

* ROBERT GRIFFITHS *

By the Robert Griffiths Defence Committee.

Over one hundred people attended a public meeting in Cardiff on Friday, December 3rd, organised by the Robert Griffiths Defence Committee.

Robert Griffiths, former Secretary of the Welsh Socialist Republican Movement, is facing trial on explosives and conspiracy charges.

But the circumstances surrounding his arrest, interrogation and prosecution have alarmed a growing number of socialists, trade unionists and nationalists in Wales.

The defence meeting was addressed firstly by prospective Labour parliamentary candidate for Cardiff North, Ray Davies. He recounted his experiences of police violence as a striking steelworker, and warned that police and State powers were biting deeply into hard-won political and trade union rights.

Labour county councillor Mick Antinou described the South Wales Police Authority - of which he is a member - as a "powerless con-trick": the police were not accountable in any democratic sense, he pointed out. Councillor Antinou, who is also a solicitor, attacked the use of conspiracy laws against trade unionists, Welsh language campaigners and political dissidents.

Phil Thomas, a senior law lecturer at Cardiff University College, described the work done over the past two years by the Welsh Campaign for Civil and Political Liberties; the campaign has researched and exposed widespread police violation of civil rights and political freedoms in Wales, he told the meeting.

In the chair was Stuart Barber, a full-time NUPE organiser, who condemned the overtly political outbursts of senior police officials, and warned of the threat posed by the massive extension of police and Intelligence Service powers. He also read out a letter of support for the meeting from Dafydd Elis Thomas, the Plaid Cymru MP for Meirionydd.

All the speakers spoke of Robert Griffiths' contribution to socialist and progressive causes in Wales and internationally, and regarded his case as a crucial test for political liberties throughout Britain.

Robert faces the charges alongside seven other defendants. By the time their case comes to trial, six of them will have spent 12 months in prison on remand.

A statement from the prisoners was read out and acclaimed by the Cardiff meeting, demanding an end to conspiracy charges, abolition of uncorroborated police "interrogations" ("verbals") as evidence in court, and release on bail of the six prisoners.