

LOCAL NEWS

NOTTINGHAM ANTI-POLL TAX FEDERATION

The second meeting of the Nottingham Anti-Poll Tax Federation took place on the 14th of October. It was remarkable only for the inactivity of its officers.

The one good thing to come out of the meeting was a Nottingham march planned for December 2nd. It is important that we, as a group, mobilise to get people along to this and show the strength of feeling against the poll tax. We shall have to face up to the fact that the success of the march will depend on ourselves and other community groups organising. Going on past performance, the Federation won't be doing much.

While the Federation is still dominated by one particular political viewpoint, new groups are joining all the time (that is REAL groups with some basis in the community, not just groups on paper), and its important that we keep involved to put the arguments for accountability, activity etc. Our group, and others like us, can act as a rallying point for those who want to defeat the poll tax and have a Federation which is democratic, open and active.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Since this report was written, the Federation have reported that the march has been cancelled because they were unable to book the Market Square for a rally. However, the march will go ahead on December 2nd. It will not be organised by the Federation, unfortunately, but by a coalition of local community based anti-poll tax groups, including this one. Watch out for more information!

SHERWOOD ANTI-POLL TAX GROUP

The Sherwood group has now been running for two months. After petitioning around Sherwood for several weeks, a public meeting was organised which attracted 80 people. A member of our group spoke at this meeting.

Since then, the Sherwood group have been going from strength to strength. The group has regular meetings every two weeks, runs a stall on Mansfield Road, and now has around 240 members - catching up with us!

For the future, they intend to have another public meeting with a speaker from Scotland, and a benefit gig to raise some money. At present they are putting together a newsletter similar to the one you are reading now. Their next meeting is at Sherwood Community Centre at 7.30 pm on November 8th.

Good luck to them!

SNEINTON ANTI-POLL TAX GROUP

The newly formed Sneinton Anti-Poll Tax Group, which was set up after a meeting a few weeks ago of 35 people from the area, held its first public meeting on October 24th. About thirty local people listened to speakers from this group, and a representative of NALGO, the local government union, who talked about the role that local government workers can play in defeating the poll tax.

So far, Sneinton activists have been petitioning from door to door for several weeks, and have been running a stall in Sneinton market.

WHAT'S ON:

1. **NOTTINGHAM AGAINST THE POLL TAX** march and rally, December 2nd. Watch out for leaflets and posters with more details
2. **SHEFFIELD AGAINST THE POLL TAX** demonstration on November 4th. This group is taking along a minibus. Contact us soon if you're interested in going.
3. **Forest Fields/Hyson Green Anti-Poll Tax Campaign meetings:** our next two meetings are - TUESDAY 14TH NOVEMBER and TUESDAY 28TH NOVEMBER, both at 8 pm
4. **Sherwood Anti-Poll Tax Group**, next public meeting on November 8th at Sherwood Community Centre

URGENT - MONEY NEEDED !

Although we've still got some money left from the benefit in October, its dwindling fast. Ideally, we need money coming in steadily, to pay for the cost of rooms for meetings, and printing costs for leaflets and newsletters.

If you're working and would like to help, we'd like you to fill in the standing order form below. Its up to you how much you give, but we suggest £1 a month for every £1 000 a year you earn - or £5 a month if you can't work that out! Send the form to us, not your bank. We'll sort it out from there. Thanks.

STANDING ORDER

Name:
Address:

TO:BANK
BRANCH:
ADDRESS:
ACCOUNT NO:

Please pay on receipt of this order the sum of £....., and on the first day of every month thereafter, to National Westminster Bank PLC, Nottingham University Branch, to the credit of Forest Fields/Hyson Green Anti-Poll Tax Campaign, account number 97052728.

SIGNATURE:
DATE:

Axe the Tax

POLL-AXE !

NEWSLETTER OF THE FOREST FIELDS & HYSON GREEN ANTI-POLL TAX CAMPAIGN

ISSUE 3

NOV/DEC 1989

FOREST FIELDS / HYSON GREEN



ANTI-POLL TAX CAMPAIGN

SNOOPER ALERT !!

Poll tax snoopers have been calling at homes in many parts of the city over the last few weeks. So far, one in every five people in Nottingham have failed to return their poll tax forms. Although there are people all over the city who haven't registered, there are more of them in areas like this one, where most of us would be worse off if the poll tax succeeded.

