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*National Bar Program*

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# AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION NOTES

By WILL SHAFFROTH

Director of the National Bar Program

In fulfillment of the mandate of the Los Angeles convention, a specific proposal for a representative and improved organization of the legal profession in the United States has been drafted by a meeting of the Coordination Committees of the Association in Chicago during the last days of October, and will be offered to the bar of the country for consideration, within a short time.

The basic idea of the draft will be to place the control of the national organization of the bar, and the power to determine its policies, in the hands of a substantial majority of American lawyers, acting through a representative House of Delegates. Some of the members of the House of Delegates will be chosen directly by state and local bar associations; others will be elected by mail ballot of the members of the American Bar Association in each state; others will be elected by the Association members attending the convention; and still a fourth group will serve by virtue of their being section chairmen, representatives of affiliated national organizations, etc.

The proposal will be offered in the form of a draft of a Constitution and By-Laws of the Association. The draft will be given wide circulation within a fortnight and copies will be available upon request to the American Bar Association headquarters. Its plan is of vital importance to every member of the legal profession, and should be closely studied, to the end that any suggestions which may be made for its alteration or improvement will be in the hands of the Coordination

Committees when they meet early in January to put the draft in form for submission to the General Council of the Association and its Executive Committee. It is expected that, at this January meeting, the plan will be further improved and will then be in such form that it may be submitted to the bar as the consensus of opinion of those who have given the matter the most careful study.

The present Coordination Committee of the Association was created five years ago for the purpose of bringing state, local and national bar associations in closer cooperation. Through the National Bar Program adopted in 1933, considerable progress towards concerted thinking and action has been made. But so promising a movement could never be content with a unity only in terms of thinking and objectives. The National Bar Program has served to bring about some accord in many instances, and the situation now is better prepared for some type of representative inter-relationship between associations, than was the case before that program was instituted. There can be no disposition, however, to abandon the American Bar Association's leadership in raising the standards of legal education, improving the enforcement of professional ethics and in the other fields which the National Bar Program covers.

The last annual meeting of the Association at Los Angeles effectively demonstrated that there is an active demand among lawyers for a representative national organization of the profession. To meet this demand and to answer the insistent appeal which has been voiced by national bar leaders for the last twenty years, the present plans have been drafted for consideration. Through a representative House of Delegates, all state bar associations and the larger local bar associations will have voice and vote. The plan is designed, as far as possible, to give actual representation in the councils of the American Bar Association to a substantial majority of the practicing lawyers of this country. The right to express the views and pledge the faith and good name of the American Bar Association will rest in a body actually representative not only of the American Bar Association membership, but also of the membership of the state bar associations and of the larger locals, together constituting a substantial majority of the lawyers. The objectives of the task of draftsmanship have been expressed by President Ransom in these words:

"The adoption of the plan under consideration will mark a great forward step in the history of the legal profession, the realization of the earnest hopes and high ideals of many of its members during several decades. It will insure a National Bar organization genuinely reflecting the ascertained views and wishes of a substantial majority of American lawyers, and therefore an organization effective in furthering the proper interests of the profession and the public. Such an improved and truly representative organization will undoubtedly be far more effective in behalf of the enforcement of high standards of professional ethics and the faithful observance of the traditions

of the profession as to conduct in relation to clients and the public. In the improvement of the criminal law and its vigorous administration, and in every way in which an organized and vitalized profession can serve the welfare of the public as well as its own members, the proposed structure of the improved organization will be in the public interest. The establishment of a truly representative control of the American Bar Association by its membership will be an event of public importance and worthy of the high duty owed by the lawyer to the Nation as well as to his State and its Courts."

No attempt is made herein to outline the specific provisions of the draft which will be offered. The plan will speak for itself and be judged on its merits. The important thing is for the bar to realize that the mandate voted and the pledges given in Los Angeles are now to be fulfilled, in that a definite plan has been drafted according to the best judgment of everyone concerned, and will soon be offered to the lawyers for consideration. If the lawyers wish such a plan adopted, it will be for them to make their wishes known. If they do not wish such a plan, they need only to say so. It is therefore important for each lawyer to give this matter his thoughtful consideration, to obtain a copy of the draft, and to make promptly such suggestions as he feels may be helpful in reaching objectives which are very much in the public interest.

Note. The complete text of the "Proposed Revision of the Constitution and By-Laws of the American Bar Association" was distributed after the copy for this Journal had been completed. It will no doubt be discussed at the Mid-winter Meeting of the Indiana State Bar Association.—Editor.

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