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Payola in Court

GRAFT and corruption are being disclosed in the current legislative investigation of the New Mexico justices of the peace. A succession of state policemen testified that they had received \$20 to \$30 gifts in cash from some justices of the peace in the Gallup area. The implication was that the gifts were made to induce the policemen to take persons arrested to those justices for trial.

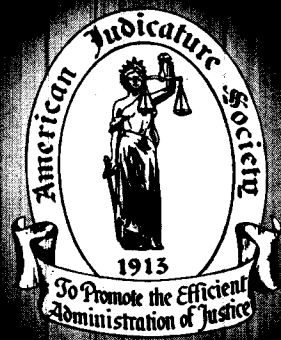
One of the justices, in a letter to the committee chairman, said that justices of the peace are compelled to "fight for police business like dogs over a bone" in order to earn a livelihood. In a further statement to the *Albuquerque Tribune*, this justice explained:

"There are a few state police who write traffic tickets by the hundreds, and a J.P. may think, in some cases, that if the defendant is found innocent the officer may get angry. If so," he said, "the officer may take these hundreds of citations elsewhere. And at \$5 a ticket, this would knock a big hole in the J.P.'s income."

The *Santa Fe New Mexican*, while not condoning these practices, suggests that the people of New Mexico might consider the fact that the state itself bribes the justices.

"That," says the *New Mexican*, "is exactly the essence of the fee system. If the justice of the peace levies a fine against a driver, the fine goes into

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