

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN (JACK) BERRY

"The Doyen of Organised Commerce"

John Berry passed away quietly in Johannesburg on Saturday 6th November 1976. He was born in Lancashire, England on 1 February 1897, spent his early childhood in the Manchester district and qualified as an electrical engineer. He worked in the telephone division of the British Post Office in his early years, thereafter, as an executive of Siemens (BRIT) Limited, he was in charge of a programme to develop Brazil's telephone network during the 1920's and 1930's. He was recognised as a specialist in telephony.

In 1935 he was transferred to Johannesburg by Siemens to take charge of its South African activities. In South Africa his business career has been as follows:

1935/49: Chairman and Managing Director Siemens Brothers & Co. (British) Limited.

1953/60: Managing Director African Cables Limited. Chairman 1960/2.

1957/62: Chairman African Telephone Cables (Pty) Ltd.

1959/62: Chairman African Telephone Cables Plastics (Pty) Limited.

1941/43: President of Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce.

1946/47: President of Association of Chambers of Commerce of South Africa.

1948/61: Vice-President (South Africa) Federation of Commonwealth and British Chambers of Commerce.

1958/65: and 1971/73: First Chairman and Founder member of the South African Council of the International Chamber of Commerce.

1961: Member of the South African Government Trade Mission to the Americas.

1960/70: Member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council.

First Honourary Life Member of the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce.

1976: First Honourary Life (and Founder) Member of the South African Council of the International Chamber of Commerce.

Founder Member of the newly-formed Free Market Foundation (Southern Africa).

Mr Berry, together with Dr Bill Busschau (who died earlier this year) and Angus Collie formed what has been referred to as a triumvirate of lucid and consistent spokesmen for the gold standard and free enterprise. Mr Berry whilst most recognised for his leadership of organised commerce, was very closely associated with the Chamber of Mines and served as a member of the Gold Study Committee.

He felt very strongly about the necessity for stable money. He argued convincingly that the only stable money, was money backed by, and directly or indirectly convertible to gold. If Governments insisted on debasing currency and printing paper money, he argued, the greatest long-term danger was the erosion of not only economic but also personal freedoms; the introduction of unsound money, had, particularly since the war, resulted in innumerable restrictions on the freedom of individuals to move their property and to use their property as they chose, both nationally and internationally, especially through such measures as exchange control.

But he was perhaps best known to the South African business community as a consistent spokesman of free competitive enterprise. In this area he has been called a "magnificent orator, a man of principle and someone possessing exceptional analytical prowess". His death has left a vacuum which cannot be filled.



His advocacy of the Austrian theory of economics as expounded by Nobel Laureate, Friedrich Hayek and his predecessor Ludwig von Mises, as the only economic system compatible with individual freedom was not only what he felt most strongly about, but also what earned his stature and repute.

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