



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

Prime Minister

*The Minister of Agriculture is opposed to saying now that we shall use the new licensing system to reduce the number of Soviet factory ships.*

*A.J.C. 16/2*

From the Minister

CONFIDENTIAL

The Rt Hon Humphrey Atkins MP  
Lord Privy Seal  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AL

15 February 1982

*h.c. 16/2*

*mt*

*Humphrey Atkins*

POLAND: SOVIET FACTORY SHIPS

*will request if required p.7*

Thank you for your letter of 8 February 1982.

I think it would be premature to say now that we intend to use the licensing system to reduce the number of Soviet factory vessels involved in the Minch Mackerel fishery this summer. The conditions which will obtain up there will certainly be very different from those obtaining in the current South-West Mackerel fishery (which in fact we are closing with effect from midnight on Saturday 20 February 1982). There are still a number of uncertainties. We do not know what our target catch will be since to date there has been no Commission proposal regarding a TAC for the Western Mackerel for 1982. Nor do we know how many factory ships in total are likely to become involved in the fishery and until we know both these things we cannot say whether it would be in our interests economically to dispense with any Soviet factory vessels, quite apart from the risk that the exclusion of these might result in the departure of all the other Eastern bloc vessels.

*will request if required*

I see no need to repeat in detail the arguments which I set out in my letter of 27 January to Peter Carrington. As I see it our industry could well suffer excessively from the withdrawal of factory vessels, and the interests of conservation (to judge by recent experience in the South-West) are sufficiently well served by the licensing arrangements as they are operative at present, without any restriction on numbers of klondykers. In my view the Nigerian point is very real; United Kingdom processing capacity is customarily used to the full during the mackerel seasons and could not begin to process supplies for the Third World on the scale practised by the Eastern bloc factory ships.

/As I have said I ...

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As I have said I cannot agree to any commitments being entered into now; we must look at the situation nearer the time in the light of the balance between the likely catch and the availability of klondykers.

I believe this is also the view of George Younger to whom I am copying this letter, as well as to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Industry, the Chief Secretary, the Minister for Trade and Sir Robert Armstrong.

PETER WALKER

15 FEB 1982

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