

CSG



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

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From the Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon Nicholas Ridley MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
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14 March 1988

Dear Mr Ridley

COMMUNITY CHARGE: ATTACHMENT OF BENEFIT

WITH PA?

I note that in your letter of 11 March, you describe the manner in which an attachment of benefits order would be applied. This seems to me to be fully in line with the decision of E(LF) on 4 February and this is the course we should now be pursuing.

E(LF) endorsed my contention that low income individuals who default on their community charge should be treated in a consistent fashion, ie that an attachment order should be considered whether the income consists of earnings or social security benefit. This argument seems to be one which will be easy to defend in that recipients of benefit will not be regarded as second class citizens who require special measures to ensure payment of the charge.

Despite the above, you are now proposing, directly contrary to the decision of E(LF) to introduce attachment of benefit, that a system of direct deductions should be applied to income support recipients. I totally disagree with this suggestion. As I have said before a system of direct deductions would not only be seen as a form of a discrimination against income support recipients but would cause significantly more administrative problems at a time when the repayment of social fund loans will be taxing the resources of my local offices.

I fully agree that the E(LF) decision to consider an attachment of benefits order should be announced as soon as possible to avoid further rumour.

I am sending a copy of this letter to other members of E(LF), to the Lord Chancellor and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours sincerely
R.D. Clark

for JOHN MOORE
authorised by the Secretary of State and signed

