

DUBLIN ANTI-WATER CHARGES CAMPAIGN

WATER CHARGES NEWS

AUTUMN 1994 ISSUE No1

DONATION WELCOME

DUBLIN: MASSIVE



NON-PAYMENT

A MASSIVE majority in the Dublin County area have not paid the new water charges. Official figures show that 82% in Fingal had not paid anything by June 30th, the deadline for the first half of the £85 water charge.

In South Dublin reliable sources confirm that 80% have not paid.

In Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown two thirds have not paid anything despite the offer of inclusion in a draw for a flashy car and a huge cash prize.

This mass boycott of the water charges shows the anger of working people at being hit for a new local tax while massively burdened by VAT and PAYE taxation already.

The last time the councils tried to collect local charges in Dublin in 1983/84 they were defeated by a mass refusal to pay.

This time the non-payment campaign is already up and running. The majority see this as the most effective way to fight the water charges.

The non-payment campaign puts it up to the Councillors who voted in these charges. In November they must

decide if they will continue to fly in the faces of the people who elected them when the charges for next year must be voted on.

A very strong non-payment campaign sends a powerful message to the government that the ordinary working person is already seriously over-taxed and is prepared to accept no more! It puts the government on notice that the super rich who got their second tax amnesty in five years earlier this year have to pay tax to fund the services that local authorities provide.

Meetings and protests have been held in Balbriggan, Swords and Mulhuddart/Blanchardstown, in Clondalkin, Tallaght, Rathfarnham and Dundrum.

The Dublin Anti-Water Charges Campaign has spearheaded the movement. Thousands of householders are being

registered as non-payers in a door to door campaign. Tens of thousands of information leaflets and 20,000 of this bulletin are being distributed.

The Anti-Water Charges Conference on September 24th will bring together the widest possible representation of community organisations and action groups to help weld one united and effective all Dublin campaign.

This concerns you, the ordinary householder. If the charges are allowed in for 1994, without a fight, they will be in for all time and can be raised. In County Cavan the charge is £180 this year.

Get involved in the campaign now. Write to Councillor Joe Higgins at 155 Briarwood, Dublin 15 or ring (01) 6772686 or (01) 8201753.

ANTI-WATER CHARGES CONFERENCE

**Saturday September 24th,
11am - 4pm, in the Conference Hall,
National Student Centre,
Aston Place, Dublin 2.**
(off Aston Quay, behind Virgin Megastore)

All residents and tenants organisations, community organisations, anti-water charge groups or individuals are invited to participate

**Contact Councillor Joe Higgins,
155 Briarwood, Dublin 15 or phone 6772686**

FIGHTING DOUBLE TAXATION



ORGANISING AGAINST DOUBLE TAXATION

Fianna Fail abolished domestic rates to win the 1977 general election. That government gave a commitment to fund local services through a Rate Support Grant from central government funds - the money would come from increased PAYE and VAT receipts.

PAYE taxation receipts increased by 28% in 1978 and have increased massively every year since. VAT rates were increased in 1978 and since. In 1979 PRSI was introduced adding a huge burden of taxation onto PAYE taxpayers while big business, rancher farmers and the other wealthy self-employed continued to pay peanuts. The Rate Support Grant was £79.3 million in 1978 and was increased an-

nually sufficient to fund local services until 1983. Then the Fine Gael Labour government, refusing to tax the rich, attempted to solve the state's financial crisis by cutting back on the Rate Support Grant and asking working people to pay 'Service Charges' for water and refuse collection - in reality double taxation since we had already paid through massively increased PAYE, VAT and other taxes on work-

ers. Since 1983, when the Rate Support Grant was first cut back, the crisis in local authority finances has worsened dramatically with savage cutbacks in services, thousands of workers let go and replaced by cheap labour SES schemes and increasing attempts to privatise services. This £100 million which has been cut from local authority finances since

1983 by governments made up of Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, the PDs and unfortunately the Labour Party is double the total estimated to be collected in service charges in all local authorities in 1994. Because these parties refuse to tax the rich, we are asked to pay double taxation. **Refuse to pay double taxation. Make them tax the rich!**

