THE F.R. TOMLINSON MEMORIAL LECTURE

The Ubiquitous Agricultural Economist

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1. Introduction

It is indeed a privilege for me to present the FR Tomlinson Memorial Lecture for 2011. I was involved in the meeting in 1985 of the Transvaal Action Group where it was decided to introduce the FR Tomlinson Memorial Lecture. The question can be asked as to why this decision was made. The fact is that we were a bunch of young (?) Agricultural Economists that were very passionate about our profession and we felt that we needed to do more than just the Annual Conference and Agrekon to promote the image of our profession.

After a lengthy discussion, one of the members, Johan Van Zyl, Johan Van Rooyen, Nick Vink, Gerhard Backeberg, Tommy Fenyes and Gerhard Coetzee suggested that we honour our first President with a memorial lecture.

We obtained his permission and a photograph and Standard Bank agreed to sponsor the production of the first ten commemorative medals.

At the time I was the only non-academic and thought that I would probably never have the opportunity to earn a Tomlinson Medal. Looking through the list of presenters it is only Harry Hattingh, Faan van Wyk and Gerhard Backeberg of the 23 recipients that are non-academics. This fact makes the presentation of the Tomlinson Memorial Lecture more difficult for me and decided to base the lecture on my experience as an Agricultural Economist over the last 39 years.

The Ubiquitous Agricultural Economist is based on the definition of Ubiquitous as presented in the Pocket Oxford Dictionary (1987, p 839):"Ubiquitous a. Present everywhere or in several places simultaneously, often encountered". My experience has been that the training for Agricultural Economics has prepared us to be utilised in a wide variety of fields and that the word ubiquitous also implies that Agricultural Economists are versatile and adaptable to take on any challenge, under ever changing circumstances, find a solution and implement successfully.
2. Structure

I recently read the book on Steve Jobs life by Walter Isaacson and one of the things Steve Jobs said made an impression on me (Isaacson, p.337): “I hate the way people use slide presentations instead of thinking” and later “People will confront a problem by creating a presentation. I wanted them to engage, hash things out at the table, rather than show a bunch of slides. People who know what they are talking about don’t need Power Point”. So, I decided that I would not be using slides!

In our first year Agricultural Economics 1 with Professor Kassier, he drew the graph of the law of Diminishing Returns (out of Earl O’Heady’s Blue Bible) on the blackboard and asked me to indicate where the point of maximum profit was. I indicated at point B and he said it was the wrong answer. As a first year student I was not going to argue with Professor Kassier. Then came one of the best lectures I ever received in my life: “You have the right point on the graph Potgieter, but you must know WHY you are right” The point was that you must be able to motivate your opinion.

We also confronted Professor Kassier about the statements he made at farmers days that infuriated the farmers e.g. to wine farmers he said: “They live a champagne life with a lemonade income” and “If you come around Du Toits Kloof Pass you should actually be smelling cabbages, as the soil was more suitable for vegetables than wine production”. He told us his objective was to make farmers think differently about their farms and farming methods, if one farmer drove away from the meeting thinking about his farm and methods he would have succeeded.

Steve Jobs was invited by Stanford University to give the 2005 commencement address. He called on a trusted scriptwriter to help him and by the beginning of June he had not received anything, he started to panic and one night sat and wrote the speech himself. He said (Isaacson, p456): “Alex Haley once said the best way to begin a speech is: “Let me tell you a story”. Nobody is eager for a lecture, but everybody loves a story. And that was the approach Jobs chose. “Today I want to tell you three stories from my life and “That’s it no big deal, just three stories”
When Professor Willemse asked me whether they could nominate me for the Tomlinson Memorial Lecture, I was very honoured and felt very privileged that they wanted to nominate me, but I felt a bit like Steve Jobs, what can a non-academic share with an audience of academics and fellow Agricultural Economists, about Agricultural Economics. My colleague on the Land Bank Board, Professor Karaan said to me that it was a great opportunity to make my statement on Agricultural Economics. I decided to tell you three stories about my experience with Agricultural Economics and the wonderful opportunities Agricultural Economics created for me. In the stories, I trust that you will gain some insight and knowledge that can assist you in your careers.

