



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY
 Richmond House, 79 Whitehall, London SW1A 2NS
 Telephone 071-210 3000

From the Secretary of State for Social Security

The Rt Hon Christopher Patten MP
 Secretary of State for the Environment
 Department of the Environment
 2 Marsham Street
 LONDON SW1

n.b. P.M.

*tel letter from
 S/S Env. arrived.*

BHP

2/11

1 November 1990

COMMUNITY CHARGE: EXEMPTION FOR SCHOOL LEAVERS

I have been following the correspondence about school leavers who become liable to pay the personal community charge for a short while before they go to university and become entitled to student relief. During this period local authorities have to put these young people on their register, collect the charge, and assess Community Charge Benefit.

If the scope of exemptions were to be extended, it will be vital to exclude students from any Bill - the last thing any of us will want is a repeat of last Session's wrangling over students. A restricted Bill covering only school leavers who are over 18 will still of course run the risk of a disputed passage through Parliament, but it will be less controversial than any legislation involving students.

I should also make the point that any Bill would have to exempt all school leavers not just those who are planning to go to university. Selective exemption would be extremely difficult to defend and would introduce several difficult issues. It would also be important that any exemption covered a specified period after leaving school. I should add that I could not accept any solution to this problem which involved the extension of the Child Benefit terminal dates. This would not resolve the problem of school leavers aged over 19 and would moreover cause additional expenditure on Child Benefit which I could not justify, and it would provide a further opportunity for Child Benefit to be debated which I think we should seek to avoid.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister and other members of E(LG).

*ever.
 Tony*

TONY NEWTON

LOCAL GOV'T: Rates
Pt 20

