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QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

18 May 1988

Dear Secretary of State

CONCESSIONARY TV LICENCE SCHEME

Thank you for your letter of 13 May in reply to mine of 9 May about the proposals for the concessionary licence scheme. *with request required at floor*

I am grateful to you and other colleagues for your quick response to my letter, and your broad agreement with what I propose.

I appreciate your and Nicholas Ridley's points about the presentational difficulties of making the announcement now. But I really do not think we can delay the matter any further. As you know, I am under considerable pressure from local authorities awaiting a decision on about 18,000 current applicants. I cannot reasonably hold these off any longer. There is a general expectation of an early decision, both on these applications and on the future of the scheme. To defer the announcement would therefore only add to the difficulties we are already facing, without lessening the inevitable complaints; the Opposition will still be able to mount the sort of criticism that you suggest. Conversely, the great majority of pensioners, who are facing an increase of £4.50 in their standard licence fee, would no doubt consider it entirely right and justifiable that those who already benefit from the provision of residential care should face a similar increase. Even at £5, the concessionary licence represents a very considerable benefit.

I do not therefore consider there is any clear advantage in delaying the announcement any further. Tim Renton has discussed the matter with Peter Brooke, who agrees that it would be sensible to go ahead as planned, as there will not be an obviously better time in the near future. I have, however, expanded the announcement as you have suggested.

/Copies of this

The Rt Hon John Moore, MP

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Copies of this letter go to the Prime Minister, the Chief Secretary, other members of H Committee and Sir Robin Butler.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Bannister

Approved by the Home Secretary
and signed in his absence.