The first story will be on my ongoing interest in the Agricultural Development field, from the early days in Venda, right through to the current challenge facing the Land Bank. The second story will be my experience with Agricultural Economics in the Banking Environment and the final story will be the adventure at the Land Bank.

3. Agricultural Economics and Development.

The question of what economic development and agricultural development really is has been in the back of my mind for my entire working life. The basis of my approach stemmed from what I believe the basic of economics is “The efficient utilisation of the four production factors: Land, Labour (people), Capital and Entrepreneurship (Management)” I think this comes from Economics 1, (Samuelson’s book: Economics).

My early years (1972-1976) were spent as a Professional Officer (Agricultural Economics), seconded to the Venda Government Service in the then, Venda Homeland. I was part of a team of Professional Officers, the others being, an Agronomist and an Animal Scientist. We were supported by a team of technically trained Extension Officers. This multidisciplinary approach to addressing the problem of developing the agricultural potential of the underdeveloped area was very rewarding on two fronts: one, for the individuals who learned from each other (about their specialities) and on the other side, involving the agricultural extension officers, they increased their knowledge of the three disciplines.
The emphasis was on implementing a Development Plan that had as basis the demarcating of the area into grazing land, crop production land, forestry areas and living areas. The Development Plan was discussed with the local communities involved and could not proceed before total buy-in was obtained. **The major lesson learnt was that no development plan or scheme could be implemented successfully if the community did not accept the total plan or scheme.** This was an onerous and time consuming task, but absolutely essential.

My responsibilities included the formation of agricultural cooperatives in the rural areas of Venda. We initially concentrated on the irrigation schemes and formed the Tshiomba Agricultural Cooperative on the Thsiombo Irrigation Scheme (it was still functioning 20 years later). We managed to convince an input supplier in Tzaneen to provide us with seed, fertilizer and pest control chemicals on a consignment basis. Due to the excellent climatic conditions in Venda, wheat was planted in winter and maize in summer. After each harvest the inputs and contractors were paid and the balance settled to the individual plot owners. Their contribution was mainly to be present and assist with the planting and harvesting process and do all the weed control during the growing phase. The planting and harvesting was done on a contract basis with private individuals and the Government. An interesting observation; after the first wheat harvest, we paid out the individual stand owners and they were very happy with their money. I suggested to Ruben Ramabulana, the extension officer working with me, that he should tell the people that we would be planning maize in the summer. There was a slight murmuring amongst the people and on enquiring there were some people that indicated that they were happy with the money they received for the wheat crop and they would not be planting maize the summer.

**The overall impression was that irrigation projects are an effective way of involving a number of people in agriculture and providing them with a steady income.** I agree with Professor Karaan that we must investigate more irrigation schemes for the settlement of black farmers. The success in commercial agriculture of the Vaalharts, Groblersdal, Orange River and other schemes proves that it is a stable way of establishing commercial farmers.

My story on development would not be complete if I do not mention my experience in the Corporation for Economic Development (CED). The CED was formed to promote economic development in the former homelands and tribal trust areas. The CED comprised of an Industrial section, a transport section and an agricultural section. The three Agricultural Economists that worked with me
deserves special mention: Jan Van Zyl the head, Junior Ferreiera and Faan Strauss completed the team. We were ably supported by agronomists Gert Greyling, Eddie Butler, Koos (Casava) Richards and Ted Stillwell, and animal scientists Piet Badenhorst and Henk Badenhorst. The Agricultural Department was headed up by Dr. Koos Van Marle, an animal scientist that had a great passion for animal husbandry projects. **Once again, the working in a multidisciplinary team to develop projects was very stimulating and rewarding.** It was, however, always up to the Agricultural Economists to bring the pure scientists back to reality with economics, it did not always make us popular, but the figures did the talking.

