Goold

Scottish Conservative Party

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Michael

Best wishes — help!

Ji.

EVENING NEWS 22 FEB 85

THE '85 REBELLION ON RATES

By KEN SMART

Secretary of State George Younger is facing a Conservative Party revolt over rates and new property values.

The Tory rebels are urging Mr Younger to freeze the current revaluation — and so take the heat off the householders.

Regional assessors' notices — to be delivered in just over a week's time — will add an average of 13 per cent to Scottish rates bills.

In Edinburgh, the figure is an average of 18 per cent higher. In parts of the Georgian New Town area, the rates demands will soar by about 35 per cent.

The new property values are due to take effect from April 1, and are being applied to new council budgets for the next 12 months.

The revolt was started by Tory Party executive committees in two Edinburgh constituencies. They have sent "call a halt" demands to the Secretary of State.

The executives in South Edinburgh — the seat of Scottish Local Government Minister, Michael Ancram — and Central Edinburgh (Consumer Minister Alex Fletcher) decided to act within the past 48 hours.

A third — the executive of the party in Mr Malcolm Rifkind's Pentland constituency — meet tonight. And they are expected to follow suit.

Local party managers are furious that Tory-held areas are being particularly hard hit in a shift of emphasis away from industrial to domestic ratepayers.

Another sign of revolt . . . the Conservative group on Edinburgh District Council have sent a rates demand to Mr Younger, urging him to halt the new rateable value figures.

Meanwhile, the 350,000 valuations notices in Lothian are ready to be posted on March 4.

I understand from the Scottish Office that it would now be impossible to halt sending out the statutory notices.

The Government would need to seek a special parliamentary Order if they wished to tell councils not to apply the new values in the coming year.

Defence

The Government are defending their action in ordering a revaluation in Scotland after only seven years. In England and Wales there has been no similar revaluation for the past 12 years.

Scottish Office officials say England and Wales are out of step — not Scotland. Revaluations should take place every five years.

● Lothian Region approved a motion earlier this week, declaring that, out of a rates rise of 12.5 per cent, 11.25 per cent was due directly to the withdrawal of Government rates support grant. But the Scottish Office say a substantial part of the loss of grant was due to council failure to meet Government spending guidelines.

4 years for bid to grab £10,000

A youth who temporarily blinded a security guard in an attempt to rob him of £10,000, was sent to a young offenders' institution for four years today.

It was said at the High Court in Edinburgh that 17-year-old David Greenshields sprayed a liquid, probably containing ammonia, in the guard's face as he left Livingston Development Corporation's offices in Morris Square, Dedridge.

Greenshields, 44 Main Street, Dechmont, admitted attacking John Miller, on January 14 with intent to rob him of three packets containing £10,000 in cash and £20,000 in cheques.

Caught

Although Millar was temporarily blinded he was able to push the three packets into the chute at the rear of his Securicor vehicle.

Greenshields ran away but was caught by a civilian and another guard.

Mr Edgar Prais, for Greenshields, asked for the case to be continued for a psychiatric report but Lord Justice Clerk Lord Wheatley rejected the idea.

Taste o

Rising to the occasion . . . t Dawn Evans and her classm Fiona Brown.

The girls, fourth-year pupil Wester Hailes Education Ce Edinburgh, beat off the oppos in Lothian Association of Y Clubs' Young Baker of the Y competition, which attracted a 100 entries.

RELIEF ROAD DECISION TODAY?

A decision on the proposal to build a western relief road in Edinburgh could be given today.

The 45 days of evidence to four parliamentary commissioners came to and end yesterday.

The commissioners are expected to consider their decision immediately, and deliver a verdict on the road either today or on Monday.

Knock on door led to fear

A 71-year-old Edinburgh man's months of living in fear began when he heard someone knocking at his door in the early hours.

William Harvey heard a woman say she was on her own and had nowhere to stay. He let her in. Then there was a second knock. The woman went out — and returned with two men.

At Edinburgh Sheriff court today, Pamela Blyth, a prisoner, admitted assaulting Harvey; threatening him with a hammer; demanding money from him, and stealing a television and flex and 50p while acting with Terence McGinness and another person, having gained access to Harvey's Calders home by false pretences last August 3.

She also pleaded guilty to failing to appear in court on January 10 this year after being granted bail.

Blyth's co-accused, McGuinness, was jailed for two years earlier this year.

During this trial, Harvey said he thought he

Spy-eye on the hooligans

Watch out, we've got you taped! That was the warning to football hooligans today at the official launch of a video crowd surveillance system at Tynecastle Park.

The system was inspected by Mr Allan Stewart, Scottish Office Sports Minister, who will be returning to the Hearts ground tomorrow to see it in action in the match against Rangers.

A similar system has been installed at Hibs' Easter Road stadium, and today's launch marked the end of a trial period for the equipment. Cameras inside the ground and at the main entrance enables police to pinpoint trouble early.

Rail safe pledge af crash pro

British Rail will give "top priority" to improving safety, after the recommendations of a Government investigation into last summer's Polmont train crash in which 13 people were killed.

Mr Chris Green, general manager of Scotrail, today stressed that the recommendations in the report, aimed at further improving safety, would be implemented.

It was said that patrols of lineside fencing should be stepped up.

Mr Green said today: "Simply to patrol and inspect fencing, costs us £15,000 a week in Scotland and replacement fencing costs a further £1 million a year, of which a quarter is spent on replacing vandalised fencing."

The July rail disaster involving the Edinburgh-to-Glasgow express is said to have

B F fence immedi accide said. "W it had again." Mean train to "cow-ca ready n 14 expr line wil ted by M And to-Glasg among fit fron radio drivers. FRE

Rise in inflation

Ma ho

The Scottish Border Newspaper . Established 1855

Largest Circulation in all the Border Counties

Southern Reporter

Incorporating the Kelso Chronicle, established 1783; Border Mail 1797; Border Standard 1848; Hawick Advertiser 1854; Jedburgh Gazette 1870; Hawick Express 1870.

No. 6994 | Selkirk, Thursday, February 21, 1985 | 20p

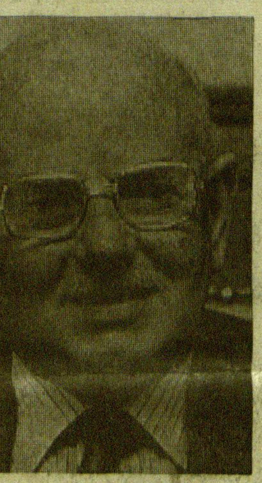
Rates plea now 'scream of agony'

BORDERS Regional Convener Tom Hunter's home will be valued for rates at £917 next year, compared with £318 this year. Elsewhere in Kelso, the valuation of Sandy Blair's jeweller's shop will go up from £322 to £1,795, and for James Stewart, the electrician, the price of revaluation will be a rise from £1,767 to £9,200.

These are just three examples to emerge this week as the full effect of the rates rise became apparent.

"We have known this was coming for months—but now it is down in black and white," said Councillor Hunter, when the Policy and Resources Committee met to strike the Regional rate.

Finance Director Mr Peter Jeary emphasised that while there would be wide variations



Convener Tom Hunter — repeated warnings.

by GORDON ANDERSON

in valuation increases—overall the increase will be 27%—the variations in the commercial sector, covering shops, hotels, petrol filling stations and so on, would be the widest of all.

On average, householders will pay 23% more, industry 2% less and commerce 41% more. He had only received the valuation roll on Monday, but an examination of commercial properties in the centre of one Border town had shown that some valuations would have increases of between 150% and 160%. "The increase will not be 2.9 times, it will be 5.5 times in some cases." Even so, Borders Region still would be paying a low rate relative to the rest of Scotland.

Mr Jeary recommended, and the committee accepted, that the overall Regional rate should be 42p in the pound, with a 4p in the pound water rate, but they and others in the Borders showed their mounting fury over the Government policies which have led to the soaring rates bills which everyone faces in the coming years.

In fact, Councillor Hunter and Chief Executive Kenneth Clark said that in their opinion, St Andrews House officials had not realised the effect on the Borders of the various financial steps they have taken in the past months.

In a last-ditch bid to avert the major impact caused by revaluation—this accounts for an estimated 18% to the rates rise—local MPs David Steel and Archy Kirkwood went to London with Mr Jeary last week, and met Mr George Younger, the Secretary of State and Under Secretary Mr Michael Ancram.

They complained about the formulae for rate support grant—as the rating valuation gets higher, forms of central government financial help gets lower—and expenditure guidelines, under which the Borders is receiving less in aid than even the Government calculates is necessary.

Mr Younger undertook to re-examine this for 1986/87, but turned down any change for this year.

In a joint statement afterwards, the MPs said: "We are very disturbed on behalf of our constituents, who are going to be very shocked at these increases. Reform of the entire system is long overdue. Sympathy from Ministers is not much use."

When Councillor Hunter read the Government's official interpretation of what had gone on and saw that the "Secretary of State said that the Borders guidelines for 1985/86 would allow them to maintain their spending at the same level in real terms as that for which they had budgeted in 1984/85 without suffering any grant penalty," Mr Hunter did not actually use the word "lies."

He said: "It is just not true."

He said that his repeated warnings about the way things were going had "turned to a scream of agony."

Some other aspects of Government propaganda also smacked of terminological inexactitudes, according to Mr Jeary. Quoting from an advertisement, Mr Jeary said the Government were giving the opinion that revaluation itself did not raise the amount local authorities had to pay.

"Oversimplistic to the point of being misleading," said Mr Jeary.

Councillor Douglas Birch wondered if reports that the Secretary of State's officials might have been puzzled by the effects that their suggestions and instructions on financial affairs were going to have, Councillor Hunter said, "Yes. I think they are baffled."

Mr Clark said: "Before Thursday's meeting, I don't think they realised the complications which faced our area."

Said Mr Jeary: "Particularly in relation to the guidelines, they unwittingly penalised us, and they have been taken aback by the impact revaluation will have on the support grant."

RUMBLES

Vice-convener George Dorward said the Secretary of State seemed to have two standards. "When Edinburgh put their rates up, he was quick to put on a rating cap. He could cap the assessor. The Secretary of State could quite easily put a stop to this."

Rumbles of revolt came from within the local Conservative ranks. The Roxburgh and Berwickshire Conservative Association, in concert with their counterparts in Tweeddale, Ettrick and Laudredale, have written to Mr Ancram.

They want an urgent meeting with him to seek Government help for commercial ratepayers.

In a letter, they pointed out that the increase in commercial rateable values in the Borders was likely to be 50% above the Scottish average.

As a result of this, £1.2M. of rate support grant would now be given to other Regions of Scotland.

The combined effect of the above average rises in rateable values, together with a large rate increase was certain to have serious consequences for commercial undertakings in the Borders, and the Associations asked that the commercial ratepayers in the Borders be treated as a special case.

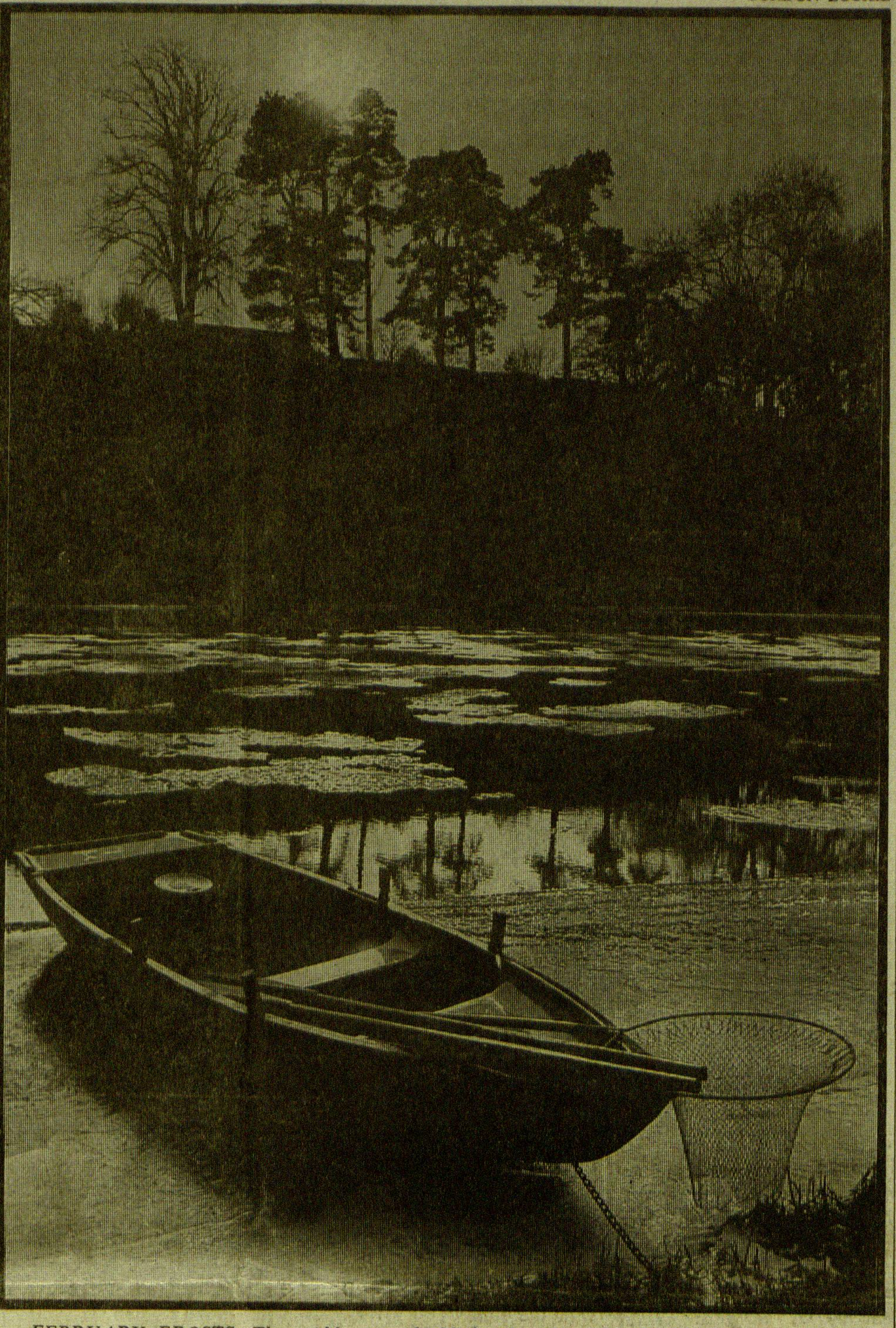
Councillor Bill Lamb pointed out what would happen in an area where commercial premises were blighted.

"I have just been to Hamilton, Wishaw and Motherwell, and half the shops there are standing empty. That could happen here."

Councillor Mrs Felicity Ballantyne said: "The bigger towns, the multi-stores can offset the rates paid here against their operations elsewhere. It is the small businessman who will suffer."

● Kelso and District Traders' Association are to hold a meeting on the rates in the Cross Keys Hotel on Monday at 7.30 p.m. Regional Convener Tom Hunter will address the meeting which will also be attended by MP Archy Kirkwood.

GORDON LOCKIE



FEBRUARY FROSTS. The midday sun highlights ice flows on the River Tweed at the Cauld near Melrose on Saturday.

Entrepreneur runs into sale problem

THE complicated wrangle surrounding Langlands Mill at Newtown St Boswells took a new twist last week with a sale of liquidation stock.

by CAROLINE WILSON

The sale was originally advertised as containing liquidation stock from Twomax in Glasgow, Deacon Knitting in Leicester and Annette Carol Ltd. at Newtown St Boswells—all companies in which the major shareholder was Martin Frost.

Mr Frost, however, told the "Southern" that he had been unable to purchase stock from the liquidator of Deacon Knitting Ltd. That company went into liquidation last November with the loss of 80 jobs and debts totalling £400,000.

Mr Frost said he had made an offer to buy the stock from the liquidator for £30,000, and about one-third of this would have been brought to Langlands Mill for sale. The remaining two-thirds, he claimed, he had already agreed to resell for £52,000 to G. A. Frost Services, another company owned by him, but not part of the Merlin Group as was Deacon Knitting.

"What happened, unfortunately, was one of the creditors objected that we were going to be making a profit," he said.

He said he had purchased the stock from three other small liquidation sales in the Midlands and some of this had been sold at Langlands. There was still stock left and this would be put on sale again this week.

Mr Frost added that one of the things he was most anxious to find a home for, was a Hattersley Loom, which, he claims, is the oldest working model of its knid in the world.

He said it was still working and is a "true museum piece."

"What we don't want to happen is for it to fall under the scrap hammer, and at the same time we want a reasonable offer for it," he said.

At the beginning of this year, Borders Regional Council appointed a liquidator for A. Hall and Sons (1982) Ltd. in an attempt to recover money due to them. At that time Mr Frost alleged they had put the wrong firm into liquidation and it should have been Glenburn Weaving which also operated from Newtown — something strongly denied by the Region.

Mr Frost said that the liquidator had ordered the factory to be locked to prevent any movement of plant or machinery.

"Normally we have had somebody in the factory to check things but this has not been the case. "Regrettably, because of the frost, radiators have burst, causing about £4,000 worth of damage.

"There is extensive flooding which has ruined most of the stock. We hope to be able to rescue some of the stock and get an insurance assessor in to sort things out."

The "Southern," unfortunately, was unable to contact the official liquidator, Mr Thomas Campbell, before going to Press.

(Picture on Page 2).

Bland reply on housing issue

A letter from the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, in reply to Roxburgh District Council's Housing Committee's comments about the lack of consultation in concentrating funds with Eildon Housing Association, was described at Monday afternoon's meeting as a "very bland reply."

Director of Housing, Robert Johnson said he was disappointed by the reply in terms of the Council's concern. It was agreed to resume dialogue with the Housing Corporation.

Motorcycle stolen

A red Honda C50 motor cycle was stolen from a garage at Morven, Venlaw Road, Peebles some time between February 2 and 9. Police are investigating.

65pc shock for Ettrick & Lauderdale

RATES in Ettrick and Lauderdale look set to rise to 10p in the pound — an increase of over 65 per cent.

This was the recommendation of Ettrick and Lauderdale District Council's policy and finance committee when they met on Tuesday night.

Provost Drew Tulley said that the responsibility for such an increase lay with the Secretary of State and described its effect upon the local ratepayers as dramatic.

"To meet increased expenditure of less than £134,000, including nearly £76,000 to meet anticipated inflation, still adds the astronomic sum of nearly £614,000 to the ratepayers' bills.

"By reducing grant, the Secretary of State has transferred a large part of the burden from the taxpayer to the ratepayer.

"To those of us who remember the present Government's declared commitment to abolish rates, this must seem very strange indeed."

Provost Tulley explained that the 65% increase was largely due to a reduction in the rate support grant.

"A 6.2% increase in expenditure has brought about a 65% increase to the ratepayers, despite some severe pruning in the last three months," he said.

Director of Finance Mr Duncan Brown added that Ettrick and Lauderdale had kept within the Secretary of State's guidelines.

PENALISED

"We have a lower guideline in absolute terms," said Mr Brown, and it is considerably down in 1985/86.

"In 1984/85 the District Council thought they had a realistic guideline, but by keeping below it, we have been penalised."

Mr Brown added that they were the only authority in Scotland in absolute terms to have finished on a lower guideline in 1985/86.

"Yet despite this we have a huge rate increase.

by Hilary Mactaggart

"The needs element of the rate support grant total for Scotland is reduced and then the Secretary of State reduces the relief given to ratepayers."

Mr Brown explained that £661,000 of the needs element had been lost — just over 51% of that grant.

"As far as the Borders is concerned, revaluation shows that the proportional increase in rateable values is greater than that for Scotland, so the gap narrows between the actual and the standard product," Mr Brown added.

"This means that more will be paid by the ratepayer and less by the government."

Provost Tulley explained that they had a commitment to the local ratepayers, and so there were difficulties in cutting services.

"We could stop providing refuse sacks, close the baths, or stop grants to village halls, but that is hardly a choice I would want to make."

Provost Tulley refuted the claims of Secretary of State George Younger that 'those who stayed within the limits would have nothing to fear'.

"We have already been denied the right to have a meeting with central government on this issue, and I just wonder if we can't cope with the increase, how is the domestic ratepayer expected to."

Provost Tulley added that the only really new expenditure in 1985-86 was the improvements to the public conveniences at Stow amounting to £10,000.

He said that for 1985-86, relative expenditure need had been increased to £1,816 million, but the guideline had not increased due to a change in the method of calculation by the Scottish Office.

"Regarding the modest increase in expenditure, it is interesting to note that not only is this well below the relative expenditure need as calculated for this District by the Scottish Office, it is also within the lower amount of the guideline also fixed by the Scottish Office," said Provost Tulley.

"The old adage was 'whoever pays the piper, calls the tune'. The Scottish Office calls the tune, as far as local government is concerned more and more, but their contribution to the piper gets less and less."

Both Councillor Ella Phaup and Alec Turnbull reacted to the rise to 10 pence by saying they were "living in a dictatorship" while Councillor Riddle Dumble added: "I am beginning to wonder if the Secretary of State is worth having in Scotland, as everything seems to be dictated from London."

Councillor Tom Henderson said: "The Secretary of State is not accountable to anyone other than Mrs Thatcher."

"The District will simply go derelict," said Councillor Turnbull," as it is impossible for some of the commercial properties to continue."

Bailie Bill Hardie seconded the rise to 10p "with great reluctance".

Provost clips wings of Guardian Angels

JEDBURGH Provost George Miller has classed Guardian Angels proposals as "the first step to gang warfare".

by JOHN ROSS SCOTT

In what was at times a heated debate at Jedburgh Community Council on Tuesday evening, members took it in turn to attack the idea—suggested by Community Councillor Bill Petrie in the "Southern" last month — of having youngsters patrolling the streets in an effort to curb petty crime.

Councillor Petrie was unable to attend the meeting, due to being "away on family business," but in his place Councillor Pat Miller spoke to the controversial item which he had placed on the agenda.

She said: "The suggestion made was not to copy the American Guardian Angels movement. That would be too dramatic. Councillor Petrie, like others in the town, is worried about the increase in vandalism, small crimes and in particular the woman being mugged on Canongate Bridge recently.

"All that he asks is that consideration be given to a scheme based loosely on the Guardian Angels idea. If someone was around the streets at night, it might be enough to deter criminals."

Provost Miller said he was concerned about the implications of the idea.

"I think it would be the first step to gang warfare, and would have an adverse effect on the Borders way of life. In the city, where people do not know each other so well, it may be feasible, but here where everyone knows everyone else, it would be counter-productive," he said.

Agreeing, Councillor George Jeffrey said it could lead to groups of youngsters ganging up on each other.

Concern over the issue was shown by the attendance at the meeting of a delegation from the "Unklubbable" Youth Club in the town and the police presence of Superintendent Harry Gilmour, soon to be Chief Superintendent, and Inspector Bob Bell.

Superintendent Gilmour said he had reservations about the scheme.

He said: "Mr Petrie seems to have suggested that such public vigilance was necessary

(Continued on Page 2)

Galashiels nightclub shuts down

GALASHIELS' controversial JJJs nightclub has closed.

Company secretary Allan Crawford said on Monday that the club, situated at 56-62 Overhaugh Street, had gone into voluntary liquidation, resulting in the loss of a total of 16 jobs — including four full-time posts.

Director James Farish told the "Southern" yesterday (Wednesday) that the building was now being offered for sale.

The JJJs had its entertainments licence suspended for one year back in November, 1983, after Ettrick and Lauderdale Licensing Board judged that public disorder had adversely affected neighbouring properties.

The suspension was, however, overruled by Sheriff James Paterson in June, when he found the Licensing Board guilty of a miscarriage of justice.

It was reported in the "Southern" at that time that the re-investment of the entertainments licence had given the centre an "economic lifeline," but that its future would remain uncertain.

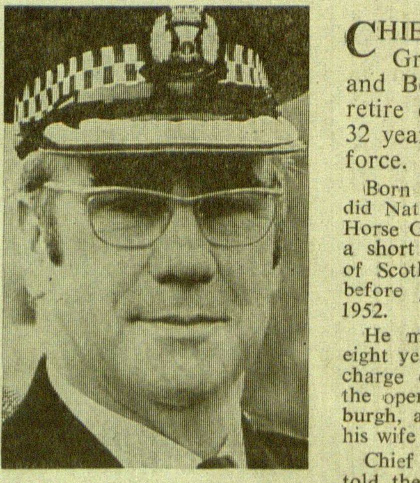
Liquor raid

A quantity of wine and spirits were stolen from A. R. Frater, Licensed Grocers, St Andrew's Street, Galashiels, early on Sunday morning. A window was smashed during the robbery. Police are investigating.

