



ce/BG  
JW

Prime Minister

NBM.

#### STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY CHARGE

AG WITH ON

I have seen a copy of Malcolm Rifkind's minute to you of 24 September about students and the community charge.

I entirely agree with Malcolm's proposition that the concession should be restricted to students on full-time courses lasting for significant periods.

We have rightly resisted pressure to provide concessions for most groups who have pleaded special circumstances, on the grounds that it would weaken the accountability which our rates reform package aims to strengthen. Having decided that students are the exception to this rule, it is vital therefore to ensure that only bona fide students receive the concession. The commonly accepted view of a student is not someone undertaking a four week secretarial course, and we should not include such people within the concession.

The practical consequences of extending the concession to people on short-term courses would be just as damaging. Requiring registration officers to keep track of such people would add considerably to their workload (often in areas where registration difficulties will in any case be greatest) and fuel criticisms of the administration cost of the new system. The special registration arrangements for full-time students were designed to ease registration difficulties - allowing people on short courses to qualify as students would make a nonsense of those proposals. As Malcolm points out, too, there would be a strong incentive for people to enrol on short courses simply to avoid paying the full community charge.

My officials are in touch with Malcolm's about the precise wording to be used. My intention would be to achieve an agreed definition which would then be used in the Rate Reform Bill for England and Wales.



I am copying this minute to the Lord President, other members of E(LF) and Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'N' and 'R'.

N R

13 October 1987