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## Remarks Delivered on the Occasion of the Dedication of The Sidney C. Norris Chair of Law to Public Service

Thomas M. Quinn

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## Remarks Delivered on the Occasion of the Dedication of The Sidney C. Norris Chair of Law to Public Service

### Cover Page Footnote

Professor Quinn received his undergraduate degree from the College of the Holy Cross. He holds a Bachelor of Laws (cum laude) and a Master of Laws degree from Harvard, a Ph.L. from Bellarmine, and an S.T.L. from Woodstock. Among his many notable accomplishments, he was one of the founders of the New York Legal Services Corporation (originally Community Action for Legal Services) and a past chair of its Board. Professor Quinn also has served as Chairman of the Community Services Committee of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) (1969-70), as Co-Chairman of the AALS National Conference on Teaching Anti-Poverty Law, and as Chairman of the AALS Paralegal Committee, where he represented the AALS in hearings before Congress. Additionally, he has served as Legal Counsel to Fordham University's Institute for Social Research, for which he authored several reports on drug addiction and federal and state drug control laws. Professor Quinn also has acted as a consultant to the Federal Reserve Board on Simplification of Truth-in-Lending.

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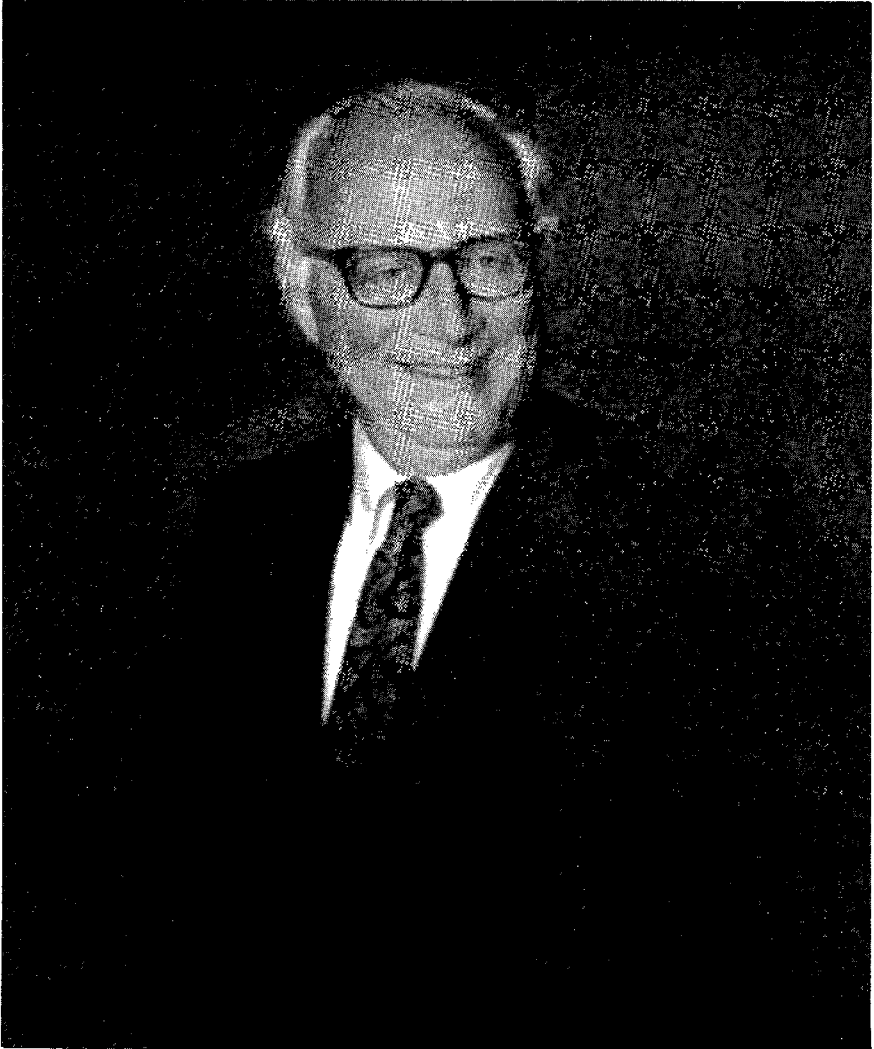
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**SIDNEY C. NORRIS**

## **DEDICATION OF THE SIDNEY C. NORRIS CHAIR OF LAW TO PUBLIC SERVICE**

Sidney C. Norris graduated from Fordham University School of Law in 1927. Following graduation, he joined the New York City law firm of Pfeiffer & Cramers, where he developed a life-long interest and expertise in real estate law. In 1934, he opened his own offices in Manhattan and subsequently joined N.K. Winston & Co. as house counsel. At the time, N.K. Winston & Company, under the leadership of Ambassador Norman Winston, was a rapidly growing organization whose many projects included the building of thousands of FHA-sponsored homes throughout the country and the pioneering of shopping center developments nationwide. It was during this period that Mr. Norris began his long association with Mr. Winston.

