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The State Bar Association and the Young Lawyer

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B. THE STATE BAR ASSOCIATION AND THE YOUNG LAWYER

R. ALLEN STEVENS*

You have heard my young friend from Terre Haute speak about "The Young Lawyer and the State Bar Association." I am going to turn that around and speak on "The Bar Association and the Young Lawyer." I shall try to give you a picture of what we are doing today in Illinois along this line.

The first question is: Why do we want to consider the young lawyer at all? My young friend said that the bar is overcrowded today. I dissent from that. In Illinois, they said the bar was overcrowded when Lincoln was practicing. Last year, in Illinois, the number of practicing lawyers increased seven per cent. The *Chicago Legal Record* carried a statement in January that during 1931, there was an increase in mortgage foreclosures of 539 per cent over the average sixty-five years prior to that time.

Business has developed. Thirty years ago, I came to a community where there was a justice of the peace, a circuit, an appellate, and a supreme court. A hundred miles away, there was a federal court; once in a while, we got to that. Today, the young man coming to the bar must be familiar with the practice of about forty different forums, counting the commissions. There is far greater opportunity for the young fellows coming to the bar than ever before.

As far as the Bar Association is concerned, there is a great advantage in catching young lawyers. We have no junior bar in Illinois at the present time, but we begin on the boys in the pre-legal period of their education. We have a vigorous legal education committee, headed by Paul O'Donnel of Chicago. We send a letter to the superintendent of every high school and preparatory school in Illinois and ask them for a list of their students who intend to study law. From those lists, we write a letter to every boy and girl, offering to help them in planning their studies, to inform them concerning law as a vocation, and

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to assign a practicing attorney to each of them to give them individual counsel on their problems.

The result is that we get replies from these young people. The first thing is to find out whether they want to study law, and whether they have any aptitude for it. This is no easy problem to decide. I usually suggest to them that they take the first Stoddard Legal Aptitude Test. Frequently, they come back and tell me they have decided that they are not the type to be lawyers. These tests consist of the statement of facts, an examination of about sixteen questions on logic which a lawyer should be able to answer, and then about sixteen questions on the statement of facts, to determine whether the candidate can remember the facts which any lawyer should remember.

When the student enters college, we advise what he should take in pre-legal education. Some say a course in economics; others say a course in mathematics. We realize that individuals differ; we are reminded that Walter Wheeler Cook is also a physicist, that Roscoe Pound is also a botanist, and that Dean Wigmore is also a musician.

The consensus of opinion is this: that as far as the young lawyer's preparation for the law is concerned, his pre-legal education should be in some line in which he can be a specialist. We advise that he should choose some subject in which he is particularly interested, and concentrate on it, so that when he enters law school, he will come with a mind trained for the most intensive study.

As soon as he is admitted to law school, he can join the Bar Association as a junior member for the annual charge of one dollar. This entitles him to appear at any local bar association in the state, and to attend any of their meetings. This makes the law freshman feel that he belongs to a profession, and encourages him to mix with that crowd where the leaders of the profession are discussing things of interest. This type of membership entitles him to all our publications, the *Illinois Bar Association Journal* gossip sheet, and the *Illinois Law Journal*.

By reason of the fact that we have the junior membership, we have two schools now that have law clubs where every member of the law clubs is a junior member of the Bar Association. At these law clubs, the President and Secretary of the Bar Association speak every year. The boys are immensely inter-

ested in these talks. We likewise provide leading members of the bar to talk to these students.

We are also doing a very practical thing for these young fellows. Three or four years ago we initiated the plan of placing these boys in law offices during their summer vacations. We appealed to the lawyers, and during the first year twenty-six were received. The second year we placed seventy-eight, and this summer we placed one hundred twenty-seven. They are paid nothing except the experience and the contact with leaders of the bar. Many of them have told me that this enabled them for the first time to see where their lessons at school fit into the practice of law.

After a boy gets through law school, and has passed his bar examinations, he comes up for admission before the Supreme Court. We have five terms, and on the first day of oral argument, the first motion that is made is one that these young men are ready for admission to the bar.

A week prior to that admission ceremony, the State Bar Association sends all the young men a letter, telling them to appear before the court the following Thursday morning at nine o'clock, and to meet in the clerk's office fifteen minutes before that time. In that letter is a little slip instructing them in the ordinary rules of courtesy of the court room. The result is that they know what to do when they enter the court room. On their first day they know more about the customs of practice before the Supreme Court than do many lawyers who have been there fifteen years.

