

# Donald English

*December 27, 1885 — July 9, 1974*

Donald English, professor of economics, emeritus, was born in Oakland, California. He was a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, in the class of 1909. At Berkeley he studied under Henry Rand Hatfield and Wesley Clair Mitchell, serving as an undergraduate research assistant to Professor Mitchell, who strongly recommended that he pursue an academic career. Upon graduation, he immediately received an appointment as an instructor at Washington State College, where he taught economics for two years. In 1914 he received the M.B.A. degree from Harvard University. His special field was accounting theory, but he was broadly trained in general economics and financial theory.

In September 1914 English came to Cornell to teach accounting theory and practice in the Department of Economics with the rank of assistant professor. In 1918 he was promoted to the rank of professor. For the next thirty-five years until his retirement in 1953 he was a vigorous, exacting, and hard-driving teacher in the College of Arts and Sciences. Never one to seek student popularity, he held his students to the highest standards of sound reasoning, accuracy of detail, and promptness in the performance of all assignments. Many students thanked him in later years for holding them to standards that they had sometimes resented as being interferences with their pleasant extracurricular activities.

English was long active in University and community affairs. In 1934 he was appointed to a three-member committee on control of athletics. As a result of the activities of this committee, Cornell's athletics program was reorganized, and James Lynah was appointed director of athletics and physical education.

In 1937, while a faculty representative on the Cornell Board of Trustees, he drafted the retirement pension system for the faculty in the endowed divisions of the University. He served as chairman of the Department of Economics from 1925 to 1946. He served jointly on the faculties of the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Business and Public Administration from 1946 until his retirement in 1953. He was active in the Ithaca Community Chest, serving as chairman of its budget committee in 1941 and 1942. He also served on the board of trustees of the Ithaca City Hospital.

English gave generous amounts of his time to helping several undergraduate organizations (the *Widow*, the *Masque*, and the *Cornellian*) keep their accounts straight and preserve their chronically precarious solvency.

Although not a gregarious person, Donald English was sociable and extremely generous to his friends and close associates. He loved good food and lively conversation. He held strong opinions that he could defend with skill and vigor. He was not easily fooled. On the floor of the University Faculty he could be devastating when he felt that nonsense was being solemnly offered as sense.

During the last five years of his life English was almost totally blind. He could neither read nor watch television. But he insisted on living alone, spending many hours listening to radio programs of great variety, in even the worst of which he found something to interest him. He was delighted to have friends drop in for visits. He seldom burdened them with his problems. He was cheerful, uncomplaining, bright, and alert until the very day of his death. He outlived most of his friends, but those who have survived him remember him with genuine respect and affection. He served the University well for many years.

*George H. Hildebrand, Clifton W. Loomis, Paul M. O'Leary*