

3D *on't pay! on't collect! on't implement!*

Issue #2 of the open,
independant newsletter
produced by the "3rd
September Steering
Committee"

Don't Pay and Don't Collect



THE POLL TAX CAMPAIGN HAS REALLY TAKEN OFF!

All over the country, even in traditionally Tory areas, anti-Poll Tax campaigns have been launched, committed to non-payment.

But there is another side to the Poll Tax campaign that has not yet been seriously addressed — trade union and workplace action.

As non-payment becomes a reality in England and Wales the movement must start to organise around the slogan of non-collection. This doesn't simply mean lobbying the TUC and call on them to give a lead — we know they won't. Where would the movement be if it had waited for the Labour Party leadership to give a lead?

We have to build the campaign in the same way, and with similar vigour, in the workplace as we have done in the community. Organising workplace anti-Poll Tax groups is essential and trade union branches should be encouraged to take on this work. We need to fight for union branches to support non-payment and non-cooperation.

This is not an issue just for local government workers. Every worker who doesn't pay the Poll Tax will be faced with the threat of wage arrestments if they are not organised. And local authority workers may lose their jobs through the cuts that councils may make to keep down Poll Tax levels, and through other Government attacks on council finances. There will be enormous pressure to keep local authority wage settlements down.

Civil servants are faced with demands to deduct benefits from non-payers when they themselves cannot afford to pay the Poll Tax.

But workplace anti-Poll Tax groups must not exist in isolation from the community-based non-payment campaigns. Real links need to be made to create a unified, organised campaign to smash the Poll Tax. Workplace groups are emerging, but there is a long way to go.

In London a trade union dayschool has been organised to raise the issue of Poll Tax in workplaces and union branches. The Greater London Association of Trades Councils and the All London Federation support this initiative. Such dayschools should be called in other areas as a step in building the campaign in workplaces.

We also need to build for a national conference of trade unionists open to delegates from all trade unions to strengthen the campaign and to be certain of defeating the tax.

Sham Singh
TU Liaison Officer
All Britain Federation

London Trade Union Dayschool

"Fighting the Poll Tax in the Workplace"

Saturday 28th April

Institute of Education, Bedford Way, WC1
(Tube Russell Square)

10.00am - 4.00pm

Workshops include: *Wage arrestments *Implementation
*Organising the campaign

£5.00 delegates £2.00 observers

For more information and delegation details contact Sham Singh on 808 5893

EDITORIAL

It is clear from the lobbies, demonstrations and meetings that the anti-Poll Tax campaign is becoming a genuinely mass movement. The levels of non-payment continue to increase in Scotland and opinion polls published recently, prior to bills being sent out in England and Wales indicate that already around 9 million people are committed to non-payment.

Paradoxically, the organised movement is much smaller and weaker than the feeling against the tax. Despite the triumphalism of *Militant* supporters, mass non-payment has not stopped the tax in Scotland.

The weak link in the movement is in its relationship to the organised labour movement. *3D* has promoted a combined strategy of non-payment and non-collection and non-implementation. For us that is not simply hollow propaganda, but an understanding that the tax can only be defeated if on the basis of mass non-payment workers take action against the tax.

This issue of *3D* concentrates on the issues facing trade unionists and highlights some of the struggles that have already taken place in the workplace. *3D* wants to become a focus for workers taking action, and the anti-Poll Tax activists who support them.

The call for a national trade union conference is timely. We urge *3D* supporters to raise the call in their trade unions and to put pressure on the All Britain Federation to actively support the conference.

The All Britain Federation has clearly been a success in its ability to organise a massive demonstration against the Poll Tax. However, the differences and sectarianism which marred the founding conference and the building of the movement continue to exist. The movement doesn't belong to one group or current and no-one group can claim to speak for the whole of the movement.

In some regions, for instance London, progress has been made in building a united campaign, but at a local level opportunism and sectarianism threatens this potential unity.

3D will continue to have a role in networking activists, promoting principled unity in action, and building links with the workers' movement.