A formal motion is made by a distinguished member of the Illinois Bar, which is replied to by a member of the Supreme Court. The justices of the court vie as to which of them can deliver the best welcoming address to the young members of the Bar.

After their admission, the young lawyers are urged to remain to listen to oral argument by members of the Supreme Court. At noon, they are entertained at a luncheon by the Illinois State Bar Association. As a result, over a number of years, an average of ten per cent of the young lawyers join the Association the day they are admitted to practice law.

At that luncheon, the President of the Illinois State Bar Association presides. Some leader of the bar in Illinois addresses the newcomers. Members of the Supreme Court sit at the various tables with the newly admitted men. The young

man goes out feeling that upon his shoulders has fallen the mantle of authority of the Supreme Court of Illinois. The fact that he is an officer of that court is impressed upon him the very day he comes into the bar of our state.

However, we do not abandon the young man as soon as he is admitted. We offer to help place him. If he takes advantage of our offer, we collect all the available information about him. When an older lawyer writes us, we can give him fifty or more young fellows, a Republican or Democrat; graduated from college with such and such a record, and all the other details. If the older lawyer indicates that he wants the young man, we send his name. We do not send the name until the older lawyer indicates that he wants this particular young man. Then they make their own arrangements.

One of our greatest accomplishments has been to divert young lawyers from Chicago. Our bar is not overcrowded, but the distribution has been poor. The average young man can start practicing at a greater advantage today in the average county seat town, than he can in Chicago. In the smaller town, he has a larger field. If he has cases elsewhere, he can go easily by automobile or even by airplane. No matter how wise he is, the young man needs experience. The best way to get it is in the small town where he can get all kinds of law practice. If he goes into Chicago, he must compete with the group. Only by outliving his competitors can he succeed.

This does not mean that he must remain in the small town. Today, when Chicago firms need a new man, they write and ask me to recommend some trial lawyer with ten or fifteen years experience in a small town. The reason for this is that they want men who know how to try cases, as well as look up authority.

The biggest thing, however, for the young lawyer, as he starts in the practice of law, is our Springfield office. We operate an office in which we keep a representative of the members of the Illinois State Bar Association in Springfield. Any member of the Illinois State Bar Association who has any kind of question in Springfield can call over long distance and get an answer in a few minutes. Young lawyers call and tell us that they have sent a record to the Supreme Court with no assignment of error attached. We tell them to send it to us and we shall get it for them. Others send down records without abstracting them at all. We send a girl over and straighten

it out. We introduce young lawyers to the heads of state departments, with whom they need to transact business or get information. As a result, the young lawyer values his membership in the State Bar Association. It means something to him.

If the young lawyer has any problem, he can come to us. Every few days we get some question of ethics. If the information desired is not in the office, we call anybody, even the members of the Supreme Court, who can tell us. We want these young men to feel that the Illinois State Bar Association is his organization, is the organization which is standing beside him, not only in his professional life, but also in those little personal matters which may be so difficult to him.

I might suggest, in closing, one last thing which might be applicable in Indiana. For a number of years in Illinois, we have had a question whether our rule making power was in the Supreme Court or in the Legislature. There seems to be no way to get that before the Supreme Court. Last year, Chief Justice Hurd suggested in the state conference that we arrange a series of conferences between the officers of the Illinois State Bar Association and members of the Supreme Court. Now, on the first day of oral argument, or five times a year, the members of the Supreme Court, the officers of the State Bar Association, and the Board of Governors of the Chicago Bar Association which represents 73% of the lawyers of Illinois, gather around the table in the Supreme Court room, and discuss matters of interest to the bar of the state of Illinois.

At the present time, we are working on the problem of disbarment and grievances. At the next term, we have the discussion of the rule making power. Eventually, I feel that the Supreme Court will take the power that it should have, the governing and direction of the officers of its court, the members of the bar of Illinois. When we do, then we shall have taken the young lawyer almost from the cradle, carry him through until he is an officer of the court and help him in his professional life. We have a pension fund of over twenty thousand dollars, and during this summer, three lawyers are getting monthly stipends from the State Bar Association to tide them over the financial difficulties which have come upon them. Thus, we hope to carry the young lawyer all through his life. And, after he has passed on, we shall still continue in the Illinois State Bar Association to write his obituary and publish his picture in the annual report.

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* Mr. Harding was chosen to replace Mr. Franklin G. Davidson of Crawfordsville who died September 27, 1932.