

1. MR. WICKS

N.L.W.  
10.3

2. PRIME MINISTER

## STATE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

You will recall that when you discussed the legislative programme with the Lord President he was talking in terms of a four week Lords spill-over which would leave Parliament sitting until well into November. He is now consulting on possible dates for the State Opening. The two dates which he suggests are Tuesday 4 November and Wednesday 12 November (you will recall that in the past we have avoided 5 November for obvious reasons and I am sure that we would wish to avoid 11 November since it is Armistice Day). The former date would be desirable if the Lords spill-over was shorter than at present seems likely but the later date of 12 November seems the more likely runner if the Lord President's predictions of a four week spill-over are fulfilled. You will also recall that the Cabinet decision of a shorter legislative programme was also predicated on the assumption of a later State Opening.

There would be no problem with the date of 12 November were it not for the fact that the Lord Mayor's Banquet speech is on 10 November. This would leave you with the very difficult task of making two major speeches in three days: moreover the Lord Mayor's Banquet speech would have to be made not only in advance of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement (the traditional problem) but also in advance of the unveiling of the Government's legislative programme.

You might therefore like to have a preliminary discussion of the position with the Lord President at your bilateral tomorrow. Before accepting the timetable outlined above we will need to be sure that there is no practical alternative.

For example

- (i) How far can the Lords be pressed to sit into August to enable an earlier date for the State Opening? The risk here is of the Government losing its supporters to the attraction of August holidays which is at the time when the most controversial legislation will be before the Lords.
  
- (ii) Are we tied to a Tuesday or a Wednesday for the State Opening? If the State Opening is to be later in November could we not go for Thursday 13 November rather than Wednesday 12th. This would at least give you three days between the Lord Mayor's Banquet and the State Opening.
  
- (iii) Alternatively could we go for Thursday 6 November?

The Lord President wants to leave a final decision until July and I suspect there is no alternative to that.

*W*  
(Tim Flesher)

10 March 1986

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SUBJECT  
cc Master



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

11 March 1986

Dear Joan,

STATE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT: 1986/7

This is just to confirm that the Prime Minister discussed with the Lord President today the date for the State Opening of Parliament for the 1986/7 Session. They noted that of the two possible dates (Tuesday 4 November and Wednesday 12 November) the latter looked to be the likely option even though it would involve the Prime Minister making two major speeches, one to the Lord Mayor's Banquet and one in the Debate on the Address, in three days. Neither of the options for ensuring an earlier start, i.e. the Lords sitting into August or during Party Conference week, seemed attractive, although the Lord President thought that it might be possible to sit for two days in August. It was agreed that a final decision should be left for the moment, presumably until July.

I will let the Palace know of this outcome. They had already indicated that they would be content with either of the two days which had been canvassed so far.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

Tim

Timothy Flesher

Miss Joan MacNaughton,  
Lord President's Office.

085

MR. FLESHER

PA  
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STATE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

The Prime Minister discussed your minute of 10 March with the Lord President this morning.

The Lord President said that it was possible for the Lords to sit for two days in August, though he was not much attracted to that. An alternative would be for the House to sit during the Party Conference. The Prime Minister ruled out that option immediately. In further discussion the Prime Minister made clear that she was ready to make the two major speeches, one to the Lord Mayor's Banquet on 10 November and one in the Debate on the Address on 12 November, if that were necessary.

It was agreed that Wednesday 12 November looked to be the likely option, but no final decision should be taken at that meeting.

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(N.L. WICKS)

11 March 1986

1. MR LANGDON  
2. MR STARK

cc Miss MacNaughton  
Mr Watson

Mr. Flesher

Any Comments

~~c - Miss Bowdery~~

Carl  
7/3

STATE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT: 1986/87 SESSION

1. The Lord President held a meeting yesterday with the Lord Privy Seal and Chief Whips of both Houses to review the progress of the current Session. It was agreed that the exceptionally heavy programme this year made it likely that there would need to be a four week spill-over in the Autumn. This might possibly be avoided if the Lords were to sit for a full week into August but there would be problems with such a course which would be unprecedented in recent times. In the light of this consideration it appeared that there were two possible dates for the State Opening of the 1986/87 Session; Tuesday 4 November and Wednesday 12 November. (The reason for adopting a Wednesday for the later option rather than the traditional Tuesday is that in earlier discussions the Prime Minister had already indicated that she would prefer to avoid having the State Opening on 11 November which is, of course, Armistice Day. There is no difficulty in having the State Opening on a Wednesday. This occurred last year in order to avoid the State Opening falling on another evocative date - 5 November).

2. The Lord President would prefer to keep the choice between these two dates open until progress with the legislative programme became a little clearer. Ideally this would mean deferring a final decision until July. He thought it would be advantageous, however, if the Prime Minister were to be sounded out now on the acceptability of the two alternative dates

3. I believe that the normal practice is for you to approach Mr Flesher on these questions I would be grateful if you could let me know the outcome.

MJS.

M J ELAND  
6 March 1986

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