

Newspaper articles 1932-1934 about the case after Ernest McDuffey went to prison

The Daily Worker March 13, 1932
The Daily Worker April 18, 1932
Twin City Herald July 30, 1932
Twin City Herald August 13, 1932
Twin City Herald December 31, 1932
Twin City Herald July 7, 1934
Twin City Herald July 14, 1934
Twin City Herald November 3, 1934
Minneapolis Spokesman December 28, 1934
Twin City Herald December 29, 1934

YOUNG NEGRO FACES 7 YEAR TERM ON FRAMEUP

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn.—Demonstrations throughout Minnesota will take place on March 18, for the release of Ernest McDuffy, 22 year old Negro, sentenced to seven years imprisonment in the St. Cloud, Minn., reformatory on a framed charge of "mistreating a white girl." On the same day, a delegation of workers affiliated with the International Labor Defense will present a petition for McDuffy's release to the governor of the state. Over 7,000 signatures have already been collected.

McDuffy was sentenced in Anoka in a trial lasting three minutes. No witnesses testified. McDuffy was told by a "liberal" lawyer and a garage owner of the town, both posing as friends, that he must plead guilty or face a long prison term and possible lynching. Both knew he was innocent. They told him he would be paroled after a year in the reformatory.

Investigators have discovered that the few Negroes living in Anoka were terrorized. McDuffy and others had been subjected to frameup plots before but they had fallen through.

Minneapolis, Minn.—Negro and white workers under leadership of League of Struggle for Negro Rights and Young Communist League begin fight for release of Ernest McDuffy, young Negro worker of Anoka, Minn., railroaded to seven years in St. Cloud reformatory.

I.L.D. Launches Fight To Free Anoka Man Unjustly Jailed

Baptists Hold Annual Sessions

The Minnesota State Baptist Convention met here at Zion Baptist church beginning Wednesday. Rev. L. W. Harris, pastor of Pilgrim Baptist church, St. Paul, is state moderator of the convention.

FORMER LOCAL PASTOR VISITS HERE.

Rev Walter Clark Wills of Sioux City, former pastor of Wayman A. M. E. church, Minneapolis, spent a few days in the Twin Cities this week on business.

Golf and Tennis

Will Work For Man's Freedom.

The first move to free Ernest McDuffey, sentenced to St. Cloud Reformatory from Anoka, Minn., several months ago on what some claim was a trumped up charge was made by the Minneapolis district International Labor Defense, defenders of the Scottsboro Boys, several days ago when a committee from that organization visited McDuffey in St. Cloud and offered him their assistance.

McDuffey's story as told to the I. L. D. committee was as follows: He was born in Birmingham, Alabama. His parents were of the poorest class of Negro workers of the South. His father is a railroad worker employed in Birmingham. When he was 11 years old, he left for the North because he thought he would have more of a chance to live in the "free" North. He worked in many cities until he found a job in a garage in Anoka, Minn. There he was working

together with two white boys. Soon, the two white boys were laid off and he was kept on by the boss because he was working hard for him. The two white boys, in their desire to take the job away from McDuffy, attempted to frame him up on a rape charge. At that time, McDuffy had too much evidence to prove that he was innocent, so that the attempt did not work.

Later on, however, another attempt was made to frame him, and this time it ended in Ernest McDuffy being railroaded to prison for 7 years. McDuffy tells that he is innocent and facts in the case prove that this is a rank frame-up case. The charge placed against this Negro boy, was rape of an eight year old white girl. However, after a doctor's examination of the girl, it was found that the girl has not even been touched. This forced a change in the charge to "Attempt at rape." No other evidence besides the flimsy story of the little girl, was necessary to send this boy to prison.

An Anoka lawyer who represented himself as a friend of the unfortunate youth along with the garage owner urged McDuffey to plead guilty to the charge on the basis that if he pleaded not guilty he would stand a chance of getting lynched and the easiest for him would be about 20 years in prison.

They told him that if he pleaded guilty, he would get off with a very slight sentence of only about 6 months to a year. To back up their threat that he might get lynched, they actually organized a lynch mob and made an attempt on the life of this boy at the Anoka jail.

