



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

Willie Rickett Esq
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16th July 1982

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Dear Mr Rickett

FISHERIES DEBATE: 15 JULY 1982

- ... I attach for information a copy of the Opposition motion for tomorrow's debate on the Common Fisheries Policy. I will contact you later today to clear the terms of the Government amendment.
- ✓ I am copying this letter to Francis Richards (FCO), Muir Russell (Scottish Office), John Craig (Welsh Office), Steven ~~Boys~~ Smith (Northern Ireland Office).

Yours sincerely

Katlyn Fox

MISS K A FOX
Parliamentary Clerk



NOTICE OF MOTION

Thursday 15 July 1982

Mr. Michael Foot
Mr. Denis Healey
Mr. Bruce Millan
Mr. Norman Buchan
Dr. Mark Hughes
Mr. Martin O'Neill

COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

"That this House reaffirms its commitment to a 12 mile exclusive limit, dominant preference in the 12 to 50 mile zone, effective conservation measures, and catch quotas for the United Kingdom which fully reflect the extent of fishing stocks in United Kingdom waters and the loss of fishing opportunities for the United Kingdom in third-country waters as the essential requirements for the United Kingdom in any acceptable Common Fisheries Policy, and accordingly demands that the United Kingdom Government refuse to agree to any Common Fisheries Policy settlement that does not secure these essential requirements."

DEBATE ON FISHERIES

Motion by the Labour Party on the Common Fisheries Policy negotiations with relevant EEC Documents, Thursday 15th July.

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DEBATE ON FISHERIES1. Introduction

Ever since the elections in 1974, negotiations have taken place in Europe on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. Up until May 1979, no progress was made whatsoever under the Labour Government - in fact, Peter Walker and Alick Buchanan-Smith took over a situation whereby eight Member States had basically agreed the format for a new Fisheries Policy, with Britain totally isolated on the side-lines.

The aim of Peter Walker and Alick Buchanan-Smith has been to assure stable and satisfactory conditions for the future prosperity of the fishing industry. In 1980, they secured agreement for community wide conservation measures, which were intended to safeguard the future of fish stocks (these have now been placed on a permanent basis). At the September 1981 Council, under Peter Walker's Presidency, and particularly as a result of an initiative by the United Kingdom, agreement was reached on a substantial revision of the marketing scheme of the Community. It extended its coverage, improved the effectiveness of the protection against low priced imports and tightened up the internal arrangements for fish marketing.

Throughout the negotiations on the Common Fisheries Policy, the Government has taken measures to ensure the continued viability of the British Fisheries Industry. Unlike the last Labour Government, Peter Walker has increased the aid available to the industry dramatically throughout his three years as Minister of Fisheries. In fact, aid to the fishing industry is now double that which the industry received under the previous Labour Government (totalling £42 million, of which £7.6 million went to the Company sector, ie the deep sea fleet). In 1980, an additional £17 million worth of aid was made available to the Fishing Industry for vessel owners, producer organisations and for exploratory voyages. In 1981, further aid along similar lines, worth £25 million, was also given. Negotiations on aid to the industry for this year are still in progress and being considered.

To put the industry on a firm footing, the Government decided to merge the two existing Fisheries Authorities into a new Sea Fish Industry Authority. It is hoped that this will provide a basis for the industry to modernise and develop its catching and marketing arrangements, to strengthen the provisions for enforcement of conservation measures and to assist the development of fish farming.

Finally, three of Peter Walker's Marketing Advisors published a report in July this year on the Marketing of Fish. It called for radical changes in the industry's approach to Marketing, and it has been widely welcomed by the industry as a starting point for a new approach to Marketing.

