

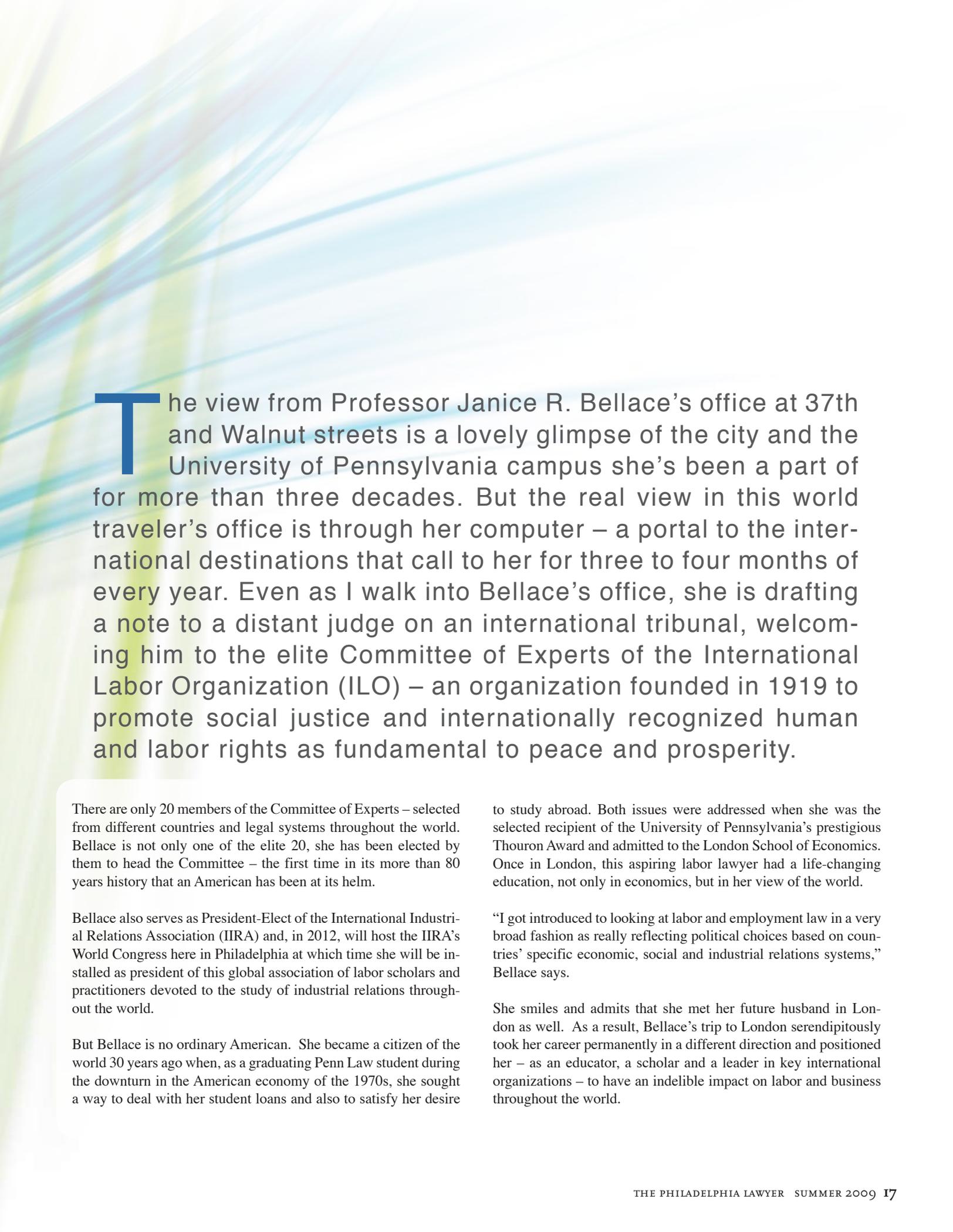
Thriving

Where Law, Business
and the World Intersect

By Arlene Rivera Finkelstein



Professor Janice R. Bellace



The view from Professor Janice R. Bellace's office at 37th and Walnut streets is a lovely glimpse of the city and the University of Pennsylvania campus she's been a part of for more than three decades. But the real view in this world traveler's office is through her computer – a portal to the international destinations that call to her for three to four months of every year. Even as I walk into Bellace's office, she is drafting a note to a distant judge on an international tribunal, welcoming him to the elite Committee of Experts of the International Labor Organization (ILO) – an organization founded in 1919 to promote social justice and internationally recognized human and labor rights as fundamental to peace and prosperity.

