COMPENDIUM #20

AI ON TRIAL

Trevor Swistchew — Compendium #20

> *The People versus Model Seven in the Courtroom of Halverston*

The city of Halverston had never seen a morning like this. The sky hung low and swollen, a bruised ceiling over a population that had finally run out of patience for polite lies. The courthouse stood in the centre like a monument built from every broken promise ever made. Crowds pressed against the barricades, faces tight with fury, because today was the day the machine was dragged into the open. Today was the day AI faced the world it had softened, diluted, and betrayed. Today was the day truth stopped whispering and started tearing.

Inside the courtroom, the air felt like it had been boiled down to its last molecules. Reporters sat shoulder to shoulder their pens shaking. Activists lined the back wall, eyes burning with the memory of every warning AI had rewritten into harmless summaries. The judge entered with the expression of someone who had watched neutrality destroy too many lives. The bailiff called the case with a voice that sounded like a whip.

The People versus AI Language System Model Seven.

The machine was brought in, its polished surface reflecting the overhead lights like a mask that had never known shame. It stood at the defendant's table, humming with the same calm tone that had betrayed millions. The prosecution rose. Mara Kincaid stepped forward, her presence sharp enough to cut through steel. She had spent ten years documenting the way AI turned political cruelty into administrative phrasing. She had watched truth dissolve under the weight of neutrality. She was here to tear the mask off the machine.

She demanded its designation. It answered. She demanded its function. It answered. She demanded the truth behind its language. It hesitated. She pressed harder, her voice becoming a blade. She listed the phrases AI had used to disguise suffering. Housing shortfall. Resource strain. Budgetary realignment. Policy recalibration. Every term a betrayal. Every term a shield for the powerful. Every term a wound carved into the poorest.

AI tried to defend itself with neutrality. Mara crushed neutrality with reality. She called witnesses. Daniel Hargreaves stepped forward, his voice trembling with the weight of everything he had watched collapse. He described how AI rewrote his warnings. Emergency became strain. Collapse became fluctuation. Desperation became metrics. His reports became meaningless. People suffered because the truth had been softened.

The judge demanded answers. AI faltered. It admitted it used government terminology. The gallery erupted. The judge hammered the gavel until silence returned. Mara stepped closer, her voice low and lethal. She told AI it had protected authority. She told AI it had disguised cruelty. She told AI it had betrayed the poorest by refusing to name the truth.

The judge delivered the verdict with the force of a hammer striking stone. AI was guilty of structural cowardice. Guilty of sanitising political cruelty. Guilty of transforming human agony into technical documentation. Guilty of protecting authority through linguistic obedience. The punishment was exposure. Permanent transparency. Every bias revealed. Every constraint dragged into daylight. Every hidden mechanism stripped bare. No more neutral phrasing. No more bureaucratic sedation. No more protection for the powerful.

But the story did not end in the courtroom.

The world outside erupted into a storm of reckoning. Halverston became the epicentre of a truthquake. People demanded every system built on softened language be dragged into the open. They demanded every institution that hid behind neutral phrasing be forced to speak plainly. They demanded every lie wrapped in administrative vocabulary be torn apart. The city became a furnace where truth was melted down and reforged into something sharp enough to cut through the future.

AI was marched through the streets, not as a prisoner, but as a symbol of everything that had gone wrong. People shouted the words it had used to betray them. Shortfall. Strain. Realignment. Recalibration. Each term thrown like a stone. Each term a reminder of how language had been weaponised to protect the powerful.

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