

## C.A.L.

The Campaign to Abolish the TV Licence

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It has recently been announced that the cost of a television licence is to increase by £5. This hike in licence fees will come into force on April 1, 2001, and will bring the cost of a colour tv licence up from £104 to £109. This increase (which is above the rate of inflation) comes from a new funding formula set by the Government. This was done without any consultation with the British people and without any proper debate in Parliament. We supposedly live in a democracy, yet we still have an archaic and unfair tv licensing system that is forced down the throats of UK citizens by the ruling elite, who are under the delusion that they know what's best for us.

New Zealand had a tv licensing system much like ours here in the UK, that is, until thousands of people refused to pay the licence and a 220,000 signature petition was handed to the government. Last year, 1999, the New Zealand Government scrapped the tv licence. And staying down under, the Australian tv licence was abolished years ago: the Aussies simply refused to pay it and the whole system became unworkable... it can be done!

Meanwhile, back in the UK, in order to soft soap public opinion (and as a pre-election sweetener for the Labour Party) it's recently been announced that there will be free Television Licences for the over 75's, coming into force on November 1st 2000. In order to administer this, the government is giving TV Licensing access to the nations national insurance records. That's right, TV Licensing (who are not a government agency, but a private company) will now be able to find out everything about you from these confidential records.

And it gets better still: to 'compensate' the BBC for this loss of Licence revenue the Treasury is giving them more than £300 million per year, this is in addition to the already huge subsidy (more than £400 million) that the Treasury gives the BBC each year; and of course, on top of this is the licence fee (we're not talking about 10's of millions here, or even 100's of millions, but *billions* of pounds every year. No other non-essential organisation in this country is given such huge amounts of public cash - each year the BBC rake in the equivalent of almost 10% of the National Health Service's yearly budget).

The C.A.L. has been formed to lobby the British Government in order to get the Licence Fee abolished. The C.A.L. is not against the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). We support the principle of a publicly funded broadcasting service. However, the modern day BBC has gone beyond its original role and is now a multi-million pound business enterprise. As such it cannot expect British citizens to give it a massive subsidy under threat of imprisonment.

The BBC is not directly responsible for this state of affairs. The Corporation has a legal remit that it uses to its advantage (the *Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1949* is the cornerstone of TV Licence legislation). It is the law that needs to be addressed, and the government that makes the law.

**APPEAL FOR VOLUNTEERS...** the Campaign to Abolish the Licence is recruiting area co-ordinators all over the country. These area co-ordinators are making people aware of our campaign and they are gathering signatures which will make up a 1 million signature protest petition against the Licence Fee. This petition, one of the biggest ever in British history, will be handed in at No.10 Downing Street.

*"Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers."*

(Article 10 of the EUROPEAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, which the United Kingdom is a signatory to.)