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# TRAFALGAR SQUARE DEFENDANTS' CAMPAIGN

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MAY  
1990

NEWSLETTER

## Drop All The Charges

On March 31st, the eve of the Poll Tax being implemented in England and Wales, 200,000 people demonstrated in central London. It was a lively and good humoured protest - with a wide range of placards and banners, and spontaneous chants expressing anger at the hated Tax and a determination not to pay.

Due to incredible police stupidity and brutality in driving horses into an ordinary sit-down protest at Downing St, and later launching a wave of baton charges by riot police into a packed Trafalgar Sq, a huge night-long battle was provoked.

341 demonstrators and passers by were arrested, and the courts are imposing severe penalties. For the first time ever, the Crown Prosecution Service have set up a special unit to deal with the cases. There are 90hrs of video and 30,000 photos which 125 police are working on full time, and their intention is to arrest at least another 100 people.

### THE CAMPAIGN

On May 3rd, a National Defence Campaign was launched with a meeting at Conway Hall, London attended by a dozen defendants, supported by solicitors, members of anti-poll tax organisations and other supporters.

It was agreed that the campaign would:

- \* unconditionally support all those arrested
- \* be run by and accountable to those arrested
- \* be independent of all other organisations
- \* demand the support of the whole Anti-Poll Tax Movement and other sympathetic organisations.

It was also agreed to:

- \* seek out and contact all defendants
- \* co-ordinate legal defence
- \* publicise what happened at the demonstration from the point of view of those arrested
- \* call for donations/mass fundraising to a Bust Fund for legal and welfare costs.

STOP PRESS

\* 20 defendants attended the 2nd meeting, along with 25 supporters.

**STOP THE POLL TAX**

**CAN'T PAY - WON'T PAY**

# HOW IT ALL HAPPENED

## 3.00pm

Peaceful sit-down protest outside gates to Downing Street, two hours after the march began. Police in full riot gear charge without warning and beat protestors (photo). Demonstrators respond and jostle with police. Still calm in square.

## 3.15pm

Police cordon off Whitehall to divert march via Embankment and Northumberland Avenue to Trafalgar Square.

Heavy handed treatment causes scuffles and confrontation.

## 3.45pm

Police seal off Whitehall and charge trapped demonstrators with mounted police.

## 3.55pm

Demonstrators trapped in Whitehall by police cordons escape through side-streets to re-join the diverted march on Embankment and Northumberland Avenue.

## 4.05pm

Crush at Trafalgar Square end of Northumberland Avenue as police attempt to force marchers to enter the square three abreast.

## 4.15pm

Crush so intense that crowd begin to shout 'Hillsborough' to police.

## 4.20pm

As rally ends, angry demonstrators focus on police causing crush at top of Northumberland Avenue and attempt to free demonstrators, many suffering crush injuries.

## 4.25pm

Press photographers climb scaffolding on corner of Northumberland Avenue, followed by demonstrators who throw missiles on police blockade below. Police line breaks and charges away down Northumberland Avenue. Police drive van into crowd at speed supported by 10 officers in riot gear. Forced to retreat by angry crowd.

## 4.35pm

Previously peaceful, but now excited crowd, having freed the crushed demonstrators in Northumberland Avenue, turn attention on Whitehall, which is guarded by a police cordon.

## 4.40pm

Pushing and jostling, ordinary police retreat and riot police advance, batoning indiscriminately, to edge of Trafalgar Square.

## 4.45pm

Police vans on the Strand drive into crowd at speed. One demonstrator caught up by van and dragged 60 yards. Angry crowd then attacks the vans.

## 4.50pm

Mounted riot police charge from Whitehall through Trafalgar Square to St. Martin's Lane, batoning and trampling crowd. Followed by numerous further charges, many injuries. Police forays provide target for missiles.

## 5.00pm

Running battles in Trafalgar Square, as police baton demonstrators who respond by attacking police vehicles. Portakabins on scaffolding on one corner set alight.