3D National Activists Meeting

Saturday 14th April

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1

(nearest tube Holborn)

2.00pm - 5.00pm

* Current situation in the movement

* Building workplace action

* Producing *3D*

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Cuts in Strathclyde

The Poll Tax rate for 1990/91 was set by Strathclyde Regional Council on 8th January. As expected, the rise was well above the rate of inflation at 12.3%.

The figure means a £25 increase in the Poll Tax. Added to the new rate set by Glasgow District Council the total rate will be £338, a rise of around 10%.

With the removal of the Government's "safety net" (which kept the Poll Tax artificially low last year), the true figure in Strathclyde would be far greater had the Regional Council not had a surplus to carry forward into the new financial year.

The estimated surplus of £28 million is made up of £12 million that was "saved" in 1989, together with £16 million that will be "saved" in 1990. These savings are a direct result of cutbacks in services to the community.

*It looks like a case of
"Go West young man!"*



Cuts in staffing levels coinciding with minimal wage rises are the source of the council's "savings". For most council employees wage rises are being held at 6% — well below the level of inflation.

Workers in services that are vital to the well-being of the community are being insulted and demoralised by being overworked and underpaid.

But it is the community as a whole that is suffering most, with both the provision and the quality of services in decline.

The most frightening aspect of the policy of "making savings" to subsidise the Poll Tax is this: what happens when our services, already poor, are pared to the bone and no further "savings" can be made without destroying them altogether?

The true cost of the Poll Tax will be revealed, and those original estimates of £500+ will become a harsh reality.

We must encourage council workers to strike against cutbacks, and then we must support them in defence of our services.

All those involved in the anti-Poll Tax campaign will stand firm until both the Government and the Labour-controlled councils who are implementing the tax accept that it is unworkable.

But the campaign must also be stepped-up to include industrial action by those council

employees involved in the implementation process, and every other employee in the council who's jobs and wages are being cut.

Re-printed from *Refuse and Resist*
c/o 2/3, 182 Ark Lane,
Glasgow G31 2JS or
telephone 041 423 8679.

Cynical deception in Central

Anti-Poll Tax campaigners have accused Central Regional Council (Scotland) of a "cynical deception" of people in hardship in order to collect unpaid Poll Tax.

For months Central Region has been assuring both the anti-Poll Tax movement and the local Labour Party that they would review Poll Tax arrears individually to protect those in hardship. They claim in their manifesto for the regional elections that "Labour has taken a whole range of steps to protect those who are being punished by this tax including the setting up of a special sub-committee which will sift through all cases of hardship."

But they have done just the opposite. As soon as it was legally possible, the names of 2000 income support recipients were passed on to the DSS to have compulsory deductions made from benefit without any review of their circumstances.

The minutes of the Finance Committee reveal an even more outrageous plan. They have sent out a letter to non-payers offering them advice and consideration of special circumstances. However, anyone on income support who takes up the offer will be passed on to the DSS and hit with benefit deductions without consultation.

Central Region is the first Scottish authority to use benefit deductions to collect the Poll Tax. This is causing grave hardship and anxiety, made worse by the fact that in many cases the DSS is using illegal procedures, not informing people properly of the circumstances or advising them of their rights of appeal.

The council's advice scheme is not a genuine attempt to help people at all but a cynical deception, aimed at getting information that they need to forcibly collect the tax but at the moment they lack. We are warning non-payers that they should pass no information at all on to the council or to Sheriff's Officers.

We organised a very successful lobby of the Finance Committee to demonstrate our disgust at the council's conduct and are planning to raise this issue during the up-coming regional elections.

Helen Allen
Central Region
Anti-Poll Tax Federation

DSS workers strike against Poll Tax snooping

In October last year workers in inner London social security offices took strike action against being used as snoopers to enforce the registration of people in receipt of income support, for the Poll Tax.

