

Sir John George, KBE, CStJ

Sir John Clarke George, KBE, CstJ (16 October 1901 – 14 October 1972) was a British coalminer and politician. He was one of a very small band of Conservative Members of Parliament to have been working miners.

Early life

George's father, also called John Clarke George, was a miner from Fife. After attending Ballingry Public School until the age of 14, George began work in the coal mines. However he later trained for management, and rose through the ranks; by 1938 he was appointed Manager of New Cumnock Collieries.

Business life

In 1946 he left the mining industry which was on the verge of nationalisation, and became manager of Alloa Glass Works. At this point he became active in politics as a Unionist and in 1949 he was elected to Clackmannanshire County Council. He was an unsuccessful Parliamentary candidate in South Ayrshire in the 1950 general election, but was elected to Alloa Town Council in 1951. He was awarded the CBE in 1952.

Constitutional problem

At the 1955 general election, George was elected to Parliament as a Unionist for Glasgow Pollok (the Scottish Unionists took the Conservative whip). Almost immediately he was the trigger for a minor constitutional crisis when it was noted that he was a Director of Scottish Slate Industries, a nationalised industry, having been appointed by the Ministry of Works in February 1947. Although George had not received any remuneration, it was possible that it might be an 'office of profit under the Crown' which would disqualify him from election.

The matter was referred to a Select Committee, while the government rushed through a Bill to change the law. The Committee found that, under the law as it stood, George was disqualified. A bill to indemnify George from the consequences of having acted as an MP while disqualified, and validate his election, was also passed.

Parliamentary career

George often spoke about the mining industry in Parliament. In 1957 he opposed the decontrol of rents which had been brought in by the Conservative government. However, this did not harm his career and in October 1959 he was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Power with responsibility for the coal industry, a job he held until June 1962. In 1963 he was made a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire and appointed Chairman of the Unionist Party in Scotland.

He stood down from Parliament at the 1964 general election, and retired from his party posts in 1965, returning to business as Chairman of Scottish Rexco Ltd and Preswick Precision Products Ltd.