



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.*

Twenty-five years is a fair slice in the life of a University that has not yet quite reached the thirtieth anniversary of its coming out as an autonomous institution. Indeed, it can increasingly be said that agricultural economics in the University of New England is almost as old as the University itself; and, certainly, the history of the one is an important component in the history of the other - a theme that I am sure Jack Lewis will be able to elaborate on in the first session this morning.



My own knowledge runs to the recent past rather than to the early days; but, for the perspective, I can acknowledge with gratitude and pride the developments in teaching, research and service that have had their genesis in the Department - not least among which are the Agricultural Business Research Institute and the Australian Rural Adjustment Unit. I can testify, too, that agricultural economics is one of the fields for which this University is best and most favourably known in Australia and around the world.

Thus it is a special pleasure to welcome the alumni and friends of agricultural economics to this Silver Jubilee celebration. It is also a pleasure, if I may say so, to discover how many agricultural economists I am acquainted with. Though I am not an agricultural economist, I have a lively respect for those who are. It might even be said that I hold them in awe. It seems to me that their training lies at the rigorous end of the spectrum, that it addresses problems of the real world, at both the micro and the macro levels, and that it

equips them with the tools to solve problems of the real world.

One consequence is to be seen in the number of people with training and experience in agricultural economics who have gained respect and even eminence in other areas - applied welfare economics, taxation, regional input-output analysis, international trade, to name but a few. And to these one might, of course, add university administration; for in this University agricultural economics has supplied able and respected Deans and Chairmen of what is now called the Academic Board; and in this University I have had the good fortune to have John Dillon as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for three years and then to secure as his successor another who was trained in the mystery - John Nalson.

I am not suggesting that all training in agricultural economics is equally productive of valuable skills and insights. Jack Lewis, in an engaging reminiscence that he wrote for our *Convocation Bulletin* three years ago, referred to the "decision to produce graduates who were basically economists, with specialised training in the economics of agriculture, rather than weak hybrids with a smattering of both agriculture and economics." Now hybrids, or so our agronomists and animal scientists tell, have their value. But surely in this case that original decision, to which I believe we remain true, was right for this University and right for the needs of this nation and indeed the world. The proof is to be found in the roles that our graduates perform, and in the sometimes embarrassing demand, from Australia and abroad, for the services of the staff of the Department.

A quarter of a century is long enough to generate traditions and legends. I am sure that this reunion will provide an occasion for them to be revived, swapped and added to - including, I would hope, in today's program of addresses and discussion. I trust that the scribes will be busy, for history and legend need to be recorded as well as made. And now I must let you get on with it. Again I bid you a warm welcome and, with pleasure and pride, I declare the Silver Jubilee Symposium open.