

FURTHER DOWN MEMORY LANE: A NOTE REFLECTING ON THE *MISSING FOUR*

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Abstract

A review article by Botha (2002) included short biographies of past presidents of ESSA from its inception in 1925 to 1963. The review article discussed 17 of the 21 presidents serving between 1925 and 1963. This note supplements the earlier article by providing some information on the four presidents not covered in the earlier article.

JEL Classification: N01, N27

Key words: *History of the Economic Society of South Africa*

1. INTRODUCTION

A review article, *Down Memory Lane: The Economic Society of South Africa – Past Presidents, 1925 – 1963* (Botha, 2002) appeared in a special edition of this *Journal* in September 2002. This article contained, *inter alia*, short biographies of past presidents of ESSA who served between 1925 (the year of its inception) and 1963, i.e. a period of 38 years. As ESSA is already some 46 years older than in 1963, it is probably time for a follow-up article on presidents who served since 1963. This is, however, not the focus of this note.

The review article of Botha in 2002 considered 17 of the 21 presidents serving between 1925 and 1963. It omitted discussions of Dr G.S.H. Rossouw (1946), Proff H.R. Burrows (1947-48) and T.H. Kelly (1952-53) and Mr A.J. Limebeer (1949), as little information was available on them (Botha, 2002: 13). This note supplements the earlier article by Botha (2002)², by providing some information on these four presidents. The following four brief sections deal with these four presidents and the conclusion follow in section 6.

2 GEORGE STEPHANUS HAUPTFLEISH ROSSOUW (1946) Missing person

If it can ever be said that a person disappeared from the face of the earth, this is true of George Rossouw. Rossouw was born on 6 June 1895 in Montagu (Grobler, 2006: 127) and passed away in Durban in either 1959 or 1960 (Young, 1960: 938). Rossouw completed a BA and part of a master's degree in psychology and sociology at the University of the Cape

¹ SA Reserve Bank and Department of Economics, University of Pretoria. The views and opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the SA Reserve Bank or of the University. The author wishes to acknowledge the kind assistance of Prof Joubert Botha, the author of the earlier paper; Mrs Audrey Newman and Mr John Burrows, respectively the daughter and son of Prof Burrows (who are also thanked for their permission to reproduce the photo of Prof Burrows); and Ms Tracey Limebeer (granddaughter) and Prof David Limebeer (grandson) of Mr Limebeer. The photo of Prof Kelly is reproduced with the kind permission of the SAIRR, and that of Mr Limebeer with the permission of the University of the Witwatersrand and Wits Archives. The comments of the editor and two anonymous reviewers on earlier drafts of this paper are gratefully acknowledged. The usual disclaimer applies.

² Prof Botha subsequently established that the series *Patrys Hulle* was not written by J.F.W. Grosskopf (Botha, 2002: 17), but by his brother, E.B. Grosskopf.

of the Good Hope (Grobler, 2006: 127) and a PhD at the University of Chicago (see for instance Lewis and Smith, 1980) on the topic *Nationalism and language: An introduction to the sociology of nationalism and internationalism*.

Rossouw was a founding member of the Society for Social Research of the Sociology Department of the University of Chicago in 1920. He served as its first Secretary–treasurer (Bulmer, 1986: 114), while holding a teaching position at the University of Minnesota (News and Notes, 1922). He returned to South Africa in 1922 (News and Notes, 1922) and played a leading role in the establishment of *Sociology in South Africa*. It is known that Rossouw taught at a secondary school in the Witwatersrand (Grobler, 2006: 127), served as ethnologist at the Transvaal Museum (Grobler, 2006: 127) and held a position at the Board of Trade and Industry (Grobler, 2006: 127). His last known address in South Africa was in Durban (Official Reports and Proceedings, 1940).

After serving as a vice-president representing Durban³, Rossouw was elected on 10 October 1945 as President of the Society for 1946 (Notes and Memoranda, 1945: 235). It is remarkable that Rossouw published no papers or book reviews in *The South African Journal of Economics*, other than his Presidential Address on the topic *The problem of Imperial Preference*. In this Address he concluded that “... in this world of stark reality the necessary judgments of statesmen concerning the welfare of their countries, rather than any particular economic theory, will decide the issue of preference, free competition or planning in international trade” (Rossouw, 1946: 183). Rossouw was therefore somewhat of a visionary, as the world still faces the same challenges.

