

Leicestershire Anti Poll Tax News

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Demonstrate in London October 20th

On October 20th there will be a Demonstration in London jointly organised by the London Fed. and the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign to welcome the Peoples March Against the Poll Tax to London and to celebrate 6 months of non-payment in England and Wales and 18 months in Scotland. The march is from Kennington Park to Brockwell Park.

It is important that the march is as big as possible to show that the campaign is alive and kicking and that the Police

attack on the March 31st demo has not deterred us from mass demonstration.

Leicestershire Fed. supports this demonstration and is organising transport. If you want to go contact the Fed. officers as soon as possible so that we know how many to cater for.

The cost will be £6.00 waged and £3.00 unwaged and we'll leave from Humberstone Gate, Leicester at 8.00 a.m. on October 20th.

Northampton Occupation

Northampton Council is one of the hardest line councils in the country when it comes to collecting the Tax. They recently decided to take Cyril Munda who is 74 back to court to threaten him with prison after he'd turned the bailiffs away.

A group of activists from Northampton, Nottingham and Leicester as well as People's marchers occupied the offices of the Borough Treasurer for 6 hours to demand that the summons against Cyril should be withdrawn. Mr Maskell the Treasurer stayed for about an hour, during which time there was some lively debate about how much he earned and whether he was able to sleep at night! Mr Maskell had little to say apparently!

After the occupation ended all the protesters were arrested and held overnight but an organised phone-in resulted in over 1,000 calls clogging the Police switchboard before they closed it down!

Initial threats that they would be charged with unlawful imprisonment came to nothing, presumably the Police recognised that no-one would hold someone like Mr Maskell - you might not be able to get your hands clean afterwards! All the protesters were charged with Public Order offences to which they're pleading Not Guilty.

After they were released the protesters went to see Cyril who said he'd rather go to prison than pay his Poll Tax and was refusing to go to court. A warrant for his arrest was issued by the Court but hasn't been acted on yet.

Cyril's refusal to surrender and the occupation have put real pressure on Northampton Council and this pressure has to be maintained and increased!

Leicester Court Cases

In late September Leicester City Council issued another 2,400 summons. Non-payers were taken to Court on the 25th and 26th of September and the 9th to 11th of October and things didn't go well for the Council or Courts!

Anti Poll Tax Unions across the city fly posted and leafletted and everybody who rang for advice got a follow up visit or phone call. We were confident of a good turn out to challenge the Courts.

On the first day people turned up ready to argue their cases and those due to be dealt with between 9.30 and 10.30 held up the Court until 11.45 - over twice the time they'd allowed! One woman lasted 45 minutes on her own! Brilliant!! This meant that the Magistrates couldn't deal with everyone and in the confusion forgot to issue orders for those who hadn't turned up! The Council are obviously feeling the strain. Many Bills have been wrongly issued - to people who are too young or have even paid! They also mucked up sending reminders and had to withdraw cases.

The next day the Court adjourned everyone who turned up and asked for a McKenzie Friend - a lay adviser - the Magistrates

refused people this basic Right at the last hearings and are clearly expecting defeat in the Judicial Review of their illegal actions! They have been adjourning everybody who has asked for a McKenzie friend since then - sometimes for months!

On the evidence of these Court hearings the system is in deep trouble dealing with non-payers. If you get a summons or know someone who gets one the message is - TURN UP AND DEMAND YOUR RIGHTS!!

Defence Campaign

Leicestershire Fed. has set up a legal defence fund to help people arrested as a result of Anti Poll Tax action. This includes the two people arrested on the first day of Court Hearings in Leicester and those arrested after the occupation in Northampton.

A separate account has been set up and the money will only be used for defence purposes. Please make whatever donations you and your APTU can afford - any of us who are active in the Anti Poll Tax movement could find ourselves in need of its help. Cheques should be made payable to the "Anti Poll Tax legal defence campaign".

If you want to help the defence campaign get in touch with Nick John on Loughborough 237372.

People's March

The People's March Against the Poll Tax came through Leicester on 6th October on a wet and windy day! We marched down Melton Rd, windblown but singing and chanting and getting a good response from the public.

About 200 came to the rally in Town Hall Square, including a group of South African workers in Britain touring a play about their struggle against Apartheid and the BTR company. There was also a delegation from Leicester City Council NALGO who had organised a social for the marchers the night before.

On their route the marchers have supported Court demonstrations and occupations - lending a welcome boost to local efforts. We'll be in London to welcome them on October 20th.

Bailiff Busters

We are putting our Bailiff Busting squad on a serious footing by appointing a co-ordinator: Mick Shenton and organising a Day School - details in a future issue.

APTU's should try to identify people who will be available during the day for pickets, lobbys, occupations etc. against the Bailiffs. We all need to organise telephone trees in our local areas.

If you want to join the Bailiff Busters or can help in other ways get in touch with Mick Shenton on Leicester 531012.