At a recent conference of the Society of American Law Teachers, the view was expressed that students come to law school full of fervor to further social justice and law reform, and leave with no other interest than to practice in prestigious law firms and become rich. The law school experience is thus viewed as one that is destructive of idealism and that produces a profession of legal technicians devoid of a sense of social responsibility.

Although I agree that the legal profession as a whole has failed in its responsibilities to society, I do not agree that the cause of that failure is to be found in legal education. Certainly law school did not have that effect on those of us who attended the SALT conference to voice our dismay over the state of our profession. Somehow we survived the law school experience with social consciences intact and, with the benefit of our training in lawyering skills, we are now able to deal more effectively with what we believe to be injustices in society. Those of us at the Conference, however, were only a small proportion of those in legal education, and an even smaller fraction of the legal profession as a whole. What happened, then, to all those others who entered law school with the sole goal in mind of righting social wrongs?

The answer, it seems to me, is clear. Those people never existed. Law School did not destroy their sense of social justice, because they never had it in the first place. That, at any rate, is the conclusion that I draw after a quarter of a century of involvement with law students as a student, teacher, and administrator.

That conclusion should surprise no one. As they say in the computer field, "Garbage in, garbage out." We admit people into law school principally on the basis of their technical skill in attaining high test scores, either by repeating back what they have been told, or by marking the appropriate box in a short-answer machine-graded examination. We give virtually no weight in law school admissions, to a candidate's manifest concern with social problems. The end product of a legal education, therefore, is not conditioned in the classroom, but is predet-
the Dean

dermined before students enter class, in the admissions process.

At Hofstra, we have taken a significantly different approach to law school admissions. Because law school and law practice require intellectual facility, we do rely heavily on the candidate's academic achievement in college (although our primary focus is on the transcript, rather than cumulative grade point average). We minimize, however, the weight given to Law School Admission Test scores. Most important, we give substantial attention to the candidate's demonstrated concern with social problems, as manifested in work and in extracurricular activities. One thing that policy unquestionably gives us is a far more interesting student body than is generally found at law schools, a factor which serves to enrich the legal educational experience for the faculty as well as for the students.

The ultimate test of that policy, however, will be the performance of our graduates. We know that a majority go into the public sector. We also take pride, however, in the fact that Hofstra Law School graduates are working at the most prestigious private law firms in the country. That, in itself, does not signal the death of idealism. Some of the most important social-legal reforms have been brought about by the PRO BONO activities of private practitioners. Whether you enter public or private practice, therefore, your professional service as members of the bar will be the true measure of the success or failure of Hofstra's policy to select its students in substantial part on the basis of demonstrated commitment to social reform. I have no doubt that you will fulfill our highest expectations.