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PRIME MINISTER

GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD POLICY

Mr. Jopling wishes to announce now an intention to publish a Government document about the future direction of agricultural policy "so that producers can better know where they stand".

*It will be torn apart and ... make matters worse*

It may or may not be a good thing to produce a White Paper, though I rather doubt it:

*And I heard it discussed on the Radio this morning - I think it was anticipated*

(i) It is unlikely to satisfy producers - see the reception given in this week's Farmers Weekly to the NFU's reasoned policy document.

(ii) To the extent that such a document gave any market signals they could be wrong. We won't know in January what the next price fixing round will bring, how the US dollar will move and so on. The Government should be moving away from this guidance approach altogether.

But whatever the merits of such a document, it surely cannot be right to announce the intention now without having any idea of its content? With the public expenditure round still to be gone through, a great deal can happen between now and then.

Agree?

*AT*

28 September 1984

*We must see any document in draft before deciding whether any document should be published. I find the suggestion both damaging and a hoax to fortune*