

# The Peoples March Against the Poll Tax 1990...

Glasgow to London with feeder Marches from South Wales and the North West

## Dear Brothers and Sisters

The anti-poll tax movement is on the march. With over 1 million non-payers in Scotland and 8-10 million non-payers predicted in England and Wales we are now taking the message to London. Over 100 poll tax protesters will be marching from Glasgow, the North West and Swansea to London, ending in a big festival to welcome them on Saturday October 13th. The aim of the Peoples March Against the Poll Tax is to show Mrs Thatcher and her government that millions

of people cannot afford to pay the poll tax and that millions now wish to see the poll tax laws repealed. This march will be made up of those least able to pay it - the low paid, the unemployed and young - who will be marching for the many old, sick and disabled and families who cannot afford this tax.

To get the march on the road we need your support. It will cost at least £200 to clothe and kit out a marcher and therefore we are appealing for your trade union, poll tax campaign or community organisation to help sponsor a marcher.

This march will make history so play your part by funding a marcher and joining the marchers as they come through your area. Thank you.

Yours fraternally,

Tommy Sheridan  
Chair of the All Britain  
Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

## Sponsor a Marcher...

I/We would like to sponsor a marcher. Please find enclosed a donation of:

£

Name/Organisation:

Address:

Please make all cheques payable to: 'The Peoples March Against the Poll Tax 1990'  
Send all monies to: P.O. Box 764, London, E5 9SX.

# May 1990...

# BULLETIN

## Dear Brothers and Sisters

The bills have gone out and we intend to keep you informed at every stage. You will find enclosed in this mailing information on the next stage of the campaign, the Trade Union Conference, fund-raising for the Federation, the peoples march Against the Poll Tax, our next Bulletin and other useful stuff.

All these items were discussed at our last national Committee on Sunday 20 May and we hope that your Anti-Poll tax Union/Group or trade Union will discuss all these things as well. Our next national Committee is on Sunday 17 June so please contact your National Committee member if you wish them to raise any points on your behalf.

We also have great pleasure in informing you that the Federations campaign is now hitting home in England and Wales. Tens of thousands have attended bill burnings, local demonstrations and public meetings since March 31 and despite Tory propaganda we are well on our way. Over 5 000 attended marches in Bristol and Leeds, 3 000 in Macclesfield, 2 000 in Preston, 1 500 in Blackpool and 500 in Maidstone. Over 1 000 attended a bill burning at Woolwich in South London and almost every high street in London has seen bill burnings.

However the essence of this report is that the figures for non-payment show that we will achieve our target of 8-10 million non-payers by the

summer. No doubt you will soon be aware of your local figures but just to give a flavour here are some you can use in local leaflets. Newport - 42% non-payment, Cardiff - 45%, Rochdale - 50%, Preston - 48%, Crewe - 75%, Wealdon in Sussex - 90%, Chester - 25% Warrington - 30%, South Tyneside - 30%, Greenwich in London - 70%, Lambeth in London - 60%, Banbury - 50%, Bristol - 85%! Although it is too early to gauge what the real levels of non-payment will be, these initial figures are extremely encouraging. In Coventry they have just sent out 60 000 reminder letters and all over the country local authorities now face an administrative nightmare. That shows our campaign is working and that we can put Mrs Thatcher and her party in even more of a spin.

To do this we now need to consolidate and build up our forces. Alongside mass non-payment we need to clog up the courts and turn to the workplaces and trade unions - all of which your local anti-poll tax union should be discussing now. We need to build even more anti-poll tax unions to ensure that no-one in our local communities, workplaces and colleges feels isolated. In addition to consolidating mass non-payment we must raise funds for both the local groups and the national federation.

