

FROM THE EDITOR...

THE PUBLICATION OF the *Law & Society Review* results from a growing need on the part of social scientists and lawyers for a forum in which to carry on an interdisciplinary dialogue. During the past decade, each of the social sciences has found it necessary to face legal policy issues of highest relevance to the disciplines themselves and to the society as a whole. In political science, the decision process in the courts and administrative agencies have been explored to an extent which parallels earlier and continuing work on the legislatures. Political scientists have also turned their attention to the implementation of legal decisions, especially where the institutions of government have been seen as an important determinant of the impact of law. Sociologists, too, are showing increasing interest in the legal process. Their studies have been concerned with the manner in which the population is affected by law in such areas as civil rights, poverty, and crime. Both professions have joined with the anthropologists in studying the relationship between society and culture on the one hand and the nature and operation of legal institutions on the other. In addition, other professional groups – notably economists, social workers, clinical and social psychologists, and psychiatrists – are increasingly called upon for information thought to be of value in the formulation of legal policy. Above all, the legal profession has moved from a position of reluctant consumer of such information to an active participant in the research process.

With so many diverse disciplines attending to legal issues, it becomes increasingly important and valuable that there be created a forum for the interchange of ideas on law and the social sciences. Even if there were need only to coordinate the kind of information utilized in legal policy making, some locus for the exchange of ideas would be needed. Since legal policy characteristically affects the whole of society, policies formulated with reference to only one of its facets would surely be inadequate. But in addition, an analysis of origins and effects of legal policy constitutes a crucial task for the theoretical understanding of the nature of the social order. Whatever the

case for individual disciplines developing independently, few would deny the value of social sciences ultimately combining insights to understand the larger picture. If law is correctly viewed as a conduit through which all of the diverse institutional elements of the society simultaneously flow, it must constitute a critical point for effective interdisciplinary collaboration.

The *Review* aims at facilitating such collaboration. Its articles will be drawn from all of the professional fields mentioned above. This first issue contains contributions by a lawyer (Auerbach), a political scientist (Becker), sociologists, (Carlin, Howard, Messinger and Skolnick) and a graduate student in law and sociology (Lempert). Moreover, the editorial work of the *Review* is carried out by an interdisciplinary team of professors and graduate students in these fields. In future issues the student board will undertake to develop a section of notes, comments, and items on a variety of topics:

1. Social science evidence in legal adjudication.
2. Issues of legal policy in social science perspective.
3. Methodological problems and techniques.
4. Research opportunities and reports.
5. Programs of sociolegal training.

Thus the very work of producing the *Review* may be expected to contribute to the fulfillment of one of the greatest needs of the field, namely, the creation of a professional cadre who are able to move freely from their original disciplinary base into the related fields.

In undertaking this enterprise, the editors have no doubt that their efforts will reflect the uncertainties and false starts which inevitably characterize exploratory activity. We invite and hope for a free flow of comments from our readers concerning the present direction and future course of this *Review*. Even more important, we hope that reader reaction will take the form of manuscripts which will permit a steady growth in the quality and significance of the *Review*.

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