

The original documents are located in Box 122, folder “Fishing” of the Ron Nessen Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Ron Nessen donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

8/29/75

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

August 29

Memo to: Ron Nessen

From: Margi Vanderhye *MV*

Subject: Background on Coastal Fisheries

The attached confidential background paper is for the President's use with his briefing book in preparation for his television interview this weekend. I have sent a copy to Jim Shuman as well.

General Scowcroft has seen the attached and approved its use for the President.

September 10, 1975

PROTECTION OF COASTAL FISHERIES

Q: Mr. President, many foreign countries, including the Soviet Union, are overfishing in the waters off our coasts. This has depleted our valuable fish resources and caused economic damage to our coastal fishing industry. What action is the Administration taking to protect the livelihood of U. S. fishermen?

A: I appreciate your concern over foreign fishing off our coasts. Many in this country are urging us to act on this issue unilaterally. However, I continue to believe that a comprehensive law of the sea treaty offers the best hope for protecting our valuable marine resources, including fisheries. Work is going ahead in the U. N. negotiations -- work aimed at a treaty text in the interests of our coastal fishermen. To protect our coastal fishing industry while the treaty is being negotiated, the United States will continue to take initiatives to negotiate interim arrangements with other nations to conserve and protect our coastal fish stocks in appropriate fashion to ensure effective enforcement, and to safeguard the livelihood of our coastal fishermen. Unilateral legislation would be a last resort only in the event that our multilateral and bilateral efforts fail. I assure you that this question will continue to receive my very careful attention.

Recognizing the seriousness of this problem and the importance of our coastal fishing industry, we have concluded bilateral agreements with a number of fishing nations, including the Soviet Union, Japan and Poland and other countries, which deal with their catches off our coasts. We are also continuing our efforts in regional fisheries organizations to implement conservation and protection measures.

September 10, 1975

PROTECTION OF COASTAL FISHERIES

Q: Mr. President, many foreign countries, including the Soviet Union, are overfishing in the waters off our coasts. This has depleted our valuable fish resources and caused economic damage to our coastal fishing industry. What action is the Administration taking to protect the livelihood of U. S. fishermen?

A: I appreciate your concern over foreign fishing off our coasts. Many in this country are urging us to act on this issue unilaterally. However, I continue to believe that a comprehensive law of the sea treaty offers the best hope for protecting our valuable marine resources, including fisheries. Work is going ahead in the U.N. negotiations -- work aimed at a treaty text in the interests of our coastal fishermen. To protect our coastal fishing industry while the treaty is being negotiated, the United States will continue to take initiatives to negotiate interim arrangements with other nations to conserve and protect our coastal fish stocks in appropriate fashion to ensure effective enforcement, and to safeguard the livelihood of our coastal fishermen. Unilateral legislation would be a last resort only in the event that our multilateral and bilateral efforts fail. I assure you that this question will continue to receive my very careful attention.

Recognizing the seriousness of this problem and the importance of our coastal fishing industry, we have concluded bilateral agreements with a number of fishing nations, including the Soviet Union, Japan and Poland and other countries, which deal with their catches off our coasts. We are also continuing our efforts in regional fisheries organizations to implement conservation and protection measures.

September 26, 1975

200 Mile Limit

Q: What is the President's view of the House International Relations Committee's consideration of a unilateral 200 mile territorial fisheries and resources zone?

A: The President's views on this issue are well known and were reaffirmed recently in Newport and Oregon. The President feels that a multilateral approach is preferable in terms of our Law of the Sea interests as well as our own fisheries interests.

October 7, 1975

200 MILE LIMIT

Q. What is the President's view of the House International Relations Committee's consideration of a unilateral 200 mile territorial fisheries and resources zone?

A. The President's views on this issue are well known and were reaffirmed recently in Maine and Seattle. The President feels that a multilateral approach is preferable in terms of our Law of the Sea interests as well as our own fisheries interests.

The President said in Seattle, on September 4:

"I believe in the 200-mile concept. The Law of the Sea Conference, which is an international group, has been working on a comprehensive international treaty or agreement aimed at solving not only the 200-mile limit but a number of other very intricate and complicated points. The adjourned some time last fall -- early this spring, I am sorry -- and are reconvening in either January or February. Our Government's position in this negotiation on a global basis is for a 200-mile limit.

"Now in the meantime the Congress, in both the House and the Senate, we have had unilateral actions taken by, or proposed, so that the United States would establish a 200-mile economic zone regardless of what the Law of the Sea Conference proposes.

