

PRIME MINISTER

BACK BENCH SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNITY CHARGE

The Chief Whip has been doing his sums on the state of support for the Community Charge and in particular the way in which gainers and losers under the safety net affect the position.

His conclusions are as follows:

- (i) 137 Conservative Back Benchers can be said to be adversely affected by the safety net arrangement (their constituents will be contributing between £75 and £10).

Of these,

13 are root and branch opponents of the Community Charge;

16 have always been doubtful about the Community Charge;

8 others who are neither root or branch opponents nor doubters have declared themselves against safety netting.

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- (ii) There are 11 more root and branch opponents of the Community Charge who are not affected by safety netting.

- (iii) There are 24 other 'doubters' about Community Charge who are not affected by safety netting.

His conclusion is that up to 48 would vote against the Government if there was a vote tomorrow on the Safety Net Arrangement. Most if not all the 16 doubters would vote with the Government if a transitional arrangement ^{for individuals} was worked out, leaving a hard core of 32 voting against. If one were not worked out, the situation would get steadily worse with the opponents of safety netting and the 'root and branchers' getting at the other Back Benchers adversely affected by safety netting who have so far remained quiescent.

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