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William Devin

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Should the Bar Advertise?

By WILLIAM DEVIN

*Vice-Chairman, Public Relations Committee,
State Bar Association*

Did you see this?

“Naming an Executor”

“* * * Administration of an estate is involved, technical and laborious, and the executor has many duties demanding the exercise of sound business judgment; knowledge of the federal, state and local taxes; understanding of legal implications; unquestioned integrity; skill in negotiation; and efficiency in accounting. How these duties are performed is of utmost importance to the beneficiaries. Few individuals are qualified for such a complex service, and the business or professional man can rarely spare the necessary time from his own affairs.

“* * * Nomination of this institution as executor or co-executor assures the maker of a will that his wishes, will be carried out by a fiduciary of strength, permanence, and wide experience.”

The above article recently appeared in a pamphlet published and circulated by a Seattle bank.

This is one example of what is being done by a business institution along the line of an educational program to inform and sell to the public its services. The same thing is being done in practically every line of endeavor except the legal profession. What is the effect of this upon the lawyer?

In the first place, it is diverting into other channels business which rightfully belongs to the lawyer, and at the same time, gradually placing in the hands of laymen, the duties and prerogatives which have heretofore been performed solely by the lawyer.

In the second place, it is, through a process of nonfeasance, placing the lawyer in the category of the “forgotten man.” The old adage of “Out of sight, out of mind” is applicable, and this in turn encourages the public to engage in the practice of discrediting and blaming the legal profession for all, or nearly all, of the ills of society, all because we will not as a profession stand up and fight back.

The day has arrived when the legal profession, if it is to retain its rightful place in society, and preserve its very life, must inform and educate the public concerning the truth of its cause. Public opinion today is being molded by the crime headlines and comic strips of the daily press, and by the radio programs which come into the homes of the nation, no one of which truthfully depicts the services or duties of 98 per cent. of our profession. We are judged as a whole by the acts of a very small minority, and what do we do about it? As a profession, we do nothing. We seem to assume that we have been granted some divine right to command the confidence and respect of the public without divulging to it the reason.

Every lawyer knows of the honor of his profession and of the amount of real justice and equity that is meted out through his efforts, but every layman does not know it, and there is no occult power that is going to inform him, but we do know that there is plenty of propaganda flooding the nation to make the public believe that the lawyer is a selfish, superannuated creature whose period of usefulness is past, and that he has no place in the new order of things.

It is the duty of your Public Relations Committee to inform the public of the truth regarding the profession, and if the criticism directed against us is well taken, it is mandatory upon us of the Bar, to correct it.

With this end in view, the Public Relations Committee of the First District is desirous of obtaining an expression from the entire State Bar upon its opinion regarding this vital matter, and to know whether or not the members of the Washington State Bar Association are in favor of, or opposed, to a radio publicity campaign conducted by the Bar Association to present to the people of the state, the vital, human, important services performed by the lawyers.

In this program an effort would be made to bring to the people through a dramatized presentation, some of the real life problems which are found in the files of every law office, and to show to the public what 98 per cent. of the profession does to warrant its respect and confidence, and to thereby offset the publicized acts of 2 per cent. of the profession, which is now the standard by which we are judged.

To do this will involve an expenditure of money which must come from the membership of the Association. The amount, of course, is dependent upon the extent of the program, and would of necessity, be determined at a later date, but the principle remains the same, and it is your expression upon the matter of principle with which this Committee is primarily concerned.

Will you, therefore, kindly fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return it to the office of the State Bar Association at 655 Dexter Horton Building, Seattle?

Do you favor the Washington State Bar Association sponsoring a radio program for the purpose of creating a better relationship between the public and the bar?

YES

NO

Our Younger Lawyer Legislators

It is encouraging to observe that the younger members of our Bar are taking an active participation (as distinguished from a mere interest) in the affairs of our State Government.

The membership of the recent State Legislature included the following younger attorneys:

State Senator C. H. Todd.

Edward J. Reilly, Speaker.

State Representatives Howard Doherty, Edward E. Henry, Lyle D. Keith, Donald B. Miller and John N. Sylvester.

Of these House members only two, namely, Keith and Reilly, had had previous legislative experience.

Senator Todd took the Bar examination in the midst of the legislative session.

In mentioning these younger members and their services, we do not mean to overlook or even disparage the services of the older lawyers who were members of the same Legislature. The point we are now making is that it is a particularly healthy sign to see lawyers taking such an early interest in the affairs of government.

We believe that without exception every lawyer in the Legislature extended every courtesy to our committees and gave very thoughtful consideration to every legislative measure in which the Bar Association and its committees were interested.

The Board of Governors and its Legislative Committee particularly wish to thank Legislators Henry and Sylvester for their activity in furthering and protecting the interests of the Bar.