

PROFESSOR ROSS ANDERSON

Ross Anderson, Professor of Public Law and Editor of this Journal, died on 23rd February, 1961, at the age of 43. Rarely in the history of the University can so wide a circle of colleagues and friends have been affected so deeply, and with a sense of tragedy, by the news of his illness and impending death. The tragedy was in the cutting short of a career approaching its peak, and the waste of great talent and accumulated knowledge that had not yet borne their expected fruit. So many were affected because he was not only an active man, with an exceptional range of interests and contacts, but he was a sociable man, whose wide circle of friends included not only those who worked or played with him, but also many who opposed the causes he fought for. Thus he was an active supporter of the Labour Party, but his closest friends included Liberal members of Parliament. The regard in which he had come to be held by his University colleagues is shown by the fact that he was their first choice when the Staff Association obtained a representative on the University Senate.

Harry Ross Anderson was born in Western Australia on 11th December, 1917. He graduated LL.B. with First Class Honours at the University of Western Australia in 1938. He was elected to a Rhodes Scholarship and was at Oxford from 1938 to 1940, taking a First Class in the Honour School of Jurisprudence. The war cut short his stay at Oxford, and he returned to Western Australia, where he enlisted in the Army. He was commissioned lieutenant in 1942, serving in the field artillery except for a period of eighteen months when he was seconded as Air Liaison Officer in New Guinea attached to the U.S.A.A.F. He liked to claim the distinction that his Oxford B.A. and M.A. were conferred on him while he was in action in Borneo.

After five years' service he returned to Western Australia. In 1947 he was admitted as a barrister and solicitor and practised in Perth. In 1948 he became a full-time research scholar at the University of Western Australia, and at the end of that year was appointed a Senior Lecturer in Law in the University of Queensland. In 1952 he was promoted to Chief Lecturer (the then equivalent of the present grade of Reader), and in 1959, when a Chair of Public Law was established, he was appointed to that position as from 1st January, 1960.

In the Law School he taught Constitutional Law and Law of Contract, and for a few years Public International Law as well. He made Constitutional Law his specialty, and soon came to be recognised as an authority in this field. He was one of those

invited to contribute to Essays on the Australian Constitution, published on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Commonwealth. In this field he contributed a number of substantial articles to various legal journals, and contributed the opening chapter on The Constitutional Framework in a composite work on The Government of the Australian States, published in 1960.

In latter years his interest turned particularly to Administrative Law, and while on study leave in England in 1956 he began a long term study of the topic of Judicial Control of Administrative Tribunals. This work was further advanced during another year of leave at the Australian National University in 1959; but it had not reached the stage of publication when he became ill in 1960; and with his death the work he did has gone for nothing.

He took a substantial and increasing part in the administration and general affairs of the University. To mention a few matters only, he took a major part in the planning during 1951 of a revised curriculum for the LL.B course; he was for four years a very efficient secretary of the Staff Association; for ten years he was editor of this Journal; and in his last year he was a member of the University Senate. In questions of policy he always exercised an independent judgment, came to definite conclusions, and had the courage of his convictions; and with this character, coupled with a first rate intellect, he would have played a leading part in top-level University Administration. His death is a great loss to the University in all its aspects.

But University work was far from taking all of Anderson's energies. Another major interest was politics. He was an active member of the Australian Labour Party, and for some time was secretary and at the time of his death was vice-president of the Toowong branch of that party. He was a foundation member of the Fabian Society in Queensland, a member of the Labour Lawyer's League, and of the Labour College Council. He was on the legal panel of the Australian Council for Civil Liberties, and president of the Queensland Branch of the Civil Liberties League. Any move which he considered to be a threat to civil liberty brought him into the open, whether the move came from his own party, or opposing political parties, or from any other source. It was a Queensland Labour Government measure, the Printers' and Newspapers' Bill, that drew him into the hottest controversy of his career and made him the object of a vicious attack in Parliament by a Labour Minister. The papers he left are evidence of a great deal of unpublicised activity, and show that he was often consulted by persons and bodies outside the University. He had a cultivated interest in most of the Arts, and he had been an interstate hockey player. There was not much that was outside his range.

Perhaps a better tribute to his memory could be paid by one who more intimately shared his interests and was the companion of his lighter diversions. But as the head of the University department in which he worked I can say that I could not have wished for a more willing, co-operative, and agreeable colleague. I do not recall in our twelve years' association a single occasion in which there was ill feeling, or even a brief angry word, between us; and as far as I know his relations with other members of the department were equally agreeable. Strong minded as he was, this could not have been if there had been pettiness or self-seeking in his nature; and the distress felt by his colleagues was the measure of their respect for his character. This was enhanced by the courage with which he bore his affliction, and the resolution with which he continued his work despite it.

W. N. HARRISON*

*Garrick Professor of Law and Dean of the Faculty of Law in the University of Queensland.