

NOTE

General: Professor Dr Johann van der Westhuizen

Born in Windhoek, SWA/Namibia in 1952; BA (cum laude) 1973, LLB (cum laude) 1975, LLD 1980, University of Pretoria; doctoral thesis deals with necessity as a ground of justification in criminal law; did research in Europe, especially West Germany in 1978 (for 1 year) and 1983 (for 9 months) as an Alexander von Humboldt fellow; participated in German-Anglo-American workshop on criminal law in Freiburg, 1984; presented several papers and guest lectures in West Germany; admitted as an advocate of the Supreme Court of SA in 1976; senior lecturer since 1976; professor and head of the Department of Legal History, Comparative Law and Legal Philosophy, University of Pretoria, since 1980; teaches Legal Philosophy and Comparative Law; author of several articles in legal journals; member of editorial committee of De Jure.

Human rights

Researched human rights as a topic in Europe in 1983; deals with human rights issues in courses Legal Philology 300 and 500; member of the executive committee of Lawyers for Human Rights, Pretoria Branch; represented Pretoria on Interim National Executive of Lawyers for Human Rights; often represents film companies and publishers before Publications Appeal Board; made representations to Parliamentary Committee concerning proposed amendments of Publications Act aimed at stricter censorship.

Van der Westhuizen headed the faculty committee organising the first general symposium on a bill of rights for SA, which took place on 1, 2 May, 1986. This symposium was very successful. It was attended by more than 200 prominent lawyers, including judges, practitioners, academicians and students. Speakers and other participants included active members of the UDF, Black Lawyers Association, Democratic Lawyers Congress, Democratic Lawyers Anti Bill of Rights Committee, PFP, CP, NP Parliamentary caucus, Presidents Council and SA Law Commission. A wide range of opinions were expressed. It was also the first human rights conference on an Afrikaans campus. (See enclosed summary in the

Attorneys' Journal, De Rebus, including footnotes).

The full proceedings and papers are going to be published, edited by professors Van der Westhuizen and Viljoen. A lively debate in the news media was sparked off by the symposium.

The faculty committee is on the point of being converted into a more permanent Centre for Human Rights Studies. Ongoing discussions with all relevant parties in connection with a bill of rights are planned and definite proposals and a draft bill of rights are being attended to. A secondary aim of this Centre will also be to bring Afrikaans students and academics into contact with Black leaders and Black political and legal thinking.

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