This, coupled with the numerous lynchings and wave of murder against the Negroes in the South, forced the boy to accept the "advice" of his so-called friends. However, when he came out to prison, he found that instead of a six months sentence, he was to stay in prison for 7 years.

The local I. L. D. is making a drive to secure this man's release. A committee from the organization will explain the details of the case to Negro and white organizations throughout the state in a few days.

Local I. L. D. Seeks Pardon For McDuffey

The International Labor Defense continues its fight to free from the state Reformatory at St. Cloud, Ernest McDuffey, youth convicted of assault several months ago in Anoka. McDuffey several days ago placed the full handling of his case in the hands of the Minneapolis members of the



MCDUFFEY.

Labor Defense. Officials of this organization claim that McDuffey was railroaded to prison, told that if he plead guilty he would only be given six months, and that if he did not plead guilty he would be lynched.

According to the Labor Defense people, McDuffey was well liked in Anoka. They claim he was framed by two white men because his employer in reducing his employed personnel kept McDuffey and let them go. They claim that his imprisonment was obtained by unfair means and plan to ask Governor Olson to pardon him. On the 16th of September the organization plans to hold a meeting to which all organizations, white and black, will be requested to send representatives to formulate plans to bring about McDuffey's release. In this movement the I. L. D. claims it is backed by many citizens of Anoka who feel that there was a miscarriage of justice in this case.

Headquarters of the organization are located at 306 Third avenue south.

Mrs. Ada Wright To Speak Here

NOTED WOMAN WHO VISITED 16
COUNTRIES COMING.

People of the Twin Cities are urged to attend the Engdahl Memorial meeting Friday, tonight, December 30th, 8:00 P. M. at the A. O. U. W. Hall, 19th South 7th St. Mrs. Ada Wright, mother of two of the Scotsboro boys, will be one of the principal speakers. She has just returned from Europe, where she toured sixteen countries, speaking to thousands in behalf of the nine Scotsboro boys who were recently granted a new trial, as a result mainly of the protest that came from every part of the world.

At this meeting, Mary Mooney,

mother of Tom Mooney, and Mrs. A. L. Engdahl, 74 year-old mother of J. Louis Engdahl, will also participate in the program.

This meeting will be made a special occasion for the furthering of the fight to free Earnest McDuffy, young Negro boy of Anoka. The International Labor Defense of Minneapolis received word December 28th that the petition for the release of Earnest McDuffy has been denied by the Pardon Board, of which Governor Floyd B. Olson is a member.

A number of Negroes of Minneapolis and St. Paul are active in the McDuffy Defense committee, and they call upon all Negroes to attend in large numbers the Engdahl Memorial meeting.

McDUFFY CASE TO PARDON BOARD MONDAY

(I. L. D. News Service)

On June 6, 1934, a representative committee organized by the International Labor Defense went to the State Capitol in St. Paul, Minnesota, to file the application of Earnest McDuffy, a young Negro worker who was convicted in Anoka, Minnesota, in 1931, on what, just as in the Scottsboro case, the same tactics were used at the time of McDuffy's arrest to make him plead guilty to a crime he never committed—(threats, lynch mob, etc.—a promise of a short sentence). McDuffy has been up before the Pardon Board on two previous occasions but it was always the contention that they could not come to a common understanding regarding McDuffy's release, owing to the fact that they were of different political opinions. However, at the present time, the committee, after talking with members of the Board, have been informed that the Chief Justice, Attorney General, and the Governor are all members of the Farmer-Labor party, and have stated their willingness to release McDuffy. The case of Earnest McDuffy will come up before the Pardon Board on the 9th of July and the International

the 9th of July and the International Labor Defense has requested of Attorney General Peterson that all witnesses and all people that have made out affidavits concerning McDuffy's character, etc., should be called in to testify. At this time the Governor is receiving resolutions from churches, clubs, fraternal organizations, co-operatives, etc., representing thousands of workers throughout the state of Minnesota and the United States, calling for the release of this young, innocent Negro worker

July 14, 1934

Citizens Urge Pardon Board To Free McDuffie

PLEA FOR YOUTH WHO WAS RAILROADED TO PRISON

A group of white and Negro citizens appeared before the Minnesota State Pardon Board Wednesday in behalf of Ernest McDuffie, who was convicted three years ago following an alleged offense against a minor child in Anoka. After his arrest in Anoka he was brought to Minneapolis to foil mob violence, since feeling was reported to run high against him.

