The public sector has difficulty in competing with private law firms for the best of the new law school graduates each year. Faced with economic realities, many graduates whose personal preference would be for a public service job find themselves compelled to take employment at a private firm. In an attempt to help those who would prefer a public service career to realize their ambitions, the Law School has instituted a loan forgiveness program that will aid graduates with lower salaries to meet their financial obligations. This is part of a new public service program that has been established by James Hormel, a 1958 graduate of the Law School, and Dean of Students from 1961–67.

On a recent visit to the Law School, Mr. Hormel discussed his life, his interest in public service projects, and the new programs. The first impression of James Hormel is of the stereotype of an English country squire, with tweeds and a gray mustache, a quiet and serious man.
First Participant in Loan Forgiveness Program

*Joan Meier* (J.D. '83) is the first graduate of the Law School to receive a loan under the Hormel Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. She is a lawyer with the Public Citizen Litigation Group, a ten-person law office in Washington, D.C. Ms. Meier's position is Director of Freedom of Information Clearinghouse. Her work involves answering inquiries from all around the country concerning Freedom of Information and Privacy Act requests. Most of her time is spent litigating cases under those Acts in the federal and District of Columbia courts.

Graduates who would like information about the loan forgiveness program and an application form should call or write to Assistant Dean Richard Badger, University of Chicago Law School, 1111 E. 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637. Telephone (312) 702-9484.

His background would seem to be an unlikely start for a lifetime interest in the problems of the not-so-well off, but Hormel did not fit comfortably into his background. The grandson of the founder of the giant Geo. A. Hormel & Co. meat packing and meat products company, James grew up in Austin, Minnesota where the company is based. He did not like growing up in a small community where he could not avoid being different and the focus of attention, at a time when, like all small boys, he needed to be just one of the crowd.

"It was impossible for me to get that in a community where the company was essentially the principal employer," he said.

At the age of thirteen he was sent to a boys' boarding school in North Carolina, but this experience was no more satisfying. Here the student body was so homogeneous, almost all coming from wealthy families in the Midwest and South, that James felt he did not get a very good exposure to the realities of the world. He also felt uncomfortable with the prevailing attitude at the school, an air of condescension of the patrician students to the plebeian world around him.

Hormel made a shaky start to his college career. He flunked out of Princeton after a wonderful year of doing nothing that vaguely resembled studying. A smile lit up his face at the memory. He finally settled down at Swarthmore and majored in history. On graduation, Hormel was not sure what to do next. He decided on law school with the expectation that a legal background would be useful in whatever he chose to do. One thing he was sure of and that was that he would not be returning to the family business. Although he later served on its board of directors for fifteen years, he has never played an active part in the firm. At the Law School he was especially interested in areas of the law involving notions of equity and constitutional issues, but found on graduation that law firms in the late 1950s were not actively engaged in these issues. He struggled with conventional law practice in Chicago for a few years, mostly in the fields of insurance defense, corporate practice, and the planning and execution of estates, but these did not hold particular interest for him. When the opportunity arose to return to the Law School as Dean of Students, he leapt at the chance, and never thereafter returned to the practice of law.

As Dean of Students at the Law School, Hormel succeeded *Jo Desha Lucas*, who wanted to devote his full attention to teaching. Whereas Lucas had held joint teaching and administrative posts, Hormel was full-time Dean of Students.

"The Law School was going through changes, particularly with respect to admissions. It was getting many more applications than before and they required a great deal more attention. It was quite a challenge at first. I was very young and had no administrative experience. It was all on-the-job training. Fortunately, Jo was there to help and Dean *Edward Levi*, during his last year as Dean, was a wonderful person to work with. His assistance was invaluable." Hormel settled in eagerly to his new post. "It was to me enormously exciting and rewarding to be a part of the University community. We moved back to Hyde Park (from Winnetka). I could walk to work. There were all kinds of stimulating people to be with and activities to be involved in."

