

Almighty Dollars

Business

IREMIDON, N.J.
They showed a picture of "bottle feeding" in the newspapers, public opinion would change the U.S. vote against a formula in third world countries.



Ann Rinaldi
The Trentonian
It has been estimated that the sales of this formula to third world countries is somewhere in the area of \$1.2 billion a year.

Lonesome, shameful posture for the U.S.
WATSONVILLE, CALIF. (REUTERS) — The United States stands alone in the world as a nation which puts the needs of babies before the needs of its own people.

The U.S. Was Hypocritical in Vote on Infant formula
The media countries are suckers for any formula that is sold in their countries.

Wrong move on infant formula
The fact that in the United States, the formula manufacturers are being asked to pay for the deaths of babies is a disgrace.

Reagan uses wrong formula
BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK — In its zeal to stamp out regulation, the Reagan administration has put a mark on the map of infant formula marketing.

INFEACT
THE SUPR, MAY 20, 1981
SPECIAL SPRING 1981
INFANT FORMULA ACTION COALITION

A poor U.S. health Vote shows U.S. Callousness
The babies are losing. While the formula may be nutritionally adequate, the conditions in which it is prepared are not.

U.S. alone shuns effort to protect infant lives
The Denver Post
The Reagan administration is putting the dollar at risk by shunning the effort to protect infant lives.

Reagan Teams with Industry to Fight to Protect Babies
The Denver Post
Reagan teams with industry to fight to protect babies, which is a disgrace.

White House
LOS ANGELES
Only one member nation refused to join the effort to protect babies.

No' a disastrous for the U.S.
WASHINGTON STAR
The Reagan administration will be a disgrace if it votes against the formula.

U.S. Shamed By Its Baby Formula Vote
DENVER, CO. 5/21/81
The U.S. is shamed by its vote on the baby formula.

An Inhumane Position
By Judy Bachrach
To no one's surprise, all the nations of the world have taken a stand against the formula.

Where Have Our Ethics Gone?
The issue is far simpler than that of the formula. It is a question of ethics.

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THE PHILIPPINES
1977

“If we in the international community are successful in our efforts to promote and protect the practice of breast feeding, we can prevent one million infant deaths each year in the 1980s.”

JAMES GRANT
Executive Director of UNICEF

A NEW CHAPTER IN CITIZEN ACTION —The Nestlé Boycott

Dr. Cicely D. Williams, founder of modern infant nutrition, signalled the beginning of the international campaign to end unethical, dangerous promotion of artificial infant formulas with these strong words in 1939:

"If you are legal purists, you may wish to change the title of this address to 'milk and manslaughter.' But if your lives were as embittered as mine is by seeing day after day this massacre of the innocents by unsuitable feeding, then I believe you would feel as I do, that the misguided propaganda on infant feeding should be punished as the most criminal form of sedition, and that these should be regarded as murder."

Although more than 40 years have passed since Dr. Williams delivered her speech "Milk and Murder," the situation unfortunately remains much the same. Aggressive, widespread promotion of infant formula is a major factor in convincing mothers to bottlefeed rather than breast feed. In economically poor regions of the world, where clean water, adequate sanitation and disposable incomes are not available, infant formula cannot be used safely. It becomes a killer.

For too many years concerned medical authorities have called for curbs on baby formula advertising. But the industry hasn't listened. Two billion dollars a year is at stake.

In 1977 the Infant Formula Action Coalition (INFACT) was formed to bring this issue to the attention of the world.

Starting with extensive research and public education, INFACT quickly grew in size and strength and launched the Nestle Boycott -- an effort to pressure the world's largest infant formula corporation to stop the following practices:

- direct advertising of formula to consumers;
- distribution of free supplies to hospitals, clinics, and homes of newborns;
- the use of company "milk nurses" (sales personnel dressed as nurses);
- promotion to the health professions and through health care institutions.

One major part of INFAC'T's work has been mobilizing large numbers of citizens for specific actions. In one letterwriting campaign, Senator Edward Kennedy received over 50 letters each day for two months. He responded with highly-publicized hearings, filmed by Bill Moyers for his CBS Television special, "Into the Mouths of Babes."