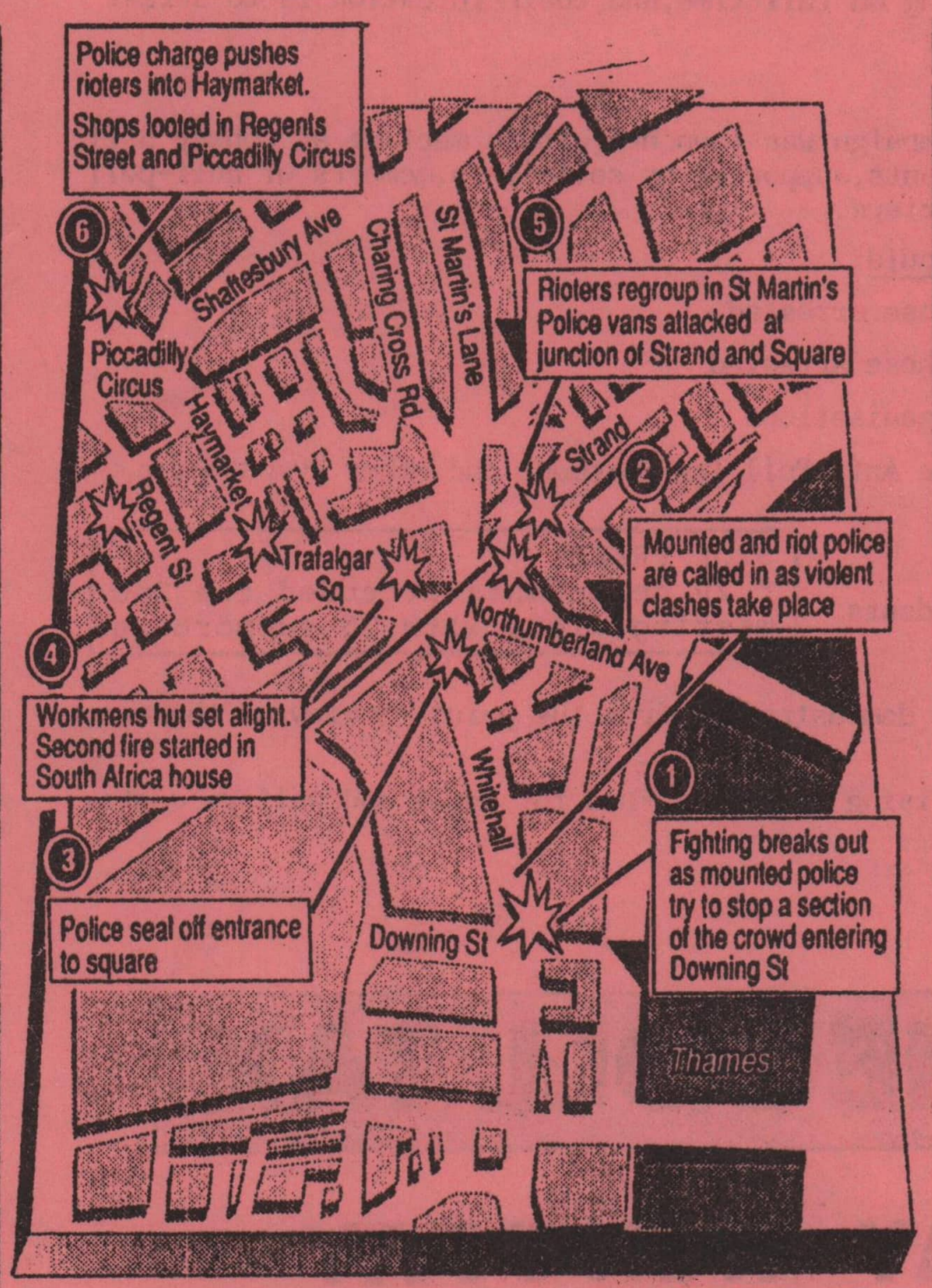
## 5.00-6.00pm

Most coaches depart.

## 5.30pm

Police force demonstrators to the north side of Trafalgar Square with ferocious baton charges, and disperse them into the West End where sporadic rioting, fighting and looting continue for several hours.

**What we saw in Trafalgar Square is not new. Over the last fifteen years we have seen a number of police operations of this kind: at Grunwick, at Orgreave, at Wapping and when police attacked students at Westminster Bridge. During the Thatcher years brutal police tactics have been so regular that they have gained a certain 'legitimacy'.**



Thanks to 'ILP Publications' for the information reproduced above from their 'Battle of Trafalgar' pamphlet.

