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We're still not paying

Water Charges

Workers Solidarity Movement

1996

LAURENCE DORAN, a retired Guinness worker from Greenhills, was taken to Rathfarnham Court in February. South Dublin County Council want to cut off his water supply. Laurence is among tens of thousands refusing to pay the water charges. The tables were quickly turned on Judge Smithwick and the County Council. Instead of being meek and shy, as you are supposed to be in court, Laurence gave them a lecture about justice.

“The PAYE taxpayer is paying for everything in this country while the big farmers, wealthy self-employed and super rich in this country get away with tax evasion. During the last eight years PAYE taxes collected from farmers and from the wealthy self-employed have fallen. If the wealthy paid their due taxes, PAYE taxpayers would not be asked to pay double tax and I would not be before this court.

Nobody has ever been jailed in this country for tax evasion. The rich tax evaders have been given two tax

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amnesties. The last amnesty in 1994 wrote off £500 million but the Revenue Commissioners report huge amounts of tax outstanding for 1995.

These people are laughing, while people like me who always pay our taxes are brought to court. That is very unfair. The water tax is an unjust tax and PAYE taxpayers should not have to pay it."

There was so much clapping and cheering that the court had to be cleared and its business suspended for the rest of the day. To hammer home the message that cut offs will be resisted, Laurence's neighbours on St Peter's Road had a demonstration of support where 200 people agreed to stop any attempted disconnection.

If the Councils try to disconnect anyone the anti-water charges campaign will be able to stop them just as it did in 1994. Peaceful but firm protest, not letting the Council get access to stopcocks outside the house. Even if they manage to turn someone off the campaign is confident that it have them reconnected within an hour.

We did it the last time and it will be a lot easier this time. Over 12,000 households have now joined the Federation of Dublin Anti-Water Charge Campaigns and tens of thousands more are still boycotting these charges. The campaign is growing stronger all the time. Over the next couple of months the campaign needs to get more organised at local level, local action groups need to be set up in all areas and local activists kept in touch with each other.

This is necessary in order to build the sort of on-the-ground solidarity which will be absolutely vital if disconnections are to be successfully resisted. The water charges will only be defeated by direct action in the communities.

If we stick together 1996 will be the beginning of the end for the charges and a huge boost for people's confidence in their own ability to fight back.