Mr. Norris resumed his private real estate practice in the late 1930's. He also continued as General Counsel to Norman Winston until Mr. Winston's death in 1977 and, from that year until 1983, served as President of the Norman and Rosita Winston Foundation. Other directors who served during Mr. Norris' tenure were the Hon. Simon H. Rifkind, the Hon. Arthur Levitt, Sr., and Arthur Levitt, Jr. Until his death in 1983, Mr. Norris also served as counsel to the law firm of Robinson, Perlman & Kirschner.

Sidney Norris married Anne Kuff on May 10, 1936; their two daughters are Jane (Mrs. Julian S.) Perlman and Emily (Mrs. Irving L.) Rome. Their grandchildren are Thomas and Jane Perlman and Johanna and Andrew Rome.

Fordham University School of Law gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the Norman and Rosita Winston Foundation in establishing the Sidney C. Norris Chair of Law. We are proud to have such a fitting tribute to his memory and his achievements.



# REMARKS DELIVERED ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEDICATION OF THE SIDNEY C. NORRIS CHAIR OF LAW TO PUBLIC SERVICE

THOMAS M. QUINN\*

TONIGHT, on the occasion of my installation as the first occupant of the Sidney C. Norris Chair of Law and its dedication to public service,<sup>1</sup> I would like to say a few words about the role of public service at the Law School<sup>2</sup> and the main objectives of our effort.

The primary, though not the exclusive, concern of public service ef-

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\* Professor Thomas M. Quinn, the first occupant of the Sidney C. Norris Chair of Law, has been teaching at Fordham University School of Law since 1963. He is a nationally recognized authority on the Uniform Commercial Code and is the author of *U.C.C. Law Letter, U.C.C. Comment and Digest on the U.C.C., Quinn's Forms and Practice Under the U.C.C.*, and *Modern Banking Forms*.

Professor Quinn received his undergraduate degree from the College of the Holy Cross. He holds a Bachelor of Laws (cum laude) and a Master of Laws degree from Harvard, a Ph.L. from Bellarmine, and an S.T.L. from Woodstock.

Among his many notable accomplishments, he was one of the founders of the New York Legal Services Corporation (originally Community Action for Legal Services) and a past chair of its Board. Professor Quinn also has served as Chairman of the Community Services Committee of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) (1969-70), as Co-Chairman of the AALS National Conference on Teaching Anti-Poverty Law, and as Chairman of the AALS Paralegal Committee, where he represented the AALS in hearings before Congress. Additionally, he has served as Legal Counsel to Fordham University's Institute for Social Research, for which he authored several reports on drug addiction and federal and state drug control laws. Professor Quinn also has acted as a consultant to the Federal Reserve Board on Simplification of Truth-in-Lending.

1. In addition to academic and scholarly responsibilities, the Sidney C. Norris Professor of Law will oversee all activities and programs of the Law School's Public Interest Resource Center. The Norris Professor will also act as a catalyst for curriculum and other developments at the school in the public interest area.

2. Fordham University School of Law presently offers public service opportunities through several different programs. These programs, which are coordinated by the Fordham Law School Council on Public Service, include:

(1) *Credit-based programs* featuring internships in litigation, arbitration, and criminal prosecution and defense, as well as a variety of externships offered in conjunction with course offerings.

(2) *Voluntary programs* conducted under the auspices of the school's Public Interest Resource Center, which sponsors three programs: (a) the Fordham Law Community Service Project, which coordinates the efforts of student volunteers in non-legal community service programs; (b) the Fordham Pro Bono Students program, which uses a computer database to match students seeking volunteer legal work with approximately 280 organizations and government offices seeking pro bono legal assistance; and (c) the Fordham Student Sponsored Fellowship Program, which raises funds and provides stipends to students who pursue public interest jobs in the summer.

(3) *The Stein Public Service Scholars Program*, which provides opportunities for selected law students to work in public interest law settings and to engage in specialized academic work in legal ethics. The Stein Scholars Program is sponsored by the Stein Center for Ethics and Public Interest Law, which also sponsors the Stein Lecture Series

forts at the Law School is set out in the statement of purpose of the Law School's Public Interest Resource Center. It reads: "The primary commitment of the Public Service Center is to service the needs of the poor, i.e., the indigent and those of limited means. Its first concerns are with issues basic to the needs of the poor."

## I

What does this include in the concrete? What are the problem areas? What might be addressed? Let me run through some and not necessarily in any order of importance.

There are:

- Problems of housing, such as landlord-tenant issues, single room occupancy hotels, shelters, and homelessness;
- Problems of food and sustenance, such as welfare reform, food stamps, and school lunches;
- Problems of health and medicine, including the poor's access to adequate health-care;
- Problems relating to the family and children, including matrimonial issues, child custody and support, and child neglect and abuse;
- Problems of employment and, more seriously, of unemployment, including chronic unemployment;
- Problems of money and credit, such as consumer credit and consumer bankruptcy;
- Problems relating to education and our schools, including school law, deteriorating facilities and declining resources, the adequacy of educational programs, illiteracy, and school safety;
- Vast problems affecting our neighborhoods and the streets on which we live, such as juvenile delinquency, gangs, street violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and neighborhood safety; and
- Problems of a more specialized sort affecting the elderly, the handicapped, the homeless, immigrants, and veterans.