We were tasked to develop agricultural projects in the homelands and these included: Coffee Projects in Venda and Gazankulu, Irrigation projects in Kwazulu Natal (Ndumu, Makatini) and Bophuhatswana, Dryland Crop Production and dairy production in most of the homelands, numerous poultry projects (both broiler and egg production), piggeries in Qwa-Qwa, silk production in Gazankulu. The success rate of these projects, in retrospect can be described as mixed. I know the piggery we started is still functioning and the Coffee Project at Zoeknog in the Hazyview is still producing. **My experience was that the key to any project was the involvement and commitment of the local people. If the project had a spin off that could be extended to the local people, it enhanced the overall success of the project.** For example, the coffee projects were developed along the lines of establishing a central unit to cover initial developmental and establishment costs and the out grower scheme enabled local people to obtain coffee trees and plant them on their plots. The harvest was brought to the central unit, for processing and marketing.

My views on project farming were formed during this time. Project farming is different from farming for your own pocket. The view was later strengthened when I visited Professor Jan Groenewald’s Alma, Purdue University. I was privileged to meet Professor Earl Butz, former Secretary for Agriculture in the Nixon Administration. He illustrated the difference between the American (Capatalistic) and Russian (Communistic) farming by way of an example. He had to phone a pig farmer friend the night before, just after ten in the evening. His wife informed Professor Butz that her husband was outside in the Farrowing house, attending to one of his sows that was about to farrow. He thought to himself that he cannot picture a Russian farmer at ten in the night walking through two foot of snow to go and look at the state’s the states sow, delivering the state’s piglets.
An observation that is relevant is that not all the people that are entitled to land are involved with the actual farming, the reasons are numerous and understandable. I have drawn the conclusion that not everybody can be a farmer, to farm is extremely hard work and it takes a dedicated, motivated individual (and his wife and children). This is true of both development and commercial farmers. We are way past the time where farming is a “way of life” or an alternative to settle a lot of people. It is hard work, dedication and a professional approach that will lead to success. It was also interesting to note that there were farmers on the irrigation schemes in Venda that rented the individual plots of other land owners and farmed them profitably for their own accounts.

A question that can be asked at this stage is: “What is a farmer?” My conclusion may be viewed as simplistic, but I feel that a farmer is a person that can sustain his family from the proceeds of his farm. My simplistic view can be criticised, asking what is meant by sustain, how much money/crops is needed and does it include schooling and building up a pension?. The conclusion I can make is that it will depend on the area and the farmer’s particular situation and needs. Any other approach will meant that the government or development agency will be subsidising the people on the land and thus create a future burden on the government/agency.

The current debate about the various percentages of land that need to be “transformed” from so called “white farmers” to “black famers” is a highly emotional debate that needs to be approached in a sensitive manner. In my opinion it must be viewed in the overall challenge for agriculture in our country and that is to feed our growing population. It boils down to the economic usage of the land. Given the challenge, we cannot afford one hectare of agricultural land to be underutilised. The press loves to publish pictures of failed agricultural projects, particularly if it involves black farmers. These pictures create a bad impression of all development projects. On the other hand the Government is clamouring for black farmer success stories. Can we not all resolve that we all want successful farmers, black and white, that will ensure that we total population has a plate of food on their table, at a reasonable price, every day.

I may be accused of oversimplifying a complex issue, but the time has come for clear thinking of how we apply the limited resources of land, people, capital and entrepreneurship in South Africa; to chase percentages and numbers is distorting the economic realities. We have very successful white and farmers and
there are very successful black farmers, there are hectares of underutilised agricultural land, lets learn from each other and build together. It is a fact that if people cannot farm successfully on the Land they are allocated, the Government only create an ongoing social problem, as these people will have to be supported.

The challenge of the successful placing of black (emerging) farmers on land that can graduate in the future to commercial farmers is the biggest single challenge that the Government and agriculture, faces. The Government must ensure that all the institutions at its disposal, The Department of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, all other relevant Government Departments, the Land Bank, the Development Bank, the IDC and all other developmental Institutions, must be aligned to provide the needed support and back-up services, to the farmers to ensure success.

