6 February 1933.

E.H.E. Havelock, Esq.,
Development Commission,
6a Dean's Yard,
London, S.W. 1.

Dear Mr. Havelock:

I have been going through Thursby-Pelham's paper, but doubt if I can say anything of much use to you. To the data he reports he has obviously given endless trouble, both in the compilation and in endeavouring to elicit points of value in the guidance of policy. You will have noted already, however, that his conclusions, when he goes so far as to draw any, are extremely cautious, and indeed seldom amount to more than to the restatement of some fact the practical interpretation of which is subject to considerable difficulty.

With respect to the average size of plaice both the industrial statistics and the sample catches agree in indicating a substantial falling off in the two years, 1929-30. If this is confirmed by the figures for 1931 and 1932, which must surely be available, there can be no reason to doubt that

the fact is well established and that the aggregate intensity of trawling for plaice is leading to an unduly rapid depletion in numbers of each year class as it passes ~~about~~ through the "best small" size.

With respect to quantity, the position is far less clear. Thursby-Pelham suggests a prima facie case for the view that Danish fishing methods conserve the stock of fish more successfully than do ours, but the inference is admittedly a very indirect one. The interpretation of the English data appears to break down invariably on the question of the relatively greater efficiency of the Vigneron-Dahl trawl. No experimental data are submitted showing the magnitude of this difference, nor statistics showing the proportion of English trawlers using this trawl in different years. The lack of such data is doubtless in no way due to the fault of the author, but the fact remains that a vast amount of work has been expended on data which cannot properly be interpreted without them. I write in complete ignorance of the conditions of Fishery experimentation, but I cannot see why the relative efficiency of any two types of gear could not be determined by direct experiment, such as taking alternate hauls with the types to be compared. I stress this point, not only because it emerges so conspicuously from the present investigation, but because I believe an immense amount of time and money can

be wasted on research projects just because the men engaged have not the means of direct access to the facts most needed in their studies.

Possibly, however, no official returns are available as to the frequency of different types of gear in use, and it may be that the lack cannot be made good from commercial information. If this is so the whole onus of estimating the abundance of different classes of fish in successive years must fall upon the experimental hauls. It is a most valuable feature of the research that a programme of such sample hauls seems to have been carried out since 1927, though not quite completely for 1929 and 1930. I believe the greatest importance must be given to the extension of this programme. At present the quantitative data shown in Appendix B do not tally at all well with the commercial statistics and this may be due, setting aside causes of discrepancy that I know nothing about, to the sample hauls being insufficient in duration or distribution through the year to correspond with the industrial fishery.

I much doubt if this will any good to you, but am sending it in with the paper for what it may be worth.

Yours sincerely,