

RESTRICTIONS ON POLICE

In some recent rulings the police have found their hands tied. It is no longer permissible for an officer to remove from the streets of the District on a disorderly conduct charge a man using the obscenest of language to a woman and her children. What responsible man would not feel revulsion for the use in front of a woman and small children of language too vile to be repeated? There are certain types of perverts who get their kicks from such an oration of filth and obscenity.

It is no longer permissible to remove from the streets of the District alcoholics who constantly clutter the city's beautiful parks. Alcoholism is, of course, considered a disease, and these persons are usually in a state of noncomprehension, spending every penny they can beg, borrow, or steal on alcohol. They are increasingly becoming more of a nuisance to the public. An officer must ask such a person to go to the Alcoholic Rehabilitation Center, but if he refuses he must be left on the street, a danger to himself and to society. Something needs to be done to increase the facilities for rehabilitation and to make it necessary for such persons to be sent to these centers with or without their consent.

We have in this city at this time approximately 3,000 Metropolitan Policemen, and every day there are enough arrests to fill a book, but the press chooses to print front page stories about the wrong actions of policemen, while buried somewhere on the back pages in usually small articles appear the seldom printed stories of a policeman's apprehension of suspects. In many instances where officers apprehend suspected criminals and there are witnesses to the crime, they will not come forward to testify for fear of their lives, or because the number of court appearances involved in a single case is much too time-consuming.

Former Vice President Nixon stated a few days ago, "At last count there were some 2,000 cases backed up in the court of General Sessions. Men walking free on probation are responsible for many of the crimes taking place in the city. An identical situation obtains in Juvenile Court." Obviously witnesses fear for their lives from criminals who are immediately released on personal bond and later probation, and this is a major reason for their reluctance to come forward. However, let policemen become involved and there are plenty of witnesses to tell the most conflicting stories in regard to the officer's actions.

Back many months ago the amount of equipment and uniforms was insufficient, and although the Department has acquired some equipment, the number of recruits has caused the shortage to remain.

Personnel files of the Department are open to the public by order of the D.C. Code, Section 4-135. Anyone so desiring may glean from these files such information on a policeman and his family as contained therein. This leaves the policeman's family target for harassment by phone or visit. Since it is a matter of changing the D.C. Code only Congress can change this fact. It would be a relief to an officer not to have to worry about his family being harassed in his absence.

SUPPORT OF LEGISLATION

All the points we have touched on here are sources of discouragement to the men and bring the morale down. The men feel that a strong