

# FROM THE SCIENTIFIC SPHERE

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## For the seventieth birthday of Prof. Ing. Jan Hron, DrSc., dr. h. c.

On 17 September 2011, at the height of his creative powers, Prof. Ing. Jan Hron, DrSc., Dr.h.c., celebrated reaching of a major milestone of his personal as well as professional life – his seventieth birthday. Presently, he is the head of the Department of Management, the dean of the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague and, for many years, a member of the editorial board of the journal *Zemědělská ekonomika*.

The life-long orientation of a successful teacher, scientist and manager was primarily determined and shaped by his family background, his studies at the Secondary School of Agriculture in Klatovy, his graduation from the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Czech University of Agriculture in Prague in 1964 and his subsequent work as an economist for the Radbuza Staňkov Unified Agricultural Cooperative. In 1967, he started his academic career as a university teacher at the Department of Management of the Faculty of Economics and Management of his Alma Mater. His further intensive studies and involvement in scientific research enabled him by 1969 to qualify as the Candidate of Economic Sciences (CSc.) in the field of economics, based on his doctoral thesis titled *Management Qualification Models for Agricultural Businesses*. In 1977, he earned the title of Associate Professor by defending his dissertation titled *Analysis and Planning of Organizational Systems for Agricultural Businesses*.

During the following decade, in 1988, he earned the prestigious title of the Doctor of Sciences (DrSc.) in the field of economics by defending his dissertation titled *Organizational Systems of Agricultural Businesses*.

His successful pedagogical and scientific work was further honoured by the granting the title of Full Professor for the field of economics and management in 1989.

As a university teacher, he has always seen his chief mission in training qualified experts for the Czech, European and global environment.

As early as at the beginning of the early 1970s, he enriched faculty study programmes by modern courses which have their place also at present. As an

example, we can mention cybernetics in management, strategic management etc.

The significant role that Prof. Hron played in the preparation of new study programmes and in the fundamental transformation of their educational content at the faculty during the period of the transition from the centrally planned to market economy was connected with the realization of important international Tempus projects funded by the EU (“Transformation of the Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Management”, “Education for the Needs of Market Economy”, “Introduction of the Transferable Credit System”, 1995–1998).

He also initiated and put into activity a summer school for American students, which has seen its 20<sup>th</sup> year of successful activity in 2011, having been attended by more than 600 American students from six U.S. universities during its existence, and he has also successfully played the founding role in the creation of a new type of studies at the Faculty of Economics and Management, the programme International MBA in Agribusiness. For many years, he has also worked as a member and chairman of final state examination committees at the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra and at other universities.

Of great importance has been his work in training of young scientists. He has regularly taken part in the preparation of the programmes for scientific education. He was and is a member of a large number of the sectoral scientific boards for doctoral studies at other economic faculties, and for many years up to the present, he has been the chairman of the Committee for Management at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague. Under his leadership, several dozen of the PhD. degree candidates and doctoral students have successfully completed their scientific training and have earned their degrees.

Prof. Hron is also in demand as an experienced opponent for doctoral and habilitation dissertations, and to no less a degree, he is engaged regularly as a member or chairman of the habilitation and profes-

sor appointment committees at several universities home as well as abroad.

Besides his important position and work in the field of pedagogy, Prof. Hron possesses excellent managerial abilities, which he has put to a very successful use for many years in various functions and positions at the level of his department, faculty and university as well as on a wider national and international scale, and this has been of real benefit.

Since 1984, he is holding the position of the head of the Department of Management of the Faculty of Economics and Management. In the process of his academic career, he has made a major contribution towards the full utilisation of the high potential of the pedagogues and workers towards the consolidation of the Faculty of Economics and Management and thereafter of the University of Agriculture (later Czech University of Life Sciences) during the period of its transformation and towards the rapid development of the Faculty of Economics and Management and of the university as a whole. This can be documented by the extensive list of the positions he held in succession during this period: the vice-dean of the Faculty of Economics and Management for Science and Research (1985–1989), the vice-rector of the University of Agriculture for Science and Research (1990–1991), the dean of the Faculty of Economics and Management (1991–1994, 2000–2003, 2010–), and the rector of the Czech University of Agriculture/Czech University of Life Sciences (1994–2000, 2003–2010). Without any doubt, we can also see the evidence of the growing external prestige of the university and of Prof. Hron's managerial ability in his repeated election as the chairman of the Czech Conference of Rectors (the longest-serving chairman in the Conference's history), his many years of service as the president of the Czech Academy of Agricultural Sciences, as the chairman of the Department of Economics, Management, Sociology and Information Science, the president of the Švehla Foundation, and in his numerous other activities in the Czech and foreign institutions and societies – the Society of Agricultural Research and Development, the ČAVAPS (Czech Association for Research and the Application of Case Studies), the Accreditation Commission (the permanent working group for economics), the Academy Assembly of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, the Inter-ministerial Working Group of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports CR, the Governmental Council for Research and the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, as well as in a number of committees and collegia for the problematics of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Agriculture CR.

