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PROBLEMS OF PRACTICE IN LARGE CITIES

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One of the most important responsibilities of the legal profession generally which particularly affects law firms in larger cities is that of aiding members who have gone into the armed forces in reentering the profession after what has already proved to be an extended absence, the full duration of which no one at this time knows. Few of such firms have remained intact, and the situation created by military demands has been met in various ways. Some have found it possible to go forward with reduced manpower. Others have been able to meet the problem by temporary expedients. Assuming a revival of many phases of the practice which have been relatively inactive during the emergency period, the problem of reabsorption in such instances is comparatively easy.

Some organizations have been compelled to make replacements of a more permanent character, and consequently have a somewhat different problem.

Several factors suggest reasons for the belief that the opportunity of those who return should be greater than in the past. The normal annual contribution of the law schools to the profession has already been set back to an extent that cannot at this time be estimated. The law school today which has 10% of its normal enrollment is the exception. Many of the smaller schools have either actually or practically ceased to function at all. This condition is now in its third year and on the most optimistic predictions of today may be anticipated for at least two to three years more. Even assuming a large increase over prewar enrollment after the cessation of hostilities, it is obvious that it will take years to make up the lost ground. Unfortunately, also, not all will return. The necessary result is that for a substantial period of time there will be fewer lawyers than in the past.

While it is not possible to forecast with any semblance of accuracy either the volume or character of postwar law business, it seems reasonable to assume that certain phases of the practice which have been relatively dormant will revive and that phases which have remained active will con-

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tinue to be so. It is difficult to conceive of a situation over the next few years where tax problems and the various phases of labor relations will occupy a less important place than at present. General litigation of all kinds and matters connected with the financing of new enterprises and expansions of existing enterprises are certain to develop from the reconversion to production for civilian needs. Presumably receiverships and reorganizations will ultimately occur although it is to be hoped that the volume of these matters which followed the years leading up to 1929 will not be duplicated. The increasing complexity of civilization and the resulting closeness of the tie between industry and the profession are not likely to diminish in the immediate future.

These considerations augur well for the younger lawyer able to return at last to the practice, whether to reenter an organization of which he has been a part, to enter a new organization, or to resume an individual practice. The same considerations should make the return to law school by the student who has been forced to interrupt his course, and the study of law by those in a position to commence upon their discharge from the armed forces, more attractive than before the war.

No doubt government will continue to absorb a substantial number of younger lawyers, but there is good reason to believe that private practice will be able to absorb at least as many as in the past. In this process the law firms in larger cities will inevitably play an important part.