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PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

Prime Minister 2

25 September 1989

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Dear Ken

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE BILL

at first

Thank you for your letter of 12 September, which we discussed when we met on 19 September. I fully understand and endorse the desirability of securing early Royal Assent to the Bill, as I know do my Business Manager colleagues. I can assure you that our aim will be to give it as early a Second Reading in the Commons as is feasible. This will of course depend on your officials getting all the outstanding instructions on the Bill to Parliamentary Counsel by 2 October - particularly those on the two major outstanding items, Community Care and Crown Immunity. Bearing in mind the sheer practicalities as well as the demands of other elements in the programme - the Bill is one of 7 measures (including Student Support) for which colleagues have said Royal Assent by April is essential - I cannot undertake that the Bill will be enacted by April. The Business Managers and I will nevertheless aim to secure Royal Assent for the Bill as quickly as possible thereafter. I am reasonably confident that, with a fair wind and provided no unforeseen difficulties arise, we should achieve that by the Whitsun Recess. If we can make even better time, of course, we will.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for the Environment, Social Security and Northern Ireland, members of L Committee, Sir Robin Butler and First Parliamentary Counsel.

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Geoffrey Howe

GEOFFREY HOWE

The Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke QC MP

NAT HEALTH. EXP + EM

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