

THE POLL TAX REBELLION IN HARINGEY



This booklet was written collectively by
members of Haringey Solidarity Group.

Price £1.00

WINDOW POSTER — PLEASE DISPLAY

**PAY
NO
POLL
TAX
CAN'T PAY - WON'T PAY**

Haringey Anti-Poll Tax Union

Hornsey & Wood Green APT c/o Box 40, 187 High Road, N22

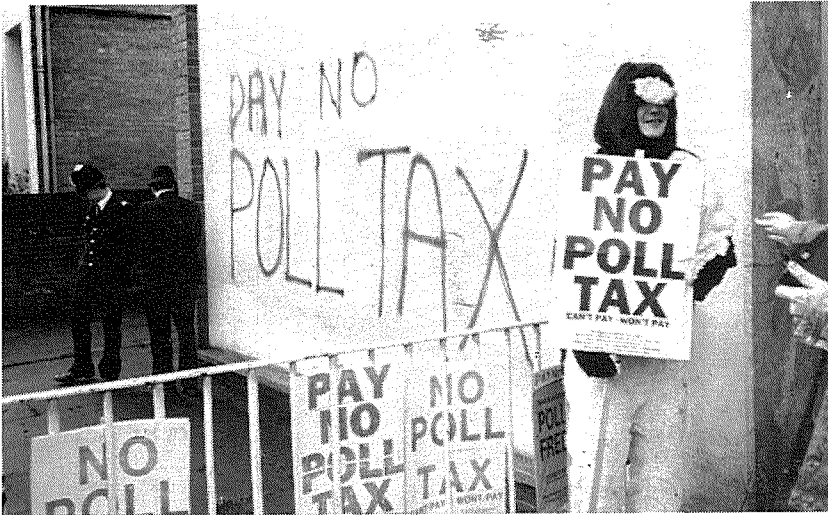
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Penguins against the Poll Tax. Haringey Magistrates Court Jan 1991

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POLL TAX
NO AMNESTY
SOONER OR LATER
YOU'LL HAVE
TO PAY.

EMERSON & STRONG

BEFORE: How the poster should have looked

Jokers stick it to the council!

A MAJOR publicity campaign to stem Poll Tax non-collection in the borough has been sabotaged - by a cheeky Bill sticker (writes JOHN RYAN).

Hundreds of Posters were put up around Haringey two weeks ago with the stark warning: No Amnesty; Sooner Or Later You'll Have To Pay.

The drive, part of a £5,000 appeal, was aimed at some of the estimated 70,000 people who have not paid a penny of the charge. But within days

many of the fly posters had been doctored and the terse threat was replaced with a calming: Amnesty; Sooner Or Later We'll Give Up. Others declared: 'It's uncollectable'.

The posters have an authentic look and retain the Haringey logo.

Undeterred, council chiefs have vowed to continue the non-collection publicity and say new posters will be up within a few weeks.

The borough's Poll Tax for 1992-93, which has been set at

£383, includes a charge of £57.30 for projected non-collection.

Debt recovery is £30 million in arrears with almost half of Haringey's 160,000 charge payers ignoring their bills.

Haringey's Anti Poll Tax Union denied involvement but said it supported any action that would disrupt the campaign.

"It is a futile attempt to scare people into paying an uncollectable and defunct tax," said spokesman Dave Morris.

POLL TAX
AMNESTY
SOONER OR LATER
WE'LL
GIVE UP!

4.4 Million already written off Nationwide

AFTER: What the doctored version looked like

THE POLL TAX REBELLION IN HARINGEY

Almost a decade later, what relevance does the anti-Poll Tax campaign have today? Certainly the Poll Tax will never come back and neither will Margaret Thatcher, so at least we have something to celebrate. We also have the experience of what a mass movement looks like. And we can see how direct action can change things and bring down unpopular governments, without the need for an election.

Also we want to celebrate the role that Haringey Anti-Poll Tax Union (HAPTU) played, both locally and as one of the largest ‘independent’ groups in the country with a significant role in London and nationally. Since the end of the anti-Poll tax movement HAPTU has transformed itself into Haringey Solidarity Group (HSG) which has attempted to carry on the libertarian politics of that mass movement.

Early days

Margaret Thatcher called the Poll Tax (the so-called ‘Community Charge’) her ‘flagship’ policy. The previous rates system was a property tax based on the size of the property, so that the rich paid more. Under the Poll Tax every adult over the age of 18 would pay the same tax, no matter what their income. As Nicholas Ridley, the Environment Secretary said: *“Why should a duke pay more than a dustman? It is only because we have been subjected to socialist ideas for the last 50 years that people think this is fair.”*

In 1988 few people in England were aware of the impending Poll Tax, which was being imposed a year earlier in Scotland. Some activists in Haringey were in touch with groups in Scotland such as Edinburgh Community Resistance that were organising a slowly building campaign against the Poll Tax, based on mass non-payment.

Haringey had an activist base that allowed the movement to avoid the stranglehold of any one party or faction. Several independent groups such as the Unwaged Centre in West Green Road, members of the anarcho-syndicalist group Direct Action Movement (now Solidarity Federation), an independent anti-nuclear group, and the remnants of the Seafarers Strike Support Group came together informally to discuss the impending Tax and the possibility of a non-payment campaign. There was also at that time still a core of Left activists in the Labour Party.

When the non-payment campaign started to take off in Scotland the Labour Party (and incidently the TUC) came out firmly against “breaking the law” by non-payment and launched a legal campaign based on a petition against the Poll Tax. Up against a Government which had spent several billion pounds to defeat a year long miners strike this was obviously as useful as a chocolate fireguard.

The first public meeting to take place in Haringey was actually organised by this legal campaign which had the backing of the Labour party, the (then existing) Communist Party, and the Haringey Trades Council. Speakers from Child Poverty Action Group and the National Council for Civil Liberties told us how bad the Tax was going to be, and then told us there was nothing we could do about it. Bernie Grant MP, perhaps slightly more aware of the heckling in the meeting, stood on the fence on the issue of non-payment.

As a result of the meeting the activists who supported a non-payment campaign started to get organised. The Direct Action Movement called a meeting at the Red Rose Club in Islington at which most people were from Haringey. A meeting took place on 15th November 1988 at the Unwaged Centre to set up Tottenham Against the Poll Tax (TAPT). Thirty people turned up and unanimously supported a non-payment campaign. The next step was to get out into the community and make mass non-payment a reality.

Getting Organised

Our aim was to have a Representative of the campaign in every street in the borough and an anti-Poll Tax group in every local area. It was realised that people would feel stronger about standing up to the intimidations of the Council and the bailiffs if they knew they had neighbours who were prepared to support them. We also needed a means to distribute information to every household and to get feedback about what was going on back to the campaign. Our aim was to build an independent movement organised from the bottom up.



