenneth Lawson of the Department of Adult Education at the University of Nottingham, aged 89, on 7th April 2017. There was no one more committed to the cause of adult education than Kenneth. I use the word cause deliberately because for Kenneth it was a cause, almost a crusade, and it was one in which he spent the bulk of his working life. He was himself in fact a beneficiary of that cause, since in 1950 he began to study at Fircroft Working Men's College in Selly Oak. After that, in 1951 he went to the famous Ruskin College in Oxford, and after gaining a Diploma in Politics and Economics he went from there to St. John's College in Oxford where he read Politics, Philosophy and Economics, and gained his BA in two years – quite an extraordinary achievement. Just how extraordinary can be gauged from the fact that here was a man who left school at 14 to become an apprentice aircraft rigger: manual worker to standing alongside those who had had a conventional and often extremely privileged education.

In 1958, he came to the University of Nottingham, where he was Warden at the Shakespeare Street Centre, and as well taught economics to miners on day release courses. In the days when we had a mining industry such courses not only informed miners about national and global topics, but acted as a conduit for those aspiring to high office in the Union, and those wishing to follow the same educational route as Kenneth himself had done. Later he became Assistant Director of the Department.

He soon began work on the topic which brought him international recognition producing much respected literature on what came to be called the philosophy of Adult Education. His papers and books, *Philosophical Concepts and Values in Adult Education* (1975, second revised edition 1979) and *Analysis and Ideology: Conceptual Essays on the Education of Adults* (1982) were influential. He made a valuable contribution to the *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, for which he was for many years an editorial correspondent.

He was a political activist too, and after the descent in Britain of the Thatcher pestilence of the 1980s, led a national campaign to 'Save Adult Education'. As well as his literary output, this is his memorial, as well as affectionate memories of a convivial and respected colleague.

Professor Emeritus J.E. (Teddy) Thomas,
Founding Co-editor, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*
Nottingham.
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