POINTS TO REMEMBER • POINTS TO REMEMBER

- It is not the County Managers but the elected Councillors who voted in the water charges. In Dublin the political parties whose councillors voted for the charges (with a few abstentions) include: Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, the Labour Party, the Progressive Democrats and the Green Party.
- In a rented house, it is not the landlord but the tenant who is held responsible for paying the

- water charge.
- Where more than one person lives in a house "the occupiers are jointly and severally liable" not just the person to whom the bill was addressed.
- Where a person has a home loan from the local authority, their mortgage payments cannot be increased to include the water charge.

TAXATION... MASSIVE INJUSTICE!

The Revenue Commissioners report for 1993, issued in July, showed again the huge inequalities in taxation. PAYE taxation collected came to more than £3,000 million - up £250 million on 1992. The reward from the Fianna Fail/Labour government for these honest taxpayers was double taxation in the form of water charges - £70 to £90 in the three Dublin Councils and up to £180 outside Dublin. In January, this same government rewarded criminal tax evaders with the second tax amnesty in five years. We pay 48% on average wages but these criminals were allowed pay at 15% - no

questions asked. The amnesty which brought in £260 million, wrote off up to £500 million at a stroke.

During the five years to 1993, Aer Lingus workers alone paid as much tax as all the farmers in the country. PAYE taxpayers paid more than £8,500 million in the three years 1991-1993. All farmers paid £136 million. We have paid enough. Let them tax the rancher farmers.

An answer to a Dail question in 1992 showed that if the self-employed who

make up 30% of the workforce and who have higher average incomes paid tax at the same rate as PAYE workers that £817 million in extra taxes would be available in 1992 to fund services. The figure would be greater in 1994. PAYE taxpayers have paid enough. Let the government tax the wealthy self-employed.

The Beef Tribunal revealed that multi-millionaire Larry Goodman employed the biggest accountancy firm in the country to ensure he paid hardly any taxes on huge profits. Scandalously,

Goodman is being allowed use the 1994 tax amnesty to write off millions due in taxes. Business & Finance magazine revealed in March that the obscenely wealthy Dunne family, owners of Dunnes Stores owe more than a £100 million in taxes since 1985. The Report of the Auditor General for the Revenue Commissioners in October 1993 showed that they could

indently £2,500 million in outstanding taxes. The Tax Inspectors union at their conference said that if the necessary staff were recruited they could collect these outstanding millions in taxes.

Refuse to pay double taxation service charges. Make the government tax the rich.

COURT ACTION... DISCONNECTION?

Standing together against Council Threats!

THE COUNCILS have legal powers to pursue non-payers through the courts and to disconnect water supply. In the ten years since the charges were introduced they have used both powers in attempts to intimidate people into paying this unjust double taxation.

Fighting these threats effectively means that in the event of any court action, the full resources of the anti-water charges campaign including legal support will have to be mobilised so that no individual is isolated and victimised.

Many County Managers, after years of significant non-payment have decided that taking people to court is time consuming and does not frighten people into paying. They have calculated that threatening to cut off water supply will terrorise people into paying.

The new Dublin councils are legally entitled to cut off water supply to non-payers two months after the due date for payment - from August 1st. It is unlikely that they will go ahead with cut-offs until the reminder for the second instalment of the charge has been sent out and no payment received. This means that if disconnections were to be tried, it is likely that it would be late in the year or possibly next year but the campaign must be prepared now to combat any attempt to disconnect non-payers' water supply.

The best way to prevent any such attempt by the Councils is to ensure that your road/estate has an active campaign against the water charges. The Dublin Anti-Water Charges Campaign is approaching IMPACT and

SIPTU, the council workers' union requesting that union members refuse to co-operate in cutting off water supply. (see article on this page).

