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DAVID LAWRENCE

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No bland banking

Heading First National 5 latest acquisition, Citibank, is 36-year-old South African David Lawrence. Appointed MD in April, of what was then a subsidiary of American-based multinational Citicorp, he will continue to manage the organisation in its new setting.

Although he's been an employee of Citibank for 10 years, Lawrence is very much part of the South African establishment - Michaelhouse, Wits, Chamber of Mines, the office of the Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister, as well as 12 years part-time service in the Transvaal Horse Artillery.

With a master's degree in economics, he started his career as an economist. But after several jobs and six months with Citibank, he realised he wanted to get more involved in the dynamics of banking: he wanted to get into the real world where profits were generated, so I chose the most active divisions - the money and foreign exchange markets?

While not a trader by temperament, Lawrence found the environment stimulating. Foreign exchange was of particular interest, because his masters degree was - the result of research into developments in the South African forex markets. But he really chose the experience as an antidote to his years of working with economic theories and principles - and to get to the heart of banking."

As it turned out, Lawrence chose one of the most exciting periods in South African markets, when the De Kock report came out, and the forex markets opened up. For the first time dealers were able to set their own prices in a free market, where rates moved quickly and a shrewd dealer could make good profits in a true trading environment.

The experience provided the adrenalin he had been craving and, in 1980, he went on to join Citibank's world corporate group as a junior marketing officer. For a number of reasons," he says, "including sentiment, I

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Lawrence . . .

gravitated to the mining industry segment." Source of the sentiment was his late grandfather, Hal Lawrence, who headed Rand

Mines in the late Forties and was president of the Chamber of Mines for several years. David Lawrence continued in this role until the debt moratorium in late 1985. uAt that point MD Timothy Wood returned to Europe. He was succeeded by David Hexter, who put control of the corporate bank into my hands and those of my colleague Derek Muller. In mid-1986 Derek left, and I took over as head of the world corporate group." keeping ahead

Next development was Hexter's departure in February to New York, creating an opportunity for Lawrence to do what he believes he is best at -- working with people and getting the best out of a team. And, given the rapidly changing environment, it will also give him every opportunity to explore and enjoy his mathematical bent, achieving order.

He has little time for interests outside of work and family. Occasionally, with his wife, Carin, and daughters Nicola (8) and Olivia (3), he gets away to his trout farm in the eastern Transvaal. But, for the most part, his energy will be directed to the business of banking.

Citibank, with total assets of around R500m and net asset value of about R1Sm, is to receive a new name but its operations will continue as before. iiWe are very much relationship-orientated. We depend on teamwork and we will continue to be innovative, aggressive and highly competitive.

"We can't survive as bland bankers." I

SEPP VAN HULLEN 4;;

An unusual mauve)

Sepp van Hiillen is chairman of the management board of Mercedes-Benz of SA (MBSA), and quite a character. Despite coming from West Germany, a country not known for its interest in rugby, he gets all muffled up on Saturdays and takes himself off to the nearest good match. He knows his rugby. Although he lives in Pretoria he shouts for Western Province, because he thinks they play intelligently, and he isn't too pleased with Transvaal for having snaffled the Du lesis brothers. "With them in the side, we would have been top of the Curry Cup 1033' he says.

He is a capitalist who supports trade unionism and wants to make it work in SA. He , criticises aspects of government policy, but has no intention of leaving. He's a wine lover, and admits that South African wines are his soft spot, arguing that those who say that our red wines are best haven't any idea of how good our white wines are.

Van Htllenis rise to the top job at MBSA - iithere are very few positions they can offer me that will entice me to leave here" - has been punctuated by many last-minute switches, not all of them of his own making. He qualified as a lawyer on December 24 ' 1967, but found himself in the family machinery business on the first working day of 1968. His father indentured him to Daimler-Benz (DB) in Stuttgart for a year to learn new skills. He ended up spending two years with DB, and liked it so much he decided to stay on longer. But his father had other

ideas.