As a result of those hearings, Senator Kennedy urged the World Health Organization and UNICEF to convene a meeting of experts on the problem. He also insisted that INFAC'T have full participation in the meeting to counter strong industry pressure. This culminated in May of this year with the World Health Assembly adoption of a WHO/UNICEF Code of Marketing for infant formulas. This code was passed by a vote of 118 member nations to 1. Lobbied by the industry, the Reagan Administration cast the sole vote against this attempt to save the lives of millions of infants in the world.

INFAC'T has scored other major victories as well. One sympathetic employee within the Nestle corporation headquarters in Switzerland revealed that Nestle had made secret contributions to Dr. Ernest Lefever's Ethics and Public Policy Center in exchange for support of the infant formula industry. Publicity of this "Nestlegate" connection was a major factor in the defeat of Lefever as President Reagan's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights.

The Nestle Boycott is now spreading around the world. INFAC'T has nurtured the development of citizen groups in over 40 countries, making this the first international grass-roots campaign of its kind. Within the United States, over 1,000 groups, including national churches, unions, and civic organizations, as well as hundreds of local organizations, have endorsed and supported our efforts, making the Nestle Boycott the largest non-union boycott in U.S. history.

"Corporate advertising in the Third World is also coming under attack...The most devastating of these attacks has been the Nestle Boycott, designed to halt the promotion of baby formula in developing countries. Moreover, in the future the boycott will stand as an example for other campaigns."

--BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL

October 17, 1980

These are important accomplishments -- important victories --but much remains to be done. INFAC'T is dedicated to seeing this problem to its proper conclusion. We face enormous challenges from a rich and powerful industry, but if we succeed we will have written a new chapter in citizen action. More importantly we will have saved countless lives of helpless babies.

HOW DID A HANDFUL of do-good organizations do it? How did men in beards and women in sandals, largely talking to themselves, puttering around the world with a good but unlikely cause, manage to reach the political heights of the World Health Organization and humble the United States, with its terrible lone vote against the worldwide ethical code for marketing infant formula?

Syndicated Columnist
DOROTHY GILLIAM



Nestlé Boycott: No Profit in Sick Babies

HOW DID A HANDFUL of do-good organizations do it? How did men in beards and women in sandals, largely talking to themselves, pattering around the world with a good but unlikely cause, manage to reach the political heights of the World Health Organization and humble the United States, with its terrible lone vote against the worldwide ethical code for marketing infant formula?

It's enough to make you take dead seriously their current international boycott against the Swiss-controlled Nestlé S.A., the giant multinational foodstuff company that is the largest producer of formula worldwide. American Home Products and Bristol-Myers also market formula around the world.

Infant formula produces "bottle baby disease" in millions of infants every year. In countries where water is polluted and resources are scarce, it is almost impossible to use the formula properly. The formula is so expensive that some women try to stretch a three-week supply for four months, and the baby becomes malnourished. Many become sick and die.

Only a year ago the national chairman of INFACT (Infant Formula Action Coalition), Douglas Johnson, was telling this sad story to the crowd at a Washington fund-raiser and saying: "It's time now to bring [the boycott] to Washington, to the international community and to the government." The issue had rattled around United Nations' circles since 1972, but it was Johnson and INFACT that focused attention on the boycott worldwide.

INFACT had started in Minneapolis in 1977 with 20 members and a \$500 budget. They toured churches and schools showing the movie, "Bottle Babies," relying on a grass-roots

network to spread the word. While other groups focused on antiformula campaigns, INFACT focused on the Nestlé boycott.

In 1979, INFACT received foundation funding for a direct-mail campaign and sent out 6 million letters, attracting more funding, publicity and the attention of television stars such as Linda Kelsey of "Lou Grant."

"The grass-roots effort was needed to make it an issue," says Johnson, "make it controversial so health professionals would be heard by policy makers in the various countries."

Meanwhile, frustration was growing among international health agencies and workers who every day saw the lethal consequences of marketing infant formula in developing nations.

Small groups all over the world who had been working separately pooled their resources. The British, for example, got 185 members of Parliament to support a code not only for the developing nations, but also for their own country. INFACT began building a coalition of respected groups in the United States and other countries, gathering under its umbrella organizations of women, churches and health professionals.