Early Anti Poll Tax stall - Seven Sisters, Tottenham - Summer 1989

One of the main tools we had for creating the movement we needed was the Non-Payment Pledge. This was not a Petition, we were not going to send it to the Council or the Government and beg for a change of policy. Rather it was a public statement that each individual was personally not going to pay and that collectively we were many and they were few. At the height of the campaign we had over 500 Street Reps, 19 local area groups, and tens of thousands had signed the Pledge.

Street stalls were held regularly to promote awareness about the Poll Tax and to encourage people to refuse to register and to act in solidarity with other non-payers. The first street stalls in Seven Sisters featured the Pledge, the Street Reps form, a leaflet about the Poll Tax and someone dressed in a mask of Margaret Thatcher in the 'stocks', who people were invited to throw wet sponges at, for a 50p donation to the campaign. It proved very popular! Flyposting and spray painting of "Pay no poll tax" (some of which can still be seen) appeared everywhere to spread information & ideas.

Front-line victims of the poll tax war

Council poll tax inspectors are now bearing the brunt of the public's fury over the community charge. Dotted throughout each London borough, there are strong pockets of resistance and rows of houses where the windows are plastered with signs reading "A Pox on the Poll Tax" and "Say No to the Poll Tax". And every day, the men and women at the sharp end of the tax have to venture into "hostile" territory.

The most alarming incidents have been in Haringey—where residents must pay the country's highest charge of £572.89 — and include:

- *An official being chased out of a house and down the street in the White Hart Lane area by a naked man brandishing what appeared to be a knife. He had surprised the officer as he tried to explain a registration form to his wife. The protestor, though stark naked, remained out in the street for an hour and the official eventually had to be escorted back to his car by two police officers.*
- *A temporary inquiry officer, a young girl, being grabbed from behind as she knocked on a door and then thrown to the floor by one man and doused with a bucket of water by another. She was badly bruised and "extremely shaken"*
- *Buckets of urine being thrown from balconies on Broadwater Farm as a group of officers, employed specifically to canvass the notorious estate, tried to deliver registration forms.*

In Camden, canvassers have had abuse shouted at them and in the neighbouring borough of Islington, officers have been threatened with dogs and pelted with eggs.

The nature of an inquiry officer's job in the borough is so sensitive that no member of the eight-strong team was prepared to be named. But one, a 32-year-old single woman called Janet (not her real name) who has covered South & Central Tottenham since July, spoke of the problems.

She said "Quite often people say they are too busy to talk to you or take the registration form and say they will fill it in later".

"Sometimes they are very antagonistic and rude and say 'I'm not paying'. They may come out with a tirade of abuse but they are only really letting off steam. You do get used to a certain amount of bad language".

"Often someone will open the door in their pyjamas and then claim they don't live there, or leave with a load of dirty washing and return with it clean and claim it is not their home".

"A fair proportion of my time is spent helping elderly people who find forms in general confusing. There are also those people who are loath to change".

The inspectors go by different names in different boroughs — either community charge registration inspectors, inquiry officers or simply canvassers.

But they all have basically the same job — to keep up to date the council's register of those living in the borough and eligible to pay the poll tax. In Camden, where the charge has been set at £534, the registration process has now been largely carried out by the council's 18 canvassing officers.

Their work has included seeking out reluctant payers who completed their registration forms using false names.

One was filled out by Margaret Thatcher, Denis Thatcher, Mark Thatcher and God. Another was signed Groucho and Karl Marx.

In Islington, where the charge is £498.62, a senior officer, who did not want to be named, said he thought about 1,000 people were still refusing to register.

**Press cutting - Evening Standard
- 5th April 1990**

Shortly afterwards (12th January 1989) the first meeting of Hornsey & Wood Green Against the Poll Tax (H&WGAPT) was organised. A poster was written out by hand with a felt tip pen, photocopied and flyposted. We contacted local trade union branches and tenants associations. The railworkers at Wood Green Underground Station gave a £50 donation to the campaign. Fifty people turned up to the meeting in the Labour Party Rooms in Middle Lane. A motion was passed to support a non-payment campaign with only a solitary vote against.

Lighting the fuse

“The most alarming incidents have been in Haringey ... and include: An official being chased out of a house and down the street in the White Hart Lane area by a naked man brandishing what appeared to be a knife. He had surprised the officer as he tried to explain the registration form to his wife. The protestor, though stark naked, remained out in the street for an hour and the official eventually had to be escorted back to his car by two police officers...Buckets of urine [were] thrown from balconies on Broadwater Farm as a group of officers, employed specifically to canvas the notorious estate, tried to deliver registration forms.” Evening Standard 5th April 1990.

At this stage of the campaign the main issue was Registration, as people would be expected to register individually for the Poll Tax. TAPT argued that people should refuse to register. The Left argued that registration was inevitable and that it wasn't worth making an issue of avoiding registration. An important issue was largely missed. Nevertheless, by the time of our public meeting in November we could announce that 50,000 adults in Haringey (about a third) had refused to register.



Haringey Anti Poll Tax March - 3rd February 1990

It became apparent that Haringey was likely to set one of the highest Poll Taxes in the country (in the end at £572 it was the highest, but was later capped by the Government). This helped fuel peoples anger. We were also helped at every stage by the Council's incompetence and delays (some of which were caused by the capping). So much so that we often found it difficult to find registration forms and bills when we wanted to stage public burnings!

A series of public meetings were held in different parts of Haringey. By summer 1989 there were large active anti-Poll Tax groups in Tottenham (TAPT); Hornsey & Wood Green (H&WGAPT); Green Lanes (GLAPT) and South Hornsey (SHAPT). Haringey Anti-Poll Tax Union (HAPTU) met as a delegate federation every two weeks and the local groups met in the alternate week. There were smaller groups in most Council wards, amongst Council-workers and on some estates and individual streets. We organised benefits, socials and jumble sales to raise money. We also set up the "Can't Pay Won't Pay Resource Unit" which published two booklets about Poll Tax law and produced badges, mugs

and T-shirts that could be sold by groups around the country to raise money. A number of public burnings of registration forms and marches were held in the borough throughout 1989 and culminated in a massive public meeting at Hornsey Town Hall in November at which Tony Benn spoke. Over a thousand people were there and over 200 signed up to be Street Reps



Local People disrupt & stop Haringey Council setting a rate for the Poll Tax - 5th March 1990

Tottenham Against the Poll Tax also took

the initiative of calling co-ordinating meetings of the campaign across London, which led to the setting up of the London Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Groups. TAPT also called the first major national meeting of anti-Poll Tax groups which was held at the Polytechnic of Central London on 3rd September 1989 with over 70 groups in attendance and a national contacts list was set up. Within a few weeks, Militant (now the Socialist Party, but then a faction in the Labour Party) set up anti-Poll Tax unions all over the country dominated by their own members and launched their own All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation (ABAPTF). At the huge ABAPTF conference in

Manchester a delegate from Tottenham Against the Poll Tax was elected as one of only three independent delegates to the steering committee. The three along with other activists set up the “3D - Don’t implement, don’t collect, don’t pay” network and magazine which became an important means of communication among many of the over 2,000 groups in the country.

