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Prime Minister ²

QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

There are certainly presentational advantages in it being a Government Bill.

21 February 1990

Geoffrey

MAINTENANCE ENFORCEMENT BILL

In the light of the outcome of the Prime Minister's meeting on lone parents on 20 February I should be grateful if you would look again at the case for including the short Bill on maintenance enforcement (described in my letter of 9 February) in next Session's legislative programme.

We are all agreed that it is essential that fathers are made to provide adequately for their children, and my Bill will help to ensure that fathers required to pay maintenance do not allow arrears to build up. It will help to avoid the consequence of arrears, namely that the mothers concerned may have to fall back on state benefit or go back to court for enforcement action. As John Major has noted, the Bill would go hand in hand with the measures which Tony Newton has identified and which the Prime Minister has endorsed.

It would be possible to take such a Bill forward as a Private Member's handout, and indeed this is how it was first conceived. But as part of our initiative on lone parent families I think it would be better as a Government Bill. In either case I should be grateful to know as soon as possible that you are content for us to instruct Parliamentary Counsel.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, James Mackay, John Major, Kenneth Baker, Tony Newton, Norman Lamont, Peter Fraser and Sir Robin Butler.

*Yours ever
and*

mt

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP
Lord President of the Council
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SOCIAL SERVICES: Agency of Benefit PPS

