Introduction

Japan is in the process of seriously considering several major changes to its judicial system, including bringing back jury trials, reforming judicial selection/evaluation, and radically changing legal education. In the past year, several groups including lawyers, legal educators, and private citizens have come from Japan to Hawai‘i to view our judicial system on programs organized by the School of Law. The largest such group was an eighty-seven-member delegation of lawyers from the Japan Federation of Bar Associations (JFBA), Japan's equivalent of the American Bar Association that spent a very busy week here last spring. Another significant group, the first-ever group consisting mostly of lay persons, came in late February of this year to get a first-hand impression of our jury system.

The efforts to reform legal education in Japan have made the most progress. These efforts have at least two origins. First, there is a strong feeling in Japan that they do not have enough lawyers to meet the demands of the new global economy.

Second, many feel that the current method of legal education in Japan does not adequately train lawyers. As with most of the rest of the world, legal education in Japan takes place at the undergraduate level and is not designed to train lawyers, but rather to provide a general education in law to a broad spectrum of undergraduate students, ninety-eight percent of whom have no intention of becoming lawyers. Under the current system of legal education, Japanese law professors often joke that they never see law majors who plan to sit for the bar exam, because they are too busy studying for the bar at off-campus cram schools. Those who are lucky enough to pass the bar exam do receive additional legal education at a national training center, but this training is still considered to be lacking, especially in skills training.

The current plan is to open new, graduate/professional law schools in the spring of 2003. In addition, changes are being made to the bar exam in Japan. Already, the pass rate has been doubled, and plans are under way for a new bar exam to be administered to graduates of the new law schools that would have a substantially higher pass rate. A number of colleges and universities in Japan are considering opening such schools, and the William S. Richardson School of Law, because of its quality and small size, is being touted in Japan as an excellent model to study.

Several delegations have come to Hawai‘i to visit our law school, including a high-level delegation from the Japanese Ministry of Education. In addition, Dean Lawrence C. Foster and Dean-Emeritus Richard Miller have gone to Japan to discuss the nature of American legal education at a number of public and private Japanese law faculties, including Meijo, Nihon, Aoyama Gakuin, Kwansei Gakuin, Ritsumeikan, and Hiroshima, as well as with the Japan Federation of Bar Associations.

We are especially pleased to present the articles collected here. Nottage and Miyazawa designed their extensive reports to interpret the current reforms in Japan for foreign audiences. The other contributing authors (Grodine, Levin, McAlinn, Rosen, and Schneider) have kindly allowed the APLPJ to reprint essays they originally published in Japan. Readers should appreciate that the authors wrote these essays for a Japanese audience and present them here to preserve an English language record of their voices in the discussion in Japan.

Our legal education colleagues in Japan are in the midst of an educational reform effort whose speed and breadth are unprecedented in Japan and which perhaps heralds broader changes throughout Japan's education system. We hope that these articles will be of some assistance in the evolving new system of Japanese legal
education that will build upon Japan's very fine tradition of undergraduate legal education and best serve the changing needs of Japanese society.

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