

Corporation Lawyer - Saint or Sinner?

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CORPORATION LAWYER . . .
SAINT OR SINNER?

The New Role of the Lawyer in Modern Society

By BERYL HAROLD LEVY. Philadelphia and New York: Chilton Company, 1961. 175 pp. \$4.00

Is the modern corporation lawyer a saint or sinner? Mr. Levy never really answers the question which he poses in the title. In fact, the title of this book is not a fair representation of its subject matter. The work is a sketchy history of the legal profession in America during the last century with special emphasis on several of the most famous attorneys from New York "institutional firms" whose part in creating modern America is an unwritten page of history. The title implies that the book deals only with the "corporation" lawyer; although the emphasis is on the large firm which represents the corporate client, the book is about lawyers generally.

Mr. Levy admits in the preface that the book is not a legal treatise. "If any lawyer should stray into these pages, I hope he will remember that this book is not to be read as though it were a legal document . . ." The main purpose of the book is to answer questions from the general public "about what lawyers are doing in our society—or to our society." It is not a book on the law, but about lawyers—their attitudes, their hopes and aspirations, their accomplishments, their function, and their future in American society.

The author's basic premise is that the role of the lawyer is changing in our changing society. As our civilization has become more complicated, which all will agree that it has, so has the law. New political theories, new governmental practices and requirements, new scientific developments, changing social and political philosophies, improved business procedures, and revolutionary changes in management-labor relations create new legal problems to which the lawyer must supply the answers. These tremendous changes in the last century have necessitated the association of lawyers in one office to handle the problems of clients and has also required the individual lawyers in such offices to specialize. The author labels the New

York firms with twenty to seventy members "law factories . . . as they are good-naturedly called nowadays, even among the lawyers themselves." He does not use this label disparagingly, but admits that the practice of law has become so complex that to satisfy all the clients' needs the firm must have lawyers to take care of regular corporation work, tax matters, real estate, estate planning, litigation and others.

Some of the significant changes in the role of the modern lawyer have been from the "county courtroom" to the "city conference room;" that is with the growth of administrative agencies and such procedures as the pretrial conference, the time lawyers spend in the courtroom has been greatly diminished. "The rise of administrative agencies . . . has demanded a new breed of lawyers and a new rubric in the law unknown in 1900: administrative law." The modern lawyer now practices preventive law. It is now his major duty to keep his clients out of trouble.

Perhaps the most interesting section of the book to students and lawyers is that part which describes the behind-the-scenes actions of such famous attorneys as Francis N. Bangs, Francis L. Stetson, John W. Davis, and Paul D. Cravath. However, this reviewer is of the opinion that this material would not be of interest to the layman—for whom the author says the book was written. The author finally turns to describing the modern lawyer as a member of society in the final three chapters. For this reason, this reviewer thinks the author has failed in his stated purpose. The historical development would not be of sufficient interest to the layman to hold his attention to the final three chapters.

The reviewer feels that the book is a practical contribution to the law student and the novice attorney who wants to learn more about the profession in which he has chosen to make his life's work. It clearly points out some of the demands which will be placed upon him and the standards by which he will be measured.

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