He was made MD of the family concern,
and sold it in 1977 to a large steel company.
He joined a client who had a business in
Bavaria. When that was sold in 1981, he
planned to take a position with a machinery
company and phoned DB for a reference. DB
made a counter offer, and he found himself
preparing to become MD of one of Its suppli-
ers (which had run into difficulties).
Two days later, before he could start that
job, he found himself back in harness at DB,
being retrained to be transferred to another
country. On January 1 1982 he was told he
was being transferred to a truck company in
the US. nI had that job for 10 minutes before
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I was told that I had been appointed MD of a small DB truck-making subsidiary in Switzerland," he recalls ruefully. "Two hours later I was in a new Mercedes-Benz car on my way to Zurich. A year later it was merged with a bigger truck maker, but DB retained industrial control of the new operation."

At the end of 1985 he learnt that he would be moved to SA to replace Ernst Stockl as financial executive of MBSA, and that Jürgen Schrempp, who was vice-chairman, would replace Morris Shenker as chairman.

Van Hullen started in SA in March 1986. Then, when DB bought engine manufacturers MTU, aircraft and medical supplies manufacturers 'Dornier, and AEG (which together now account for 25% of DB's turnover), Schrempp was moved to a senior position in Germany and Van Hullen replaced

him. He and Schrempp learnt about their respective appointments while they were in Germany. "We were sworn to secrecy, but when we boarded the plane to come home we found that all our own chaps, as well as the BMW people on board, knew all about it," Van Hullen says with a smile.

When he came to SA he found that the motor industry was still on a growth path, but the market "was in reverse. It was necessary "to change their mentality to get MBSA people to accept that we were out of step. We were talking of growth when the market was deteriorating or, at best, stagnating.

It is now a recovering market, but it will take a long time. Under present conditions, before it gets back to 300 000 cars per year. But the very depressed commercial vehicle market will have to recover. Otherwise industry is dead." Van Hullen doesn't want to make any predictions about SA's overall position. "It all depends on P W Botha," he says.

He doesn't like sanctions and disinvestment at all. He could understand the measures if those who impose them would undertake to help build up what they have broken down, once they have achieved their political goal. But, as the Zimbabwe experience

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Van Hullen ... life of surprises

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shows. in their present form they are destructive and have never ; worked.

' He would like to help trade unions to model themselves on their German counterparts. One big trade union representing one industry has lots more clout, he says, than many smaller ones chasing political shadows while trying to attend to their members'

rievances.

liLarger union.

ave a better chance

to organise internally, to educate their members and to produce the leaders who can negotiate with industry; to strike a deal and go back to their members and tell them these are the rules we have negotiated, you have to stick with them.' " I

GERRIT GEERTSEMA

Playing hrs part

Gerrit Geertsema's appointment as Chief Director of Pact in 1983 freshened the work and the image of the council. His title sounds clumsy, but the man's approach is not, and it's now paying dividends.

For many years Pact was seen as a politically conservative, Pretoria-bound bureaucracy. The opening of the beautiful and smoothly functional Windybrow complex in Johannesburg has helped to change that, and Geertsema is concerned to emphasise that, for Pact. Johannesburg is vitally important. Geertsema is anything but a bureaucrat.

A few years after taking office, he has firmly re-established the concept of the permanent ensemble, which plays a vital role in the development of young actors. Few critics would dispute his assertion that South African actors can match the best in the world, if they're allowed to develop.

Geertsema has developed an imaginative associate scheme. both for actors and directors. This gives Pact the chance to use the talents of freelance theatre people, or those not exclusively contracted to other managements. He has also seen to the appointment of black actors to Pact.

The content of plays has been far more liberal and exciting. since Geertsema's appointment of Bobby Heaney to head the drama section. Although there are rumoured to be conservative factions within Pact who resent both men, they have drastically improved the council's image and its work.

On the broader ideological level, Geertsema is concerned to point out that Pact is an independent company. It is subsidised by government, in the form of a grant-in-aid which is able to support around 58% of the costs incurred. But the rest of the money has to be raised from ticket sales and sponsorship. While managements are always reluctant to raise prices - already high for the money-swamps of opera and ballet - Geertsema argues that the prices here are among the cheapest in the world.

Major savings have been achieved with the amalgamation, after much agonising on both sides, of the Pact orchestra with that of the SABC. The new National Orchestra appears to be doing well, vindicating the real risk that was taken. Geertsema has also played an important role in seeing that expensive productions by all the provincial councils are now exchanged, where this is practical.

With an approach that is imaginative, business-like and dynamic, Geertsema seems to be ideally suited to the job, and his ebullience is relected where it counts - on the stages of Johannesburg and Pretoria. I

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