

## CENTER RE-VISITED

Two years ago (December, 1973), there was the idea of a public interest law firm, the Center for Public Representation. There was a need for clinical opportunities for second and third year law students; there was an empty suite of offices available on the second floor of a University Avenue office building; there was a dynamic director, and hope for a modest foundation grant to use as planning and "start up" money. The Center opened in March, 1974.

Today (December, 1975), the dynamic director is still there. Louise Trubek has the assistance of four full-time lawyers, one part-time lawyer, two law school professors, part-time; two part-time Directors of Research, a group of second and third year law students each semester, participants in the Law School's Clinical Program; seven undergraduate interns, a few non-student volunteers, and a small supportive clerical staff. The Center has doubled its office space.

The Center for Public Representation is very much in business. This development, according to Mrs. Trubek, is especially noteworthy, because it is counter to a nation-wide decline of such organizations.

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It has been a busy two years, spent in developing a variety of means to meet the Center's original purposes: 1) to provide representation for individuals and organizations before state and administrative agencies in Wisconsin; 2) to provide field experiences for law students; 3) to provide training for lay advocates and education for community leaders; 4) to conduct historical and social research in law and the administrative process. It is number 2, of course, which provides the link between the Center and the Law School.

Many organizations such as the Racine Urban League, the Wisconsin League of Women Voters, the National Organization of Women, the Spanish-American Organization of Madison and the Wisconsin Consumers League have retained the Center in a variety of activities in the public interest. These include efforts to increase participation by citizens in the decision-making processes in a number of state agencies, to promote equal employment opportunity; to protect patients' rights in institutions and hospitals, to promote strict compliance with the open meeting laws.

The problems connected with the "re-integration" of ex-offenders into the communities on release has been a major responsibility assumed by the Center. The Center has supported changes in administrative rules of state and local government agencies and the removal of discriminatory language and ambiguities, such as "good moral character" in the qualifications listed for occupational licenses which apply unfairly to certain individuals. Insurance coverage, often denied to ex-offenders, is the subject of a major study made by the Center staff assisted by a citizens' advisory committee, in cooperation with the Insurance Commissioner of Wisconsin.

Educational projects undertaken by the Center include many informational publications. *A Citizen's Guide to Open Government*, *Wisconsin's Transportation System—Is It Worth Our Energy*, and *The Wisconsin State Building Commission and the Human Environment: You Have a Right to Participate* are only a few.

In cooperation with other organizations, Center staff members have participated in conferences in a number of Wisconsin cities dealing with public questions such as taxation and citizen advocacy on behalf of the elderly. A November 8th Conference seeking improvements in the delivery of legal services was jointly sponsored by the Center and the State Bar of Wisconsin.

In order to encourage organizations to develop their own staffs of lay advocates, the Center established the first para-legal training program in Wisconsin. It is an intensive course, consisting of 10 two-hour sessions.

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All agree that the work of the Center will continue to grow. Although long range financial planning is not yet possible, there is hope in the future. The Wisconsin Council on Criminal Justice has made a grant for the "reintegration" project. The Law School budget pays for the supervision of the law students who are working for Law School credit. Individual contributions and foundation grants continue to provide support.

Professors Arlen Christenson and George Bunn are on leave half-time to work at the Center. Professor Christenson is at present the Co-Director. Professor David Trubek serves as Research Director, also part-time.

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