

Commercial Alert
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February 27, 2001

Dr. James H. Billington
Librarian of Congress
Library of Congress
101 Independence Ave SE, LM-608
Washington, DC 20540

RE: Crass Commercialism and the Library of Congress

Dear Dr. Billington:

On November 29th, the Library of Congress held a public ceremony for Coca-Cola in the Great Hall of the Thomas Jefferson Building. At that event, you invited Coca-Cola and its executives to bask in the public splendor of the Library of Congress, in exchange for a donation of 50 years of Coke ads. On that evening, you turned the Library of Congress into a tawdry prop for the promotion of the Coca-Cola corporate name and its soda products.

Such crass commercialism in the Library of Congress is disrespectful to Thomas Jefferson and his ideals. More than anyone else, Jefferson is the founder of the Library of Congress. In 1816, Jefferson wrote "I hope we shall crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength, and bid defiance to the laws of our country."

Following the Coca-Cola event, we would like to know the extent to which you intend to use the Library of Congress to promote corporations or commercial products. By what standards do you determine the corporations and products that the Library of Congress may promote? In your view, are there any drawbacks to the use of the Library of Congress to promote corporations or their products? What limits you have set on the commercialization of the Library of Congress? Would the Library of Congress promote corporations that are polluters? Corporate felons? Tortfeasors? Corporate welfare recipients? Corporations that pay no taxes?

Sincerely,

Gary Ruskin
Director

Ralph Nader

cc: Representative Robert W. Ney, Chairman, Committee on House Administration
Representative Steny Hoyer, Ranking Member, Committee on House Administration
Senator Mitch McConnell, Chairman, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration

Senator Christopher Dodd, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration