

LAMBETH AGAINST THE POLL TAX *news* 10p

Baillifs beaten

MONDAY 20th August saw Tory-controlled Wandsworth Council trying to become the first London borough to send in the bailiffs to enforce the poll tax.

This draconian measure was intended to frighten the 30,000 plus non-payers in the borough and would have had far reaching consequences for the anti-poll tax movement had it succeeded. The London Anti-Poll Tax Federation mobilised nearly 100 people to defend the working class estates where they knew the bailiffs intended to visit.

From 7.00 am onwards (the bailiffs can arrive at any time between 10 am and 10 pm) a constant vigil was kept around the estates. Look-outs were posted on the main routes into the estates, armed with walkie talkies and lists of bailiffs' cars registration numbers. Two cars on the list were spotted during the day but, not surprisingly, their occupants decided not to risk getting out. As a result of this activity the bailiffs were not successful in obtaining entry into any houses in the Wandsworth area - the Federation's plans were a complete success!

Eighteen months after the implementation of the poll tax in Scotland, not one bailiff has been able to seize goods to pay the tax. This same campaign is now needed in England and Wales, and the first round was won by a crushing knockout by the All London Federation.

Break the Poll Tax!

**Ann Hollifield,
Lambeth Councillor,
Joint Chair LAPT**

ON 6th August, on the casting vote of the Mayor, Lambeth Council agreed a nine-million pound package of cuts because of poll tax capping by the Government.

These cuts mean local services will be squeezed even further and will mean the loss of thousands of Council jobs. Those people who are already the worst off will be hit the hardest.

The cuts will include:

*** Education:**

Cuts in school support staff, Further Education lecturers, equipment and facilities, and Adult Education.

*** Social Services:**

Croydon Children's home will close.