If you haven't sent back your registration form yet, get a copy of our "What to do next?" leaflet - available from our stall every Saturday morning at Hyson Green crossroads, at our meetings, or by post. Meanwhile, here's what to do if the snoopers call:

DON'T:

- open the door: pretend there's nobody in!
- tell them anything about previous poll tax forms, or other people sharing your home
- be intimidated. Remember, they CAN'T force you to fill in a form there and then.

You have to take a registration form from them, or you might be fined. They'll probably try to arrange a time to collect it : Pick a time when you know that nobody will be at home...

THEN:

- TELL your friends and neighbours that snoopers are in the area
- FOLLOW them around - this will worry them, and might stop them harassing people on their own doorsteps
- REMEMBER that the snoopers are nervous because they know they're unpopular

On some council estates in Nottingham, rent collectors are doubling up as poll tax snoopers - they get paid £1 for every name they get, so its a nice little earner for them. This makes it harder to avoid them, though, since most people know and trust their rent collectors.

Looking on the bright side, we've heard that snoopers all over Nottingham are not bothering to knock on doors where an anti-poll tax poster is in the window. They say it isn't worth the bother. So all you people who haven't put up a poster yet - now is the time!

Just a reminder: Its probably not worth getting fined over refusing to register for the poll tax. The fines start at £50, and go up to £200 for further offences. Refusing to register is a criminal offence (unlike refusing to pay), and it wont stop the poll tax because they'll only get your name from one of their computers. Our aim is to make registration as difficult as we can without getting fined.

YOU MIGHT HEAR TALK THAT THIS MARCH IS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.

IGNORE IT. THE MARCH WILL TAKE PLACE. IT WILL BE A SUCCESS.

MORE INFO VERY SOON



SCOTLAND - POLL TAX CRUMBLING!!

When the papers and television mention the poll tax, they always play down the size of the Scottish fight against it. People in Scotland got their first poll tax bills in April this year, and our Scottish "twin" group, Prestonfields in Edinburgh, keep us up-to-date on what's really happening.

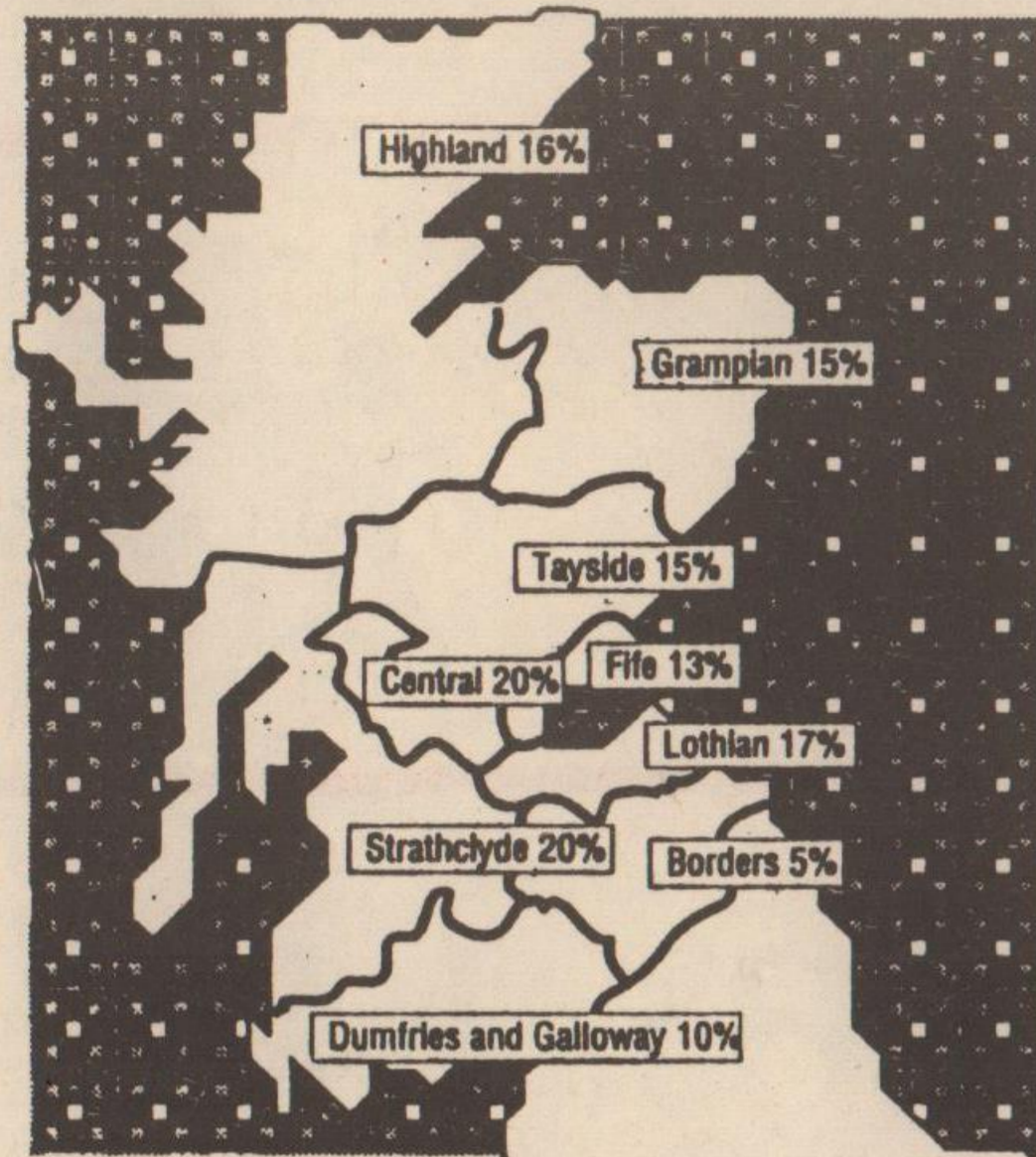
In Lothian, the Edinburgh council area, the council admitted at the end of September that there should be at least 680 000 people on the Lothian poll tax register - but they've only got 580 000. A full 100 000 people have vanished!

