

The Battle Continues!

The mass non-payment, non-cooperation campaign against the Poll Tax mobilised such widespread opposition that, two years after its introduction, the Poll Tax is now virtually history.. The victory of ordinary people against such unjust legislation, and the ignominy of its defeat, deserves to be remembered as just that - a victory against injustice, power, and the legal and parliamentary system.

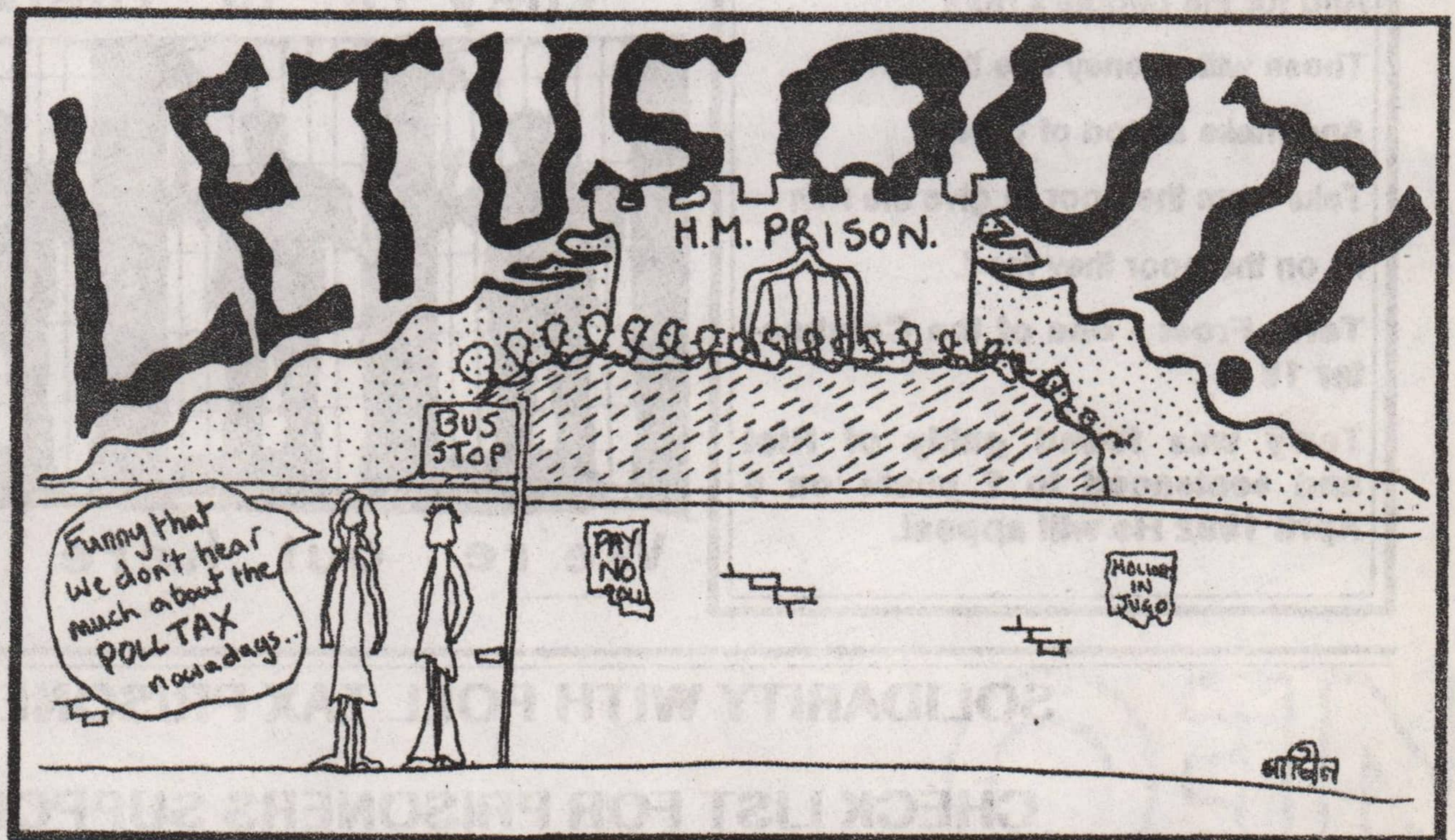
However, whilst claiming this victory with pride, we should also remember the continuing savagery and injustice meted out by the state through jailings and criminalisation of Poll Tax non-payers and resisters.

