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

19 July 1989

Dear Nick

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING BILL : EXEMPTIONS FROM THE
COMMUNITY CHARGE

I would be grateful for your agreement and that of members of E(LF) to our tabling an amendment at Lords Committee Stage of the Bill extending the present exemption from the community charge for persons in respect of whom another person is entitled to child benefit. The particular case which has alerted us to the deficiency of this provision is that of an 18 year old foster child who is still at school but who is, under the present provision required to pay the community charge. To meet this and similar problems I would propose to extend the exemption to include those in respect of whom child benefit could be paid except for the fact that they fall within certain of the categories set out in Schedule 1 to the Child Benefit Act 1975 (Exclusions from entitlement). The specific categories I am proposing should be exempt are children subject to a supervision requirement or in the care of a local authority (paragraphs 1(b) and 1(c) of the Schedule) and children entitled to non-contributory invalidity pension (paragraph 5).

I am aware that the more vexed question about the possible exemption of 19 year olds at school is still under discussion between colleagues and may not be resolved before the recess. I am, however, concerned that this should not hold up the more minor but nonetheless important change I have proposed above. The amendment will not be controversial.

Copies of this letter go to members of E(LF) and L Committees.

Malcolm Rifkind
MALCOLM RIFKIND

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