

EDITORIAL

The Editors, and through them the Editorial Committee, of the Journal feel it only right to inform our subscribers and readers throughout the world of the reasons for various changes that they will observe in the appearance and content of the Journal. Before we discuss these, however, readers are entitled to know the causes of the break in publication which led to the non-appearance of the Journal during 1974.

When the Journal of African Law began publication in 1957, the Editorial Committee informed the potential readers of the first number that "There is at present no periodical largely or solely devoted to the subject of the law in Africa." The intention then was "to provide both material for the objective study and criticism of the law, and a forum for discussion of general principles".

It was a brave gesture on the part of Butterworth & Co. to sponsor and produce a new journal of this kind, dealing with laws which had not yet received the sort of academic, professional and judicial criticism and development which the lawyer in other areas of the world takes for granted. Now, of course, all is different. There are thriving law schools in many parts of Africa, and African law attracts detailed study outside Africa—in Europe, North America and even farther afield—as well as within it. There are numerous local law journals published in different African countries.

On the other hand, as numerous letters from anxious readers show, this Journal still enjoys a high regard throughout the world, and is recognized as the leading journal of international study in the field of African law. It was for this reason that the editors felt it right to make every effort to secure alternative arrangements when Messrs. Butterworth indicated in 1974 that they were no longer able to proceed with publication.

The Journal had been adopted, with the consent of the publishers, as official organ of the International African Law Association in 1962. In 1971, consequent and conditional upon the receipt by the Association of an earmarked annual grant from the International Legal Center in New York, the Journal was doubled in size, and bilingualized by the introduction on an ampler scale of French-language articles and summaries. Contrary to the assumption upon which the expansion of the Journal was based, it was indicated to the Association in 1974 that the grant-in-aid would not be renewed. Because of heavily rising costs in the periodical publishing field, Messrs. Butterworth thereupon came to the decision to cease publication, with effect from the end of December 1973.

The School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London, members of whose staff have been concerned with the production of the Journal from its beginning, has now agreed to take over from Butterworths all rights in the Journal, and forthcoming numbers of the Journal are now published under the imprint of the School. The Editors are much indebted to the Publications Committee of the School for their willingness to assume this responsibility. To preserve continuity, the Editors will be issuing Volume 18 of the Journal as the numbers for 1974.

Because of the cessation of support from the I.L.C., and cost pressures generally, certain changes have had to be made in the Journal, as readers will notice. The first relates to bilingual production. Although the Editors will continue to be prepared to receive and publish articles and other materials

in French, it is regretted that bilingual summaries, running heads and so on have had to be abandoned. Secondly, it seemed more sensible (and in these days of rising postal charges, much cheaper) to group the material for each year in two numbers instead of three as heretofore.

THE EDITORS