7-29-1992

An Idea Before Its Time; Out of Africa; Vague Law Means Work for Lawyers and Economists

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AN IDEA BEFORE ITS TIME -- Could the Tailhook sex scandal that rocked the Navy have been avoided? Maybe so, says retired Air Force Lt. Col. Frank C. Gentner. As director of evaluation for the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute in 1985 and under the auspice of the chief of Navy personnel, Gentner conducted a Navy-wide survey to identify flag officer opinions on equal opportunity (EO) issues, including sexual harassment, and the suitability of a proposed EO/sexual harassment training seminar. Although nearly 75 percent of the 252 admirals surveyed endorsed the need for special EO and sexual harassment training, this proposed major thrust never happened.

"After the sponsor, then chief of Navy personnel, retired early due to illness, the proposed training became a back-burner issue," says Gentner, a senior technical analyst for the University of Dayton Research Institute. "From the survey, admirals believe that while much had improved about the equal opportunity climate, the EO program had been only moderately effective. They appeared ready for a change in the program. Admirals stated by far the most significant element of an effective EO program is the commanding officer's role in modeling active support of EO and resolving issues in the chain of command."

Call Frank Gentner at (513) 255-4842. For a copy of the study, call Teri Rizvi at (513) 229-3241.

OUT OF AFRICA -- A military coup in the West African nation of Sierra Leone this spring did not stop a group of UD students from spending a month working at the Association for Rural Development, where they created a computerized database of development projects, a marketing strategy for the newly privatized post office and fund-raising proposals. Three of the five students, recent UD graduates, plan to return to Freetown in mid-September for a year of voluntary service. "We're not there to save the country," says Ann Hudock, a UD graduate student who spent a year in Sierra Leone. "We're there to learn about ourselves and live in community."

Call Ann Hudock at (513) 229-4122 or 228-2305. UD graduates returning are Jenny Battaglini of Rochester, N.Y., (716) 223-8977 or (716) 248-9070; Wendell Tucker of Columbus, (614) 436-8050; and Marnie Portland of Philadelphia (215) 533-2352. Mary Harvan, one of two UD graduates finishing a year of service there, returns Aug. 10 and can be reached in Canton at (216) 494-3604.

VAGUE LAW MEANS WORK FOR LAWYERS AND ECONOMISTS -- The American Disabilities Act, which took effect Sunday, requires sweeping changes in the way employers respond to the needs of disabled employees. However, the law is vague and difficult to interpret, says Ralph Frasca, chairman of the economics and finance department at the University of Dayton. "I expect a lot of businesses are going to make modifications not required by the law just to be on the safe side," Frasca says. The law includes such terms as "undue hardship," that Frasca says are left to economists and lawyers to define. "Businesses have a responsibility to accommodate disabled employees; how far they have to go is unclear."

Call Ralph Frasca at (513) 229-2405.