Weather Outlook

Today (Thursday), mostly cloudy at first with local mist or fog patches. Outbreaks of rain spreading in from west. Max. temp. 7°C. Min. overnight −2°C, giving frost. Wind moderate to fresh south-westerly. Friday, mostly dry with sunny periods. Local mist or fog patches at first, rain spreading in during evening. Max. temp. 7°C. Min. 4°C. Wind, westerly light to moderate, fresh at times, becoming generally fresh or strong later. Outlook for the weekend, mostly cloudy with outbreaks of rain or drizzle. Mild with fresh or strong south-westerly winds reaching gale force at times in exposed areas.—Glasgow Weather Centre.

Police Chief to retire



Chief Supt. Grant Till.

CHIEF Superintendent Grant Till of Lothian and Borders Police is to retire on March 14 after 32 years' service with the force.

Born in Annan, Mr Till (55) did National Service with the Horse Guards and worked for a short time with the South of Scotland Electricity Board before joining the police in 1952.

He moved to the Borders eight years ago, after being in charge of communications in the operations room at Edinburgh, and set up home with his wife Elizabeth in Jedburgh.

Chief Superintendent Till told the "Southern" on Tuesday: "My retiral is not without mixed feelings. The eight years in the area have passed like a Borders spring, and my wife and I have been so warmly received wherever we have journeyed."

He went on to pay tribute to the co-operation of officers, staff and elected members, and said he had enjoyed in particular, during his time in the Borders, events such as royal visits, common ridings and festivals.

Talking of the police force he said: "There have been changes in the police during my term, but there were never changes for changes' sake. Today is tomorrow's history and we must move with the times.

"The results over the last few years have, I feel, vindicated past decisions. Now, with the Borders up to its new strength, more officers are able to perform foot patrols which will lead to contact so vital to continuing success," he added.

Mr Till's successor will be Superintendent Harry Gilmour (46), a native of Peebles, who moved to the Borders force from Corstorphine a year ago.

He lives in Hawick with his wife Andrea — a teacher at Trinity Primary School — and two sons Kenneth (19) and Elliot (11).

Mr and Mrs Till will not be leaving the Borders, they plan to convert their home in Jedburgh into a guest house.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, DEATHS ETC

BIRTHS

CARLYLE. — At the Eastern General Hospital on Sunday, 17th February, 1985, to Alan and Elizabeth a daughter (Emma). A sister for Lesley. Both well.

CHAPPLE. — At Watford General on 19th February, 1985, to Stephen and Jennifer (nee Roden) a daughter (Lisa). Both well.

GUTHRIE. — At Eastern General Hospital on 15th February, 1985 to Drew and Jean a daughter (Fiona). Thanking all in attendance.

RENILSON. — At St Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth, on Tuesday, 12th February, 1985, to Mark and Debbie a son (Cameron Jef). Both well.

VALENTINE. — At Newmarket, Ontario, on 14th February, 1985, to Gavin and Anna (nee Blackadder) a son (Grant John).

W.GHT. — To Colin and Sarah, Galashiels, at the Eastern General Hospital, Edinburgh, on 8th February, 1985, a daughter (Lucy). A sister for Katie. Many thanks to all hospital staff.

WILLIAMS. — On 16th February, 1985, to Paul and Fiona (née Dun) a son (Mathew James)—Beach Cottage, Pencaitland, Swansea.

ENGAGEMENTS

DONALDSON — McAULAY. — The engagement is announced between Neil Donaldson, youngest son of Mr and Mrs T. Donaldson, Smedheugh, Selkirk, and Catriona McAulay, daughter of Dr G. B. McAulay, Netherlaggen, Dunscore, and Mrs Jean McAulay, Dryden, Ashkirk.

HILL — MacDONALD. — Both families have pleasure in announcing the engagement of Alistair, youngest son of Mr and Mrs W. Hill, Dunglass Estate, Cockburnspath, and Sheila, only daughter of Mr and Mrs A. MacDonald, 16 Glenkinchie, Pencaitland.

LENAGHEN—DOUGAL. — Both families have pleasure in announcing the engagement of Stuart, son of Charles and Pat Lenaghen, 50 Dobbie's Road, Bonnyrigg, and Audrey, daughter of George and Sheila Dougal, 2 Hope Knowe, Earlston.

TAIT—BERTRAM. — The engagement is announced between Kim, only daughter of Mr and Mrs J. Bertram, 59 Langlee Drive, Galashiels, and David, youngest son of Mrs J. M. Tait and the late Mr J. Tait, Rose Cottage, Newtown St Boswells.

MARRIAGES

MILLS—COSSAR.—Fiona's family of 4 Ladyrig View, Heiton, Kelso, are happy to announce her marriage to Gary, only son of Lawrie and Margaret, 45 Wakefield Avenue, Edinburgh, at Haymarket Registry Office on 12th February 1985.

TURNBULL—CAMPBELL. — At Edinburgh on 15th February, 1985, Thomas Shiell, youngest son of Sarah and the late Robert Turnbull, 34 Fraser Avenue, Hawick, to Yvonne, twin daughter of Kenneth and Maureen Campbell, 1c Eastfield Road, Hawick.

DEATHS

ANDERSON. — Suddenly, at Peel Hospital, Galashiels, on Monday, 18th February, 1985, Thomas Archibald Mitchell Anderson, Roslea, Newstead, Melrose, son of the late Robert and Janet Anderson. Funeral to Wairds Cemetery, Melrose, on Friday, 22nd February, at 1.30 p.m., to which all friends are invited.

CAIRNS. — At Drumlanrig Hospital, Hawick, on 15th February, 1985, Mary Cairns, late of 5 Well House, Jedburgh, daughter of the late Thomas and Isabella Cairns (Edgerston). Interred at Castlewood Cemetery, Jedburgh, on 18th February.

DARLING. — Suddenly, on 16th February, 1985, Elaine Darling (née Ritchie), dearly loved wife of Craig Darling, 41 Rosenfield Drive, Selkirk. Interred Shawfield Cemetery, Selkirk.

FROUD. — Peacefully, on 20th February, 1985, Cecil Froud, beloved husband of Rena Thomson 32 Loan, Hawick, dear father of Bobby, Terence and Pauline, and much loved grandfather of Tracy, Gary and Mark. Requiem Mass in SS. Mary and David's, Hawick, on Friday, 22nd February, at 10.15 a.m. Interment thereafter in Wellogate Cemetery, at 11 a.m., to which all friends are invited.

GIBSON. — Peacefully, at 13 Rutherford Square, Kelso, on 19th February, 1985, Annie Cockburn Biggar, formerly of Cherrytrees, dearest wife of John, a dear mother to Jean and Francis, and a devoted granny to Jim and Joan and all her great-grandchildren. Cremated at Mortonhall Crematorium.

HALL. — At Peel Hospital, Galashiels, on 13th February, 1985, Mona Islay, Hawthorn Lodge, Galashiels, daughter of the late Lieutenant-General Sir Noel Mason-MacFarlane, wife of the late John B. Hall, adored mother of Jock, Islay, Mike and Richard, and granny of Jonathan, Susannah, Peter and Jamie. Cremated at Mortonhall Crematorium, Edinburgh.

HOPE.—Peacefully, at Hay Lodge Hospital, Peebles, on 19th February, 1985, Robert John Hope, of 72 Tweeddale Avenue, Walkerburn, dearly loved husband of Helen Mitchell. Service in Walkerburn Parish Church, to which all friends are invited, on Friday, 22nd February at 1.30 p.m., thereafter interment in Innerleithen Cemetery at 2.15 p.m.

JONES. — At Peel Hospital, Galashiels, on 12th February, 1985, Arthur Trevor Jones, beloved husband of Ann Robertson, "Brightside," Leithen Road, Innerleithen, and much loved father and grandfather. Cremated at Mortonhall Crematorium, Edinburgh.

LETHAM. — Peacefully, at home, 8 Priorwood Court, Melrose, on 18th February, 1985, James Leiper Letham, dearly beloved husband of Emmie Wharton and much loved dad, papa and great-papa. Cremated Mortonhall Crematorium, Edinburgh.

MELROSE. — At home on 17th February, 1985, Christina, dearly loved wife of Alexander Melrose, J.P., 14 The Meadows, Peebles, dear mother of Ian and loving grandmother. Cremated at Mortonhall Crematorium.

MOOR. — Peacefully at 1 Priory Bank Villas, Coldstream, on Thursday, 7th February, 1985, Elizabeth Douglas Young (Edy), beloved wife of Robert and dearly loved mother of Elizabeth. Cremated Seafield on 11th February. No letters please.

MOFFAT. — After a long illness bravely borne, at Dingleton Hospital, Melrose, on 12th February, 1985, Elizabeth Smith, beloved wife of the late William Moffat, formerly of "The Gables," Waltekknowe Terrace, Galashiels, dear mother of Jane and Scott and a much loved grandmother of Will, Ralph and Rachel. Interred Heatheryett Cemetery, Galashiels.

O'HARA. — At Sanderson Hospital, Galashiels, on 15th February, 1985, Hannah (née McCartney), late of 70 Bongate, Jedburgh, beloved wife of the late John O'Hara. Interred at Castlewood Cemetery, Jedburgh, on 20th February.

TAIT. — At Adelaide, Australia, on 14th February, 1985, Albert Edwin Tait (formerly of St Boswells), beloved husband of Jean Riddell.

REID.—Suddenly, at home, Station Road, Earlston, on 18th February, 1985, John Haig Reid, dear father of Ian and Tony. Service in Earlston Parish Church on Thursday, 21st February, at 12.30 p.m. with burial thereafter in Earlston Cemetery, to which all friends are invited.

WILSON. — At her home on 13th February, 1985, Janet (Nettie) Ann Darling Wilson, 38 Raeburn Place, Selkirk. Interred Shawfield Cemetery, Selkirk.

WEAR. — At Peel Hospital, Galashiels, on 19th February, 1985, William Edward, most dearly loved husband of Ina Rosebank, 37 The Loan, Selkirk, very dear father of Alan and Betty and loving grandad of Iona and Jane. Funeral to Shawfield Cemetery, Selkirk, on Thursday, 21st February, at 1 p.m. Friends desiring to attend please meet cortege at cemetery gate.

THANKS FOR SYMPATHY

ARMSTRONG. — The family of the late Veronica Armstrong wish to thank all relatives and friends for their kind expressions of sympathy received in their very sad bereavement, also the Rev. David Torrance for his comforting service and all who attended at Warriston Crematorium.—3 Mamore Drive, Earlston.

CROSSAN.—Mrs Martha Crossan and family wish to thank all relatives, friends and neighbours for their many kind expressions of sympathy, letters, Mass cards and flowers received in their recent bereavement; they also wish to thank doctors and nursing staff at Jedburgh Cottage Hospital for their care and attention, Father Conway, Sister Antonia and sisters at Eden House for their kindness and comfort.—29 Forthill Terrace, Jedburgh.

LOTHIAN. — The family of the late Adam Lothian wish to thank all relatives, friends and neighbours for their kind expressions of sympathy and floral tributes received in their recent sad bereavement. Special thanks to the medical staff of Kelso and to the Rev. D. Guides for his comforting service, and to all who attended at Kelso Cemetery.—11 Oakfield Court, Kelso.

MILLER. — Mrs M. Miller and family wish to thank all relatives and friends for their kind expressions of sympathy, cards, letters and flowers received in their recent bereavement. Thanks to the local doctors and nursing staff at Peel Hospital for their care and attention, also the Rev. Torrance and Rev. Hogg for their comforting service and kind support and to all who attended at the cemetery.—Broomfield House, Earlston.

PATTERSON. — Mrs Patterson and Alistair would like to thank their many relatives and friends for the supportive messages of sympathy and condolence and floral tributes received at the time of their recent sad bereavement. Our sincere thanks to the Rev. W. Hanley Moore for his kindness and comforting words and heartfelt thanks also to the Rev. Mr Andrews for his visit and prayer, and to Doctors Montgomerie, Muir and Dorward for their unfailing attendance.—33 Bourtrees, Jedburgh.

REDBURN. — The family of the late Martha Wylie Redburn wish to thank relatives and friends for the kind expressions of sympathy received in their recent sad bereavement, family doctors, doctors and staff of Inch Hospital, Kelso, for their care and attention, and all who attended at Warriston Crematorium, Edinburgh.—31 Roxburgh Place, Newtown St Boswells.

IN MEMORIAM

BLAIKIE. — In loving memory of my dear wife, Isabella Wilson, died 26th February, 1983, dear mother of Robert and David. Sadly missed. Forever in our thoughts.—Eck Blaikie, 27 Everett Road, Earlston.

LAIDLAW. — In loving memory of our dear son, Bruce, who died 25th February, 1982.

Another year has come and gone,
But memories of you linger on.
—Dad and mum.

ROBSON. — Treasured memories of my dear wife, a loving mother and gran, died 19th February, 1984.
—Andrew and family, Jedburgh.

SMITH. — In loving memory of a dear husband, Peter, died 22nd February, 1984.

One year has passed since that sad day
You closed your eyes and slipped away.
You went so quietly without goodbye,
But memories of you will never die.
Sadly missed.
—Alice, 39 Weirgate Avenue, St Boswells.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

MARY SCOTT, 6 The Row, Oxton, wishes to thank everyone who was involved in organising the surprise 80th birthday party in the War Memorial Hall on Friday, 15th February. Many thanks also for the beautiful cards and gifts and a special thank you to all the bairns, who over the years visited the Sweetie Shop, for coming along and joining in the party.

Witnesses sought

Police are appealing for witnesses to an incident at the Scottish Gas depot, Galafoot, Galashiels, on Monday night and early on Tuesday morning, when an axle and wheels were stolen from a trailer parked at the depot.

Bible Thought

Do not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling; but on the contrary bless, for to this you have been called, that you may obtain a blessing.

I Peter 3:9

It is easy to retaliate when we feel hurt or slighted to stoke the fires of hatred and revenge, but Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God."

Doubts raised over Guardian Angels

(Continued from Page 1)

because of a background of ever-increasing crime in the Borders. The truth is that crime in Roxburgh District over the past year has dropped by 16% and the detection rate, thanks to the support of the public, was up slightly.

"Admittedly, the situation in Jedburgh is not quite so rosy. Crime here has only dropped by 1%. But nevertheless it indicated that there is not the dramatic increase which Councillor Petrie suggests."

He worried about how youngsters would be selected and trained, pointing to the difficulties experienced by the police in selecting, training and disciplining their own officers, and in particular the suggestion that the youngsters undertaking the patrols should be trained in self-defence.

"We are talking about young people between the ages of 16 and 18 years who are still learning to cope with life. The whole idea is fraught with danger ,and insurance aspects or liabilities may also be involved."

Tudor Gebbie, Community Education worker, representing the Youth Clubs said he, too, was concerned about the idea.

"While we support the idea of young people doing something constructive in the town, when something like this comes along with references to self-defence, the idea comes forward of a para-military vigilante pick-axe-wielding group.

"Our youngsters have discussed the subject of Guardian Angels, and while there is a definite attraction for a lot of young people, it is probably for the worst aspects," he said.

Councillor Richard Gordon said the way forward to combatting petty crime and vandalism in Jedburgh was to invest in, and support, the youth clubs in the town.

"By giving the youngsters things to do and a place to go at night may not stop crime, but I believe it would reduce it. A lot of the vandalism carried out on our streets today is done out of sheer boredom."

Concluding the debate, Provost Miller said: "Rather than start up a Guardian Angels brigade, the public themselves should be more vigilant, and have no fear of dialling 999 if they see a crime being committed."

Retiral presentation

AFTER 38 years with an established Kelso company, seed packer Albert Paterson is 'packing' it in.

For the popular bachelor, of 11b Roxburgh Street — known to his friends as Bert — retires this week from Sinclair Horticulture and Leisure at the age of 65.

Bert has seen many changes in his time — a period in which he saw four name alterations from, Laing and Mathers, to Associated Seeds, to Sinclair McGill to the firm's current title and format.

A member of a well-known Sprouston family, he joined the business after completing six years' national service in the Far East with the Royal Observer Corps, working in the then Laing and Mathers Woodmarket shop.

He later took charge of transport at the Mayfield Garden Centre, and latterly was a seed packer in the premises in Abbey Row. A keen bowler and gardener, Bert also enjoys following the local rugby side.

Last Wednesday evening he received a carriage clock from his colleagues and a cheque from the company at a small presentation in the Waggon Inn. Bert said he had enjoyed his years with the company, during which time he had made many special friends.

(Picture on Page 25)

Cancer Research funds

A TOTAL of £800 was raised at a Campaign for Cancer Research sale of work in Victoria Halls, Selkirk, on Saturday, and organisers said that they were very satisfied with the sum.

The Selkirk branch recently sent £7000 to Cancer Research and have already raised the first £1000 of their target for the current financial year.

Furniture is now being collected for the clearing house sale in October and can be uplifted for storage by members.

Papers snatch

A bundle of Sunday newspapers was stolen from the doorway of 51 High Street, Innerleithen, in the early hours of Sunday morning. Police are investigating.

Sponsored slim

Local farmer Jim Pate of Mossilee and shopkeeper Kenneth Mackay have embarked on a sponsored slim in aid of Save the Children Fund. Jim, who weighed in at 14 st. 5 lb., and Kenneth, at 13 st., will be on a rigid diet for the next three weeks.

Both are members of Galashiels Rotary Club and Mrs Janice Hunt, Borders branch secretary of Save the Children Fund, will explain the fund's work at a meeting of Rotary next week.

Coffee morning

A coffee morning held by the Bield Social Club at Mungo Park Court, Selkirk, on Saturday, raised a clear profit of over £212. A sales table, raffle and bric-a-brac helped attract a big public support. A committee meeting is to be held on March 7.

OBITUARY

Mr James Lawrie

A FORMER Provost of Peebles and one of the town's most loyal servants, Mr James Lawrie, died last week in his 92nd year.

Originally from the Bathgate area, he served in the First World War before taking up a teaching post in Kelso.

In the early 1940s he moved to Kingsland School in Peebles, where he was headmaster until his retirement in 1960. When the school was rebuilt, he was invited back in 1974 to peform the official opening ceremony.

He always took a keen interest in the school and while he was there was heavily inolved in the school's savings movement, work which earned him the MBE.

In the 1930s he was also actively involved in the Scottish school cruises.

He was also awarded a Fellowship of the Educational Institute of Scotland by his own profession.

He was elected as a Peebles Town Councillor in 1946, after which he held various posts within the council. He was nominated Provost in 1957 and remained so until 1967.

He was a member of Peeblesshire County Council from 1960 to 1972 and from 1967 to 1972, vice-convener.

During his long term in office, he also officiated at the royal visit of the Queen and Prince Philip to Peebles.

Described by many as a true gentleman, he was a popular after-dinner speaker and in 1950 was Warden of Neidpath. He was an elder of the Old Parish Church since 1943.

A keen reader and lover of music, he was greatly respected by all those who worked with him, both in his teaching days and in local government.

Mr Cecil Froud

HAWICK, the Borders and Scottish rugby lost one of its favourite sons through the death on Wednesday of one of the game's true characters, Cecil Froud.

Cecil, who is survived by his wife Rena, sons Bobby and Terence, and daughter Pauline, captained Hawick in season 1947-48 and was a highly respected figure in the town.

A bricklayer to trade, he was a member of Hawick Liberal Club and a keen supporter of Hawick Common Riding.

Cecil, who was 64, will be best remembered for two of Mansfield Park's most amusing incidents, described on Wednesday by BBC Television commentator Bill McLaren.

"There are two lovely stories about Cecil, the first of which was when a Hawick v. Heriot's match in the 1950s was cancelled due to frost.

"Heriot's arrived, and it was decided to play the match despite the absence of a referee. Cecil had already started his New Year celebrations, but was brought to Mansfield Park in a taxi after several coffees.

"The upshot of the story was that Heriot's took a drop goal, Cecil caught it and ran over for one of the great Mansfield Park tries.

"The other amusing story was when, in 1947, Cecil was hooking against a Scandinavian player called Rolf Korren in a tie with Stewart's Colleges in the Hawick Sevens. They had a real set-to and both ended up with split noses.

"At the get-together that night, however, they were both seen dancing together, the best of friends."

Letter to the Editor

Present heating allowance 'patently unjust'

Sir, — Mr Ian Goldie, Press Officer for the South of Scotland SNP Euro-Constituency, hits the nail on the head in his letter (Southern Reporter, February 14) pointing out that the heating allowance system is patently unjust.

SNP chairman Gordon Wilson MP, has for years led the fight for a fairer heating deal for Scotland, but still thousands of Scots die from hypothermia annually, and still the Government does nothing.

The obvious injustice in this issue has made many Scots realise that we should look after ourselves, and that only by voting for the SNP at each and every opportunity will they ever get the chance to do that. — Yours etc.,

JOHN MITCHELL
Merry Cottage,
Orange Lane,
near Coldstream.

(More Letters to Editor on Pages 6 and 25)

Money stolen

A purse containing a sum of money was stolen from the office within the operating theatre area at Peel Hospital, Galashiels on Monday. Police are investigating.

MUSEUM PIECE. Martin Frost, company director at Langlands Mill, Newtown St Boswells, and his Hattersley loom, which he claims is one of th e oldest in the world.

POLICE CALL

LOTHIAN and Borders Police are appealing to the public for help in detecting the following crimes:

- Between Saturday, February 9 and Monday, February 11 a hut at Newby Court, School Brae, Peebles was broken into and a quantity of tools stolen.
- Money was stolen from an unlocked drawer in room two, hut F, Peel Hospital, Galashiels between 7.30 p.m. and 2 p.m. on Tuesday, February 12.
- The manager's office at Hawick Abbatoir was ransacked between Monday, February 1 and Tuesday, February 12 and £79 cash stolen.
- A quantity of foodstuffs were stolen when a canteen on the building site at Huntlyburn was broken into. Some cash was also stolen.
- Between Tuesday, January 8 and Wednesday, February 13 a quantity of tools were stolen when a house at Bridgend, Ancrum was broken into.
- A video recorder and cheque book were stolen when a house at 55 Hillend Drive, Hawick was broken into between 11.30 p.m. on Friday, February 15 and 2 a.m. on Saturday, February 16.
- A quantity of jewellery was stolen when a house at 9A Galalaw Road, Hawick was broken into on Friday, February 15.

Technology revolution at Jed Grammar

UP until recently, Jedburgh Grammar School pupils had to cope with very basic equipment for their computer studies. But all has changed now, thanks to the TVEI project.

It is partly due to the school's new rector, Mr Gerald Adams, a co-author of the submission from Borders Regional Council which went to the Manpower Services Commission, that the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) Project came to the Borders.

Explaining the benefits of the new TVEI room at Jedburgh Grammar, Mr Adams said on Monday: "Some of the pupils are now getting experience with items of equipment and technology which without TVEI. A class can now work with the computers, which is much more satisfying than having one computer for the whole class."

"In the future, we are hoping to use the room for business studies and technical subjects. The core of subjects taught at the moment are computing, information technology and aspects of personal and social development."

The new centre, in the room adjacent to the school canteen, caters for the needs of 40 pupils, under the guidance of the Jedburgh TVVEI co-ordinator, Chris Veitch.

SCREEN TEST. Maths teacher Chris Veitch, the co-ordinator of the Jedburgh Grammar School T.V.E.I. unit, supervises Gillian Watson, Jill Douglas and Lesley Elliot as they feed data into the computers.

Accordionists to fore

THE N.A.O. South of Scotland Area Accordion Championships were held in the Govan Hall, Glasgow, on Saturday, when the Bill Sharp Accordion Orchestra finished in third place in the intermediate orchestra section, playing "Prelude to Act 1 La Traviata."

Pupils of Bill, playing solo and duet, were again amongst the prizewinners.

Ian Lowthian and Wendy Davidson of Selkirk won the intermediate duet, while Tracy James (Lempitlaw) and Kevin Todd (Duns) finished runners-up.

In the under-10 Scottish traditional competition, David Lothian (Selkirk) and Sally Runciman (Tweedbank) finished in third and fifth place respectively.

In the under-12 section, Iona Runciman (Tweedbank), was fifth in the traditional class and sixth in the classical.

Lorna Jeffrey (Earlston) was third in the under-14 Scottish traditional and Ian Lowthian fourth equal.

In the under-16 Scottish traditional section, Graham Jeffrey (Earlston) was fourth, and Nicholas Dagg (Earlston) and Ian Lowthian fifth equal while Tracy James was sixth.

The Junior Championship solo, under-16 classical, is the area qualifier for the British Championships being held at Skegness at the end of May.

Graham Jeffrey finished in equal third place, and is one of five players who now go through to the national final.

Primary Blackboard — Your School News!

EDENSIDE

The PTA will meet in the school on Wednesday, March 13, at 7.30 p.m. for a session on computers.

In friendly netball games against Yetholm Primary School the following were the result: Edenside 'A' 14, Yetholm 5; Edenside 'B' 3, Yetholm 11.