The major outstanding issues in the renegotiations are: quotas and access. The Government is determined that these subjects should be negotiated together and that the final settlement should reflect the dominant position of the United Kingdom in fishing within Community waters. The quota proposals published by the Commission have so far been short of minimal demands by both Ministers and the industry. The latest proposals published on the 29th June and which are to be discussed at the Council of Ministers meeting on the 21st July, are an improvement but pose certain questions on the recommended TACs from the ICES. As far as access is concerned, the Government is determined to

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get a settlement that satisfies all sectors of the Fishing Industry, in particular the Inshore and Middle Water fleets. Undoubtedly, the structure of the United Kingdom fleet has changed over the last few years, in particular since the loss of distant fishing grounds such as Iceland. There has been an increase in the inshore fleet since 1970 of 1700 vessels, whilst the deep sea and freezer fleet has more than halved. The advent of world 200 mile exclusive limits in the mid-1970s also hurried the demise of the larger vessels.

Since the last debate on the 9th December 1981, little progress has been made on the two remaining issues, There have only been two Council meetings this year, the last at the end of June when the new proposals for quotas and access were presented by the Commission.

Throughout the negotiations in Europe, Ministers have sought the support of industry representatives on all proposals put up by the Commission. Nothing that has been agreed so far has been decided on without agreement with the industry first.

2. The Government's Record on Aid and Other Matters

The following diary of events since the last election highlights the achievements of the Government on Fisheries:

November 1979: £443,000 made available to finance exploratory voyages for under-utilised species of fish (Blue Whiting, etc.)

March 1980: Aid worth £2 million made available in the form of short-term financial aids and a further £1 million to extend the programme of exploratory voyages to assess the commercial potential for exploiting under-utilised species.

April 1980: £2.7 million aid from FEOGA for UK inshore fishing industry for the construction and purchase of vessels and to develop marine fish farming.

May 1980: Announcement of further aid for the UK fishing industry - £6.15 million made available to White Fish Authority for fishing vessel projects.

Minister negotiates increases in reference prices for imports of frozen fish from third countries (imports from outside the Community).

June 1980: EC Council of Ministers decide to restore the common custom tariff on cod, haddock and hake.

August 1980: Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced further aid for the fishing industry of over £14 million in addition to the £23½ million already being made available. It was also proposed to make £0.9 million available this year for replacement fishery protection vessels.

September 1980: The EEC Council of Fisheries Ministers reached agreement on a European Community Conservation regime, which was mostly based on existing UK measures.

March 1981: Minister announced further aid worth £25 million to the fishing industry, on similar lines as the aid given in 1980.

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April 1981: Ministry announced a further aid package of £2.46 million for UK inshore fishing industry from the European Community for the construction and modernisation of vessels under 80 ft. long.

July 1981: Ministry announced new Fisheries Act 1981, which gives new powers for financial aid to the industry; strengthening controls for enforcing fishing conservation and management; assisting fish farming; and restricting whaling operations.

The Sea Fish Industry Authority is also launched to modernise and develop the marketing of fish.

September 1981: Under the Presidency of the Minister, the EC Council of Fisheries Ministers reached agreement on a series of measures which represent an important step towards a revised Common Fisheries Policy. These include an improved marketing system, renewal for a further year of EEC aid for construction and modernisation of fishing vessels, continuation of existing conservation arrangements and further protection against third country imports.

Klondykers: Orders were approved by the House in January 1982 that all receiving vessels (Klondykers) whether from the United Kingdom, other Community states or third countries, may not receive within British fishing limits mackerel, herring, horse mackerel, sprat or pilchards caught by UK registered fishing vessels except under the authority of a license issued by the Government.

Beam Trawling: An order was approved by Parliament in April 1982 similar to those in other Member States, to ban Beam Trawling within 12 mile limits around Great Britain by vessels exceeding 70 gross tonnes (300 HP) fishing for sole or plaice. This complements the existing ban on Beam lengths over 8 metres within the 12 miles.

3. Access

The 1976 Fisheries Act extended all United Kingdom waters to 200 miles, in line with the general move in this direction by other fishing nations in the Western world. Within the 200 mile limits of European Member States, exclusive zones were established of six miles, in places extending to twelve miles, with certain historic rights being maintained.

