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The Rt Hon George Younger MP
Secretary of State
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON
SW1A 2HB

My ref:

Your ref:

22 September 1987

Dear George

NBRM

RATE REFORM: CROWN PROPERTY

Thank you for your letter of 14 September.

I am surprised that, at this late stage, you should be arguing for such a radical change to the operation, and principles, of the community charge system. It was agreed, during the drafting and passage of the Scottish legislation, that service personnel should be liable for the personal community charge in the same way and on the same terms as all other adults; and my officials were told that you were content for us to proceed on the same basis in England and Wales.

I am not, in any case, convinced that your proposal would work. I understand that RGPD do not believe they would be able to operate the system of contributions in lieu which you advocate.

I remain convinced that there are overwhelming objections, of both principle and presentation, to an exemption for service personnel. Their circumstances are, in almost all respects, no different from those civilians, in both the public and private sectors, who live in job-related accommodation and/or whose jobs require them to be mobile. To give a concession for the armed forces would set an irresistible precedent; would lead to charges that the Government was according itself, as an employer, special treatment; and would seriously undermine the fundamental principle that the community charge is a universal liability, dependent on residence in a particular local authority area.

In so far as there are unique service problems, we must deal with them. The proposals in Annex B to my letter have been agreed with your officials and are an attempt to do just that.

I cannot, therefore, agree to your belated proposal for a service exemption. I hope you will accept that there is no option but to proceed in the way outlined in my paper.

Copies go to the Prime Minister, the Lord President, the Foreign Secretary, Members of E(LF) and Sir Robert Armstrong.

John ...

NICHOLAS RIDLEY

Nicholas



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