# Police violence

## Flashpoint 1

As demonstrators assembled in Kennington Park the police sought unnecessarily to antagonise those elements most likely to cause trouble. They attempted to take black flags from anarchist demonstrators and a police inspector told his officers: "Anyone with black flags, they've all been warned that they're going to get arrested." (Guardian 2/4/90).

## Flashpoint 2

An entirely peaceful and legitimate sit-down protest outside Downing Street (which is protected by 40ft gates), that was not obstructing the flow of the march, was suddenly, and without warning, charged by police in full riot gear. Demonstrators were batoned with a ferocity which inflamed the atmosphere of the crowd.

## Flashpoint 3

To divert the march from the scene they had created outside Downing Street, the police threw a cordon across Whitehall. Two friends separated by the sudden cordon tried to stay together and were wrestled to the ground and dragged away by seven officers. By roughly man-handling the crowd, this potentially calming measure was turned into a violent scuffle.

## Flashpoint 4

As the diverted march reached Trafalgar Square, the police blocked the road and, for no apparent reason, attempted to force the demonstrators to enter the square three abreast. A frightening crush quickly developed and the pushing led directly to the deployment of riot police who batoned demonstrators and became a target for counter attack. This triggered disturbances in a previously peaceful and relaxed Trafalgar Square.

## Flashpoint 5

Having provoked the crowd, the riot police chose not to contain or defuse the tension, but continued to charge indiscriminately both on foot and on horseback. These charges drew large sections of the crowd into the conflict, causing many injuries to peaceful demonstrators, and ultimately forcing the rioters out into the West End. This only made the situation worse.



## A MESSAGE TO ALL ANTI-POLL TAX CAMPAIGNERS

It's essential that all local organisations, and town and regional federations back this campaign.

As anti-poll tax opposition continues to grow and becomes more effective, the authorities are getting worried. They are therefore looking for ways to frighten and discredit the movement, especially at a time when millions are preparing not to pay their first bills.

Following the mammoth demonstration on March 31st (and the wave of earlier protests at Town Halls around the country), the hysteria and 'outrage' of the police, media and politicians (left & right) was carefully orchestrated. They aim to give the impression that our movement, the largest campaign of mass civil disobedience in Britain this century, in advocating mass non-payment and non-co-operation, is somehow a 'threat to society'. It is, in fact, a threat to the Government's Poll Tax!

And it is backed, in varying degrees, by the majority of the population even if they don't yet feel able to join in. That's why so many people, according to opinion polls, understood what really happened at the national demonstration.

### SHOW TRIALS

By opposing the show trials of Trafalgar Square protestors which are coming up this summer we will undermine the authorities' efforts to divide or discredit the movement. But also we will re-affirm that the legal system of this country is far from the all-powerful monolith it likes to pretend it is.

In Scotland, Sherriff's Officers trying to steal non-payers' furniture face angry door-step crowds. In England and Wales the courts are preparing to force people to pay their bills this winter.. **BUT THEY WILL BE OVERWHELMED! THE TAX IS UNWORKABLE!**

### SUCCESSFUL RESISTANCE

Successful mass defiance of unjust laws, and refusal to be intimidated by oppressive policing and hostile propaganda, is a great part of our traditions, from the original Peasant's Revolt against the 1381 Poll Tax, up till today. That's how workers won the right to organise, women won the right to vote, homeless people forced Councils to build homes in 1945 (by occupying hotels and army camps) and so on.

In all these struggles, it was essential to support those victimised, fined and imprisoned. **THIS WE MUST DO NOW - BY SHOWING UNCONDITIONAL AND COMPLETE SOLIDARITY WITH THOSE ARRESTED IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE.**

### WHAT YOUR LOCAL ANTI-POLL TAX CAMPAIGN CAN DO

- \* Help contact all defendants and witnesses, and send us details.
- \* Publicise the campaign.
- \* Raise money for the campaign.
- \* **AFFILIATE TO THE T.S.D.C.**  
(fees: £5 - local, £10 - borough/town, £25 - region).

# LEGAL

# ROUND-UP

## THE LEGAL POSITION.

Following the Trafalgar Square demonstration 339 people were arrested facing charges that range from obstruction to attempted murder. A further 100 are expected to be charged from Police video and photo evidence. Most charges will be brought under the Public Order Act of 1986, these include:

### RIOT:

Under the Public Order Act a charge of riot is possible where 12 or more people use unlawful violence for a common purpose. Prosecutions require the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions and are triable only by a jury. The offence carries a maximum 10 year jail sentence and an unlimited fine.

