

to those of you who are serving, or have served, in the capacity of magistrates, let me say that I am grateful to you, and I know the people of Maryland are grateful to you, for the services you have performed in the administration of justice in our State.

All the talk about gratitude and ingratitude, to be somewhat serious about the matter, is not applicable to our situation, because it presupposes the existence of the spoils system in judicial appointments. For my part, the spoils of political victories have not been the criterion for the selection of persons to hold these important judicial offices. You were not chosen for the office as any gift or favor from me, or from the Maryland Senate. You were chosen because executive and legislative authority felt that you were qualified to perform this important function for the people of the State.

The Magistrate's Court, or the court of limited jurisdiction that compares to it, in many cases is the only tribunal of justice that a person will see. In almost all instances, it is the court that a citizen will see most frequently. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that trials conducted in these courts be conducted in an atmosphere of dignity and decorum. Magistrates' Courts, and in particular those trying traffic cases, have been criticized widely throughout the country for the manner in which some of them administer justice.

The cooperation of the public is essential to a proper enforcement of the laws, and the public will cooperate in the enforcement of any given law only if it understands that the law is needed to preserve the peace or promote the general welfare of the people. The public will not cooperate in enforcement unless it is made clear that enforcement is decent, impartial, on the level. It is here that you, as magistrates, and the courts in general, have your greatest responsibility, for nothing more effectively undermines respect for the law than a shoddy administration of justice. As magistrates, you have an opportunity each time that you sit down to hear cases to demonstrate what the people need and want to be reminded of; namely, that our American heritage of justice with equality—what Thomas Jefferson called "equal and exact justice to all men of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political"—that this heritage is firmly entrenched and unassailable. Although of course we have by no means reached, or approached, a state of perfection in Maryland, I think the people of our State can be proud of the caliber of our courts and the quality of the administration of justice.

As I approach the end of my two terms as the Governor of the