The turning point came in October 1979, when INFACT was invited to participate in an international WHO-UNICEF meeting despite its nongovernmental status.

"We brought with us a knowledge of the industry's practices in the field," said Johnson. "We had experience negotiating with corporation executives sitting across the room. We had heard their arguments. We knew what was true and what was not. We weren't cowed and they couldn't bully us. One of the things that prevented industry from taking it over was our participation, and our history with

companies, and our negotiations over time."

Before last month's meeting and vote, INFACT's international network had monitored the practices of companies selling the formula. Many are predicting that last month's WHO vote will step up the boycott against Nestlé.

INFACT expects people to stop buying Nestlé products to force the company to negotiate and stop promoting baby formula in the Third World. They want us to stop buying Taster's Choice, Nescafe, Nestlé's Quik, Nestlé's Crunch, Nestea, Libby McNeil and Libby products. They want us to forgo the products of Nestlé's subsidiaries — including Stouffer's hotels, restaurants and frozen foods, and L'Oreal cosmetics.

The ethical point here is that these companies represent industrialized countries, and it is our responsibility to keep them under control, rather than foisting that responsibility on the overworked and underfunded health workers in developing nations.

The Nestlé boycott gives us a way to use our economic clout to save the lives of babies. It's up to us consumers to call a halt to millions of babies dying a year, because the thirst for profits has put these companies on an unscrupulous path.

Business Week recently reported that Nestlé's percentage of 1980 profits is sagging at least in part because of the worldwide boycott. Nestlé plans to bolster its business, however, by going after a larger portion of the United States' market — a prospect we can diminish by refusing to buy Nestlé's products.

A movement that took off after 20 people from Minneapolis decided to take a stand has become a force in the world. We should make certain that it remains a force at home, too.

The Miami Herald



MORIN

Infant Formula—Horrible Potion From White House

By MATT SEIDEN

The mail boat had been at sea three days, due south from Saipan, someplace in the Pacific, roughly, at the end of the world.

That morning the island showed up. It wasn't there when the sun went down, but in the morning, there it was, perched on the edge of the sea, as if it had been there forever, waiting for the mail.

The mail came twice a year.

The mail boat dropped anchor in the deep water outside the coral reef, and waited. Soon it was surrounded by a flotilla of hand-carved outrigger canoes paddled by brawny, brown men dressed only in loincloths and garlands of wild orchids. The outriggers carried us silently through an opening in the reef to a calm, translucent bay and a white, sandy beach where the women were waiting.

The women looked as if they'd been posed there by Gauguin. They wore nothing but grass skirts, flowers and the dazzling, white smiles that graced their tanned faces. In their arms, they carried babies, and in their hands, some of the women of this South Pacific island carried baby bottles.

There was an American woman who came on the mail boat along with her own baby. The island women studied the American baby, and the American woman studied the island babies. The American asked the island women why they used bottles instead of their own, apparently ample, breasts.

Through an interpreter, the island women explained that the bottle was the modern American way. They seemed surprised when the American woman told them she had breast-fed her child.

The American woman asked how the island women cleaned the dirty bottles.

"With water," they said, laughing at the question.

And what did they put in the bottles?

The women said they used the powder that came in the cans that the mailboat brought twice a year. Except when they ran out of powder. Then, they said, they used coconut juice.

The American woman suggested politely that the babies might be better off if they were breast-fed. The lovely island women giggled their heads off. They couldn't believe an American woman could be so old-fashioned.

I tell you this story now because of the worldwide effort to curb the use of infant formula in Third World countries. The World Health Organization estimates that the use of unsterilized bottles is responsible for at least 1 million infant deaths a year. The international health group voted this week in favor of international guidelines discouraging infant formula sales.

Only one member nation refused to go along with the effort to prevent these unnecessary and tragic infant deaths. That nation was the United States which—under Ronald Reagan—is evidently unwilling to do anything that might dampen the sales of American products, even when a million little lives may be at stake each year.

It is Reagan's most shameful moment in office, so far.

The Administration—conveniently forgetting the pressure it exerted to get Japan to limit auto exports to this country only a couple of weeks ago—now falls back on its "ideological" opposition to regulations that interfere with free trade.