Mr Ness, Cleansing Superintendent with Roxburgh District Council, visited Class P.5S whose topic is presently "Public Services." Previously, as part of the same study, they saw how Kelso Swimming Pool works when Mr J. Currie, bathsmaster, showed them over the baths plant.

SCOTLAND'S NEWSPAPER

CITY EDITION

GLASGOW HERALD

203rd year—No. 24 SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1985 Twenty Two Pence

Tory revolt may stop property revaluation

EXCLUSIVE by FRANCES HORSBURGH,
Local Government Correspondent

THE Government may be forced to abandon this year's property revaluation in Scotland because of the growing conviction among Scottish Conservative Party leaders that it is a huge vote loser.

Sir James Goold, Scottish Conservative Party chairman, said he believes Ministers should consider suspending the revaluation pending a review of the rating system.

He said he had raised the matter directly with the Prime Minister. The situation was becoming "intolerable" for Scottish ratepayers and was made worse by the fact that there had not been a revaluation in England for 12 years.

Scottish Secretary Mr George Younger said yesterday he would be prepared to look at any suggestion made by Sir James but he emphasised the difficulties which stood in the way of any last-minute suspension and the blow it would mean for industrial ratepayers who will benefit from the new valuations.

The rates revolt in the Scottish Conservative Party has erupted after revelations of the full impact on rate bills of the substantial shift of the rating burden on to domestic ratepayers in the revaluation.

There is deep and growing concern at all levels in the party, already gearing itself up for the regional council elections next spring, that the people worst hit by the inflated rates rises will be Tory voters.

In Strathclyde, for example, half of the 25% rise in regional rates for domestic payers is due to the revaluation shift. In Edinburgh, revaluation is expected to add at least an average of 15% to domestic city rates bills.

It is already clear that rates reform will be the major topic at the Tory Party conference in Perth in May and strongly worded resolutions are already being drafted by constituency parties.

Although there is no suggestion that Mrs Thatcher favours suspending revaluation, she has already told Scottish Tory leaders that she is very concerned and is anxious to do something to ease the burden for Scottish ratepayers.

Sir James criticised the timing of revaluation as "inappropriate coming on top of the other Government reductions in rate support grant which also affect rates."

He confirmed that the Scottish Tory Party's local government committee is urgently engaged in trying to find one acceptable alternative to the rating system. Without raising hopes too high he believes it may be possible to unveil an initiative at the party conference in May.

Mr Younger dismissed the idea that only Tory voters would be hit by the revaluation. He said that if authorities had kept within Government spending guidelines the effect of the revaluation would have been very much smaller. After his decision to raise domestic relief to 5p in the £1, the effect would not have been more than 8%.

Mr Younger said: "The real source of the present problem we are in is the persistent refusal of some major authorities to bring their expenditure down and that is why rate support grant has been reduced this year. Every evidence is that if we had not reduced it, they would merely have spent more and the rates bill would be just as big as it is."

Concern about the coming rates increases which are expected to average 20-25%, has spread throughout the Scottish Tory Party.

Mr Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden MP) said yesterday: "I would certainly be prepared to suspend the revaluation if I could be sure that by the time of the next General Election there was a carefully considered and workable alternative to rates.

"There is a deep anxiety among members of the public about the domestic rates system. My constituents are reminding me very forcibly about the commitments given at previous General Elections to reform the existing system."

Lothian region's convener, Councillor Brian Meek said: "Coincidentally and without knowing Sir James's opinion, I have just written to my constituency chairman in Pentlands urging that they support the idea of a suspension of revaluation.

"For the past 10 years I have been arguing that there should be reform of the rating system to make more people pay for the services they receive and I see such a suspension as an ideal opportunity to press this case."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, Tory MP for Edinburgh West, confirmed last night that he had also written to Mr Younger, expressing "very considerable concern" about the effects of revaluation. Lord James said he believed revaluations in Scotland were "too frequent" by comparison with England where the last one was held 12 years ago.

George MacDonald writes:

Houses in Aberdeen where the North Sea oil boom is continuing to have an effect on the property market will on average be the highest rated in Scotland because of the latest revaluation.

Mr Herbert Sturgeon, Grampian region's assessor, said yesterday: "Apart from certain areas, such as Bearsden, domestic rateable values in Aberdeen will be generally higher than Glasgow and Edinburgh. As a result of the boom which is continuing Aberdeen has become a very desirable and expensive place."

Mr Sturgeon was speaking at a news conference as 220,000 notices of new valuations were being distributed throughout the region.

Telephone lines to his office were said to be "red hot" as the notices showed rateable values are going up by about three times for domestic property and as much as four or five times for offices and shops although warehouses, factories, and workshops will not be so severely affected.

Editorial Comment—Page 6

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AN all-day air an
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boot.

GLASGOW HERALD
ESTABLISHED 1783
SCOTLAND'S NEWSPAPER

Hitting ratepayers

THE Government is having a hard time with many of its traditional supporters. It tangled with middle-class voters over student grants and pensions and now it has upset the ratepayers. This year's rates revaluation is turning into such a hot potato that the Scottish Conservative Party would like it to be dropped to prevent Tory fingers being burned in the regional elections in May. Revaluations, of course, are rarely a recipe for political popularity but this time around there are reasons for the reaction to be exceptionally strong. Some of the burden is being shifted from industry to individuals at a time when a larger part of the bill for local services is expected to be met by ratepayers. There is room for argument about whether the main trouble is local government profligacy or central Government stinginess but there is no doubt that the combined force hits ratepayers hard. With some areas facing increases of up to 300% in their rateable values a political backlash seems unavoidable and it is not surprising that the Scottish Conservative Party has been jumpy enough to launch inquiries into possible alternatives to the rating system.

This is a sensible approach, for there are two basic causes of the present unsatisfactory state of affairs. One is that local government has recently been squeezed more tightly than central Government, but the other is the fundamental inequity of the rating system itself. The Conservatives recognised this in their manifesto of 1974 but like other Governments before it the present one has ducked the challenge. The green paper of 1981 gave the subject a whirl but later the Government claimed that public response had not been strong enough to merit action. The truth is surely the opposite — public opinion favours change but the political will is lacking.

It is now nearly a decade since the Layfield inquiry set out the case for some such alternative system as local income tax. This remains the most desirable option. It is more equitable than the alternatives (such as sales tax) but still satisfies the requirement for making local government more democratically accountable. If the local authorities are to be landed with a larger share of the bill, as is now the clear trend, then the case for local tax is strengthened. The argument that it is too difficult is defeatist. The Government should respond to the suggestion of the chairman of the Scottish Conservative Party, Sir James Goold, and suspend the revaluation pending a review of the rating system.

Malone mocks Hughes in angry war of words —

CITY MPs CLASH ON RATES IN COMMONS

By BILL DOULT

THREATS of massive rates rises facing North-east householders led to angry Commons clashes over who is to blame.

Aberdeen South's Tory MP Gerald Malone insisted the culprits were big spending local authorities — like Aberdeen District Council.

But Gordon's Liberal MP Malcolm Bruce and Aberdeen North's Labour member Bob Hughes accused the Government through its cutbacks in support for local government.

Press Journal 25/1/85

The clash came during a debate on the last rates support grant settlement for Scotland which Scottish Secretary George Younger claimed struck a balance and a reasonable measure of support.

But it was not reasonable according to Mr Bruce. He pointed out that the new settlement meant that the government's contribution to council budgets in Scotland was being reduced from 66.7% down to 56.6%.

The result he said, was that while there could be no increase in services, ratepayers would have to meet substantial increases in rate demands.

But Mr Malone defended the new settlement as part of an overall policy to hold public spending steady and try to keep local council expenditure within bounds.

Mr Hughes, meanwhile, was challenging the Scottish Secretary to explain his claims that local raised rates detracted from the amount the Government could spend on centrally provided services.

"If the money is raised by a local authority on rates, how does that affect the Government's ability to spend on the Health Service they raised by taxation?" he asked.

POLICY

But the point was mocked by Mr Malone. He claimed he could not understand, from Mr Hughes' words, just what it was the opposition wanted.

The Aberdeen South MP said he assumed Mr Hughes meant that rate income should not be assessed in terms of overall public expenditure.

Mr Hughes, he suggested, would be happy if councils levied rates up to any amount without Government control of any kind.

"If that is the implication of Mr Hughes' argument, it will be sad indeed for the ratepayers of Aberdeen. It is policy or irresponsibility," claimed Mr Malone.

Aberdeen District council, he told the Commons, was not being reasonable. The council have claimed that it will close the Bon-Accord Baths, certain libraries and other services.

"Such closures and cuts are being suggested for political motives," he claimed.

SQUARE DEAL ON RATES

■ YOUR rates could go through the roof. Massive rises are forecast. Why do you pay so much? What do you get for your money? Can we bring the rates situation back under control? Today the Evening Times — the paper that cares — starts a powerful campaign to get you a Square Deal on Rates . . .

WHAT A

We are the victims of this council cash war

By CHARLES GRAHAM

THE people of Scotland, nearly every family in the land, are the victims of a savage rates battle between central and local government.

The rating system has always provoked resentment because it is so obviously unfair.

But rates have now taken on a new dimension of injustice because they are being used as a political weapon by the Government to impose its economic will upon local authorities.

It is a scandal that a pensioner on £40 a week should pay the same rates as the people in the identical house next door with working sons and daughters and an income of £400.

It is a scandal that the thrifty family who put in double glazing and central heating should pay more than their neighbours in identical property who prefer to spend their money on holidays in Benidorm.

Successive governments — at election time — have promised radical reform of the rating system, including Mrs Thatcher's Government in 1979.

None has ever delivered the promise because of "administrative difficulties" or a lack of will to tackle the problem properly.

Higher

The bulk of the money spent by local authorities comes from the taxpayer via central government in the form of rates support grant.

Since 1979 that grant has diminished each year, though local financial responsibilities remain the same or have often intensified.

The grant makes allowance for a theoretical inflation rate which is invariably worse than anticipated.

It caters for wage increases — like three per cent. — which are invariably higher than anticipated.

It budgets for costs of materials which are invariably higher than some civil servant in Whitehall thought of many months earlier.

So there is invariably a shortfall — and that has to be made up in rates.

The local authorities set their standards. They believe that buses should run at certain frequencies. That old folk need so many hours of home help. That houses have to be refurbished or new houses built.

They believe — and they were elected on this basis — that roads have to be repaired, school children given new books from time to time, parks maintained, swimming baths and sports facilities provided.

A modern community demands a certain standard of living and insists on a certain quality of local life. It elects people it thinks will provide it.

At the same time no one wants to add to already excessive dole queues. We need all our policemen and teachers, social workers and home helps. We could do with more of them.

Claims

So what does a local authority do when the crunch comes and Government help is slashed? If it wants to maintain services and avoid sackings it has to find extra money somewhere and the only existing source is rates.

The pattern of rates in Scotland has been distorted by the recent revaluation. There has been an easement for commercial and industrial ratepayers. The burden now falls mainly on the private householder.

And this is the point at which the Government claims entirely new powers of intervention.

If it thinks a local authority has charged too much in rates it claims the right to step in and order the council to reduce them.

If it fails to do so the least the Government will do is "clawback" a punitive amount from the rates support grant.

Justice

If necessary, as Scottish Housing Minister Michael Ancram proclaimed on Wednesday, the Government will drag a council before the Court of Session to ensure compliance with the law and subject offenders to all the penalties of contempt of court.

Things have surely come to a pretty pass when Britain's elected MP's threaten Britain's elected councillors with the law unless the councillors toe the Government line.

Threats or not, Scotland's local authorities are not putting up with this central dictatorship, which they regard as a total denial of local democracy.

some have gone to law against the Scottish Secretary, challenging him to prove that justice is on his side.

Others simply rebel, placing their faith in natural justice and on the support of the people who elected them.

The conflict will be resolved by the courts and by the ultimate authority of Westminster. In any battle between central and local government the localities cannot win.

But what would local people prefer? Why did they cast their votes as they did?

The local polls say clearly that they are willing to pay higher rates to keep transport, housing, educational and social services at a decent level and to avoid sackings.

Offends

But the Government says the localities can't spend all that money because it offends the public spending rules prescribed by Mrs Thatcher, Chancellor Nigel Lawson — and Mr George Younger so far as we in Scotland are concerned.

Which gives the fairer deal to the local ratepayer? Which shows the greater regard for local democracy?

The Evening Times is in no doubt. Ratepayers must be protected from spendthrift councils, but local people must be allowed to decide how they want to spend their own money.

If Mr Younger and his Government are to dictate local budgets, then there is little point in having local councils at all.

Paying rates should give us all the right to a fair measure of local independence.

TOMORROW: The cruel burden

MAN IN THE HOT SEAT

By PAUL DRURY

JACK WOOD is not exactly a household name but every property occupier in Strathclyde might have cause to remember it by the end of next month.

For the soft-spoken executive is about to become Public Enemy No. 1.

Jack Wood is the assessor for Strathclyde Region. He is the man whose calculations will result in thousands of home owners and council tenants facing an increased rates bill in April.

Along with other assessors in Scotland, Mr Wood has decided to transfer part of the rates burden from industrial to domestic properties.

That means that coupled with the normal rates increase, many householders could be paying 25 per cent more in revaluation this year than last year.

Just imagine how much you would have raised in 1978 by renting out your home or shop. Then work out how much more you would get if you rented it out in 1985.

That's revaluation.

In 1971, the collective rateable values of Strathclyde's properties was £162,864,630. By 1978, that had increased to £510,481,000.

According to the estimates prepared by the assessor's office, the figure after the 1985 revaluation will be £1,291,631,000.

Informtion passed to Glasgow District Council shows that while domestic ratepayers currently provide 30 per cent. of the city's rates income, that will jump to 35 per cent. in 1985.

Industry's contribution to the overall total will fall from seven to five per cent., reflecting the switch in emphasis from industrial to domestic this time round.

An average council house in the city currently valued at £204 will be rated at £554 and non-council houses with a rateable value of £215 can expect to jump to around £610.

Explaining the domestic sector's new burden, Jack Wood said: "House prices have risen considerably since the last revaluation so it is only right that their new values are reflected in the new valuation roll.

The industrial sector has fared far worse since then so the fall in demand for factories will also be taken into account when values are calculated."

A married man with two daughters, Jack Wood lives in a comfortable home in Burnside on the outskirts of Glasgow.

"Unfortunately, the assessor is always seen as the bogeyman of local government," he reflects. "But it is the independance of my position which I appreciate most.

"In that sense, I am assured of giving all ratepayers a uniformity of treatment."

In 1985, however, he concedes that the domestic sector will fare far worse than the occupants of industrial premises, which are now less desirable than they once were.

"I suppose that once all things have been taken into account, many house occupants will be paying 25 per cent. more in rates this year than they did last year," he said.

G. Herald 28/1/85

Strathclyde householders face a 25% rates increase

By CLAUDE THOMSON
Regional Correspondent

HOUSEHOLDERS in Strathclyde face a 25% rates rise, or about £2 a week on average, while industry will have a reduction of 10% designed to improve opportunities for retaining and creating jobs. Commerce will pay almost 9% more.

The regional rates of 50p in the £1 and 4p for domestic water secured the reluctant approval of the regional council's controlling Labour group. They will go to the full council for ratification at the end of next month.

Ratepayers will, however, not know their total bills until district councils have declared their rates.

Comparison with the present regional rate of 98p in the £1 and 10p for domestic water is meaningless because of a significant switch in the way the burden is shared following revaluation.

Householders are having to pay a much bigger proportion of the total rates bill, industry less, and commerce about the same. New valuation figures for the region's one million ratepayers showing an overall multiplier of about 2.24, will be issued shortly.

Councillor Dick Stewart, leader of the regional council, blamed the Government for the severe rise in household rates.

The Government had reduced the amount of grant gradually over the past five years, and it would now be about £140m a year more if the rate of grant had not been cut.

In addition, the Government had made an unrealistic allowance for inflation. If the grant had been maintained at its 1980/81 level, the region's new rates would have been under 40p.

The region, he said, had cut its spending in real terms by £7m. Nevertheless, it would exceed the Government's £1198m guideline for the coming year by £41m.

He agreed this laid the council open to the possibility of clawback of grant by the Government, or being told later in the year to reduce its rates. Either action would be bitterly resented.

Councillor Stewart said: "We have tried our utmost to keep the rates as low as possible without a massive reduction in services.

"To cut back to the guideline would have meant a slaughter of services and would have achieved a cut of only 3p in the proposed rate, leaving householders still to pay 20p more."

Councillor David Sanderson, finance chairman, said the amount to be met from the region's rate was £569m compared with £509m this year, an overall rise of 12%.

However, because of revaluation, the average rates bill for householders was likely to go up by 25%; industry would pay 10.6% less, and commerce nearly 9% more. He added: "Continual reductions in grant are obviously part of the Government's policy to transfer the burden of essential local services from the taxpayer to the ratepayer."

Councillor John Mair, Conservative opposition leader, said: "It is quite clear that the new rate is 6p more than it needs to be. I reckon the council will incur a 100% penalty in Government clawback of grant for overspending, compared with 75% last year. It was warned last autumn that there would be severe penalties for overspending."

Mr John Davidson, director in Scotland of the Confederation of British Industry, welcomed the reduction for industry.

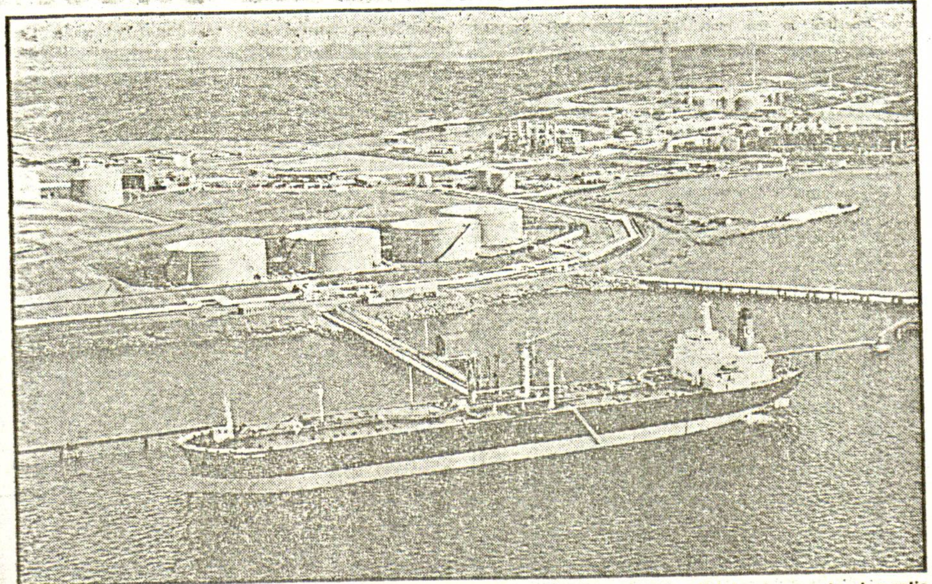
Mr Ewan Marwick, secretary of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, said commerce was suffering under revaluation and some warehouses in Scotland would still be paying more than their English counterparts.

Representatives of the CBI, Chamber of Commerce, and other non-domestic ratepayers will meet council leaders in a fortnight to discuss the new rates before they are finally approved.

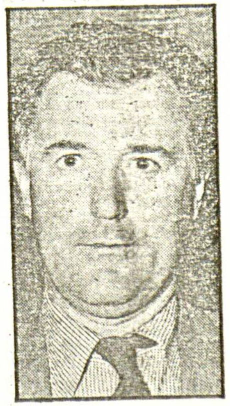
Scotsman 27/1/85

David Scott, Our Local Government Correspondent, reports on the revaluation increases

Ratepayers urged to appeal over new valuations



Sullom voe oil terminal in Shetland: reduction in valuation would shift a substantial burden on to domestic ratepayers



Jim Craigen, Labour's Scottish local government spokesman: 'There will be a run on tranquillisers when these assessments come out'

Mary Whitehouse, Federation of Scottish Ratepayers chairman: 'Rates are being put up by means which we cannot control from the ballot box'

SCOTLAND'S regional assessors are bracing themselves for a flood of appeals when new rateable values are issued to ratepayers next month.

The results of the rating revaluation — the first for seven years — are certain to lead to widespread protest. "There will be a run on tranquilisers when these assessments come out," says Mr Jim Craigen, Labour's Scottish local government spokesman.

Individual notices giving details of the valuations will be issued from February 15 and they will be particularly controversial because of the impact on householders. According to rental evidence gathered by the assessors, domestic ratepayers will be required to pay a bigger share of the total rating burden in future. Their share is being increased from 36.9 per cent to 42.2 per cent while industry's contribution will fall from 11.8 per cent to 10.3 per cent and the commercial sector, from 28.2 per cent to 27.3 per cent.

Revaluations do not have the effect of increasing the income of local authorities; their aim is to update property values to take account of inflation and other factors and distribute the rating burden in what is regarded as the fairest way. On this occasion, the assessors have found that the letting values of houses have increased at a faster pace than the other sectors.

As the immediate effect of the revaluation would have been a 16 per cent rise in rates bills for householders, Mr George Younger, the Scottish Secretary, has restricted the rise to an average of 8 per cent by increasing the subsidy for domestic ratepayers.

Revaluation, however, will be only one of several factors which will lead to major rates rises this year. The Scottish Office estimates that when the effects of inflation are added the rise for domestic ratepayers should be around 13 per cent. The commercial sector's rates bills would rise by around 3 per cent while industry — after allowing for a reduced level of derating — will pay 7 per cent less.

The Government's figures are based on its own spending targets for councils, but cuts in rate support grant and councils' own budget plans have led to forecasts of increases of 25 per cent for some householders.

Revaluation itself will have varying effects within differing localities. Glasgow District Council officials suggest that revaluation alone could add 18 per cent to domestic rates bills in the city while Fife Region is forecasting an increase of around 20 per cent.

Mrs Mary Whitehouse, chairman of the Federation of Scottish Ratepayers, says the only course open to ratepayers is to appeal. "Rates are being put up not by a means which they can control from the ballot box," she says. "A large part of the unexpected increase will have been imposed as a result of the assessor's judgment. All judgments can be flawed. Increases are being made by a body which is accountable to no-one."

According to Glasgow's figures, the owners of "substantial" private houses in the city will face increases of around £150 a year solely due to revaluation. For the occupier of a four-apartment semi-detached house, the increase would be more than £75 and a two-apartment council flat would rise by £50.

The city treasurer, Councillor Pat Lally, says: "These increases are due to revaluation alone and ignore the effects of inflation and cuts in Government grant. It is quite clear that by accepting the revaluations the Government is going to hit hard domestic ratepayers in this city."

Areas like Borders — with above average increases in rateable values — will lose a proportion of grant. The commercial sector in the Borders Region will suffer the biggest rateable value increases in Scotland, though the rise for domestic ratepayers will be in line with the average. In Grampian and Shetland domestic values will rise by slightly more than the Scottish average which is going up by 170 per cent.

Ratepayers will be given until September 15 to challenge their new valuations and the number of appeals is expected to be considerable because of new appeal rights provided for in legislation passed last year.

The changes, which led assessors to warn that the whole system could be swamped, include a right allowing comparisons to be made between property valuations in Scotland and those in England and Wales in cases where Scottish evidence is considered to be insufficient.

This change was mainly the result of controversy over claims that football grounds, racecourses and other sports stadia were paying considerably higher rates bills than their counterparts south of the Border. Some local authorities, notably Orkney, Shetland, Fife and Central, are particularly concerned at the effect of cross-Border appeals which might be made by oil and petrochemical companies.

The rateable value of the Sullom Voe terminal in Shetland has been set at £18 million — a figure considerably less than the £26 million anticipated by the islands council. The lower figure was due to the effects of an appeal in Fife and the impact of legislation derating outside plant and machinery.

Mr Malcolm Green, Shetland's director of finance, predicts that any successful cross-Border appeal could further reduce the valuation of the oil terminal and bring a substantial shift to other ratepayers — principally householders.

"Such a situation would have to be viewed in the context of the council having spent very substantial sums of money providing infrastructure for the oil industry. Its outstanding debt is by far and away the highest per head of population in Scotland," Mr Green says.

Possible appeals concerning the Mossmoran complex in Fife is also causing uncertainties for the regional council. The region's rating base has risen by £12 million as a result of the complex coming "on stream".

Another change likely to have considerable impact widens the definition of a "material change of circumstances." Until now, a material change could not be considered on the basis of rental values. A business, for example, could not argue that its valuation should be lowered during a period of recession. Downward movements in rents will now qualify as a material change. Similarly, appeal decision reducing the values of properties will constitute a material change affecting comparable properties. This is designed to remove an anomaly — highlighted by ratepayers in Troon — where similar houses can have significantly different valuations as a result of one appeal being successful.

Other changes now allow ratepayers to appeal their valuations within six months of becoming a new proprietor, tenant or occupier. Plans are also being introduced to speed up the hearing of appeals and procedures introduced to allow more complex and highly technical appeals to be heard by the Lands Tribunal for Scotland instead of by local committees.

The revaluation is becoming the subject of considerable political contention with demands being made, even at this late stage, for its postponement. Mr Craigen says the Scottish Secretary should have been prepared to provide a higher level of domestic relief to smooth the transition. He declares: "Ministers wriggle and evade but they ought to be shamefaced at the prospect which they are about to inflict on Scotland's rating public."

Mr Younger, however, has described shifts in values as being quite normal in revaluation and says that cancelling out the effects would remove the whole point of the exercise. However, he told COSLA recently that he was acting to soften the blow in the case of domestic ratepayers by increasing the planned grant by £19 million.

According to Mrs Whitehouse, of the Ratepayers' Federation, the revaluation will have an unfair effect on householders whose taxation, she says, is being increased for "arbitrary" reasons. She fears that Scottish ratepayers will find themselves paying an increasingly higher sum than people in England where a revaluation has not taken place since 1973. Mrs Whitehouse believes that controversy over revaluation will lead to further demands for a complete reform of the rating system.

THE CHANGES IN VALUATION

THE table shows the percentage increases in rateable values resulting from this year's revaluation. There is a decrease in one case — industrial subjects in Orkney. The rates poundage will be adjusted, but the effects will not be known until budgets are set in the next few weeks.

REGION/ISLANDS AREA	Per cent Domestic	Industrial	Commerce	All Subjects
Borders	+170	+100	+180	+160
Central	+160	+120	+110	+130
Dumfries and Galloway	+170	+120	+150	+150
Fife	+150	+220**	+140	+150
Grampian	+180	+120	+160	+150
Highland	+160	+140	+130†	+140
Lothian	+170	+120	+130	+130
Strathclyde	+160	+ 70	+110	+130
Tayside	+170	+110	+160	+150
Orkney	+150	− 20*	+130	+ 40
Shetland	+190	+ 80*	+ 30	+ 90
Western Isles	+160	+170	+110†	+130
SCOTLAND	+170	+100	+120	+130

* dominated by oil installations with effect of plant and machinery order working through to statistics for first time.

** affected by major new plant being first entered in roll during 1984-85.

† adjusted for changes in classification.

E. Times 29/11/85

STOP THIS NONSENSE NOW!

What a scandal
PAGES 10 and 11

THE revaluation of homes which has gone a long way towards adding an extra 25 per cent. to the Strathclyde family's burden should be cancelled right now.

It is a staggering and shocking impost on householders and it came home with a vengeance yesterday when regional chiefs spelled out the details.

It was all the worse for many homes when the news came on the same day as interest rates jumped two per cent. with the threat that means for mortgage repayments.

These are dismal outgoings when the Government is trying to restrict wage increases to 3 or 4 per cent.

Paltry

There are many factors involved in rates but revaluation alone will add up to £150 a year to the burden of the Glasgow ratepayer. And the normally expected increase comes on top of that.

Scotland's Secretary of State George Younger claims he has softened the blow to domestic ratepayers by increasing his rate support grants by £19m. In fact that paltry sum is a mere drop in the ocean.

The assessors who carried out this revaluation in Scotland will rightly be inundated with appeals when the new figures drop through people's letter-boxes next month.

Unfair

It is all the more galling that in England there has been no revaluation since 1973, and not one politician has adequately explained why Scottish ratepayers should have suffered two new assessments in the same period of time.

VOICE of the Times

There is no question about it — rates are a form of taxation, and a singularly unfair form at that.

It is nice for industry to get a 10 per cent. cut in rates and for commerce to come out so much better than the private householder. If that means preserving jobs and keeping shops open then well and good.

But it leaves the very people who can often least afford it to shoulder the crippling burden of a distorted revaluation and a massive rates increase.

We make no apology to the Strathclyde assessors in urging our readers to appeal against their revaluations if they think they are too high.

In this issue today we start a series of important articles on every aspect of rates. Later this week we will explain how you should set about lodging your appeal and we shall also encourage you to make your views on rates known to Mr Younger, the Secretary of State.

He has spent the past 12 months saying No to every proposal that could mitigate our present situation, but it is not all his fault. He is only the puppet. The decisions are made at Westminster and in Downing Street.

But the only way to make him and his masters aware of YOUR views is to write and tell him. And here again we will be offering advice on the best way to set about it.

Misery

The Evening Times believes that this latest revaluation is too great a burden for Scots to bear at this time of economic misery and wholesale deprivation.

Even at this late date it should be wiped out. Cancelled. It is only a matter of political will. The Government has been forced to change its mind on other things. It backed down on revised student grants when backbenchers rose in rebellion.

Revaluation should go the same way.

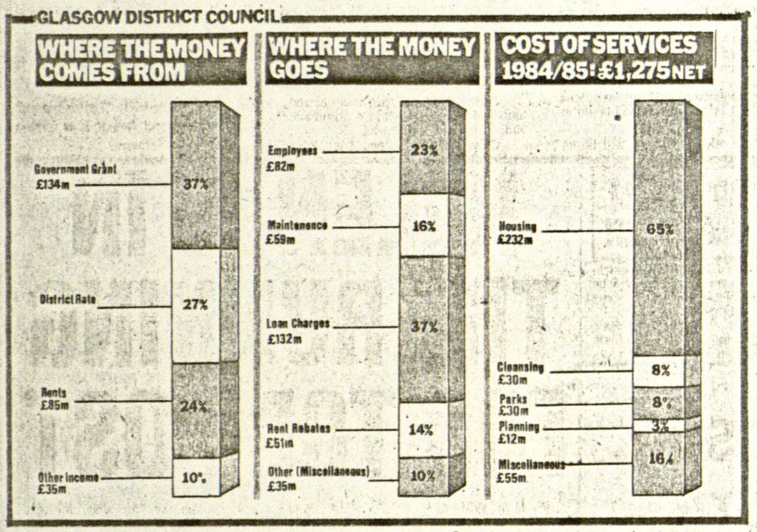
Today we start the ball rolling with this clear message to George Younger and the mandarins of the Scottish Office.

Scrap revaluation. And make that decision now.

SQUARE DEAL ON RATES

SCANDAL!

GLASGOW DISTRICT COUNCIL



THE steady increases in general costs in recent years have been matched by the relentless rise of the rates.

Since the last revaluation, in 1978, Strathclyde Reional Council's basic rate — to which individual District Council rates are added before the bills go out — has gne up by 66p per pound.

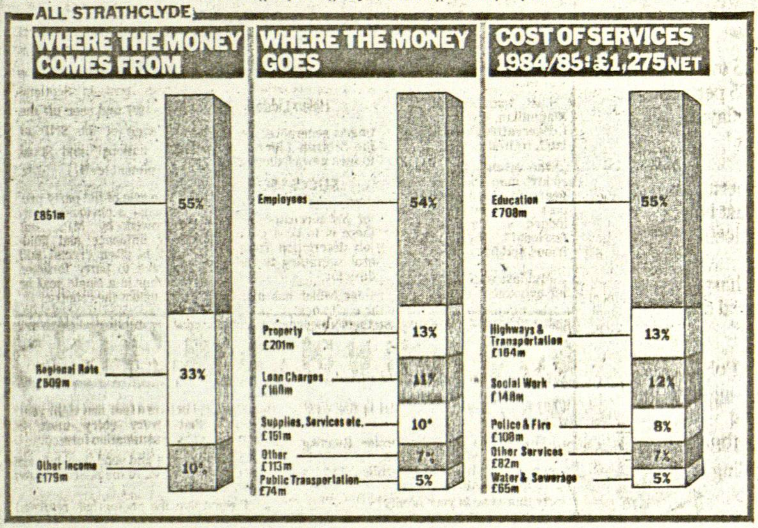
Over the same period, Glasgow District Council's rate started at 28.5p, rising to 58p.

The big spending by Strathclyde Regional Council goes on education, social work, and roads. This year education has cost £708m; social work £148m, and roads £130m.

In Glasgow, the cash has gone on housing £232m; cleansing £30m; parks £30m; planning £12m; and miscellaneous services £55m.

Glasgow District Council collected £134m in government grants; £105m in rates; £85m in rents; and £35m in miscellaneous charges.

ALL STRATHCLYDE



'Clawback' threat for the rebels

CUTS in the Government's rate support grant to local authorities are a constant source of bitterness and anger for councillors.

They see the steady whittling away of this vital cash aid for balancing their budgets as a dastardly plot for shifting more and more of the annual burden from the taxpayer to the ratepayer.

By JAMES WATSON

The Scottish Office, on the other hand, claim that less RSG focuses the minds of the budget-makers and helps keep rates down.

Rate support grant is the Government's traditional contribution towards the cost of local authority services. The cash is raised through various forms of national taxation, so that many, not necessarily ratepayers, help meet the cost of the council services.

When local government was reorganised 10 years ago, the Government RSG stood at 75 per cent. In other words the Government met 75 per cent. of the councils' expenditure for the year.

Those were halycon days. Over the years since then, RSG has been slashed by almost 20 per cent.

Central

This is the record of the cuts:

1975-76: 75 per cent.
1976-77: 72.5 per cent.
1977-81: 68.5 per cent.
1981-82: 66.7 per cent.
1982-83: 64.2 per cent.
1983-84: 61.7 per cent.
1984-85: 60.2 per cent.
1985-86: 56.6 per cent.

Scots Secretary George Younger uses the threat of an extra cut in RSG as a means of keeping rebellious councils in line. If a council doesn't reduce its expenditure to suit Government guidelines in any year, then that authority stands to lose another slice of RSG.

In recent years, Mr Younger has had to "abate" RSG several occasions to punish specific councils. Councillors have come to know — and abhor — that penalty as "clawback."

In 1976-77 the clawback total was £5m. In 1980-81 it amounted to £50m. Last year (1984-85) it was £90m.

Justifying the RSG cuts, the Scottish Office say — "The Government is committed to reducing public expenditure. This is central to their economic strategy. They believe it is the case that when RSG is reduced, this leads to economy in the rates."

The Scottish Office spokesman on rating said today — "It might be argued that if RSG is reduced, this would have the effect of putting rates bills up. But when the Government cuts RSG it looks to the councils to reduce their own spending plans to cope with the RSG loss. This leads to a lower level of rates."

"The Government believes it must persuade, convince the councils that they have a duty to find ways of cutting their spending," the spokesman said.

But councils claim that as well as reducing their rate support grant, Mr Younger deals them a double blow by increasing their responsibilities and so raising their costs.

These "additional" costs are the subject of discussion at the moment between the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and Mr Younger. It is understood that about 80 items of extra responsibility have been listed.

Disclose

"We cannot disclose cost figures at this stage, while the argument is going on," said Mr Ken Paterson, director of Strathclyde Region's finance department.

Three main items on the list concern direct labour organisations, the parents' charter in education, and EEC directives.

EEC directives, requiring councils to meet high standards — such as the quality of drinking water — can be costly in extra staff and equipment.

HOW THE TOWN HALL SPENDS YOUR POUNDS

SCOTLAND'S local councils are big business. One in seven of the country's workforce is now employed by a local authority.

And their normal budgets run into billions of pounds.

Where does the cash come from, and what do we — the ratepayers — get for our money? And just how prudent are town hall mandarins when it comes to spending our rates?

One certainty emerges. All councils — Labour or Tory, Regional or District — are on a hiding to nothing. They can never please all of the ratepayers all of the time.

Dr John Sewel, of Aberdeen University's department of politics, explains: "There is always a need to review local priorities in services. Sometimes housing commands attention, sometimes schools. At other times it's roads, or social services. Councillors and their officials can't be blamed for feeling they live in a shifting-sands world."

Ratepayers, however, seldom show sympathy, tolerance, or patience.

"They are not concerned, for instance, about the way population change affects services," said Dr Sewel.

"At the present time, we know our school population is declining, but our elderly population is increasing. This creates all sorts of problems.

Patterns

"But it is always difficult for councils to switch resources quickly, to change budgets on a sort of overnight basis, as ratepayers tend to expect.

"To make that kind of massive adjustment in spending patterns needs a lot of financial elbow-room, and this just does not exist at the present time.

"There is no way in this time of war between central and local government that councils can always achieve the most appropriate distribution of spending on the services they provide for the ratepayers. And this can be worrying and frustrating for all concerned."

In spite of the difficulties — or, perhaps because of them — Dr Sewel, after years of study, believes ratepayers generally are getting good value for their money.

Many householders, however, are still bewildered about which council provides what. They haven't come to terms about the division of responsibilities between Regional and District councils.

Ratepayers should know that Regional Councils provide education, social work, roads, lighting, transport, consumer protection, police, fire, water, and sewerage services.

District councils run the housing, parks, museums, cleansing, recreation, halls, markets, libraries, public health, and licensing services.

Both authorities in general get their cash from rates and government grants. District councils also pull in income from council house rents.

The rates money required is estimated by multiplying the rateable value of anyone's property — set by the regional assessor — by the rate poundage which is decided annually by councillors, after prolonged discussions with officials about the projected needs of the various departments in the coming year.

Britain's ratepayers this year contributed between £6 and £7 billion to their local authorities. The cash is used on the services ranging from removing a wasps' byke from your loft to providing education for your children.

Government grants, however, have been reducing in recent years, and councillors argue that the cuts in this help for the councils simply means more cash is needed in direct rates from householders.

In 1975, when local government was reorganised in Scotland, the Government's rate support grant to councils worked out at 75 per cent of their spending. In the coming financial year, starting in April, this will have fallen to 56.6 per cent.

"It is getting more and more difficult for councils to meet their commitments," said Mr William English, Glasgow's director of finance. "The Government is taking to itself a vast arsenal of powers which restricts the amount which can be spent on any one area of services, as well as cutting grants aid."

PRESS · JOURNAL 22/2/85

Notices bring confusion and horror

REVALUATION RAISES ROOF

Grampian rate set

GRAMPIAN REGION'S overall rate for 1985/86 (inclusive of water rate) was set yesterday at 43.5p in the £, effectively an increase of 13%. Domestic payers, who receive relief of 5p in the £, will pay 38.5p from April 1.

The totals which have to be paid in the region's four rural districts are: Banff and Buchan 47p domestic, 52p other; Gordon 46p, 51p; Kincardine and Deeside 45p, 50p; Moray 46p, 51p.

The figures are not comparable with the 1984/85 figures because of revaluation. The amounts to be paid can be worked out by multiplying the total rate by the net rateable value of each property.

Householders and businessmen reel

By DAVID TELFER

REVALUATION notices began arriving through letterboxes in parts of Grampian Region yesterday causing confusion in places and horror elsewhere as householders and businessmen took in the first impact of dramatic leaps in rateable values.

In line with property throughout Scotland, rateable values in Grampian are going up around three times for domestic property and as much as four or five times for offices and shops, although warehouses, factories and workshops will not be so severely affected.

The ultimate increase in rates to be paid will not, however, be three or four times the current bill, since councils are adjusting rates poundages to take account of the revaluation — the first for seven years.

The confusion was also apparent at the offices of the assessor for Grampian Region, where staff had expected notices to start going out today to coincide with a Press conference being given this morning by regional assessor Mr Herbert Sturgeon to issue detailed figures on new rateable values throughout the region.

But the Post Office jumped the gun in a bid to spread delivery of some 220,000 notices in Grampian.

Phones in surveyors and valuers offices were red hot yesterday as ratepayers reacted to sharp rises in rateable values.

Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce chief executive Mr Derek Marnoch said that until actual rate poundages were known it was difficult to judge the full effect, but early indications were that both industrial and commercial property would be facing very substantial rates rises, certainly much above the rate of inflation.

The chamber's own offices in Union Terrace have suffered an increase from £2413 to £8500 in assessment, while a tenant in their building has had his rateable value increase from £747 to £2800.

Mr Marnoch also said yesterday that the Aberdeen chamber were following closely the possibility of legal action by Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce against their district council should they set a rate which would overstep Government limits.

"We would have to consider similar action in Aberdeen if necessary, although we would trust that Aberdeen City District Council will act responsibly," he said.

With full details of new rateable values in Grampian not being revealed until today, an overall picture of assessments in the region has still to emerge. Among examples obtained by "The Press and Journal" yesterday, however, are: an increase from £494 to £1408 on a four-bed detached house at Ellon; from £295 to £895 on a three-bed semi at Westhill; £241 to £673 on a three-bed council flat at Stockethill, Aberdeen; and £239 to £697 on a four-roomed flat in Rosemount, Aberdeen.

In the North, revaluation notices have not yet begun to go out to ratepayers, although the same broad picture of domestic rateable values increasing three times, shops and offices by perhaps more, and industrial property less affected, will also be seen.

In Highland Region, the assessor's office say they expect notices to go out in mid-March. In the island council areas they may be delivered sooner, although a computer break-down at Inverness is causing a delay with Shetland revaluation notices.

A spokesman for the assessor's office which deals with both Orkney and Shetland said that notices for Orkney ratepayers were ready to go, but the Shetland notices were being held up until the computer which compiled them could be repaired.

Council agrees rents deal despite officials' warning

G. HERALD 22/2/85

By JOHN MacCALMAN
District Correspondent

A RENTS package, described by opposition councillors as creative accountancy, was pushed through Glasgow District Council yesterday despite warnings from senior officials.

Coupled with "savings" amounting to £11m, the Labour administration has managed to restrict council house rent increases to £1 a week, although the city's finance department argued an increase of about £2.30 was needed to balance the books.

Town Clerk Mr Steven Hamilton and finance director Mr William English put it on record the administration's decision had been made against the advice of senior officials.

In Mr English's view the financial package as a whole satisfied legal requirements but this did not mean he personally regarded the proposals as either desirable or prudent. Mr Hamilton shared his view and added: "We recognise you are the final arbiters and you are entitled to make this decision."

A crucial element in the package is the assumption of £3m of income from court action against the Secretary of State for Scotland, Mr George Younger.

The council's case is that Mr Younger had unjustly reduced the council's rate fund contribution limit on the housing account.

However, Mr Hamilton made it clear that even if the council won its case there was no prospect of a £3m payment from the Secretary of State in the coming financial year.

The administration also plans to claim a further £2.1m for housing by transferring expenditure on stair lighting from the housing account to the general purposes account. However, Mr English warned this could trigger selective action against the council by Mr Younger.

A further £1.8m is to be "saved" by adjusting debt charges to conform with figures issued by the Scottish Development Department.

Horrified by Labour's action, Conservative members will now seek the advice of the council's auditors and will write to Mr Younger to establish whether the council is acting illegally. Conservative leader Bailie Ian Dyer said: "If it had been a clean budget I would have raised my hat to them. But it is not a clean budget — it's just sleekit."

Liberal leader Mr Robert Brown described the budget as "an act of pure fantasy — a fairytale," and warned the people of Glasgow would reap the whirlwind later in the year because it was likely the administration would be forced to impose another rent increase.

However, an unrepentant Labour group leader, Councillor Jean McFadden, argued the budget was designed to suit the city and not the Government.

In a similar situation Labour-controlled Stirling District Council voted by 11 votes to seven to increase rents by £1 a week. The council was told by a member of the legal department that while not illegal, it could by budget day be the subject of an action.

The minority Tory group failed in its amendment that rents be increased by £115.85 a year.

Liverpool mortgage plan— Page 5

Eastwood faces 40% rates rise

By ALAN MACDERMID

HOUSEHOLDERS in Conservative-controlled Eastwood district face rates increases of 40%, with the council paying the penalty for exceeding Government spending guidelines.

Under the budget which the district council would otherwise have implemented, Eastwood rates would have gone up by 1p or 2p.

Instead, a combination of clawback for exceeding last year's guidelines, and a new formula for distributing grant aid, will leave the council with an extra £1.1m to find.

With revaluation, the actual rate goes down from 18p to 13p in the £1, but in equivalent terms, this is a jump from 18p to 32.6p, or 82% for district rates alone.

The council's chief, Mr Michael Henry, said yesterday: "Taking into account the expected Strathclyde region rate, we expect the average householder to face an overall rates increase of 40%.

"The council is horrified and distressed about this, particularly as we have kept the cost of our services low — in fact we reduced them by 22% between 1979 and 1984, in line with Government policy."

Last year, however, the council exceeded guidelines laid down by the Government by £360,000, and has paid a penalty of £313,000. Taking that and the reduction in grant, the Government's support is expected to fall from £1.6m to about £570,000.

Councillor Ian Hutchison said: "We have been put in an invidious position through no fault of our own. The fault lies squarely with the Scottish Office.

Eastwood's MP, Scottish Office Minister, Mr Allan Stewart, has had several stormy meetings with representatives of the council.

Yesterday, he said: "I am extremely concerned at the situation they are in, but the formula has been applied to them in the same way as everyone else.

"They have reduced expenditure over a period of years, but unfortunately it increased sharply last year, and that was the year when the penalty was particularly high. I think the takeover of Rouken Glen park helped to push them into this position, and probably accounted for 3p to 4p of the increase.

"At the same time, the client group approach we have developed for distributing grant has adversely affected them, but the coucillors have not been able to come up with a more satisfactory formula.

"The guidelines for next year are being increased by 8.1%, and this will give them more scope."

Mr Henry countered: "Rouken Glen only cost us £150,000 last year. I don't know the basis on which Mr Stewart arrives at his figures, but it cannot have been a significant part of the 14p increase. After all, our own budget would only have had a 2p increase overall.

"What we have argued is that no account has been taken in the guidelines of the fact that we have saved this asset and are running it more cheaply than Glasgow did.

"There is something radically wrong with the system when a prudent authority which has not overburdened its ratepayers in the past has to impose this kind of increase just to maintain its services."

Meanwhile, Grampian Regional Council yesterday approved a new rate of 38p in the £1, an average increase of 13%.

However, because of revaluation, some rates bills could go up by 25%. More than 220,000 revaluation notices have been sent out, but many householders have still to receive them.

The new water rate is 5½p in the £1, an increase of about 10%.

Kirkcaldy District Council's finance meeting yesterday agreed to recommend a rate of 14.35p in the £1, an increase of about 14% after revaluation.

Labour holds down rent rise

SCOTSMAN 22/2/85

Glasgow budget warning ignored

Glasgow's Labour administration yesterday pushed through its 1985-86 housing budget — ignoring warnings from top council officials.

The budget involved raising council rents by only £1 a week against the £2.30 that the finance department recommended. It also meant finding £11 million still needed to balance the books.

The housing convener, Councillor James McLean, listed the items he claimed would bridge the gap. But opposition councillors claimed it was an exercise in "creative accountancy."

The biggest single item in the controversial £11 million list was the assumption that the council would recover £3 million through a court action now pending against Mr George Younger, Secretary of State for Scotland.

However, Mr Steven Hamilton, the city's chief executive, made it clear that even if the council were to win such an action, something that was neither certain nor highly probable, the £3 million could not be recovered in time to be included in 1985-86 expenditure.

Mr William English, finance director, two hours before the full council was due to meet, warned the housing committee that the administration's proposals were neither advisable nor prudent.

Mr Hamilton backed up his colleague: "You have madc your own judgment against the advice of your own chief officers. The finance director believes this policy is mistaken and we both wish to place our views on record."

When the full council met, Labour's sums came under attack from both Tories and Liberals. Bailie Iain Dyer, Tory group leader, said: "The Labour rulers are gambling that the missing millions will turn up from somewhere. Perhaps Santa Claus will come along with it."

To find the money, he said, Labour councillors might as well start gambling on horses, or take out subscriptions to certain daily newspapers in an attempt to win millions of pounds from bingo. He accused Labour of failing to face up to the real question — the future of Glasgow's housing stock and the people who live in the houses.

Aberdeen and Dundee, he said, had come out openly against the Government and had immediately come under fire from St Andrew's House. But Glasgow was acting in a way not inconsistent with its record.

"If I could say that the result could be termed clever or smart I might have given grudging applause," Bailie Dyer said. "I can't describe what has been put forward as clever. The correct adjective is sleekit."

Councillor William Aitken (C) said Labour might claim that the composition of its budget was not illegal. "It is certainly an instance of questionable morality and dubious legality. At its very best it certainly breaches the spirit of the Scottish Office guidelines."

Councillor Robert Brown, Liberal leader claimed: "This budget is pure fiction, a complete fairy-tale set of statistics. The consequences bewilder the imagination. There will be either another round of rent rises in the autumn or else savage cut backs in repairs and maintenance."

Councillor Jean McFadden the Labour group leader, and other Labour councillors argued that they were making a budget to suit the needs of Glasgow rather than meet the demands of the Government. Time after time Labour speakers insisted that their actions were legal and it was up to Mr Younger, if he so desired, to try to prove the contrary.

● Labour-controlled Stirling District Council last night decided to increase rents by £1 a week after it was told by a member of the legal department that at this stage it was not illegal but by Budget day could be the subject of an action by Mr Younger.

Grampian 'lowest rate'

Grampian Regional Council yesterday approved what its Conservative administration regards as a standstill budget and claims as the lowest regional rate in Scotland for the coming financial year.

The new figure is 38p, with a water rate of 5.5p. The Conservatives claim the average rates bill in the region will rise by about 13 per cent, though there are fears that in some areas — such as parts of Aberdeen — the rise will be about 25 per cent.

The picture is expected to become clearer today when details of the current revaluation of properties are to be announced.

By DAVID STEWART

The Labour and Liberal groups mounted strong but unsuccessful attacks on the Conservative proposals. Councillor Robert Middleton, Labour leader, moved an amendment that the proposed rate would not allow the council to discharge its obligations.

The Liberals suggested a 37p rate, with more being spent on services. The extra expenditure would come from spending reserve cash and rating empty offices.

The council decided some time ago that it would keep expenditure within Government limits, and has adhered to that decision.

Councillor Henry Auchinachie (C), chairman of the finance committee, rejected suggestions that the budget involved severe cuts in services. Each department had rearranged its priorities, bearing in mind the ever changing demands and needs of ratepayers, he said.

Councillor Nicol Stephen (lib) rejected the idea that it was a standstill budget,and claimed there were unacceptable cuts totalling £670,000 in services. Councillor Jurgen Thomaneck (Lab) criticised savings made in the provision of school equipment. He said he knew of a school where three children had to share one spelling book.

SCOTSMAN 23/2/85

Tories threaten rates revolt

By DAVID SCOTT, Our Local Government Correspondent

Scottish Office Ministers are facing a major row within the Conservative Party over the huge increases in rates bills which will soon become evident.

They are coming under intense pressure from the party's leadership in Scotland to postpone the current property revaluation which will be a significant factor in the rates rises.

The effects of the revaluation — the first for seven years — have led to unprecedented protests in the Tory Party and, as a result, the party chairman in Scotland, Sir James Goold, has called on the Scottish Secretary, Mr George Younger, to intervene.

Mr Younger says he would be interested to hear what Sir James has in mind. But with the Scottish Office confirming yesterday that there are no plans to abandon or postpone the revaluation it appears Ministers could now face a sizeable revolt from their own supporters and a certain row over why a Scottish revaluation was allowed to go ahead without a similar exercise being carried out in England, where the last revaluation was in 1973.

Sir James said yesterday that there had been widespread protest about the outcome of the revaluation, which will result in domestic ratepayers paying a bigger share of the rating burden. "There is no doubt that this is the biggest single issue facing the party at the present time; people are not at all happy with the situation," Sir James said.

Notices are about to be issued to ratepayers giving details of the new valuations — which will treble in many cases — and it would require legislation to postpone the revaluation. A Scottish Office spokesman said: "It is no longer a practicable possibility to take the necessary legislative steps to ensure a postponement of revaluation even if this were in principle desirable."

But the Conservative group leader on Edinburgh District Council, Councillor Paul Martin, said last night: "We think it is vital that the Government should postpone it. The Government is completely capable of bringing forward legislation quickly and I think this would be supported by most of the parties in Parliament."

Sir James said he thought it was unwise for the Government to go ahead with the revaluation in Scotland. It could be seen as another example of Scotland suffering while England did not. He added: "This is most unfortunate and is certainly not the wish of the Government. It is a pity it did go ahead but no doubt the Secretary of State's decision to carry it out was done with the best of intentions."

Sir James said he had originally asked Mr Younger to abandon the revaluation but as he had been told this was not practical he was now asking the Scottish Secretary to postpone it for one year "or for as long as it takes to come up with alternatives."

He said that two party committees were conducting inquiries into the rating system. He continued: "I don't want to raise anyone's hopes on that because we have looked at it before and have failed to come up with an answer. But it is a very serious problem and we must turn our minds to it. Until the review is complete I have asked Mr Younger to consider postponing the implementation of the revaluation."

Sir James said that if it was found that there was no alternative to the rating system then the revaluation would need to be put into effect.

After the announcement this week about the effects of the revaluation in Lothian, local Conservative constituencies have been expressing their anger. Among the associations voicing concern is South Edinburgh — the seat of the Minister responsible for local government in Scotland, Mr Michael Ancram.

South Edinburgh sources stressed last night that no decision had been taken by the constituency executive committee to make a formal protest at this stage but agreed that strong concern had been voiced. It is understood members of the executive were told they might by required to resign if they made public statements about the matter until all the facts had been obtained.

The Conservative group on Edinburgh District Council has already written to Mr Younger voicing its "extreme concern" not only about the revaluation but about the effects of cuts in rate support grant, the increase in interest rates and the action of the council's Labour administration which is proposing a 72 per cent rise in rate poundage.

Continued on Page 11, col 5

Aberdeen 'highest' — Page 9

Kirkcaldy rates to rise by 14%

The Kirkcaldy District rate is to rise by 14%, the council's finance committee decided yesterday. For domestic ratepayers, it means they will pay a combined regional/district rate of 68.35p.

To meet the net district expenditure requirement of £12 million for 1985/86, a rate of 14.35p is required—equivalent to 33p in pre-revaluation terms. Last year, the district rate was 29p, or 12.5p after revaluation is taken into account.

Need for the increase has been blamed solely on the reduction in rate support grant the council will receive next year.

This has been reduced from £3.4 million to just over £2 million, equivalent to almost the whole of the increase.

Conservative Councillor Douglas Mason moved that the rate for 1985/86 be made 12.5p by striking out the contribution from the rates to the housing account and that the balance of the budget be achieved by increasing rents, but he failed to find a seconder.

Labour councillors are adamant that, had it not been for the reduction grant, there would have been a standstill budget this year.

Report

In his report to the committee, finance director Mr Hugh Wilson says the Government's policy on rate support grant has negated the council's success in reducing expenditure requirements in its budgets.

Before applying R.S.G., the total expenditure is £14,049,640—almost £400,000 less than last year.

Mr Wilson said in his report, "Stringent budgeting, producing real reductions in cash spending, which of itself produces a reduced burden on the ratepayers, is completely and excessively overshadowed by Government policy of reduction in rate support grant."

He added that the budget was inside the Government's guideline figure, and that the council should be entirely free from any punitive measures.

Mr Wilson pointed out that it could take two or three years to sort out the appeals brought about by rating revaluation, particularly with regard to Mossmorran.

Indeed, the rating of the petro-chemical complex may mean that the council receive nothing at all under the resources grant section of the R.S.G.

New valuation

Under revaluation, the estimated rateable valuation of the district is just under £96 million, compared with £38 million last year, although the new figure does include a valuation of £8 million for Mossmorran.

The product of a 1p rate has changed from £343,000 to £803,000.

The proposed rate will now go forward for approval by the all-Labour policy and resources committee next week, and will then be considered by the full council.

Grampian rates up 13%

Grampian ratepayers will pay an extra 13% in the coming financial year, Grampian Regional Council confirmed yesterday. The new rate will be 38p, the equivalent of 85p before revaluation.

Both Labour and the Liberals tabled amendments to the motion submitted by the Conservative-dominated council but the figure was carried by 26 votes to 12.

Many of Grampian's ratepayers received notices of revaluation yesterday and the exchange at Woodhill House was jammed by callers asking if some mistake had been made.

A typical two-bedroomed house with central heating and garage has risen in valuation from around £300 to £1200.

£1 rents rise: trouble ahead?

Labour-controlled Stirling District Council last night passed a rents increase of £1 a week—but ran into potential trouble over its plans for an illegal budget.

The Conservative deputy group leader Dr Frank Riddell, warned that if the council set an illegal budget he would advise ratepayers not to pay their rates until there was legal clarification about whether they should be obliged to pay an illegal rate.

"The council could run into the most awful cash-flow problem," Dr Riddell predicted.

His move stems from the Labour group's determination to exceed by more than £1 million the amount of ratepayers' money it may legally switch from its rates fund to its housing revenue account.

Labour group leader Councillor Michael Connarty said they were prepared to take this step if necessary.

"Excessive rises"

He continued, "We think the conclusion must be that the Government must see sense and allow an increase in the rate fund contribution limit.

"We must protect tenants from what we think are excessive rent rises."

Assistant chief executive Mr Ian Cameron said the decision would potentially be the first instalment of an illegal decision, though it would depend on the rate level that is to be fixed on March 5.

Cuts needed

Officials added that, to stay within Government limits, an average rents increase of £3.45 a week or a heavy cut in services, or both, would be required.

A Tory move to increase rents by £2.21 a week was defeated by 11 votes to seven.

It was stated that, if the council was forced by the Government to impose a rent increase later in the year, then the amount required per week would increase as the year went on.

VOICE of the Times

Welcome to our campaign

FOUR WEEKS AGO this newspaper launched a major campaign calling on Scottish Secretary George Younger to cancel the current property revaluation in Scotland.

The reason was simple — it is a crushing extra burden on ratepayers already faced with increases well above inflation levels caused by cuts in rate support grant and by financial penalties on high-spending local authorities.

We warned that with revaluation rates would go up by 25 per cent in many areas, and we were right. One thing we did not bargain for was that in Tory-controlled Eastwood they would soar by 40 per cent.

Since then there has been a growing political demand — not just from the opposition parties but from the very heart of the Conservative Party — that revaluation should be abandoned or at least postponed.

Cries have gone up again for total reform of the rating system, promised by the Government then discarded.

Today almost every Scottish Tory MP and local association has joined ratepayers' associations in calling for a halt. Scottish Tory chairman Sir James Goold has appealed personally to Mr Younger and to Mrs Thatcher herself.

Because the party in Scotland quite rightly fears an enormous backlash at the polls if the plan goes ahead.

Ratepayers are angry because they know there has been no revaluation in England for 12 years and no sign of one. We have to ask: Are we being penalised for living in Scotland?

With so much protest within the party why has Mr Younger not reconsidered? He says postponement would give some ratepayers an unfair share of the burden. But what he is proposing is an unfair burden for the whole of Scotland.

When the English middle classes protested about higher university fees the Government soon changed its mind.

If it does not budge on revaluation it will prove again what we have often said. That Scottish Office Ministers are puppets. And Mrs Thatcher couldn't care less about Scotland.

NEW BRIN

THE derelict car plant at Linwood is poised for a re-birth of industrial activity.

If plans for its future realise their full potential about 4000 men and women will have jobs in a mammoth industrial estate.

A leading Merseyside firm has taken a 125-year lease on the giant plant with its 3.2m sq. ft. of space.

A spokesman said today: "A former Courtaulds plant at Aintree, not half the size of Linwood, was fully occupied within two years and has provided 2000 jobs.

Women to carry Tory banner

TWO WOMEN will carry the Conservative banner in next month's Strathclyde Regional Council by-elections in two Glasgow seats.

The by-elections on March 21 has been brought about by the resignation of two Labour councillors — one on health grounds and the other through pressure of business.

Mrs Irene Gibson will contest the Mosspark-Bellahouston seat held by Councillor David Scott with a 1397 majority in 1982.

She stood in the Cardonal Ward in the District Elections last May.

Mrs Gibson, who has grown-up twins, competed in the Glasgow Marathon last year.

But there could be a much closer contest in the Queen's Park-Crosshill by election where Mrs Masie Dean, a local shopkeeper in Battlefield, carries the Conservative cause.

In 1982 Councillor Tom Murphy, who is retiring on health grounds, had a 475 lead.

The Conservatives are pinning a lot of faith on the fact that Mrs Dean is a local candidate and campaigning on local issues.

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ecret talks with IRA leaders at ekend.

en though the meeting never nder way, after Mr Hume l to allow it to be recorded, the ure brought a furious reaction nionists.

Hurd had hoped for some e before the local government ns in May.

Official Unionist leader Molyneaux said: "When John agreed to meet with the IRA sidered it a watershed.

is now utterly impossible for ave discussions with him."

Rev. Ian Paisley's ratic Unionist Party had made it clear they would not o Mr Hume again if he met the

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DON'T BLAME US! — Page 2

DON'T BLAME US! — Page 2

Court action over budget?

Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce are today considering court action against Edinburgh District Council if they go ahead with what could be considered an illegal budget.

Businessmen were meeting at the Chamber's headquarters in the Capital, and were being asked to authorise officials to take the necessary legal step in the Court of Session.

The district council are due to fix their budget on March 5 and the Labour administration have already said they intend to freeze rents, taking them over the limit set by the Government on the amount of money they can take from the general rates fund to prop up the housing account.

The Chamber's president, Mr James Souness, said the court move was not a question of businessmen "carping" at rates bills — but was designed to save jobs in private business.

Bigger shock on rates

20/2/85

City centre property owners in Edinburgh are in for a bigger shock than most when revaluation notices drop through their letter boxes early next month.

Lothian Region Assessor Mr Ian Rogers said today that, on average, the rateable values of flats in the capital's historic New Town will more than treble. And there is expected to be a tripling, too, in the values applied to big Princes Street shops

Revaluation notices are going out from March 4 and throughout the region will show an average rise in rateable values of about two and a half times.

Mr Rogers indicated that older and substantial stone-built houses are likely to receive higher valuations increases than new dwellings. And a detailed examination of tenement properties in and near the city centre is also likely to lead to greater changes in the values applied by the Assessor.

Inquiry centre

The actual rate poundage struck by local councils will come down accordingly and Mr Rogers empahsised at a Press conference today that actual rates bills had nothing to do with him.

To coincide with the mail drop, the revaluation roll for Lothian will go on display on March 4. The roll contains some 350,000 entries, of which 302,000 are houses.

Mr Rogers announced that the main inquiry centre for Edinburgh will not be at his own headquarters in Queen Street, but at a separate office at 20 Albany Street. Elsewhere in the region inquiries can be made at 1 Eskdaill Court, Dalkeith; Court Street, Haddington; and South Bridge Street, Bathgate.

Those receiving notices will have a right of appeal. They should first apply to the Assessor, but if this is unsuccessful a formal appeal has to be lodged by September 15

EDINBURGH DISTRICT	Age	Old rateable value £	New rateable value £
5-apt semi-detached villa in **SILVERKNOWES**	Post-war	334	868
7-/8-apt detached bungalow of superior quality in **BARNTON** — with garage and outbuildings	Post-war	1222	3611
7-apt mid-terraced stone villa in **MORNINGSIDE**	c 1880	429	1313
5-apt **NEW TOWN** flat in a mid-terraced conversion	c 1790	478	1572
Modern 4-apt semi-detached villa with central heating and garage	c 1976	389	975

!!

WOMAN'S

Courier 29/1/85

N.-E. Fife rate set to rise by 6.5p

Ratepayers in North-East Fife face an increase of just over 6.5p in the district rate for 1985/86.

At a special meeting of the district policy and resources committee in Cupar yesterday, members voted by five to three to recommend the figure of 25.13p—an increase of over 30% on last year's level of 18.5p.

The proposed new rate of 25.13p is equivalent to 11.25p in terms of revaluation, which takes effect from April 1.

The figure was proposed by council convener Derek Barrie, who referred to options which had been outlined to the committee in a report from finance director Michael Dyke.

The director has referred to the recent 49% cut in the council rate support grant, which in itself added 4p to the rate. This, together with elements of inflation and erosion of council balances, could result in an increase of 7p (or 37%).

Other options were for the council to use half of its available balances and settle for a 25p rate or apply all of the balances to reach a 24.5p rate.

Mr Barrie said his suggestion came between the first two options and involved the utilisation of a smaller amount of balances. The only other possibility, he said, was for individual departments to go through their budgets again.

He was against this, however. Since savings of £200,000 had already been made there had been considerable discussion and the council was within guideline figures.

Tory group leader Councillor David Niven said the council should aim for a figure of 23.5p, an increase of 5p, and ask departments to review their budgets. This would result in further savings of £252,000 having to be made.

Mr Barrie said Mr Niven's suggestion was a "very cynical piece of political opportunism."

The present administration was within Government guidelines, he repeated—something the previous Tory councils had not managed to accomplish.

Press & Journal

28/1/88

City faces rate shock

Region rise forecast is 13%

COUNCILLOR AUCHINACHIE

By VIVIENNE NICOL

ABERDEEN ratepayers are facing a substantial jump in their rates bill.

Today, Grampian Region's financial experts predicted the average regional rate will increase by 13%.

However, the revaluation exercise which is being carried out will result in Aberdeen householders being asked to stump up considerably more than the average.

The revaluation will switch the burden of rates from commercial and industrial premises to domestic ratepayers.

Rateable value is based on the amount of money which could be obtained for a property if it was rented.

As a result, rateable values in Aberdeen are likely to be higher than anywhere else in the region.

It is predicted that householders in the city can look forward to the rateable values of their properties tripling.

However, the regional council will reduce the amount it charges in the pound to take account of the higher values of property.

But at the end of the day Aberdeen ratepayers will be paying at least 13% more to the region in rates than they do at the moment.

Part of the reason for the dramatic increase is because the government is expecting the taxpayer to contribute less and less towards the cost of council services.

Today, finance committee chairman Councillor Henry Auchinachie said: "We plan to keep our expenditure within the Government's guidelines and the rate of inflation, yet we expect to have to impose a substantial rates increase".

On the present valuation figures, the average regional increase of 13% would represent an increase of about 11p on the present regional rate of 85p in the pound.

Once the region's rate is fixed next month, it will have to be added to the region's water rate and the district council rate.

But, ratepayers will not be able to calculate their final rates bill until the revaluation notices for their properties arrive some time later.

G. Herald 29/1/85

Grampian can expect to pay 13% more

By GRAEME SMITH

RATEPAYERS in Grampian region can expect a rise of 13% with residents in Aberdeen facing an even higher rise because of the soaring house costs.

A 13% increase represents 11p on to the present 85p in the pound, but because new rateable values come into force from April the actual rate poundage will be considerably less.

The new rateable values will mean that residents in Aberdeen, where the oil boom has pushed house prices up considerably since the last rates reassessment in 1978, will be paying "a good deal more than 13%" and residents outwith the city, particularly in Banff and Buchan and in Moray, will be paying "a good deal less."

A greater share of the rates burden will also switch to domestic ratepayers in the region away from the industrial and commercial ratepayers whose property values have not risen so fast.

In Aberdeen, domestic ratepayers can multiply their present rateable value by about three to get the new figure while in industry and commerce the multiplier will range from about 2.68 to 2.79.

Yesterday Councillor Henry Auchinachie, chairman of the region's finance committee, said that were it not for the loss of Government grants the council would have been looking for only £3m more in the coming year, an increase of 2.7% and well below the rate of inflation.

"Instead the council anticipate they will have to raise an extra £13.5m," he said.

He added that the actual rate to be levied has yet to be decided because the proposed budget is still subject to the approval of the finance committee and the full council.

"The Government guideline for 1985/86 has been increased by 4.5% to allow for inflation but makes no provision for any increase in services. However, the running costs of new premises and other facilities coming into operation this year will cost the region an extra £700,000 and to keep within the guidelines we must save £700,000 elsewhere in the budget."

He said major savings would be made in education but there would be a loss of only 15 teaching posts.

"The transfer of the cost of council services away from the taxpayer and on to the ratepayer has seen the Government contribution dropping from 75% of councils' net expenditure in 1975-1976 to 56.6% in the coming year, and in the case of Grampian the Government's contribution will be even less at 52%.

G. Herald 23/1/85

Cuts in rate support are vandalism, says Dewar

By STUART TROTTER

THE inadequate Scottish Office support for local services was "a form of vandalism," Mr Donald Dewar, Shadow Scottish Secretary, said in the Commons yesterday when he forecast much bigger rate bills from district councils.

He dismissed the claim from Mr George Younger, Secretary of State for Scotland, that relations between central and local government had been disrupted "by a small number of highly political local authorities who see this as the best way to forward their political careers."

Mr Dewar said Conservative, Independent, and Liberal controlled councils which had stayed within Government spending guidelines would find that their reward was a drop in Government support for next year which would force them into high rate increases.

He said Eastwood, potentially an overspender next year, would need to put its rates up by 57% even if it came down to Government approved spending levels.

Tory controlled Banff and Buchan was contemplating a 70% rate increase. Liberal controlled North-East Fife, which had come into line last year on spending, faced a 37% increase because Government support had been cut by no less than 49%.

The Scottish Office had cut support for local services to 56.5% of what they thought reasonable expenditure compared with 62.2% the previous year, said Mr Dewar.

As a result of the continual cutting of Government support was the average Scottish rates payment had risien from £132 when the Government came to power in 1979 to £326 now, an increase of 147%.

Revaluation had resulted in "a massive swing" against the domestic ratepayer from which Mr Younger had only partially protected them with central Government funds.

In Glasgow, revaluation meant that domestic valuations would go up by 180% while industrial values rose only 30%. Mr Younger intervened to point out that the increase in valuation did not mean rates would rise by that amount. It depended on the rate poundage set by the local authority.

In all the Government was cutting back on help to local councils to the tune of £250m.

Mr Younger forecast that average domestic rates would rise by around 13%, commercial bills by 3%, while industrial rates should fall by around 7%.

He defended the continued Government squeeze on local government spending. More spending by local councils meant less on the health service or industry, a contention challenged by Labour MPs. Local spending had not fallen since the Government came to office. It had risen by 2.6% taking into account inflation as it affected these services.

He agreed that the penalties against overspenders would be more severe in the next financial year. He had decided to increase grant to regions which accounted for by far the largest part of the rates bill.

Mr Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross — Con.) said the whole rating system must be reformed.

Mr Younger's attempts to prevent "robbery of the ratepayers" resulted in him alienating everybody. "My poor dear friend the Secretary of State discovers himself setting off to be Florence Nightingale and coming back as Jack the Ripper," he said.

Mr Donald Stewart (Western Isles — SNP) said Mr Younger was performing the role of a colonial governor. The Squeeze on spending had been carried out by the English Government.

The Rates Support Grant Order was approved by 258 votes to 166.

Kinnock supports councils over cuts

By FRANCES HORSBURGH
Local Government Correspondent

LABOUR leader Mr Neil Kinnock yesterday told Scottish local authority leaders at a House of Commons meeting that he fully appreciated the serious financial situation they faced as a result of Government grant cuts.

Councillor Dick Stewart, president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, led the group of Labour councillors who met Mr Kinnock towards the end of an intensive three-day local government lobby at Westminster.

He said later that the Labour leader had already been briefed on the Scottish position. He was "full of support," said Councillor Stewart, "and also appreciated the responsible way in which local government in Scotland has dealt with the issue."

After the meeting, Mr Kinnock accused the Government of trying to crush local democracy and of destroying the services required by the most needy in society.

He said: "The conflict is about services and jobs and democracy. That has always been the contest between a free people and a Government that wants to destroy freedom, whether they are freedoms to live in security or to gain employment or to enjoy the liberty of making decisions that fit local circumstances."

Harold Macmillan, now Lord Stockton, and former Conservative Prime Minister, Ted Heath, had warned about the "complete" folly of the Government's policies.

Labour's Shadow Scottish Secretary, Mr Donald Dewar, who also attended the meeting, said Mr Kinnock had emphasised the unanimous support for the councils' opposition to Government cuts and interference in councils' rights to set rents and rates.

Mr Dewar said the lobby of Parliament, which had been designed to coincide with MP's debates on the rate support grant and housing support grant settlement for 1985-86, had been "a rewarding, effective, and coherent attack by local Government on the oppressive legislation which this Government is pushing through the Commons".

Councillor Stewart, who is Labour leader of Strathclyde region, said the Cosla delegation, which included the vice-president Councillor Ken Fagan leader of Dundee's Labour administration, had met Scottish Tory, Labour and SNP MP's.

Councillor Stewart and Mr Kinnock after yesterday's meeting.

Even the Tories, he said, were "gravely concerned" because a lot of their authorities were also facing large rate increases.

Edinburgh's Labour leaders, who were also in London yesterday, remained determined to press ahead with their potentially illegal budget despite this week's clear warning from the Government that such action will not be tolerated.

Labour group Secretary Councillor James Burnett said they were being forced to act outside the law over the level of rates contributions to the housing account by a Government which had "gone beyond the laws of natural justice."

Courier

Chamber seeks help on rates

The need for advice from someone who can read "behind the figures" of local government finance was stressed last night as being vital to industrialists and business men to help them challenge proposed rate increases.

A meeting had been called in Dunfermline by the Dunfermline and West Fife Chamber of Commerce to discuss rates, but both Fife Region and Dunfermline District Councils ignored an invitation to send representatives.

President Ian Richards told the meeting that the chamber had registered its intention to share in the consultations that local authorities were now required to hold with interested parties before fixing the rates.

