



## Dennis Lees

Professor Dennis Samuel Lees was born on July 20th 1924 in Sandiacre, Derbyshire, the eldest of five children, moving shortly afterwards to nearby Borrowash. His school record was not particularly distinguished (he failed his 11+) and he left to become an apprentice joiner. He really enjoyed this work but polio struck at the age of 18. He was unable to continue his apprenticeship and the attack left him deformed with a legacy of severely restricted mobility and frequent pain throughout his life. He died on 11th February 2008 in Nottingham.

Epitomising his approach to life he reacted to this setback with great determination. With the support of his family and their considerable sacrifice, he returned to education at Derby College. He took the University Matriculation Exams and applied to the then University College Nottingham, later the University of Nottingham. He applied to read Geography but was rejected as the course was fully subscribed. Fortunately, it was suggested that he might like to consider Economics. His decision to take that opportunity was fully vindicated and he graduated in 1948 with an external London degree in Economics. He progressed straight to postgraduate study and was awarded his PhD in 1951 on the topic of British monetary policy, 1932-39. For his first academic post he joined the staff of the University College of North Staffordshire (later Keele University) where he remained until appointed as Professor of Economics at the University of Swansea in 1965. In 1968 he joined the University of Nottingham as Professor of Industrial Economics and Head of the Department as only the second holder of that post in succession to Professor F. A. Wells.

During his career he held visiting posts at Reed College, Portland Oregon, the University of Chicago, the University of Sydney and the University of California, Berkeley. His time at Chicago in 1963/4 was particularly influential bringing him into close contact with leading scholars such as Milton Friedman and Ronald Coase.

Dennis always held a strong belief in the primacy of market solutions to economic problems and much of his research and writing reflected this conviction. As a strong supporter of the Institute of Economic Affairs he was a close associate of Arthur Seldon and Ralph Harris. He remained an Honorary Fellow of the Institute until his death. He had a remarkable ability to express complex ideas succinctly and with penetrating clarity. He always argued that his training as a carpenter gave him enormous insights into understanding the structure of difficult problems. His most powerful writings were directed at a non-specialised audience and always sought to get to the heart of a policy debate. He made significant contributions to the discussions on welfare and health care in particular.

His research and writings emphasised policy issues and covered areas such as antitrust, mergers, the economics of industrial accidents, industrial training and finance for small firms. His penetrating analysis of the economic consequences of the professions was a major landmark in this type of research. Reflecting his strong interest in applied economics, alongside leading colleagues such as Professors Victor Morgan, Alan Peacock and John Dunning he helped to establish a successful consulting business, the Economists Advisory Group, which produced a number of influential reports for both private and public sector clients.

During the 1970s he served on a number of important government committees. These included the National Insurance Advisory Committee and the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council of which he became Chairman in 1974. He was awarded a CBE in 1980 in recognition of his contribution. This work also led to influential publications on *Impairment, Disability and Handicap* and the *Economics of Personal Injury*.

When he was appointed in 1967 Nottingham was in the unusual position of having two separate departments: one of Economics and one of Industrial Economics. In the face of considerable resistance he staunchly defended the necessity to maintain Industrial Economics as an independent unit. The value of his position was proved some years later after his retirement as it enabled the founding of the highly successful Nottingham University Business School.

Although he could be a hard task-master he was held in enormous respect by his colleagues. It is remarkable how many of his protégés, whether research students or young members of staff, have progressed to distinguished careers in academia and elsewhere. He retired from his post at the University of Nottingham in December 1982.

He married his wife Elizabeth in 1950 and remained devoted to her until her death in 1992. They had three children, David, Tessa and Alan. Sadly Tessa died in 2006. He was a great lover of cricket and a long time member of Notts County Cricket Club: his ticket for the first day of the 2008 Trent Bridge Test had already been purchased. He was very proud when Deryck Murray, the West Indian Test wicket-keeper, graduated from the Department as a mature student.

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