

Dear Minister

I wish to register my opinion that the house rating system should not be based on capital values. This method proceeds from the false premise that all people who have valuable houses must have commensurate incomes. We are one of many families in this area (South Belfast) who bought houses over 30 years ago at the moderate prices then obtaining, without any thought of possible future soaring values.

There are now two categories of house owners in this area - those such as ourselves who moved in long ago when prices were affordable, and those who bought property here recently. Those in the latter category would require an annual income of at least £80-100K even to secure a mortgage. Our income is approx £19.

I believe the case for basing rates on income tax is the only equitable one. Opposition to this might well come from high earners, who might find themselves paying more than under the capital value system. Surely the main criterion determining the choice of system should be the ability to pay, and this, it could be argued, would be best achieved through a form of income tax.