The last few years of James Hormel's appointment as Dean of Students saw the beginnings of student unrest and a time of tension.

"It was increasingly difficult to be a part of the administration at a time when students were focusing on problems that led to conflict between students and the administration," he said. He feels that those on the University side were not necessarily unsympathetic with some of the students' causes. However, twenty years ago there were notions of responsibility, based on the old ideas of *in loco parentis* and these clouded the issues.

Hormel found it increasingly hard to represent the administration's point of view. In some instances he felt more aligned to the students than to the official line. He was also distracted at this time by personal problems and eventually decided that upheavals in his private life and his work as well were too much to cope with. He resigned from his post in 1967.

In 1968 Hormel attended a meeting of about seven hundred people who were enormously dissatisfied with the chaos and violence of the Democratic Party's convention in Chicago. They wanted to try to form an alternative vehicle for Senator Eugene McCarthy to get on the ballot. Hormel was one of a small group selected to be the nucleus. Later, when it became clear that McCarthy was not interested in their efforts, the group decided to form an
independent political party, known as the New Party. Hormel was chosen to be the national director. Besides running the central office in Washington, his role in the New Party involved him in traveling around the country "making occasional speeches and visiting places like Mississippi where I had never been before and where I had a first-hand opportunity to see the level of discrimination that was then taking place and to see malnutrition and starvation that I didn't think existed in this country. To learn of other people's problems in this way had a deep and lasting effect on me and I'm very grateful that I had that time in my life. It was educational, it was frustrating, it was heartrending, but it was a very substantial part of what gets me to where I am today."

The New Party was not a success, and after its break-up, James Hormel spent some time in Hawaii, reflecting on what he was going to do next in his life. He frankly admits that he fell under Hawaii's spell.

"I intended to do some writing but I was distracted by the way things seem to operate in Hawaii, which is 'tomorrow.' I mowed the lawn a lot and did a lot of gardening and spent some time ... reflecting on where I had been, where I wanted to go and how I would deal with myself in a universe that wasn't totally in accord with who I felt I was."

Finally tearing himself away from Hawaii, Hormel settled in San Francisco, where he still lives, with his friend of ten years, Larry Soule. He also spends as much time as he can in Virginia with his four daughters, and in Los Angeles with his son. He soon found that for someone interested in helping the community, San Francisco was a lively and active place that offered great opportunities. He has been involved in several projects in the gay community, including a self-awareness workshop series called The Advocate Experience and a project by the Pride Foundation to set up a community service center in a largely black neighborhood. One of the happy results of the latter project was to bring about a concord between the two groups of people, whose relations were initially based on mutual suspicion. Hormel is also on the board of the National Gay Rights Advocates, a public-interest law firm that is his only law-related activity now. He still works with a variety of political and social groups and is also involved with trying to establish the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra as a major orchestra.

When the Law School approached James Hormel for a contribution to the Capital Campaign, he wanted to do something that would stimulate people to become involved in public service. The initial idea of a program to assist students who chose to spend a certain amount of time in public service to repay their loans was attractive.

"Some demonstrated commitment would be necessary, not just a few months after law school, but with that demonstrated commitment there would be the opportunity either to postpone or have forgiven some or all of their student loans." This program has now been expanded into a broader public service program and Hormel hopes to see it continue to develop in the future.

"We considered other means of encouraging students to examine public service opportunities and the program will be designed to promote that examination in other ways. It will involve bringing people to the campus to address the issues of public service, giving students the opportunity to work in other fields during their summers and opportunities for job interviews they might not otherwise be able to get to. I hope that there will be some long-term development." 

Hormel is enjoying his renewed contact with the University community and the Law School. He says he did not realize how much he missed the campus.

"There have been a lot of changes but I feel I am still a part of the environment and I like being a part of it. The issues that are constantly being discussed and refined and reexamined—that sort of activity is very stimulating and a lot of fun."