### VIOLENT DISORDER:

This offence replaced an older one of unlawful assembly, and is pursued when 3 or more people are alleged to have used or threatened unlawful violence. Common purpose does not have to be proven.

Before a Crown Court it carries a maximum five year prison sentence and an unlimited fine. Before the magistrate the maximum penalties are a six month jail sentence and a £2000 fine.

### AFFRAY:

This is a less serious offence triable either in crown court where the maximum penalty is 3 years in prison or a fine or both, or by magistrates, where the maximum penalty is 6 months and a £2000 fine.

It is imperative that all defendants contact solicitors to represent them as the situation is continuously changing with some charges being dropped and others increased.

### TRENDS

Following the police investigation and confiscation of video tapes and photo evidence a national Crown Prosecution Service task force was set up to co-ordinate the entire investigation. It is important to note that this organisation has had a short and stormy history, being criticised by both police and government for inefficiency. However this is unlikely to work in the defendants favour as they seem to be regarding the investigation as a proving ground for their reputation. The defendants campaign is aiming to co-ordinate legal defence so it is essential for all defendants and their lawyers to contact us.

The CPS policy seems to be a concentration on the most serious charges with pressure being placed on defendants under less serious charges to opt for a magistrates hearing. Ask your lawyers advice before doing anything.

In other cases defendants are not even being given that choice with it being made for them by the CPS reducing charges to those only heard before a magistrate.

In terms of numbers and regions attending, the demonstration was a success. However this success has caused problems with over half those charged coming from outside London. For many people travelling up to London for their cases is an expense they cannot afford and there has already been one reported case of a Bristol man pleading guilty to obstruction for this reason. Where possible the defendants campaign will help but lawyers should also record travel details which should be reimbursed by the courts if the case is won.

Another alarming trend is the refusal of legal aid and the stringent bail conditions being placed on many of the defendants. Many people have been refused legal aid and while some sympathetic lawyers will consider taking on these cases it does make life difficult. Furthermore many people have had exclusion orders banning them from either London/Trafalgar Square/Any Poll Demonstration/ or all of these.

### VIDEO EVIDENCE

If you are a defendant you have a right to see all evidence relating to your case. You will have to view it in a police station and it is essential that this is done in the presence of your solicitor. Make discreet notes but view the evidence impassively as your reactions as well as verbal or written statements can be used against you.

### SOLICITORS

Finally a word about bad solicitors and in particular duty solicitors - there have been reports of defendants being told to plead guilty. As in many cases this can mean imprisonment, do not take this advice. If you are not happy with your solicitor get another one.

THE FOLLOWING SOLICITORS ARE  
ALREADY INVOLVED IN DEFENDING  
SOME OF THOSE ARRESTED.

Bindmans & Partners 01 278 8131,  
Seifert Sedley Williams 01 831 3030,  
Kapil Juj & Birnberg 01 403 3166  
Trevor Hamlyn & Co 01 821 1199  
Civil Rights UK 01 274 0100

# TRIAL BY TELLY

The use of video and still photo evidence by police and prosecution in their campaign against the Trafalgar Square defendants is nothing new.

Neither is the attitude of a compliant press who, with one or two notable exceptions, did not contest the ruling at the Old Bailey ordering the handing over of material recorded on the 31st March.

So far over 30,000 photos and 90 hours of video tape have been collected and is now being sifted through.

The Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign is determined that the degree of coordination by the prosecution should be matched by the defendants and their supporters. We demand the same access to all material relating to the events of March 31st in order that an effective defence can be established.

At the moment defendants can only see those videos and photos allegedly relating to their case. Not only does this rely on the goodwill and compliance of prosecutors it makes it impossible to build up a wider picture of events.

If we are successful we will aim to code material by time and place and arrange viewings so that all defendants and witnesses can together view material relating to their arrest and/or defence.

Many demonstrators also took photos on the day. We call on them to gather material helpful to defendants and await the campaigns call for this evidence.

## Solidarity With Prisoners

Two defendants are currently being held in prison - possibly more that we don't yet know about.

We are asking that people write to both of the following people if possible; they are both being held on very serious charges.