In Minneapolis he pled guilty to the charge. He afterwards told officials of the International Labor Defense, who investigated the case, that he pled guilty because he was told by Anoka police authorities that if he did plead guilty he would get a short sentence.

McDuffie also said he was told that if he did not plead guilty he would be returned to Anoka where he would surely be lynched. This is the reason why he pled guilty according to his claim.

McDuffie also claimed that labor difficulties caused various prejudiced whites in Anoka to seek to get him out of the town and that the charges against him were framed.

Monday a committee of local citizens requested Judge Mathias Baldwin, of the Hennepin County District Court, to recommend a commutation of McDuffie's sentence. Judge Baldwin refused to make such a recommendation, stating that he made it a practice not to make recommendations to the pardon board.

Those who made pleas for McDuffie at the pardon meeting Wednesday, were Sam Borenstein of the International Labor Defense, Cecil E. Newman, editor of the Herald, S. K. Davis, Communist candidate for governor, and Asa Mitchell.

Chief Justice John J. Devaney assured the persons who spoke in McDuffie's behalf, that the case would be gone into thoroughly and that the discrimination against colored inmates at St. Cloud, charged by Mr. Davis in his plea to the board, would also be investigated.

**Why Is
He In
JAIL ?**



**Why Is
GOV. OLSON
Silent?**

For over three years, this young Negro worker, an auto mechanic, has been kept in St. Cloud Reformatory. He was sent up on a frame-up charge of "taking indecent liberties with an eight year old white girl." IT HAS BEEN PROVEN WITHOUT EVEN A SHOW OF A DOUBT THAT McDUFFY IS INNOCENT, that the methods of the Southern lynchers has been used to frame him.

The International Labor Defense has conducted a vigorous campaign for his release and brought the case before the Pardon Board of Minnesota, three times. In spite of all the statements of individual members of the Pardon Board that a great injustice has been done, McDuffy is still in jail.

The Pardon Board consists of Governor Olson, Attorney General Peterson and Chief Justice Devaney. All three are Farmer-Laborites. All of them claim to be friends of the workers and of the Negro people. All three are now seeking the support of the Negroes to be re-elected.

We ask all workers, intellectuals, professional people, Negro and white, to ask these three candidates the following questions:

1. You have time to release McDuffy before the day of the elections.
WILL YOU RELEASE McDUFFY?

2. Are you not lending encouragement to Negro oppression and to the attempts to "burn" the Scottsboro boys by your callous indifference to the fate of Ernest McDuffy?

3. It is a fact that segregation and Jim-Crowism is a common practice in this state. Why are doing nothing to stop it?

Gov. Floyd B. Olson,
Attorney-General Peterson,
Chief Justice Devaney.

You three who constitute the Pardon Board, and who claim to be fair and impartial, hold the fate of McDuffy in your hands.

WHAT IS YOUR ANSWER?

International Labor Defense
McDuffy-Scottsboro Defense Committee,
10 So. 3rd Street, Room 5.

Ernest McDuffy Is Again Denied Pardon By Board

The following statement was issued by the International Labor Defense, Minnesota district, through M. Masloff, secretary:

(By M. Masloff, Secy. I. L. D.)

For the third time, the Minnesota state pardon board has denied a pardon to Ernest McDuffy, young Negro mechanic, framed at Anoka, Minnesota, and railroaded to prison after less than 10 minutes deliberation before Judge Mathias Baldwin in the District court in Minneapolis. The International Labor Defense, which has been fighting for the release of McDuffy since his imprisonment in St. Cloud, forced the officials that were behind the frame-up to appear before the last session of the pardon board. It was evident to everyone that was present that these officials were extremely prejudiced, that they had never presented any evidence in the case, and were unable to defend their position before the pardon board. Their attempts to deny that McDuffy was threatened with

don board. Their attempts to deny that McDuffy was threatened with lynching as was reported in the daily press at the time, sounded shallow.

