TEXT:
Lawyers don't respect the truth. They "spin" or even lie as necessary to further their clients' interests. They don't want justice ... they want to win ... and if they think they can get away with it, they'll do just about anything to do so.

Lawyers don't care about the public ... all they care about is themselves ... and money.

The legal system is mysterious and lawyers like it that way. A non-lawyer doesn't have a chance going up against a lawyer ... and most of us can't afford our own lawyer.

The bar association is nothing but a "club" whose members watch out for each other rather than the public. People with a complaint about a lawyer have nowhere to go except to another lawyer. That's not much of an option.

According to national polls, more and more people think this way. In 1973, 24% of those surveyed expressed great confidence in lawyers. In 1978, 18% ... in 1988, 14% ... in 1992, 11% ... and in 1993, only 8%.

Newer and more specific polls indicate that three-fifths of the public think we lawyers are greedy; two-thirds believe that we are no longer "seekers of justice;" only one-fifth think of us as "honest and ethical;" and one-fourth believe that we "manipulate the legal system without regard to right and wrong."

Typical reactions among lawyers range from denial ("these polls are flawed" and "the public just doesn't understand our legal system") ... to irritation ("hey, show me another profession or group of citizens who contribute more to the betterment of society") ... to passive acceptance ("the public is wrong, but it's always going to feel that way"). Some of us even take the criticism personally ("Unfair! I'm a good person ... I care about the public ... I'm not greedy").

In this month's Perspectives column, Randy Roth addresses just one aspect of these complex phenomena. In future columns, he'll consider others.

Legal Topics:

For related research and practice materials, see the following legal topics:
Criminal Law & ProcedureCounselRight to CounselGeneral Overview