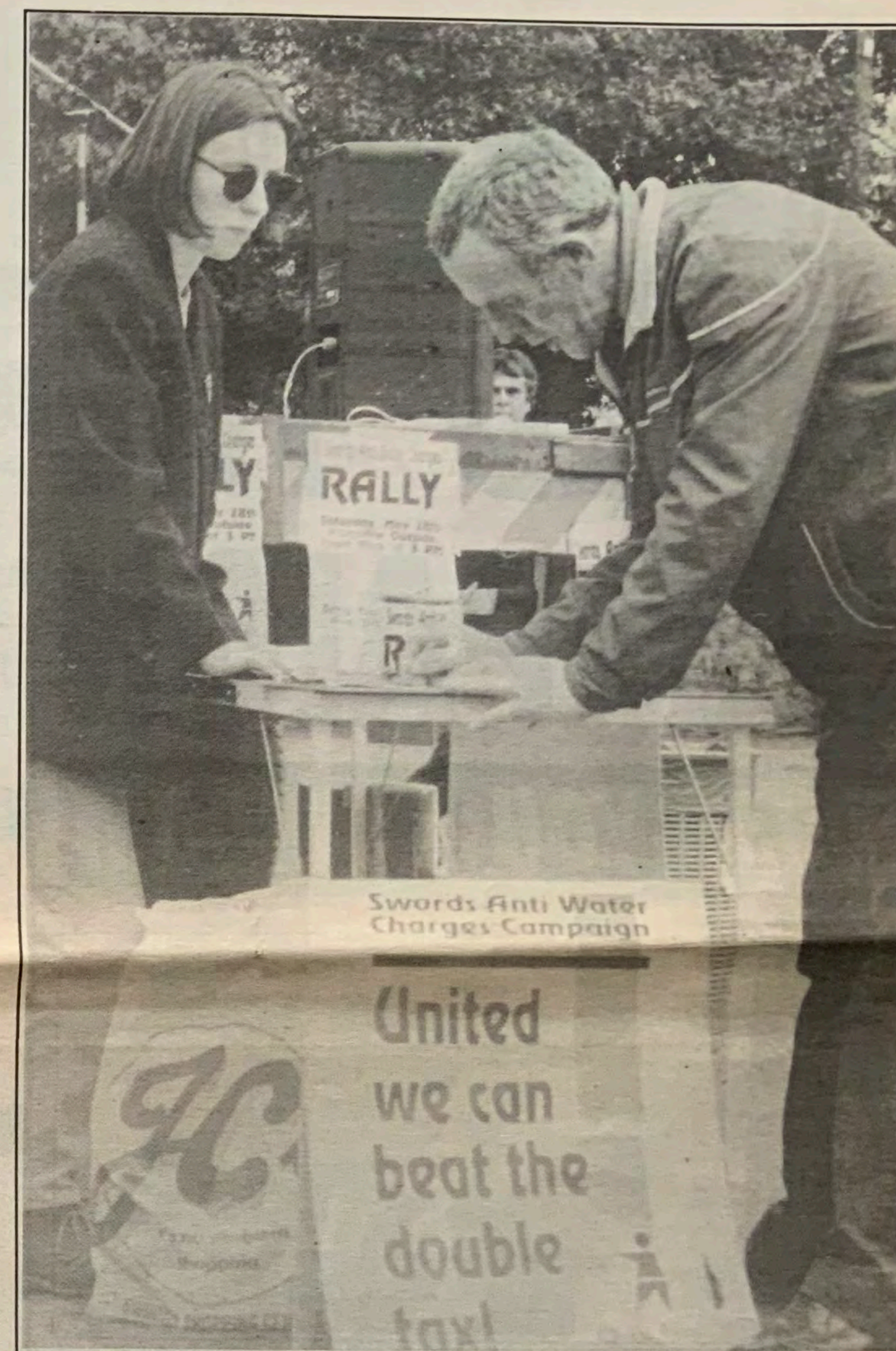
In the event of an attempted cut-off, the campaign will have to mount community protest at the scene to place huge moral pressure to make sure it doesn't go ahead.

If the councils try to get around this by employing non-union contractors to cut off non-payers it would be even more urgent for the campaign to mobilise community protest at the site of the stop-cock to prevent disconnection.

