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The Rt Hon Nicholas Ridley AMICE MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 3EB

7 January 1988

Dear Nicholas,

COMMUNITY CHARGE: DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION AND DIRECT DEDUCTIONS FROM BENEFIT

flap.

attached

John Moore wrote to you on 23 November about the issues raised in your E(LF) Memorandum of 18 November. That Memorandum has not yet been discussed and, in the hope that the matter may be settled without further delay, I am writing to emphasise the importance in my view of information about income support recipients being made available for community charge registration purposes.

The main point I want to stress is that, while I fully appreciate John's concerns about confidentiality, the clinching argument seems to me to be that income support levels will include an element for the minimum contribution towards personal community charge liability. It is a matter of simple financial prudence for us to take steps to ensure that the recipients of this contribution are properly registered and required to pay their contribution. Indeed, I think that if arrangements along these lines are not set up we could be subject to criticism for exercising insufficient care to ensure that the considerable amounts of money which will be issued as benefit are properly spent. A further argument in favour of the proposal is that routine exchange of information along these lines would allow the people concerned to be considered automatically by the local authority for eligibility for a community charge rebate, without themselves having to make a separate application.

I therefore strongly support your proposals on this point. I hope that we can reach collective agreement on it as soon as possible so that it can be built into the arrangements for the introduction of the community charge system in Scotland which will be set up in the course of 1988.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, members of E(LF), and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours ever,
Malcolm

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