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President's Page

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President's Page

There are many organized groups in which membership is confined to lawyers. Some lawyers become members of most of such available groups, some select a limited number and a few lawyers hold membership only in such organization as is required as a condition of engaging in the active practice of law. In each such class of members there are some who approach the group with enthusiasm, eagerly seeking an opportunity to participate in the activity of the group. In far greater numbers are those "members" whose attitude is primarily that of "here I am, what will you do for me today." Do members of the Bar have the privilege to arbitrarily determine that they will or will not take an active part in the community effort of their fellows? I suggest that we assume, as a part of our professional tradition, the absolute responsibility of willingly devoting a part of our time and talent to the furtherance of the goal of every Bar organization of improvement of our legal system.

The law, its procedures and its place in our organized society, cannot be static, contentedly resting in nostalgic contemplation of past glories and service to our way of life. We must keep abreast of society's need of the law, recognize and overcome our own limitations and shortcomings but, above all, be aware of the tremendous power of the law to preserve the basic freedoms of the individual by placing about each person the protective cordon of equal justice. Perhaps occasionally it does require twelve years to determine whether a particular person shall respond to the pronounced judgment of his peers — should we substitute therefor speedy execution of a sentence by an administrative official from whose declaration there is no recourse?

Only through free interchange of thought, with recognition of the views of others and ultimate translation of agreed-upon aims into effective group action can lawyers hope to have our profession attain the fulfillment of our professional responsibilities to the public and to ourselves. The public has the right to expect lawyers to reconcile their individual viewpoints and to take the lead in

programs involving the public interest. When we hear that a particular locale has a strong Bar, it usually follows that there is an effective Bar Association in which the lawyers of that locale actively participate in working towards common goals with mutual respect evident among them.

In West Virginia, the effectiveness of the State Bar and the Bar Association is determined by the interest of their members. Within these groups the lawyers of West Virginia have an opportunity for advancement of professional competence and discharge of professional responsibilities which should not be lost by individual inaction.

Stanley Higgins, Jr.