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Poll Tax

PRESTONFIELD AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY RESISTANCE AGAINST THE POLL TAX BULLETIN NO.6 JULY 1989

POLL TAX CRUMBLING: STAND FIRM- DON'T PAY

After three months of the Tory Poll Tax the whole system is in absolute chaos. Most important of all at least one million have refused to pay. The following official figures were released by Council finance departments at the end of May:-

Fife Region: 105,000 out of 260,000 hadn't paid. Central Region: 66,000 out of 220,000 hadn't paid. Tayside Region: 120,000 out of 200,000 hadn't paid. Lothian Region: 300,000 out of 680,000 hadn't paid. Strathclyde Region: so far behind that no figures yet available. At least 700,000 out of 1,750,000 in Strathclyde hadn't paid. With such a massive level of defiance the administrative machinery is on the brink of collapse.

—DON'T PANIC - DON'T PAY. MORE THAN A MILLION OTHERS ARE NOT PAYING EITHER—

There are now enough people not paying the Poll Tax to ensure victory. Now is the time to Stand Firm and Not Pay. Even the Scotsman newspaper had to admit "Up to one million Scots yet to pay" (13.6.89) - in other words well over a million.

Don't Panic

The authorities' only hope now is to try to PANIC people into paying. It is obvious they haven't a hope of catching up with more than a tiny fraction of non-payers to impose and collect surcharges of 10%.

Don't Pay

But the FEAR that it could be YOU they catch up with is calculated to panic you into paying up. Our advice is: *DON'T WASTE YOUR MONEY - DON'T PAY.* Now is no time to start panicking, when we've got them on the run!

—IF YOU RECEIVE A LETTER FROM THE COUNCIL— THIS DOES NOT MEAN YOU NOW HAVE TO PAY.

What happens next:

June 26 - "reminder letters" are sent out to people in 2 months' arrears. These can be safely ignored, on Councillors' advice.

July 24 - "reminder letters" are sent again to people in 3 months' arrears. These too can be safely ignored, but if by this stage you're getting too worried then the letter offers you the chance to meet someone from the Council who you can tell that you can't afford to pay.

August 22 - "final notices" begin to be sent out, with 14 days' notice. Again you are offered the chance of a meeting. *You should ask for this meeting because absolutely nothing more can happen to you until it has been held.*

Obviously with over a hundred thousand requests for meetings the Council won't be able to cope, and will be unable to collect the Poll Tax.

September 22 - the first prosecutions *may* begin - not before.

Council Leaders have already promised they will not surcharge anyone who "genuinely can't afford to pay" (They don't actually have to surcharge anyone at all).

USE THE ADVICE AND SUPPORT OF YOUR ANTI-POLL TAX GROUP

We are well aware that the threat of prosecution - however empty - is a very frightening thing. That is why we have made sure that no-one must face it alone. The minute you start to think that you had better try to pay - whether it is because you have just received a threatening letter from the Council, read a scare-mongering story in the papers, heard a false rumour about "what they can do to you", or you have simply become worried from waiting and not knowing - ask the group for help and advice - don't just pay!

Phone the Hotline

We promise to visit you at home if you ask, help you with a letter of appeal to the Council, give you a lawyer's advice, obtain the support of your councillor, and accompany you to any meeting you ask for with council officials, so that you don't feel intimidated. Just phone the hotline - numbers on page 2.

IF YOU'RE STILL UNSURE, JUST REMEMBER THESE FACTS:

● They can't "empty your house" if you don't pay.●

The only things they can try to sell are luxury goods eg. T.V. or record player. And you get plenty of warning to get your luxury goods out of the house before a poinding takes place - so you needn't even lose these.

● Your state pension is absolutely safe.●

By Law, the Council is not allowed to take any money from your state pension. The same goes for disability allowance, redundancy payments, student grants and housing benefit -

So they can't put you out on the street either.

● Those who can't afford the Poll Tax will not be surcharged.●

● Nothing can even begin to happen to non-payers until 22 September.●

(John Mulvey, leader of the Council, Evening News 27th and 28th June)

AT THE VERY MOST, EVENTUALLY, ALL YOU RISK IS A 10% SURCHARGE ON TOP OF YOUR BILL. YOU CAN NOT BE FINED OR JAILED FOR NOT PAYING

GOOD NEWS FOR NON-PAYERS

The news that more than a million Scots have refused to pay their Poll Tax is a tremendous boost to us all. Many believe this number is set to increase as the mood of confidence grows. Many who have struggled to pay their first instalments are now saying they will pay no more as they realise they can't afford to, that a million others are standing alongside, and that the Council, faced with such massive Civil Disobedience, simply can't collect the Tax.