London’s burning

As the introduction of the Poll Tax in April 1990 approached it became clear that a critical mass of opposition was being reached. Cracks began to appear in the media blackout as places that hadn’t had civil disorder since the last Poll Tax rebellion of 1381 held huge marches, invaded Council chambers and burned effigies of Thatcher.

Haringey Council met to set the Poll Tax rate on Monday 5th March. A crowd of 1,000 gathered outside the Civic Centre to protest and over a hundred people got into the public gallery and disrupted the meeting for several hours. Eventually the police dragged people outside to where other protestors were blocking the road. As the numbers finally died away the police charged the crowd. In the resulting scuffles 11 people were arrested. The Poll Tax setting meeting had to be abandoned until the following Friday.

HAPTU met the next night to organise the legal defence of the Haringey 11 and a solidarity campaign. A meeting was held for the defendants, with the defendants in



Police forcibly remove local protestors from Council chamber - 5th March 1990

charge of their own pleas and the campaign. This experience was important for the later founding of the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign. We organised legal defence, publicity and pickets of all the Court hearings. Eventually two people got suspended sentences, three were bound over and all the other charges were dropped or lost by the police.

During that week demonstrations at Poll Tax setting meetings in Hackney and Lambeth were attacked by the police and ended in riots, with police cars being overturned. On Friday morning Haringey met again to set the highest tax in the country. Eleven Labour Councillors were expelled or resigned rather than set the Poll Tax.



Part of the Haringey Contingent on 1st National Anti Poll Tax demonstration - 31st March 1990

The All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation had called a national demonstration for Saturday 31st March in central London. 250,000 people, including everyone from pensioners to children, gathered in Kennington Park in a huge friendly carnival atmosphere. Over two hundred local people travelled down together to the demonstration from a rally on Ducketts Common with banners and placards. HAPTU's proud "Haringey - We won't pay" and "We're not paying the most" chants could be clearly heard as we crossed Westminster bridge. Outside Downing Street a small part of the crowd stopped to shout abuse at Thatcher. Riot police on horses came out from the Ministry of Defence and charged sit down demonstrators. They were laying into people and pushing the crowd up towards Trafalgar Square. Bitter experience of the policing of the miners strike, the Wapping printers strike and at Stonehenge Festival meant that people were no longer prepared to put up with police violence and they fought back determinedly.

The police started driving vans at full speed into the crowd. People who were gathered on scaffolding around a building on the corner of Trafalgar Square began to throw anything they could down on the cops below. A portacabin was set on fire and smoke billowed across the Square. Someone seized the opportunity to try and set the apartheid South African Embassy on fire.

Eventually the riot police managed to clear the Square, but all they succeeded in doing was spreading rioting to the West End. Symbols of the rich such as banks, posh cars and boutiques were bricked and burned. The rioting went on all night and even when a Tory minister visited the scene next morning he had bricks thrown at him. ,

"We lost it a bit" - Woman cop, ITN news.

"If you know 'em, SHOP 'EM" - Headline in the Sunday People over pictures of rioters.

"We are going to hold our own internal inquiry which will go public and if necessary name names" - Militant spokesperson Steve Nally for the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, ITN news.

"They are all working class heroes" Andy Murphy, Class War, ITN news.

"Thatcherisme est morte" - Headline in French newspaper Figaro.

The media in Britain, particularly the tabloids launched a witch-hunt against the demonstrators, and the Militant leadership of the All Britain Federation followed meekly along. There was a concerted effort by the media to split the growing

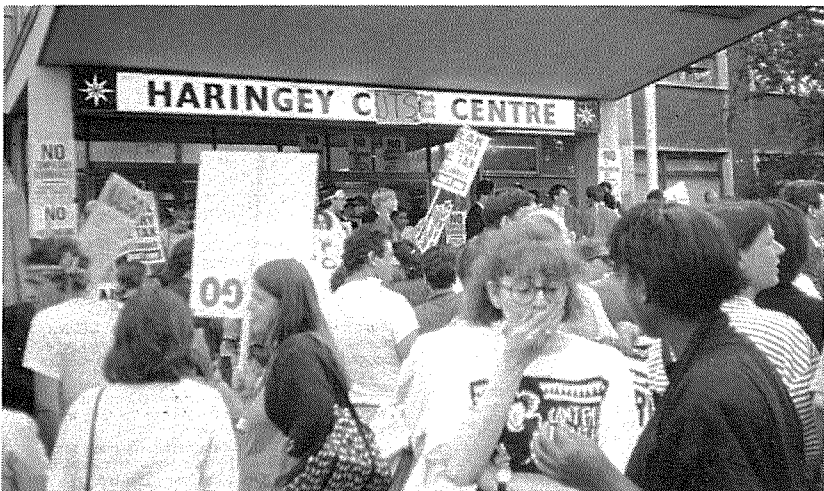


*Yet more of the Haringey Contingent on the 31st March
1990 National demonstration*

movement into “respectable” and “radical” factions to try to defeat it. In this context it was important to launch a defence campaign for all those arrested, led by the defendants themselves and based on unconditional support for all 491 arrested at the demonstration and in subsequent police raids on activists.

Activists from Haringey and other independent groups met to form the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign (TSDC). The TSDC started the serious job of contacting people who were appearing in Court, gathering evidence, including police videofilm that the cops didn’t want released. Eventually they scored some notable successes as police fabrications collapsed and the nature of police violence was exposed. They also supported poll tax prisoners whether convicted or on remand, organising prison pickets and encouraging people to write to prisoners.

The London Federation called a second national demonstration in October 1990. The TSDC organised pickets at the Courts and feeder marches and a march from the end of the demonstration to Brixton Prison where some of the poll tax prisoners were being held. The police wanted to show that they could suppress the Poll Tax movement. They attacked the demonstration and caused what a TSDC spokesperson called “**A police inspired riot**”. However the TSDC had handed out bust cards to most demonstrators and were able to contact most of those arrested by the next day. They were also able by the use of legal observers and their own videofilm to counter the police’s version of events. This legal monitoring of demonstrations was unprecedented and eventually led to the formation of the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group. The TSDC and its paper “Stand Firm” became an alternative voice to the mostly bureaucratic All Britain Federation and the attempt to split the movement failed.



