The Class of 1975 is graduating from law school at a time when the legal profession appears to be beginning a process of substantial change. Therefore, just as you have had a unique opportunity, as students, to help to create a new law school, you will be able, as members of the bar, to participate in the restructuring and revitalization of an ancient profession.

For some time it has been said that there is an over-abundance of lawyers in the United States. What the profession is belatedly coming to recognize, is that, in fact, we do not have sufficient lawyers to accomplish the job that we should be doing. The real difficulty is not that there are too many lawyers, but that we have been failing to do an adequate job of providing legal services to people who so badly need them. Significant progress has been made with respect to poor people, although we would be deluding ourselves if we were complacently to assume that that job is being satisfactorily done. Even more pressing, however, is the situation of middle- and lower-middle-class people who have virtually no access to legal services that they need for a broad variety of essential human concerns.

Our professional responsibility in that regard is clearly set forth in Canon 2 of the Code of Professional Responsibility: A LAWYER SHOULD ASSIST THE LEGAL PROFESSION IN FULFILLING ITS DUTY TO MAKE LEGAL COUNSEL AVAILABLE. One extremely important way of achieving that goal is through pre-paid legal services. Although the organized bar has previously resisted efforts toward that goal, achievement of it now seems inevitable.

In addition, we are beginning to break down the strictures against advertising and solicitation by lawyers. As a result, large numbers of people who have previously been kept in ignorance of their legal rights and of the availability of legal services will be given realistic access to legal counsel. Indeed, several decisions in the Supreme Court have confirmed that constitutional right, such as freedom of speech and association, due process, and the right to petition for redress of grievances, cannot properly be overridden in the name of "professional standards."

The one thing that I would most like to impress upon you, as Hofstra Law School graduates and as people about to become members of the bar, is that ours is a profession of service. Too many people, however, are ignorant of their rights, uncertain as to how to seek help, and even mistrustful of whether lawyers truly want to help them. Accordingly, it is essential that we act in an affirmative way to reach out to people who may need legal assistance, and thereby to "assist the legal profession in fulfilling its duty to make legal counsel available" to everyone who might need our help.

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