4. The Banking Story

The banking scene in the early eighties was very interesting: banks were shaken out of their traditional way of doing business by increased competition, rising costs and increased bad debts.

The Standard Bank, for example, appointed the Boston Consulting Group of America to make recommendations on how to improve its position. They recommended that the Bank segments the customer base into the following segments: Commercial, Personal, Black, Agriculture and Instalment Sales. This was the first market segmentation that took place in the Banks history. Up until then, all customers were treated exactly the same, from Anglo American to the pensioner that wanted to invest R10 000. Due to this exercise managers were appointed to develop marketing and action plans to serve the various market segments.

At same time, in the early eighties Barclays (now FNB), Volkskas (now ABSA) and Trust Bank (later consolidated into ABSA) appointed Agricultural Economists to assist with the Agricultural Market. (Barclays-Frans Venter, Volkskas-Dr. Andre Louw, Trust Bank-Jaques Basson.)
The early challenge was to understand how Banks financed the farming customers and it was basically asset-based finance: “if you had the assets and were willing to give the assets up as security, the bank will finance” The most important document the bank required was the farmers Balance Sheet, normally drawn up by the Branch Manager during the annual review visit in the Branch. It was expected of the Branch Manager to verify the information, complete a Credit Application (that was often typed with one finger), sent it off to the Credit Division in a provincial Head Office. The Credit Division had a hierarchical structure that evaluated the application, depending on the amount required, various levels of approval were required, with the large amounts to be approved right up to the Provincial General Manager, or Head Office Credit Division.. This process could take anything from two weeks to a couple of months. No attention was given to cash flow or agricultural potential of the farm, a lot of emphasis was placed on the farmer (the jockey) and his abilities and his assets.

One of the first challenges was to convince a large organisation that there were other factors to take into consideration when financing farmers, an uphill battle because: “We have always done it this way- don’t think you can change it”

The level of financial sophistication of both the farmers and the Branch Managers, posed another major challenge. To address this we published a book: Finance for Farmers” and “Finansiering en die Boer” We commissioned Dr. Andre Louw to write the first edition. There has since been a further two editions and the third were compiled by: Johan van Zyl, Gerhard Coetzee, Chris Blignaut and Bertus Van Heerden (1999). The publication of this book played a major role in the understanding of the intricacies of agricultural finance for farmers, bankers and agricultural students. The Bank published a quarterly newsletter, Agri Review (Agri-Oorsig) to keep customers and Branch Managers up to date with developments in the Agricultural Field.

The expansion of the Agricultural Department within the bank was necessitated by the fact that the Bank had to service the needs of the geographically spread farming customers in the whole country. The expansion lead to the appointment of a further 30 Agricultural Economists in the Bank.

The development of a comprehensive financial model, starting with enterprise budgets, overhead budgets and rolling up into a cash flow, income statement and finally a Balance Sheet was undertaken. This model was loaded as a dynamic model to the first “transportable” computer in the Bank.
The training of Branch Managers in Agricultural Financing played a major role in the early Agricultural Economists’ jobs in the Banks. The training took place at the Banks’ Training College and regional Training facilities.

The Agricultural Economists were responsible to enhance the Banks overall image in the Agricultural Market. This was done through Agricultural Seminars throughout the country and the sponsoring of major agricultural events at agricultural shows.

It was indeed an exciting story, which still continues today. One of the major points of departure with the sponsorship policy was that you look for long term relationships when you sponsor an event, and it gives me pleasure to see that Standard Bank Is still involved with AEASA and the Tomlinson Memorial Lecture.

