

COUNCILMAN FLEMING INDICTED ON GRAFT CHARGE

INDICTED



HON. THOMAS FLEMING
Cleveland, Ohio, is astir over the charges of soliciting a bribe brought against Councilman Thomas W. Fleming by Walter Oehme, a white policeman. Fleming was indicted and surrendered himself at the Sheriff's office to fight the allegations later in court.

COUNCILMAN FLEMING TO GO ON TRIAL

Accused by Policeman of Taking Bribe

Cleveland, Ohio, Jan. 25.—Councilman Thomas W. Fleming will be tried on the charge of soliciting a bribe on Monday or Tuesday of next week. This announcement came from Assignment Commissioner Edward Vondrake.

Fleming appeared in the old courthouse late Monday, soon after word reached him that he had been indicted by the grand jury. He pleaded not guilty and demanded an early trial.

Fleming was indicted by the county grand jury after Walter Oehme, crippled policeman, testified he paid the councilman \$200 for legislation enacted by council to reimburse Oehme for medical bills for treatment of injuries in service.

Bond was fixed at \$1,000 by Common Pleas Judge Samuel T. Kramer, presiding in criminal court. The bond was signed by J. C. Hudson, 2305 E. 40th St., real estate operator. He listed a four-family house at 2311 E. 43d St., valued at \$12,000, on which there are mortgages of \$2,500.

Oehme went before the grand jury on Miller's request. He was there nearly an hour.

Issue Subpoenas

Subpoenas then were issued for C. C. Curtis, manager of the West end branch of the Cleveland Trust company, Lorain Ave. and W. 35th St., where the check for \$200 was drawn for Fleming, according to Oehme, and Fred Brewer, 2363 W. 99th St., Oehme's relative, who accompanied him to the bank the day they said they drew the check for Fleming.

Curtis brought with him the check alleged to have been given Fleming. Oehme said he personally presented the check to Fleming at the Elks' club on E. 55th St.

Mrs. Margaret Oehme, the crippled policeman's wife, who also accompanied him to the bank, was not summoned by Miller. He deemed her testimony unnecessary at present.

Informed of the grand jury's action, Fleming said:

"The action of the grand jury was a terrible shame. I am absolutely innocent."

Oehme's affidavit says he approached Fleming to obtain for him reimbursement for money paid in doctor, hospital and other expenses engendered for injuries sustained in service. He sets forth that Fleming introduced an ordinance and obtained for him \$1,700, and thereafter demanded of him \$200.

Paid By Check

Oehme says he paid the \$200 in a check drawn on the Cleveland Trust company, Lorain Ave. and W. 35th St., and handed the check personally to Fleming. The \$200 represented, he said, a consideration for Fleming's services in obtaining the \$1,700 through the ordinance and for introduction of another ordinance for a remainder of \$354 in bills.

The crippled patrolman's wife, Mrs. Margaret Oehme, swore that she was present during a conversation between her husband and Fleming and heard Fleming tell Oehme that it would cost him some money for the ordinance that was introduced and for the one that was to be introduced for the additional \$354. "Don't forget Tom Fleming," she quotes Fleming as telling her husband.

Mrs. Oehme said she obtained the money from Oehme's grandfather, and the next day went with her husband to procure an official check.

The ordinance—79,424—was introduced May 23, 1927, by Fleming. It was entitled "To reimburse Walter Oehme \$1,700 for injuries incurred in the discharge of his duties." It was passed by city council July 5, 1927. A second ordinance, bearing Fleming's name, was introduced. Funds were transferred to the safety department to meet this expense of \$354.

Injury in 1922

Oehme told his story after he became angered by remarks of Fleming following the council meeting Monday night. Oehme has been attending meetings hoping to get action on his request for more aid. He said he told Fleming he could not live on the \$7.50 monthly pension allowed him and also obtain medical treatment.

"Aw, you're just one of those fellows who always want more," Oehme said Fleming told him.

Tuesday was Oehme's 34th birthday anniversary. He joined the police force in 1917. He suffered his

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Indict Councilman Fleming as Cop Cites Bribe Charge

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injuries in 1922 and was pensioned in 1928.

Fleming was vehement in his denial of Oehme's charges.

"I do not know how Oehme could make such a statement concerning the acceptance of money by me from a crippled officer for aid I gave him in getting compensation from the city," Fleming said.

"I just couldn't do anything like that. I don't know anything about a check.

"I have done everything I could for Oehme. I introduced three different ordinances to aid him in getting additional pay. An ordinance under my name now is in the hands of Safety Director Barry, providing full pay for all policemen permanently disabled while on duty. I don't think any policeman, under similar conditions, ever has received as much compensation as Oehme, and it came about through my efforts.

Knew Oehme 10 Years

"When I talked to him at council meeting Monday night I didn't say anything that should have offended him. I just told him that in his crippled condition he should not attend every council meeting.

"I have known Walter Oehme for 10 years. I knew him before he was crippled. I wanted to do all I could for him. Oehme's charges certainly came as a surprise to me. I don't see how he could make such a statement. Anybody that knows me knows that I wouldn't do anything like that."

Fleming denied ever receiving a cent from Oehme.

"If he thinks he's got a check, let him produce it," Fleming said. "If I got a check my name would be on the back of it. Yes, let him produce the check."

Oehme is in such condition he cannot straighten his legs at the knee or raise his hands above his shoulders. His wife is compelled to dress him, eat his food and otherwise care for him. Physicians have told him his only relief would be a warm climate and injections of sulphur into his blood.

Oehme was injured in a terrific struggle with John (Fats) Erlin, a dope addict. Erlin was sent to "get" Oehme after the latter, working in the "Roaring Third" precinct, had threatened to arrest every man found drunk in the speakeasy in which Erlin worked.

Erlin slugged Oehme from behind. Oehme arose and battered Erlin to the sidewalk. Erlin kicked Oehme in the stomach. Then Oehme smashed his knee against the curb. He knocked Erlin unconscious and he died from his injuries. Oehme, after staying on duty awhile, was sent to City hospital.