

Economies in oil consumption (London, 7 November 1956)

Caption: On 7 November 1956, against the backdrop of the Suez crisis, the British Ministry of Fuel and Power announces measures to reduce oil consumption.

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MINISTRY OF FUEL AND POWER

Telephone: ABBEY 7000

Telegrams:
MINFUPO, SOWEST, LONDON

THAMES HOUSE SOUTH,
MILLBANK,
LONDON, S.W.1.



Reference:

Your reference:

7 November, 1956.

Gentlemen,

Economies in oil consumption

1. I am directed by the Minister of Fuel and Power to say that Her Majesty's Government consider that in view of the situation in the Middle East steps should immediately be taken to reduce the drain on stocks of oil in the U.K. (including N. Ireland). I am therefore to require you to reduce forthwith the volume of deliveries of motor and industrial fuels to your customers to 90% of what you would normally have supplied. The Government believe that a small saving of this order can be achieved by almost every oil consumer without undue hardship or loss of production. The only exceptions that are entirely outside this request are deliveries to foreign embassies, legations, consulates, etc. and to offices of Commonwealth High Commissioners and Agents-General and of Colonial Commissioners etc.

2. The Minister appreciates, however, that in implementing a 10% cut over the whole field of consumption there may be isolated instances where discretion will have to be exercised, as indicated below.

Motor Spirit and Derv

3. The economy of 10% should be applied to deliveries to retail dealers, bunkering agencies and also to consumers taking supplies in bulk except that:-

- (a) hospitals, police, fire and ambulance services are being asked to economise and their full requirements should be met;
- (b) public passenger transport vehicle operators (not including taxis and car hire services, whose supplies should be cut by the 10%) are being asked to economise where they can and their reasonable requirements should be met, though deliveries should in no circumstances exceed the normal level of supplies at this time of year;
- (c) the G.P.O. and the Services will be making their own economies overall and you are asked to meet whatever individual demands are made.

Fuel oil and gas/diesel oil (other than derv)

4. Agricultural users will be exempted from cuts, though they are being asked to make such economies as they can without affecting production. You should therefore meet all reasonable demands. Agriculture in this context would be fairly broadly interpreted to include market gardening, land drainage, hatcheries and food producing glasshouses.

5. Essential marine trade including fishing will be exempted from cuts and normal demands can be met in full. Supplies for non-essential marine craft (e.g. yachts and pleasure boats of all sorts) will, however, be subject to the 10% cut.

6. The Central Electricity Authority and the Scottish Electricity Boards will be reducing their requirements overall by substantially more than 10% and their individual requirements should be met. The Gas Boards are being asked to suspend

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for the time being any requests for deliveries of gas oil (except where a gas-works has sufficient stocks to provide for immediate consumption and the Gas Board are unable to make stocks available from elsewhere; these demands should be met). Deliveries of fuel oil to Gas Boards should bear the 10% cut.

7. Hospitals, nursing and old people's homes and sanatoria are being asked to make economies where possible and their individual requirements should be met.

8. Arrangements are being made whereby the 10% economy in state and state-aided schools will be achieved by each local education authority. Individual requirements for each such school or similar educational building controlled by such authority should be met. The local education authorities will be informing you to which schools and premises this applies. Apart from this the 10% cut applies individually to independent educational establishments such as private or public schools and universities.

9. Other consumers, including manufacturing industry, are expected to be able to manage with 90% of normal deliveries without undue difficulty. There may, however, be isolated cases where such a cut on deliveries cannot be borne without a quite disproportionate effect on production or other serious repercussions; milk, yeast and bread are obvious examples. In such cases you are free to use your discretion in order to avoid consequences of this sort: if in doubt you should seek advice from this Ministry.

Other products

10. It is not for the moment the intention to apply 10% to other products. However, a reduction in motor fuel consumption is likely to lend to a reduced requirement for lubricants and you should as far as possible encourage customers of kerosines, white spirits, bitumen and aviation fuels, to be modest in their demands. Ocean going bunkers are outside the scope of this letter.

General

11. It is not intended that this request should be interpreted as requiring you to reduce the volume of every delivery by exactly 10% and you are quite free to determine in the light of the circumstances whether it is better to effect the under-delivery in that way or by reducing the frequency of deliveries.

12. To avoid unnecessary difficulties at this time, the Government requests that you should accept orders only from your present customers for all products with the exception of persons now requiring supplies for the first time and with no established supplier. All retail dealers in motor spirit and derv have been advised accordingly.

13. For your convenience I am sending copies of the announcements and public appeals made by the Minister. If you have any queries on this letter you should get in touch with this Ministry on Abbey 7000, Ext. 1433 or 1021.

I am, Gentlemen,
Your obedient Servant,

H. Fletcher.