

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref: A05647

MR. ALEXANDER

Negotiations on the Common Fisheries Policy


In Mr. Walker's absence abroad, Mr. Buchanan-Smith (the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) has written to the Prime Minister about the line proposed for the Fisheries Council on 29th September.

2. Mr. Buchanan-Smith reports on the unpromising prospects for the Fisheries Council and proposes that failing an overall settlement we should try to maintain pressure on the French and pin responsibility for failure to move on them. He then suggests that agreement on a mini-package in September or October could be a useful step towards overall agreement.

3. President Mitterrand was noticeably reticent on fish at the recent Anglo-French Summit and subsequent contacts at official level have shown little evidence of a real effort on the part of the French to make rapid progress. Mr. Walker is to meet his opposite number on Friday. The current French position is no doubt partly tactical; but it also probably reflects a judgment that it will be to their advantage if they can link fisheries with budget restructuring. It is very much in our interest to avoid such a link if we can. Not only will we come under pressure to make concessions on fish in order to secure what we want on the budget (or vice versa) but the fishing industry will believe, whatever the outcome, that the Government has sacrificed their interests in order to get a satisfactory budget deal. Our first priority should therefore be to keep discussion of fish in the Fisheries Council and out of discussions on the budget Mandate.

4. At first sight, agreement on a mini-package would take the pressure off the Council to come to an early agreement on an overall settlement. On the other hand, the Canada agreement will soon become a live issue because the Canadian fishing is available from October and the Germans are already getting restive. Holding back our agreement to last year's fishing, did not in practice result in their putting pressure on the French to settle on access, and there is no reason to suppose that it would do so again. But our efforts to maintain an alliance with the Germans on the budget and CAP would come under great strain if we blocked the Canada agreement for reasons which they would regard as less

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convincing than last time. Mr. Walker evidently believes that a "mini-package", including the Canada agreement, could be presented positively both in United Kingdom and Community terms. It would give our industry the benefits of an improved marketing regulation and some financial assistance for restructuring; and by resolving some of the elements, reduce the complexities of an overall settlement.

5. In reply to Mr. Buchanan-Smith, the Prime Minister might therefore wish to take the following line:-

- (a) She attaches first priority to seeking an early settlement and convincing the industry that this would be in their interests.
- (b) She believes that we should not give up our efforts to get an overall settlement at least until we have tried at the October Fisheries Council.
- (c) That if Mr. Walker judges that the "mini-package" is acceptable to the industry and would not weaken the momentum towards an early overall settlement, she is prepared to agree to it.

ReA

Robert Armstrong

23rd September 1981

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Robert A. ...

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From the Private Secretary

23 September 1981

Negotiations on the Common Fisheries Policy

The Prime Minister has seen Mr. Buchanan-Smith's letter to her of 22 September. She is content with the course of action proposed by the Minister of State.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries of the members of OD(E) and to Godfrey Robson (Scottish Office), John Craig (Welsh Office) and Stephen Boys Smith (Northern Ireland Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

Miss Kate Timms,
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

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From the
Minister of State

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Whitehall Place London SW1A 2HH

C O N F I D E N T I A L

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

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Annie Minister

Content with this line?

Print - 22/9

Yes

22 September 1981

Dear Prime Minister,

NEGOTIATIONS ON THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

As Peter Walker is in South America this week, I am writing to outline the approach which we propose to adopt at the next Council of Fisheries Ministers meeting in Brussels on 29 and possibly 30 September.

Peter and I will be meeting the French Fisheries Minister on 25 September to see if there is scope for an overall settlement this month or later this autumn. As you know an Anglo/French accord, particularly on access to waters, is vital if agreement is to be reached. However, preliminary indications this week from discussions at official level with the French are not encouraging. Nevertheless, to ensure that we neglect no opportunity for a settlement we have, as Presidency, reserved dates for a further Council in October which could be firmed up if this seemed tactically expedient. If we do not achieve an overall settlement, we shall certainly try to maintain pressure on the French and to pin the responsibility for any failure to move on them.

If we judge that it would be helpful as a step towards an overall settlement, we have in mind the possibility of agreeing a 'mini' package at either the September or October meetings. This could simplify and reduce the number of decisions to be taken and remove some difficult, but now less important, obstacles to agreement.

Such a package might include a satisfactory marketing regulation, which is now a major objective of our industry; an interim structures regulation, which is of growing importance to the industry; an agreement with Canada, which now poses less difficulty because of the strengthening of the dollar over the last 6 months; and an agreement on the Faroes, subject to the Resolution and other features set out in Peter's letter of 17 July.

/I am copying

/ I am copying this letter to the members of OD(E) and the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely,
P. R. Apsey

pp. Alick Buchanan-Smith

(Approved by the Minister of State and
signed in his absence)

22-SEP-1981

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