The federation is now in the process of organising a Peoples March Against the Poll

## introductory letter

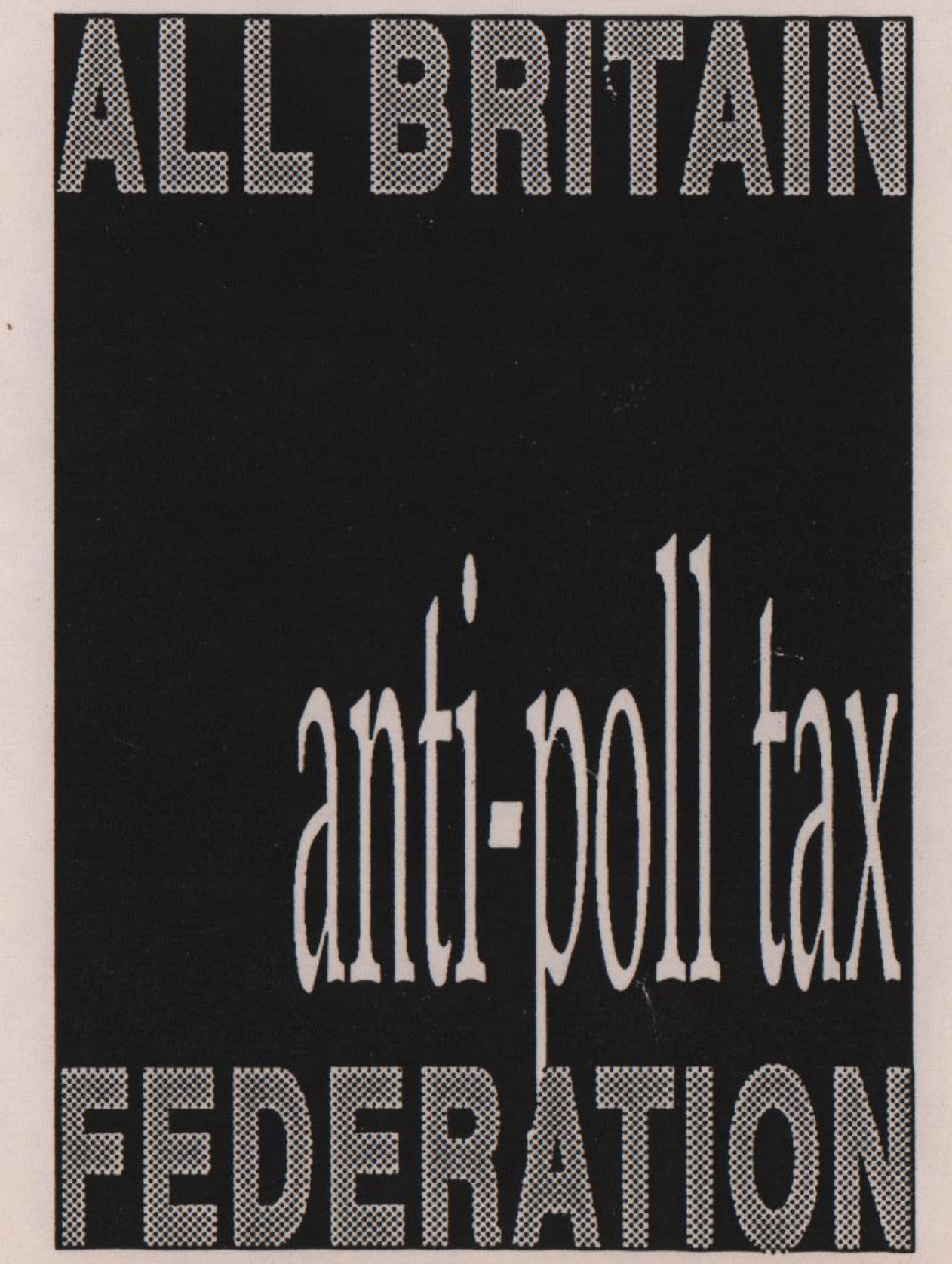
Tax from Glasgow to London and we will need at least £20 000 to get it on the road and well prepared for a long march.

We have also established a national office in Brixton. With rent, telephone bills and regular mailings we will require at least £1 000 a month to run it. With the march, our office and other initiatives we do need more affiliations, donations, sponsorship and standing orders. So please send us what you can and remember it's your federation and your National Committee member can always fill you in on the finer details of how the Federation runs.

Anyway, enough from us. Now lets get on with immediate task of building mass non-payment and defeating Thatchers Poll Tax.

