STATE OF MAINE
BEFORE THE GRIEVANCE COMMISSION

BOARD OF OVERSEERS OF THE BAR, )
   vs. )
   )
CATHERINE R. JOHNS, ) DECISION
   )
GRIEVANCE COMMISSION )
File No. 84-155 )

This case came on for hearing before Panel D of the Grievance Commission on March 24, 1987, at Augusta, Maine. The hearing was open to the public pursuant to Maine Bar Rule 7 (e) (2). Bryan M. Dench, Esquire, Chairman of Panel D, presided over the hearing, and Panel members William F. Hufnagel, Esquire, and C. R. de Rochemont participated. The hearing was convened after due notice for the purpose of determining whether a reprimand should issue to Respondent, a confidential probable cause hearing having been conducted by another Panel of the Grievance Commission on August 21, 1986.

Bar Counsel Karen G. Kingsley appeared to represent the Board of Overseers of the Bar. The Respondent did not appear. Bar Counsel filed with the Panel and read into the record a Stipulation and Admissions entered
into between the respondent and Bar Counsel, which among other things, contained a paragraph admitting all of the allegations contained in the petition. Bar Counsel also summarized the procedural history of the case and advised the Panel of difficulties experienced by Bar Counsel in obtaining the cooperation of or responses from the Respondent.

Bar Counsel stated that she would concur with the recommendation of the Panel that conducted the confidential probable cause hearing that a reprimand should issue. Mr. Ernest Gibbons, a complainant in the grievance giving rise to the proceedings, was permitted to address the Panel and urged that the Respondent be suspended rather than reprimanded.

The facts contained in the petition and Stipulation and Admissions will not be repeated in this report, but based on that evidence in the record the Panel finds that the Respondent attorney did engage in conduct unworthy of an attorney as alleged in the petition. The record reveals that the Respondent neglected the matters entrusted to her by the complainant, and failed to protect her client's interests in the manner in which she withdrew from her representation. In fact, she failed to comply with the provisions of the Maine Rules of Court in withdrawing from pending litigation,
and based on the evidence in the record, appears to have closed her practice in September of 1984 in a manner that did not adequately protect the interests of any of her clients at that time or prevent prejudice to them.

Moreover, the record reveals a lack of cooperation and punctuality by the Respondent in dealing with this grievance and the proceedings being conducted by Bar Counsel and the Commission. The Respondent did seek to file a late answer to the petition with an accompanying motion for leave to submit that late answer. The Panel took no action on the motion because the Stipulation and Admissions entered into by the Respondent and Bar Counsel rendered any action on the pending motion unnecessary.

The Panel concludes that the record demonstrates clearly that the Respondent did not conduct herself with a due regard for the obligations she had undertaken to her clients for the protection of their best interests. Nor did she respond forthrightly and punctually to these proceedings. Therefore, the Panel concludes that the Respondent should be reprimanded, and the Respondent hereby is reprimanded.
Dated the 25th day of March 1987.

PANEL D OF THE
GRIEVANCE COMMISSION

Bryan M. Dench,
Chairman

William F. Hufnagel

C. R. de Rochemont