

Obituary



James Newington King
1937–1993

Dr J. N. King, Executive Secretary of the International Union of Crystallography, died 12 April 1993 at the early age of 55 at his home in Littleton near Chester, England. He had been suffering from mesothelioma, possibly caused by inhalation of asbestos dust during laboratory work earlier in his career.

James (Jim) Newington King was born 8 September 1937. Jim was a student in the Physics Department of Imperial College London from 1955, gaining his PhD in 1963. His research was on electron diffraction studies of surface structure under the supervision of Dr H. Wilman. From 1963 to 1968, he worked in Australia as a Research Scientist in the Materials Division of the Aeronautical Research Laboratories, Department of Supply, Melbourne. Here he examined thin metal films by electron diffraction and electron microscopy. He was Secretary of the Organizing Committee for the 1965 Melbourne Conference on Electron Diffraction and the Nature of Defects in Crystals, which was jointly sponsored by the IUCr and the Australian Academy of Sciences. He returned to England in 1968 to an industrial post.

In the summer of 1968, the Executive Committee of the IUCr decided that the activities of the Union

had grown to such an extent that a salaried Executive Secretary was required to relieve the General Secretary and the Treasurer of much of the administration. The post was advertised and Dr King was the successful candidate. He was appointed from 1 February 1969. At that time, there was a small office for the Technical Editor in Chester, staffed by Stephen Bryant, one assistant and a secretary. Jim King joined them and, within a few months, larger premises were found for a joint office. Meanwhile, Jim had travelled to Groningen and often to Manchester to pick up his tasks from the honorary Officers. His first experience of the Union in full swing came at the General Assembly and Congress held at Stony Brook, NY, USA, in August 1969.

Jim King was Executive Secretary of the IUCr for 24 years, a period spanning just over half of the Union's history. He served under nine Presidents and was directly responsible to five General Secretaries and Treasurers. The duties that fell on him ranged from routine to highly complex. Lengthy agenda, supporting papers and minutes were required for the General Assembly, Executive Committee, Finance Committee and other committees. Communications were needed with the Adhering Bodies and with the

Commissions of the Union. Financial records had to be maintained and the routine affairs of the Union kept running. At a different level, whether handled by Jim alone or jointly with the Treasurer and others, were the multinational negotiations with publishers and printers, accountants, bankers, lawyers and tax authorities. Inflation, varying exchange rates and the uncertain sales of expanding publications meant that such negotiations were often difficult and demanding.

During Jim's era, the Union's activities expanded greatly both in volume and character. This expansion was much larger than is indicated by the bare statistics that the number of Adhering Bodies increased from 30 to 35 and the number of Commissions from 11 to 17. Many more scientific meetings received Union sponsorship. Publications especially expanded, and the technical-editing staff rose over the years from 3 to more than a dozen. In consequence, the Union office had successively to be moved, then rearranged and renovated, and then expanded again. Within the office, computerized technology had to be introduced. The Union's varied financial transactions increased considerably. All these developments added to Jim's responsibilities.

Jim gave invaluable help to successive General Secretaries and Treasurers. His advice was shrewd, his manner pleasant and he was generally imperturbable. Without fuss, he could write a well argued letter on a difficult topic. His judgement of situations and people was very sound. Known everywhere within the crystallographic community as *Jim*, he won innumerable friends in many countries. He had an excellent appreciation of the international charac-

ter of the Union, and understood how to balance different ways of looking at things, whether depending on personalities or different cultural backgrounds. He had a strong sense of justice, which made him adamant in certain problems ranging from employment arrangements of staff members to the most difficult negotiations concerning restrictions put by governments on free participation in Union-sponsored meetings, which sometimes required very fast reactions.

Jim travelled to IUCr meetings all round the world and coped cheerfully with the three-week non-stop round of committees that came to accompany each General Assembly. This was the part of his work that he apparently enjoyed best. Despite his ill health, he was already well prepared for the Beijing Congress in August with all his tickets and reservations arranged. His devotion to the Union was indomitable. He courageously continued working until a few days before his death. The Union has suffered a great loss by his passing at the prime of his career.

His funeral took place at Christleton Church on 22 April, and was well attended by his family, his friends (including many from the Chester area) and IUCr colleagues and Officers. Our sympathy goes to Stuart and Jocelyn, the children of his first marriage, and especially to his wife Susan *née* Lowe, a senior member of the technical-editing staff. Bravely, they had married on 20 June 1992, knowing that Jim's disease was already advanced.

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