The World Health Organization guidelines are not regulations. They do not interfere with free trade. They are purely advisory, warnings without the force of law, and they specifically exempt formula sales in the United States, where the need to sterilize bottles is more widely understood.

Nevertheless, the Reagan Administration refused to go along with this international, humanitarian effort, insisting instead that Third World mothers should read the warnings on the formula can labels.

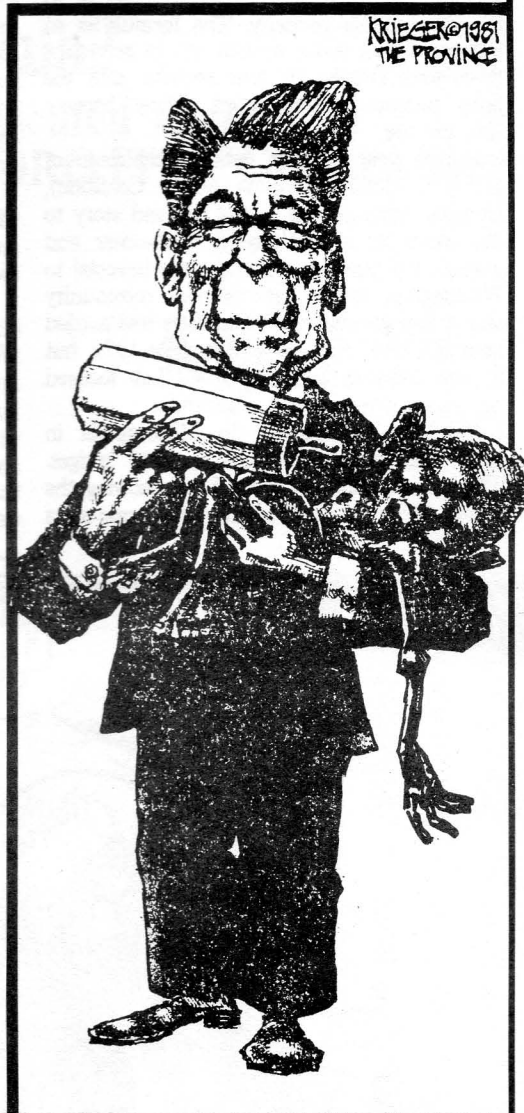
Unfortunately, many of the women in question—on that lovely Pacific atoll, and elsewhere around the world—cannot read. They especially cannot read the foreign languages which are often used on formula can labels. I have seen these women throughout Southeast Asia and Latin America, using filthy bottles, filling the bottles with sugar water and soft drinks because they cannot always afford formula powder and once they begin using bottles their own breast milk dries up.

I once saw a baby die in a small Latin American town. The baby died of diarrhea. The baby had been bottle fed. The bottle was always dirty. The formula—when there was any—sat in the bottle all day. There was no refrigeration, and the bottle was often covered with flies.

When the baby died, the mother became hysterical. She shut herself up in her little adobe hut and cried for weeks. When she came out, she accused a neighbor woman of having put a curse on her baby. The people in the town forced the poor neighbor to drink a horrible, muddy potion made from various roots and berries. They said the foul-smelling drink would remove the curse.

Next time they should send the potion to the White House.

Matt Seiden writes a syndicated column in Baltimore.



Childish (Oh, baby)

For shame, America. Your vote yesterday opposing U.N. World Health Organization recommendations to regulate the marketing of infant formula was inexcusable.

These important guidelines are designed to protect millions of babies from malnutrition, intestinal disease and death due to improper usage of manufactured baby formula. This is surely a protection that the United States, of all countries, ought to

champion, despite what our columnist William Safire says, in the space directly to the right.

Certainly, baby formula can be nutritious and beneficial if used properly, as it generally is in advanced countries like ours. But what about the developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, where the formula is mixed with polluted water or contained in unsanitary bottles? An estimated 10 million babies in these countries consequently suffer from various "bottle baby" diseases. An estimated 1 million babies die from it each year.

We don't buy U.S. delegate Gerald Helman's arguments that the recom-

mendations are an intolerable violation of free trade and speech. After all, the guidelines are absolutely non-binding. It is up to each individual country to adopt these measures according to its own marketing needs — if it wants to adopt them at all. Besides, the lofty theories of free trade and speech are not absolute, and certainly should not be in a case where they indirectly cause babies to die by the millions.

