

Coca-Cola Moves To Ban Film Claiming Human Rights Abuses

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TORONTO — It seems that a documentary critical of soft-drink giant Coca-Cola has left a bitter taste with the company.

The multinational corporation has told a university film network planning to screen "The Coca-Cola Case" in several cities that the movie contains inaccuracies and violates a confidentiality agreement.

The Montreal-based group, called Cinema Politica, says Coke lawyers sent it a letter earlier this month issuing veiled legal threats if it proceeds with plans to host screenings in Canada, the United States and abroad.

But the group's programmer, Ezra Winton, says they won't back down, noting their own legal counsel has said they are within their rights to show the film.

"The Coca-Cola Case," co-produced by Argus Films of Montreal and the National Film Board of Canada, links Coca-Cola to human rights abuses and anti-union tactics in Colombia and Guatemala.

In the letter to Cinema Politica provided by the group, Faith Gay of New York law firm Quinn Emanuel says "the Coca-Cola Company reserves all of its rights and remedies with regard to any future showing of the film."

Winton said "The Coca-Cola Case" would begin its tour as planned Monday night at Montreal's Concordia University and continue through March. Other stops include Halifax, Fredericton, Toronto, Saskatoon, Lethbridge, Alta., Vancouver and Yellowknife.

The handful of international screenings include Woods Hole, Mass.; Stockholm, Sweden; Trondheim, Norway; and Auckland, New Zealand.

"We talked to the NFB, the distributor and the filmmakers and everything seemed fine and we had some legal advice that we're in our rights to show the film, and so we're going ahead," Winton said from Montreal.

A spokeswoman for Coca-Cola said the company took issue with the film on several points.

"The unfounded allegations made in the documentary have been reviewed by multiple courts in Colombia and the United States, as well by the International Labor Organization, and outside law firms — all concluding that the Coca-Cola bottler employees in Colombia enjoy extensive, normal relations with

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multiple unions and are provided with safe working conditions there," Kerry Kerr said Monday in an email.

Winton said "The Coca-Cola Case," directed by Carmen Garcia and German Gutierrez, screened without incident at the Montreal International Documentary Festival last November.

He added that Coca-Cola's legal objections are drawing more publicity to the group's planned screenings.

"The amount of traffic onto the Coca-Cola tour page on the Cinema Politica website is just massive . . . and the amount of activity on our Facebook group, the amount of emails, the amount of stuff online, blogs and elsewhere indicates to us that we're going to have a big turnout," Winton said.

"It's the most attention that we've ever got for any of the films that have screened throughout the network."

Winton said Cinema Politica, a non-profit organization, has 55 member groups across the country and another dozen around the world.

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On the Net:

www.cinemapolitica.org/the-coca-cola-case [1]

<http://films.nfb.ca/the-coca-cola-case/> [2]

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