

THE PORTON DOWN AFFAIR: PHASE IIWHAT HAS HAPPENED ?

After two days of silence the University has acted. The Vice-Chancellor has used the arbitrary power which the Charter gives him to suspend 3 students (David Triesman, Raphael Halberstadt and Peter Archard) from the University until Senate meets on 19th June - AFTER the exams. Sloman has not seen or spoken to any of the 3; they have no right of appeal. SO THIS IS HOW OUR UNIVERSITY CHARTER PROTECTS ACADEMIC AND POLITICAL FREEDOM.

The reason which the V-C gives for selecting the 3 is that they 'seemed to him most culpable'. He does not suggest what his criteria for assessing culpability are. A more blatant case of VICTIMISATION would be difficult to imagine.

The suspension results from the participation of these three in the demonstration against Chemical and Biological Warfare last Tuesday. AND YET OVER 150 PEOPLE TOOK PART IN THIS DEMONSTRATION. Why victimise three?

Every single person who took part in that demonstration felt that, given the pernicious nature of research at Porton Down, they had a moral obligation to demonstrate in the way that they did.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Following a meeting at lunch time today at which over 200 students were present, the following course of action was taken:

1. The Administrative offices in the Valley were obstructed all afternoon as a protest against the suspensions.
2. The entrance to Keynes Tower was blocked from 5.30 p.m. onwards, to prevent the eviction of the 3 students who had been told to leave Wivenhoe Park by 6 p.m.

At a meeting in Keynes Tower at 6.30 p.m. it was decided to march to the Vice Chancellor's house and ask him to listen to our demands. The principal demand was that the three students be reinstated. The Vice Chancellor was, apparently, not at home.

Subsequent meetings in Wivenhoe House and the Library decided:

1. That a letter stating our demands should be delivered to the Vice Chancellor.
2. That a mass meeting would be called on Monday morning at 11.30 a.m. in LTB 6, and that all students and staff should be urged to leave lectures and classes to attend.
3. Publication and distribution of leaflets in Colchester and the University should be arranged for Saturday and Monday morning respectively.
4. That, despite Mr. Lilley's assurance that there would be no attempt to physically evict the three students, a constant guard should be kept on them.

SUPPORT

1. Around 40 members of staff have so far signed a petition saying that they will seriously consider resigning from the University if the Vice Chancellor does not withdraw the suspensions.
2. A petition threatening similar action has already been signed by about 300 students. (PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU SIGN IT).
3. Other student bodies, including LSE, Leicester, Leeds and Sussex, have promised their support.

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THE MEETING AT 11.30 ON MONDAY WILL DECIDE FURTHER ACTION - COME TO IT WITH YOUR IDEAS - SUGGESTIONS AREADY MADE INCLUDE SETTING UP A FREE UNIVERSITY ON THESE PREMISES, A TEACH-IN ON GERM WARFARE, ETC.

Friday 10 May (just) -
11.55 p.m.