

All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation

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Bulletin No. 1

'We are winning! We are now witnessing the largest campaign of civil disobedience in Britain's history.' With these words Tommy Sheridan welcomed the 2,000 delegates and visitors attending the founding conference of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

Delegates from over 550 anti-poll tax unions, and from 575 trade unions, labour parties, tenants associations, student unions and other community organisations attended the conference unanimous in their commitment to building mass non payment. The All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation has arrived! Scotland Leads The Way!

In Scotland there are currently 650,000 people who have refused to pay a single penny. There are another 500,000 people who are more than 5 months in arrears and there are another 305,000 people in Strathclyde alone who have not yet received their re-adjusted bills, seven and a half months after the poll tax started! In January 1990 the new Poll Tax Rate will be announced. No wonder Donald Dewar, Labour's spokesperson on Scotland has demanded that the Government should call it a day over the Poll Tax.

Attempted intimidation with the recent issuing of 100,000 warrants to non-payers in Scotland has had no effect on the campaign at all and shows that a serious



Founding Conference of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation

WE'RE ON OUR WAY

campaign of non-payment is being built on the ground not just in Scotland but in England and Wales.

The establishment of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation is a vital new development in the struggle against the Poll Tax. It provides the necessary national co-ordination and leadership of the separate regional and area Federations. It marks the opening of the second front in England and Wales. The numbers attending and general interest it attracted

shows the authority that this body already has in leading the struggle against the Poll Tax.

The Conference has now agreed a democratic constitution and statement of aims (see inside). The necessary and sometimes detailed discussion over these documents shows the serious approach that is being taken to build an open democratic movement of non-payment.

Build In The Trade Unions

The question of the trade union movement

was also discussed. Roger Bannister, the only non-payment candidate who is standing for the position of General Secretary of the local government union, NALGO stated 'Nalگو has a special role to play in this struggle because our members deal with the poll tax.' He explained that in Merseyside the Anti-Poll Tax Federation is discussing a one day work stoppage across Merseyside in the spring.

Such a mighty movement on the schemes and estates will effect

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the workers in the DSS and in the industry generally. It will build up their confidence for future industrial actions to defeat arrestment of benefit and wages and force the Tories to back down. To this end, anti-poll tax unions should build links with the trade unions, especially the CPSA and NALGO.

Build The Anti-Poll Tax Unions!

The Conference was a milestone, but it represents only the beginning. We can now go back to the building of the anti-poll tax unions with the confidence that we are not alone. The most important work will be done on the estates through the canvasses, the meetings, and patiently building the confidence of people that we can win if we are united. Delegate Pamela Mitchell from Finty anti-poll tax union in Dundee showed the confidence that already exists in Scotland. A 17 year old school student, she is now secretary of her anti-poll tax union which has visited over 5,000 households to spread the ideas of mass non-payment! The message from this conference was clear - We are on our way!

Steve Nally,

National Secretary,

All Britain

Anti-Poll Tax Federation

**Founding Conference of 2000 on November 25
1989 in Manchester representing 550 Anti-Poll
Tax Unions, 547 Trade Unions, Labour Parties,
Youth and Community organisations.**

Bulletin No1 – The First of Many!

This bulletin will be the first of many that the All Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation will produce on a regular basis for all its affiliate bodies. Through the bulletin we will aim to keep you up to date with the latest developments taking place over the Poll Tax from campaigning news to legal advice. Communication is extremely important during this struggle and every attempt should be made to relay the information given in this bulletin to the members of your union. In order to give a national picture of what is happening we will have to rely on reports from the different areas. If you have some information which you think should be included in the bulletin please send it in to the address printed.

Statement of aims

This statement of aims was presented by the Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation, discussed and subsequently agreed by the first meeting of the All Britain Steering Committee on 1st September 1989. The general principles outlined in this statement will be used as the basis for the discussion at the conference.

The Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation have campaigned for mass non-payment of the Poll Tax throughout Scotland for the past 18 months. The Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation now encompasses 7 regional Federations – representing over 150 anti-poll tax unions, trade union branches, tenants associations, community and youth groups. The Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation are now the present leaders of at least 1 million non payers in Scotland.

The Scottish Federation welcomes today's meeting as an essential step in developing mass non-payment throughout Great Britain. We applaud the M.P.'s who have agreed to support and convene this meeting to bring together the Anti-Poll Tax Federations throughout Britain. This Steering Committee agreed to the following:

1) To form an All British Anti-Poll Tax

Steering Committee of regional, metropolitan and city-wide Federations whose functions will be to:

a) Organise a democratic All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Conference in Manchester Free Trade Hall on November 25.

b) To promote mass non-payment of the Poll Tax in Britain linked to the demands that councils refuse to implement the tax and the trade union movement organises

A non-collection campaign. Non-collection by the trade union movement would include refusal to deduct Poll Tax arrears from benefits or wages. We call on local authorities to refuse to prosecute those who refuse to register or pay. We demand the return of £31 billion which has been stolen from local authorities through the Rate Support Grant cuts since 1979.

c) To encourage and assist in the formation of Anti-Poll Tax unions, groups and campaigns in every housing estate in Britain.

d) To build maximum unity of purpose around the above principles with already existing campaigns stressing the central objective of non-payment.

