

Entomology in the 21st Century

Donald L. McLean

University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405–0106

Since becoming a full-time academic administrator, I have been asked to address audiences on philosophical subjects, or to make predictive statements for the future, or both. I also find that lately I am often scheduled last on the program and usually just before lunch. I will attempt to make my presentation brief. I suppose the choice of subject matter for this address has something to do with the fact that I no longer have an active research program and that I have been in professional entomology for more years than I care to count, and therefore I am able to make rational or irrational predictions without resulting in significant damage to my reputation. I often wonder why people who are nearing retirement are asked to predict the future. It seems to me that we are better historians than predictors and that the predictions should be left to the young because they are the people who will mold the future. Nevertheless, I will try to do my best.

During this discussion, I will limit my remarks to the area with which I am most familiar, the academic segment of entomology. I will also limit my comments to the first 10 years of the 21st century. My crystal ball has trouble predicting beyond that time. In an attempt to foresee the future, it is important to look at what is occurring in entomology at the present time; and in order to lay a firm foundation, it is also important to look at some entomological history.

Entomology as a distinct science was conceived out of the zoological sciences around the beginning of the 20th century. This conception was dictated because of the unique economic implications of insects as pests of agricultural and ornamental crops, and of man and other