

Brooklynkamers en Eskom

Die onlangse kragonderbrekings in Pretoria (in een week was die krag vier midde af) het chaos in Brooklyn veroorsaak. Die Circle Chambers was gelukkig om 'n noodkragopwekker te hê, alhoewel die diesel op die vierde dag opgeraak het, maar die Brooklynkamers is erg ontwrig. Gedurende die laaste week in Mei is 'n 350KVA kragopwekker in die kelderverdieping van die Brooklynkamers geïnstalleer en die kantoorbestuurder, Hester Sapsford, berig dat dit klopdisselboom werk. Al 'probleem' is dat daar nog nie sedertdien verdere kragonderbrekings was nie!

Training

John Mullins SC reports as follows on the training for the 2008 intake:

Pupillage training at the Pretoria Bar consists essentially of four components, viz. mentoring (each pupil is allocated to one junior mentor, and groups of between five and six pupils and their mentors are allocated to a silk), a system of lectures, self-study using the extremely useful *Marnewick Manual*, and practical advocacy training.

In addition, we have for some years now run a course in the basics of the English language (both grammatical and performance-wise) aimed at those amongst our pupils (of whom there is always a fair proportion) for whom English is an obstacle, rather than an asset.

Although there is always room for improvement, and we strive every year to improve, all-in-all we can be relatively satisfied with our training system, particularly if one bears in mind that, as with all the other Bars, all training is on an entirely voluntary and unpaid basis.

As far as advanced training for junior advocates is concerned, the Pretoria and Johannesburg Bars have a cooperative relationship in which each assists the other in presenting workshops, which are in turn open to juniors from both Bars. On this basis, the Johannesburg Bar ran an appeals workshop, and the Pretoria Bar ran an expert custody workshop, both of which could more accurately be described as respectively 'Jhb/Pta and Pta/Jhb workshops.'

Waarnemende regters

Die volgende lede het gedurende die tydperk 14 April 2008 tot 20 Junie 2008 as regters waargeneem: Mac Jooste SC, Bert Bam SC, Kobus Snijmann SC, Brenton Geach SC, Jaap Cilliers SC, Piet Oosthuizen SC and Piet Ebersohn.

Gray's Inn - New practitioners training, May 2008

Johanni Barnard attended the training at Gray's Inn during May 2008 and filed the following report:

I often noticed invitations to attend training in London on the notice board at the Bar, but never took them seriously or realised what a wonderful opportunity they offered.

However, on 2 April 2008, I decided, on the spur of the moment, to apply to attend the training at Gray's Inn during May 2008 as a new practitioner. I was skeptical of my prospects and did not even have a valid passport, but realised I had nothing to lose. When I was phoned by John Mullins SC with the wonderful news, the only obstacle remaining was to obtain a passport in the short time available, something I miraculously managed.

The training was hosted by Gray's Inn at Highgate House, Northampton from 9 to 11 May 2008 and was attended by approximately 18 new practitioners and several trainer trainees. There were two civil groups and one criminal group each with two trainers, a judge and a solicitor.

I was chosen to attend the criminal law training and had to prepare skeleton arguments (we call it heads of argument) on two different cases. Unfortunately the course material from Gray's Inn was lost on its way to South Africa and had to be resent. As a result thereof, it was only received after the first skeleton arguments were already due!

The fact that my opponent in the 'mock' trials was Gary Oliver, a colleague from the Cape Bar, served as some kind of consolation. The cases we had to prepare dealt with, inter alia, provisions of the English Criminal Justice Act 2003, with which I was totally unfamiliar. Poor Gary also had to act as interpreter because I constantly used the word 'dagga' instead of cannabis, to the confusion of our co-new practitioners!

Despite my ignorance of the specific legislation, the basic requirements for good advocacy were still applicable and I learned a lot from the trainers and my fellow trainees. I was impressed by the standard of advocacy and realised that the exposure to counsel from the United Kingdom was a privilege.

We were furthermore privileged to have Courtenay Griffiths QC, an experienced defence counsel who is presently leader of the defence team of Charles Taylor, the former president of Liberia, who stands trial for human rights violations in The Hague,

and Izak Smuts SC, from Grahamstown Bar, as our trainers. I was especially impressed with the ease with which Smuts SC apprised himself of the unfamiliar legislation and different processes. He once again confirmed that a good advocate would always be good, despite the fact that he had to acquaint himself with new laws.

As part of the training we also had several ethics sessions. This was very instructive and I realised that ethical issues remained the same no matter where you practised. We were given the opportunity to recognise possible ethical problems in different scenarios and discussed different ways to tackle them. It was wonderful to learn how different people would tackle situations differently but all with the same objective.

I learned a lot during those three days and made several new friends. The opportunity to socialise with our colleagues from England and Wales during the training sessions as well as at dinner gave me insight into their problems as well as new views on ours. The fact that several QCs independently told me that in their minds the best advocate in the world was 'our' Sir Sydney Kentridge QC made me once again proud to be a South African.

I would like to voice my appreciation of a wonderful experience and I am indebted to the General Council of the Bar of SA and Gray's Inn for affording me the opportunity. I realised that constant training was of the utmost importance and intend to stay committed to advocacy training.

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