The Bank creates opportunities for employees and it happened in my case that I could get into the line function of banking. At the time the challenge was simple: “You work in a bank, you can remain a specialist and stagnate or climb into the line and get promotion” This ultimately led to my appointment in 1995 as Provincial general Manager in the Central Region, Head Office, Bloemfontein. The argument is often put forward that setting yourself goals are important, Johan van Zyl mentioned it in his interview on Kyknet on 18 January 2012 and he made the point that you should set these objectives high. In the case of the Provincial General Manager of the Central region, I set that as an objective in 1980, when I visited the Region for the first time, so 15 years later I achieved it and it was indeed satisfying. The lesson from my experience is that you are responsible for your own career, if you are going to wait for your employer to make the moves you are going to wait a long time. A further illustration I can elaborate on is further training. Big companies are big on talk of how dedicated they are to train their staff, my experience has been that you have to get all the info on the available courses, the costs involved and then motivate your case to the superiors and follow up regularly. It was the only way I managed to get to Purdue and Harvard Universities.

Due to repeated reorganisations and streamlining of systems, Banks have managed to increase the gap between their customers and the decision makers in the bank further and further, the extent that that the relationship is becoming impersonal. The assumption is that customers like to speak to call centre operators to solve their financial problems. It has been my experience that customers prefer to speak to a live human being, face to face, when it
comes to discuss their financial needs and this person must be available in the future to assist. The challenge for Agricultural Economists is to ensure that this gap between the Banks farming customers and the Bank is bridged. The basic service is still the same, but the changing challenging farming scenario will pose unique challenges in this regard.

In closing my banking story the final lesson is that due to the reorganising that takes place in the dynamic environment it may happen that you end up with a boss younger than yourself, in order to survive this scenario, you must never disagree with your boss, even if he invites you to, “I have an open door policy”, watch out, this could be a swinging door.

5. The Land Bank Story

What does happen in a career is that you have to make adjustments when change comes and this is when the lesson of building relationships is very important. The School of Management at the Free State University was always high up in my mind and I was privileged to give a number of guest lectures to the MBA students during the banking days. After I left the bank a discussion followed with Professor Helena Van Zyl and Danie Jacobs, and I joined the School. During the last years in the Bank I noticed the increasing emphasis the Government was placing on complying with Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). I studied the Codes of BBBEE Good Practiced and read up on the subject. I developed a MBA elective course on Managing BBBEE (the first at any Business School in South Africa). We presented a number of BBBEE seminars throughout the Free State and Northern Cape. A BBEE consultancy service, aimed at smaller businesses and farmers followed.

During late 2007, Professor Herman van Schalkwyk approached me with a proposition to nominate me, to join the Board of the Land Bank. If you can remember back to the end 2007 beginning 2008, the Land Bank was constantly in the press for the wrong reasons. I have long ago decided that if you live in this country you must be part of the solution and not part of the problem. I was appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs to the Board on 5 March 2008.
The situation at the Land Bank was desperate. There were acting people in all the senior positions: the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Financial Officer, the Head of Human Resources, the Head of Information Technology, to name a few. The result of this was a stagnant organisation in which no one can or wants to make a decision. A forensic investigation was completed, which did not make for good reading or comfort.

The initial approach of the Board was, out of necessity, to get involved in operational matters to try and get the ship in the right direction. During September 2008 the State President placed the administration of the Land Bank under the Minister of Finance, Mr. Trevor Manuel. After consulting the Board, a senior Treasury official, Mr. Phakamani, Radebe was seconded to the Land Bank as interim Chief Executive Officer.

Mr Hadebe and the Board tackled the problems head–on. Mr Hadebe divided the Land Bank staff into small working groups to identify the problems in the Bank and come up with possible solutions. This action got all the staff focussed and lead to a drastic change in attitude within the Bank. This is a major departure from previous approaches; where banks would appoint outside consultants to come in and identify problems and suggest solutions (normally at exorbitant costs). Interesting to note what Yunus in his book Banking the Poor observes regarding consultants (Yunus, p15): “Furthermore, consultants have a paralysing effect on the thinking and initiatives of the recipient countries”. I believe the same could be said for the role of consultants in organisations.

The Board and the Bank followed a three step process: Clean-up, Stabilisation and Sustainability. During the Clean-up Phase the objective was to focus on all audit queries by improving the existing systems and processes. This Phase was scheduled to run from September 2008 to the financial year end 2009/2010. This Phase was completed successfully as evidenced by the clean Audit Report the bank has received over the last two years. All the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) resolutions and Agricultural Portfolio Committee undertakings were successfully implemented.

