1-1-1988

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SYMPOSIUM

CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT CONFERENCE
SANTA CLARA, CALIFORNIA, OCTOBER 10, 1987

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME TO THE CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT CONFERENCE

Robert W. Peterson*

An unpopular Chief Justice and shifting political winds recently focused an unprecedented amount of attention on the California Supreme Court. Whether the storm has passed, or whether we are enjoying the false calm of the hurricane's eye remains to be seen. The intense debate, however, raised, but failed to resolve, many fundamental questions about our modern court's role. The purpose of this conference is to seize upon the opportunity, during this time of relative calm, to reflect (without the impediment of political rhetoric, if such is possible) on some of those questions.

We have been fortunate to gather a truly outstanding group to stimulate and guide us. Present and former supreme court and court of appeal justices have agreed to share their expertise. Thoughtful academic observers, legislators, and litigators also offered their own insight. And, of course, Bernard Witkin, who is a California legal institution in his own right, could hardly be kept away.

We enjoyed presenting the program, and we hope that readers will find this report of the proceedings stimulating and useful.

Frank K. Richardson**

I bring to each of you a warm welcome and best wishes from the Chief Justice of California, the Honorable Malcolm Lucas. You may know that fairly recently, he appointed a committee for the pur-
pose of examining into the procedural aspects and programs of the state supreme court. This committee comprises two active members of the court, the senior member of the court, Justice Stanley Mosk, who is with us this morning, and also Associate Justice Edward Panelli, who has long time roots and connections with this distinguished law school. In addition, Justice Robert Feinerman and Harry Low of the state courts of appeal and Dorothy Nelson and Joseph Sneed, Judges of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, Judge, retired, Shirley Hufstedler, former Judge of the Ninth Circuit as well as that imminent California legal scholar Mr. Bernie Witkin and Mr. Don Barrett who is a former very able principal attorney of the California Supreme Court for many years. The court has, as has been mentioned, a serious backlog and an increasingly heavy current workload. The commission has been asked to attempt to identify the particular areas of concern in terms of the area of the procedures of the court administratively, and if possible to devise and to suggest and recommend to the court, ways of improving and expediting the workload of the court. That very broad charge includes as the last charge to conduct any line of inquiry relevant to the end of improving the procedures of the court. Under that very broad charge, our committee is exceedingly interested in this conference today. Several of our members are here as participants, other members of court, as well as the staff of the Administrative Office of the court which serves the committee, are here as well. The school of law and Dean Uelmen are particularly to be congratulated for their foresight and their wisdom in the preparation and planning for the conference because not only of the timing but because of the fact that the importance of the court can be brought to the attention of the people. In doing so, I suggest to you very seriously that both the Dean and the law school are performing an important public service in focusing the attention and thought upon an institution which is of grave and serious importance to the people of the State of California and every citizen therein. So your presence here today is deeply appreciated by not only the members of the committee but by, I’m sure the law school and the Dean as well. We appreciate your attention and your attendance and your interest, and we will follow very, very closely your deliberations and your conclusions. Thank you so much.