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Herald Times

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Rehnquist frayed feather in IU Law School's cap?

When the present Indiana University School of Law building was dedicated in 1956, the guest speaker for the occasion was the chief justice of the United States, Earl Warren.

When ceremonies are conducted to commemorate the addition of a new library at the law school Friday, the speaker will be William H. Rehnquist, the associate Supreme Court justice who likely will be named chief justice.

To have had two United States chief justices speak at the school is highly prestigious, any law student or faculty member will tell you.

But not everybody at the law school is jumping up and down for joy. And the problem is not just the ideological difference between the late chief justice Warren and the latest chief justice Rehnquist — though the gap between the two,



Mike Leonard

H-T columnist

and the implications for the future of American law, is tremendous.

"We realize it is a distinct honor to have a Supreme Court justice, and in particular, the person who it appears will be the chief justice," law student Sharon Derrick said Wednesday. "In looking at the man himself, however, it diminishes the honor significantly."

Derrick is among a number of law students expressing disappointment and disillusionment about nearly everything connected with

see **Leonard, Back page**

Brouhaha builds over Rehnquist visit

Leonard, from page A1

Rehnquist's Friday visit. Derrick and fellow third-year students David A. Reidy Jr. and Gerald A. Role all say it appears to them that law students have been purposely kept in the background regarding Rehnquist's visit, out of a fear among Rehnquist enthusiasts that some sort of protest might be organized against the highest judicial officer in the land.

"There's an atmosphere at the law school which is, don't anybody speak up, don't anybody make anything out of this other than to acknowledge that ol' Uncle Bill is coming to tea," Reidy said. He complained that department heads and other "important" people received invitations last spring to hear Rehnquist speak, while law students were not invited until this week.

Acting law school dean Bryant Garth, who was not in his current position when Rehnquist was invited, acknowledges, "William Rehnquist is a controversial man, no doubt about it." But he insists that neither he nor anybody else at the law school did anything purposely to limit student awareness

or involvement with Friday's ceremonies. He adds that, though it was spring when Rehnquist tentatively agreed to speak at IU, it was less than two weeks ago that the Supreme Court justice confirmed he still would be able to attend.

Garth also noted, "I think it's safe to say we have some faculty members who would rather have had a different speaker, too."

Derrick, Reidy and Role have done their homework on Rehnquist. When asked why they oppose his invitation to speak at IU, they cite specific incidents which they say call into question the man's candor and truthfulness, as well as his stances on the issues of minority rights, women's rights, the rights of the accused and his attitudes about the Fourth and Fifth amendments to the Constitution.

Role points out that Rehnquist was the Nixon administration's "point man" for defending the administration's domestic surveillance ("spying") program in the early '70s. He also questions Rehnquist's sense of legal ethics regarding a case Rehnquist commented on while in Nixon's Justice Department, and then failed to disqualify himself on while a Supreme Court justice.

Derrick said, "There's no question that he has a brilliant analytical mind, but even in a brilliant analysis, one starts with one's own beliefs. And I don't think the beliefs of Justice Rehnquist are appropriate for the position he's about to obtain."

The question was posed to Derrick, Reidy and Role that maybe they are out of step with the times, and that they might be perceived as just three people who have wound up on the losing side of an ideological issue. "It would be one thing if we saw some sort of awareness in the law school — a real new guard," said Reidy, who won the law school's Moot Court competition last spring and also was selected to speak at the dedication program Friday.

"All I see is people out to buy a law degree; people who want a good job, a BMW, and safety: from a black man living next door to them, or whatever. If there were a real conservative movement, fine. But all I see happening is a dropping out. (Law students) who don't really care about anything other than knowing that having Rehnquist here adds to the prestige of the school, which could add value to their degree when they graduate."