



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2AT

19 October 1990

*Dear Secretary of State -*

**CHARGE CAPPING: LAMBETH**

I refer to you minute of 16 October to the Prime Minister.

I accept your conclusion that there is no point in proceeding to the House of Lords and that legislation, in the shape of a separate short bill seems the only way of ensuring that local authorities do not systematically deny charge-payers the benefit of capping which is an important part of the policy we have agreed. I am therefore prepared to agree that you should prepare a short bill, but in the interests of managing the programme this must be subject to a number of requirements:-

1. The bill must be as tightly drafted as possible, to keep to the minimum the scope for amendment. We must recognise, however, that there is a limit to what can be achieved, particularly in the House of Lords.
2. Because it is likely that the bill will provide an opportunity for sustained discussion and criticism of our policies, even if technical amendments are limited, it must be ready for introduction very early next Session. I think you should aim to bring it to Legislation Committee no later than 13 November. If that is likely to give you difficulty, please let me know straightaway.
3. The emergence of this additional requirement reinforces the need to keep the major bills in the programme within bounds, and in your case that means that further addition to the material already agreed for the Town and Country Planning Bill seems increasingly out of the question.

I note your proposal for an early announcement. Our offices are in touch separately about the timing of your proposed statement on local government finance. I do not think a statement on the Lambeth case should be made before that. In advance of the Queen's Speech you cannot, of course, give a firm commitment to

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legislate next Session and I should be grateful if your officials would discuss with the QL Secretariat in the Cabinet Office the form of words which might be used.

I strongly support your view that it would not be appropriate to deal with school-leavers at this stage. To cover them in the Lambeth Bill would unacceptably widen its scope while the pressures on the programme are such that yet another short bill is clearly out of the question.

I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister, members of E(LG) and QL, the Solicitor General, Sir Robin Butler and First Parliamentary Counsel.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Geoffrey Howe*

GEOFFREY HOWE

*(Approved by the Lord President  
and signed in his absence)*

The Rt Hon Chris Patten MP