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INFORMATION ON THE COMMUNITY CHARGE AND THE BUSINESS RATE

As you and colleagues will already be aware, I intend to launch in early January an information campaign to bring community charge benefit and transitional relief to the attention of those who may be eligible for them. We are now sufficiently far forward for me to give you details of what is planned.

The campaign will involve television and radio advertisements aimed at making those likely to be eligible aware of the explanatory press advertisements. These will carry coupons to be sent to local authorities requesting claim forms for community charge benefit and transitional relief. The television and radio advertisements will be directed towards those social groups and those areas of the country with the highest proportion of those likely to be eligible. They take care to make clear to those who should receive benefit claims forms automatically that this should be the case. Press advertisements will appear in appropriate national newspapers, and also in regional and ethnic newspapers and in selected women's magazines (focussed on carers).

I will launch the campaign at a press conference which is likely to be held on Thursday 4 January. To coincide with the media campaign my Department will be issuing a further leaflet in its 'You and the Community Charge' series, entitled 'Reductions' which answers the commonest questions likely to be raised on community charge benefit and transitional relief.

On a related issue, there is still widespread ignorance amongst businessmen, especially those running small businesses, about the reform of non-domestic rating which will take effect on 1 April next year. There has been quite a lot of misleading reporting in the press engineered by the CBI and other bodies. And it is likely that some local authorities which are hostile to our local government finance policies will issue to businesses in their areas slanted accounts of the new system.

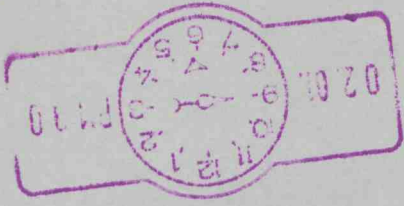
I thought you should know that we have decided to write to all business ratepayers with a short leaflet giving them a straightforward factual account of the new system. The leaflet will tell them what the poundage for 1990/91 will be and the way in which it has been derived; advise them how to check their new rateable value; and describe in some detail the transitional arrangements. It will also indicate where businesses can get further advice if they need it. The letter will issue in mid-January, well before businesses get their new rate bills for 1990/91. I am satisfied that the letter and leaflet are consistent with the guidelines on Government publicity.



I am copying this letter to Norman Lamont, Peter Walker, Malcolm Rifkind, Nicholas Ridley, Norman Fowler, Tony Newton and to Sir Robin Butler.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping letters that appear to be 'D' and 'H'.

DAVID HUNT  
29 December 1989



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