The forces of 'law and order' - the courts, the police and the judiciary - has, as ever, been mobilised against us. Tim Donaghy and others still languish in, or face the prospect of prison, after demonstrations against the Poll Tax. Inevitably in these cases police methods of fabrication and manipulation, linked to judicial prejudice, have contributed to convictions of innocent people. The antics of councils employing vast bureaucracies, the thuggery of private bailiffs, and harassment and intimidation of non-payers, has led to thousands of people being summonsed to court, and hundreds receiving jail terms for 'wilful refusal to pay'.

The threat and use of all arms of the legal and penal systems show the extent to which the authorities have gone to try to strangle opposition to the Poll Tax. England and Wales are the only countries in Europe that imprison people for the civil offence of debt, and they haven't been slow in using this against Poll Tax non-payers. This, and the swinging sentences imposed on demonstrators under the power of the Public Order act show how seriously they've taken the Poll Tax rebellion.

Prison in general is a squalid, inhumane and barbaric method of inflicting punishment on anyone at the best of times, let alone on political protesters and debtors. Imprisonment is used as a way of isolating and demoralising individuals, and intimidating the rest of us into submission. We intend to prevent this happening.

We've formed this group to offer material and practical support to anyone imprisoned for opposing the Poll Tax in Leeds and elsewhere. We aim to inform the public of the continuing injustices being perpetrated against both ordinary people and activists in its name, and to campaign to prevent such



injustices happening now and in the future.

With collection of Poll Tax arrears set to continue for six years after its abolition, and with new legislation due which is likely to retain a large measure of the 'flat-rate' aspect which made the Poll Tax itself so unpopular, we think its vital to continue to oppose the Poll Tax in all its effects and to maintain as high a public profile for this opposition as possible. We also want those inside to see that others on the outside are carrying on their fight with them. We'll continue to argue that all Poll Tax resisters are innocent and to press for FREEDOM FOR ALL POLL TAX PRISONERS and AN AMNESTY FOR ALL NON-PAYERS NOW!

Thoughts of a Poll Tax Prisoner

I'm not the first to sit right here
Around me there are shadows
Fighters for freedom from the past
Who faced jail, rack and gallows
Who just like me were innocent
There's nothing wrong with me
We're not violent, we're not bad
And we want the world to see
If you stand and think a while
Maybe you'll see it clear
Should it be us that's in the dock
Or those who put us here?
Poll tax we don't accept or pay
We argue and we fight
For a fair society
And for the people's right
Those with money rule the law
And make a God of greed
Take from the poor to give the rich
Its on the poor they feed.

Terry Frost - one of the Colchester 16

Terry was found guilty of Riot and sentenced to 2 years on 6 April 1992 He will appeal.

My Cell

As I sit here in my cell
I must say I dont feel well
To say I am bored is just right
I feel like fighting with all my might
The people whove done this unjust thing to me
My prison guards who hold my cell key
When I get out I promise you this
I will fight for justice twice as quick
No human being should have to be
Locked up in a cell just like me

by Christine Hammett - one of the Colchester 16

Chris was found guilty of violent disorder and sentenced to 9 months on 6 april 1992. She is not allowed home visits to her 4 children (after being told in Holloway that she would). Chris is appealing against her sentence.

