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

From the Minister's Private Office

C Whitmore Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1

26 March 1980

Dear Clive,

You asked for my Minister's advice on the points arising from your record of the Prime Minister's meetings with the fishing industry in Hull on 14 March and on the letter the Prime Minister was given by the Lord Mayor.

My Minister has the following points to make. First he notes that the industry representatives' hopes for the future of Hull as a fishing port depend on both an optimistic assessment of the port's attractiveness to foreign vessels and the assumption that the Government can negotiate substantial new fishing opportunities for the present distant water fleet based in Hull. Realistically we could not endorse either of those hopes. Access to the distant waters on which the fisheries of Hull were founded is now limited by the willingness of other countries outside the EEC to share their waters, and they show few signs of wishing to do so on the scale that would be needed to re-establish the importance of Hull.

There is no conceivable distribution of fishing opportunities within the fishery limits of Community Member States, or redistribution of Community quotas within third country waters, which could fully redress the balance in favour of our distant water industry. Without large landings of UK-caught fish in the port, dock charges in Hull cannot be brought down sufficiently on a long-term basis to encourage foreign landings, without a specific and continuing subsidy.

Against this background my Minister considers that there is no case for giving special financial assistance to Hull over and above anything which the Fisheries Producers' Organisation for the area in which Hull is situated may choose to do under the terms of the temporary aid scheme which my Minister announced on 13 March. Any further aid would have to be given on a continuing basis, and it would distort the present pattern of landings whereby other ports have gained at Hull's expense.

It would, however, be premature to expose this position until we have received the proposals which Mr Cairns of the TGWU said were under discussion between the trades unions, the Council and the Docks Board. You will recall that the Prime Minister said that she would be ready to receive a deputation from the City to hear these proposals when they were ready.

Finally, the Minister is disappointed that the Trawler Owners' representatives continue to misrepresent the facts about Government policy on the enforcement of present fishing controls and seek to imply that he is not fully seized of the facts about the exploitation of fish stocks in UK territorial waters. It is untrue for example to say that we are not able to enforce the quotas in our waters effectively. Our fishery protection fleet carry out a large number of boardings of foreign and UK vessels each year and in 1979 18 foreign skippers were prosecuted for breaches of our fisheries regulations. Nor are we unaware of the need to secure an outcome to the CFP negotiations which properly reflects our interests.

--- I attach a draft reply to the Lord Mayor of Hull to his letter of 14 March.

Yours sincerely

G R Waters

G R WATERS
Principal Private Secretary

DRAFT FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S SIGNATURE

The Lord Mayor

When we met in Hull on 14 March you gave me a letter setting out the City Council's views about maintaining the city's fishing and processing industries.

As I am sure you know, a proportion of the aid for the fishing industry announced by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 13 March will be available for use by the Fish Producers' Organisation Limited, in whose economic area Hull falls. They will be able to make a judgment in the light of their priorities about how far the money which will be available to them can be allocated in ways which would benefit Hull. No doubt this is being discussed in the industry. The programme of exploratory voyages which Peter Walker announced on the same day could also benefit trawlers which have traditionally been based in Hull.

These measures could help the situation in the short term. As for the longer term, you will know I also met representatives of the fishing industry whilst I was in Hull and heard from them that discussions were being held between the Council, the Trades Unions and the Docks Board about ways of improving the long-term prospects for Hull as a fish-landing port. I had to make it plain that I could give no undertaking about possible

Government aid for any new scheme. But I did say that I would be ready to listen to any reasonable proposition about the future of the port and would be ready to receive a deputation when there were proposals for discussion.

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