

become silks, or do silks become judges?
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New members' fees

Anthony Stein, Johannesburg Bar

The lot of pupil members and new members of our Bar is much on the minds of members at the moment. As a relatively new member, I must say that one feature of new life at the Bar which adds insult to financial injury is the member fee that appears on one's account from the very first month of practice. Where one has earned no income whatsoever for six months, the Bar council sees fit to place itself preferentially amongst one's circling creditors from the very outset, in full knowledge that no income will be received for another three months and seven days. Would it be too much to ask that we see our way clear to place a moratorium on new members' fees for three (or if the Bar is in generous mood, four) months from the date of commencing practice?

When one starts out, the membership fee may be a flea amongst vultures but its bite is sufficiently irritating for one to scratch into a gaping wound. The Bar council must do all that it can to prevent further and unnecessary bloodshed.

"Kaapse Kroegraad"

Willie Duminy SC, Cape Bar

I enclose a copy of a report published in *Die Burger* on 11 January 2003.

That esteemed publication advised its readers that Keerom Street Chambers was fully let to "die Kaapse Kroegraad". A spokesman for the company which recently purchased the building, was confident that "die Kroegraad" would not vacate the building in a hurry.

Membership of the Cape Bar has never been limited to the abstemious, but is this not going a bit too far?

"E" Advocates Inc

Craig Watt-Pringle SC, Johannesburg Bar

I have made use of electronic legal publications since the advent of the SA Law Reports and Statutes produced on CD ROM by Jutastat about a

decade ago. Juta and Butterworths are to be lauded for making this technology available to us, yet I have frequently been frustrated by the fact that the products and services have in material respects not properly met our requirements. Matters have improved considerably since Butterworths ditched its "books on screen" software in favour of the more accessible "Folio Views" search engine which is (in my opinion) the far more successful program used by Jutastat. Butterworths eventually adopted Folio Views but configured it in a manner which makes it less user friendly and reliable than the Jutastat version.

With increasing numbers of advocates making use of electronic publications and of e-mail and the internet generally, "e" technology has become central to the manner in which we practise. This should enable us to influence decisions regarding the products and services made available to us.

We should rectify these deficiencies by discussing our needs internally and thereafter acting as a lobby group in our dealings with the "e" industry. As a group we have considerable purchasing power. I would accordingly suggest the formation of "e" sub-committees at each constituent Bar and an umbrella committee at GCB level. The purpose of this letter is to gauge my colleagues' enthusiasm and willingness to participate in such an initiative. Please let me have your views, preferably by e-mail (craigwat@law.co.za).

Aboard the Johannesburg Bar Council – why I remained

*Khotso Ramolefe**



Now that the dust has settled, most of the people have had their say, and some quiet has been restored, or so it appears to me, perhaps I should now also have my say. And when I have, I would hope that the speculation will end and a fuller picture emerges, the other view having been placed before everyone.

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When I was nominated for election to the Johannesburg Bar Council, needless to say, I had an opportunity at that stage already either to reject or accept the nomination. I chose to accept it, and in so doing, recognised that hovering in attendance was the possibility of election. In the end I was elected, and as such, I remain.

The news of my election was broken to me over a telephone on Saturday afternoon, 26 October 2002. I was also notified, during the same telephonic conversation, of the first meeting of the newly elected Bar council scheduled to be held on Monday afternoon, 28 October 2002 (the main meeting). The purpose of the main meeting was, as we all know, to elect both the new chairman and vice-chairman.

Rumours had been doing the rounds, mid-morning on the Monday of the main meeting, that some of the elected Black members had resigned (in-between the announcement of their election on Saturday and the time of the rumours). Furthermore, it was said that the remaining Black members would also resign at the main meeting.

Some time before the main meeting, I received a telephone call from a Black colleague inviting me to a different meeting ("the special meeting") scheduled to be held shortly before the main meeting. I attended the special meeting, and for the first time got an opportunity of being informed of the reasons for the mass resignation.

As I understood them, the reasons given for the resignations were that, despite constitutional changes to the composition of the Bar council, not enough had been done for transformation, and Black members had felt that there was no point in being part of the Bar council. A declaration setting out these reasons had been prepared and was circulated at the special meeting for signature. Those who felt moved to sign it, signed. I did not.

From the special meeting we proceeded to the main meeting. There, the outgoing chairman explained the purpose of the meeting, whereafter some heated debate over the resignations ensued. I implored the gathering to realise that, whatever happened, we

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