So far, 120 000 Lothian people have completely ignored their poll tax bills. 40 000 more stopped paying after three months, and another 40 000 on top of that stopped paying after four months. Add on the 100 000 missed from the register, and that's 300 000 who aren't paying - nearly 40% of the people in the Lothian area.

Lothian council are in a mess. So far, nobody has been taken to court for non-payment, and nobody has had their belongings siezed by bailiffs. Two local councillors have already admitted that the legal system can't cope, and that the cost of collecting the poll tax from these 300 000 people will probably be more than they actually owe.

NON-PAYMENT STILL GROWING

Scottish poll tax, non payers
% paid nothing in first 3 months



In Scotland as a whole, "official" estimates say that between 670 000 and 1 million people haven't paid their poll tax (there are about 4 million on the register). But these estimates - shown on the map above - don't include the hundreds of thousands who have paid a few instalments and then stopped. Nor do they include those missed from the register altogether!

In fact, all over Scotland the non-payment campaign is still growing. People see their friends and neighbours refusing to pay the tax, and realise that joining the anti-poll tax campaign is easier - and cheaper - than trying to find the money to pay it.

In truth, the poll tax in Scotland is crumbling. The government are worried. They're pretending to ignore the Scottish situation, and hoping that people will blame their local councils for the problems the tax is causing. In this country, they're spending billions of pounds to try and convince people that the poll tax is a good idea. Our group, and hundreds of others like it, are going to make sure that they fail.

PARTY TIME

CASTING A QUICK EYE OVER THE CONFERENCES..

A poll tax motion calling for Labour commitment to a mass non-payment campaign was heavily defeated at the Labour conference. With Labour councils actively implementing the tax, and with official party policy amounting to little more than "do nothing - wait until the election", this doesn't come as any surprise.

David Blunkett accused non-payment campaigners of being "naïve and dishonest" for thinking that such a campaign will force Thatcher to abandon the tax. What self-justifying rubbish! Labour's own "do nothing" strategy itself partly explains why this government has got away with so much. At a time when the government is looking more vulnerable than it has since 1981, sitting back can only allow them time to recuperate and strengthen their forces.

Fears were also expressed that non-payment would lead to benefit and wages deductions, and to bailiffs being sent in. This is Labour's excuse to do nothing, but really it's a reason to strengthen the campaign.

A strong community organisation is the best defence against the bailiffs. Persuading DSS staff not to co-operate with benefit deductions, and supporting workers who refuse to allow their wages being arrested, will be the best defence against income deductions. It is also vital that we take our campaign to local government workers to persuade them not to implement the poll tax.

Meanwhile the "Tory flagship" (as the poll tax was called) is losing steam.

