

Tolson, Lloyd
11/09 79

Prime Minister (2)

cc [handwritten initials]

[handwritten initials]

I have asked the
Chief Whip's Office for his comments; and
will resubmit to you then.

MS 21/9

Prime Minister

LORRIES, PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

When E Committee discussed lorry weights on 24 June (E(82)16th), I was invited to bring forward in the autumn revised proposals on the timing of the action required to implement our agreed policy.

I had intended to come back to E when it had been possible again to consult backbenchers on the resumption of Parliament. But we now know there is to be a debate on the subject at the Party Conference on 8 October which rather changes the outlook. The wording of the motion (a copy of which is attached) raises no problems: we can accept it. But the debate will again concentrate attention on this controversial issue, at a time which is not of our own choosing.

The reception given to our measures, and the general feelings of the Party on the issue reflected at the Conference, will clearly be critical to our hopes of getting the new weights through Parliament. I must therefore do all I can to take the Party with the Government. This I believe means that my speech to the Conference on 8 October must firmly commit us publicly to our decision on weights, as well as spelling out all the other very desirable elements of our policy on road freight. I cannot leave the issue in the air by suggesting that we may still change tack or that there will be further substantial delay. That would undermine our credibility and our chances of success.

In giving a firm lead, I will have to indicate that the Government is going ahead - and soon - with all the elements of the package, including the heavier weights which are central to the economic and other benefits we are aiming to achieve. Colleagues should be aware that, in practice, this will be a commitment to proceed with the necessary regulations without further delay, and certainly before Christmas.

I am copying this letter to other members of E and to the Lord President, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, the Leader of the House of Lords and the Chief Whip, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

[handwritten initials]

DAVID HOWELL

20 September 1982



MOTION

That this Conference, aware of the damage to the environment caused by excessive concentrations of traffic on inadequate roads calls on the Government to introduce a package of proposals designed to deal with the heavy lorry.

Transport, May 79
Larry Wright



CONFIDENTIAL



Prime Minister

② Transport

Ms 30/9

M.S.

Prime Minister

LORRIES, PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In the Secretary of State's absence I should like to comment on David Howell's minute to you of 20 September proposing that he should announce our commitment to a maximum lorry weight of 38 tonnes in his speech to the Party Conference of 8 October. Others are better placed than I to judge the chances of success for this proposal in the House. The strong economic arguments for getting on with it were stressed in Cabinet this morning. I would briefly draw your attention to the Community aspects of the problem.

TAM-with mcs?

After years of negotiations, other Member States are now largely agreed on a compromise involving a 40 tonne maximum weight. Harmonisation in this field would bring real benefits to our lorry manufacturers and road hauliers and there is pressure for agreement from the Commission and the European Parliament. We have not yet made clear to our partners formally that we are no longer prepared to adopt a 40 tonne limit, as suggested in the December 1981 White Paper. (The Commission are however aware of this.) We are thus in for a rough ride at the December Transport Council. But the problem would be easier to handle if we had a clear position in favour of 38 tonnes.

I hope that, as we have already recommended, David Howell will feel able, as a matter of courtesy, to inform the responsible Commissioner of our views on a 38 tonne limit before any public announcement. In addition, it would be helpful if the Danish Presidency in Brussels could be informed by means of a letter from our Permanent Representative. Both letters could issue on the day of the Conference Speech.

I am copying this minute to other members of E Committee and to the Lord President of the Council, the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, the Leader of the House of Lords, the Chief Whip and Sir Robert Armstrong.

D.H.

30 September 1982

Douglas Hurd

CONFIDENTIAL

Transport, May '79, Larry Weights





Prime Minister

②

MS 29/7

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

The Rt Hon David Howell MP
 Secretary of State
 Department of Transport
 2 Marsham Street
 London SW1P 3EB

28 September 1982

D. Davis

MT

LORRIES PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

PMS Box

In your minute to the Prime Minister of 20 September you explained your proposal to tell Conference on 8 October of our decision, reached in E in February, to allow modified increases in maximum lorry weights. I see the force of your point that you must give a firm lead. Provided Michael Jopling is content, I support your intention to go ahead soon in seeking Parliamentary approval for the necessary regulation.

Nevertheless, in dealing with the motion it will be important to defend the Government's record so far as the road programme is concerned. It must not be thought that our acceptance of the motion with its mention of "inadequate roads", opens the way to increases in public expenditure. You would want, I should have thought, to put the emphasis on the effort that has already been made to reduce environmental problems through the provision of bypasses, and on the importance the Government has placed on setting realistic targets. If you judged it appropriate to mention discussions currently being held on obtaining private sector finance, I hope you would emphasize the potential benefits that we look for in terms of efficiency. Whatever the outcome of the talks, and of our deliberations, the contractors should not be led to expect an early and appreciable rise in orders, nor should we forget the commitment in later years that royalties would represent.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister and other recipients of your minute.

L. Brittan

L. Brittan

LEON BRITTAN

Transport

Road Freight transport

May 1979



28th May 1979



Prime Minister (2)

MCS 27/9

Government Chief Whip
12 Downing Street, London SW1

CONFIDENTIAL

27 September 1982

Dear Richard,

The Chief Whip has seen a copy of your Secretary of State's minute of 20 September on Lorries, People and the Environment.

In view of the considerable number of Conservative back benchers who remain opposed to these proposals, Mr Jopling believes that, as things stand at present, the Government could not command a majority on this issue in the House of Commons. The Chief Whip has discussed the names of those concerned with your Secretary of State on a number of occasions and there have been no recent developments which lead him to alter his views.

Mr Jopling thinks, however, that a highly successful debate at the Party Conference could certainly influence the attitude of a sufficient number of Government supporters to reverse this position but he strongly advises that Mr Howell should refrain from saying anything further in relation to the timing or Parliamentary handling of any regulations than he has done so far.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Michael Scholar (No 10) and to the Private Secretaries of the recipients of your Secretary of State's minute.

Yours ever,
M. Maclean

M MACLEAN

R Bird Esq
PS/Secretary of State for Transport
Department of Transport
2 Marsham Street SW1