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## Legal Aid and the Community

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time and opportunity for student guidance on the person-to-person level. Relationships are close, every student is heard from in practically every class, and no one is a mere name or number on the list. Seminars as such are not held, but, under the circumstances, are probably unnecessary.

I am no expert on law school curricula but the list of courses, and their content, seemed well adapted to the school's primary function of producing practitioners for the Wyoming bar. There is noted an absence of the "Social Science" material which has found its way into many of the larger law schools—whether that be good or bad this deponent saith not. The subjects that Wyoming lawyers need to counsel Wyoming clients and appear in Wyoming courts, are all on hand, and I suppose that whatever else the fledgeling needs is available elsewhere on the campus. The students themselves are a brisk, healthy-looking lot, full of the eagerness and curiosity that marks law students everywhere. They are lucky young men and women, learning their trade on a lovely campus in a magnificent state, whose state government is not stingy with its University.

Southeastern Wyoming and its law school, are a little off the track for Eastern visitors, but the splendid scenery and the expansive hospitality of the people, make it a very pleasant place for a sojourn. Eastern lawyers, judges and law teachers will find much of interest in a study of the way law is taught and practised in the West, and the Westerners show a great curiosity about our methods. I found my visit instructive and rewarding, and I am grateful to the University officials who made it possible.

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## LEGAL AID AND THE COMMUNITY

ORISON S. MARDEN\*

In a previous article the effects of Legal Aid on the lawyers of a community were reported, based on results in forty cities throughout the United States which maintain Legal Aid Societies.

What of the experience of these Legal Aid cities as to the effects of organized Legal Aid on the community as a whole? Again we find a great preponderance of favorable reactions.

There is, of course, the fundamental fact that Legal Aid does assure equality before the law, and proves that such equality exists to all who are interested. This fact alone is a genuine source of satisfaction and pride to the citizens of any city, lawyers and non-lawyers alike.

More than this, it protects a community from the kind of situation in which subversive ideas can flourish, for it is well understood that anti-democratic forces take advantage of any cause for resentment and magnify it for their purposes. The very existence of a Legal Aid organization removes a potentially serious argument from this element.

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\*Chairman, Standing Committee on Legal Aid Work, American Bar Association.

Another benefit that Legal Aid brings to a city comes from the fact that the legal profession, through Legal Aid, joins the family of welfare agencies that already exists, and gives to these worthy organizations the advantage of legal counsel in connection with the rights of their clients and the means by which these rights can be protected and enforced. This is not only a basic consideration for promoting good citizenship, it also helps effectively to bring legal experience to bear upon social needs for remedial and preventive legislation. This is so because Legal Aid lawyers and social agencies serve a mutual clientele.

Along these lines, the Legal Aid Society takes over problems from the other agencies that rightly belong in the hands of a lawyer. In this way Legal Aid relieves the load from other agencies, permitting them to devote more time to the social case-work functions they are best fitted for.

Difficult as it is to measure in dollars and cents, there is a definite plus value to the economy of a city in the service rendered by Legal Aid. Although individual cases involve so little money they are unattractive to lawyers, collections and savings for clients in the aggregate frequently exceed the cost of operating the office, sometimes many times over. Obviously this kind of service keeps an undetermined number of people from the public relief rolls, or from such material assistance as they would otherwise require.

On the non-financial side of the picture, it is well known that Legal Aid organizations keep families together as units, preventing the separation of children from the home unit and frequently making parents see that divorce is not the answer, or if it is, permitting new marriages which keep families together.

The gradual training of lower income groups to consult a lawyer before taking an action rather than after they are in trouble is an economic benefit to the community at large. Every Legal Aid organization is constantly educating people to this basic fact.

Legal Aid helps people understand the law, and with understanding comes respect. That, too, is a major contribution of organized Legal Aid in the long-run development of a community.

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In concluding this brief review of some of the beneficial results to be expected in establishing Legal Aid in a community, may I repeat in outline form the benefits to both the legal profession and the general public:

A community directed law office, offering complete legal service in civil cases to all persons unable through lack of means to engage a private attorney, thereby increasing respect for the law.

A resource which often reduces and sometimes prevents altogether the need of granting material relief, for example in such cases as the collecting of wages or alimony, or in the defense of unjust claims.

A useful tool in social case work, especially in many types of marital problems and the custody or guardianship of children.

An understanding legal member to complete the family of health and welfare agencies which protect the community's social well being.

The education of a sizeable segment of the community on the value and importance of a lawyer's services.

Contact between lawyers and community leaders in such varied fields as the Bench, politics, civic affairs, welfare, church, and business.

A sound and warm relationship between the legal profession and the general public, the finest kind of public relations for members of the Bar.

A training ground for younger members of the legal profession.

A constructive answer to those who, on the one hand argue sincerely for socialization of the legal profession, and on the other hand, those who stand to gain from dissension in our democracy.

As you undoubtedly know, the American Bar Association is actively interested in establishing Legal Aid Societies in cities where they are needed. In most instances, it is not difficult for an active bar association committee, under good leadership, to arrange for the kind of Legal Aid service which is appropriate for a particular community. The Standing Committee on Legal Aid would be delighted to receive inquiries or comments from lawyers interested in this program. From our end we can only help "pass the ammunition." It is up to individual lawyers and bar associations on the firing line to win the fight for equal justice to all in their communities. Speaking for the American Bar Association on this matter, I earnestly request your participation.

Editors Note: This is the second article prepared for us by the Standing Committee on Legal Aid Work of the American Bar Association. The Committee may be addressed in care of Arthur E. Schoepfer, Executive Director, 16A Ashburton Place, Boston 8, Massachusetts, or Orison S. Marden, Chairman, 14 Wall Street, New York 5, N. Y.







TOMOYUKI YAMASHITA - sketched at  
High Commissioners Residence Court House  
MANILA, P.I. 18 November, 1945

GEORGE F. GUY  
Major, Cavalry.