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INTRODUCTION

BLACK PAPERS

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R.D.C. Black Papers (D4115)

Table of Contents

Summary	3
Background.....	4
The Papers	5

Summary

The R.D.C. Black Papers comprise c.8,500 documents, 1937-1995, deriving from the professional career of Robert Denis Collison Black (b.1922), former head of the Department of Economics at The Queen's University of Belfast (1971-1975). The papers consist mainly of manuscripts and final drafts of most of Professor Black's works, including his work on W.S. Jevons, a noted nineteenth-century economist, and papers by, and correspondence with, other eminent economists and economic historians, for example, A.W. (Bob) Coates, L.M. Cullen, Sir John Hicks and William Jaffe.



Background

R.D.C. Black was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, graduating with First Class Honours in Economics and Political Science in 1941. He gained a PhD in 1943 and an M.A. in 1945. His first academic posting was at Trinity, where he was Deputy for the Professor of Political Economy. He moved to Belfast in 1945 to take up a position in the Department of Economics at Q.U.B. Most of Professor Black's career was spent at this university, where he progressed from Assistant Lecturer (1945-1946), through Lecturer (1946-1958) and Senior Lecturer (1958-1961), to Professor of Economics (1962-1985), becoming Head of Department in 1962 – a position he retained for 23 years. From 1967-1970 he was Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, and Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University from 1971 to 1975. After his retirement in 1985 he became Emeritus Professor of Economics, Q.U.B.

Professor Black spent time researching and lecturing in Japan and in America, notably at Yale where he was Visiting Professor of Economics, and at Princeton, where he held the position of Rockefeller Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellow (1950-1951). Best known, perhaps, for his work on the economist William Stanley Jevons, Professor Black is the author of over 70 publications including *Economic Thought and the Irish Question* (Cambridge, 1960), *The Economic Writings of Mountifort Longfield* (New York, 1971), and *Economic Theory and Policy in context: the Selected Essays of R.D. Collison Black* (Aldershot, 1995).

Apart from his duties at Queen's, Professor Black was also on the editorial board of the journal *History of Political Economy* (HOPE). He was a member of several learned societies and is currently the only person to belong to both the Royal Irish Academy and the British Academy. He has received a number of honorary awards, including a Fellowship from Trinity College, Dublin, and a Doctorate from Q.U.B. His public service work has included chairing the Committee of Inquiry into Angling in Northern Ireland, and the Commission of Inquiry into the establishment of a Wages Council in the catering industry, Northern Ireland, as well as being a member of the Industrial Court for Northern Ireland.



The Papers

Professor Black has deposited in PRONI a wealth of academically related material accumulated over a long and productive life. The papers range from notes taken during his early post-graduate days at Trinity College, Dublin, to this *Magnus Opus*, the life and works of W.S. Jevons.

Most of his notes and manuscripts have been preserved, as has his copious correspondence with other eminent academics – including one letter congratulating Sir John Hicks on winning the Nobel prize for Economics. This correspondence, amounting to approximately 1,000 letters, contain references to the works of other scholars, debates on relevant issues and anecdotal information. A further c.3,100 letters relate to Professor Black's work on W.S. Jevons, and include correspondence with relatives of Jevons.

Other correspondence, comprising another 1,800 or so letters, relates to the organisation of conferences, his visit to Japan, research enquiries, haggling with publishers, dealing with members of various societies and associations, such as the Royal Irish Academy, the Council of the Economic and Social Research Institute (in both of which he was a member), and the Malaysian Student Association, of which he was patron.

Professor Black's own publications are preserved in manuscript and typed draft form, along with accompanying notes, giving a very useful indication of the thought process behind the finished articles. Most of the sources he drew upon are mentioned in the 'Guide to archive sources' – also contained in this collection. Related papers include lecture notes, biographical papers and documents appertaining to Professor Black's time in America at Yale and Princeton universities.

An interesting insight into the state of economic debate between the late nineteen-sixties and the late 'eighties is provided by the collection of papers submitted to the editorial board of the History of Political Economy. Most of these papers have additional criticisms made by Professor Black. These can be compared and contrasted with Professor Black's reviews on works published by J. Creedy, P. Dean and D.P. O'Brien.

The most comprehensive section of the archive is that which deals with W.S. Jevons. This includes drafts of works on and about Jevons, both by Professor Black and other writers, and reviews, lecture notes and conference papers.

