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Progress Report on Denver's Municipal Courts

Dicta Editorial Board

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PROGRESS REPORT ON DENVER'S MUNICIPAL COURTS

The newly-created Small Claims Division of Denver's Municipal Courts seems to have become a thriving operation. In the three months of its existence more than three hundred cases have been heard and disposed of in this "attorneyless" court. From all indications, this court will continue to grow. More and more small businesses, such as groceries and neighborhood cleaning establishments, are contacting this court to determine the feasibility of attempting to collect small delinquent accounts which would otherwise be written off as bad debts. Several such businesses, which have been using this service for the last six to eight weeks, report that results are far above expectations.

Recognition of the need for this court and the size of its operation has already been received from the Denver City Council and Denver's administration. After January 1, 1951, a new municipal judgeship has been promised to assume the burden of this court, as well as to relieve the already overloaded dockets in the other divisions. This will be one of the many improvements in the services offered to the public and to the attorneys wherever possible at the municipal and justice court level.

Consistent with the desires of Denver's city administration and its municipal judges to extend better services where possible, the judges constantly have been studying the state statutes under which the justice courts and also the small claims court operate, with the end in view of recommending changes in statutes which would permit smoother operation with a minimum amount of detail. At a recent meeting of the municipal judges of Denver, it was suggested that a request be made of the Denver and Colorado bar associations to study the needs and recommend changes to the next General Assembly. The judges unanimously agreed that better service could be rendered by Denver's justice courts if changes could be effected in the statutes in the following situations in cities with a population in excess of 100,000:

1. Service of summons in the justice courts and small claims court by anyone over the age of 18 and not a party to the action.

2. A change in the sections relating to the duties, responsibilities, and liabilities of constables in cities where multiple divisions of the justice courts are operating with a consolidated clerks' office. The present statute is satisfactory in counties where the constable is elected. However, when appointed by the court and acting under orders of the court, it is felt that the present statute vests too much discretionary authority in the constable to determine whether or not he will perform a court order. It often results in internal problems which could be avoided if the discretionary authority and subsequent responsibility for the actions were placed upon the court.

3. A statute permitting city councils to establish the forms used in the justice courts and the manner and procedure of maintaining dockets and records. It is felt that this type of statute could be the basis to effect the long-needed changes in simplifying forms used in the justice courts.

4. A general revision of the small claims statute patterned to cover difficulties and problems which have arisen as a result of actual operation; i.e., corporations as parties litigant, counter-claims, service of notice in counter-claim, substituted service, costs for special service, and procedure after judgment with coverage on stipulated judgments and confession judgments.

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The Denver Bar Association is a member of the Adult Education Council which operates the Denver Speakers Bureau. Frequent call is made on the latter for interesting and informative speakers by clubs and organizations of every type and description.

The audiences involved are often small and there are no honorariums, but members of the association who fancy themselves as orators and have an interesting story or stories to tell are urged to fill in the blank below and mail it to the secretary's office, 319 Chamber of Commerce Bldg. The registrations thus received will be turned over to the Speakers Bureau for use in the busy winter lecture season just getting underway and hence forth until withdrawn.

Many lawyers already are registered with the bureau by reason of some extra-curricular activity or organization, but if you are not on their rolls, and would like to take a crack at being a hometown spellbinder, make haste to return the registration blank below or a reasonable facsimile thereof.

SPEAKERS BUREAU REGISTRATION

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Home address:..... **Home phone:**.....

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Fields in which you are capable of speaking:.....

.....

Titles of speeches:..... **Content:**.....

1.

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