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CEND
NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND

The Rt Hon Nigel Lawson MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
Parliament Street
LONDON
SW1P 3AG

22 January 1985

Dear Chancellor,

COMPETITION POLICY

I have seen Michael Jopling's letter to you of 31 December in which he considers that now would not be an opportune time to review the activities of Marketing Boards. I agree with his views.

In Northern Ireland the Wool Marketing Board and the separate Milk Marketing Board for Northern Ireland operate. I agree with Michael that a decision on a full scale review of the Wool Board's activities should await the outcome of the current review of the guarantee arrangements. However, I am more immediately concerned about the position of the Northern Ireland Milk Marketing Board.

As you know Michael announced on 5 December that he was appointing management consultants to investigate certain aspects of the commercial activities of the Milk Marketing Board for England and Wales. The outcome of that review will have implications for other Milk Marketing Boards. As I indicated in my note of 27 November to the Prime Minister, the milk industry, particularly in Northern Ireland, is hard hit by the impact of quotas and I do not think we should add to the current uncertainty by casting further doubts on the future of the Milk Marketing Boards.

Copies of this letter go to the Prime Minister, the Lord President, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and Trade and Industry, the Chief Whip and the Secretary to the Cabinet.

Yours Sincerely
N Lawson
Private Secretary

for D H

(Approved by the Secretary of State
but signed in his absence in Belfast)

