

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

Faudation

spoken by the University Orator

Professor C.O. GARDNER, B .. (Hons.) (Natal), M.A. (Oxon)

in presenting

PROFESSOR WALTER KAMBA

to the Vice-Chancellor at the Graduation Ceremony

held in Pietermaritzburg

on Saturday, 29 April 1995

Mr Chancellor,

fin " 195 S Walter WSKamba', a Zimbabwean, had completed the BA and LLB degrees at the University of Cape Town. It is interesting to consider what options might have lain before him then. He could either become a practising lawyer or he could take a further degree and become an academic. If he decided to take the latter path, he could either go in for advanced legal studies or lecture in the normal way to students of law. Then he could decide to work either in his own country or in one or more foreign countries. If he chose to be an academic, he might perhaps have the chance to move into administration -- to become, perhaps, a Dean, and even, as an outside possibility, a Vice-Chancellor. Then he could think about politics (a very real issue for a person coming from what was then Southern Rhodesia): should he remain the supposedly "pure" lawyer or should he concern himself directly with the weighty and practical illegal implications of political happenings? Then, should he focus his attention on the affairs of his own country or should he find ways of getting involved in the interesting and important affairs of Africa as a whole and indeed of the whole world?

The remarkable and outstanding fact about Walter Kamba is that he has done all of the things that I have enumerated. For most of us, life consists mainly of decisions of the "either/or" kind. We have to choose one path or the other, and our lives, however fulfilling, are a little narrowed and a little saddened by the fact that we have had to reject various possibilities. Walter Kamba has somehow managed again and again to turn "either/or" into "both/and". He seems to have taken all the available options!

Thus, after his time in Cape Town, he returned to practise for ten years in the High Court of Southern Rhodesia. But he also took time off to get a further degree, from Yale in the United States; and in 1967 he became an academic. After two years at the University of London as a Research Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Legal Studies, he moved to the University of Dundee in Scotland as a Lecturer and later a Senior Lecturer in Comparative Law and Jurisprudence. He later became Dean of the Law Faculty and also University Orator (an onerous but fairly pleasant occupation).

Meanwhile there were stirring political developments back at home, and Walter Kamba was acting as legal adviser to ZANU (PF). He played an important and significant role at the Lancaster House Conference, which was the "terms of independence" for Zimbabwe. He was elected to the National Assembly. After independence he went to the University of Zimbabwe, first as Professor of Law, then (in 1981) as Vice-Chancellor. So at the age of 50 he was the head of his country's University. Had he reached the peak of his career? Had he perhaps reached the end of the road? Could

he at last sit back and take life easy?

Far from it! He served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe for eleven years. He needed to be - and was - highly efficient, innovative and independent-minded, as the politicians were sometimes troublesome. But he also concerned himself more widely with university education in general, with the development of legal education, with cultural exchange, with social and economic development, with access to legal resources, with conservation, with the media, and with the organisation and supervision of elections. In all these areas his concerns were focused at home but spread

outwards in a series of concentric circles.

It is impossible to enumerate all his activities and all the boards and committees that he has served on, fairly often as chairman. In Zimbabwe itself he has been a leading light in all the areas that I have mentioned; the country has been infinitely enriched by his wise, varied

and generous contributions.

But his energies have overflowed his country's borders to a remarkable extent. In the world of higher education, for example, he has been on the executive boards of the Association of African Universities, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, and the International Association of Universities, of which he has been President continuously since 1990. In the field of cultural exchange, he has served as Vice-President of the ACP-EEC Foundation for Cultural Co-operation and been a member of the Board of the International Committee for the Siftly of Educational Exchange, as well as of other international committees. In the field of development, he has been an executive member of the International Development Research Centre in Canada, the Independent International Commission on Health Research for

Development., and (as Chairman) the International Review

and Evaluation Team of the UNU/World Institute of Development Economics Research. He was also a special adviser to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and is a member of the United Nations

Centre for Regional Development, based in Nagoya, Japan.

Besides all this he has been a member of the councils of the Universities of Zambia and Lesotho, the United Nations University, Tokyo, and the University for Peace, Costa Rica. For ten years he was Chairman of Zimbabwe's Electoral Supervisory Commission, and for our own election of a year ago he was one of the five international members of the Independent Electoral Commission. He is also the Patron of the Commonwealth

Legal Education Association.

Since retiring from the University of Zimbabwe in 1992 he has hardly been inactive. He has served as Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University of Manitoba, Canada, and at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. Since January of last year he has been first Professor and Founding Dean of the Law Faculty at the

University of Namibia.

What kind of person could produce such an amazing battery of wide-ranging and far-flung activities? A machine? A computerised zombie?... All those who know Professor Kamba are in agreement that he is a human, balanced, likeable, eloquent and extremely good-humoured person. One is almost tempted to think that his unimpaired fiimantitvy in the midst of such "activity ilsihiscrowning achievement. But of course it is the other way round: it is his warm humanity, with its intelligent and wide sympathies, which lies at the root of all his

contributions and activities.

We are not the first to honour Professor Kamba. He has two honorary doctorates and an honorary professorship, and an academic award from the French Government. In 1985 he was voted Zimbabwe Manager of the Year. In 1991 he was elected a Fellow of the World Academy of Art and Science. In the following year he received the Symons Award for outstanding service to Commonwealth Univerisities. This year he has been honoured by the

University of Lesotho.

With these wonderful achievements in malmel, I
have the honour, Mr Chancellor, to request you to confer
the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, on Walter

Joseph Kamba.

