

JOIN THE POLL TAX REVOLT.

SUPPORT THE DEFENCE FUND.

BENEFIT ORGANISED FOR THE THREE PEOPLE FROM NOTTINGHAM ARRESTED ON MARCH 31st.

Three people from Nottingham were arrested during the trouble which broke out on the Anti-Poll Tax march in London on March 31st.

The Government tried to scapegoat gangs of so-called 'troublemakers' for what happened that day. Holding up people like the three from Nottingham as examples, they tried to turn attention away from the Poll Tax and back onto the old question of law and order.

Significantly they failed to do this. People are fully aware of where the blame lies for what happened that day.

Everyone has seen reports on TV, or read or heard accounts of what happened. Here one of the people arrested, Rory, describes what he saw:

"We could see mounted police pushing the demonstration up Whitehall towards Trafalgar Square. On the other side of Richmond Terrace a large group of people had been left behind on the grass. They were just a crowd, including children, and not doing anything in particular. More mounted police came out of Richmond Terrace, lined up, and without warning rode their horses into the people on the grass, driving them back down Whitehall. We saw them gallop into the crowd several times. It was only after this that some banner poles were thrown - I saw nothing thrown until then. It was like some far-fetched TV play; I couldn't believe what was happening."

There might have been a few hot-heads there. But this isn't really the issue. What is at issue is the way in which the police launched indiscriminately into groups of peaceful protestors. The way in which horses were ridden, and police cars driven at speed, into the crowd. The way in which riot police made wild baton charges. If March 31st witnessed a 'riot', the blame lies squarely with the police - and with Thatcher's government who caused the situation.

That day saw many innocent people hurt. And many people, like those from Nottingham, were arrested - simply for being caught up in a situation for which they were not responsible. One of the three, Daniel, had never been on a demonstration before, and remains deeply shocked by what he saw and by what happened to him.

Jocelyn, also arrested, talks of her time in the cells:

"I was in the cells for seven hours. In that time I never once saw a solicitor. The police told me that they had phoned my father and that he knew where I was. That was a lie, they never phoned him. There were six of us in a cell designed for two and after a few hours it became unbearably stuffy. We were given no food and one woman was there for fifteen hours with nothing to eat."

These three now have to face court appearances and fines. They will also have to pay to get to and from London.

The Community Anti-Poll Tax Groups in Nottingham have agreed to organise a benefit to help cover these fines and fares. We're asking you to come along and support us.

Any extra money raised will go towards a defence fund - to be used to support anybody facing fines or similar costs due to their fight against the Poll Tax.

Meanwhile closer to home...on March 5th protestors invaded the City council chamber and disrupted the meeting at which the Poll Tax rates for Nottingham were being set. They were dressed in Robin Hood costumes, but went armed not with bows and arrows but with custard pies. On that occasion four people were arrested. Although council leader Betty Higgins has said that charges will not be made, the matter is now with the Crown Prosecution Service. Should they decide to continue with the prosecution, charges will probably range from breach of the peace to assault with wounding (with a custard pie!!!). Should they be fined we want to be able to help these four as well.

Jaz was one of the four, here he talks about the protest:

"It was intended as peaceful and humourous. Even the Evening Post said it was a harmless prank. How can you assault anyone with a custard pie? Stupid isn't it. About as ridiculous as 'our' Labour council implementing the Poll Tax, when they say they represent neither want it nor can afford it. Who's side are they on?"

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SUPPORT THE DEFENCE FUND

A BENEFIT ORGANISED FOR THE THREE NOTTINGHAM PEOPLE

ARRESTED ON THE ANTI-POLL TAX DEMONSTRATION

IN LONDON ON MARCH 31st

with

wholesome fish

the laughing deckchairs

and a reputable sound-system

for your entertainment

RESIST THE POLL TAX

CAN'T PAY - WON'T PAY

at

the marcus garvey centre,

thursday, may 10th

eight till late

ADMISSION: £2.50/£1.50

PUBLIC MEETING + Video and Discussion

International Community Centre, Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

Thank you to all those people who attended our last Public Meeting with defendants and speakers from the Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign and Birmingham Defence Campaign, and Nottingham. Anyone wishing to know how the defendants have got on in their cases please contact us. At our forthcoming meeting, Nottingham defendants will be speaking about their cases and we will be holding the first public showing in Nottingham of the "Trafalgar Square Riot" video. Everyone is welcome.

BENEFIT GIG - FRIDAY MARCH 1st, 7.30pm Till Late.

