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John R. Read
Chief, Litigation III Section
United States Department of Justice
450 5th Street NW
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LITIGATION III, ANTITRUST DIV.
U.S. DEPT OF JUSTICE

Dear Mr. Read,

My name is Jack Gantos and I am an author of books for a wide range of readers from picture book readers on up the ladder to adult readers. I am not a lawyer but after 45 published books—and as the recipient of this year's Newbery Medal—I would like to express deep reservations about the DoJ case between the United States and three publishers in the e-book collusion suit—a suit instigated by Amazon Books which is rather cynical of them given their documented history of predatory and unfair pricing in the marketplace. And keep in mind, if the DoJ rules in Amazon's favor they will in a flash return to their predatory pricing practices which not only hurt individual writers like myself, but also aim to weaken not just brick-and-mortar stores, but to weaken the core publishing industry which in turn will make more room for Amazon's own book publishing ambitions. They are being a bit disingenuous when they cry 'foul' against publishers and ask the DoJ to enter the contest and rule on their side.

I grew up in Western Pennsylvania in a town named Norvelt after Elea-nor Roose-velt. My family background is in coal mining and farming and factory work. My Mother's father worked double shifts in the coal mines: one shift digging and the other shift taking care of the mules. My grandparents lived in a company town which rented a home to them (rent was subtracted from pay), and were forced to buy groceries at an inflated price at the company store as a large portion of the paycheck came in the form of a credit at the store. In short, the rent was inflated and the food was inflated until the workers were in debt to the mines—and of course the mines liked it that way as it was then easy to exercise control over the miners. And once they had control they slowly began to lower their wages until they could get the most out of the workers for the least amount of pay.

Well, when the Depression came along the mines closed, the workers were ejected from their company owned houses and a lot of people were in dire straits. Then along came Eleanor Roosevelt. In 1934 she encouraged the US Government to fund Homestead Housing Communities. The government bought land, cut it up into 250 plots, designed small houses and the families which applied and were accepted then had the task of building the houses and community farm and factory and so on. Money was scarce. People worked fairly—if my grandfather worked on a man's house for two hours then that same man would work on my grandfather's house for two hours. Eventually,

everyone pitched in and built all the houses and helped one another as a helping-hand community and in the end they even paid the government back for the land and materials.

I tell you this story because this notion of people helping each other in a community, and showing good moral and ethical values toward neighbors is how I grew up. Not only that, but my novel which won the Newbery Award is based on the history of the town of Norvelt and promotes the old fashioned values of neighbor helping neighbor and of fairness and working together for the greater good. Young readers who read this book write me letters (as I'm writing you) to tell me that they too believe in fair play. It seems that the notion of fair play is one of the core values of America as a country—even young readers grow up believing this to be true.

So Amazon's predatory pricing practice is not part of the fair play we value. Nor is their cynical maneuvering of the DoJ against publishers who need to protect themselves and do business on a level playing field.

The intellectual property of the country can be found gathered in all its fullness at the Library of Congress. The richness of the nation is found in its ideals and ideas—and all anyone needs to do when thinking about what is right—and why America is the greatest country in the world—is to march down to the Jefferson building at the L.O.C. (or to the Jefferson Memorial) (or to the Archives building which holds the Constitution of the Nation) and remind yourself that fair play is at the center of our culture and especially our laws which we depend upon to protect us from the 'bullies' in business.

As I said, I don't know the maze of laws that over time have risen up to regulate the business world, but I do know that the seed of all those laws is fair play.

This is all I ask you to consider.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,


Jack Gantos