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Bruce Farthing

Advocate of British shipping

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Richard Bruce Crosby Farthing, shipping administrator: born London 9 February 1926; called to the Bar, Inner Temple 1954; barrister, Government Legal Service 1954-59; staff, Chamber of Shipping of the United Kingdom 1959-67, Assistant General Manager 1966-67; Secretary, Committee of European Shipowners and Committee of European National Shipowners' Associations 1967-74; Secretary-General, Council of European and Japanese National Shipowners' Associations 1974-76; Director, General Council of British Shipping 1976-80, Deputy Director-General 1980-83; chairman, Maritime London 1999-2000, president 2001-07; married 1969 Anne Williams (one son, one daughter; marriage dissolved 1986), 1986 Moira Roupell; died London 21 April 2007.

Bruce Farthing was an ardent advocate of British shipping for nearly 50 years. Joining the old Chamber of Shipping in 1959, he became Secretary General of Censa (the Council of European and Japanese Shipowners), then deputy head of the General Council of British Shipping and Secretary General of Intercargo. In semi-retirement he helped to found the organisation Maritime London to promote London as the shipping capital of the world, becoming chairman and then president.

Farthing was born in 1926, the son of a distinguished Army officer, and gained a scholarship to Alleyn's in Dulwich. He won a choral scholarship (all his life he was devoted to music and singing) to King's College, Cambridge. But the Second World War interrupted and he was commissioned into the 7th RHA, serving in Northern Italy and later Palestine.

On demobilisation in 1948 King's would not give him back the choral scholarship but engineered one for him at St Catherine's. There he sang, played cricket (he later played for the MCC and the Incogniti) and got a law degree.

He passed his bar exams in 1954 and served for five years in the Government Legal Service before joining the Chamber of Shipping. There he specialised in foreign shipping policy, with constant rows with the Americans, the Russians and others over the legitimacy or otherwise of liner conferences. But it was not all grind. At a Censa meeting aboard a Russian cruise ship in the Black Sea, Farthing felt the Russians were "out to get him". They did. He broke his ankle trying to do cossack dancing.

Farthing left the Chamber of Shipping in 1983 to start, at the instigation of the Greek shipowner Antony Chandris, the Association of Dry Cargo Shipowners (Intercargo). When he retired in 1999 as Secretary-General he had grown Intercargo from nothing to 120 members.

In 1981, Farthing had also been elected a member of the Common Council of the City of London, standing for the Aldgate (largely shipping) ward. He represented the ward until his death, being then an Alderman. He was one of the founders of Maritime London, a body embracing shipowners, shipbrokers, shipping law firms, ship- chandlers and all those concerned with shipping, to speak with one voice on taxation and shipping policy.

He was a shipping writer, too. In 1961 he edited volume 20 of Aspinall's Reports of Maritime Law Cases and in 1987 published International Shipping: an introduction to the policies, politics and institutions of the maritime world, currently being revised for its fourth edition and widely used as a standard textbook.

Apart from writing about the sea, Farthing loved sailing on it. From his earliest years he mucked about with boats and later did many a hairy voyage as a member of the Royal Ocean Racing Club.

Patrick Shovelton

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