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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ROAD AND MOTOR TRANSPORT

COMMITTEE II ON TECHNICAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED BY VEHICLES

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE NINTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 31 August 1949, at 10 a.m.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. FEIFER (Czechoslovakia)

SECRETARY: Mr. MATTER

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CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT PROVISIONS FOR INSERTION IN A CONVENTION ON ROAD AND MOTOR TRANSPORT PREPARED BY THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (Item 4 of the Conference Agenda) (Document E/CONF.8/3) (Continued)

Annex 8 (Continued)

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, drawing the attention of the Committee to the revised draft of Annex 8 prepared by the Working Group (Working Paper W/RT/10/49) stated that the following points would require discussion: the United Kingdom amendment to Part I, clause (b) to exempt caravans or light luggage trailers drawn by private motor-cars from the obligation of carrying automatic brakes; the United States proposal to include a provision in clause (c) that semi-trailers should be equipped with brakes which were applied automatically if the semi-trailer became detached while in motion; the United Kingdom amendment to Part II, clause (b), permitting private cars to have only one parking light; the United Kingdom amendment to clause (k) of Part II, exempting caravans and light luggage trailers drawn by private motor-cars from carrying compulsory stop lights; and, finally, the proposal to delete paragraph (a) from Section 10, of Part III.

At the Rapporteur's suggestion, the Committee decided to examine the above points seriatim.

Part I : Braking.

Clause (b): Braking of Trailers.

Fourth paragraph.

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, recalled that, at an earlier stage of the discussion on the problem of braking of trailers, it had been felt necessary to enforce compulsory automatic brakes. He, as representative of Belgium, had indicated that without automatic brakes, trailers constituted a danger on the road. It had then been proposed to introduce a regulation whereby it would be compulsory to equip trailers of 3,500 kg. and over with automatic brakes. Later, it had been decided to omit any specific indication as to the weight of the trailer, and simply to lay down that the automatic brakes should be capable of stopping trailers in cases where they became disconnected from the drawing vehicle. The United Kingdom proposal was a reversion to the earlier suggestion to exempt trailers of specific weight from such a regulation. He (the Rapporteur) thought it

desirable that the regulation be drafted in general terms, without specifying any particular types of trailers, since an enumeration of that kind must of necessity be incomplete. The Committee might therefore consider the inclusion of a provision exempting trailers drawn by private cars from the necessity of being equipped with compulsory automatic brakes on condition that they carried a double attachment or were fitted with a safety device.

Mr. von HEMERT (Netherlands) agreed with the views of the Rapporteur.

Mr. W.G. HUNT (United Kingdom) recalled that when the proposal for a break-away safety device had first been put forward, he had indicated that no similar regulation existed at the present moment in his country, though some heavy trailers were in fact equipped with such a device. His Government was not in principle opposed to the introduction of a regulation of that sort, but did not wish it to be extended to light trailers such as caravans, as that might oblige United Kingdom nationals proceeding abroad to furnish their caravans with additional equipment. In the interests of reaching agreement, he had expressed his readiness to accept the proposal that trailers of 3,500 kg. and over should be equipped with automatic brakes. The United Kingdom Government had carefully considered the matter, and was prepared to withdraw its reservations concerning compulsory automatic braking for heavy trailers proceeding abroad. It was not, however, prepared to subscribe to such regulations for caravans or light luggage trailers drawn by private motor-cars. The fact that private cars were mentioned in the United Kingdom amendment as the drawing vehicle itself constituted a limitation both of the categories exempted and of the size of the caravans and light luggage trailers. He was not therefore prepared to make any concession with regard to his amendment, other than that the word "two wheeled" should be inserted after the words "shall not apply to".

Mr. DAUVERGNE (France) stated that in his country trailers of less than 1,000 kg. did not have to carry automatic brakes. Larger trailers, however, had to be equipped with two braking devices, each of which was capable of holding the vehicle in the event of the

failure of the other. He was therefore in favour of inserting a similar provision in clause (b).