Yours in solidarity

Steve Nally  
Secretary





# Non-Payment-What happens

The bills have gone out in the majority of areas. Anti-poll tax unions should now be preparing to frustrate the attempts by the local authorities to collect Poll Tax payments. Below is a few suggestions from the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation for anti-poll tax unions to take up to strengthen the campaign. This will be the first of many bulletins in taking

## APTU Response

Many areas have held bill burnings as a focal point to the campaign to encourage people to join non-payment. These have been very successful. In Bristol 5 000 turned up to one burning! It is also an idea to leaflet outside the Poll tax office; in Hackney it was reported that queues of up to 300 were

as a focal point to the campaign. The same should be done to the local council office if it hasn't been done already.

It is up to the local authority whether they take steps to try and recover money from people who do not pay the Poll Tax. However, the Government will apply pressure to the local authorities to ensure that

and there is a stream of reports about computer failures. In Scotland four months after the first Poll tax bills were due some 300 000 had still to receive payment books.

Most of all it is the one and a halfmillion Scots who have refused to pay the poll tax have provided the the biggest obstacle yet to the successful introduction of the tax. It is very unlikely that the majority of councils will issue reminders and penalties within a month of the of the first bills. However anti-poll tax unions must prepare now for this period for example court summonses have already been sent out in the Isle of Wight, with the courts being booked from June 1 to take people to court.

## Reminder Notices

If the council intends to pursue the matter, they are obliged by law (section 28 of Statutory Instrument No 438 1989) to send you a reminder letter. This can be sent at any time after payment is due, they may send you other reminder letters, but by law they must send you at least one

# now?

reminder.

If the letter does not specifically state that it is a final reminder and the full amount is due in 7 days time, then it could be open to a legal challenge.

Once you receive the reminder you have 7 days from the date the notice was served to pay. If you do not pay then you lose your right to pay by instalments. A further reminder should be sent stating that if the payment isn't paid within 7 days then the council will refer to the court to obtain a liability order.

## APTU Response

In Scotland reminder letters were used as a frightener. Approach a sympathetic councillor and try and get a copy of the reminder letters before they are sent out. The anti-poll tax unions should prepare a leaflet responding to the letters. In Coventry 60 000 reminder letters have been sent out, Coventry Federation have responded by producing 1000's of leaflets to cut across fears that may be raised by the reminders. Again public meetings should be held to encourage people to stand firm on non-payment.

