

Lets wreck Irelands poll tax

Gregor Kerr

1994

JANUARY 1st saw County Dublin divided into three new County Council areas – Fingal, South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire/Rathdown. Residents of all three new Councils now face the imposition of annual service charges of at least £85-£90.

Charges for such services as refuse collection, water supply, etc. vary from county to county. They were first introduced in the aftermath of the abolition of domestic rates following the 1977 general election. Governments since then have consistently refused to adequately fund local authorities. In response, County Councillors have taken the easy option of introducing service charges.

Residents of Dublin city and county (except those in the old Dún Laoghaire Corporation area) have thus far managed to avoid these charges. In the city area a refusal to pay campaign saw the water rates scrapped in the 1980's. If the county areas are made to pay we can be sure that Dublin Corporation will re-impose charges.

Service charges are a manifestly unjust form of taxation which are felt most harshly by PAYE taxpayers, who already shoulder an unfair burden of the total tax take. They take no account of ability to pay. The company director with an income of £150,000 per annum faces the same charges as a low-paid work already struggling to make ends meet.

They are also double taxation. We pay for local services through our PAYE, part of which goes to make up the Rate Support Grant to local authorities. Then we are asked to pay again for exactly the same services.

Householders and residents in Dublin should immediately prepare to resist these charges. If nobody pays, they will be impossible to collect. In recent years service charges have been opposed – with varying degrees of success – by community and residents groups throughout the country.

Community groups in Dublin should set about making contact with anti-charges groupings in other counties, with a view to establishing a framework through which these charges can be opposed on both a local and national level. In addition, contact should be made with local authority workers whose trade unions should be asked to adopt a policy of non-cooperation with collection of these charges.

Through a united campaign of community groups and trade unionists under the slogan made famous by the anti-Poll Tax campaign in Britain "Can't Pay, Won't Pay", these charges can be successfully resisted.

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