

General Council of the Bar

Report on the Executive Committee meeting held on 20 January 1996

by Nazeer Cassim, assistant honorary secretary, Johannesburg

THE agenda of the first meeting of the Executive in 1996 reflects the ability of the Bar to adapt and promote the well-being of the new society. The Natal Bar actively participated in the "Access to Justice" seminar held in Durban in the latter part of 1995. The Chairman of the GCB, Wallis SC gave evidence to the Hoexter Commission in November 1995 on practical considerations in addressing court structures in South Africa. A committee under the chairmanship of the Natal Bar and comprising representatives from the Pretoria, Johannesburg, Natal, Cape, Eastern Cape and Transkei bars was established to urgently review the GCB's Professional Rules of Ethics prior to consultations with the attorneys to formulate a unified Code of Ethics for advocates and attorneys appearing in the high court.

The interests of members are always paramount. Although Epstein SC is now a member of the Legal Aid Board, he actively pursues as a priority payment of fees due to members. The backlog in Johannesburg has been resolved. There

is a marked improvement in payment of arrears in Pretoria and Natal. This has inspired the Cape and Eastern Cape bars to continue pressing for payment of fees due to their members. A new system has been installed at the Legal Aid Board to facilitate prompt payments of accounts. All this does not relinquish the responsibility of the member to keep proper records and to submit his accounts timeously as well as to follow up on his payment.

The arbitration project of the Johannesburg Bar has developed into a national project: all bars are offered the facility to participate together with commerce and the professions in the Arbitration Centre, which encompasses a process to expose junior members to serve as arbitrators in issues ranging from consumer complaints to labour litigation.

The chairman undertook to attend a meeting summoned by the Minister of Justice in the latter part of January 1996 on matters affecting the pro Deo system, ad hoc appointments to the lower courts, training, and the use of private practition-

ers in criminal prosecutions.

The GCB is no longer isolated from the international spectrum. The IBA report on foreign legal consultants was forwarded to the GCB for approval. The chairman was mandated to represent the GCB at the IBA Council meeting in Madrid during June 1996. The chairman and Bertelsmann SC will also represent the GCB at the Commonwealth Law Conference in Vancouver during August 1996 and the Minister of Justice accepted the nominee of the GCB, Ms J Moodley to attend the Advanced International Programme on Human Rights in South Africa and Sweden.

Griesel SC outlined the visit by 12 members from the respective bars at the Inns of Court, London, during January 1996. The project was successful. Not only is the English Bar presently continuing the advocacy project in South Africa, but both members and pupils attending the course are overwhelmed at the content, the efficient organisation and the clear indication that the Bar is alive and kicking.



The second executive meeting of the General Council of the Bar was held in April 1996. Peter Goldsmith QC (centre), immediate past chairman of the Bar of England and Wales, attended the meeting at the invitation of the chairman of the GCB, Malcolm Wallis SC (right). On the left is Mike Kuper SC, chairman of the Johannesburg Bar council.