## Liability Order

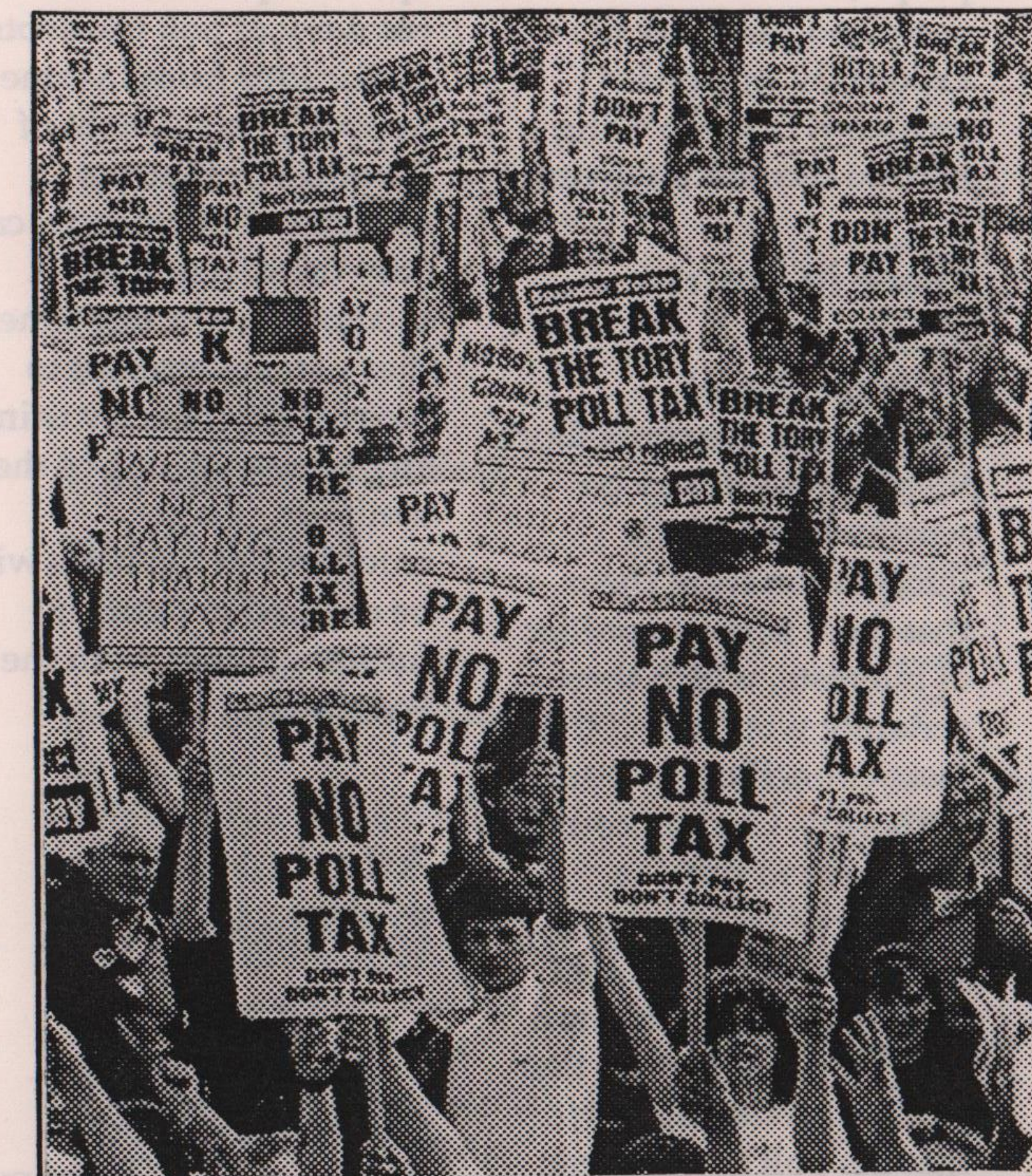
At any time after you have missed instalments and a full years Poll tax has become due the council can issue you with a summons to appear before a magistrates court. The council will seek to obtain a Liability Order from the court which will give them legal powers to obtain information from you which will lead to recovery of payment. The information they will demand from you is information about your income, place of work, where you get any other income from and possibly where you keep most of your possessions. Failure to respond to such demands for information is a criminal offence punishable by a fine of £100 (£400 for giving false information).

There will be many who will defy this and we must defend them in this stand.

## APTU Response

You do not have to appear in court, however the more people who attend the more the system will be clogged up. When the summonses are sent out, APTUs should have material ready, calling on people to appear in court. The Poll Tax Legal Group have stated that if 1 in 37 people appear, the courts will be unable to cope.

The Chief Executive of Hackney Council, Jerry White, said that Hackney Council will need at least 366 court days a year to deal with non-payers - the court could only offer him 12 days! With heightened



Mass non-payment will clog up the courts

activity by the anti-poll tax unions around this period the Poll tax could collapse at this stage.

Whether or not you go to court you will be charged court costs. These are usually a fixed amount (these are usually an amount around £50). This amount will be added to your Poll tax bill.

Under the rates, the council was able to proceed on the basis of hundreds of orders going through on the nod. If in your town you can get 5,000 people to contest their actions for only 20 minutes that's nearly 1667 hours, or 278 days of a courts time! Excluding weekends there are only 261 days in a year! The system would collapse if that was the case.

One problem is to find out when cases are coming up. It is possible that some councils, like with rates, would take action and the person having the action taken against them,

doesn't find out, or more likely not realise. It is important that the APTUs approach councils now to find out what the procedure should be.

Anti-poll tax unions must increase pressure on councillors not to apply to courts for liability orders. Individuals cllrs should be lobbied. Sympathetic councillors should be approached and asked to move resolutions at full council meetings calling on the council to refuse to refer to the courts to recover poll tax payments. Anti-poll tax unions should try and get copies of the court summonses prior to them being sent out so mass leafletting can be conducted preparing people and answering worries that will be raised. By now telephone trees should be well established and well publicised in the local areas. The court summonses will frighten people - make sure the campaign reaches those



There are 1.5 million non-payers in Scotland!

up the different stages of the campaign. This should be viewed as a preliminary document which will be supplemented at a later stage with details on attachment of earnings, bailiffs etc.

