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Black American Law Students Association: Pro... And Con... (The Advocate)

Black American Law Students Association, Fordham University School of Law

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The Advocate

The student newspaper of Fordham University
School of Law

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In Defense Of Law Review

The recent edition of the Fordham Law Review contains an article entitled In Defense of Capital Gains. It would seem appropriate, if not perhaps necessary, that the next publication include an essay titled... In Defense of Law Review. Such an article might begin with the reassurance that the concept of Law Review is not a new thing. After all, as long as any of us can remember there was the lure of academic accolades: grammar school had its stars, high school had its honor society, college—its Dean's List, and now Law School has its Law Review. There are some material differences between the gold stars and the footnote follies... the latter is for keeps... it means a job (at least a better chance for one), more money, prestige, and a chance to do a lot of hard work... what more could someone ask for?

As long as our system is based on competition and self interest there will continue to be law reviews and honor societies and gold stars in all shapes and sizes. However, it might prove helpful for eachone of us to reflect upon the type of value system that is inherent in such awards and whether or not it is appropriate for today's society. We think not. The rat race has got to end somewhere and we had better, if we are to survive as a community, end it now. We propose therefore, not the end of Law Review, but rather, the establishment of a new review... call it Humanitarian Review... the purpose of which is to acknowledge those among us who have made contributions and sacrifices to better their school and their community. It's time we recognized those who, while their grades may not be superlative, have used what they have learned to help others. Anyone wishing to nominate someone... please drop off a card under the Advocate office door with the name of the person and the reason why you feel this person deserves this type of recognition.

New Image

The Advocate as you may have noticed, is different this year. Instead of concentrating on intra-mural football results we felt we should use each issue to focus in on various problems in the law. The first issue dealt primarily with prisons, while this issue is concerned with Fordham and minorities. We believe that concern about the number of minorities at Fordham is long over due. Third year students might recall that during their orientation program someone did indeed ask why there were no black faces in the class. The answer given was that Fordham can't compete in the "black market" with the likes of NYU and Columbia. End of inquiry... well we hope this edition of the Advocate re-opens the minorities question.

The Advocate, SBA willing, plans to run a special placement issue in the Spring as well as two other issues—the topics for which are still undecided. If you would like to help, please drop a card with your name and phone number under the Advocate Office door in the basement. Enjoy the holidays.

Merry Christmas

Black American Law Student Association

Pro...

by Kenneth J. Uva

The Black American Law Students Association (BALSA) now has fourteen members at Fordham. As stated in the Charter:

The purpose for which BALSA was formed is to articulate and promote the professional and goals of Black American Law Students; to foster and encourage professional competence; to focus upon the relationship of the Black Attorney to the American legal structure; to instill in the Black Attorney and Law Student a greater awareness of and commitment to the needs of the Black Community; and to influence American Law Schools, legal fraternities and associations to use their expertise and prestige to bring about change within the legal system in order to make it responsive to the needs of the Black Community; and to do any and all things necessary and lawful for the accomplishment of these purposes within such limits as are provided by law.

Olivia Valentine, President of the Fordham chapter of BALSA,

feels that the organization is orientated toward the particular needs of Black law students. Among these needs are the difficulty in being admitted to law school, the highly competitive academic standards expected of a student, the expenses and the problems which are inherent in a situation where Blacks must adjust to what is essentially a white, middle-class environment. Part of the BALSA budget will be used to hire an upperclass student or a faculty member to tutor first year students to aid them in overcoming first year shock, a condition not unknown among law students.

According to Ms. Valentine, there are seventeen Black students at Fordham, much too small a number for a New York City law school. BALSA is therefore engaged in a program to recruit Black students for Fordham. Last month, BALSA held "Law Day" which was "basically to interest minority students in going to law school." BALSA members from schools from all over the region participated, presenting the ad-

vantages of their respective schools. Of the 400 students who attended, 45 signed up as potential applicants to Fordham. Other such activities are planned for the future.

BALSA has been granted a \$435 budget from the SBA to be used for the tutorial program, charter fees and liaison with other chapters. Another of BALSA's goals is to seek scholarship funds for Blacks from Fordham and from other sources, since financial hardship is among the most pressing problems facing Black law students. Ms. Valentine feels Fordham has not offered enough in this area. She believes that while some progress has been made, there is a great deal more to be done to achieve "a more equitable law school society in which Blacks and other minorities could become lawyers. We think Fordham has fallen short in granting equal opportunities to study law. We would like to correct that. The Administration has been helpful in many areas, but there are still many problems."

...And Con

by Jacob Apuzzo

be given by professors for a fee to be paid out of S.B.A. funds.

Some of the more obvious problems raised are:

1. With the preliminary meeting, since some of those who could best be expected to evaluate the programs as senior members of the S.B.A. with experience in its financial matters were effectively excluded. Thus the possible influence of their opinion was lost to the junior members.
2. With the payment of charter fees for an organization that has not listed any membership. Even if each member was named, there could be no justification for payment of personal dues.
3. With the two convention trips for a group new-born, when there are others who, being well established, would be better able to profit from such excursions at such expense.
4. With the two enrollment programs: Again when there are other groups in this school who are equally deserving of at least one such project, but who might balk at asking for such monies for the purpose.
5. And finally with the tutorials, with general student financing of a non-general program. This would be in fact a positive advantage for the few who—assuming uniform admission requirements—are no more deserving than the many.

These points are not intended to suggest that there is nothing of any merit to be found in any of the proposals. The fact that there are constructive suggestions being made is in itself a general good. And certainly if these programs were to be enacted there would be individual profit. It is however

interesting to note the tactical method of the proponents. Each request has at least two elements, the one being somewhat more suspect than the other. Like the skilled arbiters they may someday become, the sponsors have included what appears to be room for compromise. Actually there is none. Hopefully, the S.B.A. will not pass any part of any one of these proposals which becomes acceptable only by comparison with other, more blatantly objectionable parts.

POSTSCRIPT

This article was written before the S.B.A. had taken action on the above mentioned proposals.

There was indeed a substantial amount of compromise, the nature of which is left to the reader.

The payment of the chapter membership fee was passed while payment of individual dues was not.

The allocation for the conventions was cut from \$440 to \$240. But the amount per person was in fact maintained since the number to attend was halved.

The recruitment allowance was passed. It should be said that the two dates, although directed toward the same purpose and planned by the same individuals, were brought as separate proposals, and at a separate meeting. Thus the possibility of offset was diminished if not destroyed.

The program for tutorials was passed with the implicit provision that the sessions be open to all. But since the number at each meeting is to be held to two or three persons, with priority given to BALSA members, the classes would seem to be effectively exclusive.