

file



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB

- 1 Mr ^{MCS} Scholar
- 2 Prime Minister

Sidney Weighell Esq
 General Secretary
 National Union of Railwaymen
 Unity House
 Euston Road
 LONDON NW1 2BL

To be aware
 16 July 1982
 WH
 16/7

Sidney Weighell

[Handwritten mark]

Thank you for your letter of 15 July.

Can I say straight away that I had, and have, absolutely no wish to cause you any embarrassment. I took the quote in good faith from an article in Wednesday's Daily Mail.

I have emphasised throughout that flexible rostering is not, and should not be treated, as a political issue. Members of all sides of the House, including those sponsored by your own union, have publicly and strongly supported the line you are taking on it.

I hope you will appreciate that agreeing with you as I do about the actions taken by the ASLEF Executive, I naturally also try to support what you and others are saying on this issue when it is raised in the Commons.

Yours sincerely
David Howell

DAVID HOWELL

NATIONAL UNION OF RAILWAYMEN

UNITY HOUSE
EUSTON ROAD
LONDON, NW1 2BL

Tel: 01-387 4771 (5 Lines)

Grams: "BEWARE, LONDON, NW1"

Your Ref:

My Ref: GS/612

GENERAL SECRETARY
SIDNEY WEIGHHELL

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARIES

R. J. TUCK
F. CANNON
C. TURNOCK

The Rt. Hon. David Howell,
Secretary of State for Transport,
2 Marsham Street,
LONDON,
S.W.1.

15th July, 1982

Dear Mr. Howell,

Yesterday, in the House of Commons you attributed two remarks to me attacking Michael Foot and Albert Booth. I can only presume that you were quoting from press reports of an earlier private meeting between myself and N.U.R. colleagues and the Leader and Transport Spokesman of the Labour Party.

I want to state categorically that I made no such remarks at that meeting, nor did I say anything that remotely approached them. In the present rail crisis I find it deplorable that you should waste your time in attempting to stir up phoney divisions on the basis of untruthful reports of a private meeting, whatever the source.

That source was certainly not me or my colleagues. I regarded that meeting as a confidential meeting. I am not in the business of betraying the trust between the Leader of my Party and myself. When I and my Union make an undertaking we stick to it. Our record speaks for itself in all our negotiations with the British Railways Board and the Government.

I take great exception to you and the Prime Minister having the temerity to pray me in aid in defending your position in the present dispute. It is the refusal of your Government to honour its commitments to the railway community which is responsible, above all, for that deeper crisis in the railway industry which underlies the immediate difficulties.

As a first step, however, you as a Secretary of State for Transport would be discharging your responsibilities more aptly if you were to cease your inaction and make a positive effort to find a solution to the current rail dispute.

Yours sincerely,

S. Weighhell