Who are the members of the pardon board that denied a pardon to Ernest McDuffy, while freeing gangsters and criminals at every session. The members are Governor Floyd B. Olson, who has stated that if it was up to him alone, McDuffy would be free today. The second member is State's Attorney Peterson, who stated that even if the so-called "confession" forced by threats out of McDuffy were true, that the most that he should have received is 90 days in the work farm. The third member is Chief Justice Devaney, who was appointed originally to that office by Governor Olson and who received the endorsement of the Farmer-Labor Party in the last election.

Why was it that the pardon board delayed making a decision in the case until after November 6th? The answer is obvious. The elections took place on November 6th.

The International Labor Defense, therefore, calls upon every organization, Negro and white, to immediately send in resolutions of protest to each member of the pardon board, and to demand that an immediate and unconditional release be granted to Ernest McDuffy, who has already served twelve times the 90 days that Attorney General Peterson spoke about. Demand that the Farmer-Labor Party leaders carry through in action what they pretend in their election speeches—that they put an end to frame-ups of Negroes in Minnesota, and that they begin by freeing Ernest McDuffy, who has repeatedly proclaimed his innocence, and who also has repeatedly been denied the right to appear in person before the pardon board.


State Pardon Board Again Denies Pleas To Pardon McDuffy

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Related AI content

The details provided trace back to a vital piece of 1930s civil rights and labor history in Minnesota. The address **10 S. 3rd St. in Minneapolis** served as the local headquarters for the **McDuffy-Scottsboro Defense Committee**, operating as a regional arm of the [International Labor Defense \(ILD\)](#). 

Historical Context & Organization

- **The International Labor Defense (ILD):** Founded in 1925 as the legal defense arm of the Communist Party USA, the ILD specialized in combining courtroom advocacy with aggressive public agitation, mass rallies, and media campaigns.
- **The Scottsboro Boys Campaign:** The ILD achieved its greatest historic prominence in 1931 when it stepped in to defend the "Scottsboro Boys"—nine Black teenagers falsely accused of raping two white women on an Alabama train. The ILD turned the trial into an international cause célèbre, exposing Jim Crow racism to a global audience.
- **The McDuffy Connection:** Local branches nationwide formed specialized sub-committees to raise funds, print pamphlets, and organize demonstrations. The Minneapolis branch on 3rd Street integrated the Scottsboro campaign with local labor defense and anti-racist initiatives—often tying the Alabama case to regional struggles for Black workers and union activists during Minneapolis's turbulent 1930s labor era.  The New York Public Library +6

From Minnesota Black Newspaper Index

<https://www.mnhs.org/hubfs/sites/default/files/2024-04/blacknewspaperindex.pdf>

Labor	A. Philip Randolph to speak in the Twin Cities soon	TCH 6-20-1932 p1 c3
Labor	International Labor Defense takes on McDuffey case	TCH 7-30-1932 p1 c5
Labor	35 Black transients arrested in Bridge Square in 2 days	TCH 7-30-1932 p1 c2
McDuffey, Ernest	To serve on Hennepin Co. Grand jury	MIM 2-24-1923 p1 c3
McDuffey, Ernest	Anoka man said to be framed in rape case	TCH 7-30-1932 p1 c5
McDuffey, Ernest	Photo update in case	TCH 8-13-1932 p1 c5
McDuffey, Ernest	Pardon denied by state Dec 28	TCH 12-31-1932 p4 c1
McDuffey, Ernest	Case to go before parole board again	TCH 7-7-1934 p1 c4
McDuffey, Ernest	Cecil Newman testifies on his behalf	TCH 7-14-1934 p1 c6
McDuffey, Ernest	Photo/ad by ILD in his defense	TCH 11-3-1934 p4 c2
McDuffey, Ernest	Again denied parole	MSP 12-28-1934 p1 c6

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Subject	Article Description	Newspaper Citation
McDuffey, Ernest	State parole board rejects claim	TCH 12-29-1934 p1 c6

From the Labor Defender magazine August 1932

Ernest McDuffy, 18 years. St. Cloud
Reformatory, St. Cloud, Minn. Arrested
January, 1932, on frame-up rape charge.
Sentenced to seven years.

Article from Labor Defender magazine Vol. 10 No. 5 May, 1934

'We Demand Recognition of Political Prisoners' by James Egan.

ERNEST MCDUFFY

Charge, mistreating white girl. Sentence, 7 years.

Not permitted to receive Labor Defender.