

THE TRUTH

OCTOBER, 1950

Issued by Tom Coleman Defense Committee

The Tom Coleman Story

City Administration

Attempts Smear Of Veteran Negro Unionist

The story of Thomas Coleman, who has been branded a Communist by the Detroit Loyalty Commission, is the story of a Negro laborer, trade unionist, and father who is not afraid to fight for freedom. It is the story of what may, if YOU do not rise in protest, happen to any citizen of Detroit who refuses to permit his mind to be controlled by a group of power-drunk politicians.

Coleman, the father of four children, one of whom, a twenty-two-year-old son, Thomas Coleman, Jr., is now serving with the U.S. Armed Forces in Korea, worked for the City of Detroit collecting garbage for nearly twenty-three years. During all of that time no question was raised by anyone as to his loyalty.

In 1947, he took a leave of absence from his City job to work as a representative of the United Public Workers. So successful was he in the UPW position that through his hard work and sincerity he won the universal respect of the sanitation workers whom he serviced, and of city workers generally.

On last Aug. 31, apparently incensed over a brief wage demonstration staged by sanitation workers in front of City Hall in support of their long-standing requests for cost-of-living wage increases, Mayor Albert E. Cobo locked out nearly 2,000 Negro workers.

Coleman was an active leader in the fight for the unconditional reinstatement of the workers on their jobs. On Sept. 6, upon arriving at his home about 1 A.M. after concluding a five-hour negotiation session with the Mayor and other city officials, the

union leader received a notice to appear before the Loyalty Investigating Committee at 3 p.m. the following day. To this notice which had only a union-busting intention, Coleman replied that he was too busy with getting sanitation workers back on their jobs to comply.

One week later he received a second notice by registered letter to appear before the Committee to which he replied that his leave of absence with the City was expiring within two days, and that as he would no longer be a City employee after that time, considered the question of his loyalty an academic one.

The next thing he knew was that screaming headlines appeared in the local daily press citing him as a Communist. This charge Coleman denies and challenges anyone to prove to the contrary. He had had no trial, no hearing of any sort. As a matter of fact, publicity-mad individuals on the Loyalty Investigating Committee, contrary to the spirit of the Charter Amendment creating it, deliberately released certain "charges" against Coleman to the press. The Amendment supporters, prior to its approval by the local public, had promised that the right of individuals' privacy with regard to accusations would be respected.

Among the "charges" listed by the daily press were: (1) Coleman had protested Jim-Crowism in Owosso, the lily-white Michigan birthplace of New York's Gov. Dewey; and (2) had attended a meeting addressed by Carl

Winter, Michigan Communist Party chairman.

The unionist later learned from a reporter that the latter "charge" refers to a protest demonstration which followed the shooting, about two years ago, of Leon Mosely, a fifteen-year-old Negro boy. The youth was shot in the back by a policeman and the incident attracted city-wide interest. Many civic organizations participated in the protest of the brutal killing. The meeting referred to was held, according to reports, on the steps of the City Hall and many leading citizens were present including George Edwards attorney and former president of the Detroit Common Council.

Coleman will now be tried before the biased Detroit Loyalty Commission, Oct. 16. For what — nobody knows, except that he was willing to fight for the sanitation workers' welfare. As "The Truth" goes to press, he has received no copy of the "charges" leveled against him by the daily press, nor has he received any official notice from the Commission of the Oct. 16 trial.

These are the facts in brief behind the Coleman indictment by the Detroit Loyalty Commission. These are the facts that constitute OUR challenge to strike a significant blow at the city administration's attempts to frighten courageous leaders of men into docility.

Refuting the charges that he is a Communist Coleman declared—"There is not a more a loyal American than I am, and I defy anyone to prove otherwise. I have, during my fifty years, supported all efforts directed toward improving the general welfare, and the welfare of my people."

For further information concerning this case telephone the Rev. Charles A. Hill, co-chairman, Citizens' Committee to Defend Tom Coleman, TYler 4-9474 or TYler 6-6313.

LOYALTY AND YOU

This folder tells of the case of Thomas J. Coleman, a Negro city employee with 23 years service; father of 4 children, one of them a soldier in Korea; a man respected in the community in which he lives.

The outstanding thing about Tom Coleman is that all his life he has been a fighter, a fighter for Negro rights, a militant trade unionist, and a man who has worked to improve his community.

To Detroit city employees Tom Coleman's case means money and working conditions. If the city of Detroit "gets" Tom Coleman it will be a long step toward company unionism in city employment and a deterrent to other active union men. The city of Detroit aims to "get" Tom Coleman and put the "fear of God" into the rest of the city workers "forever", thus blocking their hopes for better living standards.

