



PRESTONFIELD AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY RESISTANCE AGAINST THE POLL TAX

BULLETIN NO.11

JUNE 1990

One Year On - One Million Still Not Paying

There are now over a million non-payers in Scotland. There are only 220 Sheriff's Officers and they have to work in pairs. In Lothian, the Regional Council have just passed another 140,000 non-payers onto the Sheriff's Officers - bringing the total now to 240,000 in this region alone. If they reckon the 45 Sheriff's Officers in Lothian can make a quarter of a million people pay they must be mad!. Despite all their bravado it's plain to see that the system is grinding to a halt.

Many of us have now received "summary warrant" letters from Gray and Scott threatening 'enforcement by Poining or Arrestment'. Others are still only at the stage of a warning letter from the Council.

We urge you to ignore all threats from the Council or from Sheriff's Officers. They can't cope with the scale of the problem. Instead they rely on trying to panic people into paying up 'voluntarily'. Don't be scared by Sheriff's Officers, but contact your local anti-poll tax group immediately you receive any letter from Gray and Scott.

Remember that you don't have to cope with this alone - you are only one among hundreds of thousands facing the same empty threat together. Stand Firm - Don't Pay. Together we will Win!

Arrestment of Wages & Income Support

- * Pensions cannot be arrested
- * Student grants cannot be arrested
- * Child Benefit cannot be arrested
- * Unemployment Benefit cannot be arrested
- * Invalidity Benefit cannot be arrested
- ** ONLY Wages and Income Support can be arrested

How much are they entitled to take?

Contrary to rumour and scare stories, they cannot take very much off your money each week. The following table tells you the maximum you could lose per week.

Take home wage	Max. deduction
£35 - £40	£1
£55 - £60	£5
£75 - £80	£9
£95 - £100	£13
£140 - £150	£23
£190 - £200	£38

The only benefit that can be arrested is Income Support. They can only take a maximum of £1.85 per week for a single person and £2.90 per week for a married couple. *They are also not allowed to backdate these deductions - so they'll not get you for last year's tax this way.* The amounts they can take per week also come to less than what you'd pay per week in poll tax!

Wages cannot be arrested at the same time as they are trying to arrest your bank account - they can only do one or the other. These deductions are NOT fines - they would just be to recover unpaid tax plus the 10% surcharge.

In case you are worried that wage arrestment might get you in trouble with your employer, check it out - don't just rely on rumours. In all but a few cases employers, when

pressed, have promised no-one will face disciplinary action over the poll tax - it would cause them too much trouble. Get together with your workmates and demand this assurance from your employer - with the help of this anti-poll tax group if needed.

If you are an employee of the Lothian Regional Council you don't have to worry about wage arrestment - they are not allowed to deduct from their own employees

Freezing & Arrestment of Bank/Building Society Accounts

The banks know they cannot collect the poll tax. At present they can only handle 20% of "actions" for small debts as it is. John Sutherland, a spokesman for the Committee of Scottish Clearing Banks said "it will create chaos and ultimately crisis". The banks won't want to tie up their staff.

Trying to trace people's names, at every branch in the country, without account numbers is a very complicated process.(all the Sheriff's Officer has to go on is your name and address - they are allowed no access to any information held by government bodies - they can't even see your rebate form if you filled one in.). To make it even more difficult for them, however, you should

move your money from any of the largest four or five banks and building societies, and use a version of your name which varies from the name by which you are known on the Poll Tax register. Better still use a false name - it's not illegal to do so to open an account. These small precautions, already taken by thousands of people, will be enough to foil the Sheriff.

■ Poindings and Warrant Sales - Nothing to Fear ■

Once it was the case that the mere mention of the name "Sheriff's Officer" struck fear into the hearts of working class people, and they thought that we'd fall for it this time. But it has failed to frighten people into paying, and everywhere throughout Scotland Sheriff's Officers have met with determined resistance. As a result there has been not one warrant sale over non-registration or non-payment of the poll tax. The people now know that at worst we face wage/bank arrestment if the Sheriff's Officers can trace them.

We have nothing to fear from the threat of warrant sales because we have organised on every occasion to successfully thwart all attempts so far. The poindings and warrant sales have been prevented because people refused to face them alone and instead called on the support of the anti-poll tax movement. So do not panic when you receive your first letter from Gray and Scott - there will be at least two more to follow, usually a month apart. However do not simply do nothing, but contact us for the latest advice

■ Successful Action against Sheriff's Officers ■

In March and April this year Sheriff's Officers were chased away by pickets mounted to defend threatened homes in the High Street, Grassmarket and Stockbridge areas of Edinburgh.

Crowds of 200 - 400 have gathered on these occasions, and no goods were poinded. Similar attempts in all other parts of Scotland have also been defeated - the latest being on May 30 in Paisley.

In Edinburgh the Sheriff's Officers have backed off in the meantime. Every legal challenge against poindings has also succeeded,

proving that Sheriff's Officers act illegally and tell lies in their futile attempts to collect the Poll Tax.

