

IMAGE OF A POLICEMAN

Speech given by Magistrate S. V. Legg, of Edmonton, at the Alberta Police Golf Association's annual banquet.

FIRST of all, I am flattered that your Association has seen fit to invite me to attend your banquet, especially after having had the pleasure of accepting your hospitality some two years ago on a similar occasion.

As mentioned also on that occasion, I am particularly flattered because I am a "non-golfer". I recall, too, making the mistake of saying, when referring to "All-Star Golf", that I did my golfing on a chesterfield. This was apparently misinterpreted (as it was again tonight), because of the embarrassing snicker.

I acknowledged, however, that while I may be a non-golfer, I am far from being a "non-goofy" as many of you well know who have had the misfortune to appear in my court. If "goofing" was golfing, I'd be Stan Leonard.

However, I am not going to talk to a group of "under par" golfers about golfing—I know better than that. I am, however, going to talk to you about policemen, and particularly policemen as seen through the eyes of a magistrate.

Lest there be some qualms about what I am about to say, I should perhaps make it clear that I am not representing *The Journal* or *The Edmontonian* or any similar publication. This is not a criticism or a mud-throwing session. If anything, I think you will find that it is somewhat to the contrary and while it may not reflect the thinking of all magistrates, I would like you to know that I am sincere and genuine in what I have to say.

You might well ask, "Why has he chosen this occasion to talk to policemen about policemen?" and I think you would be justified in so wondering. The fact is that if you stop to consider the number of occasions when a magistrate can express his personal feelings, you will find that they are limited. This, I feel, is one time I can talk freely.

How then do I see this alleged beater

of innocent prisoners; this alleged persecutor of decent citizens, and this alleged lawful liar?

In a somewhat different light, I might say.

Who does the average citizen first think of when he parks his car and can't remember where he left it, or when there is a noisy party upstairs, or when his daughter has not come home at the appointed time, or when his neighbor's dog barks or any number of little annoyances resulting from the complex life we lead? The police, naturally! Who does he call when one of the members of his family barricades himself in the family home and bounces 30-30 rounds at anything that moves? It certainly isn't the clergy. No, it's the police! Yet, who is the first person to complain when he feels that the police have been delinquent in their duty over some trivial matter? Of course, it is John Q. Public.

In my opinion the fact that these people receive any assistance from the police speaks well for the forces.

However, this is only a small facet of the policeman I see.

I see a man who, under normal circumstances and even at times under rather difficult circumstances, extends common courtesy to everyone, and yet is firm and authoritative. And this is so even though John Q. Public becomes abusive or profane, and whether it be a matter of a traffic violation or an arrest on an indictable offence. Further, it is so whether he is answering rather impudent questions of defence counsel or the aggravating questions of the court. In my experience I have seen a policeman withstand the scathing attack of defence counsel with a coolness and politeness that leaves me envious, and it is this that builds in me the highest admiration for him and the firm conviction that he is telling the truth. On the other hand, it has exasperated the defence counsel.