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About the middle of this century, the late Chief Justice Arthur Vanderbilt of New Jersey propounded the essentials of a sound judicial system, derived from centuries of experience.<sup>1</sup> One of the essentials is:

[a] corps of judges, each of them utterly independent and beholden only to the law and to the Constitution, thoroughly grounded in his knowledge of the law and of human nature including its political manifestations, experienced at the bar in either trial or appellate work and preferably in both, of such a temperament that he can hear both sides of a case before making up his mind, devoted to the law and justice, industrious, and above all, honest and believed to be honest.<sup>2</sup>

In 1953, Donald Wright began a distinguished judicial career that has reflected every single essential mentioned by Vanderbilt.

Some may disagree with his opinions, but there are few who would doubt that he is utterly independent and beholden only to the law and the Constitution. His courageous decisions in such cases as *Jones v. Superior Court*<sup>3</sup> (delineating the right to a speedy trial), *Esteybar v. Municipal Court*<sup>4</sup> (affirming the separation of powers doctrine), *Brown v. Superior Court*<sup>5</sup> (requiring the disclosure of financial contributors on ballot measures), *Brown v. Reagan*<sup>6</sup> (reapportionment), and *People v. Anderson*<sup>7</sup> (abolition of the death penalty) are confirmation of these characteristics. Further evidence may be found in articles he has written. In 1972, he wrote:

The Constitution envisions that democracy includes the right of the minority to dissent in an orderly fashion. Democracy also is the right of the minority to attempt to become the majority. And a constitutional democracy recognizes the right of the minority to be protected from arbitrariness or, in some instances, the tyranny of the majority. When forces within our system would abridge these rights, the court must intervene and protect those who have proved unable to protect themselves. In this context, judicial review of legislative acts may run counter to the will or wish of the majority, but to say that judicial review is undemocratic is to ignore funda-

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1. Vanderbilt, *The Essentials of a Sound Judicial System*, 48 Nw. U.L. REV. 1 (1953).

2. *Id.* at 3.

3. 3 Cal. 3d 734, 478 P.2d 10, 91 Cal. Rptr. 578 (1970).

4. 5 Cal. 3d 119, 485 P.2d 1140, 95 Cal. Rptr. 524 (1971).

5. 5 Cal. 3d 509, 487 P.2d 1124, 96 Cal. Rptr. 584 (1971).

6. 6 Cal. 3d 595, 492 P.2d 385, 99 Cal. Rptr. 481 (1972).

7. 6 Cal. 3d 628, 493 P.2d 880, 100 Cal. Rptr. 152 (1972).

mental rights guaranteed to all, including the members of the minority.<sup>8</sup>

His academic preparation first at Stanford, then Harvard Law School, and finally at the USC Law Center where he received his LL.M. degree, also gave him an excellent grounding in the knowledge of the law. This knowledge was amplified and tested in the course of his twenty years in private practice, during which he became a partner in the law firm of Barrick & Wright.

His knowledge of human nature was best demonstrated to me when he met each year with students in my seminar on judicial administration. One of the world's experts in this field, he had served in an outstanding way as Presiding Judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court as well as Chief Justice of the state. He appeared to delight in his meetings with students. They, in turn, found him to be absolutely inspiring as well as direct and frank in our wide-ranging discussions on such topics as court unification, selection and disciplining of judges, no-fault insurance, the jury system, economical forms of litigation, and alternatives to the formal court system. One student in his anonymous evaluation of the course wrote: "The single most satisfying experience in my legal education was the opportunity to interview Chief Justice Wright about needed improvements in the administration of justice. He didn't once beat around the bush or give evasive answers. He was so enthusiastic about what could be done. He made me want to try to do something important to improve our system. He served as a real model for us all." It seems appropriate to me that this volume of the *Hastings Constitutional Law Quarterly* is dedicated to Chief Justice Wright by students who seek to join him as servants of the law.

His experience on the bench has been extraordinary. He is the only Chief Justice to have served on all levels of our state court system: Municipal Court, Pasadena (1953-1961); Superior Court, Los Angeles County (1961-1968); Associate Justice, Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Two (1968-1970), and Chief Justice, California Supreme Court (1970-1977).

Finally, his industriousness and honesty are beyond question. His dedication to the work of the Judicial Council and his participation in numerous conferences and seminars across the nation in addition to his regular work on the court have made him a recognized leader in the field of law reform throughout the country. To me, law became to Chief Justice Wright the mission so eloquently described by Holmes:

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8. Wright, *The Role of the Judiciary: From Marbury to Anderson*, 60 CALIF. L. REV. 1262, 1265 (1972).

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Law is the business to which my life is devoted, and I should show less than devotion if I did not do what in me lies to improve it, and when I perceive what seems to me to be the ideal of its future, if I hesitated to point it out and to press toward it with all my heart.<sup>9</sup>

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9. Vanderbilt, *The Essentials of a Sound Judicial System*, 48 NW. U.L. REV. 1, 15 (1953) (quoting O. HOLMES, COLLECTED LEGAL PAPERS 194 (1920)).

