

CONFIDENTIAL

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



From the Minister

PRIME MINISTER

and

Rob Macmillan

Prime Minister

*If looks as if it will
be necessary for you to
intervene personally with
President Giscard at some
stage. You may wish to
bear this letter in mind
for your private*

I attended a Council of Fisheries Ministers of the Community on ^{lunch} Monday 25 June. *with Mr. Jenkins.*

Throughout most of the meeting the Council was 8 to 1 against the United Kingdom. It is my view that the Council was called by the French President with the purpose of putting us in this embarrassing position and consolidating the 8 to 1 opposition to our views on fishing policy. *6/1*

The first item on the agenda were a number of conservation measures proposed by the Commission for adoption on a Community footing. They were similar to those that we had announced we should operate on July 1 within our own waters. Had they been agreed, we would have had to drop our conservation measures and await until the Community measures came into effect, some of which would have operated from 1 September this year and some from 1 September next year.

I made it clear that we had no intention of deferring our measures. They were already overdue and we considered we had a legal right to bring them into force. The Commissioner and most of the member countries spoke against us. In his summing up the French President urged the Commission to take legal action in the Courts against the measures. The Commissioner had prior to the meeting informed me that he had no intention of going to the Courts in the coming months on this issue.

There was then an attempt to obtain Council approval to an individual conservation measure in the Baltic. I informed the Council that in the British view there was no need for such a measure to be approved on a community footing. The Community States concerned had the right to bring it into operation unilaterally. At the present time it was inappropriate for the Community to involve itself in piecemeal measures of conservation of that sort. They should be concerned with total fisheries policy. The French President urged that a vote should be taken on the measure, which would have resulted in an 8 to 1 vote against us but I expressed the view that such a vote would be against the national interests of Britain whose view was that piecemeal conservation measures on a Community footing was the wrong approach. As a result a vote was not taken.

/The third main item

The third main item of the Council meeting was for the Council to approve a number of agreements with third countries. I maintained that this approval should only be given as part of an overall European fishing policy and therefore that these approvals should be delayed until we had examined the possibilities of agreement on such a policy.

At a Ministers only meeting that followed the detailed agenda of the Council, I was pressed as to what would be our position on agreement to a fisheries policy. I stated that we had made clear the fundamental fishing issues that were important to Britain and I hoped that we could agree a European fisheries policy that recognised and fully met these fundamental points.

I informed the Council that I would be having bilateral talks and talks with the Commission before we met in the autumn and I hoped that the Commission would be able to put forward proposals that met the British requirements. Whilst the Dutch, Danes, Germans and Irish seemed to believe there was some hope in this attitude the French President made it clear that in his judgement a settlement was not to be obtained by compromise; agreement had already been reached by the 8. That represented compromise and in his judgement there should be no shift in that position.

Representatives of our fishing industry were present outside the meeting and were briefed by George Younger and myself both prior to the meeting and afterwards. I enclose cuttings from 'Fishing News' which, I think, clearly illustrate that our attitude obtained the full approval of the fishing industry.

My own conclusion at the end of this meeting was that the French are anxious that there should be no agreement and judge that their position will strengthen and ours be weakened the nearer we get to 1982.

I am copying this letter to George Younger, members of OD(E) Committee and to Sir John Hunt.

PETER WALKER
4 July 1979

- 2 JUL 1979

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WALKER WINS FIRST BATTLE

NEW FISHERIES Minister Peter Walker has successfully resisted strong pressure by the EEC to delay British conservation measures. Mesh sizes for white fish and nephrops will still go up on July 1 despite a bid by the EEC in Luxembourg this week to have the move put off until September. Now Britain could again face legal action in the European Court.

The special meeting on Monday had been provoked by the French, who were clearly looking for a different approach from Britain following a change of government.

Minister Peter Walker told *Fishing News* on his return that he didn't want the opportunity to make it perfectly clear that we were totally decisive that these measures should be put into operation now.

Mr. Walker said all sorts of tricks were tried in the usual eight-to-one ganging up on Britain. "As a good European I was asked to conform to the September date and told it was long overdue. I told them that I couldn't be responsible for the lethargy of my predecessors," he said.

Mr. Walker also firmly resisted moves to get separate catches and technical conservation measures.

The Commission proposal for member states to report their catches was rejected. Several member states feared that this might lead to the premature closure of certain fisheries before the end of the year.

EEC fisheries minister Finn Olav Gundelach reacted by saying that the commission would consider what legal action it could take. The commission has already referred three "British national" conservation measures to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

However, only one of these, concerning the Norway pout box, is still in force. Mr. Gundelach did not say if or when the commission would take action.

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WALKER

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Commenting after the meeting, Mr. Walker said that he hoped the commission would not waste too much money on legal fees taking the UK to court.

He claimed the commission had a "bad case" and that the UK was justified in taking urgent action, referring to a report by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES).

He added that he hoped there would be a settlement on the Common Fisheries Policy before the court had time to take a decision.

Turning to the next major fisheries meeting in the EEC at the end of September, Mr. Walker said that Alick Buchanan Smith, his Minister of State, would, in the meantime, be consulting all sections of the industry.

Mr. Walker will be holding talks with third country fisheries ministers as well as those in the EEC.

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