



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

22 June, 1982.

✓. market ask.

Common Fisheries Policy

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food discussed this question with the Prime Minister at 1130 on 22 June. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith, Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr. Hancock were present. The meeting had before it the background note attached to your letter to me of 21 June.

The Minister said that agreement had been quite close 15 months ago and the industry at that time had said that they would accept quotas of 36.1% of the total Community catch. The negotiations had then come to a halt when the French pulled out. The current proposals gave the UK 35.5% of the total Community catch, but the quality of the fish was better. A number of improvements would have to be secured - in particular the Commission had proposed a big cut in the UK's share of the herring quota. The Minister had taken the industry representatives through the proposals in detail, and now thought that there was a good chance that the industry would support an agreement on quotas provided that some improvements in the Commission's proposals were secured.

The Commission's proposals on access were not at all unsatisfactory. They would give the United Kingdom exclusive rights within 6 miles and the historic rights given to other countries in the 6-12 mile zone were better than those agreed at the time of Accession and went back to the pattern of pre-Accession historic rights. A box was to be created around the Shetlands within which boats above a certain size would have to be licensed. The proposals were backed up by an agreement on enforcement whereby the United Kingdom would be responsible for enforcement within its own waters, and the Commission would check that the task was properly carried out. This represented an important protection for UK fishing interests. The leaders of the British Trawler Federation and the Scottish fishermen (representing about 80% of the UK industry as a whole) had indicated that they would support the proposals on access. But the leaders of the English inshore fishermen had said that they would only accept an agreement giving exclusive rights within 12 miles. This was a completely unrealistic position because the historic rights of other countries went back a



very long time and were balanced by valuable historic rights possessed by the UK in other waters and particularly around the Irish Republic.

The duration of the agreement would be satisfactory - it looked as though agreement could be secured to 10 years which would be extended for a further 10 years unless there were unanimous agreement to a change.

However, because of the position taken by Mr. Silkin when he was Fisheries Minister, the Opposition were almost certain to denounce the proposals as a sell-out, and there might be difficulties with Conservative members representing coastal constituencies, particularly in the North East. The Minister intended to see the Conservative members with an interest to explain the position with care.

The Minister said he also intended to visit Brussels to explain privately to Monsieur Thorn, who had taken charge of these negotiations in the Commission, what the essential UK requirements were on quotas.

The Secretary of State for Scotland said that the Shetland Islanders were quite willing to see a box, but had some rather impractical ideas on how it would be administered. There was also a conflict of interest between the Shetland Islanders and fishermen from the North East coast of Scotland as well as between Scottish and French fishermen. But on the whole he was reasonably optimistic that the Scottish interests could be reconciled with the access proposals. Problems could however arise if the negotiations dragged on and the English inshore fishermen continued to press for exclusive rights within 12 miles, since this would be bound to encourage the more militant members of the Scottish industry to put pressure on their leaders to take a tougher line.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith said that in his judgement the deal that was now in prospect was good for the industry as a whole. However, there were unfortunately signs that the Danish Minister would prevent agreement in June hoping no doubt to exploit his Presidency to Danish advantage. This could lead to an awkward period during which British Ministers would have to defend a position which was not as favourable to the UK as some of the UK interests would like, but also did not secure an agreement.

Summing up the discussion, the Prime Minister said that the Government should clearly go for a settlement since the alternative would put our fishing interests entirely at risk. She hoped that the Minister and the Scottish Secretary would do everything possible to persuade the Conservative back-benchers to support



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the agreement and to get the British trawlermen and the Scottish industry to put the maximum amount of pressure on the English inshore fishermen. If Denmark did prevent agreement, Ministers would have to consider how best to bring pressure on the Danes to permit the settlement to be secured.

I am sending copies of this letter to Francis Richards (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Muir Russell (Scottish Office), and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

A. J. COLES

Robert Lowson, Esq.,  
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

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*Please have letter  
typed and despatched in  
my absence.*

*A.F.C. 22/6*

Qz.02624

MR COLES

cc: Mr Wright  
Mr Stapleton  
Mr Wentworth

FISH

I attach a draft Private Secretary letter recording  
the discussion at No 10 this morning.

*D.H.*

D J S HANCOCK

22 June 1982

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DRAFT LETTER FROM: A J COLES

TO: Robert Lowson Esq, MAFF

cc: Francis Richards Esq, FCO  
Muir Russell Esq, Scottish Office  
*David Wright Esq., Cabinet Office.*

COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food discussed this question with the Prime Minister at 11.30 am on 22 June. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Mr Alick Buchanan-Smith, Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr Hancock were present. The meeting had before it the background note attached to your letter to me of 21 June.

The Minister said that agreement had been quite close 15 months ago and the industry at that time had said that they would accept quotas of 36.1% of the total Community catch. The negotiations had then come to a halt when the French pulled out. The current proposals gave the UK 35.5% of the total Community catch but the quality of the fish was better. A number of improvements would have to be secured - in particular the Commission had proposed a big cut in the UK's share of the herring quota. The Minister had taken the industry representatives through the proposals in detail and now thought that there was a good chance that the industry would support an agreement on quotas provided that some improvements in the Commission's proposals were secured.



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The Minister said he also intended to visit Brussels to explain privately to Monsieur Thorn, who had taken charge of these negotiations in the Commission, what the essential UK requirements were on quotas.

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I am sending copies of this letter to Francis Richards (FCO), ~~and~~ Muir Russell (Scottish Office).  
*and David Wight (Cabinet Office).*

*ADL*