In Waterford in 1989, the Corporation workers refused to be used to cut off non-payers. The Corporation attempted to use non-union contractors but were defeated by community action. The contractors were shown the road and there has been no disconnection in Waterford since.

The Council issue a 'Red Letter' advising that they will disconnect non-payers and notice having been given would then be legally entitled to go to a house and switch off water supply at the stop-cock generally located in the pathway outside the house.

If you get a 'Red Letter', don't be intimidated. Join your local anti-water charges campaign.



Appeal to Council Trade Unions

Workers in the Dublin County Councils can be called on by their management at a certain stage to cut off the water supply to the houses of residents who are refusing to pay the water charges. Disconnecting somebody's water supply is a barbaric act and no Council workers want to be involved.

County Council workers are themselves PAYE taxpayers and understand the anger of their fellow PAYE workers at being squeezed again. They are also residents in their local communities and do not want to be at odds with their fellow residents.

The trade unions which organise the Council workers must ensure that their members are not put in the difficult position of being used to try to break the anti-water charges campaign. This can be done by adopting a policy that no union member will be forced to co-

operate in an attempted disconnection. In this way Council workers can refuse to participate.

If the management respond by bringing in non-union 'cowboys' to do the dirty work, the Council trade unions should reply immediately with a threat of industrial action unless this was dropped.

The two main trade unions involved in organising the relevant Council workers in Dublin are IMPACT and SIPTU. They are members of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. ICTU

pressed for the removal of the 1% income levy in the budget earlier this year but the water charges are reimposing another form of levy.

The Dublin Anti-Water Charges Campaign appeals to all County Council workers to pressure their union leaders into adopting a definite policy of refusal to cooperate in any way with attempted water cut-offs.

The campaign is writing to the leadership of these unions asking them to act now to ensure that no council worker will participate in cut-offs.

WHAT ACTIVISTS SAY...

"For me as a public representative for working class people, the introduction of the water charges was a further cynical squeezing of working people while multi-millionaires and companies such as Goodman International are rewarded for tax fiddles. The major political parties who form the government and the majority groupings on Dublin's new County Council have to be hit between the eyes with the revolt of the ordinary householder. The organised non-payment of these new charges is by far the best way to attempt to force a change of policy. Cash to provide decent services at local level is desperately needed but it must be squeezed from the super rich for a change."

Joe Higgins is a 'Militant Labour' Councillor on Fingal County Council. He is the co-ordinator of the Dublin Anti-Water Charges Campaign.

"Since 1984 our stand has been these charges are double taxation. Balbriggan is the last outpost in the country. The majority are opposed to the water charges but we were tentatively waiting to see if there would be a campaign.

"Now we know there's a real campaign. It was very heartening at the central meeting in Wynn's Hotel to see so many people there from all over County Dublin and to know they're behind us - we're behind them."

Bredge Tuitt, Town Commission (Independent), Balbriggan, Fingal.

"We've ten people active in the es-

tate of more than 600 houses, 80% at least are not paying, including the waiver people. I'm entitled to a waiver but I'm not applying because the government never miss an opportunity to divide workers and people on welfare. The poll tax in Britain was beaten. United we can beat this double tax."

Lisa Maher, Whitechurch (Dublin South).