Six months ago, Nicholas Ridley - then the Environment Secretary - proposed a system of temporary subsidies so that areas with a low poll tax could bail out areas with a high one. This "safety net" was intended to cushion the effects of the poll tax and deflect mounting criticism that it would bring widespread hardship. It reflected the Conservatives fear of the possible effect of the poll tax on their chances of winning the next election.

But fears that Ridley's proposal could itself cost the Conservative Party 20 marginal seats (in areas where people would pay more poll tax because of the subsidy) caused damaging rows within the party ranks. So, at the Conservative Party conference the government announced that they would use public money to pay the subsidy.

(The "safety net" is meant to last for four years, year one being financed by Ridley's cross-subsidy method, and the other three years now funded by central government.)

It was also agreed that transitional payments would be made to pensioners and to people with disabilities - but there's a catch. Payments will only be made to people who live in areas where the council keep their spending within government guidelines. But these guidelines have been artificially low for years. Using them, the Tories have forced drastic cuts in essential services by stopping councils from "overspending". Now they'll be used to pass the blame on to local councils when people don't qualify for these transitional payments. Very neat!

Still, the government has backed down twice in six months, and has now committed an extra £1 billion of public money to the poll tax. Yet splits within the Tory Party continue, as Tory MPs realise that the poll tax may not only lose them votes in the north, but also in many London boroughs and constituencies.

MPs warn of poll tax trap

Victor Smart and Tim Miles

A FURTHER softening of the impact of poll tax is being demanded by Tory backbenchers on top of the latest £1 billion injection of Treasury funds.

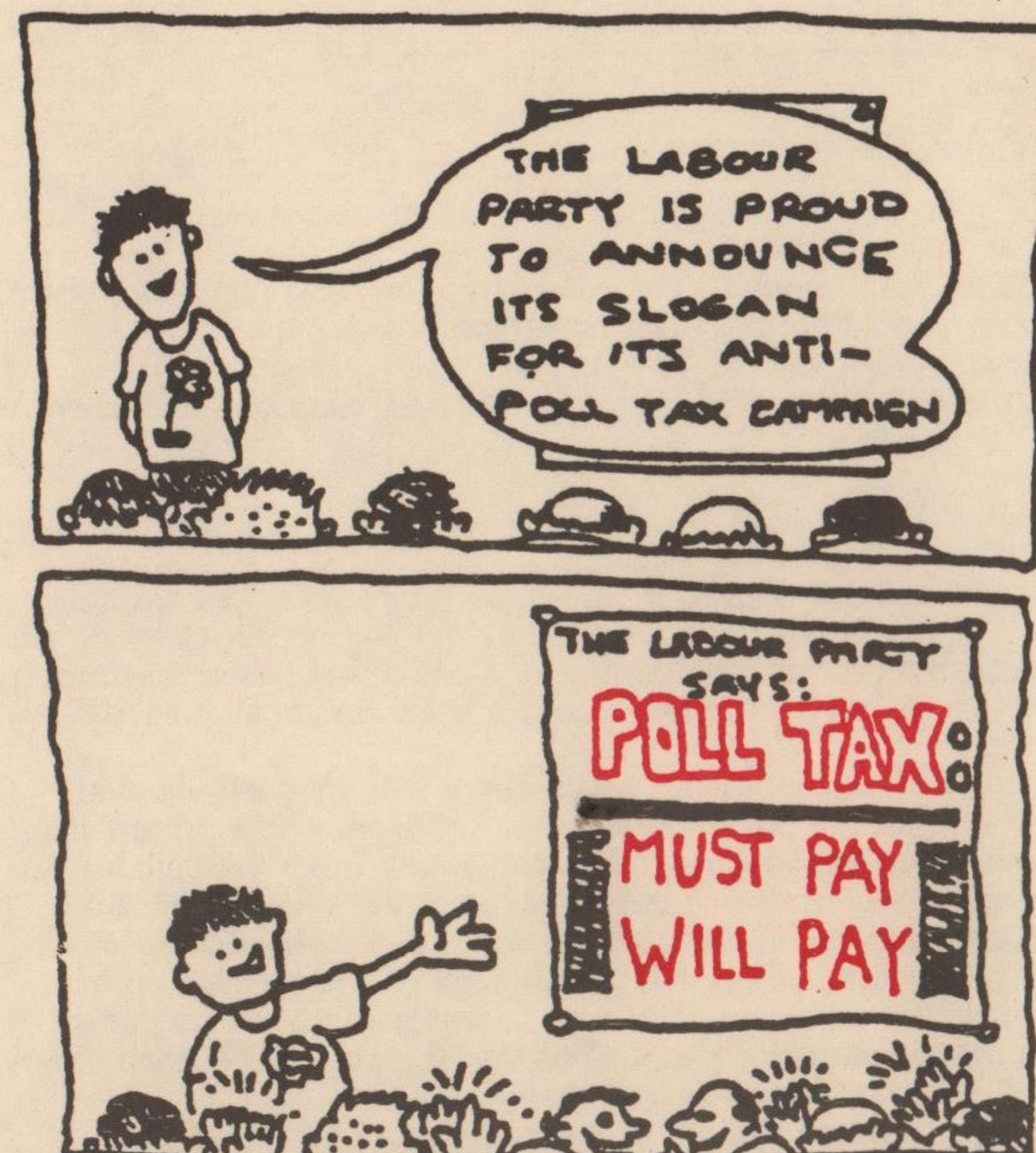
Sir Rhodes Boyson, the former Environment Minister, is pressing for the 'safety net', which penalises low-spending areas, to be abolished altogether and for poll tax to be capped in high-spending areas at a £360 maximum per person.

