



The Florida State University
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-1034

College of Law

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WASHINGTON OFFICE

June 30, 1987

Mr. Bill Mansfield
Tallahassee Democrat
P. O. Box 990
Tallahassee, Florida 32302

Dear Bill:

I am extremely grateful for your editorial in the Tallahassee Democrat. This attention helps us keep the proposed Caribbean Law Institute before our congressional delegation.

It is widely known that Senator Lawton Chiles yields great strength in his position as Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. Tremendous leadership roles are also being played by Dante Fascell as Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Bill Lehman as a member of the House Appropriations Committee.

On a recent trip to Washington, I was very impressed with the quality of our congressional delegation and their consensus on issues important to Florida. They viewed the Caribbean law Institute as an investment in future trade and there was no question of parochial reaction.

Congressman Smith, MacKay, Gibbons and Shaw offered extraordinary help as did other colleagues. It is very impressive the way in which Congressman Bill Grant has been received by his colleagues. Although a freshman, he already commands the respect of the leadership. Congressman Claude Pepper, one of the great figures in Congress, told me that Bill has a very promising future and that by his diligence he has proven he will make a great mark in Congress.

Bill Mansfield
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As we discussed, I credit Senator Bob Graham with getting FSU involved in its first Caribbean program.

I must say I feel good about the future of our state and the country from my extensive contact with your congressional delegation.

Sincerely,



Talbot D'Alemberte
Dean and Professor

TD/maf

cc: Senator Chiles
Senator Graham
Congressman Fascell
Congressman Gibbons
Congressman Grant
Congressman Lehman
Congressman MacKay
Congressman Pepper
Congressman Shaw
Congressman Smith

OUR
VIEW

The editorials below represent the opinion of this editorial board:

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Caribbean

New institute could spur trade

A half decade ago, President Ronald Reagan launched his Caribbean Initiative with much fanfare. It was intended to spur trade and development in the island nations; it has been less than a smashing success.

Now a second federally financed Caribbean initiative is being proposed: The Caribbean Law Institute. It does not promise instant solutions; it does promise efforts that could greatly facilitate future area trade and cooperation.

The proposal comes from Florida, and not from South Florida. It comes from the Florida State University College of Law, which would serve as co-leader of the project with the University of West Indies Faculty of Law in Barbados.

Tallahassee may seem an unlikely location for the Institute, but it is not for a pair of reasons:

First, the College of Law already conducts courses in the Caribbean, at the Summer Program in Law at Barbados. It enrolls not only students from FSU but from other U.S. universities. The college also offers five scholarships yearly for law students from the islands to study here.

The second, and perhaps more important, reason is the man who directs those programs, Elwin J. Griffith. A native of Barbados, Griffith spent seven years as dean of DePaul Law School before deciding the climate of North Florida was more to his liking than that of Chicago. Now at FSU, he has extensive contacts in legal and governmental circles throughout the Caribbean.

In the United States, organizations such as the American Law Institute and the Uniform Commissioners of State Laws have worked over decades to develop model laws that states could adopt to bring some order to the nation's hodge-podge of often-conflicting laws. One of the most important of these was the Uniform Commercial Code, which has been of great value to those engaged in interstate trade. The FSU-based Institute would be patterned after such organizations.

Many legal and governmental sys-

tems are well developed in the Caribbean — the Barbados parliament is 300 years old, for example. But the rich mix of laws stemming from such varied influences as the Spanish, Dutch and British can be confusing to the outsider.

The need for model laws to aid commerce in the area is obvious: Differing rules make area trading complex and difficult; many potential traders simply don't make the effort. But, Griffith says, there is already much cooperation between the judiciaries of many Caribbean nations that could serve as the basis for developing more-uniform laws.

Talbot "Sandy" D'Alemberte, dean of the FSU College of Law, sees the adoption of model laws as the possible start of a Caribbean Common Market — or more. "I can't help but think of our efforts to bring this nation together," he says. "It's exciting."

Exciting, but not grandiose. The FSU-based Institute plans no buildings, here or in the Caribbean. It would assign legal scholars to inventory the laws now in effect and would set up conferences bringing together lawyers, government officials and judges to determine the need for and to develop model laws. The cost of the program would be extremely modest for a federal project — \$1.5 million a year for five years. After the start up, the Institute would operate with private financing.

The Institute has the backing of the Florida legislative delegation with a special push from Sen. Bob Graham, who is credited by D'Alemberte with getting FSU involved in its first Caribbean program.

Is there a chance of getting even the small amount of money needed in this tight federal budget year? Says D'Alemberte: "If our congressional delegation is as good as I think it is and this idea is as good as I think it is and if the Caribbean is as important to the nation and to Florida as I think it is, I believe we will have the funding by Oct. 1."

Congress should make the small investment. This low-cost initiative could work — for the Caribbean, for Florida and for the nation.