



QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

October 1985

Dear Willie,

W 4/12

SHOPS BILL: SUNDAY TRADING

Thank you for your letter of 8 September: I have also seen Mr Addison's letter of 16 September.

David Young and I have discussed the points which he raised in his letter of 11 September, together with the comments by the Prime Minister, and have taken soundings of the Whips.

I am sure that we need to be particularly wary and skilful in putting forward this Bill. The fact that public and press opinion is broadly with us will not be of much help in tackling the strongly held objections of some of our supporters in the Commons, most of whom will have had a trickle of hostile letters from constituents during the recess.

After careful consideration we are agreed that it would not be advisable to reduce the protection proposed to prevent existing employees in the retail trade from being forced to work on Sundays. It was made quite clear to us at the time of the debate on the Auld Committee report that some of our own supporters will find it difficult to accept our proposals for legislation without a major concession to existing shopworkers. To concede the principle, and then to limit it in time, would not, we believe, satisfy those in the Party who are genuinely concerned about workers being forced to work on Sundays against their conscience or to the detriment of their families; and we think the advantage of a time limit will be minimal. We have also carefully considered whether small retailers can be excluded but, apart from problems of definition, see this category as the one where the protection will be most needed.

George Younger's request that the protection be extended to cover existing Scottish shopworkers has been taken on board.

We have also looked again at the need to retain the provisions in Part II of the Shops Act for young shopworkers. Although we recognise that the provisions are outdated and anomalous, to repeal them now at the same time as removing young people from the ambit of Wages Councils would be to leave us exposed to criticism that the Bill will be a charter for the exploitation of young people. On the other hand, any attempt to update them would have serious implications in other areas and could adversely affect employment prospects. We concluded, therefore, that we should retain the provisions, pending a comprehensive review of all the restrictions governing the hours young people may work, as the safest course in a Bill which is bound to be deeply controversial.

I am assuming from your letter of 8 September that now David Young and I are agreed, the proposals have policy approval.

The Rt Hon Viscount Whitelaw, CH., MC.

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I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, members of H Committee, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours

Douglas.



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