

## Professor Erkin Bairam

One of New Zealand's foremost academic economists, Professor Erkin Bairam, died recently in Dunedin. He was 43.

Very widely published in books and professional journals, to which he contributed more than 50 articles, Professor Bairam specialised in applied econometrics, a field in which he dealt with as diverse subjects as the economics of sport, government spending and production and economic growth.

Erkin came to lecture at the University of Otago in 1987. Within three years he was associate professor and a year later he gained a personal chair in Economics at Otago in recognition of his contribution to econometrics. At 33, he was among the youngest professors ever in New Zealand.

His publication record was much more extensive than usual for an applied economist and was one of the many major contributions he made to the development of the Department of Economics. He also served as Head of Department and on the University Research Committee.

Professor Bairam was visiting professor at Rutgers University School of Business in 1993. He secured a number of research grants within New Zealand and was also economics consultant to several companies, local and overseas.

Widely known and respected by his peers, Professor Bairam shared a warmth with students who responded well to his friendly demeanour and easy accessibility.

Current Head of the Department of Economics, Professor Dorian Owen, says Erkin's early death was deeply felt by all who knew him... "he had a great deal more to offer and we will all miss him terribly."

His long-term friend, colleague and collaborator, retired Professor John Howells, contributed this personal appreciation.

*"The sudden death of Professor Erkin Bairam was a sad blow to the staff of the Economics Department and a big loss to the School of Business and the University. His contribution to teaching, research and administration was considerable. It might be argued that his efforts at times went far beyond the call of duty. His lectures, his students, research and departmental matters came first; health considerations were ranked last."*

*"His background was an interesting international mix. He was brought up in the Turkish sector of Cyprus with a Greek mother and Turkish father who spoke no English. He attended an English-speaking school and spent his university student years in Colchester and Hull. Whilst in Dunedin, he spent all his sabbatical leaves in the United States. His Dunedin friends were his extended family, he considered New Zealand his real home and he was a naturalised New Zealander."*

*"He often boasted he carried more passports than the number of test match wins by New Zealand cricket in a normal season. His background and stock of passports, however, were not always an advantage. He was convinced immigration officers gave him a rough time because they thought he was an international terrorist."*

*"His life was centred totally on the university. Effectively his world extended in a straight line from Sylvan Street to the big building on the corner of Union and Clyde. To go outside that line (occasionally to the top of George Street, sometimes to Carisbrook) was considered a major safari. Going to Wanaka, his favourite holiday spot, required the meticulous planning of an Everest expedition; going overseas was only possible with the full-time assistance of the departmental secretary."*

*"A visit to the barber (very occasionally) and shopping were not pleasant social interludes but dastardly interruptions deliberately designed to upset his normal equilibrium. Every weekend, one suspects, was viewed as a plot to keep him away from the department."*

*"Beyond work, he enjoyed the company of his local friends and put great store on their friendship. He enjoyed a good argument, usually at the normal Cypriot decibel level which allows everybody within a radius of 30 metres to participate."*

*"As a person, he cared about people. This was particularly the case with staff in Economics. Indeed, he found tough decisions relating to some staff rather difficult because, as he recently admitted to me, 'I love them.'"*

*"He was a small man with a big heart. His career ended much too soon. I should have explained to him what Dylan Thomas meant when he wrote:*

***'Do not go gentle into that good night  
Rage, rage, against the dying of the light.'"***

