



Ilmo Hela

2 March 1915 – 25 November 1976

Professor Ilmo Hela died on 25 November 1976 after a severe illness, which gradually exhausted his physical strength, although he retained his mental vigour until his last breath. He will be remembered as a man who was prompt to help others and always ready to embark upon a new enterprise, undismayed by its potential difficulties, yet never underestimating the problems involved.

Ilmo Hela, son of a well-known educationalist, was born on 2 March 1915 in Jyväskylä, Finland.

He first came into contact with oceanography during his postgraduate studies in meteorology in Hamburg in 1938–1939, and in 1940 he joined the Institute of Marine Research in Helsinki. It was typical of Hela's efficiency that he was able to finish his doctor's thesis in 1944, while serving as an air-force meteorologist. The theme of his dissertation is fresh even today: *Über die Schwankungen des Wasserstandes in der Ostsee mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Wasseraustausches durch die dänischen Gewässer.*

Hela soon found that international contacts were necessary for an oceanographer and after obtaining a fellowship in the USA he served for two years as a visiting professor at the University of Miami. This period ended with his nomination in 1955 to the directorship of the Institute in Helsinki, a post that he held for twenty years, until retiring for reasons of health in 1975. Even as the director of the Helsinki Institute, he was able to continue his international career. From 1961 to 1963 Hela was in Monaco, where he started the activities of the International Laboratory for Marine Radioactivity sponsored by IAEA.

Between 1955 and 1975, he regularly attended the ICES Council Meetings as a Finnish delegate. He was Chairman of the Hydrography Committee in the years 1963–1966 and a Vice-President of the Council from 1971 to 1974. Of the tasks that Hela performed while participating in numerous working groups, special mention should be made of his role in the development of the punch card system of the Council's Service Hydrographique.

Ilmo Hela's activities in international scientific cooperation were not limited to ICES. He was also a conspicuous figure in IOC, IAPSO, ICSU, SCOR, etc. The scope of his international duties widened still farther during his work with UNESCO, especially while he served on its Executive Board from 1966 to 1974.

As a marine scientist, Ilmo Hela showed an interest in widely differing aspects of physical oceanography. He stressed the need for interdisciplinary collaboration, especially between physical and biological oceanography, e.g. in fisheries hydrography. Further, he was one of the first to draw attention to the environmental aspects of our science.

Ilmo Hela was able both to promote oceanographic research in Finland and at the same time to remain actively engaged in international collaboration. Consequently, his death is experienced as a great loss not only by his own countrymen, but also by the whole international community of marine scientists.

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