Mr. J.H. HUNT (United States of America) doubted whether the reference to private motor cars in the United Kingdom proposal was strictly necessary.

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, observed that it might be possible to omit all reference to the drawing vehicle, particularly as the modern trend of design was towards dual purpose vehicles. The expression "private motor-cars" might therefore give rise to confusion. All variations of the "Jeep" came within that category.

Mr. J.H. HUNT (United States of America) replied that if the United Kingdom amendment applied only to caravans and light luggage trailers he had no objection to the retention of the reference to private motor-cars.

Mr. W.G. HUNT (United Kingdom), replying to the RAPPORTEUR, pointed out that the omission of reference to private motor-cars would render the regulation more flexible.

Mr. RAAFLAUB (Switzerland) stated that if the proposed omission were adopted, it might be found necessary to define caravans and light luggage trailers, since his Government would be reluctant [redacted] foreign caravans of large dimensions, which were liable to prove dangerous on mountain roads.

Mr. von HEMERT (Netherlands) stated that he would be willing to agree to the exemption of trailers below a certain specified weight from the necessity of carrying automatic brakes, but desired to know precisely what was meant by the double attachments and safety devices mentioned by the Rapporteur.

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, replied that the former was a double draw-bar with two hooks. Safety devices varied in type and design.

Mr. DAUVERGNE (France) said that a safety device consisting of two chains similar to that used on railways, was manufactured in France. Its cost was very low, and should form no obstacle to manufacturers of trailer sets.

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, proposed a formula to meet the views of the United Kingdom representative and those of representatives who were unable to accept the United Kingdom amendment as it stood, to the effect that the provision would not be applicable, to two-wheeled caravans or light luggage trailers whose weight did not exceed 750 kg., provided that they were equipped with a double attachment or a safety device.

Mr. W.G. HUNT (United Kingdom) was unable to accept the Rapporteur's proposal, since it introduced a technical complication. The idea of a double attachment was new to him, and he could not at the moment form an opinion on it. He was also opposed to specifying the weight of the caravans or light luggage trailers.

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, stated that since there appeared to be general agreement that caravans and light luggage trailers the weight of which did not exceed 750 kg. might be exempt from the possession of compulsory brakes acting automatically in the event of disconnection, and mention of the type of drawing vehicle should be omitted, that the Committee must take a decision on his suggestion to insert a proviso that such vehicles would be exempt on condition that they were equipped with a double attachment or a security device.

The Committee decided by 9 votes to 3 that such a proviso be included.

(c) Braking of Articulated Vehicles and Combinations of Motor Vehicles and Semi-Trailers.

I Articulated Vehicles.

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, recalled that it had been suggested that semi-trailers might be exempt from the necessity of being compulsorily equipped with brakes acting automatically in the event of disconnection from the drawing vehicle, to which proposal the United States representative had raised certain objections at the previous meeting.

Mr. J.H. HUNT (United States of America) said that the fitting of such an automatic brake had been compulsory for some time for all vehicles in inter-State traffic in the United States of

America; his Government would therefore be reluctant to allow entry to foreign vehicles not so equipped. The inclusion of such a dispensation would not necessarily lead to the rejection of the Draft Convention by the Senate, but he feared that it might endanger its acceptance. Section 9 of Part III, made certain regulations mandatory where required by domestic legislation. A similar solution might be found for the point at issue.

Mr. von HEMERT (Netherlands) explained that such a provision as that requested by the United States representative had been omitted from the revised draft of Annex 8 because it had been found in practice that semi-trailers were generally equipped with what might be described as a double clutch, which prevented them from becoming uncoupled from the drawing vehicle. The introduction of the device which was obligatory in the United States of America would entail replacing the entire coupling gear of vehicles of other countries, and he doubted whether governments could require owners of semi-trailers to make such changes.

