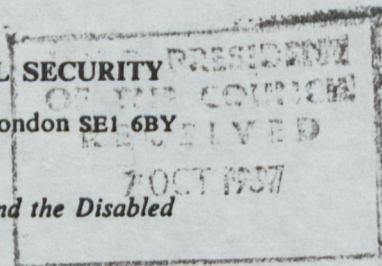


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CC Mr Wilson
Mr Langdon.

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From the Minister of State for Social Security and the Disabled



The Rt Hon John Wakeham MP
 Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the
 House of Commons
 Lord Privy Seal's Office
 Whitehall
 LONDON SW1A 2AT

07 OCT 1987

Dear John,

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W/W*

As agreed at our meeting on Monday I attach a list of the announcements we are due to make soon after the House returns. We agreed at the meeting that the Social Security Bill should be presented on 22nd October. For other items the list indicates the possible range, but the suggestion was yesterday that 27th October, when this Department was first for Questions, might be a sensible day for the uprating announcement. This should include the other essential items in my list - no uprating of child benefit, the income related regulations, the board and lodging uprating and the claims and payments regulations if that saves a separate announcement. We should also like to include the social fund budget, which has in any case to be announced no later than the Autumn statement and the voluntary unemployment deductions.

Of the other items in my list, the arrangements for exceptionally severe weather this year ought to be dealt with as soon as we can, but they could be free standing. The subsidy order certainly should be so. The contributions re-rating can perfectly sensibly be left to the Autumn statement as it has done in recent years.

Robin Cook has recently written to John Moore about the social security business this autumn. I enclose a copy of his letter and of the proposed reply.

I am copying this to the Lord President, the Chief Whip and the Chief Secretary.

Yours sincerely,

Nick

NICHOLAS SCOTT

SOCIAL SECURITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

A ANNOUNCEMENTS ESSENTIAL BY FIRST WEEK IN NOVEMBER

What has to be announced	When
<p>1. Housing Benefit rates to local authorities for consultation. Long list of items, but most controversial are rates of benefit, tapers and non dependent deductions. Income disregards, capital rules and 80% rate rebates may also attract criticism because no improvement. No Ministerial announcement - simply letter to authorities from an official. But local authority associations likely to give it some publicity especially as speculation about uprating will begin with publication of retail price index on October 9th.</p>	<p>Preferably 12 October. Not later than 13th October.</p>
<p>2. Social Security Bill (includes lowering age for offsetting occupational pension over £35 against unemployment benefit to 55; tighter contribution conditions for unemployment and sickness benefit; tighter attendance allowance; removal of benefit from 16-17 year olds).</p>	<p>22 October</p>
<p>3. Social security benefit uprating (by 12 months increase in prices). All benefits (other than income related) - a very long list including retirement pension, widows pension, invalidity benefit, unemployment benefit etc.</p>	<p>) Earliest 22 October) when Parliament) resumes. Strong case) for early announcement) to stop speculation. Latest) 5 November, to tie in with) income related rates.</p>
<p>4. No uprating child benefit</p>	
<p>5. New rates of income support, housing benefit (as at 1. above) and family credit.</p>	<p>Can be given as rates subject to consultation on housing benefit as part of above announcement. But regulations cannot be laid until 3 weeks from start of housing benefit consultation plus time for final printing after that i.e. between 2 and 6 November.</p>
<p>6. Board and lodging uprating (no uprating ordinary boarders and less than some might expect on residential and nursing homes).</p>	<p>Sometimes announced later than rest of uprating but essential to keep in line this time as part of income related regulations.</p>
<p>7. Claims and payments regulations (essential for income support start). Not likely to attract much attention.</p>	<p>Earliest likely to be available 29/30 October. Could be advantage in laying ahead of rest to catch JCSI on 3 November. Latest 6 November as for income related regulations.</p>

ANNOUNCEMENTS DESIRABLE BY FIRST WEEK IN NOVEMBER

8. Social Fund Budget.

Desirable to include in uprating statement so that budgets can be allocated locally and operational plans laid. Pressure in any case to produce it during passage of Bill. Essential by Autumn statement as figures apparent then.

9. Housing benefit (implementation) Subsidy Order. Gives legislative backing for costs already incurred by local authorities and enables subsidy to be paid for them. Consultation completed early September. Already in public domain but may attract publicity as local authorities maintain subsidy insufficient.

Order likely to be ready for laying w/c 19 October.

10. Exceptionally Severe Weather arrangements for this winter (arrangements for subsequent years are in Bill). No basic changes in rules this winter but procedural changes. There could be criticism that criteria are not being relaxed.

Proposals to Social Security Advisory Committee 7 October. Unlikely to become public at that stage. Final decisions need to be announced during November before cold weather. Suitable occasions (if SSAC procedure is complete) might be any announcement with Bill, uprating statement or second reading of Bill.

11. Voluntary unemployment deductions extension from 13-26 weeks.

Desirable to announce end October so that SSAC consultation necessary on some minor aspects can proceed. But could be left later if necessary.

C. ANNOUNCEMENTS ESSENTIAL BY AUTUMN STATEMENT

12. Social Fund Budget.

As above

13. Contributions rerating.

Could be announced with uprating if settled by then. But has been announced with Autumn statement in recent years.