"It is my hope that, in light of my endorsement of the 200-mile concept, that the Congress will wait and see if we can't get an international agreement obviating the need and the necessity for U. S. unilateral action.

"I would hope that the Law of the Sea Conference would be concluded some time in 1976. We are going to fight for the 200-mile concept. I think we can get that concept incorporated in the Law of the Sea Conference.

"So, therefore, I urge that the Congress slow down a bit until we have been successful -- and I think we will be -- in the Law of the Sea Conference."

#

TWO HUNDRED MILE LIMIT

Question: Does the President support the 200 mile limit approved by the House establishing a 200 mile limit at sea to keep out foreign vessels and other economic encroachments by foreign countries?

Answer: The President does not object to the aim of the House bill to protect the American fishing industry. He does favor a 200 mile limit for American economic interests. We will continue to work with Congress on this matter.

We still prefer to settle this matter on an international basis through the Law of the Sea Conference and we hope that the Law of the Sea Conference will approve the 200 mile limit for all countries in 1976.

200 MILE FISHERIES BILL

Q: The Senate has just passed a bill unilaterally extending U.S. fisheries limits to 200 miles. Will the President sign or veto this legislation?

A: I do not have a formal statement from the President. As you know, the Senate bill, together with an earlier piece of legislation passed by the House, will now go into conference, and we will have to await the results of this process.

As you may recall, the President was asked to address this legislation during his interview with New Hampshire editors on January 22. He noted then that the United States is seeking in the U.N. law of the sea conference -- which resumes this March -- to settle all of the problems of the sea, including fishing rights, and that he had urged the Congress to delay final consideration of this legislation until we had had time to continue our efforts to negotiate a comprehensive law of the sea agreement.

Q: Wasn't he asked specifically if he would veto the bill?

A: He was asked if he was threatening a veto, and he replied that if there was a delayed implementation date in the legislation, and if all other provisions were satisfactory, he probably would not veto it but he hoped that in the meantime we could get a law of the sea agreement.

Again, I don't think we can take this much further now, as the legislation has to go into conference.

FISHING RIGHTS

Q. If the Senate passes a bill already adopted by the House to establish a 200-mile limit to protect American fishermen from foreign competition, will you sign the measure into law?

A. I am fully in sympathy with those throughout America who are calling for proper safeguarding of U. S. fisheries interests. The Administration is acting vigorously to safeguard those interests in a number of current negotiations with nations whose commercial fishing fleets work off our coasts.

At the same time, the United States is participating with other nations in the UN. Law of the Sea Conference in negotiations on the broad range of oceans interests of such great importance to this country including our fisheries interests. I believe that international agreement coming from the Law of the Sea negotiations -- agreement concluded on terms acceptable to us and in reasonable time -- would offer the best prospect for the safeguarding of our fisheries interests. It is my hope that we can proceed quickly and successfully with the other conference participants to conclude a satisfactory international agreement.

TWO HUNDRED MILE LIMIT

Question: Does the President support the 200 mile limit approved by the House establishing a 200 mile limit at sea to keep out foreign vessels and other economic encroachments by foreign countries?

Answer: The President does not object to the aim of the House bill to protect the American fishing industry. He does favor a 200 mile limit for American economic interests. We will continue to work with Congress on this matter.

We still prefer to settle this matter on an international basis through the Law of the Sea Conference and we hope that the Law of the Sea Conference will approve the 200 mile limit for all countries in 1976.

200 MILE FISHERIES BILL

Q: The Senate has just passed a bill unilaterally extending U.S. fisheries limits to 200 miles. Will the President sign or veto this legislation?

A: I do not have a formal statement from the President. As you know, the Senate bill, together with an earlier piece of legislation passed by the House, will now go into conference, and we will have to await the results of this process.

As you may recall, the President was asked to address this legislation during his interview with New Hampshire editors on January 22. He noted then that the United States is seeking in the U.N. law of the sea conference -- which resumes this March -- to settle all of the problems of the sea, including fishing rights, and that he had urged the Congress to delay final consideration of this legislation until we had had time to continue our efforts to negotiate a comprehensive law of the sea agreement.

Q: Wasn't he asked specifically if he would veto the bill?

A: He was asked if he was threatening a veto, and he replied that if there was a delayed implementation date in the legislation, and if all other provisions were satisfactory, he probably would not veto it but he hoped that in the meantime we could get a law of the sea agreement.

Again, I don't think we can take this much further now, as the legislation has to go into conference.