

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES STATEMENT

Peter Walker's statement this afternoon was virtually a re-run of his last statement. The Opposition, led by Norman Buchan, claimed that the Commission's proposals were a sell-out of the UK fishing industry. The Opposition would support proposals for a 12 mile exclusive zone, and 50 mile dominant preference zone; but the Commission's proposals for a 6 mile exclusive zone and a 6 mile dominant preference zone, coupled with a 34% quota were a flagrant breach of the Conservative Manifesto commitment. Mr. Buchan claimed that the Manifesto committed the Government to seeking a quota of two-thirds.

Both Donald Stewart and Kevin McNamara claimed that the fishing industry had been blackmailed into accepting the Commission's proposals, and referred to the press reports that the National Federation of Fishing Organisations were deeply unhappy. Bruce Millan, concluding for the Opposition, demanded that the Government should make clear what the Commission had proposed, and what Mr. Walker would accept.

Peter Walker said that it was important to draw a distinction between the Commission's proposals and proposals acceptable to the Government. He would only accept proposals that the fishing industry could live with. He presumed that the House would do the same. He had not accepted the Commission's proposals, but it would be quite wrong to reveal his negotiating position. There was no question of breaching the Conservative Manifesto: as Norman Buchan admitted, the Manifesto gave no explicit commitment on quotas, and simply said that any agreement should recognise that "UK waters contained more fish than those of the rest of the Community countries put together". The NFFO might have criticised the Commission's proposals, but they had assured him that they were happy with his negotiating position. In answer to Mr. Millan, he said that the Commission's proposals were available to the House, and had been considered by the



Scrutiny Committee. He rejected a suggestion from Robert Maclennan that we might seek a majority vote in the Council in the face of Danish intransigence.

Wh

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