Sadly, the U.S. opposition vote will indicate to the rest of the world that the United States cares only about its own \$150-million export interests and not a whit about the responsibilities it holds overseas. ■



JUDY MANN

Dying Babies: America And the Third World

ACTRESS LINDA KELSEY of the "Lou Grant" show sat folded up on a brown sofa in a small, upstairs room on Lamont Street yesterday morning talking about the intense suffering of infants she had seen in India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Hong Kong and the Philippines during a two-week trip in April. She calls these infants bottle babies, because they have been fed with bottled formula instead of breast milk. She talks of bacteria, contaminated water, the heat and the flies that ruin the formula and of poverty so pervasive that a family that spends 85 percent of its monthly income on infant formula can't throw it out even if it has spoiled in the sun.

She takes out a poster the size of a piece of typing paper. There are four simple pictures of baby bottles with the skull and crossbones etched across them. Written in Bengali on the poster is the slogan "mother's milk is the best food for babies." The literacy rate in Bangladesh, she says, is 20 percent, so maybe some mothers will get the messages. But many haven't and many won't. That poster, distributed by doctors at clinics, can't do much to offset the marketing and advertising of the \$2-billion infant formula industry.

"It's given a kind of glamor," says Kelsey, "that makes women think it would be better." Formula advertisements show pictures of "a lovely, fat baby, usually a Western baby, and the implication is your baby will look like this. Third World babies are very, very small. When a milk nurse comes into the hospital who works for a formula company with her samples to give the baby a bath, it looks like it the endorsement of the medical profession."

Kelsey and her husband, Glenn Strand, who went with her on the trip which was sponsored by the International League of Consumers Unions, met a family of 13 in Bangladesh with a 12-day-old baby. "They said they were going to start formula feeding," says Kelsey, even though they had an income of \$34 a month and lived in a tiny hut. "A few yards away were tiny shops [in corners of other family homes] with the most incredible displays of infant formula."

"There is such a great desire to emulate the West," says Strand. The mother who bottle feeds, instead of breastfeeds, gains status. She is a modern mother.

Experts have estimated that as many as 1 million Third World babies die each year as a result of diarrhea and malnourishment associated with misused and contaminated formulas. The World Health Organization's assembly in Geneva voted overwhelmingly Thursday to adopt a strict code to enforce ethical marketing practices on the infant formula manufacturers. The United States, once a strong supporter of such a code, cast one of three votes against it. Despite the fact that the code is recommendatory and not mandatory, the Reagan administration raised antitrust and First Amendment objections to it and said there is no proven relationship between the marketing of formula and infant health.

Up until the end, a bipartisan congressional delegation made extraordinary efforts to get to a once-approachable president to tell him that the code involved not just free enterprise and regulation of business but the lives of babies. They were repeatedly rebuffed by the White House. Rep. Thomas Harkin (D-Iowa) says he first tried to get an appointment for the delegation through congressional liaison Max Friedersdorf and found he had to brief him on the issue. When Friedersdorf didn't call back, Harkin again called for an appointment and was told finally told by William J. Gribbin of the liaison office that there was no time on Reagan's schedule.

"I called him back and said, 'Look, who said we couldn't get on the president's schedule? Did the president say that?' He said he didn't know," but that the decision came through the offices of presidential counselor Edward Meese and White House chief of staff James Baker and a call to them would simply be referred back to Gribbin. "I said, 'Let me tell you, Mr. Gribbin, what my feelings are and perhaps you can pass it on.' I said, 'I cannot believe the president can't find 10 minutes in the day to meet with 12 to 15 members of Congress on an issue of this importance. I know how tight a president's

schedule is, but I also know that you can squeeze, that you can push a calendar a little bit . . . I don't want to see the president to give him a 10-gallon hat or to declare June 15 National Tulip Day. This is something much more important.'"

Harkin believes the administration decision to vote no was made at the political level at the White House and that White House advisers then wanted to prevent people from getting to Reagan who could appeal to his "better sensibilities."

