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PARKDALE: A DAY IN THE LIFE®

BY RICHARD STEINECKE

Page 6—OBITER DICTA—Monday, October 20, 1980

*Woke up, fell out of bed
Dragged a comb across my head
Found my way downstairs and drank a cup
And looking up I noticed I was late*

Arrived at the office. Checked for mail (=work). Only two more notices for court dates. Went to Bill's (community legal worker) office. Wants a script for Law Talk (cable tv show produced by us) in two weeks. Do not stare at his earring. Impossible. Have you seen my caseload? How about some time next summer? Jackie (community legal worker) asks if I will be at the demonstration (single parents lobbying for more Mothers' Allowance) tomorrow. Wants to check off my name. I am safe; she thinks I am Paul. No, actually it will be fun. Maire (yet another community legal worker) asks what I am bringing to the medical-legal party next week. Cheese? Paged on the intercom. Where can I take my call? Line 62. Client. Calling from the Clark Institute. Involuntary confinement. Shit.

Advised her yesterday that they do not do that anymore. *Hedley Byrne and Co.* here I come. Hang on, I will be there in two hours. What act is this under? Run up to Glen's (supervising lawyer) office. Take a number. Run to Marion (articling student). *Mental Health Act.* Need two doctors' signatures. Must be a danger to self or others. Client is definitely nuts, but dangerous? Assaulted by Pearl (secretary). Changed tenses in mid-sentence in my Cleland letter. Apologized. Promise not to do it again. A lie. Accosted by Ann. Do I want an emergency? Someone is being deported tomorrow. No thanks, already have one. Call doctor who committed client. Need a form 7 Consent before he can talk. Glen, help! You do not know what to do either? Phone rings. Interruption. Visit client, get consent signed. Patti (fellow student) bursts in. Interruption. She's on intake. Has a new client who

wants to put a lien on downtown carwash. Do we do those? Then deliver consent to doctor's office. Phone rings. Interruption. Then find out from doctor what's going on when he comes back to office tomorrow.

Afternoon. Got that done. Client Services Committee meeting. Decided to issue two more office memos for people to ignore. Run upstairs. Work on files. Draft a claim. Do not stand a chance on this one; it is a loser. Submit to Mike (articling student) for approval. Rejected. Sloppy work. "Draft as if going to the Supreme Court of Canada" on it. Give me a break. It is based on a claim we have been sued on drafted by a prestigious downtown firm. It is only for Small Claims Court. Or should I look at the second draft as a "educational experience"? Client visits. In tears. When will her neice be allowed into Canada? In a strange country. Running out of money. Probably never. We are working on the appeal. We are considering an approach to the matter. If I could only postpone final rejection until after the summer student takes over the file. Go over to the Parkdale Tavern. Trade Reuben Hasson stories with Adrian (fellow student). Trade Harry Glasbeek stories with Mitch (fellow student). Seminar. Adrian is smiling too much. He should have had supper before going over to the tavern. Ethical (yawn) responsibilities to clients of doubtful mental competence. What if? It is over. One last phone call. Go home. Eat supper. It is early today: 10:30. Go to bed.

*A crowd of people stood and stared
They'd seen his face before
Nobody was really sure
If he was from the House of Lords*

Parkdale was one of the most intense, educational, and interesting programs I have ever been involved in. That puts it quite a piece ahead of law school. Unless one makes enormous sacrifices of one's teamwork, a comparable experience is not available at CLASP. Also, the vast majority of articling jobs would not be of as much value especially in such areas as community orientation and office involvement.