

as Boodle Hatfield and Texan Bracewell and Patterson, between London's MacFarlanes and the Los Angeles firm of O'Melveny and Myers. This association is one of the most extensive in that it entails a partners exchange and the opening of a common office in Brussels.

#### **4.4 Increased Power for Auditing Firms**

As is discussed in the second section of this report, the "big eight" (after reorganization, now the "big six") are the principal beneficiaries of the changes related to Europe 1992 in the field of public accounting. They may also be among the principal beneficiaries of the changes taking place in the legal professions. In fact, if it actually becomes possible to create multidisciplinary firms (already partially set up in fact, if not in law, in France), the large public accounting firms (the "big six") will become the most powerful, most internationalized and best organized enterprises to provide a range of international professional services ranging from public accounting to legal consulting.

This issue is still subject to controversy. Regulation regarding multidisciplinary enterprises has not yet been adopted in most countries. Many people declare the

legal profession to be unique. They cite cultural differences between the auditing and legal professions and possible conflicts of interest. However, the process seems well in progress, although the outcome cannot be predicted. Public accountants are currently lobbying extensively in all EC countries so that the regulations under study, far from excluding them from the game, enable them to play an active role in it.

#### **4.5 Preparing for Future Globalization**

All the preceding factors, such as national mergers, the creation of networks, the reinforcement of American foreign branch offices in Europe, and associations between British and American firms, serve to prepare for the future globalization of the legal professions and, more generally speaking, of professional services, which will undoubtedly lead to the establishment of several world leaders with offices in all the countries. Gearing up to this new stage depends on advances in the harmonization of regulations in Europe, on the one hand, and on the outcome of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations, on the other. There is hardly a doubt that American and British firms and the "big six" are in the best position to be among these leaders.