The Stabilisation Phase was aimed at the improvement of the Balance Sheet, to appoint suitable staff members, particularly in the critical senior positions and to improve the systems capability of the Bank. Most of these objectives were met, but the cost to income ratio requires further attention. The banks liquidity position has improved dramatically and an adequate cash buffer has been achieved.
The Bank has filled all the senior positions with adequately qualified staff. The situation has turned around, where in the past young professionals were reluctant to join the Bank, we now receive ample response to vacancy advertisements.

The role played by the acting Chairman of the Board, Herman Van Schalkwyk (another ubiquitous Agricultural Economist!) needs special mention. His insight, cool and firm leadership, but fair approach as Chairman of the Board, played a major role in the success of the Board in the early days.

The Bank is still troubled by some legacy issues (golf estates and interest rate claims) but these have been ring fenced and action plans are in place to address them. The results of the forensic investigations have been handed over the relevant prosecuting authorities and they are proceeding with further investigations and prosecutions.

The overall lesson of the Land Bank is through hard work and focus by a dedicated group of staff, all obstacles can be overcome. We are looking forward to the third phase of Sustainability, where the Land Bank, in its centurion year, must play a crucial role in the financing of both the commercial and developing farming sectors.

In the role the Land Bank can play to alleviate poverty, the remarks of Yunus in the preface of his book, Banking the Poor, is important: “It is not micro-credit alone which will end poverty. Credit is one door through which people can escape poverty. Many more doors and windows can be created to facilitate an easy exit. It involves conceptualizing about people differently; it involves designing a new institutional framework consistent with this new conceptualization Grameen has taught me two things: first, our knowledge base about people and their interactions is still very inadequate; second, each individual person is very important”. Yunus states (Yunus, p.13): We have come a long way: from $27 lent to forty-two people in 1976 to $2.3biillion to 2.3million families in 1998” and further “by 1998 fifty eight countries have Grameen clones” Prahalad in his book, The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid states (Prahalad, p1):”If we stop thinking of the poor as victims or as a burden and start recognizing them as resilient and creative entrepreneurs and value-conscious consumers, a whole new world of opportunity will open up.” The Grameen and Prahalad principles of thinking differently about the poor and bottom of the
pyramid customers can play a vital role for the Land Bank to address the future challenge of meeting the needs of the emerging farmers.

The plans and organisational structure are in place at the Land Bank and the implementation is underway" Watch this space!!"

6. Conclusion:

In conclusion I would like to make the following observations:

6.1 A colleague of mine, Dr Johan Coetzee, at the School of Management ran a fantastic program on Contemporary Leadership/Management. In this program he focuses on the “people stuff” and concentrates on the individuals’ interaction with the Company. He starts with the “Priorities Paradox” where he asks the students to rank the following four elements in order of importance:

a) Self: Religion, faith, values, identity, needs, interests, aspirations, hopes, growth, fulfilment

b) Partner: chosen exclusive partner, e.g. Spouse, co-habitant

c) Family: Closest biological family, next of kin.

d) Work: Career, job, status, earnings, wealth.

The invariable ranking is normally, Work, partner, family and finally, self! Professor Coetzee argues that this is a recipe for huge problems in the future, the ideal ranking would be: Self, partner, family and finally, work. In my experience this is one hundred percent correct. We all tend to chase the “corporate dream” and all that it brings, as indicated above, but in the final analysis, if you are not fit and healthy to pursue your career goals, look after your partner and family, you will experience challenges in the future. The Corporate world is a very cruel animal, when someone in there decides that they do not need you, they get rid of you very fast! Regardless what their Corporate Mission says about the passion they have for their people. At these times it is your partner, your family and your friends that stand by you.
6.2 I believe we must take a serious look at the way we want to measure everything in ratios or percentages. From my experience in the BBBEE field, businesses were always out for the quick “BBBEE fix”. They lose sight of the fact that BBBEE must be economically justified in their businesses; it becomes a numbers game and eventually will cost the business money. To illustrate, in my opinion the most important objective of BBBEE is to rectify the damage the apartheid legislation caused in our society by excluding black people from participating in the economic reality of our country. This can only be done through a concerted effort of including black people in the economic growth and activities of South Africa.

