



QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

21 June 1988

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Dear Secretary of State

COMMUNITY CHARGE EXEMPTIONS: VOLUNTEERS

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Thank you for copying to me your minute of 2 June to the Prime Minister.

In view of the doubts which Kenneth Clarke and Malcolm Rifkind have expressed about extending community charge exemptions to full-time volunteers, I am writing to say that I think that your proposal is right.

The Government is keen to encourage volunteering: it is good both for the individual concerned and the community if young people especially can be persuaded to spend a year or so in helping others less fortunate than themselves. Their experience as volunteers will give them a better balanced set of values and provide an example for others. There can be no better preparation for work and a productive career.

It seems to be becoming increasingly difficult to recruit volunteers. We are considering a study into the obstacles which may be faced by those wishing to become volunteers. I would therefore be unwilling to see any other obstacle to volunteering appear at this time. I am sure that there is advantage in exempting full-time volunteers from the community charge.

I favour an exemption for volunteers along the lines suggested in your minute. But I think there could be a tightening of the restrictions to ensure that the exemptions cover the kind of volunteers typified by CSV without allowing advantage to be taken of them, for instance, by those working with cults. I suggest:

- (i) ensuring that it applies only to those working full-time for charities registered with the Charity Commission;
- (ii) allowing a volunteer to claim exemption for one year only;
- (iii) restricting the exemption to those who are not receiving unemployment benefit;
- (iv) applying an income test, as you propose.

The Rt Hon Nicholas Ridley, MP.

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I think it should be possible to avoid specifying work for churches because church-related bodies who use volunteers are normally registered as charities in their own right. We suspect there are few full-time volunteers working directly for churches rather than through a charitable arm, but this is a detail which our officials can discuss.

I am copying this letter to members of E(LF), the Lord Privy Seal, Chief Whips in the Commons and the Lords, and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Bannister

(Approved by the Home Secretary  
and signed in his absence)