

Obituary

Malcolm Leitch Cameron CMG

Public Servant: b. Timaru, 4 February 1929; m. Mary Trafford (dec); survived by daughters Jane, Sheena, and Sarah and son Bob; d. Waikanae, 6 August 2013, aged 84.

Malcolm Cameron, the former Director-General of Agriculture and Fisheries and Chancellor of Lincoln University died recently.

His successor as Chancellor, Margaret Austin, says of him: 'He was a man of few words but when he spoke you were aware that you were in the presence of wisdom. Something would emerge that was just riveting. He made a significant contribution [to New Zealand primary industries], with a wry humour,' Mrs Austin says.

That contribution was twofold. Mr Cameron led the Ministry through major restructuring (and renaming) that modernised it and fitted it to take on the world of trade in the age that followed reliance on exports to Britain. He then led Lincoln University through a period of diversification, establishing commercial partnerships and relationships with other countries.

Born in Timaru He attended Waimataitai Primary and Timaru Boys' High School, where he was pipe major of the highland band. He left school in 1947 to study at Canterbury University and then Lincoln College. He completed a Bachelor of Agricultural Science degree, graduating in 1951. He returned to Lincoln 28 years later as a member of the university council, was elected Pro-Chancellor and was Chancellor from 1994 to 1999.

Mr Cameron rose rapidly through the ranks of the Department (later Ministry) of Agriculture. He began as a farming adviser in South Canterbury, based in Timaru, in 1951. Promotions took him to Auckland in 1964 as regional adviser, and then to Director of the Farming Advisory Division, which became the Advisory Services Division in 1972 and to Director-General in 1977 at the age of 48.

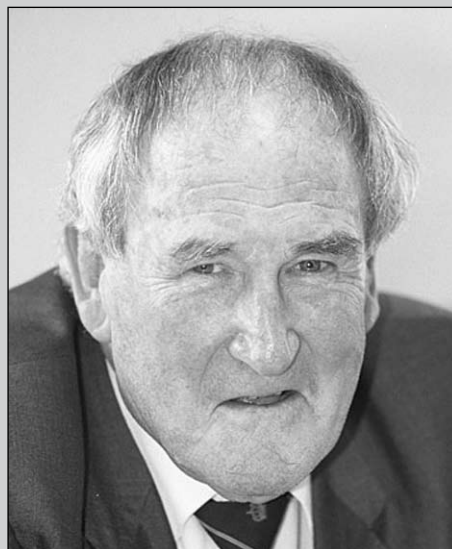
His career involved extensive travel to promote trade in primary produce. He was South Pacific representative on the council of the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organisation and represented New Zealand on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. He served on the Wool Board and the Fishing Industry Board.

Mr Cameron retired in 1988 and was made a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George, for services to agriculture. He had previously been made a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Agricultural Science and received Lincoln University's Bledisloe Medal for distinguished services advancing New Zealand's interests.

During his time as Chancellor of Lincoln University, the University's policy of internationalisation involved him in annual visits to South East Asia and he presided at several international graduation ceremonies and degree conferments in the region. Lincoln University was the first New Zealand University to hold a graduation ceremony offshore. As Chancellor, Malcolm Cameron actively promoted Lincoln University's association with Asia and international education.

He was outspoken on issues of student numbers, government funding, and the potential for government interference in university affairs. In the 1990s, Lincoln had to meet the demands of the market model as grants were slashed and fees rose with the emphasis on productivity and customer feedback. 'But the basic strategy was simple, sticking to what we were good at, staying with natural resources in their new uniform,' he said.

Former Lincoln vice-chancellor Professor Roger Field says Cameron was 'absolutely committed to New Zealand agriculture'. He was last of the old style of DGs, very supportive, very focused on outcomes. He had high expectations of people, never suffered fools. He oversaw great change.'



LAP

Sources: Fairfax NZ News, Lincoln University