

1-1-1977

## Tribute to Chief Justice Donald R. Wright

A. Alan Post

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### Recommended Citation

A. Alan Post, *Tribute to Chief Justice Donald R. Wright*, 4 HASTINGS BUS L.J. 697 (1977).

Available at: [https://repository.uchastings.edu/hastings\\_constitutional\\_law\\_quarterly/vol4/iss4/9](https://repository.uchastings.edu/hastings_constitutional_law_quarterly/vol4/iss4/9)

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### *A. Alan Post\**

His life has been marked by distinguished performances from college days through the various steps of the judicial system to the position of Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court. Nevertheless, Donald Wright may well be remembered best not for the quality of his mind nor the wisdom of his legal opinions, superior as they may be, but as a jurist who stood up to his principles, in both court opinions and appointments, at a time when the public most needed evidence that there still were principled men holding the reins of government. The fact that he did so in the face of intense pressure to turn away from his conscience and clear duty likewise contributed significantly to the reinforcement of the concept of separation of powers, a concept fundamental to the vitality of our democratic system of government.

Lest these dramatic tests of principle and courage overshadow his professionally recognized reputation for solid improvement in the administration of the court system, let me, as one who is concerned with increased efficiency in all public activities, say a few words about that. There are serious limitations on the extent to which courts can increase their productivity, particularly in a time of greatly increased legislation and steadily growing volumes of litigation that are thrust upon the courts, a trend that hopefully can be checked by fundamental legal and judicial reforms. Nevertheless, by careful exploitation of new types of court aids, by assignment of more effective persons to the position of presiding judge, by independent review and improvement of the supporting clerical processes, by development of more scientific workload measures and standards, by scrupulous and well-managed assignment of the best qualified retired judges, and by continual examination and redesign of judicial procedures, the courts have, during the tenure of Chief Justice Donald Wright, steadily improved output per judge and output per court. To all these activities, the Chief Justice gave strong personal attention and support.

As a principled and courageous leader, a strong administrator, a jurist of open and scholarly mind, and a man of broad and humane interests who was both loved and respected by his peers, Donald Wright set a standard for the position of Chief Justice that properly earned for him the high esteem in which he is held throughout this state.

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