

D'Hondt, Maurits

Born: December 2, 1922 – Bruges

Died: September 4, 1987 – Leuven

Maurits graduates as a chemist at the University of Leuven in 1945, followed by his PhD in 1948 (Its subject is about the action of catalysts in chemical reactions on solid surfaces). Through the British Council he obtains a research grant at Cambridge University. In 1950 he studies chemical engineering at M.I.T., becomes an associated researcher in biochemical engineering at Harvard and also spends some time at the Nuclear Reactor School (the Argonne Laboratories in Illinois).

On his return from the USA he starts his new career at the “Metallurgie Hoboken” with a special interest for the separation of radium isotopes through the use of ion exchange resins. In 1952 he joins the Centre d'Etude de l'Energie Nucleaire (Centre for the Study of Nuclear Energy) where he becomes general director from 1963 till 1968.

From 1968 Maurits is the founder of Emerson & Cuming to become its CEO till 1976. This company specializes in the application of epoxy resins in submarine and aeronautical research. Between 1972 and 1982 he is CEO of the Callebaut Company (famous chocolate factory)

He starts his academic career however at the University of Leuven teaching nuclear sciences, especially radiochemistry, protection from radioactivity and nuclear chemistry.

In 1967 he takes the initiative to tighten the bonds between the University of Leuven and the C.E.E.N., leading to the creation of the Laboratory for Radiochemistry, which in the first years depends on the C.E.E.N. tot become finally a department at the university in 1972. Maurits becomes emeritus professor in 1982.

Maurits D'Hondt is a member of the Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen and is member of the consultative council of Eurochemic.

Maurits's career is essentially as a chemical physicist specialised in nuclear energy and interested in the properties of materials and radioactive safety.

He also publishes articles on chemical equilibrium. In Cambridge he cooperates with Sir Gordon Sutherland on infrared spectrometry.