For a Mass Demonstration on April 1st 1990.

The conference was unanimous in its support for a resolution which welcomed the call made by the Scottish Trade Union Congress General Secretary Campbell Christie that the British TUC should organise a national Anti-Poll tax demonstration on April 1 1990, the day the Poll Tax becomes law in England and Wales. The conference also agreed to take on board the task of organising a national demonstration if the British TUC failed to do so.

Initiatives to be taken over this resolution will be discussed at the first National Committee.

Regional Round-Up

The million non-payers are now inspiring thousands to join the campaign for mass non-payment throughout England and Wales. Hundreds of marches, lobbies, meetings and demonstrations have been held or are being planned and the pressure is really building up from below as we run up to April 1st. If we step up the campaigning work then there is no doubt that 8 million non-payers in England and Wales will be joining their brothers and sisters by the summer of 1990.

The following reports can give only a brief glimpse of the activities going on but there will be further reports in future bulletins.

Merseyside/Liverpool

On December 10 over 500 young people attended an Anti-Poll Tax concert put on by the Merseyside Federation and funded by Liverpool City Council. The Federation now have plans for a one day stoppage throughout Liverpool in the New Year and will be seeking the support of 28 councillors who are now

publicly committed to mass non-payment of the Poll Tax. Liverpool NALGO has also just affiliated to the Merseyside Federation.

Leeds

Over 250 people lobbied the city council in November and the Leeds Federation is now building for a torchlight procession through the city centre in February. The traditional May Day march will now be an Anti-Poll Tax march, courtesy of Leeds Trades Council.

Southern Region

The so-called soft South is now fighting back on a number of fronts. A successful demonstration in Portsmouth, a lobby of Brighton Council on December 14 and 2,000 signatures for non-payment in Crawley no means that the fight against the Poll Tax is smashing all the myths about the North-South divide.

ALL BRITAIN ANTI POLL TAX FEDERATION CONSTITUTION

Agreed at the founding conference of the Federation on 25 November 89 in Manchester.

1. Name

The name of the organisation shall be the All Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation.

2. Aims and Objectives.

- To establish an all Britain anti-Poll Tax federation which will co-ordinate the campaign against the Poll Tax on a national level.
- To promote mass non-payment and frustration of the Poll Tax in Britain linked to the demands of non-implementation, non-collection and non-prosecution by local authorities.
- To achieve these aims the Federation will establish with trade union and labour movement bodies to harness the strength of the organised labour movement.
- To encourage and assist in the formation of anti-poll tax unions, groups and campaigns in every housing estate, locality, trade unions, the broad left movement and sympathetic organisations in Britain.

3. Affiliations.

Affiliations shall be open to anti-poll tax unions, groups, trade unions and labour movement bodies, (including Labour Parties), tenants' associations, community groups, youth organisations, womens organisations, pensioners organisations, students' unions, and ethnic minority organisations.

4. National Conference.

- The National Conference shall be the sovereign policy making body of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation.
- The National Conference shall be held at least once a year.
- Every member group of the Federation is allowed to send 2 delegates to the annual conference.
- There will be a National Committee. The National Committee shall be elected at conference.
- The National Committee shall convene an aggregate meeting of one delegate per regional or city wide federation at least 3 times a year. The National Committee shall be accountable to these meetings between

conferences. A National Committee report will be given to each meeting.

f) Voting shall be conducted by delegates to the conference only. In all cases, a simple majority will determine conference policy.

g) A special conference can be called at the discretion of the National Committee who shall do so if called for by one third of the affiliated Federations. Arrangements and timetable for such conferences will be decided by the National Committee.

h) National conference meetings should be held at various locations around the U.K.

5. Officers and National Committee

a) The National Committee shall consist of a Chair, Secretary, a Treasurer, along with places for regional or area representatives.

b) The officers and regional or area representatives shall be elected at the National Conference. The officers shall be elected by the whole conference. The regional representatives shall be the delegates from those regions. Functional officers shall be elected by the National Committee.

c) The National Committee shall meet as a minimum 4 times a year. The Officers shall meet as necessary to deal with urgent business arising between meetings and shall report to the full National Committee on their decisions. A quorum of the National Committee shall consist of one third of the members eligible to attend. A National Committee report should be given to each of the aggregate meetings.

d) National Committee meetings should meet at various locations around the U.K.

6. Finance.

a) Affiliation fee will be a minimum of £20 per organisation paid annually.

b) There will be two auditors elected by the whole conference.

c) The Treasurer shall submit to Conference an annual statement of accounts, and shall give the National Committee a financial report at each meeting.

7. Amendments to the Constitution.

Amendments to the Constitution may only be made at National conference decided by a simple majority of those present.