Protest against Haringey Council cutting local services - Summer 1990

Poll Tax court in uproar

**Police
evict
protest
group**

ANTI-POLL tax demonstrators were evicted from the foyer of Highgate Court by the police for causing a nuisance last week when 1,000 non-payers were summoned to appear.

Protestors against the £508 tax waved banners, handed out leaflets to the many people entering the court, chanted slogans and played a variety of musical instruments.

Robert Taylor, a spokesman for the Haringey Anti-Poll Tax Union, said that the numbers who had turned up showed how strongly people felt about the tax.

Rob Stevens, assistant director of finance, who is in charge of the community charge at Haringey council, pointed out that they had a statutory duty to issue summonses.

"We have given as much help as possible with rebates and exemptions. The council has set up an office in the court house to see people with queries or who want to make arrangements to pay."

"The magistrates were empowered to issue liability orders which made it possible for the council to recover the money by various means, Mr Stevens said.

This included applying to employers to deduct the sum from wages and, where a person was unemployed, to attach a percentage of their income support from the DHSS. Eventually bailiffs could be instructed to attach goods.

Mr Stevens said the council was very concerned to minimise the effect of the tax.

If some people didn't pay it was unfair on those who did because in future years they would have to increase the tax or reduce further the services which had already been drastically cut.

Among those who had been summoned was Peter Budge of the Green Party - who lives in

by
MARGARET SMITH

Church Crescent, Muswell Hill. He said he had not paid because he considered it an unfair and unjust tax.

"I don't intend to pay. I have been doing all my correspondence with the council in Welsh as a measure of my non-cooperation."

If the bailiffs were eventually sent in there would not be a lot to take as he had sold most of his possessions.

Also summoned was Usha Vernon, of Avenue Mews, Muswell Hill. She is a secretary with an 18-months-old baby daughter Alya.

She will refuse to pay, she said. "I could make better use of the money, such as by employing a baby minder."

She said her's was a personal decision and she did not belong to any political party.

Jane MacIntosh, of Bruce Grove, Tottenham, was there with her baby, Sholto, aged five months. She had not yet been summoned but was refusing to pay.

"I would not pay such an iniquitous tax which is not based on ability to pay.

"If the bailiffs come I hope there would be a picket strong enough to keep them out. Jane does not receive benefits. Her partner is employed.

Martha Osamoor, a former Haringey Labour councillor, was among the protestors to "lend support and observe." She described the poll tax as "blatantly unfair."

Throughout the hearings, demonstrators outside the courtroom window continued to sing and chant: "No tax, no pay, no way."

Altogether 7,200 summonses have been sent out. Last Wednesday 850 liability orders, which enable the council to proceed, were granted.



Occupation of Tottenham Job Centre to oppose deductions of Poll Tax from benefits - 17th July 1991

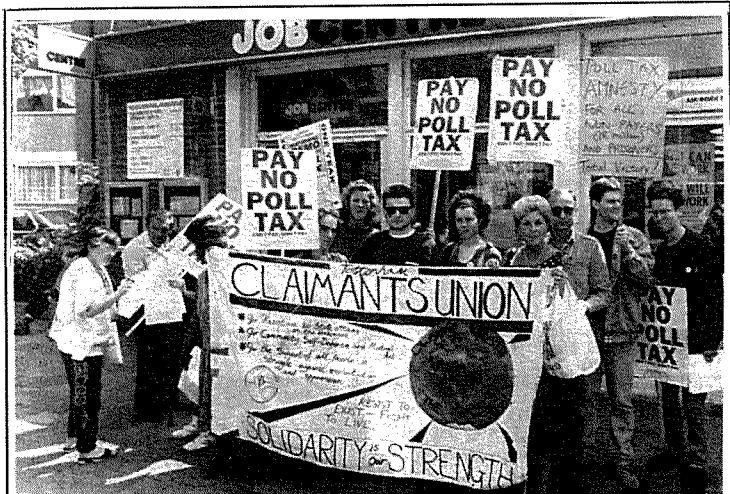
Ain't no stopping us now!

The riots had the effect of galvanising working class resistance to the Poll Tax. Here after years of defeats was a movement that was clearly winning. In Eastern Europe the Berlin Wall was torn down and the so-called 'Communist' regimes were collapsing after years of tyranny. Here in Britain there was the feeling that a similar people power movement could succeed. Now began a period of frenetic activity for the anti-Poll Tax movement in Haringey and elsewhere.

HAPTU held a series of public meetings in each local area to inform people what to expect when they were summoned to court and to encourage resistance. We delivered a leaflet against the Poll Tax with a window poster on the back to every household (90,000) and we even canvassed door to door in some areas. Women in the poll tax movement organised women only meetings both to prepare for appearing in Court and to discuss the campaign's direction.

By July 1990 there were 14 million non-payers nationwide and 97,000 in Haringey. In Scotland the number not paying was going up as the second year of collection started. Even the Tories were now obviously looking for a way out. Michael Heseltine stood against Thatcher in the annual 'leadership election' (usually a formality), and Thatcher didn't win the first ballot outright. After several days of high drama, on 22nd November she resigned.

Meanwhile the Labour Party were still doing the Tories' dirty work. In November Haringey Council sent out the first Court summonses. Someone in the poll tax movement sent an identical summons to all the Councillors, which apparently got them worried! The Council also voted to use bailiffs to collect unpaid Poll Tax bills.



★ MEMBERS of the Anti-Poll Tax Union and Claimants Union demonstrate outside Tottenham dole office and job centre PICTURE: Henry Jacobs

STORM OVER TAX DEDUCTION

ANTI-POLL tax demonstrators stormed Tottenham job centre and dole office to protest against a deduction of the tax from income support payments.

Fifteen members of the Tottenham Anti-Poll Tax Union and Claimants Union forced their way into the office. Some climbed on to the roof with banners while others leafleted the public.

"This latest council decision is purely to frighten people on income support. But non-payment levels are going up all the time", said Bob Taylor of the Anti-Poll Tax Union. He emphasised the group had not gone to cause trouble between staff and claimants. "We want to give support to the staff, because they have no alternative but to carry on policing non-payment".

About a third of all residents in Haringey either have not paid their poll tax or are in arrears. The new decision means that the council can

deduct up to £2 per week from income support to pay the bills.

But staff at Unemployment Benefit Offices are disgruntled by their involvement in the new arrangement.

Tom Taylor, branch secretary of the North London Civil and Public Services Association of the Department of Employment, said: "We think it is outrageous that claimants should have money deducted from their benefit in this way. We feel that as the Poll Tax has been abolished, local councils should reconsider their policy of harassing those people who are obviously unable to pay."

● Staff in Haringey benefit offices and job centres joined in a one-day strike last week over plans to make their offices open-plan. "There has been a rise in assaults on office staff," said Tom Taylor. "Staff are fearing for their safety."