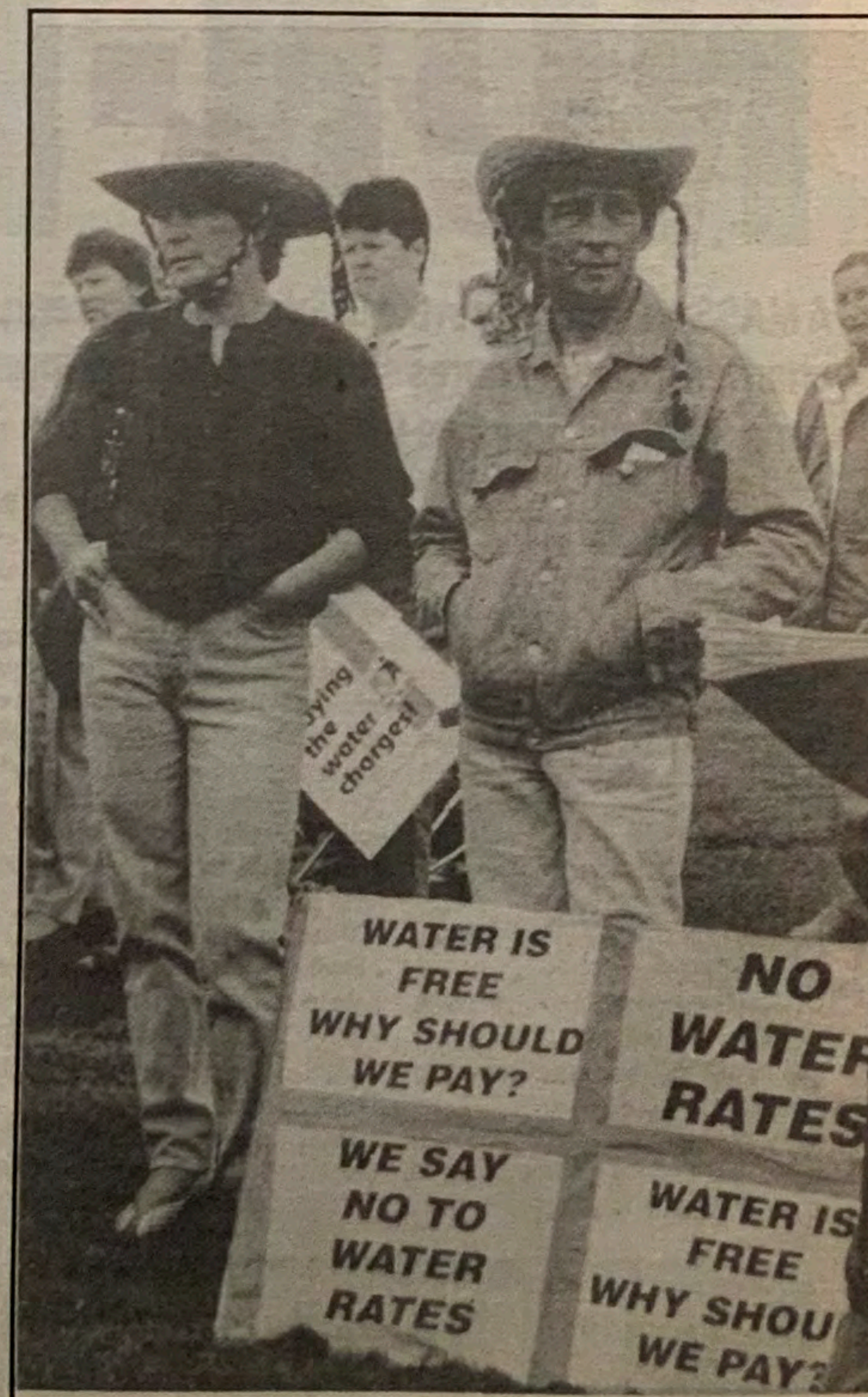
"Our local group did a door to door survey of 258 houses in Firhouse. We were surprised how strongly people felt - even those who had already paid. 75.2% did not intend to pay. We need to get more local groups active in Dub-

lin and link with Cork, Waterford and other areas resisting this double taxation. This is a fight we can win."

Gregor Kerr, Firhouse, member of Workers' Solidarity Movement.

"We've signed up non-payers and done collections - four people collected £69.70 door to door in our small estate. The bottom line is this charge is double taxation on PAYE workers. There is a great response to the campaign but we have to build it. I'd like to see more young people getting involved."

Michael O'Toole, Castle Park, Tallaght.



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BUILD THE CAMPAIGN

WHAT YOU CAN DO...



Speakers Bredge Tuite (Town Commissioner) and Councillor Joe Higgins at an Anti-Water Charges Campaign rally in Swords earlier this year

THE building of an effective anti-water charges campaign in every area in Dublin is crucial if we are to defeat this new tax and force a change of policy on the major political parties and the government.