They're in there for us



We're out here for them

SOLIDARITY WITH POLL TAX PRISONERS

CHECK LIST FOR PRISONERS SUPPORT

1. Details phoned to local contact who circulates them to other national contacts.
2. Write to prisoner enclosing stamps or stamped, addressed envelope, putting your name and address on the back of your letter.
3. Contact family/friends of prisoner to see if they can get to visit, if you can help with transport or member of support group can visit.
4. Press release. Organise demo outside prison.
5. Publicise prisoner's release.
6. Organise party for prisoner.

N.B. Released Trafalgar Square prisoners say the first 30 days are the worst. It is therefore important to get the news of a jailing out quickly. In Leeds, sentences for non-payment have been for 30 days so far.

Write Today



Don't Delay

TIM DONAGHY

POLITICAL PRISONER

Write Today



Don't Delay

Tim is a black film student from the London College of Printing. He has been repeatedly refused parole while serving a three year sentence following the Trafalgar Square Anti-Poll Tax demonstration of 31 March 1990.

Tim and Brian Tavares (also black) are the only Poll tax prisoners to have had parole refused. They also received some of the longest sentences. This fits the general pattern of the treatment of black people by the British legal system. Brian has now been released leaving Tim as the only remaining prisoner from Trafalgar Square.

After a campaign on Tim's behalf, permission for a special review of his parole decision has now been granted. It is hard to imagine how he will feel if he gets refused parole again. He would then not come out until February 1993.

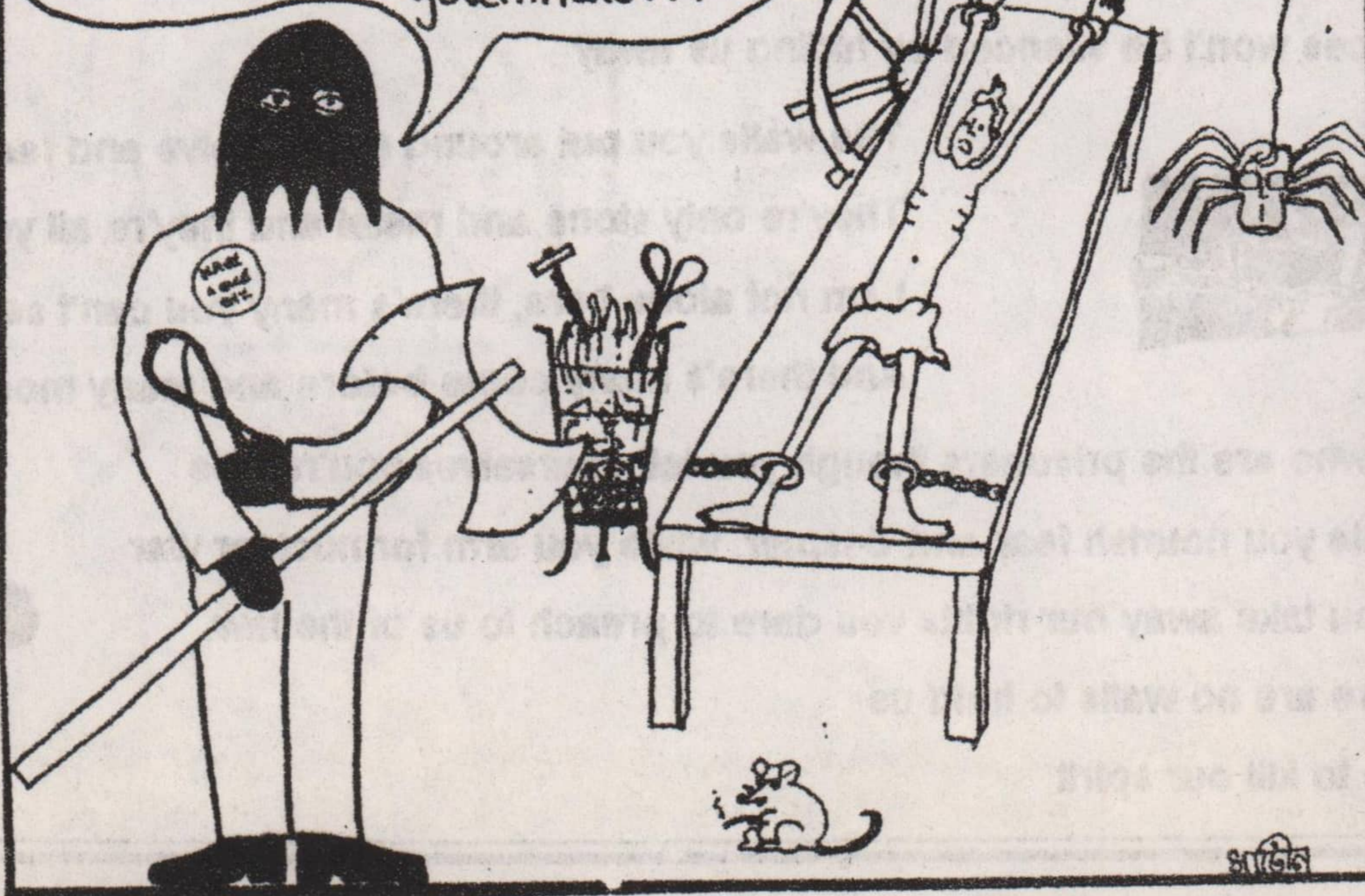
Tim writes, "The system has failed miserably in making me feel remorse for my so-called

