

# Veikko Hyvönen

\* 18.9.1929 † 9.7.2018



**NEWS HAS REACHED** us of the death of Professor Veikko O. Hyvönen on 9th July 2018. He was born in Sysmä on 18th September 1929 and matriculated from the Lahti Lyceum in 1949. He then set out to study land surveying and law side by side, gaining a doctorate in both in 1970.

For the first ten years of his working life he was employed as a land surveyor, after which, with prospects of an academic career on the horizon, Veikko Hyvönen occupied a number of positions of fixed duration in the Faculty of Law at the University of Helsinki prior to his appointment as professor of land and water law in 1970. His predecessor as full professor had been Ilmari Melander, after which Simo Zitting had acted in a temporary capacity alongside his own professorial duties. The author of this obituary began working on his qualification in land and water law as a subsidiary subject for a licentiate degree during Zitting's occupation of the post and made the acquaintance of Veikko Hyvönen in 1972 when he was in need of an assistant. Together we then worked for the creation of a new position of associate professor to meet the increasing need for expertise in environmental law, and this was achieved in 1974, the first post of its kind in Finland.

Incidentally, that post was abolished by the faculty in the early 1990s.

Hyvönen was a distinguished scholar: his prodigious writings included, in addition to his two doctoral theses, several treatises on the rights to form real estate (*Law on Land Surveying* 1982, 1988, 1991) and on planning and building rights (*Law on Land Use Planning and Building* 1974, 1988). These were partly historical documents and partly legal handbooks. He became a member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 1975.

The politically charged discussion that raged in the late 1970s concerning whether the planned legislation allowing the compulsory purchase of real estate could be approved in the manner of an ordinary law or whether the protection for property ownership granted by the constitution meant that it required a longer process in order to become law led Hyvönen to adopt a rigid stance in favour of the protection of personal property, as may be seen in his somewhat polemical book *Maapaketti* ("The Land Package"). The same constitutionalism was also reflected to some extent in his teaching and supervision of research, although he would always select the path that offered his students the best

support and encouragement in such situations. Eventually he came to gather a “school” of jurisprudence around him in his department’s Vuorikatu premises. Hyvönen also issued a large number of statements of expert opinions, often on extremely difficult matters such as the land ownership rights of the Sámi or the legal status of bodies of water in the north. He eventually retired in 1995.

The Faculty of Law altered the designation of his professorship to “environmental law” in connection with a revision of the law degree requirements the late 1970s, but the main area of responsibility was still the vast field of land and water law, so that the change in name did not affect the purposes of the discipline or its implementation to any appreciable extent.

Hyvönen evidently had a great respect for the natural environment and attached due importance to modern environmental rights. Nevertheless, since at that time nothing was said in the constitution about environmental rights, efforts were made by many instances to limit the effects and boundaries of environmental reforms (such as the regulations governing the extraction of sand and gravel) by appealing to mechanisms built into the legislation for the protection of personal property, in practise by making nature conservation procedures conditional upon the payment of government compensation in accordance with the compulsory purchase act. Later, this stage in the discussion tended in many respects to end in environmental policy compromises.

*Obituary by Erkki J. Hollo*