



protecting communities
from commercialism

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June 26, 2002

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Mr. Gregory P. Josefowicz
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer
Borders Group Inc.
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Via telecopier (734) 477-1901

Dear Mr. Josefowicz:

There is a difference between books and pop-tarts. It should not be necessary to point this out to a man who sells books, but apparently it is. According to press reports, you plan to embrace the grocery industry's practice of "category management," so that publishers -- not you the bookseller but publishers -- will manage the offerings on your shelves.

We urge you to reconsider. Borders is not Albertson's. Such pop-tart marketing likely will slash the range of book titles and ideas available to the public. It will jeopardize smaller presses; and worst of all, it will further strengthen the hand of publishing conglomerates that have too much power already.

According to the May 20, 2002 *Wall Street Journal*, you have devised 250 categories for books, each to be captained by a publishing firm. These firms will pay you a large annual fee -- in excess of \$110,000 according to the *Journal* -- which will be hard for most small and medium-sized publishers to muster. In return, the "captains" will be able to decide which books you carry, how many are bought, and where they are placed. Although you say you will keep final authority over book-buying, Borders will be an agent of the publishers rather than of its customers.

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Under your plans, smaller publishers will be at a big disadvantage, since each publisher-captain will be able to deploy your shelf space to its own advantage. In categories rich in small press titles, the publisher-captain will be able to cut the number of titles in the category, and fill the category with its own titles.



Denied shelf space in a major outlet like Borders, smaller publishing houses will be hard pressed to survive. The Kremlin would have found it difficult to invent a more subtle and effective way of suppressing original viewpoints and ideas.

Books are not just another consumer product. They form much of our society's repository of ideas; they are the bloodstream for the life of the mind. You have a responsibility to serve as well as to gain, for your books have the protection of the First Amendment. If you were not ready to accept this responsibility, then we cannot imagine why you would have entered the book business to begin with. There are many other things to sell.

We wonder, how do you understand your role in regards to your readers, and those of future generations? In your view, how many titles are "too many titles" to lose? By what measure will you decide whether your plans have cost the public too much in terms of access to ideas? What steps will you take to ensure that diverse choices are lost because of your "category management" plans?

The Borders Group is the nation's second largest book retailer. It has more than 1,190 bookstores in all 50 states, which operate under both the Borders and Waldenbooks names. You are in a unique position to maintain a high standard for book sellers throughout the country.

Once large outlets replace a sense of exploration by patrons with formulaic categories, the location takes on a distaste, a sense of being manipulated and homogenized by absentee category marketers instead of being served by a bookstore in a community.

Please leave "category management" to the soap merchants. You have undertaken a higher calling, one to which we hope that you are equal.

Sincerely,

Peter Barnes, co-founder, Working Assets; author, *Who Owns the Sky?*

Greg Bates, Publisher, Common Courage Press

David Bollier, author, *Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of our Common Wealth*

James Boyle, Professor, Duke Law School; author, *Shamans, Software and Spleens*

Liane Casten, author, *Breast Cancer: Poisons, Profits and Prevention*

Noam Chomsky, Professor of Linguistics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Jeff Cohen, co-author, *Wizards of Media Oz* and *Adventures in Medialand*

Richard B. Du Boff, Samuel and Etta Wexler Professor of Economics Emeritus, Bryn Mawr College

Paul Duguid, co-author, *The Social Life of Information*
Laura Flanders, author, *Real Majority, Media Minority: The Costs of Sidelining Women in Reporting*
Edward S. Herman, Professor, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania
Lewis Hyde, Thomas Professor of Creative Writing, Kenyon College
Sut Jhally, Founder and Executive Director, The Media Education Foundation
Naomi Klein, author, *No Logo*
David Korten, author, *When Corporations Rule the World*
Saul Landau, Senior Fellow, Institute for Policy Studies; author, *Red Hot Radio*
Mike Males, author, *Smoked: Why Joe Camel is Still Smiling*
Bob McCannon, Executive Director, New Mexico Media Literacy Project
Mark Crispin Miller, Professor of Media Ecology, New York University
Ralph Nader
Jonathan Rowe, Contributing Editor, *Washington Monthly*
Marcus Raskin, Co-founder, Institute for Policy Studies
Gary Ruskin, Executive Director, Commercial Alert
Marta Russell, author, *Beyond Ramps: Disability at the End of the Social Contract*
Andre Schiffrin, Director, The New Press
Juliet Schor, Professor of Sociology, Boston College
Jonathan Tasini, President, National Writers Union (UAW Local 1981)
Robert Weissman, co-author, *Corporate Predators*; Co-director, Essential Action
Mark Zepezauer, co-author, *Take the Rich Off Welfare*