

## Obituary

### JOSEPH RONALD LEECH

JOSEPH RONALD LEECH, J.P., died on December 28th, 1967, at the age of 66, and is survived by his widow.

For many years he was employed as an analytical chemist with Cadbury Bros., Bournville, and in 1942 he took up a similar appointment with Joseph Lucas in Birmingham, where he remained until his retirement in 1961. On his retirement, it was thought that the occasion would afford him the best opportunity for a return to better health. This hope, however, was only temporarily fulfilled, and from about mid 1964 his health again began to fail, and even the civil duties he loved so much, and which he tried hard to maintain, had to be relinquished. He was, for example, a member of the Selly Oak Hospital Management Committee from the inception of the National Health Service in 1948, until he became Chairman of the Sanatoria Management Committee in 1959.

Few men deprived of the advantages of a full-time academic education, or the qualifying distinction of an advanced scientific training, can claim to have had such an impact on analytical chemistry in the Midlands, as Ronald Leech.

The thread of his influence on the Midlands Section of the Society runs through its entire fabric, almost to the time of his death. The history of the Section dates back several years before its formation in 1955 (*Analyst*, 1955, 80, 168), to the birth of the Midlands Analytical Discussion Group in 1950 with J. R. Leech as its first Chairman; a position he held during the lifetime of the Group.

It was a popular decision, when he was appointed the first Chairman of the newly formed Midlands Section, an office he ably fulfilled until his retirement, by rule, two years later. During this term of office, he was, *ex officio*, an active member of Council.

In the years that followed, the Local Section thrived, and the fact that today it has almost the largest Local Section membership within the Society reflects on his unstinted support and wise counsel, especially during the formative years of the Section.

One of his fervent ambitions was the provision of a Technical House for the Midlands. What an asset this would have been to Birmingham, in particular, if the idea had reached fruition, but despite his influence as a member of the Birmingham Council, the *status quo* remained, and still remains.

The Midlands Section has always found pride and enjoyment in the organising and running of International Symposia, and Ronald Leech was the Symposium Chairman on all such occasions; in 1952, 1954, 1958, and 1962, but for the proposed 1969 Symposium, it is with deep regret that the vacant chair will have to be filled by someone else.

In these earlier Symposia, as with all his Society and multifarious civil commitments, he made many lasting national and international friends. He was never a man to become flurried in an emergency, but at all times displayed a characteristic calmness and meticulous attention to detail; qualities we all admired, and silently tried to emulate.

Those who benefited from his wide experience, and especially those of us who were privileged to enjoy his good companionship, with all the added attributes of a first-class citizen, recognise the sad loss brought about by his death.

W. T. ELWELL