

FROM THE EDITOR

With this issue a new team assumes responsibility for editing the *Review*. Stewart Macaulay and Jack Ladinsky have agreed to serve as my associate editors. Stewart has been a member of the University of Wisconsin Law faculty since 1957. He is the author of what may well be the most frequently cited article in law and social science research ("Non-Contractual Relations in Business: A Preliminary Study," 28 *American Sociological Review* 55, 1963), and is co-editor, with Lawrence Friedman, of the widely used coursebook, *Law and the Behavioral Sciences* (2d ed., 1977). He teaches a very unorthodox and very popular contracts course, as well as a variety of courses and seminars which, most recently, have focused on problems of dispute resolution. Jack joined the Sociology Department at Wisconsin in 1961, and has written extensively on aspects of the American legal profession and on law and social change. He is currently director of our Center for Law and Behavioral Science, and chairman of the undergraduate major in behavioral science and law. With Stewart and others he is currently studying dispute processing in the city of Milwaukee. Jack, Stewart and I have worked closely in the activities of our law and behavioral science program since my own arrival at Wisconsin in 1963.

Edith Wilimovsky has added the duties of Administrative Secretary of the *Review* to her work for the law and behavioral science program. We have worked with Edith so long and so efficiently that it was inconceivable that she would not be our first choice for this position as well. We are delighted to have her on board. Amy Kritzer, our production editor, is new to Madison and to our program. But she is an accomplished editor and a welcome addition to our staff.

Our names appear on the masthead for the first time in this issue. But our editorial responsibilities began last May when Rick Abel, at the conclusion of the Law and Society Association meeting in Minneapolis, gleefully left me with a box of about thirty manuscripts. Rick, of course, continued as editor to the conclusion of Volume 12, and will serve as editor of two special issues of the *Review* to be published in the next two years. The theme and scope of those issues is described below.

Between mid-May and November 15th, an additional 110 manuscripts were submitted for our consideration. At that rate, we expect about 250 manuscripts in our first year, possibly

more since the flow of manuscripts is uneven. A huge number arrived in June and July, and we expect another large batch in mid-winter. It is too soon to report any firm statistics, but some general observations are in order. Quite obviously, we receive many more manuscripts than could possibly appear in the *Review*. We can publish not more than twenty-five average length articles per volume. When longer articles are published the number decreases accordingly. Thus, at best, we can publish only about 10 percent of the manuscripts submitted to us. This figure corresponds very closely to the acceptance rate of other major professional journals. For example, the *American Political Science Review* reported accepting 10 percent of the manuscripts submitted in its last publishing year. The *American Sociological Review* rejected more than 500 of 600 manuscripts submitted in 1976; the *American Economic Review* more than 500 of 700 received; and the *Social Science Quarterly* rejected 425 out of 500 manuscripts received. The study from which these figures are taken, by Charles M. Bonjean and Jan Hullum, and recently published in *PS* (Fall, 1978: 480-483) reports comparable rejection rates for many other top-quality professional journals.

If our relatively low acceptance rate is the "bad news" for prospective authors, the "good news" is that we have virtually no backlog of articles accepted for publication. As this note is written, all the articles for this issue are at the printer. One long article has been accepted for Volume 13:3, and the editors are making some final decisions on other articles to be published in that issue. Thus, in our present situation, articles which are accepted are likely to be published relatively quickly.

Some discussion of our editorial procedures is in order, although we have not made any major changes from the practice of our immediate predecessors. Every manuscript that is submitted is reviewed by one of the editors (and sometimes by all three of us). Even a brief review discloses that some manuscripts are unsuitable for the *Review*, either because they are obviously of very low quality, or because their subject matter is clearly inappropriate. The *Review*, in common with other professional journals, relies heavily on the time and effort of its reviewers. We are unwilling to burden those reviewers with manuscripts that in our estimation have no chance whatsoever to be published. Thus, manuscripts in this category are returned to their respective authors without further review.

