

# POLL TAX 'THUGGERY'

LOCAL government minister David Hunt today urged Labour leader Neil Kinnock to hold a public inquiry into alleged links between Militant and the Labour Party after "town hall thuggery" over the poll tax.

Mr Hunt said there were "appalling scenes of violence" during anti-poll tax demonstrations. "This thuggery and violence has got to stop," he said.

His remarks during campaigning in the Mid-Staffordshire by-election follow Tory chairman Kenneth Baker's letter to Mr Kinnock claiming 28 Labour MPs backed the Anti-Poll Tax Federation's "campaign to promote law-breaking by non-payment of the community charge".

The 28 — whom he did not name — stood "exposed as backers of the body which promotes disruption and disorder".

But Labour spokesman Jack Cunningham rejected the claim, saying: "Non-payment can never, and will never, form part of the policy of our party, which believes in democracy."

At least 27 people were arrested yesterday as demonstrators disrupted meetings of councillors attempting to set the new charge.

## Inquiry call to Kinnock

The disruptions — from Plymouth to Newcastle-upon-Tyne — followed ugly scenes at 11 centres on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Mr Tommy Sheridan, chairman of the federation, predicted the strength of protests would force Mrs Thatcher into "the most embarrassing U-turn in the last 10 years".

He denied Mr Baker's charge that the federation was a front for Militant. The protests were organised by local people who were angry at the tax and determined not to pay, he said.

"If Mrs Thatcher thinks these protests are finished then she ain't seen nothing yet. The real protest will begin on April 1 when nine to ten million throughout England and Wales join the one million non-payers in Scotland," he said.

At today's press conference in Rugeley, Staffordshire, Mr Hunt, electioneering on behalf of Tory candidate Mr Charles Prior, said: "People should be allowed to express their views in a peaceful way but these demonstrators are being taken over by the far left for the purposes of the far left."

He said Mr Kinnock had asked for a public inquiry into allegations against NUM boss Arthur Scargill and added: "I think it is time he called for a public inquiry into links between Militant and the Labour Party."

"The Militants behind the disgraceful town hall thuggery we have witnessed this week are not all banished exiles from the Labour party. Around 30 of the most ardent supporters of the Anti-Poll Tax Federation sit behind Mr Kinnock in the Commons."

"These 30 law-breaking Labour MPs have all signed a declaration in support of the federation and pledging not to pay their community charge."

Militant has denied any connection with violence.



● David Hunt — investigation

## How we invaded council — demo man

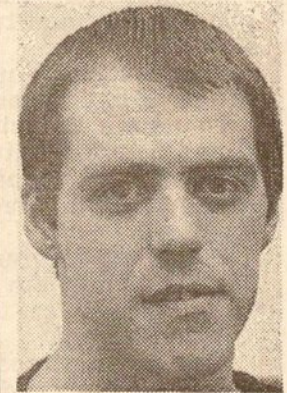
ONE of Nottingham's Robin Hood protesters against the poll tax has spoken about the invasion of the city council chamber.

John Cromby was one of the foam pie-wielding group who halted Monday's meeting, writes SIMON HARVEY.

Despite claims that anarchists, Militant Tendency and the Socialist Workers' Party had hijacked the anti-poll tax campaign, Mr Cromby denied Nottingham's opposition has been infiltrated by extremists.

Mr Cromby, the first of Monday's protesters to speak out, said he was not a member of any extreme group.

A member of the Forest Fields union of the anti-poll tax federation, he



## Evening Post; 8th March

### ● Mr Cromby: "No infiltration"

says he wants to put the record straight.

"Those of us who were on the chamber floor were acting as individuals," he said.

Mr Cromby added: "One of our members made notes after a visit to the chamber earlier that day," he said.

"It was not difficult to work out the lay out of the building from there — we were not helped by any member of the council."

Mr Cromby said someone left the Council House via an emergency door minutes before they broke in.

That person, who Mr Cromby claims was not a councillor, also left an emergency door on the third floor open.

"Our action was very carefully planned. We wanted to cause as much disruption as possible but there was never an intention to hurt anyone," he said.