



SCOTTISH FISHERMEN'S FEDERATION

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Chief Executive/Secretary
 ROBERT ALLAN M.B.E.

Your Ref:

Our Ref: CE/AH/P17.3

13 November 1997

Don Cockburn Esq
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Fax No. 001 613 231 4313

Dear Don

WORLD FORUM OF FISH HARVESTERS AND FISH WORKERS: INDIA

Thank you for your fax of 23rd October 1997 in which you ask a number of questions specific to the Federation and with respect to the UK Industry in general. I apologise for having failed to revert to you earlier (having been on leave) but trust that this response will arrive in time for it to be of use at the forthcoming forum in India.

About your organisation:

1. How many members does your organisation have?

The Scottish Fishermen's Federation is a trade body whose job is essentially to represent our member fishermen in negotiations with our own Government, who in turn negotiate with the European Commission and with the Government's of other countries. The Federation comprises seven member Associations (six catching Associations and one fish selling Association). In total over 800 fishing vessels are in membership.

2. Who makes up your membership?

As stated above our membership is based upon vessel numbers. Geographic representation within Scotland is broad with Associations based in the Firth of

V.A.T. Reg. No. 605 0967 48

Members: Clyde Fishermen's Association; Eyemouth & District Fishermen's Association; Fishsalesmen's Association (Scotland) Limited; Mallaig & North-West Fishermen's Association; Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association Limited; The Scottish White Fish Producers' Association Limited; Shetland Fishermen's Association

SCOTTISH FISHERMEN'S FEDERATION

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Chief Executive
ROBERT ALAN

By the Secretary

13 November 1997

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FISH WORKERS/INDIA

Accn no: 1200

MFN: 2004

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Members of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation are advised that the Federation is not a charitable organisation and is not a registered company. The Federation is a limited liability company registered in Scotland. The Federation is a limited liability company registered in Scotland. The Federation is a limited liability company registered in Scotland.

Clyde, Eyemouth (Scottish Borders) North West and North East Scotland together with the Shetland Isles. There are no women who go to sea as far as I am aware. It would be fair to say that there is a mix within our membership of larger vessels involved in deep sea fishing and smaller vessels, fishing predominately closer to shore. It would be appropriate to split our vessels into three categories.

Pelagic Fleet: Large deep sea vessels prosecuting mackerel, and herring.

Demersal/Nephrops: Vessels fishing in deep water exploiting key white fish species (Cod, Haddock, Whiting) in the North Sea and West of Scotland. Some of these vessels, mainly in the North Sea, switch gears to facilitate the capture of Norway Lobster (Prawns).

Shellfish: Smaller inshore vessels engaged in Shellfish capture.

3. How long have your members generally been active in the fishery?

Quite a difficult questions to answer. The Pelagic fishery has been exploited commercially for well over a century although relatively more recently, the Atlanto Scandian Herring fishery has been developed. The Shellfish and Demersal fisheries have been long established.

4. What type of work is your organisation engaged in?

As indicated earlier the SFF is essentially a political lobbying body whose role is to represent the interests of fishermen on the domestic and international stage. The Federation is thus involved in negotiations on catch quotas, on structural policy, fishing vessel safety and also issues relating to technical conservation (e.g gear types etc). The Federation also has an Environmental Issues Committee, established to improve relations with responsible Environmental Groups, together with a Seals Group whose function is to lobby for the introduction of Seal management in the UK.

5. What issues is your organisation dealing with, or what problems does it face?

The Federation is currently being avalanched by a whole range of pressures many of which emanate from the European Commission. As a result of agreement earlier this year within the European Fisheries Council, we are facing sizeable cuts in our fleet over the next five years in a bid to preserve stocks. For example, the Pelagic fleet in the UK is facing cuts in capacity/effort of the magnitude of almost 30%. The Demersal/Nephrops fleet is facing lower cuts of around 11%. The Federation has objected strongly to these cuts given that no palpable action has yet been taken to remove so called "flags of convenience" vessels from the UK register. These are foreign owned vessels which land the majority of their catch into countries other

than the UK and which are largely foreign crewed but who nonetheless have purchased UK fishing licenses.

To summarise the other major problems being experienced, I am attaching copy of our President's foreword for next year's Federation Year Book and Diary which hopefully will give you a flavour of exactly what we are up against.