There are only 20 members of the Committee of Experts – selected from different countries and legal systems throughout the world. Bellace is not only one of the elite 20, she has been elected by them to head the Committee – the first time in its more than 80 years history that an American has been at its helm.

Bellace also serves as President-Elect of the International Industrial Relations Association (IIRA) and, in 2012, will host the IIRA's World Congress here in Philadelphia at which time she will be installed as president of this global association of labor scholars and practitioners devoted to the study of industrial relations throughout the world.

But Bellace is no ordinary American. She became a citizen of the world 30 years ago when, as a graduating Penn Law student during the downturn in the American economy of the 1970s, she sought a way to deal with her student loans and also to satisfy her desire

to study abroad. Both issues were addressed when she was the selected recipient of the University of Pennsylvania's prestigious Thouron Award and admitted to the London School of Economics. Once in London, this aspiring labor lawyer had a life-changing education, not only in economics, but in her view of the world.

"I got introduced to looking at labor and employment law in a very broad fashion as really reflecting political choices based on countries' specific economic, social and industrial relations systems," Bellace says.

She smiles and admits that she met her future husband in London as well. As a result, Bellace's trip to London serendipitously took her career permanently in a different direction and positioned her – as an educator, a scholar and a leader in key international organizations – to have an indelible impact on labor and business throughout the world.



Photos courtesy of University of Pennsylvania

Seizing a World of Opportunity

Bellace is the Samuel Blank Professor of Legal Studies and Business Ethics and Professor of Management at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. She chairs Wharton's Legal Studies and Business Ethics Department. She also chairs the Wharton-Singapore Management University Research Centre – a school she helped to establish. During her career at Wharton and Penn, Bellace has served as deputy dean of Wharton, vice dean of the Wharton Undergraduate Division, and as associate provost and deputy provost of the University of Pennsylvania.

Bellace's relationship with Penn dates back to her college years. Her undergraduate and law degrees are from Penn. But Wharton didn't beckon until she had earned her degree from the London School of Economics. A Wharton professor with whom she'd taken a course as a law student invited her to return to Penn as a researcher at the Wharton School. She gladly accepted because it would give her a year to study European economic systems while she prepared to marry and return to Britain. She had worked as a legal journalist – reading and commenting on cases that were developing the law of equal pay and sex discrimination – and had absolutely loved living in London. But Bellace soon concluded that, because she could not practice law there without earning another degree, it was time to return to the U.S. Wharton invited her to return, and again she readily accepted the opportunity to work as a researcher and earn a tuition benefit to cover her new husband's study for an M.B.A.

In these early years at Wharton, Bellace enjoyed feeding her international passion – doing research and traveling to many con-

ferences. It was at this time that Bellace started teaching – something she never thought she'd do until a professor who was leaving Wharton invited her to teach his class. Characteristically, Bellace describes her foray into teaching as happenstance – making it seem like opportunities just happened upon her. Just a few minutes with this petite powerhouse, though, and it's apparent that she makes opportunities happen.

This was evident in 1979, when, once her husband had earned his M.B.A., Bellace had to decide whether to move forward with her original plan to practice law. At that time, a tenure track position opened at Wharton and Bellace was "encouraged to apply." She landed the job, just five years after having graduated from Penn Law School. Setting off on this academic course, Bellace would never practice law in the traditional sense, but she'd be finding new and exciting opportunities to use every legal skill she had.

Opportunity kept knocking at Bellace's door throughout her career at Wharton. In 1990, she became vice dean and director of Wharton's undergraduate division – "because the new dean made me an offer I couldn't refuse."