On the issue of fishing rights within Member States' waters, the Government has been and is seeking a basically exclusive six mile zone around our shores. In the area between 6 and 12 miles, there are many historic rights held by Member States, since 1964 when the three mile exclusive zones were extended to 6 (and 12 miles in a few places). It must be remembered that UK fishermen also have historic rights off the coast of Ireland and France which are essential to certain communities that are dependent on fishing. Therefore to claim an exclusive 12 mile zone around our shores would deprive many fisherman of their traditional fishing grounds.

The proposals that are being negotiated now, are based on the rights that were established before we joined the European Community, not since. No agreement would destroy this position that the Government has persuaded all other Member States to adopt.

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Outside the 12 miles, dominant preference will be given to local communities which are dependent on fishing.

The last Government were continuously changing their position, on access in particular, as the following quotations show:-

- (a) "We have also made very clear to the Community the United Kingdom's requirements for a reserved coastal band of not less than 12 miles, and extending in parts to 50 miles."
(Peart, 28th June 1976, Col. 27).
- (b) "The fact is, as we have said, that we have been looking at the key areas beyond the 12 miles and have found that many are within 35 and all are within 50 miles. That remains our position."
(Bishop, 8th July 1976, Col. 1592).
- (c) "There was always the fishing industry's idea based on a 50 mile exclusive zone, which meant that literally a United Kingdom fisherman would be allowed to fish in that zone; there was the United Kingdom Government's idea of the variable belt; and there was the third idea of a totally exclusive belt up to 12 miles and then a dominant priority. These are all methods of obtaining the objectives."
(Silkin, 30th June 1977, Col. 523, Oral Questions)
- (d) "This included a 50 mile basis of conservation, a 12 mile exclusive zone, and a 12 to 50 mile dominant preference. These were minimum demands, as were our demands on conservation."
(Silkin, 9th December 1977, Col. 1852)
- (e) "By dominant preference I mean that the limitation of effort, the conservation measures, the management of that zone and the growth potential are dominantly preferential in favour of the coastal state."
(Silkin, 19th January 1978, Col. 676)
- (f) "We have to stick by the decision which was repeated in the House year after year, that there would be no surrender beyond the 12-mile exclusive limit and the 50-mile dominant preference."
(Buchan, 30th June 1982, Col. 895)

4. Quotas

The allocation of quotas to each Member State is inextricably linked to the matter of access and the Government has continuously stated that the two should be negotiated together.

Proposals set before the Council on June 29th give us just over 36% of the total allowable catch of fish of the seven major edible species. This was just short of 30% of the total allowable catch of all fish, including industrial species. These proposals are agreed by the industry to be close to what they require as the minimum acceptable.

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The present proposals (EEC Document and Memorandum unnumbered, dated 7th July 1982) are an improvement on the previous allocation and C in draft instruments 7863/82, 7786/82, and 7788/82 and take the UK's quotas above the 36% which is basically acceptable to the industry.

These latest proposals which include quotas in Swedish, Norwegian and Faroese waters are under careful consideration by the Government and the industry as a whole.

5. Enforcement and Conservation

In October 1980, the Council of Fisheries Ministers agreed that each Member State should be responsible for the enforcement of control measures within its fishing limits. At the September Council last Autumn, it was agreed that the existing conservation regulations, which were due to expire at the end of October, should be adopted by the Council on a permanent basis. This was a considerable achievement by the UK Ministers, in that it established indefinitely the existence of the Norway Pout Box and the full range of technical conservation measures, including minimum mesh sizes. Minor details, such as control of by-catches, have still to be agreed.

Document 7954/82 covers many matters including access, quotas, conservation and management, and are a considerable improvement on previous proposals.

6. Imports and Third Country Agreements

Early in 1981, allegations were made of unfair and illegal imports. As a result of this, the Minister set up a team of industrial representatives and Government officials to examine these allegations, so as to establish the facts.

