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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 SEVENTEENTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 6 September 1949 at 9.45 a.m.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. FELFER (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 9 (Continued)

Mr. BANG (Denmark), Rapporteur, invited representatives to give their views on the question of the maximum permissible laden weight of vehicles, which still remained to be discussed, decisions having already been taken on the maximum permissible weight per most heavily loaded axle and the maximum length. He recalled that it had been decided to take the United States proposal (Document E/CONF.8/26) as the starting point for the discussion.

Mr. NIP (Netherlands) found the United States proposal interesting, but felt it was far too detailed for inclusion in the Draft Convention. He therefore proposed that regulations concerning "maximum weight of vehicle" should be inserted in a more simplified form. The figures he was about to propose to the Committee were based on the United States figures, and on the decision already taken to allow a maximum weight per most heavily loaded axle of 8 tons. He felt that there was little danger of 2-axled vehicles being too heavily loaded. The rear axle, as had already been laid down, could carry a maximum load of 8 tons. The front axle would probably carry a maximum of 6 tons. There was therefore no need to specify a precise figure for such vehicles. It might however be necessary to state that the maximum load for vehicles of more than one axle, where those axles were less than 2½ m. apart, should be 15 tons. For vehicles with 3 axles a maximum of 21 tons could be admitted: the total maximum weight of 4-axled vehicles and articulated vehicles should be restricted to 22 tons, it being assumed that the maximum distance between the front and rear axles would be 8 m. He was thus in favour of reducing by 4 tons the United States proposal for vehicles whose maximum length was 11 m. He was prepared to admit a maximum weight of 30 tons for combinations of vehicles.

Mr. WILLEME (Permanent International Bureau of Motor Manufacturers) asked what figure the United States representative proposed for 3-axled vehicles with 2 rear axles.

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) stated that it would depend on the length of the wheel base of the 3-axled vehicle. The maximum weight on the 2 rear axles would be $14\frac{1}{2}$ tons, to which must be added the weight on the front axles, within the total limit, calculated on the basis of the distance between the front and rear axles. The maximum permitted would be about 22 tons, a figure which might be too high in the case of short 3-axled vehicles.

Mr. WILLEME (Permanent International Bureau of Motor Manufacturers) asked what the distance would be between the two rear axles.

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) replied that any pair of axles more than 40 ins. apart, which was approximately equivalent to 1 m., were considered as two separate axles. Otherwise they were counted as a single axle.

Mr. DUVERGNE (France) said that from the point of view of loading, he was unable to understand why a maximum load of 14.5 tons should be allowed on 2 axles, and only 8 tons on one axle.

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) stated that his country, was already prepared to accept a higher load on two axles than that for which United States bridges were constructed, because heavier loadings affected only the flooring of bridges, and not their main structure. The over-stress that would be caused by such heavier loading was well within the safety limits of the bridge as a whole, and if it was found necessary to strengthen bridges in consequence of the acceptance of a higher figure, the change would be a relatively simple one, since it would, as he had already stated, affect only the floor.

Bridges were designed with a greater factor of safety than were roads, and could support the greater strain caused by more closely spaced loads, that was to say, loads carried by vehicles whose axles were close together. The effect on road surfaces of the impact of two axles separated by only a short distance, was apt to be similar to that of a single axle.

Mr. D. JUVERGNE (France) was still unable to understand why a vehicle of 10 tons with a single axle should cause greater stress on the road surface than a vehicle of 14.5 tons with 2 axles, the argument on which the United States representative had based his rejection of a higher figure than 8 tons for the maximum permissible load on the most heavily loaded axle.

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) replied that in the demonstration given a few days ago he had attempted to show that the effect on the road surface was not appreciably altered by increasing the area of contact between the tyres of the vehicles and the road surface. There was little point in using dual tyres, for example, since they were liable to produce a single area of contact. It was therefore necessary to separate the points of contact by at least 1 m. in order to avoid concentration of load.