The Council Can't Cope

Lothian Region has been receiving a thousand rebate claims a day. So far twenty thousand claims for rebate have come from people who weren't even on the register!. The register - supposed to be complete by LAST

OCTOBER - *still* isn't ready.

And *still* - out of thousands of people who have refused to register, *only a FEW HUNDRED of those threatened with fines have actually been fined.* (remember you can't be fined for not paying).

NO WARRANT SALES HERE!

Twice already in Aberdeen, sherriff officers have been met by crowds of 60-80 people when the anti-poll tax group was asked to help. Police were needed to help the sherriff officers make their get-away empty handed. (see Scotsman 15.6.89 and 3.5.89). There are already 70 people in the South of Edinburgh alone pledged to be on hand if sherriff officers attempt a pointing or sale anywhere in the Lothians.

A pointing in Rutherglen, Glasgow, was prevented by the Strathclyde Federation of Anti-Poll Tax groups on July 4th. 200 people turned out to prevent Sherriffs Officers entering the house of Janette McGinn. (see Daily Record 5.7.89) A hundred demonstrators then went on to occupy the offices of the Sherriffs Officers in Hope Street.

Council withdraw warrant sale threat. John Holloway had his goods pointed because he refused to register for the poll tax. But the Council backed down from doing a warrant sale when the Lothian Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Groups threw its weight behind John and went in numbers to the Council Chambers to protest. The Labour Council clearly doesn't dare be seen as the Party of warrant sales.

The message is clear - if you are threatened with a pointing - contact the anti-poll tax group immediately. We have proved we can stop warrant sales

—BACKDOWN OVER WAGE ARRESTMENT THREAT—

A rumour began at Savacentre, Cameron Toll that employees might lose their jobs if they had their wages arrested for not paying the poll tax. Under pressure from our anti-poll tax group, the management was forced to write to all employees to assure them wage arrestment would not lead to the sack. *Seek this assurance from your*

employer - and if you don't get it, contact the anti-poll tax group as well as the union.

More problems for Poll Tax collectors. The Region's Finance Director admitted in the Scotsman on 23.6.89 that under the law the Region couldn't "arrest the wages of its own employees in respect of arrears of the community charge"

—POLL TAX CHAOS IN ENGLAND AND WALES—

Millions of people in England and Wales have now joined with the Scots non-payers, to resist registration down South. In some areas of London up to 50% haven't returned their forms. Federations of anti-poll tax groups now exist across the country to support non-payment. 40,000 marched in Manchester on July 1st in the biggest demonstration yet seen. This followed a massive demonstration of over 10,000 in Glasgow on June 24th in support of non-payment. The Prestonfield banner bore the words "We're Not Paying" at both demonstrations.

GOOD NEWS IF YOU'RE ON BENEFIT

Income Support payments can be arrested only up to £1.75 a week, or £2.75 for couples. It will be at least 6 months before such deductions can be arranged and it will not be possible, therefore, to recover arrears built up by non-payment during this period. In other words it's cheaper not to pay, and it might cost you nothing at all.

Empty Threats

Eric Milligan's threats of "we'll get you all in the end" - can't be carried out because there are not enough council officials or sherriff's officers to do the work. And news of a "computer virus" messing up the register can't be making it any easier

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO STOP PAYING

You may already have paid one or two instalments of your poll tax out of fear of what might happen to you. Now that you have seen what little they can do to you, and that a million aren't paying, it is not too late to change your mind. If you have been paying by instalment book - simply stop sending in money. If you have been paying by direct debit, simply write to your bank and cancel the direct debit arrangement you made. The bank must do this within 7 days. And don't try to pay as much as you can manage - this is pointless. Don't struggle to pay the poll tax - join the struggle against it. Join the million non-payers!

USE THE ANTI-POLL TAX HOTLINE

If you feel threatened and are beginning to think you'd better start paying or else..... **DON'T! Instead,** phone any of the numbers below and wait till you have heard the advice of the anti-poll tax group.

Or else, come to the support meetings - open to everyone - EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING AT 8pm in Cameron House Community Centre, Cameron House Avenue, till 9.30.

You can also write to S. Rooney, 2 Clearburn Gardens.

ANTI-POLL TAX HOTLINE

Tel. 667-1434 668-3136
667-9005 (answerphone)
667-5557 664-1346 667-0596
662-4195 667-9310

Prestonfield and District Community Resistance Against the Poll Tax is affiliated to the Lothian Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Groups.