

*Fishing Subsidies 2*

*has seen*

PRIME MINISTER

c.c. Mr. Gow

I attach a copy of Mr. Buchanan-Smith's statement about the herring issue.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith gave a robust performance to a House which was sceptical about his assurances and alarmed about the constitutional implications of the latest developments. After an unremarkable response from Mr. Mason, John Silkin entered into an argument about The Hague agreement. In the course of the exchange, Mr. Silkin claimed that he had never supported the agreement he negotiated, but had merely gone along in view of Cabinet collective responsibility. In a final retort, he announced that he supported the agreement with all the vehemence with which the Minister of Agriculture supported the Government's economic policies.

After the initial round, the Speaker allowed 25 minutes - a long period by his usual standard - for Questions, and about 20 backbenchers joined in. Those whose concerns centred on the problems of conservation, and the inability of the Commission or anybody else to enforce catch limits, included Robert Maclellan, Austin Mitchell and Robert Hughes, who reported that the Dutch had recently been given a special exemption from the ban to provide herring for some national festival, and were later shown to have caught 10 times the permitted amount in the period. The Constitutional questions were raised by Alan Beith, Douglas Jay, Alexander Pollock, George Foulkes, and finally Bruce Millan. He wanted to know whether the Council of Ministers had agreed to the lifting of the ban, and if so, why there had been no British veto. The Commission's ability to give a binding ruling had to be challenged successfully.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith had some supporters for his performance in Brussels, notably ~~from~~ Albert McQuarrie. But the issue looks likely to cause trouble for some time to come.

29 July, 1981.

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COUNCIL OF FISHERIES MINISTERS, 27 JULY 1981

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF STATE

Under the Presidency of my Rt Hon Friend, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, my Rt Hon Friend, the Secretary of State for Scotland and I represented the United Kingdom at the meeting of the Council of Fisheries Ministers in Brussels yesterday.

The main issue before the Council was the re-opening of the herring fisheries at the West of Scotland and in the Southern North Sea, as recommended by the scientists. The Council had before it a Commission proposal which, in the most important area, that of the West of Scotland fishery, would allocate to the United Kingdom 67% of the total EEC catch. However, after prolonged discussion it was not possible to reach an agreement on these proposals even on an interim basis because of objections from four member states - Belgium, Denmark, France and Ireland. In these circumstances I insisted on the vital necessity of the Commission effectively monitoring the fishery so as to ensure that the total allowable catch recommended by the scientists would not be exceeded. Agreement was reached that catch reports should be made twice weekly to the Commission by any member country fishing in the area concerned. The information obtained will be circulated to member states so we will be able to monitor the situation and ensure that the fishery is closed as soon as the proposed total allowable catch has been taken. We are arranging



for the surveillance of the area involved by both ships and aircraft to be intensified.

I am glad to report that we have persuaded the Commission to ban until the end of November imports of cod fillets into the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic at prices below the Community reference price, thereby eliminating imports at unduly low prices. This is an important step towards the more effective operation of the marketing system. This will also make it easier to take action in future to ensure the proper observation of the reference prices.

The next Council will take place at the end of September, when it is agreed that an attempt will be made to negotiate a comprehensive fishing policy.