3 HARRY RAYMOND BURROWS (1947-48) Defender of freedom



Harry Burrows was born in Lancaster in the United Kingdom in 1893 and passed away in Grahamstown, South Africa, in 1960. After service in the World War I, he completed a master’s degree at Leeds University and later received honorary doctorates from Natal and Rhodes universities. Burrows was appointed to the William Hudson Chair of Economics at the University College of Natal in 1938 (Kelly, 1960: 385).

After his retirement in 1957, Burrows was appointed Principal of the University College of Fort Hare. He held that position until 1959, when he was not reappointed owing to changes at the University College (see for instance Moodie, 1994: 7). His tenure at Fort Hare can at best be described as turbulent (see for instance Burrows et. al., 1961 or Moodie,

³ ESSA followed at the time a practice of electing four vice-presidents, each representing a different region (Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria), although the Constitution and Rules made no provision for such an arrangement at the time (see for instance Constitution and Rules, 1947: 225). This practice was abandoned in 1953.

1994), with Burrows taking a strong leadership role in defending academic freedom. As early as 1957 Government introduced a Bill in Parliament proposing, *inter alia*, the transfer of the control of the University College of Fort Hare to the then Department of Bantu Education, with a limited intake of only South African Xhosa-speaking students. The Council, Senate and management of Fort Hare vehemently opposed this proposal on the grounds that it impedes academic freedom of a successful autonomous academic institution.

It could be argued that the defence of freedom came naturally to Burrows, as he was a decorated war hero. During World War I he served in the West Yorkshire Regiment and received both the British Military Cross and the French *Croix de Guerre avec palme* for bravery (Kelly, 1960: 384). It seems that this background contributed to his defence of academic freedom at Fort Hare. The final tribute to his service at Fort Hare comes from the Student Representative Council of the University at the time of its takeover, which states that Burrows “ ... put up a valiant fight to save Fort Hare from wanton and malicious ravishment, but the odds were too great” (Majola and Modise, 1959).

This brief overview can hardly pay sufficient tribute to the remarkable research output of Burrows. He was the author or co-author of numerous books on topics such as concerns about Indian living conditions in Natal, social security, pensions, international trade, the history of higher learning at Fort Hare, and an explanation of economics for business people. Other than a Presidential Address on the topic *An approach to the Indian problem in South Africa*, Burrows also authored or co-authored nine other papers that appeared in *The South African Journal of Economics*. These papers covered topics ranging from reviews of the work of Keynes, international trade, and price control. Of particular interest is the focus on social conditions, social security and pensions in some of these papers, which reconfirms his broader concerns with social conditions in South Africa.

Despite all his achievements, Kelly describes Burrows in the final analysis as “ ... modest and reticent ... (with a) sense of duty and ... (a) ... high regard for the truth” (1960: 386). The military awards and his stand at Fort Hare pay tribute to these characteristics.

4 ALFRED JOHN LIMEBEER (1949)
Initially missing but recovered



Despite Alfred Limebeer's career of 35 years at the Chamber of Mines, commencing in 1915 and ending as Secretary of its Gold Producers' Committee at the time of his retirement in 1950 (Lang, 1986: 365), the Chamber has no records of him. He was born in London in 1890, moved to South Africa in 1913 and passed away in London in 1976.

In 1932 Limebeer served on a subcommittee of the Council of the Economic Society, appointed to consider the future of its initial *Journal of the Economic Society of South Africa* that

was published periodically from 1925 (Botha, 2002: 9). On recommendation of this subcommittee *The South African Journal of Economics* was established as the quarterly journal of the Society, with Limebeer serving on its short-lived Board of Management.

