AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search
http://ageconsearch.umn.edu
aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

Australian Journal of Agricultural Economics, Vol. 32, Nos 2 and 3 (Aug/Dec 1988), pp. 187-188

OBITUARY

THOMAS HUGH STRONG 1909-1988

Dr Tom Strong, a former Director of the Commonwealth Bureau of Agricultural Economics, died in Sydney on 27 March 1988. He was a foundation member of the Australian Agricultural Economics Society.

Born at Maleny, Queensland, he had an early, instructive introduction to farm chores on the family farm. He took an honours degree in agricultural science at the University of Queensland and proceeded to the M.Agr.Sc. before joining the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research as a soil bacteriologist. His work at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute (1939-1942) was addressed to problems of pasture improvement and even at that time he was emphasising the essentially economic basis of many of the problems of Australian agriculture.

He joined the newly established Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE) in 1946 after four years service with the R.A.A.F. in Papua New Guinea, where his specialised knowledge of entomology was drawn upon in research and field control measures for malaria and other tropical diseases. As a Principal Project Officer and Assistant Director of BAE he was responsible for the inspection and economic appraisal of War Service Land Settlement proposals.

In 1948 he was awarded a Harkness Fellowship for the study of agricultural economics at Harvard University. He returned to Australia as Director of the Bureau in 1950. His work at Harvard, under the supervision of Professor J. K. Galbraith, earned him the degree of Doctor of Public Administration. He was to remain Director of the BAE throughout the period 1950-1958, a longer term than any prior or subsequent holder of the post, and his contribution to the Bureau's development during its formative period was considerable.

Under Dr Strong's leadership, the BAE participated in a comprehensive review of agricultural policy, which saw the government resort to World Bank loans to give Australian farmers and land development authorities access to essential equipment from the dollar area and the adoption of an explicit set of production aims. He was a forthright critic of product pricing, trade and international monetary policies, which diminished producer incentives or withheld essential resources from the rural industries. He also strongly condemned several grandiose, ill-considered development schemes then being advocated or, in some cases, implemented. At the same time, he was an enthusiastic supporter of development proposals, which had a greater regard for the realities of markets and life on the land, and he was quick to perceive the opportunities presented by new crops or technological advances. His rare gift for encapsulating issues in a few words and undermining opposing positions with a telling phrase made him a formidable critic. At the same time he was a man of immense personal charm.

Copyright 1988 The Australian Agricultural Economics Society

After leaving BAE at the end of 1958 Dr Strong worked with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, taking a series of assignments in developing countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific area. In this work, he put to good use his double qualifications in agricultural science and economics, his considerable experience in project appraisal and planning and a down-to-earth grasp of operational constraints in the Third World.

An accomplished cricketer, rugby player and athlete in his youth, Tom Strong coped manfully with the restricted mobility that afflicted his later years and retained his zest for living. His first marriage, in 1942 to Noelle Chandler, a distinguished repertory actress of Brisbane, ended with her untimely death in Ghana in 1960. He was remarried in 1966 to Joyce Telling, who survives him, His daughter Ann, a graduate of R.A.D.A. in London, lives in Kent with her husband and two children.

J.N.L.