Sir Rhodes also questioned the fairness of the 'homes, won't' to press for further exemptions in the wake of a week's announcement of sufferers from Alzheimer's Disease will not have to pay the poll tax.

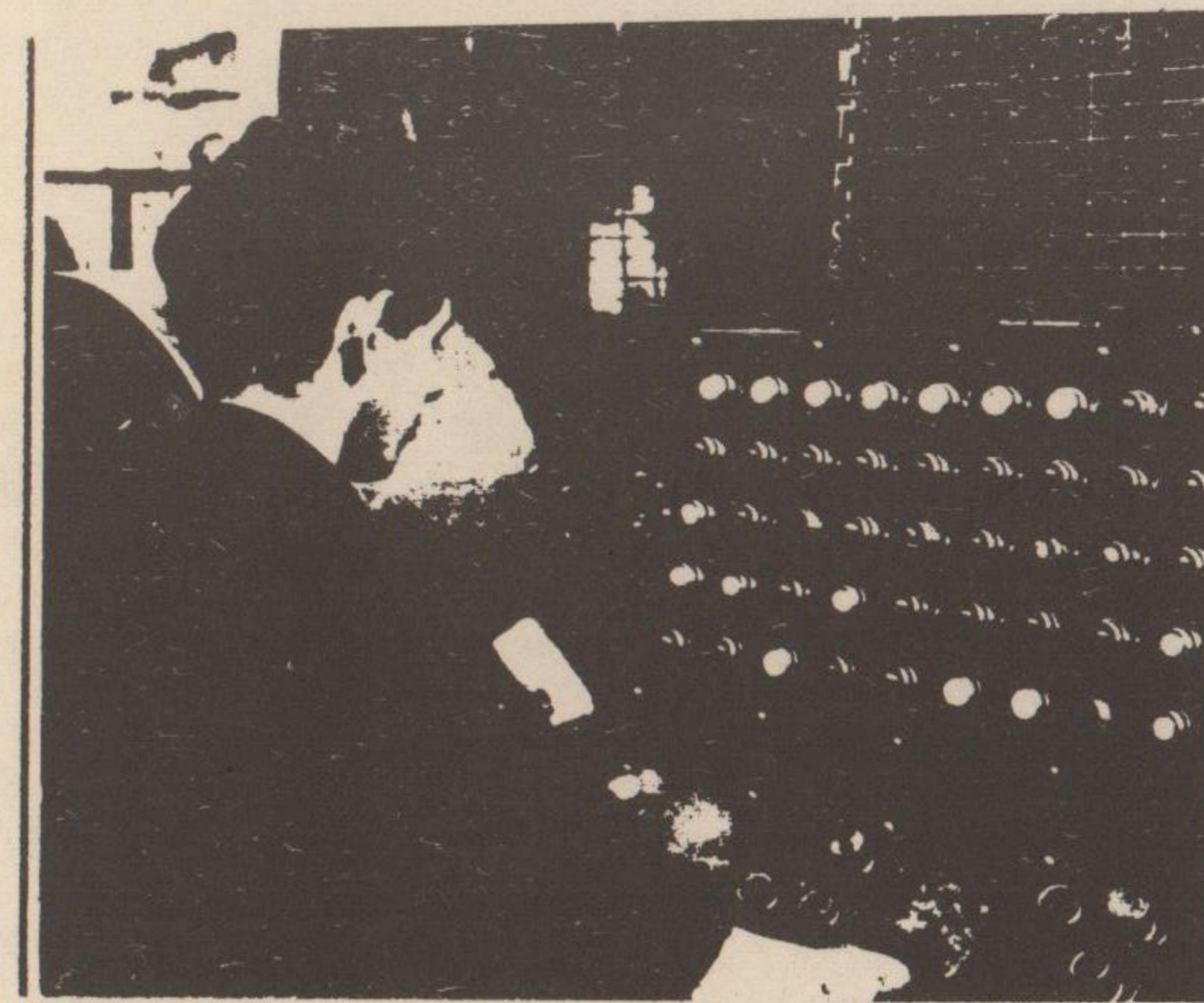
The Carers' National Association said last members, who relatives in homes, won't