About the Fishery

1. What are the main issues affecting the fishery?

We have received recently a Government briefing on the health of the main fisheries being exploited by our fleet in the run up to the end of year Fisheries negotiations at which next year's TACs and quota allocations will be decided. For many years there has been much scientific concern about the possible collapse of the North Sea Cod stock and yet things appear now to be improving which would suggest a higher TAC next year given a good year class this year. Things are similar for North Sea Haddock. However we could be looking at sizeable reductions in allowable catches for north Sea Whiting and Saithe. In addition North Sea Herring is in some decline although the 50% cut in last year's TAC should go some way to addressing this problem. The North Sea Nephrops fisheries do not appear to be under threat although the Government does not propose to let effort increase within them.

On the West Coast of Scotland, the position for White Fish stocks is fairly gloomy with fishing mortality reductions being required for Cod and Saithe. However our major concern in all of this is that there really is insufficient liaison between the Industry and fisheries scientists given that our members often tell us a very different story from what the "science" says. However things are steadily improving and we are looking into the possibility of hiring our own scientific advisor.

2. Are resources in decline?

Clearly fisheries have to be managed but as outlined above there is still a strong difference of opinion as to the extent to which stocks really are in decline. Nevertheless in attempts to protect juvenile species, this Federation has consistently called for mandatory insertion of square mesh panels in fishing nets but to date, the European Commission has failed to act on this.

3. Is the catch per unit of effort, or per boat, increasing or decreasing?

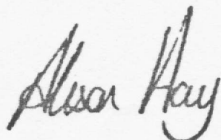
We do not feel in a position to comment upon trends in catch per unit of effort. Might I suggest that you contact the Chief Economist of the Sea Fish Industry Authority, Mr Neil McKellar (Tel No. 00 44 131 558 3331) who might be able to help.

4. **Is the number of people engaged in fishing increasing or decreasing?**

I can only comment on employment in the catching sector and attach tables 28 and 29 of the Scottish Office's Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables 1995 which do show quite a sizeable decline in the numbers of regularly employed fishermen over the period 1993-1995. We can probably expect further falls as more fishing vessels are decommissioned.

I apologise for a rather hurried response but hope that this will at least serve to give a picture of the key issues and trends arising within the Scottish Fishing Industry.

Yours sincerely



PP
CRAIG EGNER
Assistant to the Chief Executive

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Total	8180	8140	9420	8610	8395
Regularly employed	7300	7180	8060	7160	6889
Partially employed	790	870	1320	1410	1423
Crofters	90	90	40	40	83

Number of Scottish fishing vessels and fishermen employed, district by length of vessel and employment status, 1995

Table 29

	Vessels			Fishermen (1)			Total
	Under 10m	10m and over	Total	Regularly employed	Partially employed	Crofters	
All Districts	1583	1209	2792	6889	1423	83	8395
Eyemouth	57	78	135	337	88	-	425
Pittenweem	64	40	104	209	54	-	263
Arbroath	64	24	88	98	76	-	174
Aberdeen	36	28	64	122	45	-	167
Peterhead	50	113	163	715	57	-	772
Fraserburgh	74	218	292	1479	98	-	1577
Buckie	41	125	166	631	70	-	701
Wick	109	29	138	140	155	-	295
Orkney	133	63	196	334	113	-	447
Shetland	117	90	207	455	172	-	627
Stornoway	268	88	356	550	112	23	685
Kinlochbervie	17	6	23	25	14	-	39
Lochinver	13	21	34	103	-	-	103
Ullapool	46	22	68	96	12	-	108
Mallaig	169	72	241	412	76	7	495
Oban	126	40	166	212	43	53	308
Campbeltown	120	60	180	261	90	-	351
Ayr	79	92	171	710	148	-	858

(1) Figures are based on estimates and should only be used to indicate trends.

FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION

It is again a privilege and pleasure to write a few words of introduction to our 1998 Year Book and Diary. Every year is a hectic one for the Federation as it strives to represent the interests of our Fishermen Members, but it is fair to say that this last year has been exceptionally dramatic not least because of the sea change in the political climate. May 1997 saw the arrival of a new Labour Government and by September the people of Scotland had cast their votes in favour of the establishment of a Scottish Parliament with tax raising powers.