Just how busy the president could have been this week is a good question. He found time to go to the ballet and to yet another of the private dinners with his Hollywood cronies. He has rarely worked in the afternoon since the shooting, although he is well enough that on Wednesday he received permission from his doctor to resume wood chopping and horseback riding, which he will do during this long weekend in California.

But when a bipartisan delegation of congressmen wanted to talk about Third World babies dying, Reagan didn't have time. Linda Kelsey said she was appalled by what she found on her trip to the Third World, and she came to Washington to try to stop it.

What she found here, she said, was frightening.

BILL SCHORR

Money
is the
MOTHER'S
Milk of
Politics



SCHORR
1981 LA KERALD

LOS ANGELES
HERALD EXAMINER

Radio Station Boycotts Nestle

A Boston radio station had had its affiliation with the ABC radio network cancelled after the station refused to air an advertisement for the Nestle Corporation in protest of that firm's infant formula promotions in third world countries.

WBNC FM reused to air "The King Biscuit Hour," an ABC distributed program, due to advertising on the show by Nestle. The station's general manager, Tony Berardini, claims it would be "inconsistent" with the station's editorial policy to run the ads, since WBNC has publicly condemned Nestle for its promotion of infant formula in third world countries.

An ABC spokesperson claims the network does not try to interfere with a station's programming policy, but admitted that WBCN has been removed as an affiliate. The spokesperson said ABC is now seeking another station in the Boston area to carry "The King Biscuit Hour."

The issue was the breast versus the bottle—and how far the World Health Organization might go to regulate the sale of infant formulas. In Geneva last week, the WHO met to consider a voluntary commercial code designed to encourage breast-feeding by banning advertising and restricting marketing practices of the \$2 billion-a-year international baby-formula industry. Supporters of the code said it might save as many as 1 million infants who die each year of diseases related to poor feeding. The Reagan Administration argued that the code represented a dangerous restraint of free speech and international trade. When the final decision came, the WHO voted 118-1 to adopt the code—leaving the United States on the very lonely end of the tally.

UNITED NATIONS

The Breast Vs. the Bottle

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The health and legal questions involved in the affair were complex and badly tangled, but the Third World was quick to cast the Americans as hard on babies and soft on big business. Before the vote some State Department and Department of Health and Human Services officials urged the White House to avoid embarrassment by abstaining. After the counsel was rejected, Eugene Babb, a nutritionist for the Agency for International Development, and Dr. Stephen C. Joseph, a pediatrician who is AID's top health officer, resigned in protest. Joseph called the Reagan Administration's stand "unconscionable, inimical to the responsibilities of health professionals, contrary to the best interests of my country, inexplicable to my professional colleagues—and more important—damaging to the health and growth of the world's children."

Ten years of lively debate led to the vote in Geneva. In the developed countries, as increasing numbers of mothers have re-

turned to breast-feeding, formula companies have recouped by tapping an enormous and expanding market in the Third World. In the early 1970s, medical journals warned that bottle feeding was rapidly overtaking breast-feeding in many areas. Alarmed, the World Health Assembly urged its member states to do more to promote mother's milk. Two years ago, the WHO and UNICEF assembled representatives of national governments, nongovernmental health experts and the formula industry to develop the code that was finally adopted last week.

Psychological Bond: All sides in the controversy, have agreed that mother's milk is much better than artificial formulas in promoting infant health. Breast milk contains antibodies that help protect infants against infection. Nursing delays the return of the menstrual cycle after pregnancy, thus acting as a functional contraceptive. Breast-feeding strengthens the psychological bond between mother and child. And milk from the breast is free, no small factor in the impoverished Third World—where 80 per cent of the globe's 125 million babies under 1 live.

Not only do infant formulas lack these advantages, WHO doctors have argued, but they can also contribute to malnutrition, infections, postnatal disturbances and early death. Illiterate parents can't read the instructions for preparing the formulas properly. They often fail to sterilize the bottles. And the water they use to mix the formula may be contaminated. The WHO estimates that as many as 10 million serious cases of malnutrition or diarrhea each year may result from improper use of bottles or infant formulas. About 10 per cent of these babies die. WHO studies show that infants

who are breast-fed for less than six months—or not at all—are five to ten times more likely than breast-fed babies to die in the second six months of life.

