



Volume 2

1948

A Legal Center for the Great Southwest

Robert G. Storey

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Recommended Citation

Robert G. Storey, *A Legal Center for the Great Southwest*, 2 Sw L.J. 1 (1948)
<https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr/vol2/iss1/1>

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SOUTHWESTERN LAW JOURNAL

(Formerly Texas Law and Legislation)

VOLUME II

SPRING, 1948

NUMBER I

A LEGAL CENTER FOR THE GREAT SOUTHWEST

**Dean Robert G. Storey*

UPON my return recently from a trip to South America, I found that a number of current magazines and periodicals had accumulated on my desk at home. As I read these issues the velocity of social, economic and political change became increasingly apparent. Within the short space of a few weeks the topic of peace had turned to possibility of war, plans for reviving the Selective Service were discussed, several countries had reorganized their governments, strikes were threatened in many industries and a new speed record for jet propelled aircraft had been established. I began to wonder if many of our institutions were geared for such rapid changes. Obviously they are not.

The horse and buggy, once the principal method of transportation, seems ancient and outmoded in an age of atomic bombs and jet propulsion. Comparable change is apparent in our system of law, public and private. Once largely the product of local necessity, the law has now become international in its scope. State lines and even national boundaries have dissolved into infinite oblivion as far as intercourse with other nations is concerned. Never before in history has the need for sound thinking and planning been felt so acutely. When the problem affecting our neighbors across the borders or even across the seas become as important as once were those involving our neighbors across the back fence—then we must become internationalists. Our thinking, our planning, must be on a global basis. The world has not shrunk but science and invention through technological advancement have had the effect of shrinking it and brought what were once remote places very near to us.

*Dean SMU School of Law, President, Southwestern Legal Foundation, Member Law firm, Storey, Sanders, Sherrill & Armstrong, Dallas, Texas.

Yes, the velocity of social and governmental change is unprecedented. Leaders and thinkers all over the world are longing for the law that protects liberty and the law that is based upon reason, morality and justice. But where can the scholars, teachers, successful lawyers, judges, leaders in governmental affairs, and outstanding independent thinkers be brought together in such a unified plan of action. Such a rendezvous may be found in the Legal Center.

A representative group of lawyers and business men have organized "The Southwestern Legal Foundation" which proposes, in cooperation with the SMU Law School, to create a great Law Quadrangle and Legal Center in Dallas, Texas. A \$2,000,000.00 project, the physical plant of three buildings will be the Headquarters of the Legal Foundation and will house the Southern Methodist University School of Law. The Law School and the Legal Foundation will work harmoniously and closely in establishing and operating The Southwestern Legal Center and its activities will include the following:

RESEARCH

Realizing the constancy of change—research is regarded as one of the most important phases of Legal Center activity. Special fields of law of peculiar interest to the Southwest, such as Oil and Gas, Insurance, Labor Law and Taxation, will be developed by joint efforts of the Law School and the Southwestern Legal Foundation. It is anticipated that special grants, fellowships and specific research undertakings will be financed by the Foundation. Behind every institute, lecture or publication, and behind all activities of the Legal Center will be the laborious research that makes for progress in the law. At this very moment outstanding members of the profession are working toward a revision of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure. There are many other fields of law in which research is needed.

Research will be directed by selected members of the faculty of the Law School, specialists from the profession, outstanding judges

and lawyers, and by men in government and business. Such careful research benefits the public as well as the legal profession. Today the judges, the lawyers, and the public alike, are harassed in many matters by the interpretation of hasty and ill-considered legislation on our Statute Books. If many of these proposed measures could be put through the "legislative mill," could run the gamut of public opinion, and be given mature pro and con discussion before enactment, a clarification would result which would not only save time but enable the attorney to more intelligently advise his client. It is planned that the Legal Center may provide such a laboratory.

INSTITUTES

The attorney of today would be unusual indeed who could lay claim to a current working knowledge of many fields of the law. The busy practicing lawyers cannot expect to keep abreast of all new developments, yet, sources should be available. One method offered is the Institute. While less formal than graduate courses, it does provide post-admission training and clinics for the busy lawyer. During the past few months all over the country Institutes of a similar nature were the means of bringing the returning service man up to date on new changes in the law.

Institutes will be conducted periodically through the cooperation of the Legal Center and Bar Associations of the Southwest in various fields of the law. Under the auspices of the Southwestern Legal Foundation, Tax Institutes, conducted by outstanding attorneys have been presented in key cities during the past few months. Such Institutes are only another medium through which the results of the study and research of the Legal Center will be carried to the practicing attorney in his own locality. They are an essential part of continuing education for the bar.

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

There was a time when the Town Hall was the center of civic activity. Heated and impassioned debates in such centers by the

lawyer and the layman alike laid the very groundwork for our free thinking today. Possibly we have drifted too far away from such *Colonial Ideas*. If there were ever a time when we needed concerted action, it is now.

It is planned that the Legal Center will become a laboratory to test ideas; a place where thoughtful and experienced judges, legislators, law school professors, business men and representatives of both management and labor, working in the non-controversial air of the Legal Center, will seek to find solutions to the many complex legal problems that disturb our people.

INSTITUTES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

The world and the law alike are admittedly in a period of crisis. Problems of world organization require not only knowledge of international law but of foreign relations. Probably there is no period in history when more fundamental laws and constitutions are being written or considered than today. Most of them are patterned after, or inspired by, the Constitution of the United States of America.

International relations are, or should be, of vital concern to every citizen. Our daily lives will be affected by the type of peace that is finally written between our former enemies and our present allies. The time has come when we should read as much about foreign relations as we do the baseball scores or the comic strips. We have realized the folly of thinking only in terms of county or state boundaries in considering the effect of law and justice. Hence, one outstanding object of the Legal Center will be to encourage study in international law and foreign affairs and to promote institutes on foreign relations, especially as affecting our relations with South America.

We propose to take full advantage of the Fullbright Act to exchange students and professors with friendly foreign governments.

It is also planned to conduct under the auspices of the Southwestern Legal Foundation and Southern Methodist University an

annual institute on foreign affairs similar to the Cleveland Institute of Foreign Affairs.

LEGAL AID CLINIC

If the profession is to meet its responsibility to society it must furnish free legal aid to those who cannot pay for legal services. A free Legal Aid Clinic has just started in Dallas through the cooperation of the Legal Center; the Junior Bar Association, and the City-County Welfare Department. Such activity will provide clinical facilities to senior law students and give them much needed practical experience and at the same time serve a pressing community need. Such a project seems mandatory in a community where great strides have been made in other fields of social service.

Less than a year ago many of the plans above outlined were only in the thinking stage—pure “paper talk.” The desired goal seemed a long way ahead—the skeptics were many. But what once seemed a dream is now an assured reality.

In November 1947 a modern three-story class room building of Georgian architecture and a five-acre plot of ground were dedicated to the exclusive use of the Southwestern Legal Center and the Southern Methodist University School of Law. Conservatively valued at \$500,000, this magnificent gift will provide ample grounds for the construction of two proposed new buildings which will complete the Law Quadrangle.

Once the physical plant is finished, I am convinced that there is no limit to the amount or character of work that can be conducted in the Legal Center. Many attempts have been made to solve our complex legal problems but most of them have failed for lack of purpose and perseverance. In the great Southwest, with a tradition of pioneering and struggle, what greater challenge could there be to the organized bar and the public than to solve some of these problems through determined work in a great Legal Center?