

To: John Doyle  
Inquiry Co-ordinator  
Competition Commission  
Office of Fair Trade  
Victoria House  
Southampton

From: Lynn Johnston  
Bailey Hill Book Shop  
Fore Street  
Castle Cary  
Somerset  
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I have found the framework for this consultation completely incomprehensible so I am replying in the language of an ordinary person.

I am writing as an independent bookseller who has had to transfer location due to the arrival of an Ottakers in the town where I was trading. They are a company I have no personal interest in defending.

However I am writing to object because I feel the buying power of the big chains like Smiths and Waterstones and the supermarkets has created a situation that is too strongly dominated by powerful buyers. The acquisition of Ottakers by Waterstones will only exacerbate this trend and will leave us with a publishing industry reliant on producing mid market bestsellers and books related only to current media interests. More demanding history, fiction and science titles will be marginalized. The public will not have the diversity of choice previously available. Little publishers will not be able to compete.

Moreover I understand from reps in the trade that Ottakers staff are now seeking jobs outside of bookselling.. People with good knowledge are being lost to the trade.

I know the Office of Fair trading does not seek to deal with cultural issues but it is true that the books this country is famous for, could easily have been never published under the current trading proposals. Britain, whose second largest industry is tourism, is a nation of chain shops with no diversity. It has gone downmarket and downhill.

Thank you,

Lynn Johnston  
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