

POLL TAX MOB ON RAMPAGE



● Police line up outside Hackney Town Hall after clearing a crowd of about 2,000 people protesting against the poll tax

Demo turns into riot

A POLL tax protest turned into a riot with demonstrators running through the streets smashing windows and looting shops as they went.

In the worst violence so far over the community charge, police officers last night came under attack from a hail of missiles, including bottles, sticks and cans, in Hackney, east London.

About 300 police charged to break up a crowd of about 2,000.

But as the mob dispersed windows were smashed with paving stones and looters were seen running off with videos and other valuable goods. Mounted police were called in but were too late to stop the looting.

'Bombardment'

A Scotland Yard spokesman said today 57 protesters and four policemen were taken to hospital with injuries including a broken nose.

About 50 shops had their windows smashed and were looted.

At first, only about 100 police were at the scene as the Labour council fixed a poll tax of £499 after a 90-minute debate.

But reinforcements were called in as the scene turned ugly when about 1,000 protestors staged a sit-down demonstration.

Local resident Peter Adams, 46, said: "An electrical shop was cleared out. People were running off with videos.

"This had nothing to do with ordinary local people. There were locals here but it was taken out of their hands. I feel sickened."

There were big protests elsewhere. Police in Swindon, Wiltshire, called for extra help after more than 1,000 demonstrators tried to force their way in

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to the council chamber, where a £336 charge was fixed.

Officers linked arms to hold the crowd back as effigies of Mrs Thatcher with a noose around her neck were held up.

Two demonstrators were ejected by police as Dudley council in the West Midlands set its rate of £387 while a private security firm and police guarded Hendon town hall in north London as Barnet council set a £338 poll tax.

In the London borough of Camden set one of the highest poll taxes so far, £534, despite noisy protesters in the public gallery.

Gedling poll tax is fixed at £369

MODEL CITIZEN?

CITY Treasury staff have had one pleasant poll tax surprise.

A man walked into their offices in Burton Street this week and handed over enough cash to cover his bill. He said he was going on an extended holiday and wanted his poll tax settled.

Chief community charge officer Gordon Edge said: "After all the hassle we've had, it's nice to have someone paying this early."

COUNCIL rulers ignored Labour pleas to take £1m out of reserves to cut the poll tax bill in Gedling last night.

Opposition councillors demanded that the borough dug into its savings to reduce the community charge which was fixed at £369.

But Gedling's ruling Tories refused to back down at the packed meeting.

Sixty people filled the public gallery at the borough's civic centre. Others were forced to stay outside but the 12-man police guard reported no trouble.

Coun Ivan Gollop (Lab) argued: "We don't need £1m in savings in Gedling. But the people need it now."

He said the savings would ease collection and cut the bill to £357.

"It isn't our money, it belongs to the people of Gedling," said Coun Gollop.

Council leader Bob Baird-Parker (C) insisted only £228,754 would be taken out of reserves to help fund the tax. He said the borough could not afford to take huge sums out of reserves.

"The Government hasn't the money to just take huge sums out of reserve and we certainly can't afford it."

He blamed the county council for the final £369. Poor management and inefficiency pushed up the county's costs, he said, and Gedling was forced to bear that cost.

Maggie attacks the demos

THE Prime Minister has attacked the anti-poll tax demonstrations which have disrupted council meetings in Nottingham and elsewhere.

She joined Gedling MP Andrew Mitchell in the Commons yesterday in condemning the scenes which halted many budget meetings.

Mrs Thatcher said: "I utterly condemn the violent scenes organised by Militant Tendency. Like Grunwick and Wapping it seems to be an abrogation of democracy."

Both challenged Labour leader Neil Kinnock to disown the 28 MPs pledged not to pay the tax.

MORE POWER TO POLL TAX BATTLE

I NEVER really knew whether Robin Hood was a man or myth. The recent display of outrage by the people of your city concerning the dreaded poll tax has heartened a young woman who believed we were doomed to lethargy and nonchalance.

More power to their elbow — the people of Nottingham — I say. Cheers to them all for voting with their feet and leading the way in the fight against injustice, greed and downright inhuman policies of extracting more from us.

Long live Robin Hood and the county of Nottingham.
ELIZABETH HILL (Miss)
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