

TORY BID TO SLASH POLL TAX

City's figure 'is £100 too much'



● Coun Bradbury — campaign

TORIES in Nottingham are launching a campaign to have the city's poll tax cut by £100.

They are asking people to sign a petition calling on the Government to cap Labour-controlled Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council.

In a move that would lead to an administrative nightmare, they want Secretary of State Chris Patten to step in and veto the £390 fixed by the city's ruling Labour group.

But they were accused today of being irresponsible and of betraying Notting-

ham's interests by city council leader Coun Betty Higgins.

Tory leader Coun Bill Bradbury said there was no other way, however. "I owe it to the people who elected me to do something about it. If the only recourse is to the Government, that's what we have to do."

The Conservatives say the councils are spending too much and that is why the figures are too high.

Slicing

They want the Government to set how much the councils can spend.

Tories say the city poll tax could be cut "painlessly" to £290 a person by slicing the capital programme, dispensing with new posts, taking £700,000 from reserves and being realistic about the number of people who won't pay.

They will launch a major campaign on Friday asking people to press for the capping. Newspaper advertisements ask for signatures — the first to sign are two local Conservative MPs, Martin Brandon Bravo and Michael Knowles. Coun Bradbury has also signed. The move brought a furious reaction from Coun Higgins.

"To pretend, as he does along with his Government, that Mrs Thatcher's tax figure could be met is either living in cloud cuckoo land or blatant misinformation.

"Nationally, councils of all political persuasions are charging an average of 34% more than Government target figures for the tax.

"Here in Nottingham, we are 36% above those Government figures, which have been widely condemned as unrealistic and inaccurate."

Coun Higgins said there were no grounds on which the Government could cap the city.

Coun Bradbury denied acting irresponsibly. "They've acted irresponsibly. I'm elected to look after the people of Nottingham. They're not happy with £390.

Poll tax driver gets the sack

VAN driver Russell Burrows was out of a job today after refusing to deliver 170,000 poll tax forms.

His employers, Grosvenor Printers of Northampton, warned him on Monday of the possible consequences of refusing to handle the forms.

But after he staged another protest yesterday, he was sacked on the spot.

Mr Burrows, 40, said he refused on principle to deliver the forms: "I don't regret what I did. It's about time more people took a stand against the poll tax, it's a rip-off."

The print union Sogat is taking up his case, but a spokesman said it was difficult because Mr Burrows had clearly refused to carry out his driving duties.

Grosvenor Printers today had no comment to make.

'Don't pay it' plea

CITY residents have been told to break the law and not pay their poll tax bills.

Some laws are made to be broken, campaigners told an anti poll tax meeting of 65 people at the Queens Walk Community Centre in The Meadows, last night.

"We aren't asking anyone to go to prison, but we are asking for their support to frustrate the system," said Richard Shaw, a member of The Meadows Anti Poll Tax Union.

Withholding poll tax would cause chaos for the Government, he said.

Problems

And problems would be caused for the county council which already faces delays with meeting rebate demands, the meeting heard.

Mr Shaw said: "A bad law is there to be broken. That is democracy — being able to break the law."

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Exchange rates

Today's rates for the sale of currency notes:

Australia.....	2.0650 dollars
Austria.....	18.75 schillings
Belgium.....	55.65 francs
Canada.....	1.87 dollars
Cyprus.....	0.76 pounds
Denmark.....	10.31 kroner
Finland.....	6.4150 markkes
France.....	9.07 francs
Germany.....	2.6675 marks
Greece.....	257 drachmas
Holland.....	3.02 guilders
Hong Kong.....	12.40 dollars
Ireland.....	1.0125 punts
Israel.....	3.10 shekels
Italy.....	1990 lire
Japan.....	242.50 yen
Malta.....	0.5175 pound
New Zealand.....	2.67 dollars
Norway.....	10.42 kroner
Portugal.....	237.00 escudos
Saudi.....	5.95 riyals
S. Africa.....	4.10 rand
Spain.....	171.75 pesetas
Sweden.....	9.86 kronor
Switzerland.....	2.3850 Francs
Turkey.....	3850 lire
USA.....	1.58 dollars

● Rates subject to change at short notice. Provided by National Westminster International Banking Centre, Nottingham.