"crimes"; at this moment all I feel is contempt. A contempt that grows each time I remember that day when the police were exempt from any or sense of justice. From that day to this, the police still seem to escape prosecution for the crimes committed by their hand. A woman trampled by police horses, a man maliciously run over by a riot van - the list goes on. Then came the lies, perjury, fabrication of evidence, conspiring to pervert the course of justice (Incidentally, how many charges have been brought against the police in the Birmingham 6 case?) No charges whatsoever have been brought against the police! Ultimately this brings into line the judges and lawlords involved in this cover-up as being guilty of false imprisonment. Living on this "septic isle" with its fake democracy that boasts of no political prisoners, I for one have been incarcerated for an opinion against the state, nothing else! The violence I was involved in was an instinct for survival, or plainly defence!"

Please write, putting your name and address on the back of the envelope to: Tim Donaghy, MW 0105, HMP Downview, Sutton Lane, Sutton, Surrey, SM2 5PD

DEPT. OF FINANCE: POLL TAX COLLECTION UNIT

We Labour Councillors see ourselves as a buffer between the people and the repressive dictates of central government...



COMMITAL HEARINGS

The first committal hearings in Leeds took place over a year ago. Since then the Council has continued to hold them at least once a week. Thirty six people have received suspended sentences and two have been jailed.

The hearings show some of the worst aspects of the British justice system. Legal aid has been denied the defendants, even though they are faced with jail, on the basis that the cases are deemed to be civil. Fortunately there are several local solicitors who are prepared to work in a voluntary capacity, and most people have been represented. Unfortunately this hasn't been the case in the vast majority of courts in the country.

At the hearing the Council representatives have to prove that the defendant was guilty of either "culpable neglect" or "wilful refusal" prior to the granting of a Liability Order at the first court hearing. In other words that the defendant had the money to pay, but for some reason didn't. The Council's job is made a great deal easier by the fact that the magistrates have usually made up their minds before the court case! The council's arguments are frequently moronic; two favoured ones being "They managed to pay their gas and electric bills so they could have paid their Poll Tax" and "They could have paid the Poll Tax with all the money saved when the rates were abolished"! With this level of sophistication the

Council is doubly lucky in having the court clerks rooting for them. The clerks are squarely supposed to give unbiased advice to the frequently unlearned magistrates. This is particularly important when the Council's case is being challenged as legal points such as the admissibility of evidence. In almost every case we have come across the court clerks have advised the magistrates to favour the Council. Undaunted we continue to put up legal challenges to the Council's case. In particular, a rule in the 1980 Magistrates Court Act which gives a six month time limit for the court to hold a committal hearing following the original complaint has led to the adjournment of all cases in Huddersfield. We hope to repeal the success in Leeds.

