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19/4

The Rt Hon Norman Lamont MP
Chief Secretary
HM Treasury
Parliament Street
LONDON
SW1P 3AG

19 April 1990

Dear Norman,

I have read with interest Chris Patten's letter to you of 10 April about further publicity for the community charge benefit arrangements. On the basis of our experience in Scotland at this time last year I would support the proposal for a further publicity campaign.

As you may know, the arrangements for introducing community charge benefit in England and Wales, including the 56 day backdating rule, are very similar to those which applied to the introduction of community charge rebates in Scotland last year. We were at that time conscious of the concern that not everybody who was entitled to rebate would apply within the 56 days and ran a slightly revised version of our television commercial in early April 1989 to encourage claims. The result was that the number of claims in fact marginally exceeded our own forecasts. This did not stop the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and members of the Opposition seeking an extension of the 56 day backdating period on the grounds that significant numbers of people had lost out on rebate because of this rule. However when COSLA were asked to supply hard evidence they failed to do so, presumably because there was none. Our conclusion has been therefore that, with appropriate publicity the 56 day rule was quite sufficient to ensure widespread take up of rebates.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor, Kenneth Baker, Chris Patten, Tony Newton, Peter Walker and Robin Butler.

over,
Malcolm Rifkind

MALCOLM RIFKIND

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LOCAL GOV: Community Day Pt 18



MAY 19 1990
PT 18