Mr. VEZZANI (Italy) considered that it would be preferable to follow the suggestions made in the United States proposal, since the list was an exhaustive one and covered most types of vehicle, particularly from the point of view of the distance between the centres of the first and last axles. In view of the large number of American lorries and buses which were at present being imported into Europe, it would be desirable to have a uniform system of standard loads.

Mr. W.G. HUNT (United Kingdom) asked the Italian representative how the weight of vehicles could be checked at frontiers.

Mr. VEZZANI (Italy) replied that since lorries and buses in international traffic were to be required to carry a registration book, data on the maximum load per axle could be given in that document, and would thus be easy to check.

Mr. CHARLOTTEAUX (Belgium) observed that it would be extremely difficult to exercise frontier control by measuring the distance between the axles of a vehicle. When the question of a registration book had been discussed in the relevant Working Party of the Economic Commission for Europe, the Belgian representative had stressed the necessity of that document's containing data on the essential characteristics of the vehicle. That condition was all the more essential if the maximum weight of vehicles was to be determined in accordance with their length.

Mr. NAP (Netherlands) observed that the point raised by the United Kingdom representative concerning the difficulties of frontier control, confirmed him in his conviction that the Convention must be kept as simple as possible. It should not be turned into a manual of regulations with lengthy concomitant explanations. He was unable to see how a table of maximum permissible weights of vehicles, such as that proposed by the United States representative, could be embodied in it.

Mr. DAUVERGNE (France) stated that in spite of his desire to reach agreement, he was unable to accept the United States figures, which had clearly been calculated in accordance with the bearing capacity of United States roads, and bore little relation to conditions in Western Europe, for which they were far too low. As he had already stated, he was unable to understand why a maximum load of 14.5 tons should be accepted for 2-axle vehicles, when a maximum load of 10 tons for the most heavily loaded axle had been rejected. The adoption of the United States figures would be, as far as France was concerned, a retrograde step. The problem had been studied by the Conseil des Ponts et Chaussées, a body of international standing, which had decided that when the distance between two axles was 0.9 metres, the maximum load on the most heavily loaded axle should be 7.35 tons; and that when the distance between the two axles was increased to 1.35 m., the maximum permitted load could be increased to 10.5 tons. Those maximum figures had been in force in his country for the last fifteen years and had created no difficulties.

Mr. BANG (Denmark), Rapporteur, suggested that as there seemed to be little chance of reaching general agreement, the Committee might defer further discussion on the question of maximum laden weight of vehicles, and set up a small working group to elaborate a compromise solution based on the Netherlands proposal, taking into account the views expressed in the foregoing discussion.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the working group should consist of representatives of Belgium, Denmark, France, Netherlands and the United States of America.

It was so agreed.

Article 13

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, drawing the attention of the Committee to the revised draft of Article 13 (Document W/RT/24/49), recalled that Committee III had agreed on a draft text for Paragraph 1. Subsequently, the whole of Article 13, had been referred to Committee II by the Co-ordination Committee. The amendments proposed by Committee III had been incorporated in the new text.

Paragraph 1.

Mr. DAUVERGNE (France) drew attention to an ambiguity in the third sub-paragraph. It was not clear precisely what was meant by "domestic legislation". Was that to be interpreted as the legislation of the country of origin of the vehicle, or the country in which it was circulating?

Mr. von HEMERT (Netherlands) was anxious that it should be made clear that the regulations of the country of origin of the vehicle were meant, so that vehicles could circulate in international traffic with those lighting devices which were required in their own countries, and not be obliged to comply with the regulations of the country in which they were travelling. Such a provision would be entirely in accordance with the 1926 Convention.

Mr. GILLESPIE (United Kingdom) stated that it was important to be perfectly clear that Article 13 applied to the domestic regulations in each country, and was not concerned with regulations for international traffic. The inclusion of that article was necessary, so that domestic rules of the road should comply with international standards, and it was intended that the regulations on lighting embodied in the article should be the minimum requirements to be observed by all road users. In addition, of course, motor vehicles and trailers circulating in international traffic would have to comply with Annex 8, and cycles with Annex 14. He was therefore of the opinion that Paragraph 6, which would mean that vehicles not circulating in international traffic would have to comply with paragraph 2 of Annex 8, Lighting, should be omitted.

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) stated that, though deferring to the United Kingdom representative's more detailed knowledge of the negotiations which had led up to the formulation of the Draft Convention, he doubted whether the intention had really been to draft rules of the road of strictly national application. The whole purpose of the Convention was, after all, to establish regulations for international traffic.

The difficulty referred to by the French representative might be met by the addition of the words "in the country of origin" at the end of the third sub-paragraph, since if the Conference was to impose the lighting regulations of the country in which the vehicle was travelling it would be raising an obstacle to the free circulation of vehicles across frontiers.

Mr. GILLENDER (United Kingdom) pointed out that Committee I had agreed to insert the following introductory paragraph to Chapter II of the Convention: "Each Contracting State shall take the appropriate measures to ensure the observance in any part of its territories to which this Convention is applied to the rules set out in this Chapter."

Article 13 was a part of Chapter 2, and its provisions, therefore, related to domestic road users and were consequently somewhat less precise than the requirements to be laid down in Chapters IV and V of the draft convention for vehicles to be admitted to international traffic. The purpose of Chapter II was to lay down minimum regulations which would be observed by vehicles travelling inside the borders of their country of origin, so that foreign motorists would know roughly what standard of behaviour to expect. If foreign vehicles did not comply with the provisions of Annex 8, they could not claim the benefits of the provisions embodied in Chapter IV.

He did not therefore feel that the problem raised by the French representative was of any real importance. The third sub-paragraph merely recognized that yellow lights would be allowed in lieu of white lights where they were permitted by the country of origin of the vehicle.

He suggested that the third sub-paragraph might be deleted, and

replaced by the following text "the white light may be replaced by a yellow light and the red rear light by a reflector in cases covered by domestic legislation".

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, proposed that the following sentence be substituted for the second sentence of the third sub-paragraph: "The white light can be replaced by a yellow light and the red light by a reflector in cases where this is permitted by domestic legislation".

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) asked that wherever domestic legislation was referred to, the word "national" should be used instead of the word "domestic", since that would more closely correspond with the situation in the United States where, in fact, legislation concerning motor vehicles was the responsibility of the State legislatures.

Mr. GILLENDEY (United Kingdom) pointed out that the words "domestic legislation" were referred to a number of times throughout the draft convention. It was necessary to ensure that they were always used in the same sense. That was a matter which might be referred to the drafting committee.

The amendment proposed by the Rapporteur to the third sub-paragraph was then accepted by the Committee with the reservation that the Drafting Committee would be requested to decide whether "domestic legislation" was a suitable term. If so it would be adopted throughout the Convention.

Paragraph 3

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Rapporteur, proposed that the words "This provision does not apply to a white or yellow reversing light or to the lighting device of the registration number" be substituted for the words "except that a white or yellow reversing light may be allowed and that this prohibition does not apply to the lighting device of the registration number."

Mr. W. G. HUNT (United Kingdom) stated that the law in his country was somewhat ambiguous so far as reversing lights were

concerned. He could accept the first part of the sentence, ending at the words: "this applies equally to reflectors", if it was followed by a proviso that reversing lights might be allowed in countries where such lights were permitted by domestic legislation.

He also felt that the reference to the lighting device of the registration number might be omitted, since it was already specified that "In no case shall a vehicle show a red light directed to the front or a white light directed to the rear".

Mr. von HEMERT (Netherlands) agreed with the United Kingdom representative that reference to the lighting device of the registration number might be omitted, since it was an indirect light and was not very clearly visible.

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium), Mr. DAUVERGNE (France) and Mr. VEZZANI (Italy) agreed with the Netherlands representative.

Paragraph 3, as amended by the Rapporteur, was accepted by the Committee.

Paragraph 6

Mr. GILLENDER (United Kingdom) proposed the deletion of Paragraph 6.

Mr. FREDRIKSON (Sweden) was also unable to accept paragraph 6.

The Committee agreed that paragraph 6 should be omitted.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.