But we shouldn't have any illusions about beating them at their own game. Much greater difficulties have been created for the council and the courts by people simply not turning up. A note of caution here though, for people under suspended sentences who don't turn up for a second committal hearing the magistrates are now willing to pass sentence in their absence.

With no end in sight to the committal hearings we will have to continue our weekly vigil at the courts, in order to support those people who are at the front line of Poll Tax enforcement.

HOLLOWAY SONG

And when you've locked the door behind us you only fan the flames

By giving us a number you don't rob us of our names

There's nothing you can use now to threaten or control

Authority is hollow when it's all you have

Our voices won't be silenced by hiding us away



The walls you put around me dissolve and fade away

They're only stone and metal and they're all you have

I am not alone here, there's many you can't see

And there's many come before and many more to follow me

It's you who are the prisoners though you tell yourselves you're free

And while you nourish fear and despair, while you arm for nuclear war

While you take away our rights you dare to preach to us of the law.

And there are no walls to hold us

No laws to kill our spirit



PROBLEM PAGE

Your questions answered

Dear Non-payer,

Surely the Poll Tax is fair because everyone pays the same.

Confused of Calverley.

Dear confused,

You certainly are. How is it fair for millionaires, miners, merchant bankers and pensioners to have to find the same amount?

The Earl of Harewood saves about £5000 and a housewife with children and no income has to find £400. Is that fair? Wake up!

Dear Non-payer,

Why should I pay extra to make up for those who haven't paid?

Angry of Armley.

Dear Angry,

Quite right. Why should you? Don't. Lawyers are arguing that this is illegal. Nobody can be made to pay another's debt. Don't do it. Better still, Pay nothing at all. In this way we can get the whole thing completely abolished fast.

P.S. How come we're getting blamed for the extra £40 when we didn't get thanked for the £140 reduction? Don't blame us. Join us.

Dear Non-payer,

It's you non-payers who are causing cuts in local services, isn't it?

Worried of woodhouse.

Dear Worrier,

My dear friend, think back. Local services were being cut even before the Poll Tax. 25% of local funding is from the Poll Tax. The rest is from government grants, which have been slashed by 50% since 1979. The government knew that the Poll tax would bring about cuts - that was why it was brought in. They knew it would cost a great deal to administer and that millions of people would be unable to pay it. Yet they went ahead. The rich have had their bills greatly reduced. Did they honestly expect the poor to make up the difference? Non payers are mostly poor (obviously). They are also the ones who most need and want local services. If the council want to save money they could stop wasting it on the fruitless persuasion of non-payers, spending 2 to 3 times as much as they end up with if they succeed.

Dear Non-payer,

Why is the Anti-Poll Tax campaign continuing now that it's abolished?

Bewildered of Beeston.

Dear Bewildered,

I would be bewildered if I was told something was abolished and then got another bill for it. I would be bewildered if I saw people suffering the worry of bailiff visits and both the fear and the reality of being imprisoned for debt because of something that had ceased to exist. If you believe it has been abolished you certainly shouldn't try to pay it.

Dear Readers, if you've any more questions, don't ask me. Ask the people who administer the damned thing!

