

LEICESTERSHIRE ANTI POLL TAX NEWS

THATCHER HAS GONE - WE FIGHT ON

THATCHER HAS GONE! Every non-payer will be delighted to see the back of the architect of the Poll Tax. Every candidate for the Tory leadership claimed the Tax was nothing to do with them and needs "reviewing". It needs to be scrapped right away not "reviewed"!

Now that Major has won it's likely that the Tory leadership will try to buy off our hatred of the Tax with small concessions. This is why Hesselstine has been given the job of fixing the Tax. We must stand firm and continue our campaign! It's even possible that the Tories might go into

the next election promising to get rid of the Tax. We don't want promises - we want the Tax scrapped now and all outstanding debts written off!

Even the Tories now say the Poll Tax was a mistake and that they were "bounced into it". We shouldn't have to pay for that - the Labour controlled City Council should refuse to carry on with this completely discredited Tax and pressure should be put on all Leicestershire councils to do the same. We say: STOP THE PROSECUTIONS! STOP THE BAILIFFS! SCRAP THE TAX NOW! WRITE OFF THE DEBTS! FREE THE POLL TAX PRISONERS!

JUDICIAL REVIEW

The judicial review of Leicester Magistrates refusal to allow McKenzie friends was held on Monday 26th November and we do not know the result yet as the Judges "reserved judgement" - this means that they have gone away to think about it! Let's hope they don't get headaches! The Magistrates defence of their attack on this basic right was almost entirely a political one. They produced a series of leaflets that they'd collected from around the country advising people how to muck up the courts - the Judges were suitably shocked that there are people who are actually willing to contemplate deliberately not paying their poll tax and encouraging others to do the same! I wonder who these shocking individuals could be!

The City Magistrates have said that if McKenzie friends are allowed they may only be able to get through three cases a day! They allowed two people to have McKenzie Friends to see what happened and one case took 55 minutes to deal with! There have been large turn outs at court - on the 29th and 30th Leicester Magistrates were having to adjourn cases 30 at a time and in Melton 250 turned up. These sort of responses give us a real opportunity to develop the campaign.

Whatever the result of the judicial review we have to be prepared for an intensification of the fight as the councils try to collect the Tax. Even if non payers have to defend themselves without the help of McKenzie friends we still have a good chance of blocking the courts.

TRADE UNION CONFERENCE

At the last Fed meeting a resolution from Highfields APTU calling for the organisation of a Leicestershire Anti Poll Tax Trade Union Conference was passed unanimously. The conference will be jointly organised with the Trades Council and will consider building support for non payment in the workplaces, mobilising against wage arremstments and cuts and organising other action against the tax.

An organising committee will be elected at the next Fed meeting and the conference should take place early in the new year.

This news sheet is produced on a monthly basis to keep Anti Poll Tax activists informed about what's going on in the campaign. We're hoping to have reports on what each APTU is doing, so if there's something you want included get in touch with Pete Kenny on Leicester 553440.

COUNCILLORS IN COURT

On November 6th three councillors from Highfields appeared in court for not paying the Poll Tax. They were: Malik Salim from Spinney Hill, Paul Gosling from Charnwood and Joe Allan from Wycliffe. All three refused to pay on a principled basis of supporting our campaign and standing shoulder to shoulder with the thousands in Highfields who can't pay or are refusing to pay.

On November 21st two other City Councillors appeared in court. They were Dave Brazier from St. Augustines and Bob Waterton from Saffron Lane. All have been attacked by those in the Labour Party whose response to the Tax has been to do the Governments dirty work for them. We want to make it clear that we see the actions of the non-paying councillors as being in the best traditions of the Labour movement and we thank them and support their stand! We condemn those who have attacked them and particularly the right wingers in the Labour Party who paid Malik Salim's Poll Tax.

Malik Salim wishes to repeat that he supports the campaign for non payment and will not pay in future. He says that if these people want to start paying for others he could suggest 6,500 deserving cases in his ward!



DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

The Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign was set up after the Police attack on the March 31st demonstration to support the 500 plus who were arrested. The campaign unconditionally supports all of those arrested that day and has done invaluable work revealing what really happened. The Leicestershire Federation supports the campaign and urges all of the Anti Poll Tax movement to do the same. TSDC can be contacted at:

Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign,
C/O Haldane Society of Lawyers,
205, Panther House,
38, Mount Pleasant,
London WC1X 0AP TEL 071 833 8958

TSDC scored a major success in early November when the jury at Southwark crown court threw out a charge of Affray against a March 31st defendant. The jury used their power to stop the trial after hearing evidence showing that the Police had assaulted the defendant and had clearly fabricated evidence against him.

TSDC have also produced an excellent detailed account of the Police attacks on the Brixton picket on October 20th based on the work of their legal liason volunteers.

MELTON NEWS

Melton APTU was set up following a large public meeting when the Tax was introduced. After this promising start they ran into problems when the key organiser tried to turn the campaign into a group which called for Hesselstine style reforms rather than abolition and which encouraged people to pay! Not suprisingly people flocked away from this group! However the anti poll tax campaign in Melton had been seriously disrupted - particularly as those supporting non payment couldn't get access to the original membership list!

Large numbers in Melton still didn't pay but there was little in the way of an organised campaign. Recent court cases look like changing this. On November 29th Melton Council summonsed 700 and 250 turned up! There was a huge queue outside the court and 75 adjournments. Previously the council had summonsed about 100 a time from outlying villages and about 10 would turn up. They are now moving against non payers in Melton itself and re-invigorating the campaign as a result.

Melton APTU are holding a public meeting on December 19th to capitalise on this and are hoping to be in a strong position for the next set of court cases.

BRAUNSTONE BAILIFF BUSTERS

Braunstone APTU organised a trial mobilisation of their Bailiff Busting squad on November 16th to show that they are ready and waiting for Gaults to do their worst. There was a turn out of about 40 with their new Bailiff Busting banner and they got good coverage in the press.

Stewart Foster was quoted as saying that "I would very much regret it if people were to intervene in this matter" - we'll have to take his regret into account and give it serious consideration before ignoring him completely!

NO CUTS

The introduction of the Poll Tax has led to cuts in Public services across the country. It is clear that the second year of the Tax will lead to councils slashing yet more vital services to avoid being Poll Tax capped.

The Tories claim that the Tax is only high because of inefficient or extravagant Councils - in fact it is their fixing of the way Government grants are worked out that has led to high bills.

The local authorities claim that they have no choice but to have high bills or cuts. In many cases people have both! They will also claim that non-payment causes cuts. In fact it is the huge reductions in the central Government support grants which have done this. Local authorities have chosen to implement the Tax and do whatever the Tories tell them to. The councils could have set deficit budgets, refused to implement the Tax and refused to meet repayments on loans from the City Of London. They could have joined with the millions who can't pay and the workers whose jobs are at risk and killed the Poll Tax from the start.

In Leicester there is a high chance that there will be cuts - Stewart Foster the Chair of the City Councils Finance Committee has said as much. Leicestershire County Council are considering 3% cuts across the board. Other district councils will also be looking for cuts. These will not bring the amount of the Tax down - they will just be to avoid capping. In other words the Councils will probably surrender without a fight. We can't afford the Poll Tax and we can't afford the cuts and so we have to campaign against both! The Tories and the Councils will try to turn non-payers and Council workers against each other - we have to make sure that they fail by supporting every fight against cuts and asking Council workers to support our fight against the Tax itself.

CONTACTS

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PUBLIC MEETING

Castle APTU are holding a Public meeting in Clarendon Park it is at:
Friends Meeting House
Queens Rd.
Leicester,
Wednesday 19th December 7.30 PM

XMAS PARTY

Highfields APTU is organising a Xmas fund raising party. It is at:
38, SEVERN ST
LEICESTER
9.00 PM SATURDAY 8th DECEMBER
BRING A BOTTLE
£2.00 WAGED £1.00 UNWAGED

DAY SCHOOL

Leicestershire Federation are organising a Bailiff Busters Day School on:
Sunday 16th December
Tower St Community Rooms
Leicester
2.00 PM - 4.00 PM
EVERYBODY WELCOME!