

spectacle of justices actively competing for the business of trying cases by moving their offices to new locations where roads were opened, and in other ways degrading the dignity of their judicial offices.

I have pledged myself to bring about much-needed reforms in this connection. Now let me tell you what has been done. Immediately after the Inauguration, I appointed a commission, headed by former Judge Hammond Urner, of the Court of Appeals, to provide a modern system which would insure against many of the abuses and evils under the old set-up. The Urner Commission proposed a Bill which would revolutionize the present system and which would reduce the number of Justices of the Peace, trying cases throughout the State, from approximately 250 to 75, and which would abolish entirely the vicious fee system. That law is now passed and under it the 75 trial magistrates will be on a salary basis, paid by the counties, and sitting in a regular courtroom provided by the respective counties. By the sharp reduction in the number of such magistrates, and by the salaries paid them, it is hoped to be able to attract high type persons to hold these offices. The public can be convinced of my desire to have the services of the best available men when it is recalled that I have already drafted for the public service in these courts such men as Robert France, President of the Bar Association of Baltimore City, H. Hamilton Hackney, in the Juvenile Court, and other persons of integrity. In order to have the services of able judges in the minor courts, I took the extraordinary precaution of asking the Bar Association to recommend to me a list of persons qualified by training and character for these positions.

Second only in importance to this State-wide reform of the minor judiciary are the two enactments affecting magistrates in Baltimore City, the Peoples' Court and the Traffic Court. Sponsored by the Baltimore City Bar Association and other civic organizations, the Peoples' Court Bill provides for a sweeping reorganization of this tribunal, which has come to be known as the "Poor Man's Court."

To make it more readily accessible to persons of small means, court costs have been sharply reduced. The number of constables also has been reduced by almost two-thirds and the effect of the Act doubtless will be to put the Peoples' Court on a higher plane, with increased efficiency and economy in its management. I shall carry out my part in reforming this bench by appointing to the judgeships only the best-qualified persons obtainable.

The Traffic Court of Baltimore City will be completely re-organized by an Administration measure passed at this session. For years, high-ranking police officers have been assigned to the Traffic Court to perform certain clerical duties. Under the new plan all police employees will be taken out of the Traffic Court and returned to active street duty, thus accomplishing the two-fold purpose of enlarging the City police force and making room for smaller-salaried but efficient clerks in the Traffic Court.

The Act also gives Traffic Court magistrates a power never before possessed, that of suspending or revoking a motorist's driver's license upon conviction of violating the motor vehicle laws. Heretofore, the magistrate could only impose a fine or jail sentence; and later the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, following another hearing, could suspend or revoke the license. Under the new bill the entire procedure takes place at once, with the right of appeal to the Criminal Court from both the fine and the suspension of license. This