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## OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAW GRADUATES

By CLIFFORD W. MILLS

*of the Denver Bar, Dean of the University  
of Westminister Law School*

What are the opportunities of the newly made lawyer and the student who is just embarking upon the study of law?

Dean Gavit of Indiana University School of Law in his *Introduction to the Study of Law* dismisses the newly made lawyer with a commonplace:

On the score of opportunity one can only say that of course there is continually need for young lawyers. Lawyers die and quit the practice, the population is increasing, and the law leads to other activities if one becomes interested in them.

As to opportunities other than the practice of law, Dean Gavit's view is rather discouraging. We quote again from his *Introduction to the Study of Law*:

It is not true that legal learning is a distinct asset if one later decides to abandon the law for a business career. Business, and in particular big business, certainly has many legal problems but they are not the same thing. One without legal training can be a very successful businessman. All he need know about law, and it is easy to learn, is that practically everything he does cannot safely be done without legal advice. He accepts as routine the regular services of a lawyer or a staff of lawyers. If he is also a lawyer he still usually turns his legal problems over to one engaged in the active practice.

The reason why one with legal training is frequently tempted to transfer to business and makes an outstanding success of it is because he had those aptitudes, abilities and interests which would have made him a successful businessman without legal training. That which makes his business success easy is not his legal learning but it is the educative process he went through in gaining it, and his experiences as a lawyer which have taught him much about human nature and business, both private and public. He is an educated man well beyond the ordinary.

Despite all its infirmities legal education in this country involves a broad and rigorous discipline which finds no complete counterpart in the other professions, or in other countries. One who survives six or seven years of college and law school training has mastered, on a broad basis which goes beyond most if not all other spe-

cialties, a substantial amount of learning or knowledge. He has been trained in the processes of thinking and talking correctly beyond most disciplines. He has, at least on a comparative basis, a "good" and a disciplined mind. This is enriched and sharpened by the practice of law.

His qualities and achievements made it easy for him to convert himself into a businessman (or anything else, for that matter) and learn what needs to be learned about that activity. But had he started in business at the time he started in law school he almost certainly would have come out (financially at least) at about the same place, but by a different route.

At least it is very doubtful that a young man can properly be told that if his real interest is finally in business legal training for him will be worth while. He can, of course, be told that the decision to be a lawyer is not irrevocable. One is free to quit the law whenever he gets ready. A legal education in a sense will never be a total loss; he will always have the benefits of his knowledge and his training, and it is true that they make it easy for him to convert himself to other activities. On the other hand one who really wants a legal education as a prelude to a business or other career, or for his own satisfaction, or as a means of handling his own, or his family's legal affairs, or for the simple satisfaction of having it, should be encouraged to undertake the job. Those who are seriously doubtful about the whole matter can only be encouraged to try it and then decide.

#### "PLACE INFORMATION"

Dean Gordon Johnston and Professor Charles E. Works of the University of Denver College of Law have collaborated in publishing a brochure entitled, "Placement Information for Law Students and Graduates".<sup>1</sup> This pamphlet might well be printed in its entirety under the subject announced for this paper. We take the liberty, with Dean Johnston's consent, to quote liberally therefrom.

The main problem confronting the student as to his career is the decision as to whether to go into general practice, to get a job in a law office, to do legal or semi-legal work for a corporation or for the government, or to go into some non-legal business. A very large percentage of students will feel a considerable uncertainty as to the type of work for which they are best fitted and which will be most satisfactory to them.

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<sup>1</sup>Copy of this pamphlet will be sent gratis upon request to the Dean, University of Denver, College of Law, Denver 2, Colorado.

Most students graduating from law school desire a legal career. The legal profession has been, is now and probably always will be 'overcrowded', but there is always room in practice for men of ability. If the student has a keen interest in legal work, loves it and feels that he has the ability to succeed in it, he will probably be wise to choose a legal career—in spite of the fact that it may be difficult to get a start and that the earnings of the legal profession are relatively low on the average.

Many graduates who do not have a keen interest in the law feel that they should go into the law because they have invested three years in a legal education and do not wish to waste this investment. This is not a valid reason for entering the practice, because a legal education is not wasted for the man who goes into business. It has trained him to think and to solve problems. Most businessmen recognize that a legal training is a great asset, even in types of work which do not depend upon legal knowledge; and, of course, legal knowledge itself is an asset in a great many business positions—especially executive positions.