Limebeer gave evidence at a trial after the strike of the African Mine Workers' Union in 1946 (Naicker, 1986), testifying that the Chamber of Mines erroneously acknowledged receipt of a memorandum with demands from the Union before the strike. At the time it was the Chamber's policy not to acknowledge communications from the Union. This remark not only seems to indicate that Limebeer played a role in labour relations (or rather, the lack thereof) at the time, but also provides some insight into the social conditions of the country in the 1940s.

Apart from a published Presidential Address on the topic *Economic Revolution*, Limebeer contributed two papers for publication in *The South African Journal of Economics* and one paper to its predecessor, the *Journal of the Economic Society of South Africa* (Limebeer, 1928). His research focus was the contribution of the gold mining industry to South African exports and employment.

Of particular interest is his address in 1945 in his capacity as President of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, in which he stated, *inter alia*, that employment difficulties should not be "... accepted as an excuse for not employing the partially disabled on the most productive work of which they are capable" (Limebeer, 1946: 97). Limebeer was indeed a visionary on the social responsibility of employing people with special needs, as is currently embodied in South Africa's Employment Equity Act of 1998, but the question whether there is really anything new in *new* policies should nevertheless be raised.

This brief overview of Limebeer's life reveals little about a remarkable man with a sense of social responsibility towards the less fortunate in society, but who nevertheless applied a policy of non-negotiation on certain labour matters. Given Limebeer's clear views on social responsibility in employment, it would have been interesting today to know his personal, rather than the official, views on interaction with organised labour in the 1940s.

5 THOMAS HERBERT KELLY (1952-53)⁴
Remarkable academic



Tom Kelly was born in 1907 in Aberdare, Wales and passed away in Victoria, Canada in 1999. From humble beginnings he obtained a PhD at the University of Birmingham at the remarkably young age of 23 in 1930. Kelly was appointed by the University of Cape Town in 1933 and moved to the University of Natal in 1945. After retirement in 1968 he moved

⁴ This section draws on the comprehensive obituary of Kelly, compiled by Nieuwenhuysen (2000: 351 to 356).

to Canada to take up an appointment at Queen's University in Ontario. He finally retired in 1972.

Kelly excelled in administration, over and above his academic duties, evidenced, *inter alia*, by the fact that he chaired for 17 years the Non-European Studies Committee of the University of Natal. As such he contributed to the provision of higher education for students that would otherwise not have had such an opportunity. He made a similar contribution as a member of the Council of the University College of Fort Hare. After Government took control of the University College in 1959, Kelly was not reappointed, as was the case with the majority of Council members owing to their strong opposition to such takeover.

Kelly published widely, including five papers in *The South African Journal of Economics*, apart from his published presidential addresses on the topics *Economics as a tool of business management* and *The transition to Customs Union in South Africa*. In reaction to the Marketing Act of 1937 imposing control over the marketing of dairy, maize and wheat production, Kelly published in conjunction with some of South Africa's most distinguished economists of the time (H.M. Robertson, R. Leslie and W.H. Hutt were some of the co-authors, who all also served as presidents of ESSA) three papers between 1938 and 1940 under the collective title of *Economists' Protest*. Recent suggestions that the South African government should assume a larger and more direct role in economic activity, leaves somewhat of an impression that the work of Kelly and his co-authors are as relevant today as some 70 years ago⁵.

Kelly made an administrative contribution for which he should surely be remembered. However, with a PhD at the tender age of 23 and a protector of market freedom on economic principles, he makes a lasting impression as an outstanding academic.

6 CONCLUSION

This note leaves some food for thought. The particulars and contributions of people who worked hard and diligently to ensure a sound foundation for ESSA are soon forgotten. As this will probably also be true of the current generation participating in the activities of ESSA, the publication of similar biographies of past presidents since 1963 is probably overdue.

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⁵ In 2008 the Minister of Public Enterprises made a case for a direct role of government in business enterprises through a government shareholder management model (Erwin, 2008).

⁶ This book was published after the death of Burrows. The co-authors state their deep regret that “Dr Burrows to whose inspiration and practically sole effort the compilation of this little volume is due, died suddenly ... when the text was already in the hands of the printer ... “ (Burrows et. al., 1961: v).

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