

time, not a part-time occupation. It is not a business. It is a calling. As everyone in this room knows, it is damnably nerve-racking, often exciting, highly time-consuming, and all-absorbing. It demands the most total dedication, striving and commitment throughout the duration of a case. And our work is visible, it calls for instant and intuitive judgments, and the advocate carries an immense burden of accountability to the client. For standards to be maintained, it is important that those societies which value advocacy should continue to recognise it as a separate professional activity.

But it is not a narrow activity. The work of the profession of advocate does not end with the individual case. We are all as a profession involved in the development of our system of law, and its procedures, and in the need to keep them in tune with the requirements of society. This has not always been sufficiently appreciated in England. It was not until six years ago that the Bar Council had a Public Affairs Committee. It was previously thought that anyone who happened to be interested in wider aspects of the law could take part in the work of the great law reform agencies such as JUSTICE. This is all very well, but the profession itself has an important and cohesive role to play in promoting sensible developments in the law. We have our part to play in the reform of law and procedures. We have to be vigilant to assist and uphold human rights, especially those of minorities. This is of the essence of our profession. One of these rights is the right of individuals to representation in Court. This obviously includes wherever possible an effective and properly funded legal aid system. But it also includes the principle that all litigants are entitled to a lawyer of their choice. It is easy for us, practising in England and Australia, to forget the immensity of our privilege to practise before independent judges of integrity, and to advance our client's case without fear of any personal impact upon ourselves. This, on one level, is a tribute to the effectiveness of the cab-rank principle which, since the days of Erskine, lies at the heart of our profession. We have seen attempts to whittle away at the cab-rank principle in the United Kingdom, and a few advocates who say that they will not, for example, act for the Police or act against Trade Unions. I believe it remains of immense importance that our services should be available to all comers. This principle not only serves the public but enables the profession freely to carry out its work. We have known this freedom so long that we tend to take it for granted. But experience elsewhere in the world suggests that we have to be on guard to maintain it. Here our professional body, and a united professional body and the work we do for it, has a key role.

May I conclude. I have not attempted to talk of detailed techniques or tricks of advocacy. They exist, but some of them are not always very worthy and those that are are of less importance than the general principles which each of us can seek to apply according to our own instincts, personalities and the needs of the case. I have spoken perhaps for too long and I'm sorry for that. If you had asked me to describe good advocacy in but a single sentence, instead of the time you generously allowed, I would simply have reminded you of Sir Owen Dixon's words which for me summarised it: Advocacy is "tact in action". □

Readers Re-unite

On 6 August 1990, a group of eager young (ish) persons assembled in the Bar Common Room to embark upon a thankless round of papers, lectures, videos, talks by important people, ethics enigmas and yet more lectures and papers. On 27 August, 1990 an appreciative Bar Association, in recognition of the Readers' hard work and David's increased revenue, donated practising certificates to these pioneers of the reading programme.

In August 1991 they reunited ... The first Annual Reunion of the August 1990 Readers took place on 23 August 1991 at the Forbes Hotel Grill Room. In answer to a Summons from Messrs Needham and Colyer, thirty-four of the sixty readers came to swap stories of what they said to the Judge, what the Judge said to them, how they foiled the Prosecution, their masterful ways with consent adjournments, and the like. Food and drink were had by all, some more than others. Perhaps the night was best summed up by the following letter, from Peter McGrath (who would probably prefer to remain nameless):

26th August 1991

*Messrs. Need'em and Collar ya,
Solicitors,*

Dear Sirs,

GOODWIN AND GREENWOOD v. AUGUST 1990 BAR READERS

I appeared for the respondents at the Forbes Grill Room on 23 August 1990 before a rather full bench. So did a lot of other people. The hearing did not run smoothly. The arguments of the various parties appeared to lack direction and coherence as the hearing wore on. Judgment was delivered early on Saturday morning.

Although the costs awarded were high, given the joint and several (and continuing) liability of the respondents, I feel they escaped lightly. I would not consider you appealing in any circumstances. Please return my briefs.

Yours faithfully, (sgd) Peter McGrath

The Goodwin and Greenwood contribution to the success of the Readers' programme was acknowledged - we invited them. The success of the Readers' programme itself is apparent through the numbers who replied (responses were received from all but two of the readers) and those who eventually came (45 said they would come, but 9 were unable to do so for various reasons). The camaraderie engendered by three weeks of enforced proximity had not disappeared over the passing of a year, and the consensus was that the reunion should be an annual event. If the spirit of the Bar tended towards effervescence nearing the end of the evening (that Opal Nera Sambucca is a killer) the friendships and support forged during August 1990 should indicate to those in charge of it that the full-time Readers' Programme is, on balance, a Good Thing.

PS: To those who haven't yet paid: We know where you live.

□ Jane Needham