Bands "Kelly's Heroes" and "Smashing Time" at The Manor Pub, Albert Road, West Bridgford. Tickets £3/£2 (or £2.50/£1.50 in advance from The Manor or Mushroom Bookshop).

SUPPORT THE NORTHAMPTON 20!

20 people were arrested for occupying the treasurer's office in Northampton on 1/10/90, in protest at the council's threat to imprison a 74 year old man for non-payment. The Nottingham defendant is Gary Freeman, secretary of the Notts Anti Poll Tax Federation. We offered him our support but this offer has been ignored.

It is ironic that after a year of opposition to the NDF by the NAPTF, the same people are now supporting a petition and appeal to raise £6000 for the defendants by the Northampton 20 Legal Defence Fund and the All Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation. It's a shame that support is only forthcoming for defendants now that one of their own is involved (i.e. a member of Militant)

We wish the Northampton 20 every success with their case, and we know that lawyers do not come cheap. We believe, however, that money raised for defendants in Notts should be distributed fairly amongst all of them, not just to those with influence in Militant or the SWP, but also to the majority of us who have to fend for ourselves. We are all fighting the poll tax and we all need financial support.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

The state has decided to hammer anti-poll tax defendants as hard as it can, and this is likely to continue in 1991. It is vital that people can take action and demonstrate knowing they will be supported by the whole anti poll tax movement. The All Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation, as well as the Nottingham Federation, has made it clear that they are happy to see genuine, militant resistance to the poll tax criminalised. They are afraid of working class initiatives outside of their control.

In spite of the indifference and misinformation put about by the likes of Militant, independent Defence Funds struggle on. The Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign, the Avon and Somerset Defence Fund and the Birmingham Defence Fund have received the same lack of support for their defendants that we have, not to mention their original threats to grass up 'trouble makers' to the police.

People facing criminal charges for fighting the poll tax must be supported against the state just like people not paying it. We offer our unconditional support to them and whatever help we can with legal costs, fines etc. We desperately need your donations. Please send cheques payable to 'NDF', Box DF, 72 Radford Rd, Hyson Green, Nottingham.

Please invite us to speak at your meeting and do whatever you can to support Nottingham defendants as part of the fight to beat the Poll Tax.

BR man threatened with sack for Poll Tax Protest

On 8th January 1991 British Rail worker Keith Duncombe and fellow defendant Guy Waddingham were sentenced to one month's imprisonment by Nottingham Magistrates for nothing more than throwing a harmless "custard pie" at a Tory Councillor in an anti-poll tax protest that had taken place nearly a year before.

Amidst widespread public condemnation and outrage at the sentence, Sian Griffiths, Chair of the East Midlands branch of the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO), described the sentence as "severe in the extreme", and the branch went on to condemn it by a unanimous vote. NAPO is now seeking an urgent meeting with the Magistrates Commission to discuss the matter further, and to seek assurances that it will not happen again.

On release from HMP Lincoln, Keith received a letter from B.R. management at Furlong House to the effect that he had been suspended from work, and it was deemed "inappropriate" that he should remain in B.R.'s service. After a subsequent hearing, he was charged under Clause 9 of the BR Disciplinary Procedure. This clause reads :

"The procedure set out above shall not apply in cases of exceptionally grave misconduct which may warrant summary action."

This clause is normally only used against workers who literally attack workmates or commit similarly serious offences in the workplace. Offences of manslaughter (whilst on duty) and soliciting have not in the past resulted in sackings, but it seems that the most minor of offences whilst on an anti-Poll Tax demo (a tax that almost all workers are opposed to) can be deemed as "exceptionally grave misconduct" by B.R. management.

It is quite clear that Keith (who previously had a clear record both outside of and at work) has been subjected to the worst kind of victimisation both by the judiciary and now by B.R. management. This is an issue that workers cannot afford to remain silent on. If B.R. management are allowed to sack a worker for being arrested on a demonstration, then this is a fundamental attack not just on our jobs, but equally on our right to demonstrate against governmental measures that we disagree with.

Our strength has always lain in our ability to defend ourselves collectively against victimisation of this kind, and as in many previous cases throughout history we must be prepared to again. Local anti-Poll Tax groups have already pledged to support Keith and his colleagues in this matter.

Please support a demonstration outside Furlong House, Queens Drive, Nottingham on Tuesday 12th February at 1.30pm.

Nottingham Defence Fund
c/o Box DF, 72 Radford Road, Nottingham

with the support of local anti-Poll Tax groups and BR workers.