But Tom Coleman's case means more than this. His case could be that of any auto unionist, any person active in his community, any fighter. For in this period of tension and hysteria, "loyalty investigation" have invariably become union busting, anti-liberal actions. They breed publicity mad prosecutors and investigators, people who want their names in the papers so much that they ignore the elementary rights of the accused and rush to smear them in print. "Loyalty investigations" have bred stoolpigeons, people who have made a career of testifying in these cases, deliberately falsifying evidence to keep their livelihood in many cases. They encourage the men-

tally sick, the neurotic, those who have a grudge against fellow workers, hoping thereby also to climb into the good graces of the powers that be.

The tragic fact is that while all "loyalty investigations" start out with the announced aim of catching Communists, the web that is laid soon entraps many non-Communists, liberals and progressives of every stripe. The latest anti-Communist Act, the McCarran Act — passed recently by the Congress — was condemned by national officers of AFL and the CIO, precisely because the law as written could be used against AFL and CIO leaders and members.

A story of a recent strike is very apt. The AFL Financial Guild called a strike against a Wall Street firm. They were assisted in the picketing by members of the Seafarers International Union, AFL, a militantly anti-Communist organization. One day the police broke up the picket lines, cursing the pickets as Communists and clubbing them. Not a few pickets had their skulls cracked. As a policeman swung his club a picket protested, "You can't do this to us, we're anti-Communist". The cop answered, "I don't care what kind of a Communist you are," and continued clubbing him.

TOM COLEMAN'S CASE IS YOUR CASE. YOU MUST ACT ON IT. PROTEST TO MAYOR COBO AND THE DETROIT LOYALTY COMMISSION. Mr. Coleman's "trial" IS OCTOBER 16.

DON'T WAIT. ACT IMMEDIATELY!

Citizens Rally To Coleman Defense

Coleman's Record

- 1926—Helped found an independent organization of garbage workers to improve conditions in the Detroit Garbage Department.
- 1932—Participated in the fight to get CF Smith stores to hire Negro clerks in Negro neighborhoods and spent a night in jail in this fight.
- 1933-1936—Collected food from a bakery and potatoes from a friends farm for free distribution to needy at Eastern Market. Did this daily for years.
- 1937—Charter member Garbage workers union SCMWA-CIO — Local 285.
- 1938—Became a 32nd degree Mason.
- 1940—Helped in CIO organizing drive at Ford.
- 1941—Volunteer picket during Ford strike.
- 1943—Helped organize (while working nights.) Bohn Aluminum Plant 14.
- 1944—President of Community organization which built Community Building and Recreation field for that area and Community church.
- 1945—Led successful fight to prevent segregation in Romulus township schools, in joint action with NAACP.
- 1946—Collected money for UAW General Motors strikers from city employees and community during the long strike.
- 1947—Became full time union organizer. Organized and became first president of NAACP chapter in Romulus Township.
- 1950—Leader of Sanitation workers during wage fight and lock-out by Mayor. President, Sanitary Workers' Local 285 for 7 years.

Hill, Walsh Head Protest Committee

A group of Detroiters under the leadership of State Senator Patrick Walsh and the Rev. Charles A. Hill have organized a Citizens' Committee for the Defense of Thomas Coleman, DPW employee United Public Workers Union leader who has been branded a "subversive" by the Detroit Loyalty Commission.

Members of the Committee, representing a broad cross-section of local citizens have expressed the opinion that — "the attack on Coleman seems to us to be a clear case of character assassination and an attempt at union-busting led by the daily press rather than an effort to determine an individual's loyalty."

A partial list of the Committee members include Collins C. George, editor, Detroit Edition, Pittsburgh Courier; the Revs. T. S. Boone, pastor, King Solomon Baptist Church; Jesse Jai McNeil, Tabernacle Baptist Church; W. A. Hilliard, St. Paul AME Zion Church; John Kolb, T. T. Timberlake, and E. T. Byrd;

Lee Cain, chairman Fair Practices Committee, Dodge Local 3, UAW-CIO; Dean Robb, attorney; Cora Brown, attorney; and others. Citizens wishing to circulate Coleman protest petitions or desirous of contributing financially to the protest campaign may telephone the Rev. Hill—TYler 7-6313 or TYler 4-9474.

ADA Scores Schudlich's 'Loyalty' Law Violation

In a statement last week-end to Council President Louis C. Miriani, the Detroit Chapter, Americans For Democratic Action, urged a Council investigation of "reasons for the violations of the prescribed procedure" of the City Loyalty Charter Amendment in the Thomas Coleman case.