1981

In June, the team concluded that the major factor affecting the UK market had probably been the strength of sterling attracting imports and prices, which were relatively low when considered against the significant increases in costs with which fishermen have had to contend. It also established that significant imports from third countries have been coming in at below the reference price.

1981

The September Council agreed a long term frame-work agreement for Canada and reciprocal arrangements with the Faroes and Sweden, which, linked with lower exchange rates, has removed the threat posed earlier this year by reduced tariff imports. The agreements also provided some opportunities for UK vessels (although not enough) to fish in Canadian and Faroese waters - these are still to be settled. Agreement would not have been reached on the Marketing proposals without some agreement on third country arrangements.

7. Marketing

Besides the Minister's initiative through his Marketing Advisors, to improve the marketing of fish the Council of Ministers, under pressure from UK Ministers, agreed in September 1981 the following elements to new marketing measures and arrangements for the Community:-

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- a streamlined, more certain and speedier method of ensuring that reference prices for imports of fish from third countries are observed, so that Community, and particularly United Kingdom, fishermen can be protected more effectively against low-priced imports;
- revision of the tariff arrangements for herring, so that Community processors are encouraged to take supplies of herring caught by United Kingdom fishermen;
- revision of the market support arrangements to encourage producer organisations to market their fish to the best advantage;
- arrangements for bringing wild salmon, lobster, crabs, nephrops and dogfish into the Community's system for supporting producers.

These measures came into effect on the 1st June 1982.

The Fishing Industry wholeheartedly supported the agreement on Marketing - as David Aitchison, Chief Executive of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, said: "...on balance, it seems possible that these changes will bring greater stability to the market, both from the point of view of imports and the new producers' organisation arrangements." (Fishing News, 2nd October 1981). Austin Laing, Chief Executive of the British Fishing Federation, also enthusiastically supported the Minister's achievement, "... it was an important step forward which augured well", (Financial Times, 1st October 1981).

8. If no agreement before the end of 1982

Article 103 of the Act of Accession to the Community provides for limitation to be agreed by the Council of Ministers on Access to maritime waters after 31st December 1982. Therefore there is NO QUESTION of 'Fishing up to the beaches' as there was no fishing 'up to the beaches' before we joined.

9. Restructuring the fleet

Aid for modernising the fleet is already available and has been paid from UK grants and loans (see 2 above). The Commission has proposed a further extension of the EEC interim aid scheme and proposals for a more comprehensive restructuring policy are being discussed with the other proposals for quotas etc.

The Government obviously attaches priority to decommissioning grants and measures to help modernise the fleet.

10. Summary

Under the last Labour Government, there was no progress whatsoever in negotiating a satisfactory Common Fisheries Policy that would be acceptable to all sectors of the industry. Mr Silkin, with his anti-European attitude, blocked negotiations to the extent where Britain became totally isolated, with no progress on common conservation measures, marketing measures, or on quotas or access.

Under the Conservative Government with our Fisheries Ministers, agreement has been reached on many issues.

However, the major negotiations on access and quotas are still in progress (the next Council is on 21st July), and Ministers are determined that any agreement reached in the Council of Ministers should be supported by the Fishing Industry's representatives themselves. In all negotiations and agreements so far, the industry has worked closely with Ministers on the spot, and it is hoped that in the coming tough discussions on the two outstanding major issues, this process of close co-operation will continue. This is totally opposite to the last Government's attitude, where Mr Silkin went his own way without really bothering to consult with the industry during negotiations.

"My only objective in negotiating is to provide British fishermen, including Scottish fishermen, with a better future than they have had for many years, since we lost the Icelandic waters. If I cannot attain that objective, and the industry does not agree that I can attain it, I shall come to the Dispatch Box and say that there is no agreement." (Peter Walker, 30th June 1982, Col 896).

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