The remaining manuscripts are sent out for review, usually to at least two reviewers, sometimes more. The exact number,

and of course the identity of the reviewers, reflects our own initial judgment on what kind of advice we need. We try to get the broadest spectrum of advice and counsel on each manuscript, including that which we can provide internally. Thus, if one of the editors has some expertise on the subject of a particular manuscript, we will not seek to duplicate that expertise in soliciting outside reviews. More likely, we will try to get “different” advice from scholars likely to view the manuscript in an entirely different fashion. Since the *Review* is an interdisciplinary journal we often seek advice from several disciplines. A paper addressing law and psychiatry issues may be reviewed by a psychiatrist but also by a medical sociologist or a law professor who is interested in that subject. A paper utilizing sophisticated quantitative methods will be reviewed by someone with such skills, but perhaps also by someone with more theoretical or even jurisprudential interests. The fit is rarely perfect, but we do strive to be fair to the author while insuring acceptance of the highest quality and most relevant manuscripts.

When all the outside reviews are in (we ask reviewers to complete their evaluations within a month, but this is not always possible) a final judgment is made. We do not automatically accept a manuscript when both reviews are positive, and we do not automatically reject a manuscript when one or more reviews are negative. We analyze the reviews and the manuscript ourselves, try to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and determine if any of the weaknesses are remediable with further revision. To all this we add our own judgment about relevance and importance. We may lean toward one manuscript because of what it tries to do, while rejecting another which does something less important very well. There is no litmus test to substitute for our best judgment.

All manuscripts are then returned to the author with anonymous copies of the reviewers' comments and a summary letter from me. Those few which are accepted outright are sent back for final revision. A number are returned to the author with a revise and resubmit invitation. These usually contain detailed suggestions for revision, but no formal promise of publication. Such manuscripts, if revised and resubmitted, go through the review process again. In each case we endeavor to have one of the original reviewers evaluate it again, along with a fresh reviewer who either may receive the manuscript without comment, or may be sent anonymous copies of the original reviews. This practice helps to prevent the understandable distress of

an author who has revised a manuscript according to our specifications and is then told that a new reviewer has an entirely different set of objections.

We have established only a few editorial policies. One is that we have a definite preference for shorter rather than longer manuscripts. We will consider manuscripts exceeding 50-60 double-spaced typewritten pages, but are likely to ask for some cuts if accepted. It is also our policy *not* to review a manuscript actively under consideration at another journal, unless there are compelling exceptional circumstances *brought to our attention by the author* at the time of submission. Manuscripts submitted to us, and submitted elsewhere without full disclosure, will be summarily rejected. This policy is comparable to that of most major social science journals. It is necessary to protect the time of our readers, without whose loyal efforts no journal of this quality could be published.

We will also not consider for publication a manuscript which has been published elsewhere in the English language, or which is drawn from an already published book likely to be available to our readership. This policy does not affect a manuscript which, at a later date, is to be incorporated into a book by the author on the same subject. Indeed, our copyright arrangement with each author guarantees full rights to the future use of an article published in the *Review*.

Many inquiries concern book reviews. We will continue the long-standing policy of the *Review* not to publish a formal book review section. Within the limited resources of the Law and Society Association which can be devoted to publication of the *Review*, maximum space ought to be devoted to the publication of original articles. However, we intend to continue the recent practice of publishing, on an occasional basis, commissioned review essays. From time to time a number of books are published which collectively advance our knowledge of a particular subject. This would be the typical, if not exclusive, reason for commissioning a review essay. Occasionally a single book will loom so importantly on our common research horizon that a full-length discussion of it seems merited. For the most part, however, our judgment is that the *Review* ought to be devoted to reporting of the best current research and thinking about law and society.

We also plan to generate additional special issues on topics of particular relevance. Two such issues are now planned, both to be edited by Rick Abel. The first, to be published in 1979 as Volume 13:2, focuses on the subject of plea bargaining. It will

contain a number of articles delivered as papers at a conference on plea bargaining last summer, sponsored by LEAA. A second special issue is scheduled to be published in 1980 as part of Volume 14. Sponsored by a grant from the National Science Foundation, it will contain a series of review articles specially commissioned after very intense competition. Each of these articles will provide an intensive analytic review of the literature of a particular sub-field of the discipline.

One of the healthiest and most promising developments in the *Review* has been its increased focus on research about the law and legal systems in other countries, and the increased representation in its pages of articles written by non-American scholars. The *Review* is now truly an international journal and it is our intention to maintain it as such. Contributions from scholars in all countries are most welcome.

In closing, a word of thanks to Rick Abel, his production editor, Patricia Shoup, and their staff, is surely in order. Under Rick's leadership, the *Review* has maintained the high level of quality which its readership has come to expect. We can only hope to do as well.

JBG
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