

Highfields Anti Poll Tax News

NUMBER 11 FEBRUARY / MARCH 1992

No Poll Tax Jailings!

The City Council has started threatening non-payers with prison. Britain is the only country in the E.E.C. that uses prison for civil debt and yet a Labour Council is willing to send people to jail for being poor.

The Council's propaganda has been that only those who can afford to pay but had refused would be threatened with jail. The first case was a woman in a low paid job, living in homeless accommodation and on sick leave. If she had paid all her commitments she would have had a £25 a week deficit!

We took up her case with the Council - we lobbied the Finance Committee. They refused to listen so we disrupted the meeting! When she was in Court the Leicester Federation paid for her to have a solicitor who showed that the proceedings were not legal. We all know that the City Magistrates are only interested in helping out the Council and not in justice and they sentenced her to 14 days suspended sentence. She was told she'd have

to pay £20 a month.

The Federation, with strong support from HAPTU, took up the general issue of jailings and pressed the council to set up a Hardship Committee. This would look at cases where jail is threatened so that people who can not pay would not be taken to Court.

Only a handful of Labour Councillors supported this after being threatened that anyone associating themselves with the campaign would be expelled from the Party.

We think that it is a disgrace that the Council are threatening people with prison for not paying the Poll Tax. They are only doing it to try and intimidate the thousands in Leicester who have not paid. We are committed to fighting all threats of imprisonment by any means necessary - legal action, lobbies, demonstrations and working for support within Trade Unions.

If you get a summons threatening you with prison - GET IN TOUCH.

Bailiffs

It's becoming clear that the bailiffs operating in Highfields are taking a completely cynical attitude to collecting Poll Tax.

We've heard of a number of cases where people have come to arrangements to pay by installments with bailiffs. After a couple of payments the bailiffs then say that they are passing their names back to the Council - the amount paid having just covered the bailiffs fees! Wake up City Council! they are ripping you off!!

This underlines our advice - don't deal with these people - get in touch with us.

Lobby

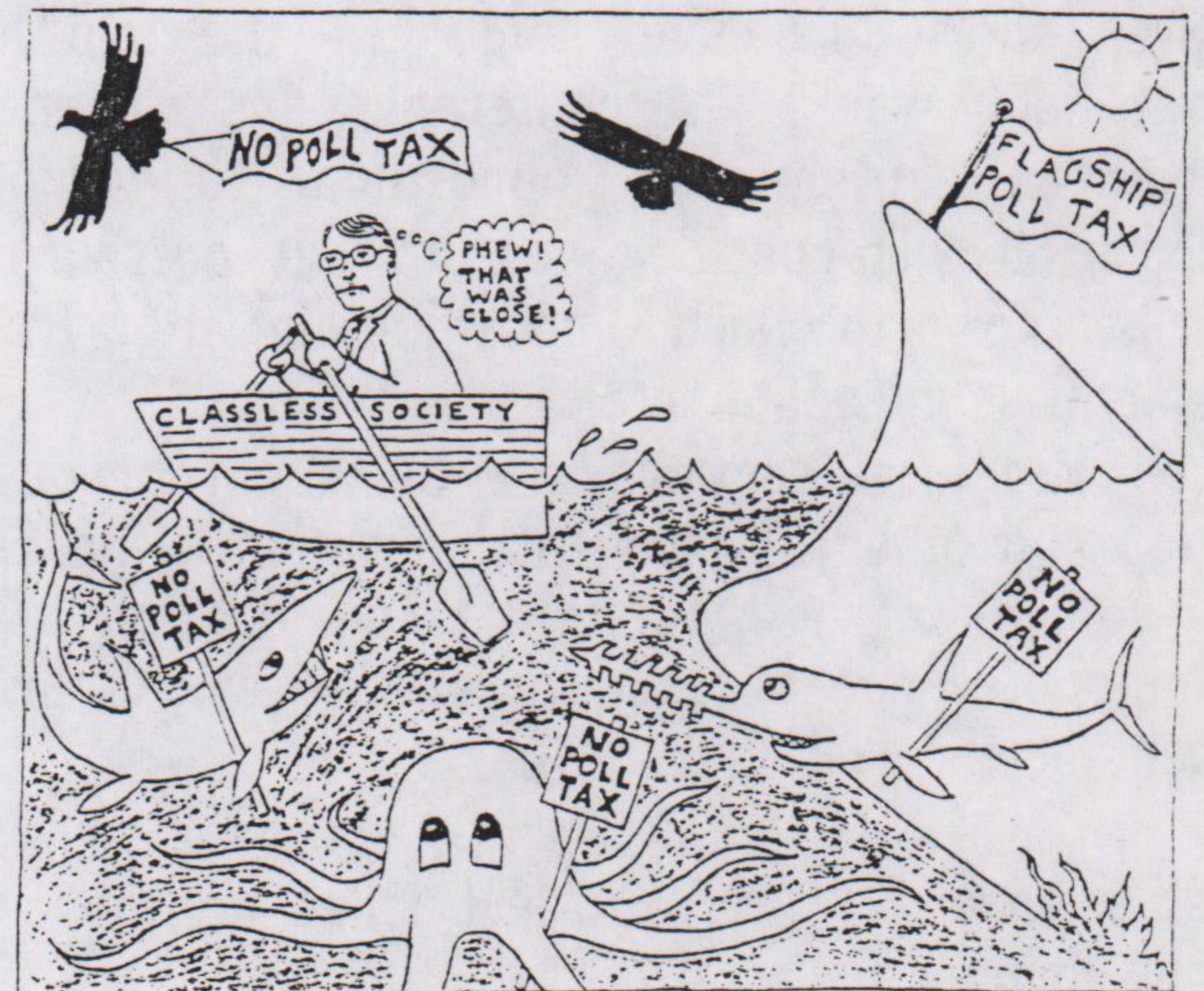
On 15 January HAPTU organised a lobby of Councillor Dave, Chair of Finance, at his surgery. Unfortunately he wasn't there - he probably heard we were coming - so we spoke to the other Councillor for the ward - Kavia.

He seemed none too happy to be facing 30 Anti-Poll Tax activists wanting to know why he supported jailings and he didn't have any answers. We'll be working our way round to other Councillors.

Next HAPTU Meetings:

69 CHANDOS STREET THURSDAY 7:30PM

FEBRUARY 6TH MARCH 5TH



Courts

As this newsletter was being prepared a stipendary Magistrate in London put Councils and Government into a panic. He ruled that computer evidence could not be used in Poll Tax cases. This backed decisions in Bury St. Edmunds, Liverpool and Gravesend. On 23 Jan. Nottingham Courts adjourned 2500 cases and we're waiting to see what happens in Leicester.

This means that all Liability Orders made so far maybe invalid. The Council uses the Court if you have not paid to get an order allowing them to try and take money off your wages or benefit or to use bailiffs. This ruling about computer evidence has undermined the Councils ability to use the Courts to do this.

We're looking for a case to test this out in Leicester. If you here of anyone who has a summons and is on benefits - PLEASE LET US KNOW