It is particularly important to have an organised campaign to be able to meet threats to non-payers of court action or disconnection.

What this means is that every housing estate should have residents who come together as a campaign group. These groups must first ensure that all residents know that there is a non-payment campaign. This can be done through distributing campaign leaflets and posters, using the local press and community newsletters where possible and by just talking to neighbours and fellow residents.

This has the effect of letting each estate know that there is an organised campaign and can bring other residents into an active involvement.

In areas where groups are already in existence they have been going door to door in their estates, 'signing up' households who support the campaign.

So far there has been a massively favourable response to the 'sign-up' and this should be extended to all areas possible.

The local groups which are already working are also asking for contributions from each householder towards the campaign especially to cover the high cost of printing leaflets and posters. Contributions of 50p and £1 are readily being given at most doors and this will enable up to date bulletins to be printed which will be distributed to every area.

All the local groups within a defined larger area such as Swords, Blanchardstown, Tallaght or Clondalkin for example should combine in an overall group or committee.

This means that no estate is isolated but is part of a campaign in the overall area. Combining in this way is crucial to being home to the Councils, the political parties and the government that in trying to push this new tax on people they face a massive and united opposition against the charges.

As we move into the Autumn and the Councils start to make threats against non-payers, having a campaign group in each area is vitally important. The

local campaign organisation can give people the confidence to stand firm and can organise with the residents against threats of court action or disconnection.

Every householder can help out the campaign. Volunteering to drop leaflets or 'sign up' your street can be a major help. You could organise a meeting of a few neighbours and friends in your home and invite a representative from the Dublin Anti-Water Charges Campaign to speak to them.

You can join together with other residents who are willing to be involved to create a campaign group in the area. Remember that effective local groups are the key to be able to keep people united and confident in this fight against an unjust new tax.

Don't leave it all to others to do the work. If everybody did that, there would be no effective opposition and the government and councils could impose any charges they liked. Get in touch with your local campaign now!



Don't leave all the work to others!

Contact your local campaign now! Ring or write to any of the following representatives:

FINGAL:

Balbriggan/North County Dublin

Bredge Tuite (Town Commissioner), 94 Lambreecher Estate, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin. Tel: 8413516

Swords/Howth/Baldoyle

Andrew Smith, 46 Broadmeadows, Swords. Tel: 8402163

Mulhuddart/Blanchardstown/Castleknock

Councillor Joe Higgins, 155 Briarwood, Dublin 15. Tel: 8201753

SOUTH DUBLIN:

Clondalkin

Antóin Stanbridge, 12 Harelawn Dr., Clondalkin, Dublin 22. Tel: 6268236

Tallaght

Betty Palmer, 80 Homelawns Road, Tallaght, Dublin 24. Tel: 4512071

Firhouse/Knocklyon

Gregor Kerr, 160A Carrigwood, Firhouse, Dublin 24. Tel: 4947025

Rathfarnham/Rathdown

Lisa Maher, 78 Whitechurch Way, Whitechurch, Dublin 16.

SEND A DONATION...

The anti-water charges campaign is organised by ordinary working class people determined to fight the injustice by which the super-rich escape while the hard pressed ordinary person is asked to pay over and over again.

Organising the campaign costs a lot of money especially for the printing of information leaflets and bulletins.

You can help! Send a donation. Every donation, small or large, is vital to enabling the campaign to be effective.

We appeal to every individual, to residents associations and community organisations working for ordinary people to send a donation now.

Organise a fundraising event!

It can be as simple as a coffee morning in your home. It could be a disco, social or quiz in your local area. For any advice or assistance contact the campaign.

Contributions should be sent to Dublin Anti-Water Charges Campaign, c/o 155 Briarwood, Dublin 15 • Tel: 8201753. All donations will be acknowledged by post.

Title: Water Charges News, No. 1

Organisation: Dublin Anti-Water Charges Campaign

Date: 1994

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