While the list is not comprehensive, it indicates the depth and breadth of the troubling issues confronting us as students, educators, and providers of legal services.

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at the Law School. The Stein Center and the Stein Scholars Program are made possible through the generosity of Mr. Louis Stein, a 1926 graduate of the Law School.

(4) *The Career Counseling and Placement Office*, which offers specialized career services for those individuals seeking employment in the public interest field.

In addition, the Law School's course offerings include two seminars examining the ethical responsibilities of public service lawyers: *Ethics in Public Interest Law*, which fulfills the school's professional responsibility course requirement, and *Advanced Seminar in Ethics in Public Interest Law*, which explores, at an advanced level, the ethical, constitutional and procedural issues arising in contexts that involve service in the public interest. These two courses are among the few such courses offered in the country.

Notably, this past year over 350 Fordham law students participated in public interest work, and the Law School received local, state, and national recognition for its commitment to providing its students public service opportunities.

## II

Are at least these areas of concern adequately served by the law? Unfortunately, they are not.

The law itself is, at best, a hit-or-miss affair; a patch-work quilt with as many holes as patches. Even where there is law, moreover, it is probably badly in need of major overhaul.

As if this were not enough, even knowledge of the law in these areas, such as it may be, is minimal. Most students graduate from law school with little or no knowledge of poverty-related law. Nor is that all. The practicing bar is in much the same state. Practicing lawyers rarely see the poor and, in consequence, are largely ignorant of the law as it operates in the lives of the poor.

The truth is that access to the law by the poor is very, very limited. The legal profession, in the final analysis, is a service profession and the delivery of services by any profession, whether legal, medical or otherwise, involves expenditures and requires resources. Yet, very few resources are available to the poor for legal services. There is no insurance system akin to medical insurance and while there is some government support of legal services, it is, quite frankly, minimal. It is, at best, the proverbial drop in the bucket.

Self-help by the poor remains, of course, a possibility. It is however only a possibility, more theoretical than real. Indeed, the effort required in terms of the necessary self-education, self-motivation, and effective application is daunting, and, even if surmounted, comes to little when confronted by the formidable bureaucratic barriers that usually characterize these areas.

The task therefore falls to legal service organizations and volunteers. Legal services, unfortunately, are poorly funded and woefully understaffed. As for volunteers, while the American Bar Association has suggested that all lawyers dedicate 50 hours a year of free legal services to public service,<sup>3</sup> few, if any, expect its realization.

The picture I have drawn is not encouraging. Indeed, it would seem, more accurately, a formula for continued failure. The efforts of those few involved are valiant, but the likelihood of real success is minimal.

## III

In the face of this grim recital, the larger issue becomes: why address these problems at all? Why serve the poor when so little apparently can be done? Why be concerned?

There are many reasons, too many to go into here: moral, economic,

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3. In February 1993, the American Bar Association House of Delegates adopted, by a vote of 228 to 215, an "aspirational plea" for 50 hours per year of pro bono service from every lawyer. See *Fifty Hours for Pro Bono: ABA House Adopts Ethics Rule Specifying How Much Time Lawyers Should Donate*, A.B.A. J., Apr. 1993, at 32; Model Rules of Professional Conduct Rule 6.1 cmt. (1993).

religious, theoretical, and practical. I will single out just two. The first is obvious. The second is not obvious at all and is peculiar to law schools.

#### IV

The obvious reason is the need itself. The poor need our help. Their problems are enormous; their needs are often desperate. A housing or employment problem that may seem manageable to you or me can easily result in homelessness for another. A malnourished and poorly educated child is not likely to become a productive and well-adjusted fellow citizen. The need is there and calls to us.

#### V

The second reason is not nearly so obvious and is peculiar to law schools. Paradoxically, we—students, faculty and administrators—need the poor. Why?

Because the gap between rich and poor is ever widening. Or more accurately, the gap between the middle class, of which most of us are members, and the indigent is ever widening. Significant human contacts between the two groups are becoming more and more minimal. The danger is that we become two separate worlds. The end result is that we will share a single citizenship but inhabit two different worlds.

The urgent need is to bridge the gap. To introduce students—and faculty—to the problems of the poor and to do so as part of the educational process. Students and faculty need to encounter the poor, and their problems, first hand.

Students and faculty need to meet the poor as people, not simply in the abstract. They need to learn of their problems in the concrete, and to see the impact of these problems in their lives.

They need to learn first hand whether the law serves or fails to serve those needs, and to reflect on what can be done to improve the law.

The hope, and our long-range objective, is that, once introduced to the poor and to the problems of the poor, our students will develop a concern as young lawyers that will become a lifelong commitment.

Up to this point, we have not done very well in this area. Let us hope that our students—our young men and women—once introduced to the poor and their problems will do better. Much, much better.