Being at the helm of the nation's top undergraduate business program enabled Bellace to make her mark with the international focus that had propelled her own career. She proposed a major curriculum revision that reflected an international thrust. As a result, Bellace traveled to Italy, France, Belgium, Hong Kong and China to negotiate study-abroad opportunities that could enhance the Wharton educational experience.

Her success as the head of the undergraduate division led to Bel-

lace's appointment as deputy dean of the Wharton School – which she likens to being the chief operating officer to the dean's CEO for an enterprise that includes about 4,500 full-time students in the undergraduate, graduate and doctoral divisions, plus a full contingent of students in the executive education program. Add to that about 200 standing faculty members, and an active fund-raising campaign for the construction of the state-of-the-art Jon M. Huntsman Hall, the new building to house the Wharton School where her office is now located, and Bellace had her hands full.

During this time, Bellace was called upon to act as Wharton's ambassador in working with Singapore's government to create a third university in Singapore modeled after Wharton. This was a major enterprise, involving multiple meetings with high-level members of the Singapore government. Bellace clearly impressed those she met, as she was invited to be an advisor to the chair of the board of the new university, the Singapore Management University.

Mistakenly thinking they simply wanted Wharton's deputy dean and not her in particular, Bellace disclosed that she was about to step down from her post as deputy dean. That news went over quite well in Singapore. Bellace laughs and says the responding e-mail she almost immediately received read, "If we knew you were stepping down, we would have made you the offer outright ... will you be the first president?"

Bellace recalls reading that e-mail and thinking, "Is this for real?" But, in what she describes as one of the most spontaneous decisions of her life, Bellace agreed and then spent two years living in Singapore and creating the Singapore Management University from the ground up. She oversaw everything from the admission of students, to the hiring of faculty (assuring candidates that "yes they do speak English here"), to deciding what was worn for graduation. "There was no way I could have envisioned exactly what it would entail," Bellace says, "but it seemed like an opportunity that was too good to pass up."

After two years, Bellace returned home due to her father's failing health. She resumed teaching, did a brief stint as an associate provost for the university, and then decided to focus her attention back on Wharton where she chairs the Legal Studies and Business Ethics Department. Throughout, Bellace's work has carried the imprint of her vast international expertise.

Leading Collaboration and Scholarship in Our Global Economy

It's hard to imagine that Bellace ever met a challenge she didn't readily accept. In addition to serving in the prestigious position of chair of the ILO Committee of Experts, she also holds a major leadership position in the IIRA. Now president-elect of the association, Bellace will be hosting the IIRA World Congress here in Philadelphia in 2012. At that time, she will be installed as president of this global association of labor scholars and practitioners devoted to the study of industrial relations throughout the world. "The idea," Bellace says, "is that we all learn from each other." She also participates by traveling around the world to further this dialogue. This past year alone, Bellace traveled to congresses in Australia, South Africa and Argentina – all the while learning about their "very different problems."

Bellace's particular interest is in exploring "how to maintain adherence to basic human rights while at the same time working to maintain and sometimes to establish a sustainable basis for economic activity." This resonates in every part of the world she visits including the United States. Reflecting on her work with the IOL's Committee of Experts, Bellace sees first-hand how other countries perceive America. "It's difficult," she says, "because we haven't ratified most of the core conventions." Thus Bellace's surprise when, as an American member, she was asked to report on freedom of association – core conventions dealing with child labor, non-discrimination and forced labor – all "very important topics on globalization." Bellace says she was

honored to get this assignment in recognition of her expertise and her ability to remain independent and impartial.

Out of all of Bellace's work on a global level, Bellace describes her work chairing the ILO's Committee of Experts as "the most intensely international experience" she's had. "Imagine sitting around a table with someone from Madagascar, or a Caribbean country, or South Africa or Japan. And everybody has their own way of interaction...just very different views sometimes." The challenge, she says, is that they issue their opinions by consensus – requiring an intense ability to negotiate while respecting other points of view. ■

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