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DEAN'S MESSAGE



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Last July, I had occasion to attend a meeting of the board of directors of the Law Alumni Association, just two weeks after assuming the position of dean. That meeting served as a reminder of the loyalty of the alumni to the Law School and their sincere interest in its future and continued well-being. This message is being written a few days after that meeting. I can reassure you, as I did the directors, that all's well at the Law School.

The year will see a number of changes in the regular faculty because of leaves of absences and the arrival of several new faces. By the time you read this, a new class of first year students will have arrived. We anticipate that they will continue to be diverse in the mode of recent classes, and equally well qualified. The "Buffalo Model" will be in place and unimpaired.

True, some — perhaps many — of you react uneasily to the label "Buffalo Model." In the first issue of this Forum, then Dean Headrick said, "Our Law School is rather special. It is remarkably open to new ideas, novel approaches to teaching and different perspectives that have been stultified in legal education elsewhere." In the second issue, then acting Dean Schlegel said, "Here we attempt to combine theory and practice by focusing attention not only on legal rules but on the social, political and intellectual contexts in which those rules operate." The "Buffalo Model" could be said to date from Dean Headrick's arrival in 1976, following the completion of the Long Range Plan in 1975.

But do not be misled. The roots of the "Buffalo Model" are deep in the history of this Law School. During World War II, Dean Mark Howe succinctly described the focus of the School in words which in many important ways presaged the developments of the next decades. In 1962, when Jack Hyman was dean, the first of several Long Range Plans was adopted (to be revised in 1965, following the absorption of UB in SUNY; then revised and updated in 1975;

and due for revision and updating again, now that another decade has passed). The themes in that 1962 document are remarkably similar to those said to characterize the "Buffalo Model." Truly, the more things change . . .

Since 1937 the faculty of the Law School has sought to implement a number of themes: to focus on the social, political and intellectual contexts in which law operates; and to embrace new ideas, novel approaches to teaching and different perspectives. We have always tried to keep in mind, nevertheless, that the theoretical should not be divorced from the practical, and have recognized that portions of the curriculum should be directed to the practical. And while exploring law and its relation to international and national issues, we have also made it a point not to neglect state and local government law, or the domain of private practice.

I began as a law professor in 1953, and came to Buffalo in 1958. The tensions between the practical and the theoretical, between how-to-do-it and policy analysis, and the complaints about law schools not turning out lawyers prepared to practice, were as real 30-years ago as they are now. The names of the movements and many of the players may have changed, but the concerns are not all that different. The wisdom and the strength of today's "Buffalo Model" is that it harbors and nourishes several of the major movements in legal education, and is open to the inclusion of others.

In this brief message, I shall not elaborate on the characteristics of those several movements, but will conclude by reaffirming another theme underlying the "Buffalo Model," perhaps not so explicitly mentioned in recent years. That theme is that the alumni are a vital part of the life and future of the Law School, that their interest and concern must be nourished, and that the mutual respect of faculty and alumni is a critical element in the development of the school and the profession. During my time as dean, I look forward to hearing from you. ■