

MEMOIR

ARTHUR HUNTER

A COLUMN of the *New York Times* of 29 January 1964 carried the headline 'ARTHUR HUNTER, ACTUARY, IS DEAD'. The wording is more direct than would be used in newspapers in this country but such was the reputation of Dr Arthur Hunter that the reactions of one who knew him were not of shock at the bluntness of the statement but of regret, sadness and sorrow that the passing of a distinguished actuary should mean the end of an era; the era of the young Scot crossing the Atlantic to seek his fortune and in the process making a substantial and unique contribution to the development of life insurance and the actuarial profession in the United States.

Hunter was born in Edinburgh in 1869 and was educated at George Watson's College. He served his apprenticeship with the Life Association of Scotland and in 1892, after he had completed the examinations of the Fellowship of the Faculty, he left for the United States and secured a post with the Fidelity Mutual Life Insurance Company in Philadelphia. Six years later he joined the New York Life Insurance Company from the service of which office he retired in 1941 as Senior Vice-President and Chief Actuary.

When it is realized that until comparatively recent years many United States life insurance companies would not issue policies on sub-standard lives, it will be apparent that the New York Life was a pioneer in issuing policies to cover sub-standard lives from 1896 onwards. Hunter blazed the trail in actuarial research when he persuaded his Company to allow him to present a paper to the Actuarial Society of America giving the Company's experience under sub-standard risks. This was the first of many papers—about eight in all—which became a guide to the profession in U.S.A. and Canada over a long period of years. Many of Hunter's papers were written in collaboration with Dr Oscar Rogers, the Chief Medical Director of the New York Life with whom he was jointly responsible for devising the numerical rating system for the assessment of sub-standard risks. It is the standard system used on the North American Continent and has many adherents in other parts of the world.

Hunter was a member of the Actuarial Society of America for sixty-three years and played an active part in its development. He held a number of offices culminating in his election as President in 1916. On the occasion of the final meeting of the Actuarial Society of America prior to its merger with the American Institute of Actuaries into the Society of Actuaries, Hunter was uniquely honoured by being invited to make the final address to the Society. He was then the senior Past President of the Society.

His membership of the Faculty from his admission as a student in 1887 was longer still and only last year the Council of the Faculty passed a resolution on the completion of his seventy years as a Fellow which referred to his services to the profession, to his fellow members' appreciation of the honour he had brought to the Faculty and to the high regard and esteem in which he was held by all the Faculty members who had the privilege of knowing him.

Hunter became an Associate of the Institute by ballot in 1893 and was elected a corresponding member in 1925. The purpose of the appointment of a corresponding member is usually, first, as an honour to the recipient and secondly, to enable the Institute to have a correspondent of standing in a foreign country who could be a source of reference and information in case of need. Hunter considered that his appointment placed upon him the obligation to correspond with the Institute. In the result, ten notes on medico-actuarial investigations of various types were published in the *Journal* between 1925 and 1948.

Hunter's reputation spread to other spheres of actuarial work and to other countries. He was a Charter Member of the Casualty Actuarial Society and a corresponding member of the French Institute of Actuaries, and the Swiss Society of Actuaries. He was

the principal contributor to the textbook on Disability Benefits published in 1920 by the Actuarial Society of America in their series *Actuarial Studies*. He made a contribution to the discussion on Disability Benefits at the 1927 Congress.

But prolific as he was as a writer and hard as he worked for the profession, for insurance and for his Company, he did not confine his activities to these areas and he had many other interests.

Such was the esteem and integrity of Hunter in the eyes of those with whom he was associated that he was offered and accepted such posts as Director of the Blue Shield Doctors Plan, Director of the New York United Medical Service and Trustee and President of Montclair Art Museum, Trustee and President of the Mountainside Hospital, Trustee of the Community Chest and Trustee of the Unitarian Church. He preserved his links with his native Scotland and was President of the St Andrew's Society of New York and of the Burns Society. He was a keen golfer and helped to develop the first golf course in Philadelphia. His keenness also showed itself in the formation of a 'before Church' group of Sunday morning golfers on the links of Montclair Golf Club.

In the two World Wars he had a remarkable record of service. He was Chief Consulting Actuary to the United States Government in the first World War and Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the War Risk Insurance Bureau playing a major role in the development of life insurance for members of the armed forces. He was also responsible for the New York State Military Census. In 1946 he received the King George VI Medal 'for services in the cause of freedom' being one of the instigators of the 'Bundles for Britain' scheme. He was adviser to a number of Presidents of the United States on financial matters connected with Red Cross, pensions, medical services and unemployment problems.

Hunter was honoured by the academic world by being awarded honorary degrees of LL.D. at Edinburgh University and by Hamilton College, New York and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Through his life Hunter had a keen interest in young people and many outstanding actuaries both in the U.S.A. and Canada gained much from their early training while serving under him. He was keenly interested in the establishment of a better understanding between the U.S.A. and Canada and provided funds for the purchase of books for the Universities of Edinburgh and St Andrews and for a scholarship in America tenable by boys at George Watson's College.

The young man from Edinburgh who sought his fortune in the new country in the last century lived to see the growth of a great nation: a nation built by citizens such as Arthur Hunter. He had many friends in England and Scotland who admired and respected him, not least those who had the privilege of knowing him over the years.

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