His extensive involvement in the academic activities on the international level can be characterised, inter alia, by his activities in the frame of the Slovak Academy of Agricultural Sciences, the International Academy of Organization and Management Science, the ICA, the Consortium of the European Life Science and Agricultural Universities, the Euroleague for Life Sciences etc.

Prof. Hron has held and still holds a leading role in the scientific research in fields of broader management issues. His intensive scientific research, dating back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, has been focused on management models and organizational systems of agricultural enterprises.

In the 1990s and in the following period, Prof. Hron has taken the initiative in obtaining large external research grants for the faculty, such as the “Virtual Organizational and Management Structures of Entrepreneurial Subjects in Agriculture” (National Agency for Agricultural Research), “Creation of Strategic Alliances” (National Agency for Agricultural Research), “A Resource-Based Approach to Building Competitive Advantages” (research project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports CR, 1999–2004), and “Information and Knowledge as Support for Strategic Management” (research project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports CR, 2005–2011).

Prof. Hron's role as the scientific coordinator or director of the above mentioned and other research grants is naturally reflected in his very extensive activity as an author and lecturer. Corresponding to this is the noteworthy quantity of his published works including several hundred scientific papers, research reports, textbooks, books etc.

In connection to that, he puts his experience to use as a chairman or member of more than ten scientific boards at the faculty or university level at the Czech University of Life Sciences, the Czech Republic and abroad.

Prof. Hron's international reputation and the external recognition of his personal contribution to the advancement of learning and higher education has found its expression by the award of honorary doctorates or honorary professorships conferred upon him by more than a dozen renowned foreign universities in Europe, America and Asia.

The list of Prof. Hron's academic achievements will always have one major flaw – it will never be complete, as they are so wide that always something will be missing.

Nevertheless, no characteristic of Prof. Hron would be complete that would omit the characteristics of his personality and his interests, his care for the family life and his ability to promote healthy pragmatic, yet

at the same time visionary intentions for the benefit of his department, the faculty, the university and higher education in the Czech Republic and on the international scale.

His colleagues can confirm that he is a man of flesh and bones, so, as the saying goes, there is nothing human that is foreign to him. As a master of his field, he is able to utilise the theoretical principles of his profession in his own managerial practice. Definitely worthy of mentioning is his definition of the phase space, the implementation of homeostasis, balancing of the goal-based and resource-based approaches and also the realization of management as it is defined (management – the achieving of one's goals through others).

At the same time, however, he is always willing to “wait until the butterfly that sits on the flower flies away before smelling its fragrance” (his favourite quotation that thousands of the fresh graduates that Prof. Hron addresses at the graduation ceremonies can testify to).

It is generally agreed that people who do not worry about the future, necessarily face problems at present.

Speaking of Prof. Hron's life, let us then think along the following lines:

When planning for one year – the best way is to grow grains.

When planning for 10 years – there is nothing better than planting trees.

When planning for the lifetime – we can hardly find anything better than the upbringing and education of human beings.

In conclusion, it is our great pleasure to say that Prof. Hron has been successful in creating the future success through taking part in the training and educating of a large number of successful graduates and workers. It is then proper and highly justified to express our sincere thanks to him for a lifetime of work undertaken for the benefit of our Alma Mater and of the education in the Czech Republic.

What would then be our wish for Prof. Jan Hron? Nothing that would be new to him, just an unflinching zest for life, many more successes in his pedagogic and research work, sound health and personal satisfaction – and many happy returns!

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