In January 1991 the first people summonsed for non-payment in Haringey appeared at Highgate Magistrates Court. Over two hundred people turned up on the first day to 'clog the courts'. There was a carnival atmosphere and it wasn't quite clear who was on trial, us or the Magistrates.

Every day we ran a stall giving advice to non-payers who turned up at the Courts and we often had people from Tottenham Law Centre who would give legal advice. Volunteers would go into court as a 'Mackenzie's friend' (unofficial legal advisor), although this right was often denied by the Court who were generally hostile to the idea of the public participating in the 'justice system' in this way. We also issued our "How to beat the bailiffs" leaflet, the main advice being "Don't let them in, then they are powerless".

The bailiffs, Madagans Ltd, used by Haringey and several other authorities, turned out to operate from a tiny office in Leytonstone. Several times they arrived to find their locks superglued and the message "Bailiffs are scum" across their shutters. But the use of bailiffs turned out to be largely an empty threat. Bailiffs were scared to knock on people's doors because of the nationwide campaign. In Haringey they generally put a warning letter through the door and were never seen again. Our posters told people what to do if bailiffs were seen - "An angry crowd gets results" and gave advice line numbers across the borough. The Council then turned to the threat of jailings. It became clear that total non-cooperation and non-attendance at Court was the best strategy, even for committal hearings and our posters and leaflets encouraged this.

The TSDC called for a massive demonstration in London on the anniversary of the previous year's national demonstration and booked Trafalgar Square. With the police calling for the demonstration to be banned the All Britain Federation agreed to back it. 18.7 million non-payers nationwide were proving that the Poll Tax was unworkable. Tension mounted as speculation increased about the future of the Poll Tax. The TSDC called for the march to go ahead even if it was banned by the police. On 22nd March 1991 John Major announced the abolition of the Poll Tax, but it would have one more



Picket of Haringey Magistrates court - 9th January 1991



Taking the fight to the Magistrates Court - 9th January 1991

year to run. The main issue of the next day's 'Victory' march in central London now became an amnesty for all non-payers and the release of all Poll Tax prisoners.

With the abolition of the Poll Tax announced the level of activity in the anti-Poll Tax groups diminished. Following a big discussion meeting a new strategy was agreed to leaflet every house again with a leaflet that covered every stage of Poll Tax collection and to concentrate our person-power on opposing committal-to-prison hearings.

Although the Government claimed there would be no amnesty, in fact Councils had to write off millions of uncollected Poll Tax debts. Again the threat of jailings was largely empty. By February 1992 only 120 people nationwide had been jailed for non-payment, mostly for only a few days. It became clear that the police weren't prepared in most cases to issue the warrants and Councils had to rely on bailiffs. Our last poster as HAPTU was titled "How to beat the threat of Poll Tax jailing". We continued giving support and advice to individuals until well into 1994, often to people elsewhere in the country as other groups had folded by then.

A legacy

All victories of popular movements are quickly recouped by the State unless the State is overthrown. So it's no surprise to find that Council Tax is not much better than the Poll Tax. However two principles were kept: the tax was graded according to wealth (although less fairly than the previous rates) and there was no personal register. Labour, as lackey and administrator for the Tories, gained nothing from the campaign, and Major won the 1992 election.

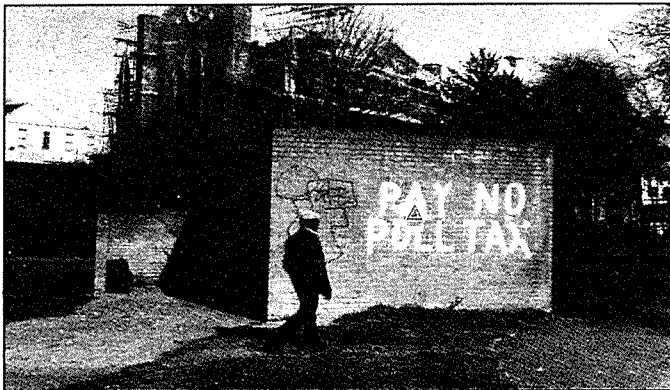
In most places the anti-Poll Tax movement disappeared. But in Haringey the decision was taken to turn local anti-Poll Tax groups into Solidarity Groups to preserve the links and knowledge gained during the campaign and use them in other struggles.

Haringey Solidarity Group, now one borough-wide group, is today one of the largest libertarian socialist/anarchist groups in the country. The spirit of the Poll Tax movement lives on in our desire not to have leaders and for people to organise themselves. We have continued to produce a borough wide newsletter and deliver it using a network of Street Reps. There have been times, particularly for example around the 1996 JJ fast-food distribution workers strike in Tottenham when the Haringey Solidarity Group (along with others) has had an positive influence on local struggles. But that is another story.

The feeling that we got from people we spoke to, was that this was one political movement that they still felt positive about. Even people no longer active remembered the solidarity, humour and inventiveness of the campaign. People had experienced a campaign where people stuck together to resist authority and won and started to discuss alternative ideas about how society could be run by people themselves for everyone's needs.

Notes: The best book written about the Poll Tax movement is "The Poll Tax Rebellion" by Danny Burns. The pamphlet "Poll Tax Riot" by ACAB Press is also worth reading and the video "We have the power" is worth seeing. These can all be borrowed from HSG. All the documents of Haringey Anti-Poll Tax Union (including over 400 pages of press cuttings, leaflets, posters and newsletters) are now housed in the borough archives at Bruce Castle Museum where they can be consulted by any member of the public. HSG also have a copy.

Haringey Solidarity Group, PO Box 2474, London N8.
Phone/Fax: 0181-374-5027. **E-mail:** "hsg@clara.net".
Website: "http://home.clara.net/hsg/hhome/html".



HARINGEY council is still struggling to collect the poll tax, even as it becomes history.

The tax proved unpopular with payers across Britain. But it also proved to be a nightmare for Haringey council, which has spent £4.6m over the past two years to collect it. There is still nearly £20m outstanding.

To enforce the tax, more than 100,000 court summonses and 14 jail sentences were issued in Haringey during this financial year alone.

One of Haringey council's problems has been the high number of people who change address in the borough. Each year, between 30 per cent and 40 per cent of the borough's population moves, so each week there are about 1,000 fresh accounts opened. So, although there are only 93,000 households in the borough, there are 181,000 current accounts.

More than 76,000 of those have been paid in full, 50,000 have been paid in part and a further 55,000 have paid nothing.

Press cutting - Haringey Advertiser - 25th March 1993

Jailed poll tax man released for appeal

POLL tax non-payer Languel Cousins, jailed for a maximum 90 days by Highgate Magistrates Court last week, was released from Pentonville Prison on Monday by a High Court judge. Cousins, of Dowsett Road Tottenham,

has been granted unconditional bail until an appeal can be heard.