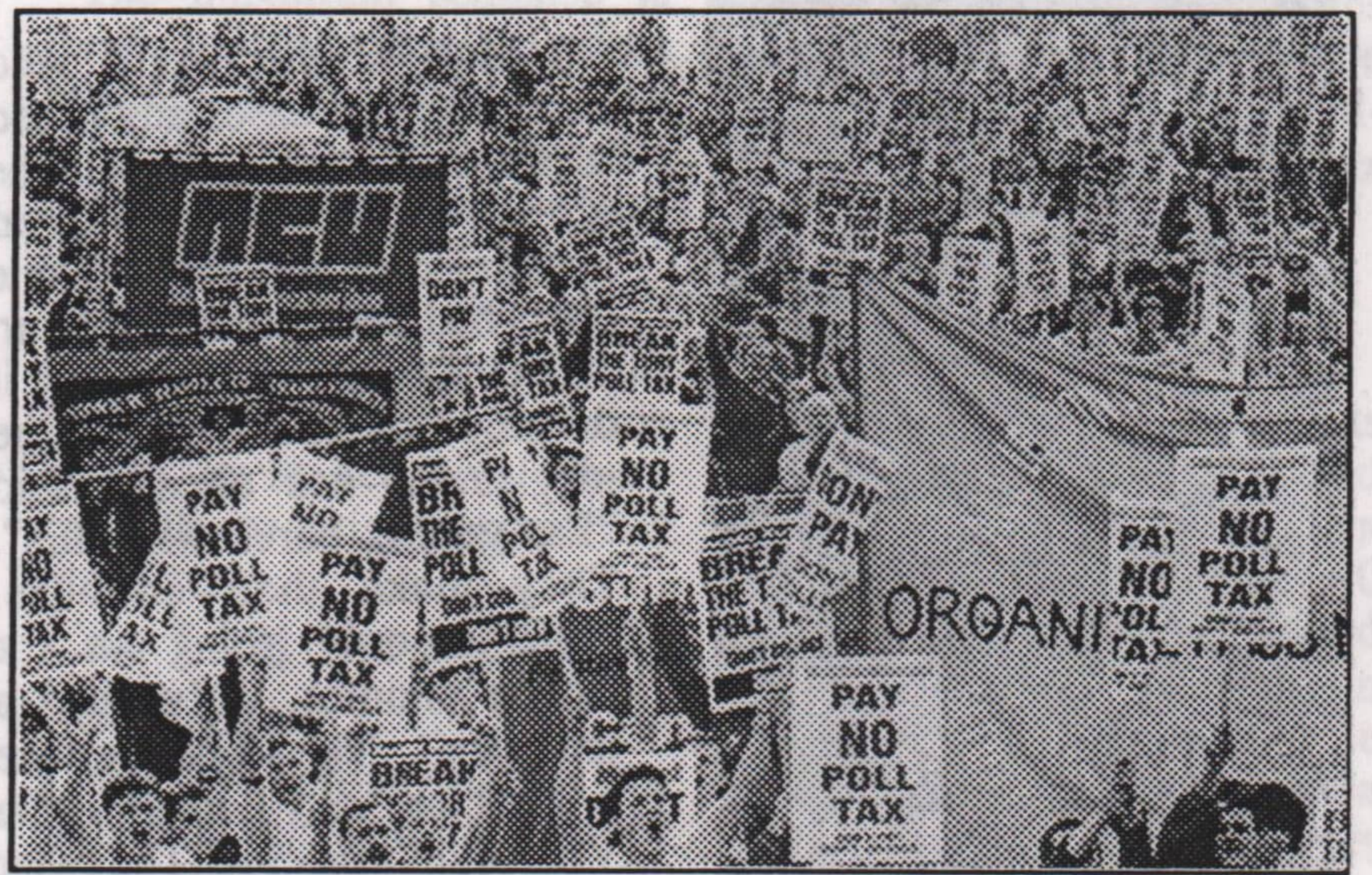
*** Amenities:**

Reduced opening of Brixton Recreation Centre, Brockwell Lido to close early, the Playbus to be scrapped, cutbacks in environmental health, animal wardens, parks maintenance and traffic-calming schemes

*** Plus:**

Increased charges for nurseries, school dinners, and meals on wheels.

This squeezing of local services was exactly what the Tories had in mind when they brought in the Poll Tax. Over the last eleven years they have



The National anti Poll Tax demo last March

stolen £46 billion from local authorities like Lambeth. The poll tax was meant to cut spending even further.

The idea was to force local councils to choose between setting a high poll tax or cutting local services. However poll tax capping makes a nonsense of even this idea. - The Tory government has now decided what Lambeth needs to spend on its services - not Lambeth Council!

In spite of the cuts, the poll tax level will only be reduced by £27, to £521. We say this is still much too high. According to the Council's own research, one third of Lambeth's people would have to cut down on spending on food in order to pay this amount. Not surprisingly then, over seventy five per cent of people in Lambeth are refusing to pay the Poll Tax. - The campaign of mass non-payment is winning.

If no-one pays the poll tax

though, where will the Council get its money for services? As explained earlier, the poll tax is designed to destroy local services, so it must be beaten. The campaign of mass non-payment is beating the poll tax. The shortfall in the Council's income should be made up by Central government. They have certainly been able to write off other debts when it suited them. What about the £640 million in debts written off for the Rover company when it was given away to British Aerospace? Or the £5,000 million written off when the water industry was privatised? Or the £21 billion spent each year on defence?

But Lambeth Council will not get anything from Central government if it does not fight.

Myself and five other Labour Councillors have consistently voted against meekly complying with the demands

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Lambeth Against the Poll Tax News

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Lambeth Against the Poll Tax is a federation of Anti Poll Tax Unions, Trade Unions, and other affiliated organisations, supporting mass non payment and non-implementation of the Poll Tax. To find out more write to the above address or phone 081-671-5318

Victory in Croydon

Graham Lewis, South Streatham APTU

“YOUVE been making our life very difficult” said the Deputy Collection Officer for Croydon. The court had closed, the officials were huddled in the corner.

Most of the people who turned up had cases adjourned to fight another day. All the other cases were moved upstairs to a court where single cases had been lasting an hour.

