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

NBRM

Rec'd  
15/6

7 June 1988

Dear Nicholas,

PROJECT 2000: STUDENT NURSES IN THE COMMUNITY CHARGE

Thank you for the copy of your letter to John Moore of 26 May on this subject. *file with PG*

As you will be aware we have already given considerable time and thought in Scotland to the form of concession for students for community charge purposes and, in the light of this, I am unwilling to agree that the Lords should now be told categorically that student nurses will be treated as full-time students when Project 2000 is implemented. The details of training arrangements under Project 2000, including the nature and timing of their contribution to the nursing workforce during training, have still to be settled and until this is done we cannot be confident that a commitment of the kind you propose would not open the door to other trainees and apprentices whom we would not wish to include in our definition.

In any event, your requirement that student nurse bursaries are adjusted downwards as a consequence of making this concession is completely unacceptable. We have yet to decide precisely how the value of these bursaries will be determined but a reduction in bursary would undermine the value of the concession and result in student nurses being treated differently from other full-time students, the support arrangements for whom, as I understand it, will remain unaffected by whether or not they are eligible for the 80% discount. To proceed as you suggest would offer a gift to opponents of the community charge and place us in an untenable position.

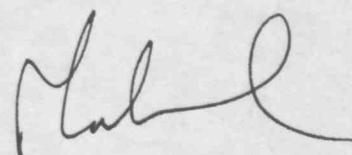
I consider that far from announcing that student nurses will qualify for the discount we should now be taking an opportunity to emphasise that

detailed consideration still has to be given to this subject and that a final decision will not be possible until details of the implementation of Project 2000 implementation are settled. "Student status" has a particular connotation in the context of Project 2000 - it simply means "supernumerary to the workforce" - and I do not think that a decision on the treatment of student nurses for community charge purposes has to follow necessarily from our endorsement of the concept of "student status" as part of our response to Project 2000. The fact that many have read this into our response gives us a reason for putting the record straight.

I would therefore suggest that Lord Caithness restricts his statement to indicating that we will not be able to make any firm decision until we have a clear idea as to the path of and timetable for implementation of Project 2000. We can, of course, give the positive assurance that if the effect of implementation is to place student nurses in the same position as other persons regarded as undertaking a course of full-time education for the purposes of the community charge then, of course, student nurses could expect to be brought within the definition of those eligible to pay only 20% of the full charge.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, other Members of E(LF), the Chief Whips in the Lords and Commons and Sir Robin Butler.

*Yours ever,*



MALCOLM RIFKIND

Local Govt

Receives P. 10

