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Introduction

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Abstract

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KEYWORDS: Civil Rights, Industry, Public interest

Introduction

BRUCE S. ROGOW*

We initially conceived the Nova Conference on Public Interest Practice in Florida as an educational and a supportive meeting. It was to provide an opportunity for public interest lawyers to learn new developments in the law and, perhaps more importantly, the Conference was to encourage new members of the Bar to become engaged in public interest practice.

I am not sure how much substantive law anyone took away from the Conference, although the opportunity was provided. I am not sure how many new entrants were recruited into the field, although we tried to encourage them with wonderful tales of success and attorney's fees under the Civil Rights Attorney's Fee Act.

I am sure that those already engaged in public interest practice in Florida left feeling invigorated and ready to pursue new frontiers. There was a spirit of community among the participants which reflected the closeness which has developed among a small number of Florida lawyers who have, for the past fifteen years, made Florida public interest practice a growth industry.

Some of the people whose views are on the next few pages are among that group. Tobias Simon, supervisor of the Nova Experimental Federal Litigation Program, was the founder, in 1966, of a federally funded legal services program in Miami which spawned a host of important law reform cases and which created another program, Florida Rural Legal Services, the state's largest legal services program. Dan Bradley, now President of the Legal Services Corporation, began his

* Professor of Law, Nova University Law Center. Professor Rogow began his public interest practice in Mississippi in 1965 and 1966, representing civil rights workers. He returned to Florida (he is a graduate of the University of Florida College of Law) and was Assistant Director of Legal Services of Greater Miami until 1972. From 1972 to 1975 he taught at the University of Miami and came to Nova when the Law School opened in 1975. During the past decade, Professor Rogow has argued over 75 public interest cases in various state and federal appellate courts, including six cases in the Supreme Court of the United States.

public interest practice in Florida Rural Legal Services.

Chesterfield Smith has for years served as a pillar of reassurance for all of us who have felt ostracized in our roles as public interest advocates. When we felt no sympathy or understanding from the organized bar, there was Chesterfield, ABA President elect, ABA President, ABA former President, taking up our cause, attending American Civil Liberties Union dinner, lending his name to fairness.

This is a good state for the public interest practitioner. People like Chesterfield, Toby, Dan, and a long list of other Florida lawyers have kindled an ongoing commitment to legal progress, although some pockets of legal provincialism remain. But on balance, one must recognize the increasing quality of our state trial and appellate judges, and the fact that more and more, these appointments are coming from the ranks of people who have shown a commitment to the poor, to minorities, to the aged and the handicapped.

Alan Morrisison's remarks, and Chief Justice England's Isaac Asimov-like opinion, look to the days of deregulation and free-market competition for legal services. Their ideas are thought provoking and the time they describe may come, but for the thousands of people in Florida who are too poor to afford a lawyer, or too handicapped by physical, emotional or societal barriers, the words of Dan Bradley and Chesterfield offer more solace.

So read the views of our friends and come to your own conclusions. We at Nova look forward to a future in which our graduates will play a vital role in shaping public interest practice in the next century, whatever form that practice takes.