Samples: Nonetheless, aggressive marketing has placed formulas on shelves from Tijuana to Tibet. WHO experts charge that some companies have used unfair marketing gimmicks. Labels on formula packages tend to display bouncing, blue-eyed white babies, suggesting to poor Third World mothers that their own offspring can rise to such robust good health if fed the formula. Some companies have enticed rural health officials with offers of scholarships and travel allowances to promote formulas. Doctors and nurses, important role models, are offered free supplies of formula for their own children. "The over-all impression created is that bottle-feeding is a far simpler, more modern and more convenient method of child-feeding and nutritionally equivalent to breast-feeding," says E. J. R. Hayward of UNICEF. Perhaps the most troubling marketing practice is the free gift of formula to new mothers as they leave the hospital. Such mothers may start their babies off on the formula only to discover when the samples run out that they cannot revert to breast-feeding, because mother's milk dries up in about a week if suckling is discontinued.

The new code recommends a draconian ban on advertising except in medical journals and the like. It calls for labels that state the superiority of breast-feeding, plus simple instructions for mixing and safe storage and an expiration date for safe consumption. Although the code is voluntary, governments are encouraged to pass laws that would make it mandatory.

The code drew stiff protests from the formula industry. Lobbyists representing Bristol-Myers Co., Abbott Laboratories and American Home Products Corp., which have \$150 million in formula sales and 15 per cent of the world market, argued that the code was inflexible and its premises in error. They said changing life-styles, not the hard sell of the industries, were responsible for declining rates of breast-feeding. And they pointed out that commercial formula was better for babies than home brews concocted by mothers on their own: paps, gruels, sugar water and herbal teas.

Wean: Fearing that the code might be interpreted to cover all baby food—or even all groceries—Heinz, Kraft, Gerber's and the Grocery Manufacturers of America joined the fray against regulation. Their lobbyists argued that if Washington voted for the code, it would be morally bound to pass laws to carry it out that would violate the First Amendment and U.S. antitrust laws. The White House was impressed. "How can you vote for a code that goes against your own laws?" argued Richard Schweiker, Secretary of Health and Human Services. "The Administration honestly doesn't believe the WHO should be an international Federal Trade Commission." When the code is put into practice, sales techniques will undoubtedly change. But a question remained: can a legal code alone wean the world's mothers from the bottle?

TOM MATHEWS with PATRICIA J. SETHI at the United Nations and MARY HAGER in Washington



A bottle baby and a nursing mother in Togo: A vote of confidence for mother's milk

A U.S. Vote on Baby Formula That Stirred a Storm

It was justified, said the administration, but protesting rules to curb use of milk substitutes for babies roused anger at home and abroad.

The United States got a black eye in the world community in late May by casting the only "No" vote against a new marketing code for baby formula.

By 118 to 1, the World Health Organization, meeting in Geneva, approved guidelines to curb overly aggressive marketing of breast-milk substitutes.

The code seeks to protect babies in Third World countries where, some health workers say, improper use of formula, such as mixing it with impure water, has contributed to malnutrition and other diseases in millions of cases.

The U.S. vote, cast amid protests from consumer groups and more than 75 members of Congress, prompted the resignation of two officials of the Agency for International Development: The top health professional, Dr. Stephen Joseph, and Eugene Babb, deputy assistant administrator for food and nutrition.

Babb was among many who charged that the administration had bowed to the wishes of baby-food companies, stating: "What we're saying to the world is that narrow commercial interests are more important to us than the health of infants in developing countries."

The code, to be adopted on a voluntary basis by individual countries, bans virtually all advertising of breast-milk substitutes, as well as distribution of free samples. It also requires wording on labels that acknowledges the superiority of breast-feeding to formula.

Chances for code. While some observers say the guidelines will be weakened without U.S. support, Edward Baer of the International Baby Food Action Network, a coalition of 35 consumer groups, predicts that developing nations will be quick to adopt the rules.

In voting against the code, Gerald Helman, U.S. ambassador to the WHO, said: "On the one hand, we strongly support efforts to promote and protect breast-feeding as the ideal form of infant nutrition, but, on the other hand, there are provisions of the code that cause serious legal and constitutional problems for the United States."

Reagan officials contend that it is not the WHO's place to be involved in

commercial regulation and that it sets a dangerous precedent for the international health organization to tell private industry how to conduct business.

