

Admissions Ceremony

9 September 2002

Chief Justice's observations

On behalf of the Judges, I congratulate you. Your admission today signifies great achievement, and signals your capacity to serve your community with distinction.

Public service underpins your new profession. In acting for clients, you will indirectly benefit the community through providing the expert legal services necessary for the civilized resolution of disputes, and for the orderly advancement of individual interests. More fundamentally, you become now part of the mechanism which assures the linchpin of civil society, the rule of law.

A year and a day ago, on 10th September 2001, we held admissions ceremonies in this court, at which I expressed similar sentiments. Then with dramatic irony the following morning, we witnessed the horrible destruction of life and property wrought by persons without respect for the rule of law. Those events illustrated both the indispensability, and the fragility, of that stipulation. However apparently robust our democracy, its foundations demand continual recognition and reinforcement. It falls to lawyers especially to uphold this pillar of civilized interaction.

To the discharge of your responsibilities you will, we trust, bring integrity, intellect and judgment; and as well, compassionate regard for those less fortunate. The involvement of lawyers in the provision of services pro bono or at reduced rates is warmly encouraged, and you should regard it as a natural corollary of the privilege you now enjoy.

Most of you will enter into practice as lawyers, and in doing so, you will participate in the life of a noble profession, where collegial interaction is a markedly beneficial feature. Youthful influence has been beneficial for the practising profession in recent years, in actively drawing attention to the importance of balance: balance between commitment to professional work on the one hand and on the other, those other important enduring features, such as the interest of one's family and friends and the desirability of a broad rather than narrow focus on the business of living.

I spoke a moment ago of a "noble profession". The legal profession in this State has in recent times attracted criticism of substantial order. There is no place in our profession for rapacity, or misleading conduct, or deceit. I have great confidence in by far the great bulk of the profession, and it is regrettable that public confidence may be eroded by the unacceptable approach of but a few. You should not be discouraged by recent events, but rather encouraged, as you enter now a profession apparently determined to reassert the prime ethical standard which should characterize all its members.

And so you go forward, with our good wishes, which we extend also to your families and friends who no doubt have assisted you substantially to your present point of achievement. I hope you will continue to draw strength and inspiration from their wise counsel.

Finally, to those of you who may not enter into legal practice as such, you will of course remain lawyers, and that distinction will always signify both mental acuity and ethical commitment.

We again congratulate you, ladies and gentlemen, and warmly wish you well.