

DOCUMENT 1096 - October 5, 1953

MEMORIAL RESOLUTIONS OF THE FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY

OF WISCONSIN ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR CHARLES LEONARD HUSKINS

In the untimely death of Charles Leonard Huskins in Madison on July 26, 1953, at the age of 55, the University lost an internationally distinguished botanist and a dynamic, colorful personality.

He was born at Walsall, England, November 30, 1897. In 1906, he emigrated with his parents who settled in Red Deer, Alberta Province of Canada. He studied botany first at the School of Agriculture in Olds and then at the University of Alberta, Canada, where he received the B.S. Degree in Agriculture in 1923 and the M.S. Degree in 1925. He won the "1851 Exhibition Overseas Scholarship" for graduate study and in 1927 received the Ph.D. Degree from Kings College, University of London.

He held appointments as Assistant in Plant Breeding, University of Alberta, 1922-25; Research Geneticist, John Innes Horticultural Institution, London, England, 1925-30; and Associate Professor and Professor of Botany at McGill University, 1930-34. In 1934 he was appointed chairman of the new Department of Genetics at McGill University, the first department of its kind in Canada. In 1945, he came to the University of Wisconsin as Professor of Botany and in 1948 became also a member of the Department of Integrated Liberal Studies. During the 1st World War he served with the 187th Battalion of the Canadian Infantry and as Flying Officer (pilot) in the Royal Air Force.

In recognition of his contributions to science, he received many professional honors. He accepted invitations to work for short periods at research institutions in Germany, Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Holland, and France. He was visiting Professor of Botany at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1938, and Guggenheim Fellow in the Department of Zoology of Columbia University in 1942-43. He was active in many professional organizations of the United States including the Genetics Society, Society for the Study of Evolution, American Society of Naturalists, Botanical Society of America, American Genetical Association, Sigma Xi, and American Association of University Professors. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and president of its Biological and Medical Sciences Section in 1951.

In 1923 he married Margaret Villy, native of Manchester, England, a writer and at the time lecturer in English literature at the University of Alberta, a person whose exceptional artistic and spiritual qualities contributed greatly to their home and to the community. She died on March 11 of this year. Her many humane interests included the founding of the "Canadian War Nursery No. 1" and the first Unitarian Society's Play House Nursery School in Madison. They are survived by three children: Sheila Wincot (Mrs. S. Hori), Olwen Margaret and John Michael.

As an investigator, Leonard Huskins combined the approaches of the scientist and the artist. He had spent his boyhood on a farm, and though he became primarily interested in the fundamental aspects of scientific work, he never lost sight of possible practical applications and retained the originality of a practical man in solving technical problems by the simplest means. He emphasized the usefulness of exceptions to prevailing generalizations in the solution of

fundamental questions. He was always skeptical of oversimplification and reminded his students continuously to treasure exceptions.

His scientific investigations represent pioneering work on fundamental biological problems. His early work dealt with the origin of aberrant types in cereals and its significance for understanding the evolution of cultivated plants, and led to his investigations of chromosome structure, behavior, and reproduction. These cytological and genetical studies he expanded from the oats and wheats on which he had begun to "flies, mice, and man." In recent years his interest centered on the analysis of the role of chromosomes and the nucleus in differentiation and development and related problems of cellular physiology.

As Chairman of the McGill Genetics Department and the leader of research groups, he attracted many younger collaborators and students in whom he encouraged an unusual degree of independence and whom he influenced by his personality and breadth of vision.

Professor Huskins' educational interests were by no means confined to the biological sciences. Because he recognized the kinship of the arts and sciences and the role science must play in education and education in science, he had friends in many disciplines. He could well claim to be a humanist, being widely read in philosophy, literature and the arts. He did not hastily reject new ideas. He subscribed to and read currently a number of journals of ideas and was familiar with contemporary works in the theory and practice of higher education. In his lectures to undergraduates he undertook to relate the significance of the biological sciences to the broad scheme of education as he saw it, and to his graduate students he was an example of a liberally educated scientist.

In 1947 he was appointed to "Committee B" of the College of Letters and Science which undertook the formulation of an integrated curriculum resulting in the program of Integrated Liberal Studies. Dr. Huskins' vision of liberal education and his readiness to conceive the place of the biological sciences in the total pattern of studies were stimulating to his fellow committee members and played no small part in the success of the new curriculum in which he became a teacher.

Beyond the campus his activities were equally broad. He was an enthusiastic member of the Madison Literary Society. He was an active and hard-working member of the Madison Unitarian Society, both he and Mrs. Huskins serving on important committees and contributing in effective ways to the growth of the Society. On several occasions he occupied the pulpit as speaker.

Leonard Huskins' written contributions to cytogenetics will preserve his scientific memory; his vivid personality will live on in the memories of his many friends. He was a vigorous, energetic man, quick of movement and speech. He enjoyed physical labor, and for many years had spent part of each summer toiling on his Vermont farm. Witty, earthy, and quick to appreciate the humorous side of a subject, he was a stimulating conversationalist who often applied his wide knowledge of history and philosophy in a shrewd interpretation of contemporary events. He was deeply concerned about trends and problems of science and society and spoke on these subjects forthrightly and with imaginative understanding. He was open-minded, youthful, eager to learn, and he vigorously championed innovation if convinced of its merit.

In his death, the University community and the city of Madison have lost a searching thinker and an effective contributor to educational and civic improvement.

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