It has always been the policy of this Federation to work constructively within whatever political framework we find ourselves and this will continue as we make ourselves known to the new Ministers who have taken office. Devolution will undoubtedly present its challenges and the Federation still has many questions for which it is seeking answers not least those pertaining to the future status of a Scottish Fisheries Minister as he attends the Brussels negotiations as part of the UK delegation. On the plus side however, one would hope that fishing issues might be given a higher profile within a Scottish Parliament than they receive at present within Westminster.

One of the biggest concerns I have continually heard from our Members this last year has been the devastating impact that the strong Pound has exerted on exports of fisheries products. In addition, white fish prices have been very poor indeed which I believe is in part a symptom of increasing import volumes. There has been a particular worry that rules governing the import of fish products are not being as strictly enforced as they might be. In attempting to establish whether we had a case to make to the Government in this respect, the Federation recently commissioned a study looking into the various agreements and rules governing imports. The study is now complete and has been submitted to the Scottish Office. From a review of it, it is certainly clear to me that there needs to be far more co-operation between Customs Officers and SOAEFD Fisheries Officers in monitoring imports generally. Moreover, I am not at all convinced that the reference price is either being enforced or adhered to. We trust Government will act quickly on these matters.

I cannot remember a time when fishing had as high a public profile as it now commands. Hardly a week goes by now when a fishing related story does not appear on the pages of our newspapers, on television or radio. There is increasing public concern about the health of a variety of fish stocks in the seas of Europe and in answer to this, I would say that Fishermen more than

any other, have a vested interest in ensuring the sustainability of stocks. Put simply our future depends upon it. For this reason we have continued to press for the introduction of selective gear which would allow a fair balance to be struck between retaining marketable fish on board a vessel to allow those at sea to make a living and also at the same time allowing juvenile fish to escape.

Throughout the year the Federation has watched as an increasing number of powerful Environmental Groups have turned their respective attentions to the Fishing Industry in a bid to conserve stocks. The Federation has come to the view that where possible, it must establish dialogue with the more responsible groups. Conflict is in no-one's interest.

It is impossible for us to forget that our sector is not just a part of the United Kingdom but a part of Europe. In the past the Federation has been accused of being pro the Common Fisheries Policy. This is totally incorrect, we are aware that the policy has many defects but also aware that the only realistic policy we as a Federation can pursue in the current political climate is to seek to reform the CFP from within. This cannot be done on the margins and it is quite unrealistic to believe that a Labour Government would withdraw from the CFP and ultimately from the European Community.

Nevertheless the Fishing Industry finds itself embroiled in an ever-increasing number of rules and regulations which emerge from Brussels and to the Federation, there must come a point at which this must cease in order to allow the Industry to operate without driving an increasing number of men away from it. In May of this year at the Fisheries Council, much to the dismay and anger of the Federation, European Fisheries Ministers agreed to a five year programme of capacity/effort cuts in the UK and other European fleets as part of the fourth generation Multi-Annual Guidance Programme (MAGP IV). At the time of writing, it would appear that the Pelagic sector has been particularly hard hit with cuts (if choosing capacity rather than effort limitation) in the region of 28%. The White Fish fleet is likely to be facing capacity cuts in the order of some 11%. This is particularly disturbing on two fronts. The first being that, in the view of the Federation, no effective action has yet been taken to remove so-called "flags of convenience vessels" from the UK fishing register. The new Government's approach to the problem has been to propose attaching economic link conditions to any vessel holding a UK licence. Whilst not wishing to be phlegmatic for the sake of it, I feel bound to say that these Government initiatives fall woefully short of Industry aspirations and may well be the subject of legal challenge by flag ship operators. At the end of the day, the successful resolution of the problem would have been contingent on amendment to the Treaty of Rome. Whilst

we are aware of the difficulties the Prime Minister faced, this was nevertheless not achieved.

I said that the decision on MAGP IV appalled the Federation on two fronts. The second was the manner in which the decision was reached, which involved other Member States being given larger shares of Atlanto Scandian Herring for 1997 than they otherwise would have been in order to get agreement on capacity cuts. The UK ended up with a very low share indeed and this must not be allowed to happen next year. We are very critical indeed about the way the Dutch Presidency handled the negotiations.

