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PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Walker's Statement on Fish

Mr. Walker made a statement on fisheries policy this afternoon. The text is attached at Flag A.

He ran into uncharacteristic trouble when he was accused several times by Mr. Mason and Mr. Julius Silverman of reneging on a commitment made by the Chancellor of the Duchy last July that agreements would not be made when the Scrutiny Committee had recommended that there should be further consideration by the House first. The Written Answer in question is at Flag B.

Mr. Walker was not prepared for this line of questioning and, although he offered several times to have an early debate on fisheries policy, I did not think he was entirely convincing. We will get a note for you for your Questions tomorrow, but it is far more likely to come up on the business statement.

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30 January 1980

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DRAFT STATEMENT

I beg leave, Mr Speaker, to make a statement about the meeting of the Council of Fisheries Ministers on 29 January.

My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, my Hon Friend the Minister of State in my Department and I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting.

Agreement was reached on total allowable catches for 1980. These are based on scientific advice with a few minor changes to take account of arrangements with third countries and, in a very limited number of cases, other factors. The agreement takes adequate account of the vital need to conserve stocks and it will form a good basis for further decisions on an effective Community conservation policy.

Agreement was also reached on the introduction of a Community system of catch reporting. Reporting will start next month on the basis of existing procedures and a full Community system is intended to be agreed by 1 July.

The signature of the framework agreements with Norway, Spain and Guinea-Bissau were agreed to. In the case of Norway this will help to strengthen the Community's links with a country

whose waters provide United Kingdom fishermen with very important fishing opportunities. In the case of Spain the Community's willingness to sign the framework agreement will, because of the reference in it to reciprocity of fishing opportunities, help the Commission in the forthcoming negotiations with the Spaniards on fishing during 1980.

Mr Speaker, this meeting was a meeting in which significant progress was made towards agreement on a revised Common Fisheries Policy.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Friday 13 July 1979

TUC

Mr. Thomas Cox asked the Prime Minister when next she expects to meet the General Council of the TUC.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 12 July.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gibraltar

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will raise the Gibraltar question with the Council of Ministers in the EEC in an effort to gain a settlement of the problem.

Sir Ian Gilmour: The best way to find a solution to the Gibraltar problem would be through discussion with Spain following the removal of the Spanish restrictions. Gibraltar is part of the European Community but neither my right hon. and noble Friend nor I propose to raise the matter in the Council of Ministers for the time being.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Lord Privy Seal what representations have been made by the British Government to the Spanish Government on the refusal by the Spanish Government to grant approval to Gibraltar Airways to operate a service between Gibraltar and Madrid.

Sir Ian Gilmour: Official representations have on several occasions been made in Madrid. A reply is awaited.

USSR

Mr. Alton asked the Lord Privy Seal what representation he plans to make to the USSR in support of Jewish prisoners of conscience, Ida Nudel, Vladimir Slepak and Anatoly Sharansky to assist them with a speedy emigration in view of their bad health.

Mr. Hurd: The Government support those who wish to emigrate from the Soviet Union by their continuing pressure for implementation of the Helsinki

Final Act. The Government will also make representations to the Soviet Union about human rights cases where there is a direct connection with the United Kingdom. In cases like the three mentioned where there is no direct connection we shall take decisions about representations on a case by case basis and, among other considerations, shall bear in mind health questions.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

European Legislation

Mr. Silverman asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the practice the Government will follow in arranging debates on recommendations of the Select Committee on European Legislation etc.

Mr. St. John-Stevias: Ministers will not give agreement to any legislative proposal recommended by the Scrutiny Committee for further consideration by the House, before the House has given it that consideration, unless the Committee has indicated that agreement need not be withheld, or the Minister concerned is satisfied that agreement should not be withheld for reasons which he will at the first opportunity explain to the House.

NATIONAL FINANCE

National Savings

Mr. Arnold asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements he proposes to make for recompensing those savers affected by the recent industrial action by staff employed by the department of national savings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: Industrial action by certain staff employed by the department for national savings (DNS) lasted from 23 February to 3 May 1979 bringing to a temporary halt a number of national savings services. Every effort is being made to recover. The administration of national savings certificates, save-as-you-earn (SAYE) and the National Savings Bank is now largely back to normal. Dividend payments issued by DNS should be up to date by the end of this month.