

Lawyers' Role, Duties for Public

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Concerned about the public's growing uneasiness about the legal profession, the Allegheny County Bar Association yesterday launched a program designed to inform the public about what it does.

In return, the association hopes to become more familiar with the needs of the public.

"I can't tell you how much of a change in attitude this represents," Donald L. Very, president of the association said at a news conference in the Pittsburgh Press Club. "We're aware of the criticism."

The bar association will run half-page ads in the Pittsburgh Press and Post-Gazette Monday in what it believes is a program unprecedented in both content and concept in the United States.

Very said the U.S. Supreme Court ruling permitting lawyers to advertise constituted a major change in the legal profession. He said the number of lawyers actually advertising is minimal but that the bar association decided its program is the best way to reach the public in an institutional way.

(James I. Smith III, executive director of the association said that of 4,200



DONALD L. VERY

lawyers in Allegheny County only nine have run ads, only three or four are now advertising and those who have advertised say their advertising has not had much impact).

Very said the association, in formulating its plan, did so because the pub-

lic does not understand who lawyers are, what they do, what a bar association does and what services are available to the public through the bar association. On the other hand, he said, lawyers do not know all the needs of the public.

Monday's ads call attention to services provided by the bar association, including free pamphlets, free speakers' bureau, courthouse tour program and the Lawyer Referral Service.

The second phase of the project will include a community meeting to be held in June and the third phase involves efforts to inform the public about legal services and to learn from the public what additional services are needed.

Very emphasized that the bar association opposes live television courtroom coverage. He said such coverage would be an inhibiting factor on judges, lawyers, jurors and litigants. Very testified against TV coverage at hearings before a committee of the American Bar Association in Washington, D.C., last week.

At that time he said:

"We don't need it, the Constitution does not demand it, the public doesn't want it and judges can do without it."

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