

UTKAST TIL TALE VED MIDDAGEN FOR ENERGIMINISTER ANTHONY
WEDGWOOD BENN TORSDAG 14. APRIL 1977

Great Britain has a special place in the heart of the Norwegians. The historical, cultural, political and economic development of our country is to a great extent tied to the development of Great Britain. Up to today Great Britain has been the most important trade partner for Norway. The statistics tell us that Norway, as far as I understand, has not the same great significance for Great Britain.

Fate - or most probably geology - has given our two countries one more common field during the last decade.

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The oil and gas wells on our continental shelves has put our countries in a situation which give us possibilities and challenges, but also new and unknown tasks and problems. The oil activities would, however, - how important they seem to be - not be the only factors in the economic life of our two countries. In our country settlements and job possibilities will be based on other activities and industries than oil and gas. This fact has been an important part of the debate about the oil policy in our country and is one of the main pillars in the national oil policy with a wide support in our country.

Up to now the considerations in our country has mainly been concentrated on the forming of political principles and aims. It has been fundamental that the development in this field should be lead by elected organs and that the resources should be looked after for the benefit of everybody in the country.

The oil activities, however, give us great opportunities and duties to cooperate across the boundries. When it comes to who we should cooperate with, we have to look at the geography and also at the economic and political aspects.

A cooperation with the nations around the North Sea is for Norway a natural consequence of the general policy line of

our country. The fact that the North Sea is devided according to the median dividing line principle, has brought our two countries together in a neighbourhood interest. We have mutual problems in connection with the oil developments. This has been manifestoed also by the fact that we have found oil wells which are lying on both sides of the median deviding line. It ought to be natural - in spite of our two countries sportsmanship - that we through agreements can stop the competition between us who can "suck" the most in shortest possible time from the oil wells.

We also have mutual problems as regards to security towards the fisheries and shipping about pollution and a possible blow-out.

I am pleased to hear that our two countries have agreed to appointing a coordinating committee on minister level when it comes to oil and gas activities on the continental shelf. We have good reasons for a comprehensive cooperation.

I have from the agenda for your visit here seen that you are going to have talks on central and important items during your stay in Norway.

I am fully convinced that our two countries and our two governments will find new ways of cooperation within this sector and also that it will be to the advantage for our two countries.

I wish you welcome to Norway, Mr. Wedgwood Benn, and I hope that the meetings will be fruitful for our two countries. I also hope that we will have an enjoyable evening.