Offices Occupied

And we have not just been sitting at home waiting for them to call! Instead we have taken the fight to them. Sheriff's Officers' premises have been occupied by protesters in Edinburgh, Dundee, Glasgow (where the protesters stayed overnight!), Aberdeen and Hamilton. It seems we've had more success getting past the front door than them

■ Ignore Rumours - Stick to the Facts ■

Many rumours are being spread in an attempt to reverse the tide of non-payment. The mere fact that the authorities have had to revert to crude scare tactics and lies in the Press shows just how desperate they have become. Here we put right some of the more commonly heard false rumours.

*** You do not get fined, nor jailed for not paying your poll tax**

*** You will not get your name on any "credit blacklist" for not paying your poll tax** - If they blacklisted a million non-payers, who would be left to lend money to? They can't afford to lose their custom over something which doesn't even concern them.

*** You won't lose your job over wage arrestment** - although some employers would obviously like you to think so - it's a good way to keep

you quiet at work for a while! Such threats must be resisted - employers will realise it's not worth risking confrontation with their workforce over this issue

*** You will not lose all your week's wages in aoner** - our table shows the facts. On no account can these weekly amounts be exceeded by law.

*** You will not lose your possessions in a warrant sale** - the law only allows for the sale of luxury items, and in any case all attempts so far have been defeated

Don't believe these scare stories, wherever you hear or read them. Check the facts in this leaflet, and spread the truth - we are winning

Don't Be Frightened by Sheriff's Officers -

WE ARE MANY - THEY ARE FEW

Huge Demonstrations

The people have also taken to the streets in huge numbers to show their confidence. **35,000** gathered in Glasgow on March 31st in another show of the strength of the anti-poll tax movement. On the same day (contrary to what you may have heard or read in the Press) **200,000** marched **peacefully** in London, until a sit down protest outside Downing Street was attacked by police in a vicious cavalry and baton charge resulting in retaliation by protesters and the riotous scenes we all saw in biased TV reports.

The numbers of people involved in these demonstrations, and the huge growth of anti-poll tax groups throughout England and Wales gives us a great boost here in Scotland.

Meetings

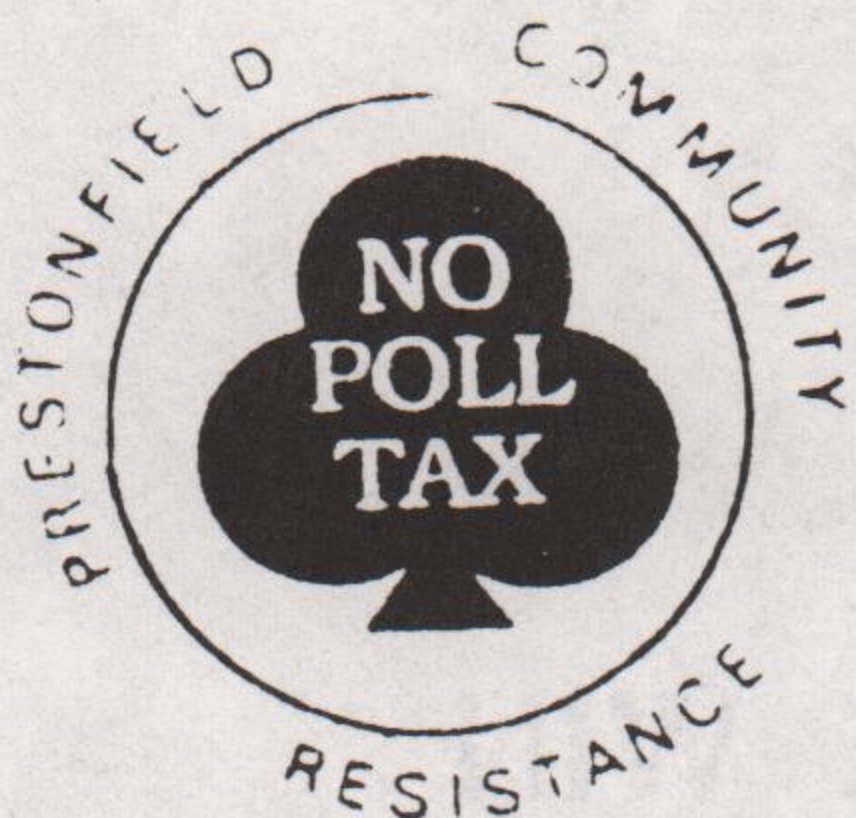
Your anti-poll tax group holds regular meetings which are open to all. We meet every Wednesday at 8pm in Cameron House Community Centre, Cameron House Avenue, Prestonfield. Everyone is welcome to come and ask for advice, give their opinion and offer their support. The meetings are friendly and informal. If you live outside the area you are welcome too - and we can put you in touch with your local group, or help you start your own.

Anti-Poll Tax Phonenumber

668 3136 667 9005 (ansaphone)
662 4195 664 1346 667 5557
229 7487 667 2180.