Turning briefly to Technical Conservation Policy, everyone should be aware that an EU wide review of technical conservation measures is still ongoing although there is a possibility of agreement being reached in October 1997 at the Fisheries Council. The original European Commission's proposals which involved for example the enforcement of 110mm (diamond)/110mm (square) mesh rule in the North Sea Demersal Fisheries and a "one net rule" have been considerably scaled down by various compromises which successive EU Presidencies have tabled. Nonetheless at the time of writing (early in October 1997), use of a 110mm diamond mesh in the White Fish fisheries of the North Sea is being proposed and the Federation will use all the powers at its disposal to ensure that this is not agreed to.

Two other issues are worthy of mention in the European context. The first pertaining to the introduction of Satellite Surveillance Systems for European Community Vessels. It is intended that these will require to be fitted to vessels over 24m in length overall in two tranches. By 30th June 1998 vessels operating on the High Seas (except the Mediterranean), vessels operating in waters of Third Countries and vessels catching fish for reduction to meal and oil will require to have fitted Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS). All remaining vessels over 24m length overall will be required to have fitted VMS by 1st January 2000. However implementation on Community vessels fishing in waters of Third Countries will be contingent on Third Country vessels carrying this equipment in Community waters. The Federation is determined that our own vessels will not be required to comply with these requirements until all other vessels in the Community have.

Also on the European front it is with great concern that I note the release of a European Commission White Paper dealing with sectors excluded from the Working Time Directive of which the Fishing Industry is one. The Commission are proposing that working time restrictions and mandatory rest periods be applied to Fishermen and pressing the Industry at the European level to make sensible proposals as to the shape of these restrictions. Any

man going to sea will recognise that the nature of sea fishing makes inflexible rules on working hours completely nonsensical and to this end, the Federation will continue to vehemently oppose these measures at European and National level.

On the domestic front the future of the MSA-run Fishing Industry Safety Group appears to have been assured amidst concerns that the MSA were seeking to abolish it. Nonetheless the Group's terms of reference still require to be agreed and the Federation will in due course meet with the UK Transport Minister with this in mind.

A brief review of how each of the sectors in the Scottish fleet fared in 1997 is also appropriate. There have been a number of new additions to the Scottish Pelagic fishing fleet undoubtedly motivated by the need to supply distant markets and to capitalise on distant water fishing opportunities such as those for Atlanto Scandian Herring, Blue Whiting and Capelin. Any future programme of effort restriction under MAGP IV must take into account the ability of these vessels to exploit fisheries which are not under threat in the conservation sense.

The White Fish fleet has suffered this year from the low prices referred to earlier and this, along with the increasing age of the fleet, obviously gives me cause for concern. It is for this reason that we continue to press the Government to release public funding to facilitate modernisation (not expansion) of the fleet. In the annual fisheries negotiations in December, I would certainly not wish to see any further reductions in White Fish TACs given the fact that many White Fish vessels have diversified into the Shellfish sector.

In the Shellfish sector it is possible for me to be more positive given that prices for many species continue to be good and also enjoy a reasonably buoyant export market despite the high value of the Pound. However, I feel as the year 2002 approaches and the CFP comes up for review, that it is in our interests to have TACs established for species currently not subject to restriction to ensure that the UK and our Fishermen get a share of these. This is most obvious in the case of Scallops.

A few words on the offices of the SFF itself. I would like to extend my warmest thanks to Bob Allan and his staff for the effort they have put in over this last year in carrying out the representative functions of the Federation. The business arm of the Federation, SFF Services Ltd, continues to perform very well indeed under the management eye of Michael Sutherland and is a vital source of funding for the Federation. We also said goodbye to one of

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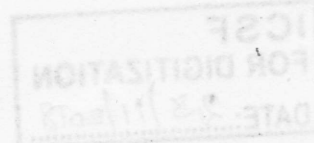
our Secretaries, Susan Cowie at the end of 1996, who left the Federation for pastures new, and to this end we have welcomed Alison Hay, her replacement, to the Federation.

Finally, I wish to extend to all our Fishermen Members and to everyone associated with the publication of this Year Book and Diary, the Federation's best wishes for the coming year.

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1 October 1997



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