The Government has done a very thorough job of investigating and instituting the necessary legislation to facilitate the process of involving Black people in the economy. The BBBEE Act is a good Act, the resultant published BBBEE Codes of Good Practice is a good guideline to the implementation of BBBEE. The problem is that businesses does not understand the Codes and are seeking quick fixes. The result is clear, a number of so-called BBBEE deals have failed spectacularly. The businesses concentrate on “fixing” the Ownership, Management Control and Employment Equity challenges of the total scorecard, quite often through “window dressing” and not real empowerment. These elements play a limited role in creating employment and meaningful involvement of black people in the economy. The most important elements to achieve involvement in the economy for black people are Skills Development, Enterprise Development and Preferential Procurement. These elements allow businesses to find innovative ways to involve black people, through training, partnerships and creating new businesses. These issues are being addressed in the suggested changes to the BBBEE legislation

The initial surge was to get a “good” BBBEE score and not to find the ways to make a real difference.

6.3 I would like to use this platform to seriously urge the Government to seriously address the problem of budgeting for Agricultural Research. In the last couple of years the spending of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries on agricultural research has diminished to what I believe are dangerous levels. On the fountain to the entrance of the Agricultural Building of the University of the Free State, Minister SP Le Roux is quoted (in 1958) to say (my translation):” A nation that looks after agriculture, looks after its future” We need to urgently get the research stations fully operational with sufficient budget and qualified, competent staff, to ensure that our Agriculture is up to date with the latest
scientific developments and to ensure that the latest research findings are disseminated to all our farmers. Allied to this is the establishment of a fully functional team of Agricultural Extension Officers. The role played by the Agricultural Training Colleges must be reinvigorated to become the centres of excellence which they were always known for. I believe we can again look to align the Agricultural Colleges to the relevant Universities, to ensure the latest knowledge is transferred.

6.4 My final concluding remark may be a controversial one: I wish all South Africans will start to view each other as members of the same country. I am so tired of hearing: “Yes, but (is it not always yes, but) THEY are different and we only want to protect what is rightfully ours” from my white friends and:” Yes, but, it is now our turn” from my black friends and colleagues. We all live in the same country and we all share the same future. The white people must accept the fact that things have changed, the painful people who start the argument with” but in the old South Africa, the roads, schools, hospitals, whatever were better, working etc.” Wake up this is the new South Africa and if you want to be eternally unhappy, live in the past. Make peace with the new South Africa and seek out ways to make a difference, it is much more rewarding.

My advice to my black colleagues and friends is not to wait for the BBBEE, Employment Equity, the Government or any other institution to improve your life; you will wait a long time as only limited people will be helped. You are the maker of your own future and work hard to achieve your goals, success will be inevitable.

I was thinking that we were privileged to have the real scholars in our profession, Professors Tomlinson, Kassier, Groenewald, Nieuwoudt, Behrman, Spies, Van Wyk and Kotze, the young lions: Professors Vink, Fenyes, Ortmann, Van Zyl, Oosthuisen, Viljoen, Blignaut, Laubscher, Van Rooyen, Bester and Willemse and the whizz kids: Professors Kirsten, Karaan, Kleinhans, Coetzee and Dr. Makhura. With these people at the centre of preparing the future ubiquitous Agricultural Economists, our future is bright and exciting!

We are privileged to live in exciting times and the challenges facing Agricultural Economists in the future is daunting and unique. I am of the firm belief that Agricultural Economists will rise and adapt to meet them to ensure sustainable,
affordable food production for the South African population and beyond our borders.

In closing I honour the legacy of Professor Tomlinson, how different the agricultural scenario could have been if the Government at the time implemented his recommendations made in the Tomlinson Commission Report in 1955............

Bibliography:


