

Cleveland in “Revolt” Over Indictment of Fleming

OHIO REVOLTS OVER CASE OF TOM FLEMING

Citizens Give Moral Aid to Leader

By ORMOND A. FORTE
Cleveland, Ohio, Feb. 1.—Out of the momentary chaos that followed the surprising indictment of Councilman Thomas W. Fleming on the charge of soliciting a bribe from former City Detective Walter Oehme has sprung a new and vigorous spirit of racial unity such as this city has never before witnessed.

This spirit leaped into being at a mammoth mass meeting held last Sunday afternoon at Mt. Zion Congregational temple, when more than 3,000 persons, representing a clearly defined cross section of the community, overflowed the church auditorium in a rare demonstration to express their confidence in Fleming, and to serve notice on the newly-elected Democratic county prosecutor, Ray T. Miller, that the race will brook no humbug in the coming trial.

Friends and admirers were there; political cronies and fellow councilmen—Gregs and Greggs; leading men of the pulpit and bar; political opponents of Fleming—men and women who had fought him tooth and nail in recent campaigns, but who despite political differences have thrown themselves unreservedly into the fight on the side of the indicted leader.

All Join in Expressions
And what a sight it was: Democrats, Garveyites, with flash of uniform; black-coated divines; Republicans of every minute degree of party fealty—rock-ribbed regulars, backsliders and independents—all joining in a united expression of faith in the honor, integrity and high moral principles of Thomas W. Fleming.

Rev. C. C. Alier, pastor of Zion Hill Baptist church, who recently supported the Democratic county prosecutor under whose direction the indictment was drawn, sounded the keynote of the meeting when he declared that, “We did not want the case tried in the newspapers without judge or jury”—urging the public to withhold judgment until all the facts were presented in open court.

And a supporting battery of speakers, among whom were Jane E. Hunter, of the Phyllis Wheatley; Rev. J. Boston Prince, Rev. C. H. Granum, Councilman Dr. E. J. Gregg, Hon. John P. Green and other local leaders joined in lauding the public career of Fleming and demanding fair play in the newspapers and in the courts.

There is infinitely more than the subject of a newspaper story in this demonstration by our people of their belief in the integrity of one of their own who is under fire. Its significance, deep and pointed, has left us all in Cleveland somewhat bewildered at the marvel of its happening—once!

But somehow, deep down in our hearts the conviction lurks that in Cleveland in this never day it may yet happen—twice!

Changes Charge

Cleveland, Ohio, Feb. 1.—Councilman Thomas W. Fleming for the second time within a week was indicted by Cuyahoga county grand jury Monday on charges growing out of allegations by Walter Oehme, crippled former city detective, that the councilman accepted \$200 from him in return for introducing legislation into the council to pay Oehme's doctor bill. The new indictment charges Fleming with soliciting and accepting a bribe, where the original indictment charged him only with soliciting a bribe.

Hardly had the indictment been returned when Fleming appeared at the old courthouse, accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Lethia Fleming, prominent clubwoman and political worker, and his attorneys. He walked swiftly into Presiding Criminal Judge Kramer's private room after attempting to evade reporters and photographers. He was arraigned in the judge's chamber, pleaded not guilty to the new indictment and was released on \$500 personal property bond, signed by Mrs. Fleming.

The new indictment was asked by County Prosecutor Ray T. Miller because he pointed out the strongest evidence against Councilman Fleming is the check alleged to have been accepted as payment for introducing the legislation for Oehme. The principal evidence against the councilman is that he “accepted” rather than “solicited” the alleged bribe.

Legal authorities are of the opinion that Attorney George W. Spooner, defense counsel, might have beaten the original indictment on a motion, arguing that the check constituted little if any evidence to show Fleming actually solicited the money even if it was proven that the check served the purpose Oehme declares it did.