## The Bill

Your bill is divided into 10 monthly instalments to pay the full years Poll Tax minus any rebate entitlement if a rebate has been claimed.

forming, many of these people were old age pensioners who had queries about the Poll Tax and had no contact with the anti-poll tax campaign.

Anti-poll tax unions should ensure that they increase their public profile through Public meetings, demonstrations etc so that when people receive their bills they are aware of the local campaign. Anti-poll tax groups should find out where the bailiffs offices are that have been contracted by the council to carry out 'distress orders'. Lobbies should be organised of these offices

they are pursuing non-payers and penalise those that don't. It is therefore important that the anti-poll tax unions keep up the pressure on the local authorities not to prosecute non-payers using methods such as lobbies of councillors surgeries and council meetings etc.

At the moment the councils are faced with administrative chaos unable to cope with the changes such as transitional relief etc. Southampton have not yet processed 40 000 rebates,

"Hackney Council will need at least 366 court days a year to deal with all the non-payers - they were only offered 12!"



people and allays their fears. If people are called to court in your union make sure a lobby is organised and the public gallery is packed with people, ensure there is press and publicity to expose the draconian measures that are being used to recover payment.

### Once in court

A number of magistrates are councillors themselves. It may be worthwhile seeking information from them that there is not a conflict of interests, which there certainly would be if they were councillors in your authority. Once in court, they have to prove a number of things about you. You can insist that the council has to show a number of things (eg. that you are on the register; that the poll tax has been properly set; that you were sent a bill and all the reminders) and you being there makes sure that they have to prove those things. They should not go through on the nod. You could also challenge the actual amount they are asking for, for example if you have an outstanding rebate claim that is unresolved. Such things may result in an adjournment, which in itself is a useful event. Tactics about court appearances must be discussed at every APTU meeting.

If the council succeeds in obtaining a liability order it and not the court can choose which method it wishes to use to recover a Poll Tax debt. In Scotland there has been no successful recovery of poll tax through the methods that are open to them. About 1.5 million people - 38% of the population - are still not paying or have stopped

paying the poll tax. This is after more than a year since the bills have been sent out.

The councils have three options open to them for recovery of poll tax debts - deductions from Income Support, Attachment of Earnings or Distress (bailiffs). The councils can only use one of these methods at any one time, they can not attempt to recover payment by using any more than one of these methods. These enforcement methods will be covered in detail in future mailings from the Federation.

### Attachment of Earnings

It is becoming clear that the most popular method of recovery of poll tax debts used by the councils in England and Wales will be attachment of earnings. It has already been reported that employers are sending out letters to their employees warning them that they will be obliged by law to deduct the poll tax from their wages. However pressure applied by the workforce and local community can be enough to prevent employers from proceeding. Attachment of earnings is a time consuming process and there are strict guidelines they must follow e.g. the maximum that can be taken from £100 take home pay is £9 a week.

### APTU Response

A survey should be conducted of the membership in your anti-poll tax union to assess where your members work. If a group work in

the same place get them to approach their union official to organise a workplace anti-poll tax meeting. Resolutions calling for their union to oppose by all means necessary, including industrial action any attempt by the employers to deduct the poll tax from members wages.

Anti-poll tax unions should also target the target local employer and attempt to organise gate meetings or meetings jointly with the local trade unions etc.

### Income Support

They cannot stop income support. The maximum they can take is £1.85 per week per single person and £2.75 for a couple.

### APTU Response

The recent strike by Glasgow Cranston Hill DSS workers was organised in response to managements attempts to deduct the poll tax from benefits. The strike was inspired by the occupation organised by the Strathclyde Anti-Poll Tax Federation of the Provan DSS office when management tried to take money out of benefits. The federation won an assurance that claimants would have the right of appeal against this action. Anti-poll tax unions should be making contact with the workers in their local DSS branch, organising joint workplace and public meetings.

### Distress

The sending in of bailiffs is used as a frightener. In Scotland no attempt to send in the bailiffs has succeeded to date. The non payment campaign has driven the bailiffs off the estates and pressurised councils into not using them to enter peoples homes. This issue will be covered in future mailings.

### Jail

This penalty mainly exists as a frightener, there is no possibility of jailing even a fraction of the 8 million non-payers. The council can only apply for committal to prison in 'exceptional situations' and only after they have attempted to recover arrears through the bailiffs. Payment releases you immediately. At the end of the day all they can get from you is the poll tax plus court costs.

