



From the Minister

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD
WHITEHALL PLACE, LONDON SW1A 2HH

Prime Minister (2)

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The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
10 Downing Street
London SW1

10 June 1980

John G. ...

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NEXT STEPS ON NEGOTIATION OF THE REVISED COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

The text on fisheries which forms part of the proposed agreement on the EC budget issue offers the prospect of a serious attempt by the Community to reach a settlement of a revised Common Fisheries Policy by the end of this year. George Younger and I have therefore considered the approach which we should adopt in the coming months.

In view of the economic state of our fishing industry, it would clearly be to our advantage to reach a settlement as early as possible this year if acceptable terms can be obtained. But on past experience, agreement on the full package is unlikely to be reached until the last Council meeting before the deadline, ie in December, and we cannot assume that it will be possible even then.

With this in mind, we need to make progress on discussion of the main issues fairly soon and we have this work in hand. In the context of our overall post-budget approach and in view of the present lack of preparedness of the fisheries dossier in Brussels, it would be desirable to have a relatively low-key Council on 16 June, opening the way for a more substantive Council in mid-July. Some decisions might then be possible. And there would be an opportunity for any necessary bilateral negotiations in the second half of the summer recess, so that the main negotiations can take place from the September meeting onwards. If early agreement can be reached before December, so much the better.

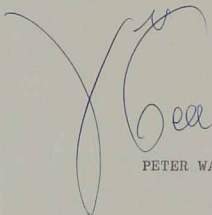
We expect conservation and control to be the principal subjects discussed at the June Council. Progress on both should be possible, although the Commission are unlikely to be ready with definitive proposals at that stage. On conservation, following the successful bilaterals with the French, all the problems should be capable of resolution except for the Norway pout box, on which the Danes are likely to be reluctant to move in advance of the European Court

case judgement on our national measure. On control, agreement could be reached on the catch reporting and other enforcement provisions if the Commission move fast enough, but again this is likely to spill over into the July meeting.

Although the Commission have mentioned the possibility of papers on quotas, structure and national aids, neither the Commission nor the Presidency have undertaken the preparation necessary before serious discussion of these issues could take place and any papers or proposals could not receive more than preliminary consideration at the June meeting. We will, however, wish to register our expectation that access will be one of the issues in the general CFP package and that there will be no question of deferring its discussion until next year. It is clear from Community discussions in the last few days that this could present difficulties.

Lastly, there is likely to be discussion of the mandate for the long term agreement with Canada, although we would prefer to avoid this. If it is on the agenda, there will be difficulties because German desires to buy fishing opportunities for their distant water fleet at the cost of tariff concessions would be strongly opposed by the UK catching interests. Our flexibility on this issue at this Council is therefore very limited.

I am sending copies of this letter to members of OD(E), the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Walker', is written over the typed name.

PETER WALKER



17 JUN 1960