CPSA (the union for low paid clerical workers in the Civil Service) members in Broomsbury, Oval, Greenwich Park, Kensington and Crystal Palace, among others, refused to co-operate with the completion of form NHB10(CC), which covers any claimant not receiving Housing Benefit — if completed it registers such claimants for the unfair Poll Tax.

Every claimant will have to pay 20% of the Poll Tax. If claimants can't pay then social security workers will be asked to take compulsory deductions from benefit.

In some offices the strikes were successful and form NHB10(CC) has still not been completed.

The right-wing national CPSA leadership condemned the strikes — the first to be taken by any group of workers against the Poll Tax — for fear of breaking the law!

Yet the legality of form NHB10(CC) is itself in question.

In face of the refusal of the national union to lead a nationwide fight against completing NHB10(CC), the forms have been filled in in many areas.

However, workers in the DSS are preparing to fight the next round — that of being forced to deduct money from poverty-stricken claimants who can't pay the Poll Tax.

CPSA officers in Wales and South West DSS region have now been threatened with suspension from the union for debating and overwhelmingly carrying a motion calling for DSS workers to refuse to make "poll tax deductions" from claimants. Claimants may have been stabbed in the back by the cowardly CPSA national leadership — but the rank and file will fight on.

Dion D'Silva
West Dulwich APTU

Nalگو members refuse to collect!

NALGO (the local government union) members who work as cashiers in Neighbourhood Offices in the London Borough of Islington are balloting over whether to refuse to collect the Poll Tax until the council provides adequate staff.

The number of transactions will be quadrupled under the Poll Tax and Nalگو cashiers are demanding 72 extra staff to carry the massively increased workload. The council is offering 15!

Although this is a dispute primarily about working conditions many of the cashiers, who are themselves refusing to pay the tax, are relieved that at least for the moment they will not have to collect it.

Even if the council were to provide the extra staff there is no space in the Neighbourhood Offices to put the new workers, so the dispute looks likely to continue.

Anti-Poll Tax campaigners should support council workers who take action, even if it is in defence of their basic working conditions. Industrial action over working conditions can act as a springboard to industrial action over Poll Tax implementation.

The Avon Federation opens a new office

Bristolians will be in no doubt that the Bristol campaign is well under way with the opening of our new office in the centre of the city.

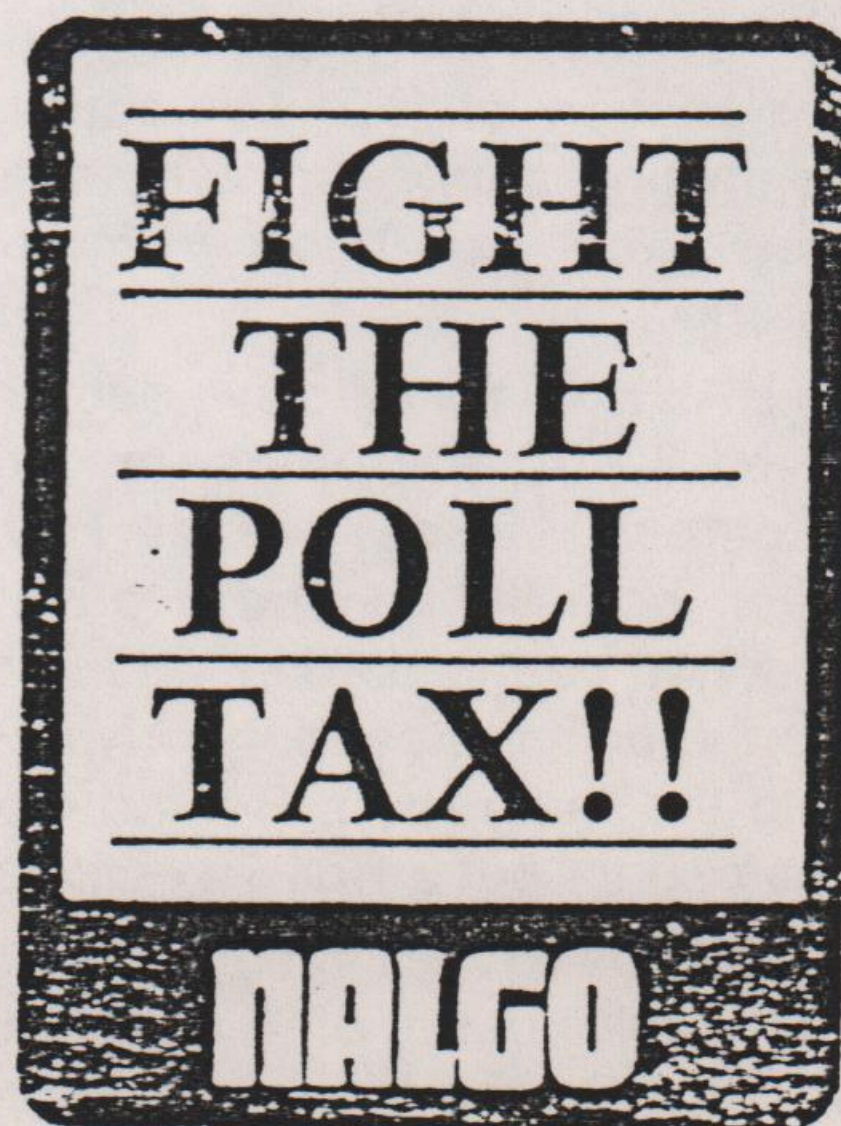
With 35 local groups, the Avon Federation has felt the need for a base to co-ordinate the campaign as well as a central location for advice and information work as we get closer to April.

