

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS 2021

TLU-SA was founded in 1897 and is 124 years old this year. Three years after its founding, South Africa was involved in the second war of independence against mighty England. Our country lost more than 30,000 men, women and children.

Around 121 years ago, Mrs. Anette Marais sat on a tree stump in the Bethulie concentration camp and dusted off her ragged clothing. She was surrounded by the familiar faces of a group of tired women. The high fence surrounding the concentration camp was only a few steps away. She opened her Bible and started reading. In the dark hours of the night, she had wrestled with God and begged Him for a message with which to encourage this group of women, because who knows how much longer...

Anette read the words of Matthew 10:29: “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care.” While she was reading these words, a small brown sparrow sat down on her shoulder. The group of women stared in amazement at what was happening, and so the sparrow became a symbol of hope amid the impossible circumstances in the Bethulie concentration camp.

In the following months, it was amazing to see what a beacon of faith and hope the sparrows of Bethulie became to these women.

The war was over on 31 May 1902. On the way back to her house, now burned to ashes, Anette stopped at the home of an influential woman and told her the story about the sparrow. In turn, that woman told the story to others and in 1923, Gen. Jan Smuts made the sparrow appear on the country’s smallest coin, the quarter penny, and later it also appeared on our 1c coin. Many years later, Afrikaans singer Jak de Priester is in London, desperately needing a job. He reads the message about the sparrow in his Bible and prays for a job. The next day, he gets one, and back home on the bus he picks up a South African 1c with the sparrows on the back. He realises God is with him on the train and that prayer is his guarantee in this broken world.

Farmers: no matter how dark the future of agriculture and this country may look, know that there is hope through the mercy of our Heavenly Father. Notice the sparrows on your way. See TLU-SA as your sparrow. Empower TLU-SA through your support and participation, so that together we can create hope for you and for farmers in this country.

This past year, the value of a productive commercial farmer became abundantly clear. With many systems collapsing, South African farmers' contributions have truly kept our country functioning. Without food on the table, every mechanism in the country would collapse. The anarchy of recent times emphasised this once again.

Our country bears the burden of a policy environment that is being heavily questioned by the markets. Even before Covid-19, which, by the way, together with apartheid and racism, gets the blame for nearly everything that goes wrong, the markets weighed South Africa on the scales and found it wanting. Many years of ANC policy have caused the breakdown of investor trust, and economic forces are struggling to win against the unrealism the ANC government is persisting in. We were downgraded to junk status even before Covid-19 came on the scene. With the lockdown regulations that followed, the economic climate deteriorated even more.

At some point, we will need to get honest about the policy environment and especially its implications for South Africa. With around 68% of our population urbanised, anyone in their right mind should be able to realise that the most important asset our country can have is a productive farmer that can ensure that consumers have food on the table. What more will it take to make the government realise this? Transformation is mentioned in almost every government announcement. What is meant by that? The ANC seems to include aspects of government such as BEE, equal employment, land reform, redistribution of assets, and so forth, in the concept of transformation. Division of wealth has never had a sustainable outcome anywhere in the world. The inevitable result is shared poverty. The world over, the centralised control the government is aiming at has caused nothing but poverty and suppression.

Currently, South Africa is dealing with endless social problems caused by an unemployment rate of 44,4% and poverty. The reality is that in the current policy environment, this problem is getting worse every year. There is only one solution, and that is economic growth. Growth cannot be merely announced, and can only be obtained if the private sector reacts positively to a favourable climate, which the government is supposed to create, in which entrepreneurs and investors are eager to do business. The unfortunate reality is that the current outflow of capital is surely the highest it has ever been, all because of the lack of the necessary trust.

TLU-SA has repeatedly gone on record where we have tried to share with the government what is needed to stabilise the country economically. Over the past three years, we have, aside from personal letters to the Presidency, pointed out in conversations with government officials and by means of press releases what would bring about success. Unfortunately, the ANC clearly has no plans to abandon this destructive policy. For that, South Africa and its citizens will pay a high price. The poorest people will be hit hardest.

In a democracy, the government has two primary responsibilities, namely to protect the safety of its citizens and to create, through policy, a favourable climate in which investors want to be part of the economy. Every day, we experience a government that, for various reasons, is failing miserably in these primary responsibilities. We have the know-how in this country to steer both these issues in a positive direction, but time and again, the choice is made to appoint those close to the ANC fires to influential positions instead of letting the best candidate do the work to achieve the greatest success. Add to this the corruption of many politicians and their persistence in being racist in their policy, pronouncements and actions, and we have a recipe for failure. It is an open question how much longer the government wants to persist in its policy of BEE and thereby tell its own people that they are incapable of success in their own right. The policy of BEE is truly a slap in the face of every black citizen of this country.