\* \* \* \* if a man is going into the law, whether in practice for himself or as an employee of a law firm, the selection of the place to locate is of major importance. Since a lawyer's success depends largely on his reputation and contacts in his community, the longer a lawyer has practiced in one community the more he has to sacrifice in moving to a new community. For this reason it is of great importance for a graduate who is going into the law to select a location which he believes will probably be satisfactory for the rest of his life. He must balance the opportunity which may be offered by a particular locality with the desirability to him and his family of that community as a place in which to live. Certainly it is a mistake for a man to settle in any community unless he feels that he and his family will be happy there. A married man should hesitate to settle in a small town unless both he and his wife will be happy in the life of that community.

Generally speaking, a large city (say of the size of Denver) will provide a number of possible jobs in law firms. The competition for such jobs will be keen. To 'hang out one's shingle' in a large city is extremely hazardous unless one has good business contacts in that city or some other course of income.

The small town usually does not provide openings for work in a law firm. If a man can get a start in a small town, he will probably have a much better chance

of making a good living or a much better than average living than he will have in a large city. A young attorney has a much better chance to succeed in building up his own practice in a small town than in a city. Even in the small town, however, he cannot expect to make a living from the start and should have a financial reserve. In many cases it is possible for a man to go into a small town and make a connection which will give him some assured income at the start, such as a job as City Attorney, County Attorney, Deputy District Attorney, or a connection with a business firm which has a substantial amount of legal work to give him.

If a law graduate decides he would rather go into business than practice law or would rather be assured of a fixed income from a semi-legal source, there are numerous activities in which he might be engaged.

#### OPPORTUNITIES IN GOVERNMENT

Probably the greatest employer of legal talent is Uncle Sam. Lawyers and legally trained individuals are employed in every branch of the Federal Government. Within the experience of the writer hereof there have been dozens upon dozens of Uncle Sam's employees who have upped their employment grade by acquiring a law degree, regardless of the fact that they were never admitted to practice law. Oil companies employ many legally trained men in their land and lease departments. Insurance companies are always in the market for adjusters with legal training. In the life insurance field many able law graduates find lucrative employment in the sale of insurance in connection with estate planning. Nor should the law graduate overlook the possibility of employment in the trust departments of the banks. Then there are the companies engaged in compilation of various types of law books. All of these companies are continually in the market for law graduates.

One of the respectable employment agencies in the City of Denver reports that they have had calls for lawyers or law graduates for positions in the following fields:

1. Labor Relations.  
Large companies having a special Labor Relations Department request Law Graduates for openings in these departments.
2. Trust Work.  
In Trust Departments with Banks.
3. Loan Work.  
In Loan Departments.
4. Investment Work.  
Investment Companies request Law Graduates for financial and security positions.

5. Insurance Companies.  
Request Law Graduates for the following types of positions:
  - Claims Adjusting,
    - Auto Claims
    - Fire Claims
    - Casualty Claims
  - Underwriters,
    - Law Graduates to train in Underwriting capable of being promoted into executive positions.
6. Credit and Loan Companies  
Request Law Graduates for Credit or Collection positions. Also for Assistant Manager positions.
7. Patent Assistant  
A few of the larger companies in Denver retain on their payroll Law Graduates as advisors to their board members concerning any changes on equipment and necessary patents resulting therefrom.
8. F. B. I.
9. Secret Service.
10. For various Governmental Agencies.

This agency has placed thirty-two different people with law degrees in the various fields, some of whom were also admitted to practice law. Of course, the last three items in this list are ordinarily not filled through employment service except in the event of what is known as a "deep pinch", when help is required in a hurry.

From all of this it is perfectly apparent that Dean Gavit in his work, *Introduction to the Study of Law*, has failed to properly evaluate the vast field of opportunity that is open to law graduates, even though the graduate is not admitted to practice law and even though he does not desire to practice law.

Unfortunately, none of the law schools in Colorado have kept a census of the activities of their graduates. Dean Johnston estimates that of the graduates from Denver University College of Law in the last five years 20% have opened their own law office; about 40% have taken law office jobs; 20% in semi-legal jobs and about 20% in non-legal jobs. Dean King estimates that of the graduates from the Law School of the University of Colorado in the last five years 60% are practicing law, and the others are engaged in other pursuits. He is of the opinion that practically all of those in other pursuits are making use of their legal training.

The best estimate that can be given by Westminster Law School is that about 40% are practicing law, mostly on their own, and the balance are engaged in other pursuits, most of them making direct use of their legal training.