

AGRICULTURE

From: The Rt. Hon. Peter Walker, M.B.E., M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
10th March 1983

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

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A. Seaford

I enclose a short note upon the Manifesto.

I believe the important thing is to recite our achievements and you will from my note there are only a number of minor issues where I believe we should commit ourselves to some future progress and these in tolerably vague terms.

With best wishes,

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC, MP,
11 Downing Street,
London, S.W.1.

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The Government by both its negotiations in Europe and its actions at home have enabled British agriculture and horticulture to continue to make a major contribution to the strength of the British economy.

Production of British agriculture has risen. Exports have substantially improved and self-sufficiency in the home market has increased considerably.

When we came into office the benefits to British agriculture from the Common Agricultural Policy were less than the proportion of British agricultural production to the Community agricultural production as a whole. By successful negotiation the proportion of the CAP of benefit to British agriculture has doubled during the years of a Conservative Government. The cost of the CAP which rose under the previous Labour Government by more than 200% has risen during the period of the Conservative Government by only 20%.

Food prices that more than doubled during the period of the Labour Government have become ever more stable and during the past year food price increases have been less than at any time over fifteen years.

The Government has substantially improved the farming subsidies to Britain's hill areas bringing great benefit to Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the hill areas of England.

The Government has successfully launched "Food From Britain" to see that British products have far greater success both at home and abroad. The potential of our exports to the European Community is enormous. The potential of obtaining a still better share of our domestic market is considerable. In the

coming years we will reap the success of our efforts in these areas which will assist not just the balance of payments but also provide more jobs and a greater economic strength for Britain.

We have fulfilled our promise of reversing the disastrous green pound policy of the last Labour Government. We have continued to support research programmes and the technical and scientific advisory services which have proved to be of such benefit to British agriculture.

We will in the period of the coming Parliament endeavour to improve the opportunities of younger people obtaining a position in farming and endeavour to see that more not less tenancies become available.

We will prepare in consultation with the Glasshouse Industry a programme to bring about a greater market effectiveness, the best that is available in heat insulation and heat provision and the need to produce an ever-widening diversity of products that the consumer is demanding both at home and abroad.

We have successfully negotiated a Common Fishing Agreement that provides British fishermen with the best preference in our territorial waters in the history of the industry, with effective conservation measures for the first time since Britain joined the Community. With the quotas of important fishing stocks and the correct conservation measures we will have expanding stocks of fish rather than declining stocks.

During the next Parliament we will introduce measures for the sensible restructuring of the fishing industry and with the appropriate encouragements for capital investment to take full advantage of all that the Common Fishing Policy provides.