We will say it again – economic growth is obtained when the correct policy environment is created and there is a safe environment in which anybody would want to live and work. The strongest basis for capital investment is surely the principle of right of private ownership. The government needs to ask itself whether anyone in their right mind would invest capital heavily in a country where the constitution determines that assets can be seized from the occupants without compensation. This would be plain robbery, and wanting to make something like this constitutional implies the inherent criminality of those wanting to do it. The history of land ownership has been so distorted and lied about that white people are reviled as land thieves. It is our position that every farmer is the rightful owner of his land and that is verified by a title deed issued by the government. Several years ago, TLU-SA offered a reward of R100,000 to anyone able to prove that any of its members had stolen land. That money is safe to this day.

The culture at TLU-SA is to not be blinded by everything that is wrong, but instead work on solutions with an eye to the future. The dilemma we are experiencing is that certain role players are continually trying to create a history that is different from that which has been written down. Accusations can easily be slung from one side to the other about the way history was experienced by either group. An entire day could be spent in an effort to agree,

which clearly would not happen easily, and then the question remains of what would have been done to improve things for tomorrow. Every person has received certain talents. If those talents are not used, others should not get the blame. People need to learn to accept the responsibility that life requires of each of us. TLU-SA focuses on the future and this focus is included in the cultural mandate given to us by God in his Word, the Bible.

Our focus is to keep commercial farmers living safely and productively on their land. That is our mandate and that is why we focus on agriculture and letting it flourish. TLU-SA works to focus constructively on specific aspects and effect a positive outcome.

The following areas are important for the future of agriculture. TLU-SA would not only be forsaking farmers, but also South African consumers, if positive outcomes in these areas were not negotiated and worked for.

- Security – as time goes on, one realises more and more that the state is incapable of meeting its obligation concerning the security of the citizens of South Africa. The scope of crime in the field of agriculture has rapidly increased. I personally feel that crime is out of control. Apart from farm attacks and killings, which are already at 32 murders in 171 attacks this year, the theft of products, livestock, infrastructure and equipment has taken on unprecedented proportions. This causes farmers to be largely dependent on themselves to look after their own security. Farmers: if you are not involved yet, I am sorry for you. For those who are, thank you for what you do, and let's improve on it. In my view, 10% of those in communities are involved in security and 90% are not. This puts incredible pressure on the 10% to get hurt, be prosecuted or even die for the 90%. Please also report all crime to SAPS, no matter how small the value of the loss. Having said that, we would like to immediately give a word of great thanks to those SAPS members who continue to persevere in trying to carry out their task with integrity. Conditions are also not easy for honourable SAPS members, and we would like to wish them all the best.

- Adverse policy environment – A healthy policy environment is the basis for success in creating an environment within which success in many respects can be achieved in a country. Few good things can be said about the current policy environment. The market environment continuously evaluates any business in terms of how a policy is applied. Similarly, our country is continuously evaluated for the quality of what the government decides. Cabinet can be compared to the board of a company – in this case, the board of South Africa Limited. Currently, the decisions of the board are negatively assessed, and we have been put on a slippery slope of failure. How long will the shareholders, in other words the residents of South Africa, still be satisfied with this policy environment that does not create a future for the shareholders? TLU-SA will continue to expand and promote the

economically correct choice. If the country is not going to take a turn in this regard, we will eventually go down in history as one of Africa's failures. It would be good if the government could be transparent and honest about its path to socialism and communism. The markets would then be able to properly judge and censure. This could possibly bring the government to their senses. To blithely support and even expand the government's agenda of transformation is, in practice, supporting the ANC in achieving the goals of their NEC, namely centralised control. Our plea to all role players is to reflect on the extent to which that support can be given. We can see the outcome of this directly north of South Africa.

- The reality for South Africa's future is too important for organisations to be fragmented, each trying on their own to improve the future. Active co-operation will have to be sought, but then it will have to be around the right principles. TLU-SA has repeatedly gone on record as striving to work with other organisations for the right reasons. In the ad hoc group for the protection of property rights, TLU-SA is an active role player together with more than 50 other organisations, and even if we disagree on other matters, the principle for which these role players stand together is an important matter without which no positive outcomes will be achieved. It is TLU-SA's view that more needs to be done to find out what various organisations have in common to generate collective torque and bargaining power. Moving South Africa in the right direction requires considerable and dynamic input – the problem is too big for single organisations, and it is indeed a problem for South Africa as a whole.

- The combined weight of South Africa's realities means that communities will have to strive for independence in many respects. Independent structures will play an increasingly important role in all respects going forward. This involves a variety of aspects, from security issues to education and training, social support, disaster management, and so on. The state takes our taxes, but utilises them in such a way that many questions arise when looking at the effectiveness of service delivery. Having about 6 million taxpayers to satisfy the needs of about 60 million, about half of whom are unemployed, can in no way be sustainable.

