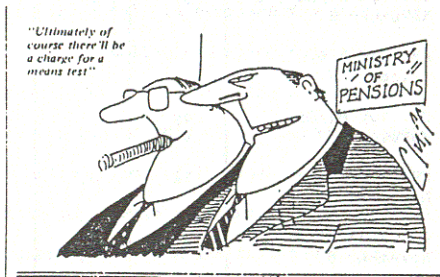


The Poll Tax: Losing Out

The Poll tax is to be introduced in Scotland in 1989 and one year later in England and Wales. Every adult over the age of 18 becomes liable to pay a flat rate. This shifts the rate bill from large, low occupancy, rich households to small, multiple occupancy, poor households. This general pattern is exacerbated in many areas. A summary of the results of several local studies of what would be the impact of the poll tax if it were to be introduced now is given in the Table. Their detailed findings - and caveats - are available from David Clark, Local Government Information Unit, 1-5 Bath Street, London, EC1V 9QQ.

One peculiar anomaly is the City of London. If their few residents were to pay the full poll tax, they would be liable to an annual bill of nearly £9,000. Instead, the Government proposes a Special Authority Solution - just for the City of London - so that these few favoured residents will pay less than £500. The Government argues that, uniquely, the needs assessment for the City of London (i.e. its Grant Related Expenditure) is not a proper assessment of its need to spend. Not unsurprisingly, the ALA has said that they don't believe the GRE reflects need anywhere!



Local Studies of the Effects of the Poll Tax

Local Authority	Method and Date	% Adults		% Losers by H/hold Size		
		Winners	Losers	1 Adult	2 Adults	3/More Adults
Birmingham	SS. 1% 87/88 w January 88	39	61	-	-	-
Bradford	CS. 80% 87/88 w/o October 87	33	77	-	-	-
Cleveland	CS. 97% 87/88 w/o July 87	29	71	19	69	95
County Durham	CS. 50-80% 84/85 w/o June 87	-	-	30	79	96
Haringey	SS. 2.25% 87/88 w/o November 87	36.5	63.5	5	61	94
Islington	SS. 2% 87/88 w/o October 87	8.7	91.3	66	97	100
Leeds	CS. 82% 86/87* w/o May 87	27	73	27	74	92
Lewisham	SS. 86/87 w & w/o October 87	26	74	11	77	99
Manchester	CS. 88% 87/88 w/o January 88	34.5	65.5	10	63	96
Newcastle	CS. 95% 85/86 w/o September 86	30	70	18	70	96
North Tyneside	CS. 90% 87/88 w/o November 87	31	69	17	68	93
Northumberland	SS. 87/88 w/o October 87	-	-	34	60	93
Reading	SS. 10% 87/88 w November 87	49	51	2	40	83
Sheffield	SS. 87/88 w/o November 87	12	88	57	91	97
South Tyneside	CS. 100% 87/88 w/o November 87	41	59	34	87	97
Southwark	SS. 87/88 w/o October 87	3	97	-	-	-

NOTES: CS = Comprehensive Survey matching the electoral and rating registers with % coverage.
 SS = Sample Surveys of records from registers with % coverage.
 w or w/o indicates whether figures were calculated with or without safety nets.

The poll tax has longer term implications for us poor statistical technocrats. Until now, anyone could run a semi respectable postal survey with a pin and the latest Register of Electors. Not henceforth: as Edward Houth said "it [the poll tax] will persuade people not to put themselves on the register of electors" (Hansard, 2/7/87). This has already happened in Scotland.

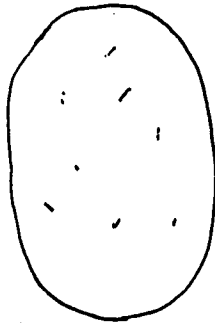
	Change in numbers of registered electors 1987 to 1988	Percent change 1987 to 1988
Scotland	-27,000	-0.7
England	+61,000	+0.2
Wales	+5,000	+0.2
Northern Ireland	+5,000	+0.5
U.K.	+44,000	+0.1

Scots, quite rationally, are deregistering to try to dodge the tax. South of the border, there has been an increase in the number of registered electors, but data collected by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities show the first signs of a similar trend in England. 39 of their member authorities report a fall in registration this year. Liverpool has lost some 10,000 voters; Ealing and balmy Kensington and Chelsea around 5,000 apiece. Overall, the AMA reports the disappearance of 107,000 voters, and that from the replies of only 49 of their 67 members and two years before any possible introduction of the tax. At this rate, how many will be left to vote - or to pay - come the General Election of 1991?

For us journeymen, it means that the Register of Electors will become even more useless as a sampling frame. The sparkling new Community Charge Register will be available - and a fat lot of good that will be. I'm afraid

it means back to including an indent for not only footleather but also gumshoes in any even half serious survey of "the public". Of course, SCPR - and others - have been using sampling from households rather than from the Register of Electors for some time now: but the added spice is going to be the difficulty of reassuring respondents that we are not snoopers for the local State.

Salmonella in eggs?



Let them eat caviar!
(Unattributed)