The ‘Deputy’ gallops in; it doesn’t look good. One of the magistrates has already said “I’m getting bored with this”. They make their entrance. “This is only going on for fifteen minutes, we’ve had a long day”. The Deputy’s face is a picture and Leonardo Da Vinci didn’t paint it. The other 60,000 non-payers in Croydon? Well that’s another story...

No one in Lambeth will get a summons until the middle of October at the earliest. When it arrives don’t panic, don’t pay, contact your anti poll tax union. (See ‘hotline number on front page). Poll tax non payment constitutes a civil debt *not* a criminal offence. Even after the hearing, all the Council gets is the right to chase you up for the £497 poll tax plus £30 court costs. - In Scotland where they don’t even have to take you to court, they have still been unable to collect the tax from over a million people. - Before then they have to prove *nine* things in court. Your anti poll tax union has a list of *one hundred and twenty* questions and legal challenges prepared. You have the right to an individual hearing, and we will provide free help and advice during your case. - This is what the magistrates call a ‘McKenzie’s Friend). - Together we can make the collection of this tax virtually impossible.

The

THE Tories, backed up by the press and TV, have deliberately set out to confuse and mislead people over their rights under the poll tax, in an attempt to intimidate people into paying. Here are the real facts:

Who is supposed to pay?

Almost everyone! 18 million people paid rates, 35 million are eligible to pay the poll tax. It affects everyone over 18 except monks, nuns, prisoners and the severely mentally impaired.

How much am I supposed to pay?

Margaret Thatcher will save £1,500 on her Dulwich home. Lambeth residents will be asked for £497 EACH in the first year. Next year’s figure is expected to be over £750 each.

Can I get a rebate?

Those in work have to be on poverty wages before they qualify! for example, a single person under 25 earning more than £57.53 per week will be asked to pay the full poll tax. A married couple with two children will BOTH pay the full poll tax if their joint income is more than £135 per week. No-one gets a full rebate. The unemployed, pensioners and students will all be asked to pay at least 20 per cent of the tax.

Even if you are not intending to pay the poll tax or don’t think you are eligible for a rebate, you should still apply on one of the council’s application forms. It increases their workload and makes the system even more unworkable.

Will I be standing alone if I refuse to pay?

Over one million people in

Break the Poll Tax (Continued from P1)

of the Tories on the poll tax and cuts. I believe it is the job of Labour Councillors to fight cuts, not make them. Lambeth should refuse to comply with poll tax capping, and should instead join forces with the Council trade unions and the new borough federation of anti poll tax unions, *Lambeth Against the Poll Tax*.

Together we must build a campaign against the poll tax; in the community and the workplaces. We must demand back our share of the £46 billion stolen from local authorities by Thatcher and the Tories.

At the very least, the Council must give full support to Council trade unionists taking industrial action against the cuts and the poll tax, as well

as those fighting wage arrestments.

I have argued on the Council that local authority trade unions must link up with those in the other capped authorities, and build for a one day strike to show the Tories, and the local councils, that council workers are not prepared to bear the brunt of these attacks. Such a strike could then if necessary be followed up by all-out action, backed up by other trade unions.

Each local Anti Poll Tax Union must now build links with the Council workplaces in its area. Why not visit your local Council depot and ask if they would like to hear a speaker from *Lambeth Against the Poll Tax*?

Remember, there are still

over a million people in Scotland who have not paid the poll tax for over a year. It is over four months since the poll tax was implemented in England and Wales and there are already 14 million non-payers in Britain. The courts have ground to a standstill. There are only one thousand bailiff firms in the country. How will they cope against 14 million non-payers? In Scotland not one stick of furniture has been stolen from anyone’s house. In England and Wales the bailiffs have been seen off by local Anti Poll Tax Unions.

So stand firm. Mass non-payment is winning. Build the Anti Poll Tax Unions, build in the workplaces. The poll tax must be beaten!

Real Facts About Non Payment...

Scotland have refused to pay the poll tax, and by organising in local groups, have managed to prevent a single person being prosecuted for non-payment. Moorlands Estate Anti-Poll Tax Union, as part of the All Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation will act to give us a collective strength, and will prevent single person being picked off by the courts.

