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PRIME MINISTER

I should report to you a small but significant debate which took place at the 1922 Committee last night on the Community Charge:-

Richard Page raised the issue. He had never before during his 12 years in the House addressed the 1922. If the issue is not handled properly we could lose the next election and certainly the services of many colleagues. Every voter will be a Community Charge payer. He doubted if constituents would understand the safety net. Why should they pay for expensively run Councils? The Executive should approach the Government at the highest level. His position would be all right, but he was fearful for colleagues in the Midlands and the North.

Rhodes Boyson: If we must have the safety net it must be paid for by new money from the Treasury. How can one explain to constituents that £55 - £75 will have to be paid to help run a neighbouring Labour Council? This will go on for four years. The safety net will cost the tax payer £850m in the first year, and something over £2,000m over 4 years. There must be new money from the Treasury.

John Wheeler: We have a great problem in Westminster. We might well lose control of the Council next May. My seat will be greatly threatened at a General Election. It should not be Conservative authorities which pay for the safety net, but the tax payer.

Charles Morrison: When the legislation went through the House some of us then expressed doubts. When the Bill went through the House it was votes inside the House that were crucial. That was handled by the Whips. Now the worry is votes outside the House. I trust that all points made will be listened to.

M.L.B

MARK LENNOX-BOYD
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cc Andrew Turnbull
Paul Gray