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Obituaries

Geelum Simpson-Lee

Geelum Simpson-Lee was Dean of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Sydney during the 1970's when the first Political Economy courses began. He played a crucial role in facilitating the development of the political economy movement, challenging the dominance of orthodox economics.

Geelum had a long commitment to the University of Sydney. He had been a student there. Becoming an academic in the 1950's he had helped to popularise the teaching of Keynesian economics in Australia. His textbook *The Economic Pattern*, co-authored with Cyril Renwick, was a vehicle for its broader influence in schools and universities.

He was elected to the Deanship by popular support of the academic staff, in days when those democratic processes still existed in Universities. As Dean he had to deal with the deep conflicts in the Department of Economics about the appropriate content of the syllabus, which was then under major challenge. He appointed an official committee of inquiry which recommended the establishment of a sequence of political economy courses for students to take as an alternative to mainstream economics. He helped the dissident faction in the development of those courses and sought to steer them through the process of gaining University approval. After a long period of struggle against the intransigent economic professors and conservative opposition elsewhere in the university, the courses eventually began in 1975.

Quiet and contemplative by temperament, Geelum was a pillar of wisdom and support for his political economy colleagues. He enjoyed twenty years of peaceful and creative retirement in the company of his wife Sheila before his death on the 30th of April 2001, following a short period of illness. He was seventy nine. An annual student prize in his honour is to be established at the University of Sydney.

Frank Stilwell
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