### REMEMBER -

Non-payment is a civil NOT a criminal offence. You will not get a criminal record.

They cannot freeze bank accounts  
You cannot get evicted

They cannot take it from your pension  
You do not get fined for non-payment

# News...News...News...News...Ne

### The Federation Bulletin

You too can write for the feds bulletin!

We are now in the process of compiling a new national bulletin for all groups to read and sell. However, to finish the bulletin we need your stories and reports from the local areas. Don't be shy - anyone can write for the federations bulletin. So, put pen to paper and send your poll tax prose to us by Monday 11th June at the very very latest.

All contributions are eagerly awaited and should be sent to:

The Leeds Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Groups, c/o Leeds Trade Council, Saville Mount, Leeds 7.

If words fail you then you can ring your story through to Ian on:

Finally, we have enclosed a copy of our last bulletin, which although it is a little out of date, gives you an idea of what we intend to produce on a regular basis. You would have seen it earlier but the events of March 31st prevented a proper distribution on that day. Hope to hear from you soon.

Your in anticipation,  
Ian Greaves  
Assistant Secretary and Bulletin Editor.

### Councillors for non-payment

Despite the position of the Labour leadership many councillors throughout the country are active in, and support the aims of the federation. Many have consistently argued that local councils should not implement the poll tax or prosecute those who cannot or will not pay. These councillors can and will play an important part in helping us fight the tax. The All London Anti-Poll Tax Federation plans to hold a meeting to pull together councillors from London and the South East with the aim of organising a campaign around councillors fighting the poll tax. However, they now feel that this meeting should be open to as many councillors as possible from different parts of the country. If you know of any councillors who are fighting the poll tax who would like to attend or get involved, then please contact us by writing to:

Councillors for Non-Payment,

are:

Councillors for Non-Payment Inaugural Meeting  
Saturday 9th June -

### Join the South West on the March

The South West of England has been shaken by massive demonstrations against the poll tax.

Their next big demo aims to pull together all their forces within the region. The All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation is giving full support to this demo and urges all poll tax campaigners to advertise the march and send people to it. The details are:

The South West Demo  
Saturday 30th June  
Assemble 12 noon  
Berry Meadow Park,  
Exeter.

South West March...

Councillors for non-payment...

Write for the Fed...



# Trafalgar Square defence campaign...

## Dear Brothers/Sisters

Over 400 people were arrested on and after the demonstration on March 31. Dozens of Poll Tax campaigners have since been harassed and victimised by the police' "Operation Carnaby". It is now quite clear that the

help all those arrested. The meeting was well attended by defendants, lawyers and Federation representatives and it was agreed that the All Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation would co-operate with the Trafalgar Square

you to take this issue into the anti-poll tax unions, the trade unions, Labour Party and other community organisations.

We must ensure that defendants are not left isolated and that this campaign becomes fully



The March 31st demo - we must defend those arrested

Government intends to use the media, courts and police to intimidate our movement.

Our Federation now faces attack and we have a duty and responsibility to help those arrested and harassed on or after the events of March 31st.

In the light of all the arrests and attacks the Federation helped many of those arrested and held a meeting in London on May 12th to discuss how best we could continue to

Defendants Campaign to ensure that proper legal representation was given to all defendants.

That decision was ratified by the National Committee on Sunday 20th May and we hope that you will make full use of the information enclosed about the Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign.

The defence of those arrested is an issue for the whole of the anti-poll tax movement and we urge

linked to the poll tax and labour movement.

Finally the Federation enquiry into the events of March 31 is well under way and we will circulate all anti-poll tax unions with its findings as soon as possible. Remember - an attack on one is an attack on all.

Yours in solidarity

Steve Nally  
Secretary

# Vote for non-payment...

Ring <sup>80</sup> TODAY!

The All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation urges your local groups, its members and the general public to cast their votes against the poll tax by ringing:

0800 771750

771750

## Know your national and regional numbers...

The results of this poll against the poll tax will be forwarded to the government and media, and proceeds from it will go to the federation. So phone today!

\* Call charges are made at:  
28p per minute  
cheap rate  
38p per minute all other times

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