



Government Chief Whip
12 Downing Street, London SW1

Prime Minister:

The Chief Whips teaches
his getting the Foundation
Bill through. I am sure
he is right. But you

should be aware that
there may be an all-night
sitting on Tuesday 24 October, before
Cabinet, although members should
not be too involved. Agree?

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

The number of Government amendments made to the Water Fluoridation Bill during its passage through the House of Lords presents a potential problem when the consideration stage of Lords amendments is taken in the House of Commons. This stage was not proceeded with before the recess since to have done so would have seriously jeopardised business which it was essential to achieve before we rose for the summer. This is primarily a whipping matter and I agreed with the Lord Privy Seal that I should minute you.

We have allowed backbenchers both in the House of Commons and in the House of Lords, free votes throughout the passage of the Bill but there is a hard core of opposition to it mainly from our own side, led principally by Ivan Lawrence and Keith Best. So far it has been debated for 47 hours in the House of Commons, nearly 40 of which have been on the floor. During the Report Stage, a subsequent day's sitting was lost as the result of a filibuster and Ivan Lawrence made the longest Commons speech of the century on what is essentially a two Clause Bill.

Amendments in the Lords were kept to the minimum but even so there are eight to be considered. All are Government amendments. Two are technical, but the rest are substantive and in the main represent concessions. It is, of course, possible procedurally to table amendments in the Commons to, or in lieu of, the Lords amendments. There are none so far but it will not prove difficult to construct amendments which are in order and I would envisage that many are likely to appear in due course.

Cont'd...

We have tried to put some pressure on the opponents to the Bill by having the matter raised at the 1922 Committee and during business questions but Ivan Lawrence has told me that he remains totally opposed to the Bill and will do all in his power to wreck it. Thus there are still serious opportunities for disruption by the Bill's opponents and by the official Opposition. Though much depends on the Speaker's grouping and selection of amendments there is a real possibility that there could be 30 hours or more of debate and divisions. This amounts to two calendar days of sitting time and could involve keeping the payroll up in the House for one night and possibly two.

Whilst the Opposition have also allowed a free vote on this measure they would not pass up the opportunity of joining in a filibuster knowing that we have to complete consideration of Lords amendments to the Transport Bill, Oil and Pipelines Bill, Insolvency Bill and possibly the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) and the Bankruptcy Bill before prorogation.

The business for the week commencing 21 October, as announced by the Lord Privy Seal before the recess, is attached. I believe that the right way to deal with this Bill now is for the Lord Privy Seal to make a Business Statement on Monday 21 October announcing that Lords amendments to the Fluoridation Bill will be taken at 10.00 p.m. after the PAC debate on Thursday. I would propose to put on the remaining stages of some Consolidation measures after these Lords Amendments and it would be normal procedure to whip the Party on a two-line whip from 10 o'clock for this Government business. This will put the maximum pressure on the Bill's opponents by other backbenchers to call off their filibuster as the House could be sitting for a very long time. The Orders at present set down can be postponed, and the debate on Friday 25 October can be lost without presenting any difficulties. In practice, however, if there was clear evidence of a major filibuster, I am sure that the right course would be to report progress on the Bill at an appropriate time and for the Lord Privy Seal to announce a timetable motion to be debated on Monday 28 October allowing afterwards a maximum of one hour to bring

Cont'd...

the debates to a conclusion. I would propose to whip the party for a timetable motion but continue to allow a free vote on the substance of the Bill.

There are no precedents as far as I can ascertain for having to timetable a Bill at this stage in its passage through the House, or indeed, to use a timetable on a Bill which has been the subject of a free vote throughout. Nevertheless the Bill must be obtained and I would not wish to allow a handful of members to frustrate the Government and to keep the House sitting for no useful purpose.

I should be most grateful for your agreement to proceed along these lines.

I am sending a copy of this minute to the Lord President of the Council, the Lord Privy Seal, the Secretary of State for Social Services and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

J.W.

Att:

4 October 1985

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

THE BUSINESS FOR THE FIRST WEEK AFTER THE SUMMER ADJOURNMENT WILL BE AS FOLLOWS:

MONDAY

21 OCTOBER

THERE WILL BE A DEBATE ON INDUSTRIAL INNOVATION AND DESIGN ON A MOTION FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE.

SECOND READING OF THE HOUSING BILL (LORDS), THE HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS BILL (LORDS), THE HOUSING (CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS) BILL (LORDS) AND THE LANDLORD AND TENANT BILL (LORDS) WHICH ARE ALL CONSOLIDATION MEASURES

PROCEEDINGS ON THE WEIGHTS AND MEASURES BILL (LORDS) WHICH IS ALSO A CONSOLIDATION MEASURE.

THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS HAS NAMED OPPOSED PRIVATE BUSINESS FOR CONSIDERATION AT SEVEN O'CLOCK.

TUESDAY

22 OCTOBER

REMAINING STAGES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (FINANCE) BILL

MOTION ON THE RATE SUPPORT GRANT (SCOTLAND) (No.3) ORDER

WEDNESDAY

23 OCTOBER

OPPOSITION DAY (26TH ALLOTTED DAY) THE SUBJECT OF DEBATE TO BE ANNOUNCED.

MOTION ON THE NURSING HOMES AND NURSING AGENCIES (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER

MOTION ON THE PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES (ENGLAND) (MISCELLANEOUS CHANGES) ORDER

THURSDAY

24 OCTOBER

THERE WILL BE A DEBATE ON A MOTION TO TAKE NOTE OF THE OUTSTANDING REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS TO WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS REPLIED.

MOTION ON THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (DEFINITION OF TREATIES) (NORTH ATLANTIC SALMON CONSERVATION ORGANISATION) ORDER AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (IMMUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC SALMON CONSERVATION ORGANISATION) ORDER.

FRIDAY

25 OCTOBER

THERE WILL BE A DEBATE ON ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF ENERGY ON A MOTION FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE.

MR SPEAKER, THE HOUSE MAY ALSO BE ASKED TO CONSIDER ANY OTHER LORDS AMENDMENTS AND MESSAGES WHICH MAY BE RECEIVED.

IT MAY BE FOR THE CONVENIENCE OF THE HOUSE IF I INDICATE THAT GOVERNMENT BUSINESS WILL ALSO BE TAKEN IN THE WEEK BEGINNING 28 OCTOBER. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE NEW SESSION WILL BE OPENED ON WEDNESDAY 6 NOVEMBER.



10 DOWNING STREET

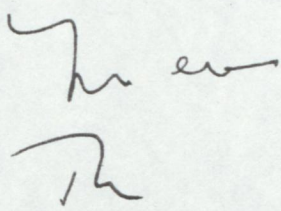
From the Private Secretary

7 October 1985

Dear Murdo,

The Prime Minister has seen the Chief Whip's minute of 4 October about the Parliamentary handling of Lords amendments to the Water Fluoridation Bill. She has agreed to the tactics proposed by the Chief Whip.

I am copying this letter to Joan MacNaughton (Lord President's Office), David Morris (Lord Privy Seal's Office), Tony Laurance (Department of Health and Social Security) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).


Tim Flesher

Murdo Maclean Esq
Chief Whip's Office.

885