The office will be permanently staffed by volunteers from local groups. It will cost £10 a week. Very cheap by commercial standards, but not so easy for a campaign to find.

Nevertheless we have seen it as a priority and hope to raise this money and much more in our planned sponsored walk.

As for the location — Colston Street. The same street as the council's Poll Tax office. I think they will be receiving regular visits.

Danny Burns
Avon Federation



For A National Conference Of Trade Unionists Against The Poll Tax

The Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, which organised a highly successful conference in November 1989 against New Realism has launched a call for a national trade union conference.

"The Poll Tax is totally undemocratic and massively unpopular. Trade unionists throughout the country, who won't or can't pay may well find that their own or their fellow worker's Poll Tax is deducted at source by their employees.

This is a matter for every trade unionist and for the TUC itself. An injury to one is an injury to all!

Trade unionists in local government face being called on to implement the tax against their fellow workers and neighbours; further deterioration in working conditions and even compulsory redundancies as councils make cuts budgets under the new system.

We need to organise on a national basis to work out a united and effective response to the Poll Tax and its implementation.

The SMTUC is requesting that your trade union branch or committee endorses the call for a national conference to be organised in the autumn."

The SMTUC is approaching the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation to jointly organise the conference.

For further details contact SMTUC c/o 53a Geere Road, London E15.

New Thames Valley federation

At a meeting held in Reading on Saturday 24th March over 70 delegates from across the Thames Valley (the heart of the Tory heartlands) voted to set up a new federation.

The massive mobilisations around council budget-making meetings has given a real boost to the campaign and the federation hopes to co-ordinate activity across a wide geographical area.

The conference was addressed by activists, trade unionists and anti-Poll Tax councillor Vince Gillespie from London who said it was one of the best anti-Poll Tax meetings he had spoken at.

For more details of the federation contact Dave Warren c/o 28 St. Giles Close, Reading.

The campaign steps up...

The massive mobilisations of the last few weeks have firmly put the Poll Tax campaign on the map and deepened the crisis of the Government.

No amount of press hysteria and "red baiting" can detract from the impact of the campaign which has proved its ability to involve hundreds of thousands of ordinary people. Kinnock's rantings have only served to make people angrier at Labour's capitulation to the hated tax.

The vast majority of the lobbies and demonstrations have been peaceful, and the responsibility for any violence lies firstly with the Tory government for introducing the tax and secondly with local authorities who attempted to exclude demonstrators from council chambers and allowed the police to run amok among protesters.

