



**Shrewsbury 24 Campaign, PO Box 92, Liverpool L19 3WD Tel: 07927-937773**

## **Pickets win Judicial Review hearing**

The Shrewsbury 24 Campaign has won a crucial victory in its long struggle to overturn the convictions of the building workers who were tried in 1973/74 for picketing during the national strike. On Tuesday 30 April 2019, halfway through the Judicial Review hearing in the Birmingham Administrative Court, the Criminal Cases Review Commission conceded the case. It agreed to reconsider the referral of the convictions of the pickets to the Court of Appeal.

The CCRC had taken over five years to make a decision on the pickets' applications and all the evidence that the Campaign had submitted since 2012. It has steadfastly refused to make the referral despite the strength of fresh evidence.

Four of the pickets, Nick Warren (for his late father Des), John McKinsie Jones, Michael Pierce and Terry Renshaw, together with the Campaign, refused to be bowed by this decision. Our legal team advised that the CCRC's position was flawed and that we should pursue a judicial review. The CCRC continued to defend the proceedings until the day of the hearing. Then, two hours in, it took the unusual step of conceding the case. It agreed to withdraw its earlier decisions of October 2017, turning down the pickets' applications.

### **A magnificent success**

Eileen Turnbull, Researcher and Secretary of the Shrewsbury 24 Campaign said, "This is a magnificent success. We are one step nearer to achieving our goal of justice for the pickets. The Shrewsbury 24 Campaign has worked tirelessly since 2006. Today's result is a testament to all our hard work and the support of the labour movement."

The chairperson of the Campaign, Harry Chadwick, added, "It has taken us over 13 years and two court hearings to get us to this position. The Labour Party and trade unions have stood by us throughout, particularly my union, Unite. The fight goes on until we achieve justice for the pickets."

Jailed picket, Michael Pierce, was ecstatic. "I never thought that I would see the day when the courts would recognise the justness of our case. I would like to thank the Campaign for getting us there."

Terry Renshaw, convicted picket, was delighted, "When I left court yesterday, I almost cried with joy. We have now had three judges saying that we have an arguable case. We look forward to the day when the CCRC sends our case back to the Court of Appeal."

## The Campaign

The Shrewsbury 24 Campaign was established in 2006. Our aim is to overturn the convictions and sentences of building workers who were victimised and criminalised when they took part in picketing during the 1972 national strike, several of whom were sent to prison. We have spent over twelve years researching the background to the trials and have found fresh evidence to support the case.

We have 21 national unions affiliated to us and many hundreds of trade union branches, trades councils, CLPs and others. We appeal to all trade union branches, trades councils and CLP's to affiliate to us. Please go to our website for details: [www.shrewsbury24campaign.org.uk](http://www.shrewsbury24campaign.org.uk). For further details please do not hesitate to contact the Secretary, Eileen Turnbull, at the address/telephone number overleaf or by email.

## The failure of the Government to disclose documents

The Government consistently refuses to release documents relating to the Shrewsbury trials, hiding behind section 23 of the Freedom of Information Act (the 'national security' exemption). Our researcher, Eileen Turnbull, has discovered that there are crucial documents 'missing' from the National Archives at Kew. We believe that these papers show the extent of interference into the case by the Conservative Government in the early 1970s.

**On 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015 the Conservative Government announced its intention to continue to withhold the documents from public scrutiny for a further 6 years. The next review will be in 2021. Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell have been longstanding supporters of the Campaign. In the 2015 and 2017 manifestos the Labour Party pledged that if it was elected it would, "Release all papers concerning the Shrewsbury 24 Trials".**

## History of the Shrewsbury 24

The first-ever national building workers strike took place in the summer of 1972. Construction workers faced hostile and powerful employers, lump labour and isolated workplaces that changed constantly whenever a contract finished. Health and safety measures on building sites were non-existent building workers faced dangerous working conditions on a daily basis.

UCATT, the T&GWU, FTAT and the NUG&MW, were the main unions who had members in the industry. The building workers irrespective of which union or trade they were in organised effective picketing of sites throughout the country. At the end of the twelve-week dispute, in September 1972, they succeeded in winning the highest ever pay rise in the history of the industry.

Five months after the strike ended 24 pickets were picked up and charged with over 200 offences, including unlawful assembly, intimidation and affray. Six of the pickets were also charged with *conspiracy* to intimidate. None of the pickets had been cautioned or arrested during the strike. Approximately 80 police had accompanied the pickets on the Shrewsbury building sites at all times on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1972. There were no police complaints laid against the pickets at the time.

At the end of the three trials at Shrewsbury, beginning in October 1973, six pickets had been imprisoned.

Jailing these building workers remains one of the most notorious anti-trade union acts of the state in recent times. All the might of the police and criminal justice system were used against the pickets to deter trade unionists from organising effectively. The convicted Shrewsbury pickets were blacklisted from the industry and most were never able to work in their trade again.

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