Is there any other way of defeating the tax?

This Government has shown countless times that it is not willing to listen to mass popular protest. The only way to convince them is through money, and by not paying their tax, they will be forced to back down. Lobbies, petitions and demonstrations will help to build the campaign, but only mass non-payment coupled with trade union action, will make the tax break down.

Will they be able to claim the tax off me, even if I refuse to pay?

If you are in the Anti-Poll Tax Union, this will be impossible. How can they take the millions of non-payers to court? It simply is not possible.

Councils need only take reasonable steps to collect the tax. If they decide that it is not worth the expense, or might cause "a threat to public order", it could be judged unreasonable. Councils will also be pressurised not to take non-payers to court.

Before they can do anything, the council need to get a liability order against you from a magistrates' court. Even if they do get as far as court proceedings, the system is long and complicated, and the current cases going through court are being slowed to a trickle by successful lobbies of the courts organised by anti poll tax unions.

Only after they have obtained a liability order can they even think about sending in bailiffs,

wage arrestments or deductions from benefits. To arrest your wages, they need to know where you work, and this information is not provided on your poll tax form. They can only deduct money for the poll tax from certain forms of benefits - they can't touch pensions - and they are limited in how much they can deduct. Even if they were to deduct the maximum amount possible, this would still be less than the amount of poll tax we are supposed to pay.

Will they send the bailiffs in to take all my property?

Lambeth Council leaders, under pressure from the Anti Poll Tax Unions, have stated that they will only use bailiffs to collect the poll tax as a last resort. We must keep up the pressure to make sure they refuse to send in bailiffs under any circumstances, and stop implementing the poll tax altogether.

Even if the council does send in bailiffs, we have the power to take them on. Despite numerous attempts to send in bailiffs, mass pickets organised by Anti Poll Tax Unions have meant that not one item of furniture has yet been siezed! We will do the same.

Can I be evicted if I don't pay?

Non-payment does not affect your tenancy, whether you are a council or private tenant.

Will I get a criminal record?

Not paying your poll tax is a civil, not a criminal, offence.

Can they freeze my bank account if I don't pay?

In England and Wales they have no power to freeze bank accounts.

Can I end up paying massive fines?

You cannot be fined for non-payment of the poll tax. The biggest bill you could possible be presented with is your poll tax bill, plus legal costs (which for rate arrears have always

been nominal).

Will I end up in jail?

It is exceptionally unlikely that anyone will be jailed. The council may only try to have you jailed if it has failed by all the above means to have you pay the money. Then it must take you to court in person, and prove it has tried every other means, and that you are not paying through "wilful refusal, or culpable neglect."

The maximum sentence is three months, and payment releases you instantly. An offer to pay by instalments would almost certainly have the same effect.

Pressure from the mass campaign can also be used to prevent councils taking this action, as in Scotland, where councils are trying to avoid this at all costs.

Can I get the sack if I don't pay?

No! As non-payment is not industrial misconduct, it is not grounds for dismissal.

Is the poll tax high because of high-spending Labour councils?

The average Tory council will set a rate of £91 higher than the government's target, and the Labour council average is only a few pounds more. The new system has taken £200 million in business rates from the councils, all of which has to be added to the poll tax bills.

Also, the 'safety net' heavily benefits Tory councils, meaning Labour's Manchester council will pay half the money they collect to keep other councils' bills down, as with Tory Wandsworth, who receive £29 million.

Won't mass non-payment threaten council jobs and services?

The point of the tax is to force cuts on local councils. By opposing it now, we will safeguard the funding of local councils in the future. In any

case the way the poll tax is set up, only twenty percent of council spending comes from the poll tax.

Ok, I'm not paying.

What do I do now?

First join the campaign. Join the your local Anti Poll Tax Union. (For more information contact the hotline number on the front of this broadsheet). This will ensure you have the organised backing of millions of others throughout the country, through the All-Britain Anti-Poll tax Federation.

Can we stop the poll tax?

