

GCS



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My ref:

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nbpm

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP  
Home Office  
Queen Anne's Gate  
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13 May 1988

Dear Douglas

Rep

Thank you for your letter of 9 May about concessionary television licences.

I am broadly content with your detailed proposals, although I do have some concern about your new definition of the accommodation that will qualify, which I think might be unduly restrictive. Under pressure to reduce costs and improve efficiency many local authorities and housing associations are replacing resident wardens by mobile wardens supported by alarm and call up facilities. In practice many genuine sheltered housing schemes with mobile wardens will fall outside your new definition. Clearly the impact on individual households will be mitigated by your sensible proposal that the position of existing beneficiaries should be preserved, but as it stands the change you propose might be seen by some local authorities as a reason for persisting with resident wardens when mobile wardens would be entirely adequate and more cost effective. That said, I am not sure that there is a better practical definition of sheltered housing that can be adopted for our purposes that is not open to abuse by local authorities wishing to exploit the concessionary scheme. There will always be a degree of arbitrariness in such arrangements, continued resentment by those that do not qualify, and of course the unfortunate financial incentive for old people to move to sheltered accommodation where their needs will be best met at home with proper care provision.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, the Chief Secretary, other members of H Committee and Sir Robin Butler.

Having said this: I do strongly wonder whether it is a good idea to make this move at this time: it will be very much resented.

*Nicholas Ridley*  
NICHOLAS RIDLEY



BROADCASTING = BBC France

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