

SEMINARS—A METHOD AND A PURPOSE

During the school year of 1948-49 a sizeable number of Law students discovered that the most satisfactory way of learning law was to talk it over together. On the basis of this realization, many of us took part in "bull sessions," or "jam sessions," or if you wish, discussion groups or seminars. The great advantage of participation in such groups is that one is either compelled to explain a particular point of law or one must be able to frame an intelligent question thereon. This kind of learning is undoubtedly a luxury. Nevertheless, it is a useful luxury, because it enables the earnest student to fix firmly in his mind the point of law which he is called upon to discuss.

In the fall of 1949 a majority of the students decided that the proper manner of handling these discussion groups was to set them up on a formal, but voluntary, basis. This would be an adaptation of the Oxford tutorial system. The innovation of this method of learning law would require the expert guidance of a member of the Faculty rather than trusting to the hit-or-miss leadership of a student.

The approval of the introduction of the seminar system at the Law School was sought. The Faculty not only approved but showed great enthusiasm for the scheme. Their attitude is greatly appreciated by the students. Although, as yet, few seminars have been held, joint committees of the Faculty and the students are planning ten or twelve discussion sessions. Thus, the academic year of 1949-50 may provoke more pertinent legal discussion on the part of the students than has ever taken place heretofore within the precincts of the Provincial Building.

LAW TEACHING IS CRITICIZED

Dr. Karl N. Llewellyn Betts, Professor of Jurisprudence at Columbia University, in a recent issue of the Duke University Law School Journal of Legal Education has sharply criticized the case system method of teaching in law schools.

Professor Llewellyn particularly criticizes the practice of some teachers in furnishing a court's decision along with the problem presented for study. This method of "approaching the case from the rear can jeopardize and even defeat the possibilities of case teaching by focussing attention on the answer to the problem rather than on the techniques of solution."

Professor Llewellyn declares: "The case system can be directly vicious on the point of acquiring needed information about the state of the rules of law, because the effect over three years of limiting a student's required reading substantially to fifteen or so pages a day—conveniently collected in a single book—is to discourage that very habit and skill of independent outside reading and searching which is one major part of every professional man's equipment."