

MR STOWE
PRIME MINISTER

Mr Ryder

Cars at No.10

We have a problem about replacing our cars.

At present, the cars here comprise three old Rover 3.5s (one of which is kept in reserve), one new Rover 3.5, and a smaller "runabout" car. There is no need for us to have four cars of the same model, but we do ideally need two identical main cars for your use, with the others as back-up cars.

All the old Rover 3.5s have done a high mileage, and have been due for replacement for some time. One of them broke down on a journey in March and is in a very worn condition. We have now taken to the limit their use as the Prime Minister's main car, and are forced to consider what would be the best replacement.

This is not easy. The assumption is that the cars at No.10 must be British, and manufactured in this country. They must be comfortable, and must allow you privacy for conversation and the room, if wished, to work on a long journey.

The British-built possibilities are as follows:-

Rolls Royce Silver Shadow

Daimler Limousine

Daimler Sovereign

Ford Dorchester or Minster

(slightly different extended versions of the
Ford Granada)

Rover 3.5, new version

/The new

The new Rover 3.5 can be eliminated at once. It will not do as a main car; it is adequate for use as a back-up car.

The Government Car Service (GCS) owns five Ford Dorchesters and two Ford Minsters. The drivers do not much like these cars because the performance of an extended car of this kind is not all that exciting. But they provide good room for comfort and for work, and have been popular with those who have used them. Although this kind of Ford is now assembled in Germany, the GCS cars are 100% British.

The Daimler Sovereign recently became available in a new version. This car has a good all-round performance, but has been, and remains, something of a driver's car, a little cramped in the back and not so easy for getting in and out. GCS do not own any, but could of course get them either for trial or for permanent use.

The GCS already has some Daimler Limousines, or a new one could be acquired. This car is often used by Government Hospitality for visiting VIPs. It is a sound enough car, and comfortable. The "image", it seems to me, is not ideal for our main car. It can apparently negotiate Speaker's Court, but it must be a tight squeeze.

The Rolls Royce Silver Shadow is an excellent car. The use of a Rolls by The Queen's First Minister is in many ways wholly appropriate and desirable. But in the past there have always been presentational inhibitions about acquiring one; although the true cost of running one may not be all that much more than other cars, the first acquisition would surely be criticised on public expenditure grounds.

/The decision

The decision on your car is, in a sense, irreversible, because the car chosen will then need adapting for security and for the communications equipment.

The choice is a very personal thing, and you will perhaps have a clear preference among these possibilities. Subject to that, I would recommend trying out at an early date and more or less at the same time, the following:-

Daimler Limousine

Daimler Sovereign

Ford Dorchester

Ford Minster

If one or more of these cars looks an attractive possibility after being tried out in this way, I recommend that they should then be kept here for a longer trial, for use on all types of journey, before a final choice is made.

The annual current cost of running these cars is not very different, ranging from £12,000 for the Minster to £13,000 for a new Daimler Limousine. The capital cost of acquiring a new Daimler Limousine would be £15,300, and a new Daimler Sovereign £10,900.

CVP

17 May 1979

cc: Mr Ryder

Mr James

(F) GEORGE
NEWELL

MR. RYDER

Re: The Prime Minister's enquiry about No. 10 transport

We should, for the efficiency of transport for the Prime Minister and the office, revert to the previous system of having three cars (effectively protected) of the same make.

This ensures that wherever the Prime Minister goes she will be able to use a No. 10 car. To this effect, we suggest that the cars should be 4.2 Daimler Sovereigns as the most suitable car available. After 1 year a new Sovereign should be ordered to replace the Prime Minister's car which would then be the spare car.

This system has worked very successfully in the past and accepted as such by previous occupants of No. 10.

This is the opinion of Mr. Newell and his colleagues who are well aware of the requirements of No. 10.

23 May 1979