In HARINGEY the council's first attempt to set a Poll Tax was halted for two hours by the chanting of protesters, then when left councillors refused to vote for the tax the meeting was abandoned. As the peaceful lobby was dispersing the police sent in snatch squads and arrested 13 local people. On Friday 9th March a Poll Tax of £572 was finally set after the protest resignation of four left councillors. The remaining councillors who voted against now face expulsion from the Labour Group.

In HACKNEY a massive demonstration of over 3,000 people came up against "Fortress Hackney" — the Town Hall had been boarded-up and a private security firm had been called in. As frustration built up the police moved in, driving protesters into the main road. Behind closed doors the council set a Poll Tax of £499.

CAMDEN council set a Poll Tax of £534 to the background of a lively, 500-strong lobby which had been excluded from the council chamber. Euston Road was occupied for ten minutes in a short, sharp shock tactic and there were no arrests. On the supposed threat of violence councillor Angie Birtill, who voted against levying the

tax, told the crowd that she felt safer outside on the lobby than she did in the council chamber — a reference to the Labour Group's continuing witch-hunt against the left.

In ISLINGTON the lobby was so large it spilled out onto the main road. There were minor scuffles with the police as the council set a Poll Tax of £499, but reports of a "riot" were greatly exaggerated by the media. Cashiers in Neighbourhood Offices have voted overwhelmingly not to collect the Poll Tax until their claim for 70 extra staff has been met in full — the council has offered 15 temporary staff!

In BRISTOL, thousands rallied to show their opposition to the Labour Council's implementation of the tax. Police riot squads and horses were used to intimidate the crowd, forcing the demonstration away from the town hall.



The noise of the council's tannoy, relaying the council meeting, made it impossible for the lobby organisers to steward the demonstration. As protesters took over the city centre the council set a Poll Tax of £490. Two left councillors have resigned, and one may stand as an anti-Poll Tax candidate in the forthcoming local elections.

In the rest of the SOUTH WEST large lobbies were organised in Stroud, Bath and Western-Super-Mare where the council chamber was successfully occupied and the meeting halted.

In OXFORD no mass lobby was called but a public meeting was held which attracted hundreds of people. Unfortunately, the meeting was completely dominated by supporters of *Militant* who used the event to win support for their paper. On Saturday 24th March the Oxford Labour Party has called an anti-Poll Tax demonstration, but is excluding non-payment speakers from the platform.

READING and SWINDON also saw large demonstrations and in Swindon an effigy of Thatcher was burnt. The Swindon Labour council leader seemed more concerned with rubbishing the protesters than the Tory tax. There will be a Thames Valley anti-Poll Tax conference on Saturday 24th March.

In BIRMINGHAM 500 protesters lobbied the council as it set a Poll Tax of £406 based on a 19% growth budget. Forty

protesters attempted to get inside the civic centre but were repulsed by Tory councillors throwing punches at anything in their way. Birmingham City Council has banned anyone advocating non-payment from holding meetings in council premises.

The policy on lettings adopted by Birmingham City Council is not an isolated example and many anti-Poll Tax campaigns have reported increasing difficulty in booking premises for meetings. In Bristol, Badger Line buses attempted to un-book the 30 coaches that had been booked for the national demonstration, but under pressure from the TGWU branch and the anti-Poll Tax campaign have put the coaches back on.

In SCOTLAND, Lothian Regional Council has started freezing bank accounts and deducting money from non-payer's wages, although for every five accounts they try to freeze they are successful with only one. However Strathclyde Regional Council, the largest in Europe, has been paralysed and rather than take any action against non-payers has sent out a further warning letter. Activity in Scotland has focussed on building the Glasgow demonstration on March 31st and "harassing" sheriff officers to stop poindings.

Jane Connor
Tottenham APT

3D hits the streets again...

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Apologies about the delay in getting issue #2 out. Members of the steering committee have been as busy as everyone else building the movement. Hopefully new people will come forward at the next national meeting on 14th April to help make 3D a more regular and representative publication.

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