

Independence, Mo., 221 So. Union St.,

December 2, 1942.

Senator Harry S. Truman,

Dear Senator Truman:

I feel almost guilty to "be writing you about a local situation When you have your mind, so full of national problems. But there is a situation in this county, as I see it, that is very serious. The integrity of our courts is threatened by the action of the Kansas City Star in admitting to its columns each day for two weeks immediately preceding the late election a campaign of slander and abuse against the Judge of the Independence Division of the Circuit Court.

It took everybody by surprise. The defense did not have the time nor the money to meet the onslaught in an adequate manner. The Star is the only newspaper in Kansas City, now, and Independence Examiner does not have city circulation, besides its policy is to keep out of controversy altogether. Furthermore, judges are supposed to "stand on their record" and keep silent.

Not until this affair came up did I realize how helpless we are in this county to protect our courts against such attack as was made on Judge Waltner. It is sure to have an intimidating effect upon judges in the future, and the bench will not have the same attraction for the type of men we want. I know one able man who has been nominated. but does not want the place.

Evidently his enemies were afraid to let Judge Waltner's record speak for itself, so they smeared it. They appealed to a prejudice that is becoming almost fanatical, and labeled him "a Pendergast man."

If a judge may have no appeal to the people only through his record, should not his opponents respect the same rule, for it as fair to one side as to the other? I can not see why a judge should have to remain silent while his enemies are permitted to destroy his record.

If charges are alleged against the conduct of a judge it seems to me there should be some provision for an impartial Investigation. Surely a public servant is entitled to this much protection, that the truth shall be known, and the people have a right to the facts that they may vote intelligently.

Then, there is the question of giving a newspaper unlimited power of attack without being placed under any obligations to permit equal space for the other side to be heard. All we got in the Star to represent our side was paid Ads. They do not carry the weight that a personal message does. I know this is an involved question, but there should be some way of correcting such an unfair practice.

I am writing to you, Senator Truman, because you are a man of action. If things are not right, you believe in doing something about it. So many I talk to deplore the situation as much as I do, but they fold their hands and are just sorry. That does not get anywhere.

I attended a case in Judge Waltner's court the past summer as an observer. A friend and I were so much pleased with his summing-up talk: after the four days sessions, and the advice he gave, that we had a few words with him at the close. That was the first time I ever met him and the extent of my acquaintance with him. While I sympathize with him very much, it is the principle of Justice that is involved, and the Integrity of our Courts that I am deeply concerned about. I do not want to see such work as was put over at this last election practiced on other courts in our county, nor again on our Independence court in the future. We are fighting the enemy abroad, and we need to be eternally vigilant against his inroads at home.

If you can spare a little time when it is convenient, Senator Truman, I shall appreciate any suggestions you may have to offer. Or, if you could see your way clear to do anything in the matter, that would be grand. Plenty would follow if there were leadership.

Thanking you for the time I have taken,
Very sincerely,
(Mrs.) Louise Sheldon-