



**Obituary: Professor B. L. Welch**

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the janitor would appear, ostentatiously jangling his keys like some Shakespearean gaoler. Activities promptly resumed in a nearby public house, there to continue until, for the second time that evening, we found ourselves decanted on to the dark and deserted pavements.

Moroney's industrial and teaching experience revealed that virtually none of those doing numerical work in their daily jobs possessed the mathematical competence necessary to study statistics as a straightforward branch of applied mathematics. For them, what we might nowadays term a 'secondary technology' was required, using only the most basic numerical skills. It was primarily to meet this need that *Facts from Figures* was written. It also met that of full-time students in a wide range of numerate disciplines.

On joining Unilever in 1954, it became clear to Moroney that better statistical methods would be introduced only with the co-operation and under the control of the operating companies, always jealous of their independence. It was never intended to establish a large central statistical services department. The first task was to discover where lay the most promising areas of work in Unilever's far-flung empire of factories, oil-mills, packing lines and warehouses. Moroney's prestige opened many doors, but a more formal approach was necessary, and residential courses of one or two weeks' duration were arranged, to which representatives from all the companies were invited. Many sessions were presented by Moroney himself. A teacher of rare talent, he combined a clarity of exposition, an ability to link the theoretical to the practical and an irresistible enthusiasm for his subject. His audience was happy to listen for as long as he was prepared to go on. The unfortunate speaker next on the programme found Moroney an impossible act to follow.

Moroney had all the zeal of the true missionary; not sparing himself, he saw no reason why his staff should not do likewise. A degree of fortitude did not come amiss.

As work developed in a particular area, it became possible for some statisticians from the central team to transfer to the company concerned, with the work thereafter proceeding independently. Thus the role of the central team gradually changed, and Moroney himself now had more time to develop the use of statistical methods in new areas. Much attention was given to marketing and advertising problems (where the distillation of facts from a veritable ocean of figures presented new problems), and some of this work remained with the central unit throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Though not all the seed fell on fertile soil, the harvest was one of which Moroney could feel proud.

It is, however, as the author of a single book that he will be most widely remembered. And, with that book still, after nearly 40 years, finding new readers among later generations of students, both full and part time, and among the general public throughout the world—a further reprint is at this moment being prepared—it would be difficult to imagine a more enduring memorial.

*F. P. Thompson*

### **Obituary: Professor B. L. Welch**

Bernard Lewis Welch died on Friday December 29th, 1989. He had suffered a stroke in June 1989 from which he never recovered. He was cremated in Leeds on January 9th,

1990. Born in 1911 in Sunderland, the youngest of four brothers, he was educated at the Bede School from which he won a scholarship to Brasenose College, Oxford. A gifted batsman, he was most proud of being captain of his school cricket eleven for two successive years. He never ceased to be interested in cricket at all levels and was a regular attender at Headingley.

He graduated, first class, in mathematics in 1933. Subsequently, almost by chance, he became interested in mathematical statistics, the pursuit of which took him to University College London, where Pearson and Fisher were creating an outstanding centre for studies in statistical inference and the use of statistical methods in biological science. Welch made his own distinctive theoretical contribution there and by personal contacts with other workers he committed himself to furthering the explosive impact that statistics was beginning to make in industrial and agricultural fields. Indeed, the organization of the Industrial and Agricultural Research Section of the Royal Statistical Society owed much to his efforts and he became joint editor of the corresponding supplement to the journal of the Society (now Series B). He also served on the editorial boards of other journals including *Biometrika*. He read a paper to the Society (Series A) in 1970 entitled 'Statistics—a vocational or a cultural study?' which still remains an open issue. He was a retiring person who avoided the limelight whenever possible and he was distressed by the controversy with R. A. Fisher over the solution to the 'two-means' problem.

From 1939 to 1946 Welch served as a Scientific Officer on the Ordnance Board of the Ministry of Supply. He then returned to academic life by way of an appointment to a Readership in Statistics in the then Department of Mathematics in the University of Leeds, where he remained until his retirement in 1976. Leeds was then one of the few places that boasted a statistician on its mathematical staff. He then began the, for him, familiar task of spreading the influence of statistics as a tool and as a discipline throughout the university. He was appointed to the Chair in Statistics in 1968 and in 1968, following the establishment of the School of Mathematics, he was appointed Head of the newly created Department of Statistics where he remained until his retirement during which period there was a dramatic expansion in the size and influence of the department.

He enjoyed his retirement during which time he travelled widely in Europe and Canada. An avid reader of biographies of the famous and not so famous he still found time to watch cricket and to keep an eye on the footballing fortunes of Sunderland and Newcastle United.

*K. V. Mardia*