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cc Ms Bateman (1. cc 20)
2. file
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From the Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon The Viscount Whitelaw CH MC
Lord President of the Council
Privy Council Office
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23 October 1984

New Willie.

THE QUEEN'S SPEECH: THE WATER (FLUORIDATION) BILL

As you know, there is a place in the forthcoming session's programme for a bill to make secure the powers under which Water Authorities, at the request of Health Authorities, may add fluoride to water supplies in order to reduce the incidence of dental caries. Our decision to prepare this legislation followed a court judgement in Scotland which found that the powers under which fluoridation was provided there were defective. The powers available in England and Wales are similar, so the bill is drafted to provide proper powers throughout Great Britain.

Since we decided to introduce the bill this session questions about the safety of fluoride have been raised on the basis of some recent research abroad. The research is not yet complete, and has not been fully evaluated. British studies to check the results at first provided no confirmation of the doubts; but very recently suggested that there is at least a question to answer. In view of this very recent development it would not now be possible for us to repeat without qualification the assurances about the safety of fluoride that have been given in the past. It would take a little time to assess the issue more thoroughly, but I have concluded - and in view of the shortage of time we have already informed the Cabinet Office - that it would not be right to retain a mention of the Bill in the Queen's Speech. I still hope to be able to keep the Bill in the 1984/85 programme and intend to confirm this by December.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, Members of L Committee and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever

Norman

NORMAN FOWLER

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