



a different drummer books

513 Locust Street Burlington, Ontario L7S 1V3

905 639 0925 diffdrum@mac.com

18 January 2007

Regarding the Canadian publishers/booksellers book marketing proposal, 2007

When this scheme was first announced, we thought it was outrageous. Not because it favoured Indigo. Rather, because we firmly believed that public money should not be used to underwrite marketing expenditures. Now that other, independent, booksellers are complicit in the the scheme, we feel no differently. It remains outrageous.

We weren't around to cheer Chamberlain's return, but certainly still recall the swell of congratulation echoing from the shores of Meech Lake. With all respect to those in the book trade who have just expended their energies to extend the tent, A Different Drummer will not participate in any national or nationalistic book promotions. Our customers, with our help, do admirably well in their book choices. Without raising a banner we sell a lot of Canadian titles; there is, after all, a richness of Canadian books available. And we do not quite believe that advertising and focused display tables will work any wonders; those methods are already being employed. Nor would we make a claim on public monies for that purpose. The 'scandal' of the federal Sponsorship Scandal was the lame attempt of advertising to Canadians to be Canadians.

Since the incursion of Chapters/Indigo, we have been thoroughly sympathetic to Canadian publishers. A Different Drummer has remained viable; but we had (and have) genuine concern for the publishers. We knew that they would be bearing the full, detrimental burden. A decade ago heads of publishing houses went all starry-eyed about the miles of additional retail shelving. Much was said about 'growing the market.' We thought it might be otherwise. As it has turned out. Over the years, it must be said, our sympathies have moderated; we now must recognize that the publishers have co-authored some of their problems.

Still and all, we devoutly want a marketplace which includes M&S and McArthur, Cormorant and Raincoast, Anansi and Thomas Allen (to take the examples of this consortium). We understand that their largest customer certainly needs to attend to bookselling. A large store of unsold books is no better than a large warehouse of unshipped books. However, we believe it is untenable that these publishers should solicit government funding for marketing initiatives. By all means, publicly underwrite publishing programs, support increased professionalism in the book trade, continue to nurture Canadian authors. But under no circumstances should government money be allocated to specific publishers to prompt their clients to sell their goods.

We wish our colleagues well. Skeptical as we may seem, nothing would be more delightful than the prospect of innumerable readers descending upon their display tables. May it happen soon.

In the meantime, we will do our best to sell good books, from all presses, as we have always done.

Richard Bachmann