



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

From the Minister's Private Office

N Sanders Esq
Prime Minister's Office
10 Downing Street
London SW1

13 March 1980

Dear Sir, PA_{rs}
AID FOR THE FISHING INDUSTRY

--- I attach the final text of the statement which Mr Walker is to make to the House this afternoon. As you will see, to meet the Prime Minister's wishes, we have agreed with the Treasury to delete the paragraph about the financial provision for the scheme of aid. That will now be given in a slightly amended form to an inspired PQ to be tabled for answer tomorrow. Obviously if the Minister is pressed on this point in supplementaries after the statement this afternoon he will have to give the omitted text in answer.

I have also taken on board the request from Mr Elliott at the Cabinet Office that we should include the word "on" between "negotiating" and "a" in the third paragraph.

I am copying this letter to Ingham; Stevens (Leader of the House's Office); MacClean (Whip's Office, Commons); Cumming-Bruce (Whip's Office, Lords); Wright, Whybrow, Elliott (Cabinet Office); the private secretary to the Paymaster General, and private secretaries to members of E(EA), OD(E) and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely

G R Waters

G R WATERS
Principal Private Secretary

AID FOR FISHING INDUSTRY

STATEMENT BY MR WALKER, 13 MARCH 1980 - FINAL REVISE

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the problems of the United Kingdom fishing industry and the Government's plans for providing short-term aid.

When I met representatives of the fishing industry on 23 January, they described the problems which they were experiencing as a result of increasing costs and deteriorating prices. I asked them to provide me with details of their economic position and to suggest ways in which their problems might be eased. When my Rt Hon friend the Secretary of State for Scotland met the Executive Committee of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation on 1 February, he received similar representations and asked the Scottish fishermen for their suggestions on possible action. Fisheries Ministers have now analysed the responses from the industry and we have concluded that assistance from the Government is justified and necessary.

As the House knows, the fishing industry faces great difficulties. It is having to adjust to reduced fishing opportunities. It is uncertain about the future because we are still in the process of negotiating on a Common Fisheries Policy in the EEC. And the recent economic pressures have added substantially to the problems. This is threatening the whole structure of our industry.

To meet this situation the Government intend to introduce two schemes of temporary aid.

First we propose to make up to £2 million available to the industry through the Fish Producers' Organisations over the period 1 April to 30 September. This will be in the form of financial aids to be used for a range of prescribed purposes. These purposes include helping the industry to cover part of the cost of intervention so as to maintain withdrawal prices, the provision of temporary laying-up premia, the payment of dock, harbour and landing dues and the financing of approved programmes to improve the grading, handling and sales promotion of fish.

It is an important feature of the scheme that it will give Producer Organisations a real degree of discretion so that they can match their efforts to the specific needs of the areas in which they operate. A further statement on the details of the scheme will be made after notification to the European Commission and consultation with the industry, which will take place as soon as possible.

In addition we propose to allocate a further £1 million to extending the programme of exploratory voyages to assess the commercial potential for exploiting under-utilised species.

The Government was urged to act quickly. This we have done. We believe that our proposals taken together will benefit the great majority of fishermen.

The Government remains determined to try to reach a Community Fisheries Policy that provides a good future for the industry, and the decisions that I have announced today will enable the industry to take advantage of an agreement when it is reached.



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