

Northern Circuit Meeting Saturday March 1st 2014 #theNorthMeets

“The Circuit demands maximum action to save our system of justice for generations to come.”

About 150 Northern Circuiteers met at a meeting called at short notice by Circuit leader Andrew O’Byrne QC. Its purpose was to allow everyone to ‘have their say.’ And have their say they did!

From the outset it was perfectly clear that this was a Circuit who understood the logistical difficulties that the leadership of the Bar generally but particularly the Leadership and Executive of the CBA face in representing the views of the criminal Bar and they welcomed the opportunity to give voice to their views.

The Leader of the Circuit made plain his support for the day of action and the no returns policy. He stressed again and again the need for unity not only for the Bar but unity with our Solicitor colleagues.

Simon Czoka QC, a member of the CBA executive illustrated the duplicity of the supposed 6% reduction in grad fees, demonstrating time after time, example after example of the lies told by the MOJ. SCQC suggested to unanimous agreement that the clerks on the Circuit be asked to ‘re-bill’ one month’s work to demonstrate the reality of the cuts. His message though was clear these cuts threaten the very existence of the Circuit.

It will surprise no one that the mood was one of anger. The meeting made a number of things very plain. They were ready and willing to take action. Alistair Webster QC and Mark George QC both spoke from the floor. Both made it very plain that if it was a fight that the MOJ wanted then that was what they would get. Both placed their trust in the CBA and both received rousing applause from the floor.

But as now appears to be the norm it was not the senior members of the profession that demonstrated the real resolve of this fight but this time a young man from the Chester Bar, Philip Clemo, who explained not only that he fully supported the CBA and was grateful to us but also how he as a young man realised that sacrifices would have to be made in order to fight this injustice. Was he some radical long inculcated in anti-government activity. No, he had up until recently been a card-carrying member of the Conservative party but who had resigned so appalled was he with the actions of his own party.

I, speaking for the CBA, was proud and pleased to receive the strongest of support for the actions of the CBA. I left the meeting to rousing applause in support of the CBA, proud of my circuit but more so of the individuals who form it. Men and women of all calls determined to do what is right in the fight to save justice.