



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

1 March, 1984

MS

for John

Call by Mr Lubbers, The Netherlands Prime Minister: 2 March

As you will know from the briefing submitted for the call by Mr Lubbers tomorrow morning, the Netherlands, like the UK, attach great importance to the liberalisation of road haulage in the European Community. We have heard that the Dutch Prime Minister may well be briefed to raise, at the Brussels European Council on 19/20 March, the issue of free lorry movement, with particular emphasis on the abolition of all road haulage quotas in the Community in a fixed period. We entirely endorse this objective.

HM Embassy in the Hague have reported today that Mr Lubbers is now considering proposing at tomorrow's meeting that the Prime Minister and he should send a joint letter to their Community colleagues urging the need for progress on European Community transport policy.

I attach a speaking note and background for use if Mr Lubbers raises the issues.

The Secretary of State for Transport has been consulted, and agrees. Sir G Howe has not been able to see these papers this afternoon: I shall show him copies in tonight's box.

Copies of this letter go to Dinah Nichols (Department of Transport) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yes
RB Bone

(R B Bone)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY ROAD TRANSPORT LIBERALISATION
JOINT LETTER FROM MR LUBBERS AND THE PRIME MINISTER
PROMOTING LIBERALISATION (if raised)

1. Important that transport liberalisation should figure prominently in the new policies chapter of the Brussels European Council agenda.
2. Entirely agree that we now need to give careful thought to tactics in pursuit of our shared objective as we approach the Brussels European Council. Welcome the Netherlands intention to raise the issue of road haulage liberalisation at the summit. Happy to support. As to a joint letter to other Heads of Government, suggest officials should discuss tactics. We can then decide whether joint action or individual approaches to sympathetic governments will be the more effective.

BACKGROUND

1. European Community brief (e) on European Transport policy indicates that UK and Netherlands transport policy objectives are very close. The abolition of all roadhaulage quotas in the Community preferably within a 5 year period, is one of the UK's key new policy objectives. The Secretary of State for Transport has argued strongly in favour of liberalisation at successive Transport Councils last December. There should be another opportunity to do so, at an emergency Transport Council which the French presidency now proposes to hold on 22 March - no doubt for tactical reasons, the French prefer to delay discussion until after the European Council. The Department of Transport are considering whether we should put up a marker on road haulage liberalisation at the Internal Market Council now fixed for 8 March.

2. The Netherlands occasionally antagonise other Member States by their approach on transport. Several other Member States - notably the other Benelux partners and Ireland, also favour the abolition of road haulage quotas. We will wish to consider whether we should ask them to join in a pre-summit initiative on free lorry movement.