The group can also be contacted by phone on 667 3762 (8-9.30pm Wednesdays) . **All Edinburgh Hotline 557 1595 (9-4pm)**

If writing, write to S. Rooney, 2 Clearburn Gardens, Prestonfield.



Prestonfield and District Community Resistance to the Poll Tax

Warrant sales and how we can win the fight against the poll tax

Whether you remember warrant sales and their effects from days gone by or have heard your parents and grand parents talk about them, you will feel a sense of revulsion at the thought of such a thing happening to you. And it is this sense of dread, this threat, which the council finance department are prepared to use to frighten you into paying the Tory poll tax.

BUT IT IS A MUCH EMPTIER THREAT THAN THEY WOULD HAVE YOU BELIEVE. FOR THINGS HAVE CHANGED SINCE THOSE BAD OLD DAYS.

First of all, the infamy brought to a Labour Administration in having to enforce this archaic and barbaric form of debt collection would be so politically damaging that their credibility would take years to rebuild. This is why the Lothian Region's finance department are adamant that warrant sales will only be used "as a last resort".

Secondly, The Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987, has so limited the nature of goods which can be poinded and sold, that anything which is saleable can easily be "farmed out" to a friend or neighbour until after the sheriff officers have called.

HERE IS THE OFFICIAL LIST, QUOTED FROM SCHEDULE 5 OF THE ACT,
OF THOSE ARTICLES WHICH CANNOT BE TAKEN.

(these are defined in the act as "items which are reasonably required")

Clothing, implements; tools of trade; books required for the practice of a profession, trade or business the total value of which does not exceed £500; medical aids or equipment; educational or training books to the value of £500; childrens toys; articles for the care or upbringing of a child; beds, bedding, household linen; chairs or settees; tables; food; lights and light fittings; heating appliances; curtains; floor coverings; furniture; equipment or utensils used for cooking, storing or eating food; refridgerators; articles used for cleaning, mending or pressing clothes; articles used for cleaning the house; furniture used for storing clothing bedding or household linen; articles used for safety in the dwelling house; tools used for maintenance or repair of the house or of household articles.

All that is left to them for poinding are luxury goods eg. videos, t.v.'s, stereos and the like and as we said these can be easily moved whilst the heat is on.

As you will have realised, this hardly leaves enough to sell to make it worth their while. And this is the third reason why the threat of a warrant sale should be taken for what it really is - **merely a threat.**

TOGETHER WE WILL WIN

It is because this method of debt collection has proved so inefficient that it has hardly been used recently. According to a spokesman for the Regional Council, "Whilst there have been many poindings, only about half a dozen people in three years have been forced into a warrant sale" and he admitted that with 200,000 non - payers in Lothian alone there would be "difficulties". At an individual level, where there were no goods of any value in a house, he confirmed that there would have to be "a write - off report - its **an irrecoverable debt**".

Apart from being ineffective, the sheer process of administering 200,000 poindings and warrant sales would take years, (at present there are a maximum of 45 sheriff's officers who manage to work on only 300 warrants in a year) and as we have seen, these don't usually end in warrant sales. This goes to show how important it is to stick together and fight this rotten tax.

AND THIS THE FOURTH POINT ordinary people who stand shoulder to shoulder can resist and protect where local councillors and politicians have cut and run. Attempts to poind goods for non - registration have already been fought off by anti - poll tax groups.

WE HAVEN'T LOST A CASE YET

On two occasions, sheriff officers attempting a warrant sale in Aberdeen have needed police escorts to get away from upward of 70 protestors.....the officers left empty handed. In Rutherglen, the Strathclyde Federation of anti - poll tax groups rallied 200 people to the support of a woman when sheriff officers turned up to hold a poindingthe officers didn't get in.

And here in Edinburgh, John Holloway had his stereo poinded for non - registration for the poll tax. **But the council backed down from the actual warrant sale** when Lothian Federation of Anti - Poll Groups, supported John by turning out in numbers at the council chambers to protest.

Our local anti - poll tax group, supported by the many, many others throughout Lothian are determined that there will be

NO POINDINGS AND NO WARRANT SALES IN OUR AREA.

REMEMBER Sheriff Officers may come snooping round pretending they are from the gas board or whatever trying to find out where folk work and other information. Be careful, ask for identification. If in doubt say nothing. We have set up a phone tree that will allow us to respond quickly to any threats from Sheriff Officers. If you are at all worried **contact your local anti - poll tax hotline** on the telephone numbers below. 668 - 3136, 667 - 5557, 664 - 1346, 667 - 0596, 667 - 9005 (ansaphone), 662 - 4195, 667 - 9310.

If you would like your phone number added to the phone tree let us know. The phone tree will not be made public.

The situation is changing almost everyday. Up to date information can be found at our **meetings at Cameron House Community Centre, Cameron House Ave., Prestonfield every Wednesday 8pm. or write to; S. Rooney, 2, Clearburn Gardens, Prestonfield, Edinburgh 16.**