"Mouthpiece"

They wanted to be the "mouthpiece" for both their members and the non-domestic ratepayers, who provided upwards of 60% of the net rate income.

Consultation was their only hope of influencing the containment of rates to the level of inflation, around 5%, as the business community had no right to vote against any proposed increases.

"We should be doing something through the Scottish Secretary to show our dissatisfaction with the procedure which gives business no power to influence the rates," he said.

At meetings with the local authorities they had been shown pages and pages of legislation which, they claimed, had added to their statutory duties to such an extent that they had to take on more staff.

Documents with masses of figures had been produced and there had been no opportunity for the chamber to examine them in depth and try to find arguments to counter claims for increases.

15-25% rise?

"A rate increase in the 15-25% range has been bandied about," said Mr Richards.

"We can't condone such large increases, which reduce profitability and have adverse effects on employment."

E News

Rates stunner on the way

By 'NEWS' REPORTER

Public demands for changes in the council rating system are likely to flare again when the effects of this year's property revaluation hit householders.

This was the warning delivered last night by Mr Donald Dewar, Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, during a Commons debate on rates support grant.

He said: "There will be a great deal of fear and dismay when the news of a massive swing against the domestic ratepayer rattles through the letter boxes of the people of Scotland in the next few weeks."

INDUSTRY

The average domestic ratepayer will have to pay around 13 per cent more as a direct result of the revaluation, Secretary of State Mr George Younger revealed.

Rates bills for industry will fall by around seven per cent, and for commercial properties there is to be an average rise of three per cent.

Leith's Labour MP Mr Ron Brown demanded to know when Mr Younger was going to scrap the rates system, but the Secretary of State said the options considered by the Government in the last two years had all been rejected by those consulted.

Mr Younger said if ratepayers were faced with substantially increased bills, they should blame councils who had failed to get their spending under control.

SHARP

The Government believed their spending targets were far from unreasonable.

Mr Younger said he had recognised that the shift towards domestic ratepayers was a sharp one, and that something had to be done to soften the effect.

He had therefore made a substantial increase of £19 million in the amount of grant which would reduce the effect of revaluation on the householder.

Mr Dewar complained that the rates support grant settlement was "rotten." It was bad for the ratepayer, bad for the councils, and bad for those who used local authority services.

The Government were reducing their share of the cost of local authority spending. In the past year, Government grants had accounted for 62 per cent, but in the coming year that would be down to 56 per cent.

G. Herald

Councils must pay penalty if they defy law, says Ancram

By WILLIAM RUSSELL

THE Scottish Office will bring the full weight of the law down on Edinburgh District Council if it refuses to obey the Government's orders to budget for rate fund contributions inside the limits set down, Mr Michael Ancram, Scottish Office Environment Minister, warned last night in the Commons.

He said during a debate on housing support grant that Edinburgh or any other local authority who took that decision should be in no doubt that Mr George Younger, Secretary of State for Scotland, would take all possible steps to ensure compliance with the law.

That would involve using his powers under the 1973 Local Government (Scotland) Act to press for an order of specific performance from the Court of Session.

Failure to comply with such an order would constitute contempt of court with all the penalties that entailed.

Mr Ancram said that in certain circumstances individual councillors could be required to make good illegal expenditure incurred.

Mr Ancram also challenged Mr Donald Dewar, Shadow Scottish affairs spokesman, to say where Labour stood on the question of breaking the law.

On the one hand Labour said it did not condone law breaking but on the other it supported councils in breaching statutorily imposed limits.

He urged Mr Dewar to say that Labour respected the law and accepted the democratic decisions of Parliament.

"If he is honest he cannot sit on the fence, he cannot lead from behind, he can no longer cavil," he said.

Mr Dewar said: "I will not encourage nor support people who are up in defiance of a court order. It would not be proper and should not be done."

He said councils were entitled at this stage to stand their corner and put their case to Ministers. "But we may end up in a confrontation situation and that would be a tragedy," he added.

Mr Ancram said: "We believe that the average rent increase in Scotland need be only slightly above £1 per house per week," he said.

In Glasgow the average rent was £9.75, in Aberdeen £8.90 and Dundee £8.82. This compared with an average local authority rent in England and Wales of £14.71.

He claimed that if Glasgow brought its management and maintenance spending per house down to the average of the other Scottish authorities it would save the equivalent of a rent reduction of £1.14 a week, and Edinburgh could cut £1.70 a week.

The vote was 217 to 190, Government majority of 127.

Scotsman

Scots councils warned against defiance


Mr MICHAEL ANCRAM

By KEITH AITKEN, Our Parliamentary Correspondent

Edinburgh District Coun- il was last night given a lunt warning in the Com- nons that it or any other uthority which goes ahead vith threats to defy the Government over council ouse rents can expect to e taken to court.

The assurance came from Ar Michael Ancram, Scottish Environment Minister, who hallenged Mr Donald Dewar, Labour's Shadow Scottish Sec- etary, to make clear whether e would support Labour coun- illors who broke the law.

Mr Dewar responded that he ould not and would not lend is support to councillors who efied court orders. But he also blamed Ministers for the confrontation that had arisen and appealed to them to withdraw parliamentary orders restricting councils' powers to subsidise rents from the rates.

Mr Ancram, opening last night's heated debate on the orders, warned Edinburgh District that the Scottish Secretary, Mr George Younger, would not hesitate to take all possible steps available to him to force councils to comply with the law.

If laws were defied, he said, Mr Younger would seek a court order in the Court of Session forcing the councils to comply. If they defied that they would be in contempt of court and individual councillors could become personally liable to make good illegal expenditure.

Mr Ancram said that Edinburgh's reported refusal to raise its rents by £1 per week — the average estimated by the Scottish Office for increases in the coming year — came in the face of a report by Shelter suggesting that the council need only raise its rents by 18p to comply with the Government's limits on subsidy and to meet inflation costs.

"If Edinburgh chooses now to go outside the law we can only conclude that it does so for purely dogmatic reasons," he added. "In due course I am sure that the voters will take note and act accordingly."

He challenged Mr Dewar to make clear where he and his party stood on the issue of law-breaking and described Labour's stance on the matter so far as "a miracle of twisted morality" in which the party would only condemn such action once it had been ruled illegal in a court of law.

Mr Dewar responded to the challenge by declaring: "I will not encourage and support people who at the end of the day end up in defiance of court orders. That would not be proper and should not be done."

But he also laid the blame for the confrontation squarely at the door of Mr Younger who was engaged, he claimed, in an attempt to rob housing authorities of the right to determine their own rent levels.

"I believe that this collection of orders illustrates a mean-minded approach and is likely to make council housing — I fear, is intended to make council housing — a less attractive option than it was," he said.

He declared that the result of the orders would be "misery and more misery, poorer services and higher rents, pay more and get less."

But the measure won support from Conservative backbenchers. Mr Gerald Malone, the MP for South Aberdeen, said Labour wanted to return to a policy of high public expenditure which had created many of the problems the Government was now trying to confront.

The SNP chairman, Mr Gordon Wilson, said: "It does seem to me that the policy of the Scottish Office is to bring Scotland into line with the situation in England regardless of the methods, regardless of the hardship cost."

But Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, the Conservative MP for W. Edinburgh, said rents in Scotland would remain significantly lower than in England.

For the Alliance, Mr Charles Kennedy — the SDP MP for Ross, Cromarty and Skye — said the Government's policies had brought about a contin erosion of the housing st and a diminution of lo power and local democracy.

The Labour MP for E Edinburgh, Dr Gavin Str accused Ministers of "for up council house rents deli ately in order to try to f as many people as possibl buy their council houses."

Mr Willie Hamilton, Lab MP for Central Fife, decla "If local authorities break law, I hope they do together."

The Orders were appro by 317 votes to 190, a Gov ment majority of 127.

(Move for unity — Page

Press & Journal 29/1/85

Black Monday for North-east ratepayers . . .

Grampian's warning

By DONALD SMITH

RATEPAYERS in Grampian are going to have to pay considerably more for services provided by local authorities.

The gloomy news yesterday from the regional council's financial experts was that there is to be an average rise of about 13% in rates throughout the region.

The actual rise will vary from area to area, but it is certain to be highest in Aberdeen and according to director of finance Mr Tom Carter, could be "considerably more than the average of 13%".

It has been known for some time that rates throughout Scotland were bound to rise because of the Government's financial policies and yesterday Councillor Henry Auchinachie, chairman of Grampian Regional Council's finance committee, explained the situation.

He said the council's draft budget for the 1985/6 financial year — which starts on April 1 — envisages total expenditure of more than £239 million.

"We are planning to keep our expenditure within the Government's spending guidelines and within the rate of inflation — yet we expect to have to impose a substantial rates increase.

"The explanation is that the taxpayer is paying less and less towards the cost of council services with the result that more of the burden is falling on the ratepayer. In the coming financial year, Grampian Regional Council will receive almost £11 million less in Government grants than they did in the current year — and this can only spell bad news for ratepayers.

"Had it not been for the loss of Government grants, the regional council would have been looking for only £3,000,000 more in 1985/6, an increase of 2.7%, and well below the rate of inflation.

"Instead of that, the council anticipate they will have to raise an extra £13,500,000 from rates and council balances, even although they are containing the increase in their expenditure within the inflation rate," said Councillor Auchinachie.

The actual rate will depend on decisions still to be taken by some of the committees and will then have to be agreed by the finance committee and ultimately the full regional council on February 21.

But Councillor Auchinachie stated: "I can say the amount required will represent an overall increase of about 13%, or 11p on the present 85p in the pound rate. Because of the new rateable values coming into force from April 1, the actual rate poundage, however, will be considerably less than that."

The revaluation — a statutory obligation and the first for seven years — means it will be impossible for an individual ratepayer to work out what next year's rates bill will be until the revaluation notices have been sent out, probably about the end of February.

The rateable value of a property is based, however, on the amount of money which can be obtained from a property if it is rented, and the "boom-town" image of Aberdeen means it is likely to suffer more than other parts of the region and certainly more than most of Scotland.

Predictions are that houseowners in Aberdeen are to be hardest hit through Grampian in the revaluations. They are almost certain, as a result, to have to shoulder a greater burden of the rates bill than previously. Commercial and industrial payers will be the main beneficiaries.

Councillor Auchinachie said: "The Government guidelines for 1985/6 have been increased by 4.5% to allow for inflation but makes no provision for any increase in services. However, the running costs of new premises and other facilities coming into operation this year will cost the region an extra £700,000. To keep within the guidelines the council are obliged to identify savings of £700,000 elsewhere in their budget.

"The transfer of the cost of council services away from the taxpayer and onto the ratepayer has seen the Government contribution dropping from 75% of council's net expenditure in 1975/6 to 56.6% in the coming year. In the case of Grampian Regional Council in 1985/86, the Government's contribution will be even less, at some 52%.

"Growth in Grampian continues to necessitate a high level of capital expenditure on school building, road improvements, water and drainage, etc. This results in mounting debt charges to meet the cost of interest borrowed on capital and annual repayment instalments. In 1985/86, debt charges on the Grampian rating account will rise by £3,500,000 to £38,600,000.

"What we have tried to do in our 1985/6 budget is to make relatively-minor adjustments to the budgets of departments reflecting the changes in needs of the various services. It is easy to make an argument for more money for many of our services. If we are to keep within Government guidelines it can only be achieved by taking money from another service; if we do not keep within the guidelines, the effect is to increase still further the burden on ratepayers."

Under new Government legislation, local authorities are required to invite consultations from non-domestic ratepayers on rates before the final figure is fixed.

Some time ago officials of the council met representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the National Federation of the Self Employed and Small Businessmen and others. Yesterday another meeting in private was held with the same organisations and elected members of the council.

The representatives of the various organisations are entitled to make representations about the rates and have to lodge them before February 8.

Chamber warns Younger

A THREAT of a 100% increase in district council rates and 15% in the regional rate would have a damaging effect on employment and investment prospects in Edinburgh, Mr George Younger, Secretary of State for Scotland, was told yesterday.

A deputation from the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and manufacturers said the proposed increases would threaten the competitiveness of business.

Rates in Edinburgh were already among the highest in the United Kingdom. In some cases the rates per square metre were 40% higher than Glasgow and 50% higher than Aberdeen.

Mr David Mowat, the chamber's chief executive, and Mr Jim Souness, the chamber president, urged Mr Younger to take action to restrict the rates rise for 1985-86 to the level of present inflation.

Scotsman
29/1/85

Big firms to meet on rates

By BRIAN CHRISTIE

The 30 biggest firms in Edinburgh are to meet this week to discuss what action to take in the face of unparallelled increases in local authority rates.

One of the main issues at Thursday's meeting is expected to be their response to a situation in which the Government declares Edinburgh District Council's rate to be illegal. The firms may question if it would be legal to pay such a rate.

The firms, which employ more than 30,000 people and include the big banks and insurance companies, large stores, hotel groups, brewing and publishing interests, have decided to mount strong opposition as they fear that the big planned increases would have a devastating effect on the business and commercial sector.

Edinburgh District has still to decide on its new rate but present plans would see it shoot up by about 60 per cent. Lothian Region's rate is on top of that and it could rise by about 15 per cent.

Mr David Mowat, the chief executive of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, said that increases of this magnitude would hit jobs, stifle development and stop new companies moving into the city. "We already have the reputation of being the highest rated city in Britain," he said.

He said that Marks and Spencer's highest rated store in Britain was in Princes Street and he quoted the example of Jenners, which has a rates bill of £500,000 — half that of Harrod's in London which is 12 times the size. [illegible] said.

Yesterday he met the Scottish Secretary, Mr George Younger, to put the chamber's case against the planned increases. 'We are now certain that the Secretary of State is as worried as we are at the rate levels being talked about," Mr Mowat said afterwards.

Press & Journal 29/1/85

Perth, Kinross 70% shock

A RATES bombshell is on the way in Perth and Kinross — and domestic ratepayers will be hardest hit.

The present 19p rate could leap by 70% to 32p for domestic subjects and 29p for commercial and industrial ratepayers.

Tory group leader Councillor Tom Drane yesterday said there was no doubt the Government's financing policy was to blame.

He explained that a major factor in the rates increase, which he conceded would be "substantial", was the switch of the greater proportion of RAte Support Grant away from the district to the regional council.

Several other factors, including the amount they applied for balances, had to be taken into account before the council finally arrived at the rates for 1985-6, which will be announced on February 27.

The situation will also be affected by the rating revaluation, which has been carried out and becomes effective from April 1 this year.

In a report to the council, the director of finance, Mr Harry Robertson, pointed out that in general domestic rateable values had increased by a greater proportion than commercial and industrial properties and this would result in domestic ratepayers throughout Scotland meeting a higher proportion of local government spending.

"Additionally, all ratepayers in this district will meet an increased proportion of local expenditure as a result of rateable values in Perth and Kinross generally rising to a greater extent than the national average."

Based on various assumptions, Mr Robertson noted that the projected rate poundage for 1985-6 was 11.5 which is the equivilent of 32p in prerevaluation terms for domestic ratepayers and 29p for commercial, and industrial subjects.

E. News 20/2/85

Court action over budget?

Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce are today considering court action against Edinburgh District Council if they go ahead with what could be considered an illegal budget.

Businessmen were meeting at the Chamber's headquarters in the Capital, and were being asked to authorise officials to take the necessary legal step in the Court of Session.

The district council are due to fix their budget on March 5 and the Labour administration have already said they intend to freeze rents, taking them over the limit set by the Government on the amount of money they can take from the general rates fund to prop up the housing account.

The Chamber's president, Mr James Souness, said the court move was not a question of businessmen "carping" at rates bills — but was designed to save jobs in private business.

Bigger shock on rates

City centre property owners in Edinburgh are in for a bigger shock than most when revaluation notices drop through their letter boxes early next month.

Lothian Region Assessor Mr Ian Rogers said today that, on average, the rateable values of flats in the capital's historic New Town will more than treble. And there is expected to be a tripling, too, in the values applied to big Princes Street shops

Revaluation notices are going out from March 4 and throughout the region will show an average rise in rateable values of about two and a half times.

Mr Rogers indicated that older and substantial stone-built houses are likely to receive higher valuations increases than new dwellings. And a detailed examination of tenement properties in and near the city centre is also likely to lead to greater changes in the values applied by the Assessor.

Inquiry centre

The actual rate poundage struck by local councils will come down accordingly and Mr Rogers empahsised at a Press conference today that actual rates bills had nothing to do with him.

To coincide with the mail drop, the revaluation roll for Lothian will go on display on March 4. The roll contains some 350,000 entries, of which 302,000 are houses.

Mr Rogers announced that the main inquiry centre for Edinburgh will not be at his own headquarters in Queen Street, but at a separate office at 20 Albany Street. Elsewhere in the region inquiries can be made at 1 Eskdaill Court, Dalkeith; Court Street, Haddington; and South Bridge Street, Bathgate.

Those receiving notices will have a right of appeal. They should first apply to the Assessor, but if this is unsuccessful a formal appeal has to be lodged by September 15

EDINBURGH DISTRICT	Age	Old rateable value £	New rateable value £
5-apt semi-detached villa in **SILVERKNOWES**	Post-war	334	868
7-/8-apt detached bungalow of superior quality in **BARNTON** — with garage and outbuildings	Post-war	1222	3611
7-apt mid-terraced stone villa in **MORNINGSIDE**	c 1880	429	1313
5-apt **NEW TOWN** flat in a mid-terraced conversion	c 1790	478	1572
Modern 4-apt semi-detached villa with central heating and garage	c 1976	389	975

big rate bills

Local goverment Editor KEN SMART sums up the rates debate at Lothian Regional Council.

Don't blame us — blame them. That's the message coming from Lothian's 49 regional councillors when your new property values and your new rates bill come tumbling through the letterbox.

The new values — due in the next few days — con be put down to the regional assessor. He's the man who has more than doubled your house rateable value. It could add about 18 per cent to your rates bill.

And there's the Scottish Office — the heavy hand of Central Government. They've pulled out millions of pounds in rates support grant.

Out of a rates rise of 12½ per cent, 11¼ per cent is as a direct result of Government withdrawal of rates support grant.

So much so, that nine-tenths of the increase in the regional demand can be laid on their doorstep at New St Andrew's House, Edinburgh.

In fact, the regional councillors became so frustrated at the end of hours of deliberation yesterday on their budget, that they decided in early evening to urge the Government to replace the present rating system.

"Replace it with an income tax, or a local poll tax — something that can be equated with the ability of an individual to pay for the services received," pleaded Conservative Regional Convener Brian Meek.

It's all part of the growing belief in the Conservative Party of Scotland that Mrs Thatcher and her advisers must think again about who exactly pays for the services provided by local councils.

Concession

The bite in the attack on the Scottish Office came from the Conservative group. Government leaflets explaining changes in property values will be accompanied by the council's own advice ... that out of a rates rise of 12½ per cent, 11¼ per cent is as a direct result of Government withdrawal of rates support grant.

The suggestion from Convener Meek — accepted unanimously in the council — is that they express their "regret" that a Government leaflet explaining revaluation misleads the public by giving the impression that rates increases are caused mainly by increased council spending.

The motion from the Labour group, expressed by their leader Councillor John Mulvey, condemned the "misleading propaganda leaflet"

E. News 20/2/85

ERIC MILLIGAN
Argued

JAMES GILCHRIST
Freeze warning

produced by the Scottish Office — "You and Your Rates" — as yet another attempt by Central Government to lay the blame for council spending at the door of local government.

All will be revealed in the new valuation notices due any moment in your letterboxes. That will increase new house rates bills substantially, keep commercial rates about level, and reduce industrial property rating significantly.

Just how much depends on the decision of the assessor — and every property owner has the right of appeal.

Apply to these new values the new regional rate of 47.5 pence in the £ — an average increase of around 12 per cent for the regional council's demands. Add to that a new district rate — expected to average out at around 20 per cent.

Whatever the combined total, the householder will be asked for 5p less in the £ than industry and commerce — the Government's concession to

People protesting about cuts have been misled about the effects of a budget designed to "toady" to Secretary of State George Younger.

the fact that the householder is being "asked" to pay that much more than industry this coming year.

Thee main difference is in rateable value — not in ratepoundage demanded by the council.

The regional budget had earlier been accepted by a margin of only one vote (25-24) and that was thanks largely to an agreement reached last week between the Tory administration and the cross-bench Alliance councillors who hold the balance of power.

Conservative finance chairman, Councillor James Gilchrist, claimed it would mean a "virtual standstill" in council staffing, savings of around £600,000 from the work of management consultants in identifying efficiency moves, a freeze on items like bus fares and charge for school meals, old folks' lunch charges and meals-on-wheels fees.

The Conservatives, he claimed, had wanted to go further, but they had to depend on the votes of the Alliance who insisted on the charges and fares freeze.?

Continue

The public, claimed Labour, were being conned, and the budget really meant cuts in service, in staff and in spending overall.

People protesting about cuts had been mislead about the effects of a budget designed to "toady" to Secretary of State George Younger, said Councillor Mulvey.

Labour's finance spokesman, Councillor Eric Milligan, argued against a new rates system, saying that financial demands from councils on commercial and industrial property owners should continue.

A local income tax was not the complete answer, because a substantial part of the council's income came from commercial and industrial properties, he said.

Conservative councillors in Lothian are interested in listening to reasoned argument, but not "ranting and raving" on the issue of closing some nursery schools units and transferring the pupils into empty classrooms in nearby primary schools.

This was the view put by the region's education vice-chairman Councillor Ian Hoy during a council debate on the future of nursery classes.

After the debate, it was decided 25-24 to go out to public consultation, particularly with parents' groups, on moves which the Labour group claimed would save the council only £47,000 a year.

All parties have agreed to consultations on the future of St John's Nursery at Portobello, and at Macmerry

But Labour were against consulting further on closing the Children's House Nursery at Niddrie, and transferring the children to classes at Craigmillar, Niddrie and St Francis Primaries; closing Grassmarket and High School Yards nurseries and transferring the pupils to Cowgate, Hope Cottage, Royal Mile and St Leonard's nurseries; closing the Princess Elizabeth Child Garden and putting the children to Cameron House and Prestonfield nurseries; and relocating the Winchburgh Nursery School within the local primary.

Labour councillors argued unsuccessfully director of education, Mr David Semple, should first prepare a report on the need for nursery education in the region.

● The council also approved the setting up of a number of education information offices in rural areas to replace divisional offices in East and West Lothian. The education service is being centralised at the department's headquarters at Torphican Street.

G.Herald 21/2/85

Chamber threat to sue if city budget is illegal

By CHRISTOPHER REEKIE

EDINBURGH Chamber of Commerce warned yesterday that it was likely to take court action if Edinburgh District Council passed a budget which broke the Secretary of State for Scotland's guidelines and became illegal.

Mr James Souness, president, said the attendance at a general meeting of the chamber yesterday and support by members by letters and telephone calls indicated total opposition to the district council's intention to fix high rates and its attitude to business.

Mr David Mowat, chief executive, said that if the council breached the guidelines by exceeding the limit on funds for its housing revenue account, the chamber could then go into court to seek to interdict the council.

The council's Labour administration has proposed a budget which is 42% above Government guidelines and would produce a rtae of 50p in the pound, 72% above the present rate of 29p. Edinburgh's rate will will be fixed by the council on March 5.

Mr Souness said in an address to the chamber that the budget could represent a political gesture rather than a considered responsible budget.

A consensus of the chamber's 1100 members felt that a rates increase equivalent to the rate of inflation would be acceptable, but the council was proposing colossal excesses over spending guidelines.

The chamber had to oppose rates increases which would have the opposite effect to encouraging business and creating jobs. The way to a higher standard of living all round in any area of the country was a strong local economy, Mr Souness said.

Mr Michael York, managing director, NEI Peebles Ltd., said he was responsible for several factories, three of them in Edinburgh. While Scotland and the United Kingdom were competing overseas, Scotland was now beginning to compete with the rest of the UK.

Factories in Scotland were costing more than factories elsewhere in the UK because of the extraordinary cost of living in Edinburgh.

Councillor James Burnett, secretary of the district council's Labour group, said later that he and his colleagues were not surprised that the Chamber of Commerce was more concerned to protect its narrow interests than furthering the general interests of the people of Edinburgh which the Labour administration had been elected to extend.

Labour 'will lose on rates'

By Our Local Government Correspondent

LABOUR councils who are seeking deliberate confrontation with the Govenment over spending are heading for defeat, the chairman of the Scottish Conservative Party, Sir James Goold, predicted yesterday.

However, there were likely to be further skirmishes before "the socialist guerillas" were finally convinced that this was a risky course, he said.

Sir James, speaking in Carnoustie, said: "Those Labour authorities who think they can ignore Government guidelines on spending without fear of sanction had better think again.

"George Younger's principle that local government spending must be regulated as part of the overall reduction of public expenditure is perfectly logical and entirely necessary. I have no doubt he will enforce it and I back him all the way."

Sir James went on to refer to Labour-controlled Aberdeen District Council which has already received a warning of immediate Government action if it persists in the decision to break Government imposed limits on the amount of rates money which can be used to subsidise housing expenditure.

A basic difference of principle between the Conservative and Labour parties lay behind these battles, he said. While Conservatives wanted to find solutions which were fair to all the people, the socialists favoured their own political strongholds where their housing policy was aimed at preserving the power of the local authority landlord.

"Class distinction is vital to Labour, the party of "us" and "them," Sir James said. "They must preserve it because in a world without it they are lost. But these days are gone. Labour faces a straight choice: moderation or extinction."

courier 14/2/85

...s out a 28% rates rise shocker

Domestic ratepayers in Fife face a huge rise in the regional rate of almost 28%.

That was the shock news to emerge from yesterday's meeting of the regional council finance committee, when proposals for next year's budget were made public for the first time.

And it means a head-on clash with the Scottish Secretary for the third year running, with the possibility of severe penalties being imposed.

The expenditure figure for 1985/86 is £174.5 million—£7.7 million or 4.95% above the Government's guideline figure—leaving almost £104.5 million to be raised from the rates after estimates for specific grants and the rate support grant have been deducted.

For householders, that means an effective rise of 20p in the £ to 118p, although the actual figure because of revaluation is 53p—an increase of 27.69%.

The proposed water rate is 4p, effectively unchanged, and there is domestic relief of 5p.

For the average householder, it means his yearly rates bill will jump from £304 to £362.

The rate for commercial properties looks set to rise by just over 17%, while industrialists will pay no more apart from increases caused by revaluation.

Defended

The proposals have been defended by the Labour administration, who say that the reduction in rate support grant—£5.75 million in Fife's case—and rating revaluation, which has shifted the burden from the industrial to the domestic ratepayer, are to blame.

This was backed by director of finance Mr Douglas Mitchell, who said that, had it not been for these factors, no increase would have been necessary.

The Labour group say that the budget will maintain jobs and existing levels of service, with improvements in certain services such as social work.

It also means that for the fourth year running there will be an increase in bus fares.

The various concessionary fares schemes, including free travel for the elderly, will continue—something of which the administration is unashamedly proud.

"Disastrous"

Had the rate been held steady, it would have worked out at 46p under the new valuation, but convener Bert Gough said this would have been "disastrous."

"We are not declaring war on the Scottish Office; what we are doing is to provide a standard of living and quality of life for the people," he said.

Labour group leader Councillor Henry McLeish said that they were attempting to pursue policies which made Fife a fairer, more caring society.

"Jobs and industry are the life-blood of the Kingdom and we have worked to ensure our policies not only protect jobs but also support expansion.

Consequences

The proposals are certain to incur the wrath of Mr Younger.

In separate reports, both Mr Mitchell and chief executive Mr James Dunlop warned of the consequences of exceeding the Government's guideline figure.

Mr Mitchell pointed out that any authority whose relevant expenditure was in excess of the guideline was liable to have its share of the needs element of the rate support grant cut, and indications were that any penalty for 1985/86 would be more severe than for 1984/85.

Mr Dunlop said the council had experience of the exercise by the Scottish Secretary of his powers of general abatement of rate support grant during the past two financial years.

In addition to this, he could also seek parliamentary approval to redetermine the rate—"rate-capping."

This would have serious effects for the council, including having to spend an estimated £200,000 on altering the rate during the financial year, and loss of income from a lower rate or reduced rate support grant, or both.

First time

Because of the new legal requirement for the council to consult with non-domestic ratepayers, this is the first time that the proposals have been made public prior to the special budget meeting.

This was welcomed by Conservative Councillor Tony Jackson, who said later that it gave all councillors a chance to study the proposals beforehand.

Despite his attempt to have the proposals debated yesterday, the Labour majority on the committee merely noted the report.

It will now be considered—and certainly approved—by the all-Labour policy and resources committee before being finally discussed at the special budget meeting on February 28.

Looks like 11p up in Grampian

Ratepayers are likely to face an increase of 11p in the £ in the coming financial year in Grampian Region—in addition to any rises the district councils may make.

The 13% rise was yesterday approved by the regional finance committee, and will go forward for final approval to the full council next week.

At present day rateable values, the increase would produce a regional rate of 96p in the £.

However, revaluation is expected to increase rateable value by 2.5 times, with the rate per £ consequently reduced by an equal figure, putting the new rate at 38p.

Scotsman 8/2/85

Businesses in Borders want later revaluation

By WILLIAM CHISHOLM

Representatives of the business and commercial sector in the Borders are to ask Mr George Younger, the Scottish Secretary, to postpone the Scottish rating revaluation to head off large increases.

Borders ratepayers have already been warned that revaluation and loss of rate support grant will push up commercial rates by as much as 50 per cent from April, while domestic ratepayers can expect an average rise of 23 per cent.

During talks between local chambers of trade and members and officials of the regional council it was calculated that, had there been no revaluation, the combined region and district rate bills for 1985-86 would have increased by 10 and 15 per cent in all districts except Roxburgh where, because of a more favourable grant allocation, the increase would have been 5 to 10 per cent.

Councillor Tom Hunter (Ind), convener of Border Regional Council, said after the meeting: "There was a general agreement that the traders' organisations should get together and ask Mr Younger to delay the implementation of new valuations. They are naturally concerned about imminent rates rises although they recognise the governing factors are outwith our control."

The convener and other council representatives indicated that the local authority would support the approach to Mr Younger.

"The seriousness of the situation facing the Borders cannot be overstated," Councillor Hunter said. "We were told by the consulting bodies that some people would definitely go out of business."

Mr John Curtis, local spokesman for the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses, said the request to Mr Younger would be for a two-year delay on revaluations.

"It must be remembered that rates increases and demands bear no relation to the ratepayer's ability to find the money," Mr Curtis said. "It is clear that the rating system is unfair and completly out of date but despite election promises the Government has done nothing to introduce alternative methods of raising local finance."

Councillor Hunter added: "I was interested to see in *The Scotsman* recently that the Scottish Office was baffled by the size of the predicted rates rise in the Borders. It is high time someone told them that despite all our efforts to contain spending within guidelines the loss of grants has resulted in these rises."

on the approved list

P&J. 14/2/85

Grampian rates go up 13%

By DONALD SMITH

RATES in Grampian Region this year will be 38p in the pound, an increase of just under 13% on what is being paid in the current year.

The rate poundage was set by Grampian Regional Council's finance committee yesterday, but it will be some time yet before ratepayers will know exactly what they have to stump up.

Most district councils have still to fix their rates but the biggest complication this year is the revaluation exercise which has been carried out by regional assessors.

All property has been revalued upwards but the actual increases vary from area to area and even from street to street.

Notices of the revaluations will not be sent out by until near the end of this month.

What is certain is that the burden of rates is being moved to the domestic ratepayer.

Aberdeen is likely to have the biggest increases in revaluation, estimated to be about three times present figures within Grampian region. Banff and Buchan district is likely to have the smallest increase, though it will still be substantial.

One surprise at yesterday's meeting was an about-turn by the ruling Conservative group on a previous decision to cut £40,000 from the provision for nursery school nurses in the education budget.

As expected the budget presented by the Conservatives was strongly opposed by both the Labour and Liberal groups on the committee.

Orkney council fix 26% increase

ORKNEY Islands Council have fixed a rate of 52p in the pound plus 9½p for water. Taking into account a Government domestic rating relief of 5p in the pound, this means householders will pay a total of 56½p in the pound.

That represents an average increase of 26%. The rates are based on the new rateable values on property that come in to effect from April 1.

Estimated expenditure for Orkney in 1985-86 is £17,792,000. Once again education leads the way with close on £8,500,000 followed by roads and transportation at about £2,750,000 and social work at £1,348,000.

In his statement to the council on the estimates for 1985-86, Orkney's Islands convener Mr Edwin Eunson said estimated expenditure was less than 2% greater than the original estimate for 1984/85 of £17,462,000. The rate support grant, however, had continued to be reduced.

On the Government's own calculations said Mr Eunson, Orkney should have received £8,900,000 — an extra £1,30,000 — in 1984/85 and £8,400,000 — an extra £1,000,000 in 1985/86 by way of grants.

"This shortfall has to be made good by local ratepayers," he said.

The average increase in rateable values from April 1 are expected to be as follows:— domestic, 250%; industrial, 210% and commercial, 200%.

Mr Eunson said: "It is not recommended that any reduction should be made in balances during 1985/86 since they will be required in future years to cushion the effects of the de-rating of the Flotta oil terminal. This will be phased in with effect from April 1, 1986.

"The balances produce an annual income which is conservatively estimated at £1,000,000 for 1985/86 and has reduced the rate call by at least 5p in the pound."

The convener pointed out that in 1984/85 Orkney Islands Council had the lowest average rate bill per house in Scotland.3

● Dmestic rates in Fife are to rise by almost 28% if the region's policy and resources committee approves a recommendation of 57p, including water rate, less 5p domestic relief on Monday.

C. Herald 12/2/85

Snag over rates plan

By CHRISTOPHER REEKIE

THE minority Conservative administration and the Alliance group, which between them hold the balance of power on Lothian Regional Council, are putting together a compromise budget to present to next Tuesday's council meeting.

The Conservatives, the Alliance, and the main opposition Labour group each put forward proposed budgets at yesterday's meeting of the policy and resources committee.

The Alliance proposals received the least votes in a first division and dropped out. In a second division, Tories and Labour tied and regional convener, Councillor Brian Meek, gave his casting vote to the Conservative proposals.

The Tory budget could not, however, survive in the council. A compromise figure between Tories and the Alliance is expected to be made known this week.

Councillor James Gilchrist, finance convener, said that, after revaluation, the present regional rate would be 42.2p in the £1. The Conservative administration proposed to raise this to 46.4p, and increase of just under 10%. This would be an increase in expenditure of only 1.27%.

The Alliance proposed a rate of 48.2p, and Labour 53.3p.

The Conservatives' proposals were 1% above Government guidelines, the Alliance 3%, and Labour 9%.

Edinburgh District Council's Alliance group yesterday proposed a budget which would provide for a 21% increase in expenditure and a rate poundage before revaluation of 38.5p.

Council's threat on budget

CUMBERNAULD and Kilsyth District Council said last night it may have to set an illegal budget if its rents are not to rise by £2.08 a week.

The housing convener, Councillor Mrs Rosemary McKenna, said the Government's new powers over spending were to blame for the increase, estimated at more than 20%, which will have to be imposed if the council is to meet guidelines.

"We find the implications horrendous," said Mrs McKenna. "It is disgraceful that we should be forced to impose these increases because of Government action."

Chief executive Mr Jim Hutton warned that to defy restrictions on the rate fund contribution to housing and the housing revenue account could mean declaring an illegal budget.

Councillors asked for a report on the implications of an illegal budget, to be drawn up by officials for consideration.

FARMING

Scotsman 15/2/85

Lothian rate set to rise 12.5pc

By DAVID SCOTT, Our Local Government Correspondent

Lothian Regional Council's rate is expected to rise by 12.5 per cent after a deal between the Conservative administration and Alliance councillors which will freeze bus fares, prevent increases in other charges and maintain present staffing levels.

Details of the "compromise" budget which will be put to the regional council on Tuesday were announced yesterday. The proposed regional rate is 47.5p in the pound, a rise of 5.3p when the present rate is converted to take account of the revaluation of property.

Many Edinburgh householders will be faced with paying 40 per cent more in their rates bills because of the combined effects of the new regional rate; the rise proposed by Edinburgh District Council; and the revaluation, which will require domestic ratepayers to pay a greater share of the total rating burden.

According to figures given yesterday a householder whose rateable value is £300 would have a rates bill of £549 — an increase of £156. This would be made up of £40 extra attributable to revaluation; £43 to the regional rate increase and £73 to the increase proposed by Edinburgh District Council.

However, if Edinburgh's rate were restricted to a 20 per cent rise instead of the 72 per cent increase proposed, the additional rates payment would be £103 — a 26 per cent increase — according to calculations made by regional officials.

The proposed increase in the regional rate will result in Lothian's budget exceeding Government guidelines by £7.8 million or 2.3 per cent. The three Alliance councillors, who hold the balance of power, persuaded the Tory administration to spend £4.7 million more than planned before a deal was reached.

While leaders of the Tory group did not disguise their disappointment at having to concede on some key budget proposals such as bus fares, the Alliance yesterday voiced satisfaction at a compromise which they saw as protecting essential services while allowing some modest growth in others.

Councillor Donald Gorrie (Lib) said: "Sevices are still not as good as we would like them to be but this is due to the Secretary of State's policy which we strongly oppose. However, we think it is a fair budget providing for some growth in what we would regard as priority areas."

Councillor Brian Meek, the regional council convener, said the only alternative to the Alliance proposals would be to accept a horrendous Labour budget which would immediately plunge Lothian into a further confrontation with Mr George Younger, the Scottish Secretary.

He stressed that people would still be paying less in regional rates than they were when the Conservatives took over from Labour three years ago. The council's spending excess over guidelines of 2.3 per cent for 1985-86 compared with the previous Labour administration's 22.5 per cent. "That must be the biggest turn-around of any local authority in the country," Mr Meek said.

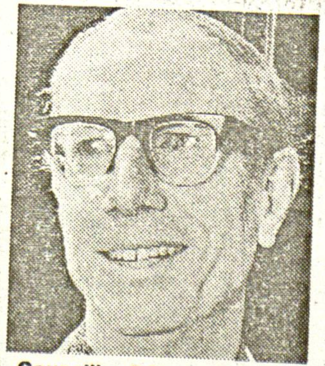
Councillor James Gilchrist, chairman of the finance committee, said the bus fares freeze, applying to Lothian regional services and those operated by the Scottish Bus Group, had been a significant area of disagreement between the administration and the Alliance.

"We believe the Alliance are mistaken in their view. In the same way as ratepayers would expect to pay moderate increases in their rate payments, they would also be prepared to pay moderate increases in bus fares," he said.

The compromise budget also means that charges for school meals and social work services like meals on wheels and lunch clubs will remain the same. About 70 extra posts are being provided between education and social work though savings elsewhere will result in the total staffing establishment of the region remaining virtually unchanged.

Freezing bus fares will cost £760,000 while expenditure on education will be £2.5 million more than the figure proposed in the original Tory budget. This will allow increases in nursery places and more staffing resources for both primary and secondary schools.

Social work spending will be £917,000 more than planned by the administration, while there will also be increases in expenditure on urban aid.



Councillor DONALD GORRIE
"Fair budget"

Councillor John Mulvey, leader of the Labour group, claimed that only minor adjustments had been made to spending levels and that the proposals still amounted to bad news for those who used local authority services. He also gave warning that it was unlikely that a bus freeze would remain for the full financial year.

Tayside Tories' clawback warning

By JAMES ROUGVIE

Householders in Tayside were given a clear warning yesterday that rates are set to rise much higher than inflation. The leader of the Tory administration, Mr Ian Mackie, indicated that revaluation and cuts in rate support grant would throw the heaviest burden on to domestic ratepayers, although the extent of the increase will not be known until later this month.

The council's policy and resources committee yesterday recommended by 14 votes to six to accept a final upper limit of net revenue expenditure of £179.4 million. This is below the Government guideline of £183 million, but since the council estimates are based on prices at October last year and the Government target based on out turn prices next year, in real terms the council expects to spend £188 million, the result of inflation lifting their spending £5 million above the guidelines. The rise represents a three per cent increase on last year.

Mr Mackie said there would certainly be a clawback by the Scottish Secretary for their overspending. "Bearing in mind the warnings from the Secretary that grant penalty might be stepped up, and we are assuming it could be 100 per cent, it could be that for every £1 million over the guidelines we could lose £1 million in grant."

In the current year they had started off with an excess of £6.9 million, but had taken steps to reduce clawback. Even if they had had a standstill budget, there would still have been an additional burden on ratepayers because of grant cuts and revaluation.

The Labour group on the council was defeated in an attempt to introduce a budget of £183 million. The group leader, Mr Ian Borthwick, called Mr Mackie "the flim flam man, now you see it, now you don't," and claimed that services would fall to below an acceptable level. Failure to approve their budget might place the authority where it could no longer meet statutory obligations and become vulnerable both in court and elsewhere.

Scotsman
15/2/85

Labour heading for rates showdown

Edinburgh's Labour administration are heading for confrontation with the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Their draft estimates for a 72 per cent increase in council spending next year were approved by the district council's policy and resources committee by 12 votes to eight.

E. News 15/2/85

By SANDY BRAID

The £73 million estimate for spending would increase the present city rate of 29p to about 50p in the pound.

A budget based on these figures will now be presented to a special meeting of the policy and resources committee on February 28, and to the full council for final approval on March 5.

Labour leader Councillor Alex Wood said at yesterday's meeting: "We make no excuses. Indeed, we will be very proud to introduce a budget which will improve services, create jobs, and defend local democracy."

He estimated that the budget, if passed, would create 800-900 new jobs.

Criticism from Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce was brushed aside. "They are always talking about making the city attractive for incoming industry. We are going to make Edinburgh a bright, attractive and loving city," said Mr Wood.

Councillor John Crombie (Con, North West Corstorphine) moved the Opposition estimates, which were based on the current budget plus an additional 5 per cent for inflation.

Tory estimates of £55 million would result in a rate of about 34p. Councillor Crombie said that even this was 8 per cent above the Government guideline.

Shocking

The Liberal/SDP Alliance favoured a modest amount of growth in their estimates of £61 million, representing a 38.5p rate.

Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Robertson (Con, Baberton) condemned Labour. "You are setting out deliberately to destroy business and existing jobs by putting up overheads.

"This is the most shocking budget this city has ever had to face."

● The committee were told that officials were predicting a deficit of about £5 million by the end of March this year, which would result in a further 3½p on the rates next year.

Scotsman 15/2/85

Tory MPs to press for rating reform

By DAVID SCOTT, Our Local Government Correspondent

Scottish Office Ministers look like coming under increasing pressure from Conservative Back-bench MPs to produce positive proposals for the reform of the rating system in view of the protests which are expected will follow the declaration of this year's rates.

Signs of discontent on the Back Benches at the Government's handling of rating reform surfaced last night in a speech at Kilmarnock by Mr Michael Hirst, Tory MP for Strathkelvin and Bearsden.

"Domestic ratepayers are forcibly reminding Conservative MPs of commitments given at earlier General Elections to reform domestic rates," he said. Mr Hirst added: "The ratepayers' impatience for reform is matched by a realisation and determination on the Government's Back Benches that the nettle of domestic rates has to be firmly grasped."

Of the inquiry into local government finance being conducted by the Department of the Environment and the Scottish Office, Mr Hirst said seasoned observers did not appear to be getting excited about it. "That review must not bring forth a mouse," he said.

Mr Hirst said that since the last General Election, the Government had enacted a number of worthwhile improvements to the rating system but in aggregate these measures, together with a widening of the availability of housing benefit, merely represented a tinkering with the existing system.

"What is needed is a root-and-branch reform which takes better account of ability to pay and use made of local government services, without at the same time unleashing a bureaucratic Frankenstein to administer the new scheme."

He thought it understandable that at a time of low inflation and restraint in income, domestic rates increases of up to 25 per cent resulting from revaluation, cuts in rate support grant and local authority spending levels, were provoking howls of anguish from ratepayers.

While local income tax was frequently mentioned as an alternative to rates its introduction could hardly precede the completion of the national computerisation of taxpayers' records scheduled for 1991.

Mr Hirst suggested that the Government might meantime consider the "half-way house" proposals of transferring the

Mr MICHAEL HIRST
"Frankenstein" warning

whole cost of certain major services like education, police, fire and water, to the Exchequer.

While rates would fall under this system, taxes would increase. "While this would achieve a much greater element of fairness in the rating system this is almost certainly not the most propitious time to be calling for tax increases," he said.

Demands for renewed attempts to find a solution to the rates problem are certain to be made at the Scottish Tory conference in May. According to one party source yesterday, pressure for change will intensify as a result of this year's revaluation, which applies solely to Scotland.

Discontent about the Scottish Labour leadership's attitude towards councils threatening to break the law over spending has been expressed by the chairman of Scottish Labour's local government committee, Mr Mark Lazarowicz.

In an article in the *Scottish Labour Activist*, published by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (Scotland), he claims that the leadership's statements that councils will not be supported in an illegal situation "are simply not reflecting Scottish party policy."

Mr Lazarowicz, a member of Edinburgh District Council, adds: "The Scottish parliamentary Front Bench and party officers in Scotland must get the message that the party wants them to concentrate on defending the services that working people depend on, rather than undermining the confidence of Labour councils."

NEW MOVE TO GET RATES ON THE RUN

By BILL HYNDMAN

A NEW move is being made in Strathclyde Region to abolish rates.

It comes as they are set to rise by a staggering 25 per cent. The plan is to replace them with a local income tax.

The main objective is to bring in the many thousands of wage-earners who escape the rates levy.

Man behind the idea is Labour Councillor James Wray, who feels the present system creates a lot of unfairness.

He said: "In one house you can have a family of seven with a few wage-earners and enjoying many of the services provided by a local authority.

"Next door are an elderly couple, not getting much out of the services, but paying exactly the same as their much better-off neighbours."

Councillor Wray claimed it would mean a $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent levy on income. Someone earning £80 a week would pay £2. Someone earning £200 a week would pay £5. But his plan is unlikely to gain support from Strathclyde's Labour Group.

Councillor Wray's move came as regional bosses met the heads of industry and commerce to consult on the coming rates rise.

LOOSE

Domestic ratepayers will suffer a staggering 25.5 per cent increase and commerce 8.8 per cent, but industry benefits by millions of pounds with a 10.6 per cent reduction because of revaluation.

Region leader Dick Stewart said: "We know all hell is going to break loose when the domestic ratepayers know what they'll have to pay. It's all caused by a government hell-bent on making life difficult for local government."

D. Record 15/12/85

Rates talks plan runs into trouble

G.Herald 13/2/85

By DEREK BATEMAN

THE Government's new consultation procedure to involve non-domestic ratepayers in the formulation of council budgets has run into trouble in Edinburgh.

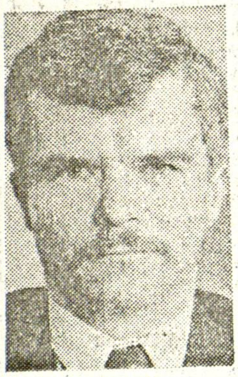
The city's Labour administration has made it clear to business men that it disagrees with the new system and is only complying with the regulations in a technical sense.

As a result the Chamber of Commerce is convinced its arguments for lower rates are being ignored.

Both sides met for the second stage of their talks yesterday and afterwards Labour leader Councillor Alex Wood repeated that he was against commercial ratepayers having a statutory right of special access to the council when every other group was excluded.

He said: "Our priority remains the maintenance of a sensible level of expenditure. It is that and not lower rates that will attract inward investment."

He claimed that some of the chamber members did



Councillor Wood

not appear to understand local authority financing.

A provisional budget released 10 days ago by the council proposed a 50p rate in the £, 72% above the present 29p, and 42% above Government guidelines.

Among the chamber's complaints is that opening remarks by Finance Convener Councillor Ian Campbell, at the first session of talks, was deleted from the minutes. In his statement the councillor told business men he was not prepared to answer or ask questions on the budget and would not pay any attention to the evidence.

Mr David Mowat, the chamber chief executive, said rates were the second largest cheque a company had to write in a year after wages. The only way to pay higher rates was to cut the wages bill while the council's plans included adding 1000 new staff.

"They are also ignoring the fact that their budget is going to be liable to Government clawback," he said.

Since the council wanted to freeze council rents, Mr Mowat wanted to know if council tenants would be charged more in the event of a Government funds clawback.

Mr Mowat said: "It is a totally impractical budget with no attempt to meet the guidelines and instead a determined move to increase spending on all fronts."

Yesterday's meeting was the last stage of the consultation process incumbent upon authorities under the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act.

By DAVID APPLETON

The proposed rates increase of 50p by Edinburgh District Council would add almost 2p to the cost of a pint of beer in city pubs and increase rates bills for some hotels by up to £23,000, councillors were told yesterday.

Council members who were taking part in a consultation exercise listening to submissions from seven bodies representing non-domestic ratepayers heard speaker after speaker declare that the proposed rates increase would mean that jobs would be threatened and businesses damaged.

Only one speaker — Councillor John Mulvey, Labour group leader on Lothian Regional Council — supported the rates proposals of the district council's Labour group.

Mr Peter Henry, rating adviser of the Edinburgh Licensed Trade Association, said that while it welcomed the reduction in the proposed increase from 65p to 50p which had already been announced, it hoped that the administration could now do some more "pencil sharpening" and reduce the figure to a more realistic level.

