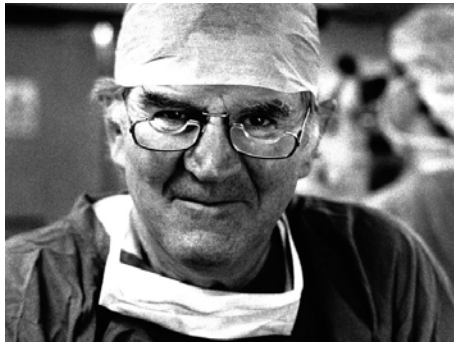


Frederick Cossom Hollows (1929-1993)



Fred Hollows became one of Australia's most honoured doctors who devoted his life to the humanitarian ideals to which all ophthalmologists aspire. He was deeply and widely read, held definite views, and it was said of him that he could quote from the Bible in one sentence and Karl Marx in the next. What he said and did was direct and honest, and he expected the same from those around him. He was held in high esteem by his compatriots as a Passionate and compassionate man, and a gifted teacher. He forced his students and colleagues to make hard decisions which for young ophthalmologists, and even medical students, would determine what they would be doing and how they would be thinking in years to come: decisions that related to right and wrong, just and unjust, to hard and easy paths. It has been said of him that he had a rough tough exterior, beneath which he hid a heart which was always sensitive to the feelings and the wishes of others, even those of a totally foreign culture. He was an astute judge of character and had the ability to delegate without then interfering with the decisions of his deputies.

Fred's family migrated from Lancashire to New Zealand. His father was a railway engine driver and Fred was educated at the local high school in Palmerston. He had been in the Boy's Brigade and had been a Divinity student and knew the Bible well, but having worked in a Mental Hospital he had converted to Agnosticism. Fred studied at the Victoria University Wellington, and in between lectures he led an active life, rock climbing, in forestry, and drove bulldozers in outback Queensland. After a change in course he completed his medical studies at Otago University in Dunedin in 1956. In 1961 he left for the United Kingdom as a ship's surgeon and enrolled for the Diploma in Ophthalmology in London where he won the Moorfields Junior Prize, meanwhile earning money by being a radio car controlled general practitioner. He joined the British Communist Party while a student. Having obtained the Primary Fellowship examination in Dublin in 1961 he became a Registrar in Ophthalmology in Cardiff, South Wales. After obtaining the Final FRCS, he embarked on a glaucoma screening project in the Rhondda Fach under the auspices of the Medical Research Council Epidemiological Research Unit, the results of which he presented at the Oxford Ophthalmological Congress in 1964.

In 1965 he was appointed Associate Professor at the University of New South Wales which involved teaching Optometry students as well as Ophthalmology trainees. In 1971 he became interested in the Aboriginal Guridji tribe in their quarrel with Vestey's at Wave Hill cattle station in Northern Australia, ultimately assisting with the setting up of the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service. In the mid-1970s he embarked upon the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program following the footsteps of Father Frank Flynn in the Northern Territory and Dame Ida Mann in Western Australia. Later he promoted the cause of the Erireaans and helped to train them in performing eye surgery and to set up manufacturing facilities for intraocular lens production, which he replicated in Nepal and Vietnam. In recognition of his work with the Aborigines and in Third World countries he was awarded Companion of the Order of Australia, Australian Human Rights medal, Australian of the Year in 1991, and the Rotary International Award for World Understanding in 1993. The Council of the Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists awarded the College Medal to Fred for his years of distinguished, meritorious and selfless service to the College: his Fellow Ophthalmologists are proud to be able to continue and support the work he undertook and the projects he envisaged.