From "The Observer", 8th October

The government is bending and divisions are growing. Now is not the time to sit back and wait for the election, but to press ahead and build the campaign.



WORKERS POWER



Since a part of our general strategy to defeat the poll tax is to try and organise within the unions, the last meeting of this group drafted a motion to be taken to union branches. Members of the campaign should try to get this motion passed at their branch meetings. This raises in your workplace the issue of the poll tax, and might help build an anti-poll tax group there.

MOTION ON THE POLL TAX

This union notes:

1. The introduction, in April 1990, of the Tory poll tax (community charge).
2. That the poll tax in Nottingham will cost each adult about £350 - £7 per week.
3. That to receive any rebate you must earn less than £65 per week.
4. That at least 71% of people in Nottingham will be worse off under the poll tax.
5. That the poll tax is inefficient and will cost twice as much to administer as the rates system it will replace.
6. That the poll tax will increase central government control, since 75% of local government funding will in future be distributed by central government.
7. The formation of local anti-poll tax groups, and the formation of the Nottingham Anti-Poll Tax Federation

This union believes:

1. That the poll tax is an unfair tax which will result in the transfer of money from the poor to the rich.
2. That the best way to stop the poll tax is to organise a mass campaign of non-payment in the community, and a campaign of non-implementation in the relevant unions.
3. That Labour councils should refuse to implement the poll tax, and refuse to penalise anybody who refuses to register or pay.

This union resolves:

1. To publish amongst its members the facts about the poll tax.
2. To establish an anti-poll tax group within the workplace.
3. To affiliate to the Nottingham Anti-Poll Tax Federation

STOP THE POLL TAX - NOW !!

Are you angry about the poll tax? Do you want to fight it, but don't know how? Then come to our next meeting - see the "What's On" column for details.

But if meetings aren't your scene, don't fret: you don't have to wait until next April (when the bills arrive) to throw a spanner into the works. We're going to make the poll tax unworkable, and we've thought of some fun ways of doing it. Here's the first:

OPERATION "TELL SID"

To collect the poll tax, they need to know where we all live. If the register of people who should pay isn't accurate, they've got problems. The more inaccurate it is, the more problems they've got. So..

We've obtained a lengthy list which members will be given, and is available at meetings and at our stall. On it are the names and personal details of some local people who will gain from the poll tax: judges, company directors, freemasons and other undesirables.

Get a copy of the list and pick out a name. Then, next time you've got a spare ten minutes, write a letter pretending to be this person. Send it to Sidney Stares - he's our Community Charge (poll tax) Registration Officer. Here's what you should Tell Sid:

1. The person's name and current address
2. Their date of birth
3. That they are moving house
4. Their new address: this can be an empty house, a non-existent address, or something vague like "abroad" or "London"
5. The date they moved or are moving

Once you've sent a few letters like this one and got bored, you can start to play a slightly different game. Invent a name - or use somebody who's famous: a real person, a character from your favourite soap - it doesn't matter.

Be this person. Write and Tell Sid that you have just moved into the Nottingham area. Pick an address from the list, and Tell Sid that's where you are living.

It's as simple as that. By itself, this won't stop the poll tax - but every little helps, so get writing now. Send all your letters to:

The Community Charge Registration Officer
Third Floor
The Guildhall
Nottingham
NG1 2DE

"I've got a community here that says I'm not *** paying!"