The proposed 50p rate would force beer prices in bars and hotels up by about 1.75p a pint from April, and would also force increases in charges by hotels and restaurants for accommodation and meals.

Publicans and hotel operators had had to make substantial economies in their businesses in the last few years, and a rates increase of this scale could not be absorbed.

Mr David Mowat, chief executive of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, said it was clear that competition among regions in the United Kingdom for new jobs would increase dramatically.

Ambitions of providing more jobs would be seriously threatened by costs increases of which rates were an important part, and it was therfore only commonsense to ensure that the area did not rule itself out from the start.

In addition local government had to realise that it had to reduce its activities, for without reduction in this burden the international competitiveness of British industry remained at risk.

Edinburgh and Lothian was already the highest rated area in Scotland, he said, with business paying £310 per square metre in Edinburgh, compared with £190 in Glasgow and only £120 in Aberdeen. Compared with English cities, the differences were even more staggering.

Referring to the council's plans to freeze rents, Mr Mowat suggested that a tenant might actually pay more in rent and rates if the rent were frozen and the Scottish Office imposed a penalty on the council.

If this turned out to be the case, he said, it would be a cruel deception of council-house tenants.

Mr Bruce Lindsay, representing the Forum of Private Business, said that the rates burden on business in Edinburgh was already double that in many comparable areas of England. A warehousing operation in Edinburgh, he said, which last year faced rates of £46,000, would have paid only £22,000 in Newcastle.

He claimed that the highest rated employer in Britain — whom he did not wish to name — operated in Edinburgh and paid the equivalent of £22,000 for each employee in his warehouse.

Councillor James Gilchrist, finance chairman of Lothian Regional Council — who was appearing with councillor Mulvey representing the council as a ratepayer — said that it was difficult to understand why the district was seeking to impose such large increases in some areas and not in others. The logical justification for increasing spending by 124 per cent on parks but only 1 per cent in public health was not obvious.

Local government was not about adding up the bills and inviting the taxpayer to pay. Expenditure, as in the case of a private individual, ought to be determined according to income and not the other way about.

Councillor Mulvey said that increased spending by the district council was necessary because of a legacy of neglect of public housing, and as a means of preventing increases in rents, which were already the highest in Scotland.

Previous administrations, he said, had not been prepared to provide public services and rates had therefore been artificially low.

Scotsman
13/2/85

Tory housing budget plan 'illegal'

The Conservative group on Edinburgh District Council yesterday proposed a £13 million housing budget for 1985/86, £5 million under the limit set by the Government, and guaranteeing all offers of grants to owner-occupiers.

But Councillor Eleanor McLaughlin, the housing chairman, accused the Conservatives of incompetence in including as part of their non-housing revenue account (private sector) programme two items that did not belong in that heading — loans for house purchase and grants to housing associations — which would mean an underspend.

She said the proposed transfer of £3.75 million from the HRA into the non-HRA programme was illegal as it was over the 20 per cent transfer limit set by Government. It also meant that the £4.7 million allowance for damp housing, claimed from the Government with Tory group support, was in the Tory budget being cancelled out.

Councillor Tony Metcalfe, the Conservative group spokesman, told the housing committee that the proposals were based on a realistic assessment of what the council could achieve next year.

The committee approved by 12 votes to 5 a request to the director of housing to draw up from the estimates a £25.9 million spending programme for 1985/86, of which £18 million would be spent.

Key role for Alliance in rates clash

By KEN SMART

A Lothian Region Conservative-Alliance rates deal looked highly likely today.

This emerged as the main Labour opposition revealed they want to inject £20 million back into the regional budget for next year.

This would involve reappointing 1400 staff out of 5000 jobs lost in spending cuts over the past four years.

Labour's proposals

One of the three Alliance members who hold the balance of power, Liberal Councillor Donald Gorrie, said they were still involved in talks with the Tory administration on reaching some sort of compromise — to avoid Government action against the council.

That is likely to involve a rates rise of about 12 per cent, compared with Labour's target of stepping up rates by nearly 27 per cent.

Across the road, at the City Chambers, Edinburgh District Labour administration's latest forecast put their rates' increase at around 75 per cent.

Labour are proposing to bring back free travel for old folk; to freeze bus fares in city and country areas; to employ 800 extra home helps; to bring down charges for lunch clubs and meals-on-wheels; restore teaching and nursery school staff, and to step up the amount of money for building and road maintenance.

Labour Group leader Councillor John Mulvey challenged the Alliance to go for a line-by-line voting system at the council's budget meeting later this month.

The line-by-line budget had been introduced by the Alliance two years ago when they had claimed it was a more democratic way of dealing with the council's spending.

Councillor Gorrie said: "We are talking with the Tories about a package deal. If the outcome of that is not satisfactory, we would then go for a line-by-line budget.

"The difficulties with that are that we do not necessarily achieve the priorities we are seeking.

"At times we would be left with a choice between a Tory figure which we think is too low and a Labour figure which would lead to a confrontation with the Secretary of State.

"The best possible solution is to negotiate a budget which achieves our priorities."

Up to now, the main differences between the Alliance and Tories is over whether bus fares and school meal charges should go up and whether there should be extra teaching staff in schools.

The Tory budget would give a rates increase of 10 per cent; the Alliance proposals a rise of nearly 15 per cent, and the Labour plan in increase of nearly 27 per cent.

Tories warn of disaster

Edinburgh's Labour administration are "still on collision course" with the Government despite the drop in the size of their original rates increase plans.

And the ratepayers of Edinburgh will find the new proposals "just as unacceptable," said Conservative leader Councillor Paul Martin.

Yesterday Labour revealed that the latest estimates would mean that the city would see a district rate of 50p in the £1 — an increase of 21p over the present figure.

Their proposals would mean creating 960 new jobs within the authority, freezing charges and improving services. But Councillor Martin said they were still heading for confrontation with the Government and "that can only mean disaster for the citizens of Edinburgh."

He added: "It has become clear over the past few days that the unity which Labour leader Councillor Alex Wood said was essential for Labour plans to be carried out is not going to be available to him."

He said Labour would be reassessing their ideas and they might well draw back from the brink.

The Government guidelines would mean a district rate of between 31-33p in Edinburgh and the Conservatives are giving indications that their alternative budget will be close to that figure.

Group secretary Councillor Jane Ball said that Labour had stated that if the Government didn't accept the Labour budget, one of the first organisations to suffer would be the Festival.

"This once again highlights the Labour Group are prepared to use the Festival as a political pawn."

E. News 1/2/85

Scotsman 21/2/85

Legal action threat on rates

By PETER JONES

Legal action by Edinburgh businessmen may be added to the political action from the Scottish Secretary that Edinburgh District Council will have to face if it presses ahead with its plans for a big increase in city rates.

Plans to take the council to the courts have been outlined to all 1,137 members of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and Manufacturers. Yesterday, the chamber president, Mr James Souness, said not one had objected and many had expressed support.

At a chamber meeting he said that rates per square metre in Aberdeen were £120; in Dundee, £160; in Glasgow, £190; but in Edinburgh they were £310. They had not so far been able to find a city in Britain with higher rates.

Edinburgh employers at yesterday's meeting expressed support for the chamber and total disbelief that the ruling Labour group on the council could fail to understand the damage that businessmen argue would be inflicted on Edinburgh businesses and therefore jobs.

Mr David Mowat, the chamber's chief executive, said that legal advisers had reported there was only one way that any ratepayer could take court action against the council.

This was if the council went above the limits set by the Scottish Secretary for the amount of money that could be transferred from the rates fund to the council's housing account. That limit is set at £2.8 million, but on its present course the council is intending to use £9.5 million from the rates to subsidise the council's houses.

If a legal action were successful in bringing that sum back within the Government's guidelines, this would only account for 6p or 7p of the 21p rise on top of the existing 29p rate that the council is proposing. However, action by the Scottish Secretary would also be under way by then.

Mr Souness said businesses, particularly in central Edinburgh, had only just begun to recover from the big rates increases imposed by Lothian Regional Council a few years ago, but what was coming now would cause the patient to relapse.

He described the consultation the chamber had had with the council as totally without effect. He continued: "I would like to stress to all that this chamber does not spend its time finding ways to complain about playing its part in financing the services provided by the local authority.

"What we spend our time on has been, and will be, to find ways of making Edinburgh and surrounds a more attractive area for the establishment of business leading to higher employment."

To this end, he said, the chamber had initiated discussions on a proposed conference centre, but also had to oppose rates increases which would discourage business and the creation of jobs.

Several businessmen spoke graphically of what they will have to do if the planned rises go ahead. One said he was with a woollen merchanting house which did 85 per cent of its business in exports. It was facing tremendous competition worldwide and would be quite unable to put prices up to pay an increased rates bill.

"Inevitably it means that it will come out of the wage bill. We will not be able to replace staff when they leave," he said. Another solution would be to abandon parts of premises so they would be unoccupied and therefore rates would not be paid on them. He forecast many businesses might do likewise and thus the objects of the council's big rates increase would be defeated.

Mr Michael York, managing director of NEI Peebles Ltd, which employs about 1,000 people in Edinburgh, said the company was now facing competition not just from overseas but from other parts of Britain. He was responsible for factories throughout the UK and he said the Scottish factories are more expensive than their equivalents in England.

"I want highly-skilled people to come to Edinburgh, but I have to pay them more than if they were going to work in the Midlands. They don't want to pay high rates anymore than I do. Edinburgh is now one of the most expensive cities in the whole of the UK."

Scotsman 21/2/85

Lothian's rateable value to rise by 130pc

By DAVID SCOTT, Our Local Government Correspondent

Lothian Region's rateable value will increase by 130 per cent to just over £498 million according to the results of this year's rating revaluation published by the assessors' department yesterday.

Notices giving details of individual property valuations will start going out to ratepayers during the week beginning March 4. In line with the pattern throughout Scotland, householders in Lothian will be required to pay a higher share of the total rating burden — just over 44 per cent compared with the 38 per cent share they have paid during the last seven years.

The official figures show household valuations rising by an average multiplying factor of 2.68 though the regional assessor, Mr Ian Rogers stressed yesterday that there would be wide variations within this average. Increases, he said, were likely to range between 1.4 times present values and four times. In unusual cases tenfold increases were possible.

The rises will, however, be partly offset by reductions in rate poundages and the impact of the revaluation on individual rates bills will not be clear until local authority budgets are finalised.

He pointed out that above-average increases would apply in the case of better-class stone houses and older bungalows. The records of tenemental properties had been brought up to date and as a result these would be subject to fairly large increases. The values of good quality houses in Edinburgh's New Town would also rise substantially.

Examples of new values in Edinburgh — where the average increase is slightly higher than in the three other districts of the region — show the rateable value of a New Town five-apartment terraced flat rising from £478 to £1,572 and a 12-apartment terraced villa, also in the New Town, increasing from £758 to £2,512.

A post-war five-apartment semi-detached villa in the Silverknowes area with a present rateable value of £334 would in future be valued at £868 and a five-apartment detached bungalow in the Corstorphine area built between the wars, £1,252 instead of £438. For an eight-apartment "superior" detached bungalow at Barnton the new rateable value is given as £3,611 against £1,222.

Examples of tenemental properties show a four-apartment good quality tenement in Edinburgh having its rateable value increased from £312 to £888 while the value of a three-apartment modernised council flat would increase from £209 to £582.

The rateable values of industrial properties in the region will be 2.22 times higher on average while commercial properties will rise by an average factor of 2.27.

While the values of Princes Street shops will vary considerably from one end of the street to the other, the rateable values of large stores will rise by above-average levels. In the case of one large store quoted yesterday, the rateable value would rise from £310,413 to £909,000 while that of a smaller shop would increase from £25,413 to £72,100.

Of other examples given, the value of a large modern city centre office block would increase from £291,663 to £456,100 while a non-industrial workshop at Livingston would rise from £16,872 to £26,200.

Among miscellaneous properties — whose share of the rating burden is considerably reduced — an 18-hole golf course in Edinburgh would have a new rateable value of £12,900 instead of £6,750 and a large comprehensive school, a value of £305,750 compared with £154,122.

Mr Rogers said inquiry centres were being set up throughout the region to answer ratepayers' questions and allow them to inspect the valuation roll.

Mr Rogers is expecting a large number of appeals because of changes made as a result of recent legislation but he does not share the view of some assessors who have given warning that the whole valuation system might collapse. He said: "We will be monitoring the system over the next year or two. I think we can cope with the changes that have been made."

Tenants storm meeting

As members of Glasgow District Council Labour group arrived at the City Chambers yesterday for a private meeting, about 500 demonstrators from tenants' associations broke through a police cordon and stormed into the building.

They were allowed to occupy a corridor and a committee room, but failed in their demand that the group agree to freeze rents for another year.

Rise pegged — Page 9

G. Herald 21/2/85

Some rateable values up 300%

By FRANCES HORSBURGH
Local Government Correspondent

PEOPLE who live in Edinburgh New Town and the owners of the multiple stores in Princes Street will be the hardest hit by property revaluation in Lothian region.

Better class stone houses and older bungalows in other desirable city areas will also find their assessments soaring with rateable values sometimes three times as high as the old ones.

For example the rateable value of a five-room New Town flat will rise from £478 to £1572 and for a 12-room good quality detached stone villa in Morningside with garage and outbuildings, the rise will be from £1053 to £3073. A big store in Princes Street will find its rateable value rising from £310,413 to £909,000.

Details were given yesterday by the region's assessor, Mr Ian Rogers, who emphasised that the average increase for domestic properties in the area — by a factor of 2.68 — was consistent with the position in other parts of Scotland. Some of the Princes Street rises were above the commercial average.

Tenement dwellers will also face fairly large increases, especially where the property has been improved. For example a four-room first-floor tenement flat of good quality in the Bruntsfield area of Edinburgh will rise from £312 to £888.

In Bathgate, West Lothian, the rateable value of a six-room detached pre-war stone cottage will rise from £366 to £1014.

In North Berwick, East Lothian, the rise for a four-room terraced villa with central heating and garage will be from £377 to £867.

While ratepayers won't know the actual size of their bills until council demands go out, they should receive notice of their new revaluation figure during the week of March 4.

Mr Rogers said the revaluation, the first for seven years, affected the share of the total rates bill which people had to pay and householders were having to find a larger proportion of it. By contrast industrial reatepayers were coming out of the revaluation quite well.

Mr Rogers said assessors only interpreted the rental evidence they found in a particular area. They did not decide the level of valuation but followed behind the level made by the local occupiers.

New and wider appeals procedures are now in force and some assessors expressed fears last year that the system would not be able to handle the possible flood of cases following revaluation.

Mr Rogers, however, said he believed they could cope and the effects of the new legislation would not be as bad as had previously been feared.

Referring to the new powers to allow owners of football grounds and other sports properties to base an appeal on a comparison with a similar property in England, Mr Rogers said while it wasn't known just how this particular evidence would work it was clear that the revaluation increase for sports properties would be less than the average.

Earlier this week Lothian Regional Council passed a motion attacking the impression given by a Scottish Office leaflet, being distributed by assessors, that rates rises were mainly a result of increased council spending. The council said 11.25% of the 12.5% rise in the regional rate resulted from cuts in Government funding.

A copy of the Lothian valuation roll will go on display at the regional council headquarters on March 4.

Mr Rogers urged people who want to dispute their valuations to call at local inquiry centres or to telephone or write to the assessor's office in Edinburgh.

Scotsman 30/11/

Borders collapse feared after 50pc rates shock

By WILLIAM CHISHOLM

Sections of the Borders economy are facing collapse after a disclosure yesterday that some commercial ratepayers will be asked to pay upwards of 50 per cent more next year.

Councillors said they were horrified and staggered by figures contained in a report prepared by Mr Peter Jeary, director of finance. The document showed that though regional council spending is set to rise by only 5.3 per cent, ratepayers will have to pay an increase of 27 per cent.

A revaluation of property and loss of rate support grant from the Government are the key elements in an equation which is expected to result in a regional rate of 42p. Without these outside influences, Mr Jeary estimated that the likely rates increase would have been 8.5 per cent.

Yesterday's meeting of the council's policy and resources committee was told that domestic rates would increase by an average of 23 per cent, commercial levies by 41 per cent and industrial rates should fall by 2 per cent.

"The main point to be hammered home is that these horrendous rises in rates are largely outwith the control of the council," Mr Jeary said. "Your actions to mitigate the increase are severely limited, for expenditure is within Government guidelines and is in line with inflation."

Then Mr Jeary clearly shocked councillors when he said: "The average increase in the commercial sector wil be over 40 per cent, but for most shopkeepers and hoteliers it would be true to say the increase in their case will be 50 per cent on average."

Councillor Tom Hunter (Ind), council convener, said the ratepayers would be as horrified as the council by these shattering increases.

"How can we support tourism, shops and the general infrastructure of the Borders when we are talking about an average rates increase of between 40 and 50 per cent in the commercial sector," he said. "I do not understand it, for the Conservative party is going to lose thousands of votes as a result of all this. It is quite extraordinary how this situation has been engineered."

Councillor Douglas Birch (Ind) commented: "Maybe the Government do not care about Scotland because their support does not lie here. It has been a quite deliberate policy to shift the burden from taxpayers to ratepayers."

Other committee members claimed the situation was even more serious than was thought a month ago when the first indications were given of the likely impact of revaluation. Widespread closures of shops were predicted and the rates increases would be the final straw in breaking many parts of the Borders economy.

Councillor George Dorward (Ind), the vice-convener, said one of the promises contained in the Conservative manifesto was to change the rating system completely. But they had welshed on that promise. Councillor Bill Lamb (Ind) told the meeting: "As far as central Government is concerned it has been lies, deceit, dishonesty and deception all the way down the line."

After the meeting Councillor Hunter urged ratepayers to submit appeals once they received their new valuations next month.

Policies 'overloading system'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The criticisms being directed at the Government's local authority spending policies are coming not only from Labour councils. The convener of Dumfries and Galloway, Councillor John Jameson, said yesterday that the rate support grant settlement would have a most unfair effect on the region.

He added: "This regional council has a record of good housekeeping without equal in Scotland, and it is nothing short of tragic that we should now be facing massive rates rises due to factors outwith our control.

"If the current system of local authority finance produces this kind of situation then the Government should be giving serious consideration to finding an alternative system. I have no objection to finance for local government being raised locally, but I do think it is most unfortunate that the Government appears to be doing nothing about providing an alternative system such as a local income tax.

"Instead, they are continuing with policies that are overloading the present rating system to such an extent that we are approaching the stage where the system will be unworkable."

Councillor Dick Stewart, president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, said the forecasts confirmed what COSLA had told the Scottish Secretary, Mr George Younger, when the grant arrangement was first announced.

"It is just what we predicted," he said. "It is all coming home to roost — an inadequate inflation allowance, cuts in grant and a tremendous burden placed on domestic ratepayers as a result of revaluation."

Councillor Stewart said people were now faced with increased mortgages, higher interest rates, higher local authority rates and higher levels of unemployment. He felt it inevitable that people would make new demands for the reform of the rating system, as this usually happened when big rises were proposed.

The rates-rise forecasts are generally being made as part of the new consultative process involving non-domestic ratepayers, and final figures will not be known until budgets are declared over the next few weeks.

Strathclyde's estimate of a 25.5 per cent increase in domestic rates takes account of the expected regional rate and revaluation. The final figure will depend on the rates struck by district councils, many of which have been protesting strongly about the impact of grant cuts.

The Conservative administration in Lothian Region has proposed a rates rise of almost 11 per cent, but regional finance officials estimate that the bill for householders in Edinburgh could rise by as much as 42.5 per cent. A slightly higher figure would apply if a compromise were reached on alternative proposals being considered by Alliance councillors who hold the balance of power.

Although Grampian's rates rise has been estimated at 13 per cent, householders in Aberdeen may be required to pay an increase of more than 25 per cent. Rateable values for domestic properties in the city are expected to treble — an increase which is above the average for the rest of Grampian Region.

Elsewhere, Fife Regional Council forecasts an overall rates increase of 20 per cent with domestic ratepayers paying 27 per cent more. Central Region's rate may rise by about 10 per cent with householders facing extra payments of about 20 per cent. "This appears to be reasonable compared with other parts of Scotland, but it is still a substantial increase," says Central's convener, Councillor James Anderson.

Highland Regional Council's estimates suggest that its ratepayers may be less severely affected than many other parts of Scotland. Its regional rate is expected to increase by just over 12 per cent, with domestic ratepayers facing a rise of around 17 per cent.

Officials of Tayside Regional Council will inform its non-domestic ratepayers at consultative talks today that its regional rate will require to rise by between 10 and 15 per cent. No estimate has been given so far of the likely impact on domestic ratepayers, though it suggested that rises will be "well into double figures."

The latest increase in interest rates is causing further uncertainty for councils trying to plan their spending commitments for the next financial year. Glasgow District Council finance officials said yesterday that the rise would cost Glasgow £700,000 more in debt charges this year.

Scottish Office Ministers are said to be puzzled by some of the criticisms coming from areas like the Borders. The Scottish Office pointed out yesterday that Borders, Dumfries and Galloway and Grampian Regional Councils received an increase in grant in spite of the overall decrease for Scotland

Scotsman 29/1/85

25% rise likely in domestic rates

The worst fears of Strathclyde householders were confirmed yesterday when the regional council announced that domestic rates will rise by about 25.5 per cent.

The increase means that householders will pay on average an extra £2 a week. They have been by far the biggest losers in a revaluation which has seen the rates burden lightened in the industrial sector. Industry will pay 10.6 per cent less in the next financial year but commerce will pay 8.8 per cent more.

The leader of Strathclyde Regional Council, Councillor Dick Stewart, said that many householders will be hard pressed to meet the increase but he said the extra burden was mainly caused by the revaluation and by another cut in the Government's rate support grant.

The industry rates cut was welcomed by Mr John Davidson, the Scottish director of the Confederation of British Industry, who said: "This reflects the fearsome problems of industry in recent years. I think that for some hard-pressed companies this could be a welcome reduction in costs and could lead to new jobs being created. I am concerned, however, that commercial rates should have risen so much above inflation."

The secretary of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, Mr Ewan Marwick, said that the rates burden was being passed back to householders "who have a vote." He added: "At least it is getting it off the

fallen from 68.5 per cent to 60 per cent. From April a further cut would bring RSG down to 56.6 per cent.

The increase in valuations would put the regional rate at 50p in the pound, compared with the present 98p, and the water rate at 4p instead of 10p. To meet Government guidelines the council would have to cut rates by about 3p in the pound.

The council believes that to cut the £40 million overspend on the Government's £1,198 million guideline for the Strathclyde budget it would still need to increase domestic rates by 20 per cent and reduce services.

Councillor Stewart said he was prepared to wait to see if the Scottish Office would retaliate against the overspend

D Record 29/1/85

RATES TO ROCKET

HOUSEHOLDERS in Strathclyde, already reeling over the loans shock, received another blow yesterday.

For it was revealed that they are facing a staggering **25 PER CENT** rates increase.

But businesses in the region were celebrating a multi-million pound handout.

Industry's share of the rates bill was actually **CUT.** On average, factories and workshops will get a whopping 10.6 per cent reduction.

They would have paid another £11 million if it had not been for revaluation. This has meant that the domestic sector is now picking up a far bigger share of the rates levy.

The commercial sector's share is only slightly changed and their rates will increase, on average, by just under nine per cent next year.

And there could be worse news to come. When council leader Dick Stewart released financial details yesterday, he said the region's budget would be £1,316,639,000.

That puts Strathclyde £40.9 million above the Government's permitted ceiling. It could result in Scots Secretary George Younger withholding the same amount in grants, plunging the region further into financial crisis.

Assuming District Councils run on the same lines with their budgets, a householder with a rates bill of £500 will, on average, pay £625.

For Grampian, too, there was depressing news . . . a proposed average 13 per cent rates increase.

Scotsman 30/1/85

Ministers face council fury over rates rises

By DAVID SCOTT, Our Local Government Correspondent

Scottish Office Ministers will face a furious row over local authority rates increases and fresh demands for an alternative financing system as councils finalise their budgets over the next few weeks.

The effects of revaluation, cuts in rate support grant and council budget policies are combining to produce the prospect of the biggest increases in rates payments experienced in recent years.

Most regions, including Strathclyde, Lothian, Fife, Grampian, and Dumfries and Galloway, are predicting rises of 25 per cent and more for many of their ratepayers.

In Lothian, officials estimate that householders in Edinburgh may have to pay an average of about 45 per cent more because of revaluation, an increase in the regional rate and the expected dramatic rise in the charge made by the district council.

While Borders Regional Council envisages a 27 per cent average increase for all ratepayers — with commerce paying an average of 50 per cent more — the neighbouring Dumfries and Galloway fears that many domestic ratepayers will experience rates increases of more than 30 per cent.

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