The statement, signed by local ADA Chapter's chairman, Orville Linck, pointed out further that, "At the time for the adoption of the Charter 'Loyalty' Amendment, many members of our organization had very serious reservations about the merits of the measure. Now we find that these reservations have been largely justified by the mishandling of the first stages of the Coleman case.

"We do not presume," the ADA said further, "to pass judgement on the guilt or innocence of the city employee involved, but we are in complete agreement with the principle that such cases should not be tried in the press nor by public opinion reacting to necessarily incomplete newspaper stories. Furthermore, pend-

ing the determination of its constitutionality, the amendment is now part of the city's legal structure, and we recognize that it is the duty of our officials to carry out its provisions.

"However," the statement continued, "we do want to assert very strongly that Mr. G. W. Schudlich, the head of the Investigating Committee, appears to have violated both the spirit and the letter of the Charter Amendment by prematurely and irresponsibly revealing to the press certain 'evidence' which, we understand, should have been reserved for inclusion in the charge to the Loyalty Commission proper.

"Our concern is that every case processed under the Charter Amendment be dealt with in such way as to protect the basic rights and reputations of all innocent city employees. Unless such a policy obtains, any finding of disloyalty is likely to smack of persecution rather than of legal, responsible prosecution.

"For The Record"

"I have been personally associated with Tom Coleman for the past twenty-four years and his activities have been those of a man sincerely and courageously interested in the advancement, politically and economically of his race and fellow workers.

"It is my candid opinion that the citation by the Detroit Loyalty Commission of Tom Coleman as a 'subversive' is obviously an act of retaliation by the City Administration which disapproved the last Aug. 31 wage increase demonstration staged by garbage and rubbish employees in front of the City Hall."

J. R. JACKSON Retired City Employee

"I have known Tom Coleman for approximately ten years. On many occasions we have worked together for the rights and good of all workers, both black and white, in the City of Detroit.

"He has fought for better working conditions and better wages for all city employees. He has fought against discrimination wherever found.

"In all my dealings with Tom Coleman I have never known him to teach Communism or to pass out Communist literature.

"It is my honest opinion there is no more loyal American than Tom Coleman.

Both the Executive Board and the general membership of Local 279, UPW, are of this opinion."

Eugene Green,
President Local 279, UPW

"That Thomas Coleman is a 'subversive' is ridiculous. During years of friendship with this courageous trade union and community leader, I have never known him to commit any act that could be described as 'subversive' and am happy to avail myself of this means to register my unqualified contempt of such an untrue accusation.

"In addition to working as a hard laborer for nearly a quarter of a century as an employee of the garbage division of the Department of Public Works, Coleman found time after hard working hours to attempt to improve the lot of his fellow-men, and to educate and give paternal attention to his four children and wife. The frame up of such a man must be protested firmly and loudly by all decent, American citizens."

The Rev. E. T. Byrd, Retired Minister

"When a citizen has served his fellow workers, and the community in which he lives to the extent that Thomas Coleman has during the past

twenty-three or more years he should be cited for service outside and beyond the call of duty.

"Instead, however, of being thus recognized, Tom Coleman, like scores of great men of past years, has been handed a crown of thorns, and is being crucified on a cross of political hysteria.

"As officers of the United Public Workers Union, we have had the privilege for several years of working closely with Thomas Coleman in a professional capacity. We have nought save praise and admiration for his service to the Union and the workers who comprise its membership, and sincerely hope that he will continue these activities in the future.

Louis Segadelli, President
Detroit Joint Board, UPW
Mort Furay, Regional Director UPW
Dan Schwartz, Dir. of Org. Reg. VI

"We know and have known Thomas Coleman since this local was organized as a true and hard fighter for the members of this local. A union man at heart, and always ready to fight against unfairness, his untiring efforts and sacrifices for this union without regard to his own inconveniences, his fights for fair play, make this union feel that there is not to be found a more loyal citizen than Thomas Coleman, President and Business Agent of our Local."

Arthur Poplar, Secretary-Treasurer
Local 285, UPW

"I have known Thomas Coleman and been a close associate of his for 24 years. He is an aggressive and progressive champion of those things which he believes is best for all the people who must be assisted regardless of race. My 24 years of close association with him relieves my mind of any doubt of disloyalty or ulterior motive. For at least two years he was at my house daily discussing and planning means of relief for those in need during the depression, and his record will show that his work has been open and above board. He was instrumental in bringing to the attention of the Detroit City Council a song book which the Council agreed was not a good book for the morale and teaching of our young. The book was therefore banished from the High School and from all schools of the State of Michigan. He was an exponent and pioneer in the idea that the Negro should cease to be a tool and vote his convictions on all issues regardless of party lines.

true to that which he believes is right, and only asks fair play for all, and an honest application of the constitution of our Country."

—Wiley Thompson