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Montana State University Law School on the move

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"Things are on the move" at the Montana State University Law School in the opinion of an American Bar Association official quoted in the August issue of the MSU Law School News.

John Hervey, adviser to the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admission to the Bar, made the comment in his report to the Section Council following his latest routine accreditation visit to the Montana school.

"In the opinion of the adviser," Hervey's report continues, "the progress here has well outdistanced the progress in state-related schools generally. ... It definitely is not ... 'just another state-related law school'."

Stating that the school has a splendid plant, an excellent faculty, and a sound program, Hervey says that MSU is capturing more and more topflight law students. "This means, of course," he says, "that you must continue to match them with topflight teachers and in such numbers as to keep them happy."

In the Law School News article quoting Hervey, MSU Law Dean Robert E. Sullivan tells of plans to appoint two additional faculty members in the coming biennium. The staff additions will permit the teaching of courses which were authorized in a curriculum revision of a few years ago and will insure continuation of the school's extensive legal writing program. The dean hopes to add a third new staff member to enable the school to inaugurate a practical skills program in cooperation with the Montana Bar Association.

The Hervey report commends the school for a good job of continuing legal education but suggests that more can be done not only to make public officials more effective but also to wed the University to community leaders in Montana. (more)
On this point, Dean Sullivan says the school will cooperate with the MBA in a coordinated plan of lectures, institutes and short courses. He hopes that an extensive program in continuing legal education will be launched within two years and that a legal aid program utilizing law students will be started.

Hervey calls attention to the major problem of the flight of superior minds to other states for schooling and their failure to return to Montana. "It seems to me," he writes, "that you have begun to turn the tide and I would hope that you may do even more with increased funds for scholarships. You are fortunate to have the support of the organized bar in this effort."

Dean Sullivan points to significant progress in the degree to which Montana lawyers are helping to provide scholarships; but he stresses the need for continued effort if the best students are to be kept in Montana. Almost half the 40 applicants for scholarships for the coming year had to be turned down for lack of funds, he reports. Because this is a problem of the profession as well as the school, the MBA has taken the initiative in soliciting support for scholarships and will continue to appeal to all Montana lawyers, not just MSU alumni, for contributions.

The dean's article treats the school's progress to date and its plans for the future in such areas as faculty, student body, curriculum, law library, financial aid to students, placement of graduates and public service. Dean Sullivan places particular emphasis on the last aspect of the school's function, stressing the faculty's part in improving the administration of justice and modernizing Montana law and the school's role in providing continuing education for laymen charged with quasi-legal responsibilities as well as for lawyers.

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