Yes! Over 1.5 million Scots have taken the Tories on, and more are joining the campaign every day. An estimated 10 million people in England and Wales have still not paid. In Camden, over half the population have not paid a penny. In Lambeth it is estimated that the council have only collected thirty seven percent of what they should have done. And even most of this has come, not from what people have actually paid, but from money claimed by the council under the rebate system.

More and more people are realising that Thatcher isn't unbeatable. The Tories have made a big mistake in introducing the poll tax. They are trying to take everyone on at once. If millions refuse to pay, backed up with sympathetic action in the work place, we will sink the poll tax.

What is the All-Britain Anti-Poll tax Federation?

The federation was set up last November to establish a national campaign of mass non-payment. It now has over 1 400 affiliated organisations, and is growing. It also is a forum for information, and provided many of the details in this article.

Join your
Anti Poll
Tax Union!

or find out
more...

Phone:

081-671-5318

Or write
to:

LAPT, PO Box

596, London

SE11 6UT

*One and a half million
non payers in
Scotland... fourteen
million nationally...
not one item of
furniture seized by
bailiffs...*

We are
winning!
Join the
m a s s
campaign!

Non Payers Speak Out

ACCORDING to the Government, Lambeth is the fourth most deprived borough in London. The borough's population has high levels of the most needy sections of society - the under fives, senior citizens, single parent families, the unemployed and black and ethnic minority groups.

With such deprivation, it is expensive to provide services. The council has a choice: Set a high rate of poll tax or drastically cut jobs and services. The poll tax is thus designed to deprive the poorest members of society.

Evelyn Sommers is a fifty three year-old housewife and she explains:

"I find the poll tax frightening and intimidating. Yet it makes me very angry. I can't afford to pay. Only my old man is working and there are five of us in the house. My one son is still at school and

another son and a daughter have no income. How can we afford to pay?

"I have a bad back and I need a new bed. What am I supposed to do? You have to look after your health.

"I don't mind paying the rates. We should pay something for the services we are getting. This way is worse. The service is no good. They are cutting back and want more money. I'm not paying any poll tax. They can send me to jail, I won't pay."

John and Darant Goode have a three month-old baby girl and a two year-old boy. They live in Darant's mum's flat and only John is working. He explained:

"We've been waiting five years on the housing list. We have two children and still they can't give us a house. Now they are demanding the poll tax. What are we paying it for?"

"The poll tax is bad. We haven't got £1,100 to pay from one income. We're not depriving the kids. It costs £90 per week to feed and clothe them. They come first!

"Everything's going up - bills, gas, electric and food. -

But wages are staying the same. Darant went to ask about rebates and they told her to pay the poll tax out of her housing benefit. Its disgusting. They're telling you to deprive your kids and yourself just to pay this tax.

"It's useless me saying I'll pay the poll tax when I know I can't pay unless I go out and deprive or rob someone else. I won't do that; I have my pride. My pride is my wife and kids.

"The doctors told me to eat during the day because I have gas. I'd love to but I can't afford it. I can only afford one meal a day. We are constantly struggling. I get my wages Friday but they're gone straight away. We are skint. That's how life is so serious with us.

"They can do whatever they want. They won't get no poll tax. If they jail me, they still won't get it when I come out. They can't touch my wages. It is my sweat and tears. People I work with are militant. If the boss touches it, his business will suffer.

"They better come back out with the rates. People don't mind paying that."

Marching with the Millions...

THE most ambitious event so far to be organised by the All Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation is due to start - a People's March against the Poll Tax right accross Britain.

Seventy one poll tax busters, representing towns and cities all over the country, will be

marching from scotland, the North-West and Wales in three marches converging on London around 15th October.

Along the way they will be joined by tens of thousands in support-demonstrations and meetings. They will be representing the millions of people not paying the poll tax. It will be another message to the Tories and their government - we can do without them and their poll tax.

The first leg will leave Glasgow on 9 September, the second will go from Liverpool on 16 September, the second will go from Liverpool on 16 September and the third from Swansea, will leave on 23 September.

Leg one will split along the way so part can visit Bradford and Grimsby/Hull. A section from leg three will also visit Gloucester.

don't pay the poll tax!