

From: Books
Sent: 03 January 2006 11:04
To: Alan Shearman
Subject: HMV Takeover Bid

Dear Mr Shearman,

I write to protest about the proposed takeover of the Ottaker's chain by Waterstones. As the manager of The Ceilidh Place Bookshop, a small independent bookshop in the far north-west of Scotland, I am extremely concerned that, if the two chains are merged, the buying decisions affecting the range of books available across the UK high streets will be concentrated in fewer hands. Unfortunately the track record of Scott Pack, the present buying manager at Waterstones, does not inspire confidence as he has already reduced the number of titles being promoted by the chain in such a way that the more literary titles have been sacrificed in favour of mass market best-sellers. Ottaker's have less centralised buying and stock control systems but should a merger take place it is highly likely that the stores would be rebranded as Waterstones as this would be much more cost effective than a dual branding policy. The debate over whether or not rebranding would happen is, of course, largely irrelevant as the key point is that no single retailer should be allowed to hold so much power anyway.

In Scotland "Wottaker's" would represent more than 30% of the Scottish book market and would be able to exert tremendous influence over which Scottish titles would be available on the high street. If the enlarged company decided to destock certain kinds of titles it would soon affect what actually gets published and small and special interest publishers in particular might be unable to continue to publish the diversity of titles we presently enjoy. Authors would find it harder to get published and our culture would be poorer for it.

The entire health of the UK book industry is at stake here as not only would booksellers, publishers and authors be affected but consumer choice would be drastically reduced as well.

Yours sincerely,

Avril Moyes (Bookshop Manager)

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