- TLU-SA must continue on its path to set feasible goals that can be carried out practically. The power of our organisation is precisely at the grassroots level, where realities are experienced and from where the inputs are brought to the EC by the structure, which gives it shape. In this regard, I would like to thank every member who helps to maintain and make our grassroots structures work. Without our farmers' associations and our farmers' unions, we would lose a great deal of our torque. In practice, these are the real teeth of organised agriculture. We must also constantly evaluate ourselves to make sure we achieve the goals we set. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the newly elected

members of the Executive Committee, as well as to thank the re-elected members for your loyal support. Thank you for your willingness to take the reins at regional level as regional chairpersons, but also as part of the EC. Thank you for the good, positive and directional input you provide in the interest of TLU-SA and agriculture. Also, to the staff of TLU-SA, thank you for your service and sacrifices. It is sincerely appreciated. You are the best team!

- Accepting the responsibility of membership and all that it entails is a critical aspect not only for the members themselves but also for the collective bargaining that is essential for us to make our mark. A little bit of input from each member creates a very strong joint ability that will become increasingly important for each of our survival going forward. A shared burden is a manageable burden. My plea to our members is to raise your hands for the various needs that are needed at the grassroots level to help position us right there at the local government level. Each member is a leader in their own right and that joint power is going to become increasingly important going forward. Let's also get those farmers who are not members on board – this way we could create greater torque for the survival of us all.

Thank you to all the new members and specifically the farmers in the Northern Cape, who joined TLU-SA as members despite years of drought. May our Heavenly Father wrap you in love and give you deliverance. May your hope also remain established in Him, as I referred to at the beginning in Matthew 10:29. Thank you to farmers who donate feed. Thank you to organisations that make it possible to deliver feed to hungry animals. Thank you to farmers' associations and farmers' unions, farmers and their families who send hope in the form of food and other items. Thank you to farmers and members of the public, or rather consumers, who make financial contributions. Maybe we're just sticking plasters on the problem, but you bring hope. May the Lord bless you.

- Our mindset can so easily become negative these days. In many respects, circumstances cannot be considered primarily favourable. A positive person can let their thoughts wander creatively. Negativity puts such persons on a spiral in the wrong direction. Covid-19 has had a severe impact on virtually every family and also on communities. This past year, it has been very difficult not to be able to spend time together. This has been experienced at school, at church, in culture, sports and in agriculture. It is easy to become lonely. I've been hearing from communities where they are "adopting" each other and deliberately setting up an outreach campaign to connect with each other and give support to especially our senior citizens. This is very positive, and we can support each other in those difficult circumstances so that nobody has to deal with trauma alone. With a solid foundation of faith, we can be positive – let us hold on to that. In the last year, TLU-SA has lost

members, friends and acquaintances in agriculture as a result of Covid-19, farm murders and other trauma. Many members lost family and friends. On behalf of TLU-SA, I would like to express our sincere condolences with your losses. May you find comfort in the Lord. Our time on earth is temporary and short. Live fully to the glory of Him, and may we all look forward to eternal life hereafter.

- An informed person is in a better position to make good decisions. TLU-SA distributes our Pitkos document on a monthly basis, which contains quite a few pieces of information that benefit our members. For example, better prices have been negotiated this year for, among other things, fuel and fertiliser. Members can only reap the benefits if they know about them. We do not inundate members with information, but would like to make a friendly request to our members to take note of what is distributed in Pitkos to their own advantage. Communication is crucial and I would like to thank three of our partners today for their exceptional contribution, each in their own field. TLU-SA has been making its mark very effectively in recent times and these three, namely Edge Communications, Boermedia and Impact Now, have each made a huge contribution in the process of conveying TLU-SA's views and message. Remaining principle-driven and not playing to the gallery makes it easy to take a stand on behalf of TLU-SA. Then it is easy to have the same message every time. We are very grateful that our position is increasingly being recognised. Realise once again that this is the right way to keep a principle-driven course – it will always carry you the farthest.

I would like to thank our members who are constantly working to bring agriculture to life. This is truly work with eternity in mind. In many respects, our challenges are extensive. Handling them collectively is our strongest weapon. TLU-SA provided input before the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on the proposed amendment of Section 25 of the Constitution as well as the Expropriation Act. Input was provided on the proposed amendment to the Firearms Act. We provided input on the new agricultural plan that the government is currently working on, namely the Agriculture Agro Master Plan (AAMP), in which we pointed out the lack of pure economic principles and made better proposals. TLU-SA will continue on this path.

Every day we receive power and great grace from our Heavenly Father. This is our guideline and TLU-SA affirms in its constitution and manifest our faith in the Triune God as revealed in his Word, the Bible. May we always hold on to it and help each one that we as an organisation live out our first to the glory of God.

Go and look for the sparrows on your way today. Notice them, and realise that there is always hope, know that the Lord will always look after us, take care of us, no matter how dark the future in the country and in agriculture.

A blessed sparrow day to you.

Thank you.