Campaigners welcomed Monday's decision. Dave Morris of the Haringey anti-poll tax union and other campaigners called for his release during a lunchtime occupation at the council's Alexandra House poll tax office last Thursday.

"The grounds for the appeal are that this person is completely penniless," he said. "He shouldn't have been sentenced."

Haringey Council did not oppose bail, they told the Advertiser.

Press cuttings.

Above - Haringey

Advertiser - 26th

March 1992

Right - Haringey

Journal - 6th

February 1992

Poll tax summons hoax

TEN shocked Haringey councillors have received fake court summons for non-payment of their poll tax.

The bogus summonses were posted to Labour and Conservative councillors last week. But all of them had already paid their community charge.

Labour Councillor Jim Buckley opened his summons last Wednesday morning, January 16.

"For five minutes I thought it was the real thing," said Mr Buckley. "But I know I've paid my poll tax so I looked again and put two and two together."

"I've been in touch with the police and I'd like to see someone prosecuted. What's most worrying is they had my name and address. Haringey council isn't supposed to

give out that information."

The imitation summonses were good quality colour photocopies, personally addressed, and contained the official letterhead and signature of the clerk of Highgate Magistrates' court.

A Haringey council spokesman said: "They did look like the real thing."

Robert Taylor of Haringey Anti-Poll Tax Union said: "This is apparently a one-off gesture by a few individuals. It has nothing to do with the anti-poll tax union, but their action is to be applauded and supported."

"Receiving a court summons is very intimidating. I think the idea was to turn the tables and give the councillors a taste of their own

Poll tax chaos faces courts

POLL TAX collection could be plunged into further chaos today if magistrates refuse to accept computer evidence in court.

Nine liability order cases were adjourned at Haringey Court last week after residents challenged the use of files stored in hi-tech memory banks.

Similar appeals have achieved success in Camden and Bury St Edmunds. The Government is trying to amend the 1968 Civil Evidence Act, which contains the loophole.

Magistrates ruled against a poll tax protester two weeks ago but Haringey Anti-poll Tax Union says the decision to adjourn indicates a possible change of heart.

Spokesman Robert Taylor said: "We are confident that the magistrates will refuse to accept the computer evidence. It could yet be another victory for the mass non-payment campaign, and if the Government tries to change the law it will be admitting to the biggest blunder in 20th century legal history."

£30 million arrears

It could also spell disaster for Haringey's poll tax debt recovery, which is £30 million in arrears with 70,000 of the borough's 160,000 charge payers having not paid a penny. It may even mean bigger poll tax bills this year.

Council finance supremo Ian Willmore said: "This is only the latest in a long line of Government bungles on the poll tax. For every day that this legal loophole remains open, poll tax payers will see their bills for next year going up. The Government must act now."

Mr Taylor said that a pool of barristers had volunteered their services.

Four cases are being heard this afternoon with three on February 13. Two further cases will be heard on February 20 and 27.

Press cutting - Haringey Advertiser - 25th March 1993

THE POLL TAX REBELLION IN HARINGEY

A brief chronology

1988

- 15 Sept* Public meeting with Bernie Grant and other speakers who say what is wrong with the Poll Tax but don't support non-payment, Cypriot Centre, Earlam Grove.
- 24 Oct* Poll Tax non-payment meeting organised by the Direct Action Movement at Red Rose Club in Islington with a speaker from Scotland. Most of the people there are from Haringey.
- 15 Nov* First Tottenham Against the Poll Tax (TAPT) meeting at the Unwaged Centre, 72 West Green Road. 30 people support non-payment. From then on TAPT met every two weeks.
- 3 Dec* First street stall at Seven Sisters. Regular stalls from then on.

1989

- 12 Jan* First Hornsey & Wood Green Against the Poll Tax (H&WGAPT) meeting held at the Labour Party Rooms in Middle Lane. 50 people vote to support non-payment. From then on H&WGAPT met every two weeks.
- 29 Jan* First monthly meeting of Street Reps in Tottenham.
- 15/16 March* First meetings of Central Tottenham APT, Bruce Grove APT and White Hart Lane APT.
- 17 Mar* First meeting of South Hornsey APT.
- 21 Mar* TAPT call a meeting at Conway Hall to get campaign activists from across London working together. Later became London Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Groups.
- 1 April* Registration for the Poll Tax starts in England and Wales.
- May* TAPT deliver 30,000 leaflets to every home in Tottenham and flyposter 2,000 posters.

- 15 May* Anti-Poll Tax march from Ducketts common to Civic Centre.
- 3 June* Burning of Poll Tax registration forms on Ducketts Common. Islington and Southwark forms were burned as Haringey's hadn't been sent out yet.
- 26 June* First meeting of Green Lanes APT (GLAPT).
- 8 July* Burning poll tax registration forms on Ducketts Common.
- 30 July* Haringey Anti-Poll Tax Union (HAPTU) set up as a delegate body for all anti-Poll Tax groups in the borough. From then on HAPTU met every two weeks.
- Sept* 5,000 leaflets delivered warning people about Council snoopers registering people for the Poll Tax.
- 3 Sept* 70 groups & federations attend national APT meeting at Polytechnic of Central London organised by HAPTU.
- 7 Nov* HAPTU public meeting at Hornsey Town Hall. 1,000 people fill the hall. Speakers include Tony Benn. 50,000 adults in Haringey have failed to register for the Poll Tax.
- 20 Nov* Noel Park APT set up, later became Wood Green APT.
- 25 Nov* All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation Conference, Manchester. Dominated by Militant. A delegate from Haringey is elected as one of only 3 independent representatives on the Steering Committee. Independent 3D (Don't Pay! Don't Collect! Don't Implement!) network set up.
- 1 Dec* GLAPT lobby of Poll Tax workers at Alexandra House.

1990

- 3 Feb* HAPTU march - started at Scotland Green, toured the main streets of Tottenham and Wood Green, ending at a rally on Ducketts Common. Hundreds of people who had been turned out of Wood Green Shopping City by a bomb scare cheered as the march passed.
- 5 Feb* HAPTU demonstration at Civic Centre in response to the Council fining 7,000 people for non-registration.

