

On The Front Cover

A New Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia

by Hamish C. Cameron

The appointment of William Arthur Esson to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia after ten years in the judicial vineyard (at first on the valley floor and then lately on the greener appellate slopes) is well deserved and will serve us well. The qualities of patience and compassion, clear thinking and uncommon good sense that were noted in these pages at the time of his original elevation to the bench have earned him the respect of bench and bar in the performance of his judicial duties in the trial and appellate courts. He was, it is truly said, born to the task.

But now he takes on an additional and different task as Chief Justice and he does so in challenging times. In his first year in office as Chief Justice, he will preside over the greatest single change in the administration of justice in our province: the union of the County and Supreme Courts. This gives new meaning to Section 10 of the **Supreme Court Act** which proclaims, in almost biblical terms (well suited, in fact, to the stern religious upbringing of the new Chief Justice), that "The Chief Justice has general supervision of the judges". The echoes, in that legislated job description, of the unseemly wrangling in the early years of this century between Chief Justice Gordon Hunter and Mr. Justice Archer Martin will not be lost on Chief Justice Esson as he oversees the amalgamation of the courts and the organization of more than eighty independent-minded puisne judges.

Among those who recently preceded him in this office, Madame Justice Beverley McLachlin was so quickly launched from this particular pad into the legal stratosphere that we cannot characterize her time in office. But her two immediate predecessors as Chief Justice (who were each in turn vaulted to a higher place) could fairly be called *administrative activists*. Chief Justice Esson managed for twenty-one years to conceal from his partners in practice his longing for administrative and managerial responsibility, and while it is conceivable that he learned to love such things by apprenticeship as a judge, it is impossible to suppose that he will ever be an administrative activist. His supervision will be *general*, as commanded by statute, but based on the common experience of the man, it will be good-humoured, reasonable, compassionate and wise. He will not fear change but neither will he seek it out.

His two children (both lawyers practising in Vancouver) and his wife, Margaret will rejoice in his new adventure as well as in the blush that this encomium will cause him.



FUTURE PROTOCOL
S Y S T E M S I N C.

(604) 986-2090

Consulting Services For Large & Small Firms
Specializing in Legal Environments

- Time & Billing
- Communication - Software & Hardware
- ACCPAC - Installation, Training, Customization
- Trust Accounting
- Systems Interfacing - OCR (Text Scanning)
- Photocopiers - Telephones

" CALL FOR FREE INTIAL CONSULTATION !"

2nd Level - 1500 Marine Drive, North Vancouver, BC V7P 1T7