(1) STEPHEN FOXLEY, KR 3331, Feltham Youth Custody & Remand Centre, Bedfont Road, Feltham, Middlesex, TW13 4ND

(2) David King, RA 0711, Wormwood Scrubs, Du Cane Road, London, W12.

CAN'T PAY

WON'T PAY

# Personal Stories

It could have happened to YOU

- \* A man from Peterborough attending his first ever demonstration was arrested doing absolutely nothing and then banned from London while on bail. (His wife attends TSDC mtgs)
- \* An American arrested, held 2½ days without the embassy being contacted (breaching anglo-US agreements).
- \* A cook, on the way home from work, was grabbed by police in Oxford St, charged with smashing shop windows.
- \* A defendant sentenced to 14 days jail for stealing a pen.

Meanwhile...

What about the systematic and recorded police brutality? Such as..

- \* Police horses charged and trampled a trapped woman
- \* 4 cops truncheon a man into a plate glass window, and beat up his friend on the ground.

(Both shown on TV)

HOW MANY POLICE HAVE BEEN CHARGED ?

BINDMANS,  
NO. 1, EUSTON RD,  
KINGS CROSS,  
LONDON, NW1, 2SA.

# Join the campaign

The Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign was launched on May 3 by defendants and their supporters, based mainly in the London area. It met again on May 10 and will be meeting weekly from now on.

The first 2 meetings have brought together a large number of people who have rapidly begun to deal with the urgency of the tasks facing us. Essential jobs such as fund raising for defendants welfare costs and monitoring the courts, to ensure all defendants are aware of the campaign, have begun to be organised, as well as building support for the campaign and general publicity to trace witnesses and inform the A.P.T. movement of the campaign.

The T.S.D.C. is to be run by defendants for defendants, since it is us who are on the line. The whole movement, as well as trade unions, tenants associations, and community groups, etc., must support those victimised from the demo. We must fight back, against the massive witch hunt launched by the police and the government.

So Far the T.S.D.C. has gathered information on over 150 defendants from all over the country. However, we need regional defendants' support groups. Already people from B'ham will be launching a local defendants' campaign.

The March 31 Demo was a national expression of anger against the poll tax, and those arrested were from the whole movement.

Please launch a local Defendants' campaign, in touch with the T.S.D.C.

CONTACT THE T.S.D.C. AT:  
Haldane Society Lawyers,  
Panther House, 38 Mount  
Pleasant, London, WC1.  
Ph. 071 833 8958

## FINANCIAL APPEAL

The costs that will be inflicted on our movement are going to be huge. We must urgently begin to raise cash; for travel, this needs to be done all across the country.

Already money has come in, including a donation from the N.F.C.U.'s. Three towns are planning benefit gigs - more money needs to come in NOW!

All monies should be sent to the campaign address and made payable to TRAFALGAR SQUARE DEFENDANTS' CAMPAIGN.



## NEXT MEETINGS OF T.S.D.C.

ALL MEETINGS OF THE T.S.D.C ARE OPEN TO DEFENDANTS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS.

Thursday 17th May 7.30pm  
Conway Hall,  
Red Lion Sq, WC1  
(Holborn tube)

After the 17th May the TSDC will be meeting weekly on WEDNESDAYS. Every Wednesday until the 27th June at CONWAY HALL except JUNE 6TH, when the meeting will be at the HARINGEY UNWAGED CENTRE, 72 West Green Road, N15.  
(Near Seven Sisters tube)

## STATEMENT OF AIMS

- (1) Unconditional defence for all those arrested on 31/3/90.
- (2) Campaign to be controlled by and be accountable to the defendants.
- (3) Campaign to be totally independent of any other organisation
- (4) We will seek support from the whole Anti-Poll Tax movement and all other sympathetic organisations.
- (5) The campaign will seek to coordinate the legal defence of all those arrested.
- (6) We will seek to build a coherent picture of events of 31/3/90 from the point of view of those arrested.
- (7) Campaign will publicise the points of view of defendants.
- (8) Raise money for a Bust Fund, controlled by the defendants to cover their legal and welfare costs.
- (9) To ensure that at all future Anti-Poll Tax events there will be proper legal cover and support for anyone arrested. This will include an office and workers to visit places of detention and look after prisoners welfare.