- March* Four groups - TAPT, GLAPT, H&WGAPT & South Hornsey APT meet ing fortnightly in Haringey. Stalls every Saturday at Seven Sisters, Bruce Grove, Wood Green, Crouch End, Stroud Green and every Sunday in Green Lanes. First issue of HAPTU newsletter "Burning Issue" comes out. 90,000 leaflets delivered to every home in the borough.
- 5 March* Haringey Council meets to set the Poll Tax. 1,000 demonstrate - people invade the Council Chamber and block the road outside. "Haringey 11" arrested. Meeting is adjourned.
- 6 March* Haringey 11 defence campaign set up.
- 9 March* Reconvened Haringey Council meeting sets highest Poll Tax in Britain (£572).
- 19/23 March* Haringey 11 appear at Highgate Magistrates Court. Picket of the Court.
- 21 Mar* Public meeting on estate sets up Broadwater Farm APT.
- 31 Mar* Over 200 people rally on Ducketts Common to go down to the national anti-Poll Tax demonstration in central London. Demonstration is attacked by police and ends in a riot in Trafalgar Square.
- 1 April* Poll Tax comes into force in England and Wales.
- 5 April* 50 people attend a South Tottenham APT public meeting in spite of police on horseback and in vans outside trying to stop the meeting and intimidating people.
- 14 April* Easter Funday - including burning Poll Tax forms, bouncy castle, bands, etc on Ducketts Common.
- 18 April* Demonstration in support of the Haringey 11 at Highgate Magistrates Court.
- 3 May* TAPT help organise London meeting for 31 March defendants at Conway Hall. Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign (TSDC) established. Unwaged Centre used as temporary office.
- 3 May* Council elections. Anti-Poll Tax protestors invade the count in Haringey and get on national TV.
- 18 May* HAPTU picket of Mirror newspaper in support of Trafalgar Square defendants vilified by the paper.

- 24 May* Strike by Haringey council workers against cuts imposed by Poll Tax budget. Demo outside Council meeting and burning of Poll Tax bills.
- July* 14 million non-payers nationwide, 97,000 in Haringey.
- 1 July* TSDC picket of Pentonville prison. 100 present. Some prisoners hang anti-Poll Tax banners out of cell windows. First of a series of pickets of prisons.
- 23 July* "Axe the Tax - Not jobs and services" demonstration outside Council meeting, Civic Centre.
- 17 Sep* Trial of Haringey 11. HAPTU picket of Court. 2 get suspended sentences, 2 get fined, 3 accept bind-overs, 4 get charges dropped.
- 4 Oct*
- 12 Oct* Demonstration at Tory party conference - Bournemouth. Coachload went from Haringey.
- 20 Oct* Second national Anti-Poll Tax demonstration in central London ends in police riot outside Brixton prison.
- 5 Nov* Fireworks display at Alexandra Palace. Poll Tax demands and an effigy of Thatcher are burnt.
- 22 Nov* Thatcher resigns. Celebration in Trafalgar Square.
- 15 Dec* HAPTU contingent support demonstration in Grantham, Lincolnshire against first jailing for non-payment in the country.

1991

- 9 Jan* First Poll Tax court cases in Haringey - demonstration outside Highgate Magistrates Court. 160 people turned up to challenge their cases. Noisy protest inside the Court evicted by police. Council get through all of the unchallenged ones but only 6 challenged cases.
- Feb* 51,000 Haringey adults (31%) haven't paid a penny. 50% in arrears/ stopped paying.
- 4 March* Protest at Council Poll Tax setting meeting - bills burned outside the Civic Centre.
- 5 March* Early morning demonstrations outside homes of Ian Willmore (Council Chair of Finance) and Toby Harris (Leader of Council). Police already there.

- 22 Mar Abolition of the Poll Tax announced. 18.7 million non-payers nationwide.
- 23 Mar Anti-Poll Tax demonstration in central London, ends in Hyde Park. Calls for amnesty for non-payers.
- 11 April Leaflets dropped in post boxes in the borough urging postal workers to refuse to deliver Poll Tax bills.
- 11 May Meeting to set up Haringey Solidarity Group at Tottenham Community Project
- 8 June Picket of Holloway prison in support of 1st woman jailed for non-payment.
- 17 July Occupation and rooftop demonstration at Scotland Green Jobcentre against deduction of poll tax debts from benefits.
- 24 July Haringey Council brings first committal proceedings against 28 non-payers at Highgate Magistrates. Only 2 turn up. HAPTU picket.
- 19 Oct TSDC national march from Pentonville Prison to Trafalgar Square.
- 5 Dec First Poll Tax non-payer jailed in Haringey.
- 10 Dec Tottenham Solidarity Group set up and work of TAPT incorporated into it.

1992

- Feb Haringey has issued 149,500 summonses for non-payment of the Poll Tax (there are only 172,000 eligible Poll Tax payers in the borough). London-wide over a million summonses have been issued. HAPTU leaflets the borough (90,000 households) for third time.
- 4 March Hornsey & Wood Green APT transforms into Hornsey & Wood Green Solidarity Group.
- 12 Mar Second poll tax non-payer jailed in Haringey. HAPTU get him a solicitor and he was released after a few hours.
- 19 Mar HAPTU disruption of Poll Tax department at Alexandra House in response to jailing, followed by demonstration outside.

1993

- January Over 70,000 in Haringey still not paying. Only 11 people jailed in Haringey. 90% of people summonsed for committal don't bother going to Court. HAPTU posters encourage non-attendance.

NO POLL TAX



WE WONT PAY
EASTER
FUNDAY

ENTERTAINMENT AND RALLY
BALLOONS STALLS
SPEECHES

2-4 PM

Ducketts Common
Turnpike Lane
Saturday April 14th

FEATURING AT **3 PM..**

MASS BURNING OF POLL TAX PAYMENT BOOKS - BRING YOURS!



JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

Haringey Anti-Poll Tax Union
Hornsey & Wood Green APT c/o Box 40, 187 High Road, N22
South Hornsey APT c/o 9 Oxford Road, N4
Tottenham APT c/o 72 West Green Road, N15 (081 802 9804)
Green Lanes APT c/o 72 West Green Road, N15

PAY NO POLL TAX

UNWANTED



Leader of the Council Toby Harris

THIS MAN HAS VOTED FOR CUTS IN SERVICES

**THIS MAN HAS VOTED FOR THE USE OF BAILIFFS
AGAINST PEOPLE WHO CANNOT AFFORD THE POLL TAX**

Meet Toby Harris during his next surgery and tell him what you think of his decision to implement this unjust and unfair tax.

The only way to defend jobs and services is to get rid of the Poll Tax. The quickest and easiest way to get rid of the Poll Tax is not to pay it. Thousands of people in Haringey have said no to the poll tax through non-payment. When will Haringey council take notice. We Can't Pay and Won't Pay.

**BEAT THE BAILIFFS WEEK
3rd to 8th March 1991**

Haringey Council has voted for the use of bailiffs against people who have not paid the Poll Tax. As part of Beat The Bailiffs Week tell the leader of the council what you think of the use of bully boy tactics to intimidate people who cannot afford this iniquitous tax.

