



Obituary Note

An Obituary note to John O'Mara Bockris (1923–2013)

T. Nejat Veziroglu*

President, International Association for Hydrogen Energy, Miami, FL, USA

Abstract

An Obituary note to John O'Mara Bockris.

© 2015 ISCMNS. All rights reserved. ISSN 2227-3123

Keywords: Hydrogen association, Hydrogen economy, Hydrogen energy system, John Bockris, John O'Mara Bockris

John O'Mara Bockris, a pioneer and proponent of the Hydrogen Energy System and Professor Emeritus of Texas A&M University, died on 7 July 2013 because of a heart complication in Gainesville, Florida, USA, at the age of 90. John was the first person to call the Hydrogen Energy System "Hydrogen Economy" in a paper entitled "The Hydrogen Economy: An Ultimate Economy?" co-authored with John Appleby and published in *Environment This Month* in 1972. I thought it was an excellent way of describing the Hydrogen Energy System, since energy is the locomotive of economy. Consequently, when I was planning the first international conference on hydrogen energy in 1973, I named it The Hydrogen Economy Miami Energy (THEME) Conference, which was held on 18–19 March 1974 in Miami Beach, Florida. I invited John and a few others working on hydrogen energy as invited lecturers to the conference. Personally, I met John for the first time at this conference. Although we had the same alma mater, the Imperial College London, and we were there at the same time in 1940s, we never met there, as John was studying Electrochemistry at the Royal College of Science and I was studying Mechanical Engineering at the City & Guilds College.

At the THEME Conference, together with nine other hydrogen energy enthusiasts and/or scientists (Hussein K. Abdel-Al of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, William J. D. Escher of USA, Cesare Marchetti of Italy and Austria, Anibal R. Martinez of Venezuela, Tokio Ohta of Japan, Walter Seifritz of Switzerland, William D. Van Vorst of USA, Kurt H. Weil of Germany and USA, and Robert M. Zweig of USA), John and I met at the Penthouse of the Playboy Plaza hotel in Miami Beach, where the THEME Conference was being held, on the evening of Monday, 18 March 1974. At the meeting, there was a passionate, yet deliberate debate. It was agreed that the Hydrogen Energy System was an idea whose time had arrived. It was the permanent solution to the depletion of fossil fuels. It was the permanent solution to the global environmental problems. Then, the discussion turned to whether there was a need for a formal organization.

*E-mail: veziroglu@iahe.org

John and Anibal (incidentally the one who took part in establishing the petroleum cartel OPEC) urged the founding of a society dedicated to crusade for the establishment of what seemed to be to the gathering, the inevitable and universal energy system, the Hydrogen Energy System. It was ironic that Anibal was proposing the establishment of an organization, which would make OPEC obsolete. As a result of the Penthouse meeting, the International Association for Hydrogen Energy (IAHE) was established by the end of the year 1974. All those who participated at the Penthouse meeting formed the first Board of Directors of IAHE, and I was elected the President.

After the THEME Conference, John and I became very close friends. We had the same aim, i.e., to establish the Hydrogen Economy throughout the World. We co-authored a book entitled “Solar Hydrogen Energy: The Power to Save the Earth”, and three papers, viz., “A Solar-Hydrogen Economy for USA”, “A Solar-Hydrogen Energy System for Environmental Capability”, and “Estimates of the Price of Hydrogen as a Medium for Wind and Solar Sources”. In 1986, John and I testified to the Energy and Environment Committee of the Congress in Washington, DC, about the advantages of the hydrogen energy system.

After working as an Assistant Professor at the Imperial College London, John joined the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, as the Professor of Chemistry, 1953–1972. He then went on to the Flinders University of South Australia, as the Professor of Physical Science, 1972–1979. After that he joined the Texas A&M University as the Professor of Chemistry in 1979. He was promoted to the Distinguished Professor of Chemistry in 1980, and became Emeritus Professor in 1997.

John O’M. Bockris was one of the originators of the concept of the hydrogen energy system, and was a founder of the International Association for Hydrogen Energy (IAHE) in 1974. He served on the IAHE Board of Directors, was awarded the prestigious IAHE Jules Verne Award in 1998, and attained the Emeritus Board Director status in 2000. He has promoted awareness of Hydrogen Energy amongst the scientists, engineers and laymen through hundreds of publications and lecture presentations around the world. The hydrogen energy community mourns the loss of John O’M. Bockris. We offer our sincere condolences to his surviving family members and friends.