

CCB/31



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The Rt Hon Nicholas Edwards MP

From The Secretary of State for Wales

6 November 1986

"PAYING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT": SUGGESTED EXEMPTIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY CHARGE FOR RESIDENTS OF HOMES AND HOSTELS

Nicholas Ridley copied to me his letter to you of 29 October about the possibility of exempting residents of homes and hostels from the community charge.

I agree with Nicholas that we should not make such exemptions. The logic of the community charge is that everyone should pay it, with assistance being made available to those who need it. The more exceptions we make, the harder it will be to resist pressure for others when Nicholas and I are steering our Bill through. The argument about people in homes not making use of local services, or having no role to play in accountability, seems to me to be a dangerous one - there are many people in the community, such as the infirm or the mentally handicapped, who make little use of services and, perhaps, are not able to take much interest in the affairs of their local authorities. To exempt those in homes alone is to make a distinction on the grounds of residency not of involvement in the community; and this would be very hard to maintain.

In fact the approach which we have adopted to the community charge seems, if anything, to point in the other direction to include those who are long stay hospital patients and, it could be argued, are really in no different a position to those who stay in homes. This is not a point which I would want to pursue at this stage but it should be noted that there are arguments the other way too as well as problems of definition.

/ I am copying this letter to members of E(LF) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP
Secretary of State for Social Services

LOCAL GOVT: Rating revaluation: A5.