Mr. J.H. HUNT (United States of America) replied that, so far as the safety aspect was concerned, articulated semi-trailers could not in theory break away, though he had heard of a recent accident in which that had happened. He feared, therefore, that the Inter-State Commerce Commission, which was responsible for inter-State motor vehicle regulations in the United States of America, would continue to insist on semi-trailers carrying automatic brakes. The matter was of considerable importance to his Government, and he must therefore reserve his right to raise the whole problem in plenary.

Mr. DAUVERGNE (France) observed that he had discussed the problem with motor vehicle designers, who had informed him that they saw no objection to introducing automatic braking devices for semi-trailers.

Mr. RAAFLAUB (Switzerland) asked whether, in the event of the United States proposal being adopted, Belgium and France would admit semi-trailers without automatic brakes.

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium) and Mr. DAUVERGNE (France) both replied in the affirmative.

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, speaking as representative of Belgium, stated that although automatic brakes on semi-trailers were obligatory in that country, his Government was prepared to waive that regulation so far as international traffic was concerned, since it was keenly aware of the difficulties of reaching agreement on a draft Convention if each Government insisted that it reflect its own domestic legislation.

He asked the United States representative whether he could accept a formulation of his amendment in the sense that automatic braking of semi-trailers should be made compulsory where domestic regulations required. A note would have to be inserted in the text, indicating that, since that was a matter which had important repercussions on other Articles in the Draft Convention and the Annex, it had not been possible to settle it finally, in the Committee, and that it would have to be discussed by the Conference itself.

Mr. J.H. HUNT (United States of America) accepted the Rapporteur's proposal.

The Committee unanimously adopted the Rapporteur's proposal.

Part II. Lighting.

Clause (b).

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, drew the attention of the Committee to the United Kingdom amendment contained in the square bracket at the end of Clause (b), whereby private cars would be permitted to carry only one passing light.

Mr. von HEMERT (Netherlands) stated that his Government considered that symmetrical lighting must be compulsory in international traffic, owing to the fact that in some countries traffic drove on the right and in others on the left. If asymmetrical lighting were accepted, there would also be a danger of the single light being too strong.

Mr. EGERTON (Austria) and Mr. VEZZANI (Italy) agreed with the Netherlands representative.

Mr. J.H. HUNT (United States of America) stated that he could not accept the United Kingdom amendment unless a proviso was included to the effect that where a car had only one passing light,

the parking lights should also be lit. Such a proviso would be consistent with the second paragraph of clause (d), which required parking lights to be shown at night. Subject to that condition he could, albeit with reluctance, support the United Kingdom proposal, and his Government would agree to allow entry to tourist cars equipped with such devices as were required by their own national legislation.

Mr. W.G. HUNT (United Kingdom) stated that unless his amendment were accepted he would have to reserve his position on the matter. United Kingdom regulations did not prescribe passing lights, and the majority of existing cars were equipped with one passing light only. That design was still in use and his Government was not prepared to make two passing lights obligatory. The Committee would note that the amendment made no mention of commercial vehicles, in the case of which his Government would be prepared to impose such a requirement, which would not be an unreasonable request to make of big operators. Small private cars, however, were a different matter and it would hardly be fair to expect tourists who intended to travel on the Continent for a relatively short period to go to the expense of fitting a second passing light. It might even be found difficult to obtain spare parts for such re-equipment.

Mr. EGERTON (Austria) stated that although two passing lights were compulsory in Austria, there was no reason why United Kingdom cars should not be admitted to his country, provided that they were equipped with parking lights which were switched on at night, on condition that foreign cars with two passing lights were admitted into the United Kingdom.

Mr. VELLODI (India) said that he was in general agreement with the provisions laid down in the draft. There was, however, one point on which he wished for clarification. In the explanatory memorandum to the ECE draft the question as to whether such provisions would be made applicable to vehicles already on the road, and also of the transitional period, had been raised. Unless and until a decision had been taken on that point, the Indian delegation was not in a position to take up a definite position on the matter.

Mr. FRAENKEL (Israel) observed that the problem of glare and dazzle was very important. Tourists were inclined to drive with very strong lights because they were unfamiliar with the roads of the countries they visited, and it had been found necessary in his country to promulgate a number of regulations relating to that matter. Reference was made to those regulations in his Government's communication to the Secretary-General (Document E/CONF.8/27), and his Government was desirous that some similar provisions be included in the Draft Convention; it felt that the second paragraph of clause (b) was inadequate for the purpose.

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, pointed out that if the Conference were to attempt to draw up a Convention embodying all the detailed legislation of Governments, agreement could never be reached. All representatives had one basic consideration in mind, that of safety, which, in his opinion, was fully covered by the text submitted by the Working Group. He therefore hoped that the representative of Israel would not press his point.

Mr. RAAFLAUB (Switzerland) stated that certain provisions in the Convention would be of a transitional character. It was to be presumed that eventually United Kingdom cars would be equipped with two passing lights. The question was, how long would the provision proposed by the United Kingdom representative remain in force ?

Mr. W.G. HUNT (United Kingdom) stated that his Government attached such great importance to the amendment under consideration that he was unable to modify it. If it were rejected by the Committee he would bring it up before the Conference.

Mr. DAUVERGNE (France) asked whether the United Kingdom representative would be satisfied with the following formula: "However, private cars may for the time being have one such light fitted at the front".

Mr. W.G. HUNT (United Kingdom) replied, with regret, that he could not accept such a wording.

Mr. VEZZANI (Italy) pointed out that the problem had been studied by the International Standardization Organization, which had come out in favour of two passing lights; that decision which had

been accepted by British designers.

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, pointed out that the purpose of the United Kingdom amendment was to cover United Kingdom vehicles already in service, and equipped with only one passing light.

8 representatives declared themselves in favour of a provision requiring that cars should be equipped with two passing lights.

3 representatives declared themselves in favour of the United Kingdom amendment, with the proviso that when a car had only one passing light, the parking lights should be on at night.

3 representatives declared themselves in favour of the United Kingdom amendment as it stood.

The Committee agreed on the text given in clause (b) of Part II of Working Paper W/RT/10/49, and took note of the reservation entered by the United Kingdom representative.

Clause (k)

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, stated that the words "except caravans and light luggage trailers drawn by private cars (U.K.)" should be placed in brackets, and invited comments on the proposal that caravans and light luggage trailers be exempted from the necessity of having at least one stop light at the rear.

Mr. W.G. HUNT (United Kingdom) explained that his amendment was intended to apply to only two types of small trailer.

Mr. von HEMERT (Netherlands) stated that trailers must carry stop lights, since they obscured those of the drawing vehicle. However, he would be prepared to exempt small trailers with one or two wheels where there was every guarantee that the stop light of the drawing vehicle would remain clearly visible to all other road users.

Mr. DAUVERGNE (France) agreed with the view of the Netherlands representative.

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium) Rapporteur, asked whether the Committee was agreed on the basic principle that trailers should be obliged to carry stop lights where they obscured that of the drawing vehicle.

Mr. W.G. HUNT (United Kingdom) could not accept that proposal.

The Committee decided that clause (k) of Part II of Working Paper W/RT/10/49 should be redrafted on the lines that trailers should carry stop lights if they obscured those of the drawing vehicle, reference to caravans and light luggage trailers being omitted.

Part III. Other conditions.

Paragraph 10. General Provisions.
Sub-paragraph (a)

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, pointed out that since sub-paragraph (a) only served to repeat the principle embodied in Article 20 of the Convention, it might be deleted.

The Committee agreed to delete sub-paragraph (a) from paragraph 10 of Part III of the revised text of Annex 8 (Document W/RT/10/49).

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.