

Harry Champion

1905-1996



Harry Champion, son of John Henry Champion was born on May 20, 1905 in Worsely, Lancashire, England. After his early education at Farnwoth Grammar School, he pursued higher studies at the Manchester University. After graduating, he served as a statistician for three years with the joint Committee of Cotton Trade Organisations, where he took an active part in the preparation of a regular digest of statistics for the cotton industry. He visited the United States during 1932 on a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship. After returning from the U.S., he became the Robert Ottley Reader in Statistics at the Manchester University and remained so during 1933-39. In December 1939 he joined the newly created Central Economic Intelligence Service, a part of the War Cabinet Office, to help organize statistics needed in their surveys. When the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) was created in January 1941 he became its first Director. He remained in this position till his retirement in 1967. Even after retirement, he was very active in organizing several conferences including the 37th session of the International Statistical Institute, Conferences of Commonwealth Statisticians and Conference of European Statisticians. He was knighted (1957) for his contributions and service to the nation. Sir Harry passed away on May 24, 1996.

Sir Harry was deputed to the United Nations for an year during 1946-47 to help organize the Statistical Office of the UN. He took an active role to clarify concepts, to devise accepted definitions of the statistical figures to be collected, to make statistics from different countries comparable and to advance the collection of statistics in areas which had not so far been fully developed. Thus he was at the forefront of official statistics, not only in the UK but internationally. He strongly felt that there should be short term visits of senior staff between universities/research institutions and the government statistical services so that university staff could bring in fresh ideas to the services and at the same time universities would gain from staff

having practical experience of working with official statistics. This would also provide better candidates from universities to the statistical services of the government.

Sir Harry published research articles on various topics – distribution of national capital; public and private capital in Great Britain; relative importance of British Export Trade, stocks of staple commodities (cotton) etc. He was responsible for the many improvements and developments in the official statistical system in the UK. His name became almost synonymous with the CSO in the UK. He was mainly responsible for starting Monthly Digest of Statistics in 1946. He played an active role in drafting the Statistics of Trade Act in 1947. He chaired the official committee appointed to follow up the 1959 Radcliffe Committee report on the working of the monetary system and was subsequently responsible for starting the monthly Financial Statistics around 1962. He was a statistician *par excellence*.

Sir Harry was a man of few words, one of them being 'thing' which could take on a wide spectrum of meanings. He left his estate to the Royal Statistical Society and the Manchester Statistical Society. Royal Statistical Society setup Champion Fellowship to promote a specific piece of work by its Fellows, that would make a significant contribution to the development, use or exposition of statistics on the economic or social well being of the population. Manchester Statistical Society uses the Champion Fund to support small and novel research projects.

Sir Harry was UK member of the Statistical Commission of the UN from 1947 to 1967. He was President of the International Statistical Institute from 1963 to 1967. He was President of the Royal Statistical Society during 1957 - 1959. He was awarded the Royal Statistical Society's Guy Medal in Silver in 1950. He was awarded CBE in 1945, CB in 1949 and KCB in 1957. He received honorary LLD from Manchester University. Sir Harry visited the Indian Statistical Institute in 1951 and 1968.

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