Leeds prisoners support group

LEEDS PRISONERS SUPPORT GROUP

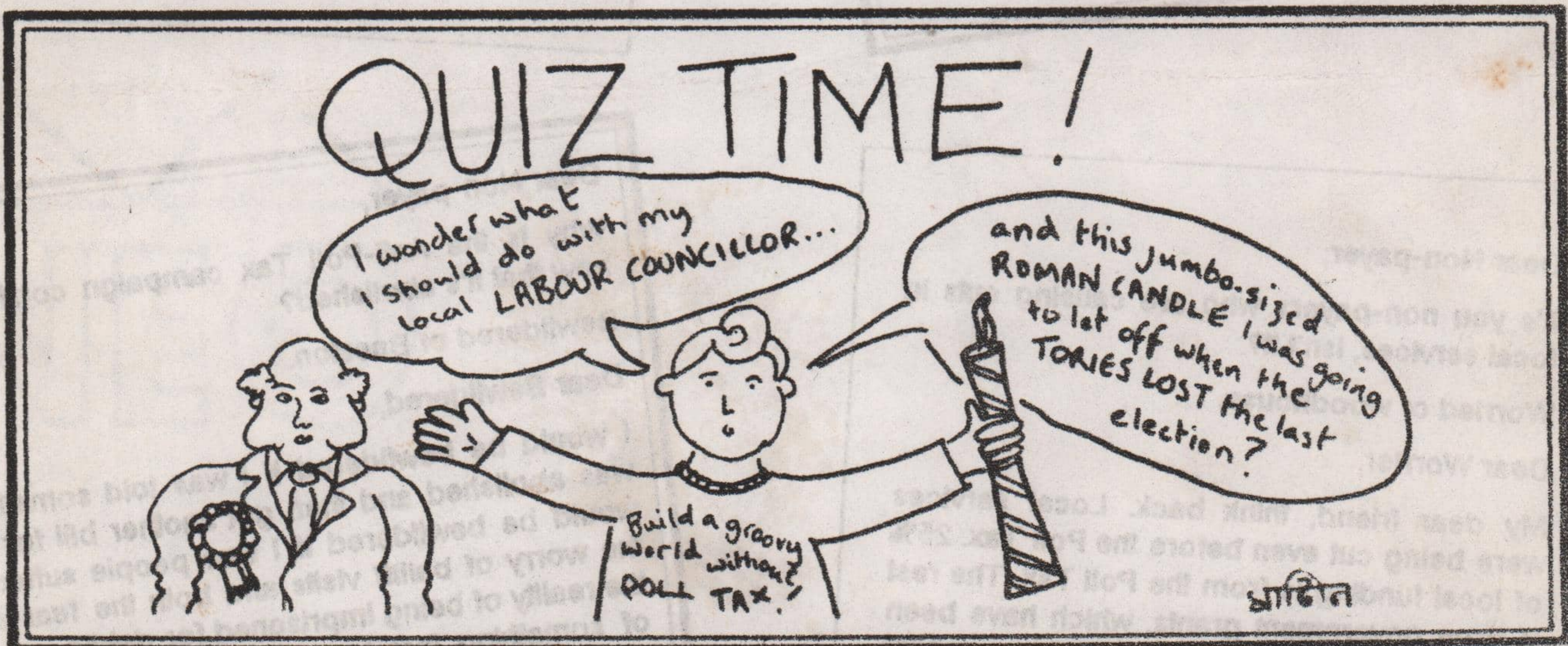
The group was set up in March 1992. We aim to support people in prison because of the Poll Tax, both those arrested at demonstrations and those imprisoned for non-payment. In the latter group most are simply guilty of the "crime" of being too poor, and therefore unable to pay, and others have refused to pay on principle because of the injustice of the Poll Tax.

We write to prisoners all over Britain and visit local prisoners when necessary. We also try to support families if we can. We have raised money by collecting in pubs and as a result we have been able

to commit ourselves to sending a little money each week both to Chris Hammett and her children for the duration of her sentence.

We have also taken part in the campaign to get Tim Donaghy's parole reviewed and some members help out at court at committal hearings.

Someone who has been in prison said that he could not emphasise enough how important it was to receive a letter or card of support. If he did not get a letter in the morning he "wrote the day off". If you would like to help please contact Steph or Richard on Leeds 787095 or Pat on Leeds 653816.



If you are interested in supporting Poll Tax prisoners' send this tear-off slip back to: Steph Field
97 Burley Lodge Road Leeds LS8 1QP.

NAME;

ADDRESS;

TELEPHONE NO.;

