

accede to such a proposal without a fight.

The long knives will emerge and scapegoats sought. The first question that will be asked is this: Whose idea was it, anyway? Answer: right-wing theoretician Douglas Mason, a Scottish politician associated with the Adam Smith Institute. He is reported as stating:

It was ludicrous that services were paid for on the basis of the size of the house you lived in and where it was situated."

So he floated the idea of the "community charge" – a subtle version of the Poll Tax invented by Richard II. The original invention led to heads rolling into baskets.

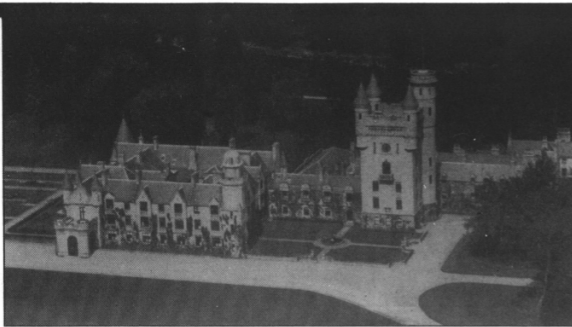
Labour MPs are wondering whose head will roll now. One of them, Mildred Gordon, says she will refuse to pay the Poll Tax and suffer the consequences – a popular stand among the voters.

In the run up to the next election, a major debate will ensue over alternatives. Opinion polls suggest that almost 40% of voters favour a return to the old property tax, which was levied on the notional rental value of a house.

The Labour Party, which is now running well ahead of the Conservatives in public popularity, has yet to formulate an alternative. It says it may relate a new tax to the capital value of people's homes, but modify the levy on the basis of incomes.

Receiving more attention in the media, these days, is an alternative strategy: a tax that falls exclusively on the value of land, which is part of the policies of the Liberal Democrats.

Writing in *The Financial Times* (March 30), Frederic Jones, a professor at the University of Wales, pointed out that "I see no reason why, when full site-value rating is operative, part of the



• Balmoral: Poll Tax charges made the Queen £5,700 better off

ROYAL SAVINGS

THE WORLD'S wealthiest woman, Queen Elizabeth, is richer because of the Poll Tax.

Under the British constitution, she is exempt from this tax. And by abolishing the property tax on her homes, she has enjoyed a major saving.

• Last year she saved £5,698 on her 50,000 acre Balmoral estate in Scotland.

• This year she will save over £12,000 on her Sandringham estate in Norfolk.

• In all, the Queen and the rest of the royal family will save over £50,000 a year.

So for the first time in history the Queen will be exempt from taxation. Explained a Whitehall spokesman: "As it is a personal tax, the Queen does not have to pay the Community Charge."

The anomalous nature of the new local tax is indicated by the fact that other members of



• The Queen

the rich royal family are now going to pay less than their employees.

Take the case of Prince Charles. His butler, Harold Brown, will pay £15 more than the prince. This is because he lives at Kensington Palace and will pay the charge of £278 to Kensington and Chelsea council.

The prince has decided to make Highgrove his official residence for poll tax pur-

poses. He will pay £263 a year to Stroud Council.

For constitutional reasons, the Queen is not allowed to express her views on fiscal policy. But some idea of her attitude emerges from the revelation that she has agreed to pay higher wages to cover the Poll Taxes of her staff. However, Buckingham Palace employees will not benefit: for their wages are paid by the government out of the Civil List.

Nor is the government getting any help from royal warrant holders who are hampered by the new Uniform Business Rate.

Harrod's the Queen's favourite store in Knightsbridge, paid a property tax of £1m last year.

This year, it will pay a "monstrous" £8.3m – the fault, principally, of the failure of previous governments to regularly revalue property for tax purposes.

impost should not be returned to central government to alleviate income tax, from which we would all benefit."

Ironically, that policy ought to

have attracted strong sympathy from Margaret Thatcher. But she has turned down the idea, and says she will stick with the Poll Tax.