Meet Toby Harris at his surgery

Wednesday 6th March 1991 7.00pm to 7.45pm

Campsbourne Tenants Room, Eastfield Road N8

HORNSEY AGAINST THE POLL TAX

HORNSEY AGAINST THE POLL TAX

COURT SUMMONS?

LIABILITY ORDER ?

BAILIFFS LETTER ?

Drop in for some advice

Wednesday 3rd July

anytime between 7-8.45pm

**Campsbourne Junior School
Nightingale Lane N8**

**CRECHE or TRANSPORT,
PHONE IN ADVANCE.**



348 6153

348 8765



PAY NO POLL TAX

HORNSEY AGAINST THE POLL TAX

97,000

**COMMUNITY CHARGE
Poll Tax**

RE18

HARINGEY COUNCIL

AREN'T PAYING

**DON'T PANIC!
DON'T PAY**

Account Number

BRING YOUR

All over Britain people are refusing to pay the Poll Tax: 14 MILLION people nationwide and 97,000 in Haringey. People know that this tax, which takes no account of ability to pay, is unjust and undemocratic. Haringey Council have gone along with every stage of this vicious tax. Education, libraries and social

A services have been cut at the Government's request. But the Council and Government have been overwhelmed by the level of non-payment. **WE HAVE A REAL CHANCE TO BEAT THIS UNFAIR TAX.** If you are paying, now is the time to stop.

FINAL NOTICE to the

Date of issue **16 OCT 90**

BONFIRE arrears **£84.84**

Outstanding Balance To 31st March 1991 **£425.24**

(including unpaid instalments)

My records show that you are not up to date with the payment of your Community Charge instalments. The Instalment Arrears are shown above.

If the arrears are not paid within the next 14 days, you will be liable to pay the full amount due. **CELEBRATE GUY FAWKES NIGHT WITH HORNSEY AGAINST THE POLL TAX JOIN US AT THE FIREWORK DISPLAY ON THE PROMENADE UNDER THE ROSE STAINED GLASS WINDOW OR LOOK FOR OUR YELLOW BANNER.**

notice take legal action against you to collect the full amount due, which could include the

ALEXANDER PALACE FIREWORKS

If you have any questions about this notice or have any reasons why you cannot now bring your instalments up to date, please contact the Community Charge Office at the above address.

**J. PIRRIE
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**
**BRING YOUR FINAL NOTICE AND BURN IT ON THE BONFIRE
LET HARINGEY KNOW THAT WE'RE NOT PAYING AND MEET THE 97,000
NON-PAYERS IN HARINGEY. BRING MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND MAKE A
NOISE. CAN'T PAY WON'T PAY. MEET HORNSEY AGAINST THE POLL TAX
FOR INFORMATION ABOUT NON-PAYMENT. HAVE FUN AND DON'T PAY.**

MONDAY 5th NOVEMBER 7-30pm

**DON'T PANIC DON'T PAY
CONTACT HARINGEY ANTI POLL TAX UNION NOW
PHONE THE 24 HOUR HOTLINE on 081-902-9804**

**HOW TO
BEAT**

POLL TAX JAIL THREAT

**THE COUNCIL'S LAST DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO SCARE PEOPLE
INTO PAYING - IT WON'T WORK**

- Over 70,000 people in Haringey are still not paying
- 90% of people summoned for "Committal Hearings" DON'T bother going to court
- By January 1993 the council had got only eleven non-payers sentenced to jail

IF YOU DON'T TURN UP AT COURT - YOU CAN'T BE JAILED

- When you don't turn up, the magistrates will issue an arrest warrant with bail (over 2,000 already issued) to try and bring you to court; you cannot be jailed without first appearing in court. You may be sent a letter telling you to contact the court/police
- If you ignore this letter a bailiff/council official will eventually call at your home to try and serve (deliver) the warrant. They have to hand it to the person named on it
- They don't know what you look like - if they're told that you're on holiday or don't live there, or no one answers the door, **THEY ARE POWERLESS AND HAVE TO GO AWAY**
- No one can enter your home (including the police) at any time, unless you invite them in
- **DO NOT** consent to bail, **DO NOT** agree to go to court, **DO NOT** sign anything; then **THE WARRANT IS MEANINGLESS**

IF YOU DECIDE TO GO TO COURT - YOU CAN BE JAILED

- Phone us well in advance for information
- You can be jailed if:
 1. The magistrates think you made no attempt or are not willing to pay
 2. They are prejudiced, vindictive, incompetent or just don't like the look of you
 3. The Council Official asks for someone to be made an example of
- The magistrates may write off all or part of your bill - but it's very unlikely

ONLY GO TO COURT IF YOU HAVE FAITH IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM

POLL TAX IS DEAD - DON'T WORRY

Non-payment of the poll tax is a civil, **NOT A CRIMINAL**, offence. You will not get a criminal record. You can settle the bill at any time (even in prison, where you'll be released immediately).

Solidarity Groups Contact Numbers

Hornsey & Wood Green	341-3372
Tottenham	802-9804
Green Lanes	348-5399

Produced by HARINGEY'S SOLIDARITY GROUPS, P.O. Box 2401, Hornsey, London, N8 9LR

POLL TAX HOW TO BEAT BAILIFFS

Haringey
BAILIFF
FREE ZONE

- Remember:
- We are many (90,000 not paying in Haringey) – they are few (14)
 - They are inefficient, have few powers, and rely on fear
 - Mass defiance has made the Tax uncollectable

NEVER LET THEM IN

Before

1. IGNORE any threatening letters, sign nothing
 2. LOCK doors and windows if you get a 'liability order'
 3. ALERT your neighbours and friends to help out
 4. GET ADVICE & HELP* from your local Anti-Poll Tax group
- *Leaflets available

If They Turn up

1. DON'T OPEN THE DOOR – it's ILLEGAL for them to use force. If you let them in once, they can *break in* in future
2. IMMEDIATELY CALL neighbours, friends and someone from the Anti-Poll Tax group
3. AN ANGRY CROWD works wonders!
4. GET PHOTOS, descriptions, car numbers, and pass on to us

After

1. SUPPORT your neighbours when bailiffs turn up at their door
2. JOIN THE CAMPAIGN – *Bailiffs out of Haringey!*

ALERT
YOUR
NEIGHBOURS
TELL
US

We're Winning - Stand Firm - Get Involved

PAY NO POLL TAX

SCRAP ALL the debts NOW

Anti-Poll Tax Contact Numbers

Tottenham
Hornsey

Wood Green
Muswell Hill
Green Lanes



It was humiliating... People looking as they passed my desk. I had paid my Poll Tax. Someone saw my direct debit form and the next thing I knew it was all over the office... So I lied about it... Did anyone believe me... I don't know. I left my job... I had to... I just couldn't face people finding out... Where to now?... Things have changed haven't they?

DON'T PAY THE POLL TAX