

Memoriam: Thomas Kenneth Whitaker

42nd President of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland (1968-1971)

Born: 8 December 1916 (Co. Down); Died: 7 January 2017 (Dublin)

Thomas Kenneth (T.K.) Whitaker is generally regarded as the greatest Irish public servant of the twentieth century. A graduate of London University by external study, he was a career civil servant from 1934 to 1969.

Appointed to the position of Secretary of the Department of Finance in 1956, Whitaker is best known for leading the team of economists in the Department who prepared the ground-breaking study *Economic Development* which set out to explore the factors behind Ireland's economic decline in the post war period. Early versions of some of the ideas in that study were presented by him at the Society and the study was also influenced by academic economists and other public servants who were actively involved in meetings of the Society during the 1950s. The study paved the way for direct political engagement with a major and highly successful transformation of the Irish economy, moving steadily over time from a policy of protectionism and self-sufficiency towards competition and an increasingly outward export focus, centred on integration into the European & global economies and on the development of exporting industries.

Whitaker also had a wide-reaching impact outside the Department of Finance. He served as Governor of the Central Bank (1969-1977) and later served as an Oireachtas Senator for two administrations. He played the role of a trusted advisor to governments on issues pertaining to Northern Ireland and worked in a variety of other roles, including Chairman of the Constitution Review Group (1995/6), Chancellor of the National University of Ireland (1976-1996), and President of the Royal Irish Academy (1985-1987). Under the auspices of the Society, he played a pivotal role alongside other Council members in establishing the Economic and Social Research Institute (then the Economic Research Institute) in 1960, serving also as its President (1960-1975).

T.K. lived an exceptionally long life – long enough for his importance as an influential leader to be recorded in the school history books. For those of us who knew him personally, we will remember his calm wisdom, his analytical ability, his commitment to public service, his engaging personality and exceptional social skills.

T.K. Whitaker served as President of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society from 1969-1971 and previously as Honorary Secretary. Further biographical details can be found at the Society's Website (www.ssis.ie). His Society contributions include two single authored papers, and two significant responses, one to a paper by Patrick Lynch on full employment and the other to a paper by M.D. McCarthy at a symposium on national accounting:

Journal contributions:

Whitaker, T. K. 'Discussion on the problem of full employment' Dublin: Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland Vol XVII, Vol. XVII, Part 3, 1945/1946, pp446-449

Whitaker, T. K. 'Ireland's external assets'. - Dublin: Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, Vol. XXVIII, Part II, 1948/1949, pp192-216

Whitaker, T. K. 'Symposium on National Income and Social Accounts' Dublin - Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, Vol. XXVIII, Part V, 1951/1952, pp 499-503.

Whitaker, T. K. 'Capital formation, saving and economic progress'. - Dublin: Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, Vol. XXIX, 1955/1956, pp184-209