

C.F. to note
Original - A.P.



VLB
Adm
MAFF

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

12 June 1980

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you for your letter of 10 May, about the fishing industry, with which you enclosed a cheque for £75.26.

I know of the deep concern which is felt at present about the fishing industry, and have followed closely the discussions which Fisheries Ministers have had with representatives of all its sectors recently.

Our quota regulations have been introduced after full consultation with representatives of the fishing industry, and we have tried both to strike as fair a balance as possible between the interests involved and to ensure that fishing opportunities are available equitably throughout the year. Failure to introduce some form of controls on these stocks would only exacerbate the dangers of over-fishing to the detriment of all our fishermen. Certain other member states have also introduced controls on their fishermen but clearly the most satisfactory solution to this problem would be a settlement of the Common Fisheries Policy with quotas agreed for each Member State.

Your letter also alleges that vessels from other member states have been fishing with undersized nets and catching herring illegally. In the absence of an agreed common fisheries policy national governments are responsible for the conservation of fish stocks and it is for them to ensure that national conservation measures are properly enforced. For our part, we are ready to take action against any vessel found fishing contrary to our regulations in United Kingdom waters.

/ In the long run ↙

In the long run, the best way in which the Government can help the industry towards security and prosperity is by continuing to press for a fair and enforceable settlement of the revised Common Fisheries Policy. It is this most of all which will enable the industry to plan with confidence for the future and to make the most of the resources available to them. In the meantime, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked Mr. Gundelach to take action to control the flow of imports into the European Community and as a result reference prices for frozen fish have been increased. A decision will shortly be taken on a proposal to restore the full rate of duty on imports into the Community of fresh, chilled and frozen cod, haddock and hake. Taken together, these proposals should go some way to prevent the U.K. market being undermined by excessively cheap imports from outside the Community.

This year, we have provided additional special assistance to the industry over and above the programmes of continuing support which in the current year will cost some £20 million. This package of temporary aids is designed to put an extra £3 million into the industry during the year. I understand your frustration in the face of present difficulties, but I hope you will accept that our assistance is intended to provide a little extra support in this interim period. I return your cheque, and I am sure that you can put the money to good use.

Yours sincerely
Raymond Dutton