Tommy Sheridan



Steve Nally



Maureen Reynolds

Know Your National Committee

The first National Committee will take place on Sunday January 14. This meeting will discuss the Tasks for the new year. A full report of this meeting will be given in the next bulletin. Below is the list of the National Committee elected on the 25 November

National Chair Tommy Sheridan
National Secretary Steve Nally
National Treasurer Maureen Reynolds

Regional Representatives

Scotland West Jack Harvey
Scotland East Russell Taylor
Northern Kevin Miles

Yorkshire Ian Greaves
North West Jeff Coulding
East Midlands Steve Hoare
West Midlands Rob Windsor
Eastern Dave Murray
Southern Bill North
South West Danny Burns
Wales Cath Harding

Regional Round-Up

Manchester

No rest for the wicked in this city. Having just hosted the National Conference the local campaign is set to lobby the council on December 20 and NUPE is taking strike action in support.

Coventry

The council here is all over the place. In the space of 3 weeks the Poll Tax estimates have changed twice - once in the space of an hour! The Poll Tax will now be £420 and local plans include lobbies in February, a demonstration in March and 'stepping it up like nobody's business in January.'

Bristol

December 2 saw a march and rally of over 500 through the city centre.

Wales

Campaigners here are now set for a tough battle with Cardiff City

council which has just fined 5,000 people for non-registration. A mass lobby has been organised for December 20 and further action will follow. Cardiff City NALGO has just affiliated to the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation and an all-Wales demonstration is being planned for February 24 in Cardiff.

London

Last but not least. Councils are firing and threatening all over town and lobbies and demonstrations are in the pipeline in many boroughs. In Hillingdon, Wally Kennedy and 9 Labour councillors face fines for non-registration and a mass lobby is being held on December 14. With over 130 Anti-Poll Tax unions and Borough campaigns a serious fight is being built in the capital. The campaign looks set to take off in the New Year with a conference to launch the All London Anti-Poll Tax Federation being held on February 10.

Scotland Won't Pay!

From Shetland to Borders, from Glasgow to Dundee hundreds of people have been attending meetings to state their intentions to not pay the Poll Tax. In the Lothians, Christmas presents were handed out by 'Santa' to the Lothians councillors at a council meeting. The Tories were handed not silver spoons but wooden spoons to 'symbolise their position in Scottish politics'. Councillor Mulligan, the finance chair was handed a giant Christmas card containing greetings from '200,000 who are not paying the Tories' hated Poll Tax.' He was also asked to settle a bet that he had made with the Lothians federation that there wouldn't be a mass non-payment campaign - the stakes? The annual budget of the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities! Even more humiliating for Councillor Mulligan is that he is now admitting for the first time that large sums of money 'may have to be written off', because of the problems with pursuing non-payers. Councillor Mulligan also promised us 1,000's of poindings - we have yet to see one successful poinding 7 months after the Poll Tax is law.

The 'visit' from Santa followed the announcement that 76,750 people in the Lothian region alone had their names passed to the sheriff's officer for refusing to pay a penny of their poll tax. Between them they owe £25.5 million. This figure represents 12.8% of the 600,000 people on the register. Even those figures only tell half the story. No action has yet been taken against the 160,000 people, the worst off claiming a rebate. The council has not taken

these into account. If they are included, non-payment is running at 17% of those eligible to pay. In addition there are another 100,000 people who stopped paying after one or two months and have been served with 14 day warning notices.

The warrants have had no effect whatsoever on the mass campaign of non-payment. The sheer weight of numbers of the non-payment campaign has pushed the whole poll tax system to the brink of collapse. This has been entirely due to the campaign led by the Scottish Federations.

Everyone is now at a loss to explain how the sheriff's officers will be able to recover the poll tax. Just to deal with the initial batch of summary warrants in Lothians it would take 20 years! If the poll tax is not recovered then the new Poll tax level would mean levying an extra £43 per person. The situation now has reached a point where no-one can dismiss the mass campaign of non-payment led by the Scottish federations. Shadow Scottish Secretary of State, Donald Dewar has called on the Government to call it a day over the poll tax.

We are more confident than ever that we will win. We have seen the power of the people sweep away governments within Eastern Europe and we're now seeing the power of people in Scotland pushing the poll tax to the brink of collapse. Forward to a Poll Tax Free Year!

Andy Clachers,

Vice-Chair,

Lothian Anti-Poll Tax Federation

..... STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS
..... National Union of Students Agree to affiliate to the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation

At its recent conference the National Union of Students overwhelmingly supported a resolution calling for NUS to join a mass campaign of non-payment and calling on Local authorities not to implement the Poll Tax. The conference also voted by 415,000 to 226,000 to affiliate to the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation. Tommy Sheridan was elected as guest speaker and addressed the 1,000 delegates and visitors who gave him a standing ovation.

This is an important step forward as NUS represents 1.5 million students, the largest union of youth in Western Europe with resources in every town in Britain. Why not contact your local Student Union now about some joint activity to carry out the policy agreed at the National Conference. The All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation welcomes the step taken by the NUS and looks forward to joint campaigns over the Poll Tax.

Affiliate to the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation! Build the Mass Campaign of Non-Payment!

Our organisation would like to apply to affiliate to the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation
(minimum of £20 per organisation)

Name of organisation:

Address:

Please Return to The All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, P.O. Box 764, London E59 SX.
All cheques made payable to All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation.