Here it is in black and white from the CA Vehicle Code. Page 275.

You do not need to pay weight fees. But if for some unknown reason you want to pay the fees the DMV will be happy to take your money. Weight fees give you a commercial plate. If no fees are paid you have no commercial plate. No mention is made saying that you can or cannot haul anything in a pre 1937 vehicle without paying weight fees.

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privilege of using its streets or highways, other than a permit fee for extra legal loads, after December 31, 1990, unless the local agency had imposed the fee prior to June 1, 1989.

Added Ch. 1337, Stats. 1989.Effective January 1, 1990.

Weight Fee for Pre-1937 Year Model Vehicles

9401. (a) Motor vehicles manufactured in or prior to 1936, are exempted from the payment of the weight fees provided for in Section 9400.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), any person who owns and operates a commercial vehicle manufactured in or prior to 1936 which is registered to such person, may pay the appropriate weight fees, and the department shall issue license plates of the same type as are issued to vehicles which are required to pay weight fees for such vehicles.

Added Ch. 622, Stats. 1980. Effective January 1, 1981.