"The administration honestly does not believe the WHO should be an international Federal Trade Commission," explains Secretary of Health and Human Services Richard Schweiker. "The code runs contrary to our Constitution and antitrust laws."

That reason doesn't sit well with many. Some members of Congress vow to introduce legislation that would implement the code in the United States. Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), who held a public forum on the issue, asked: "Can a product that requires clean water, good sanitation, adequate family income and a literate parent to follow printed instructions be properly and safely used in areas where water is contaminated, sewage runs in the



Resigning after U.S. vote were Eugene Babb, left, and Dr. Stephen Joseph of AID.

streets, poverty is severe and illiteracy is high?" At the forum, television actress Linda Kelsey showed pictures of undernourished children in several nations. She noted that a family in Bangladesh, with a monthly income of about \$34, would have to spend \$28 on formula to buy a sufficient supply. As a result, this family—and others like it—dilute the formula to make it last longer.

Some officials also point to evidence of a link between bottle feeding and health problems. In an April memo, Dr. John Bryant, the Health and Human Services' deputy assistant secretary for international health, cited a New Guinea study showing improved infant health from breast-feeding.

Millions affected. Bryant estimates that 10 million children a year suffer from malnutrition and other diseases associated with the use of milk substitutes or inadequate breast milk.

Yet, critics point out, health workers who counsel mothers continue to give in to high-powered sales campaigns by formula firms, including ads that picture healthy, contented babies.

The baby-food industry, meanwhile, rejects the view that the new marketing code will save millions of lives.

Says Geoffrey Fookes of the Zurich-based International Council of Infant Food Industries, whose members account for 85 percent of formula sales in the world: "Babies do not die because of infant-formula feeding. Poor hygienic conditions, malnutrition and poverty are problems, no matter what foods are used when breast milk is unavailable or insufficient in amount. But risks are vastly reduced when good-quality formula is used and adequate instruction for correct use is given."

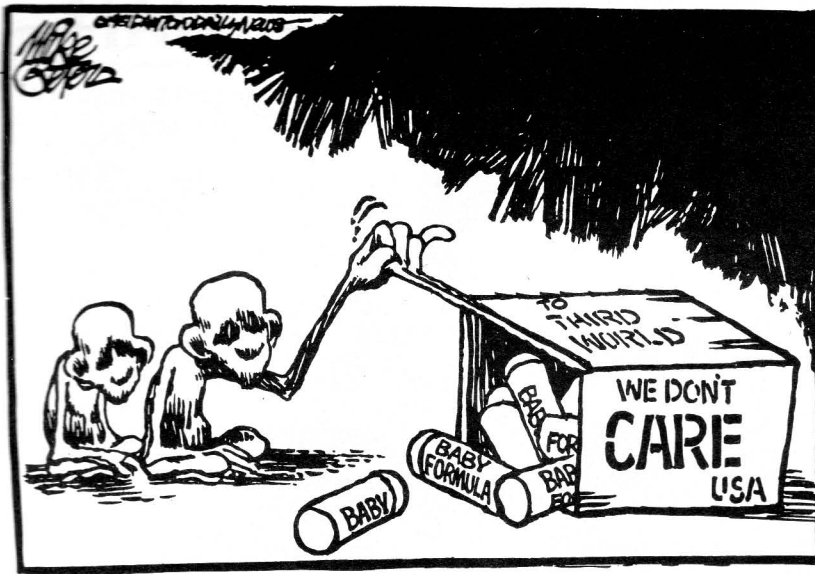
Harry Levine, a vice president of Bristol-Myers in New York, says his firm and two other U.S. formula makers—Abbott Laboratories and American Home Products—tried to work with WHO officials in drafting a code but that the health agency went too far. He adds: "They came up with a set of regulations that tell companies what they can do, not just in the Third World, but in the U.S. and everywhere else."

Many firms in the formula industry, which has annual sales of more than 1.4 billion dollars, say they will observe the code in nations that adopt it but do not believe the rules will shrink business.

Approval of the new marketing code caps a 10-year controversy that featured a boycott by several religious and consumer groups against products made by Nestlé. The Swiss firm is the world's leading formula producer.

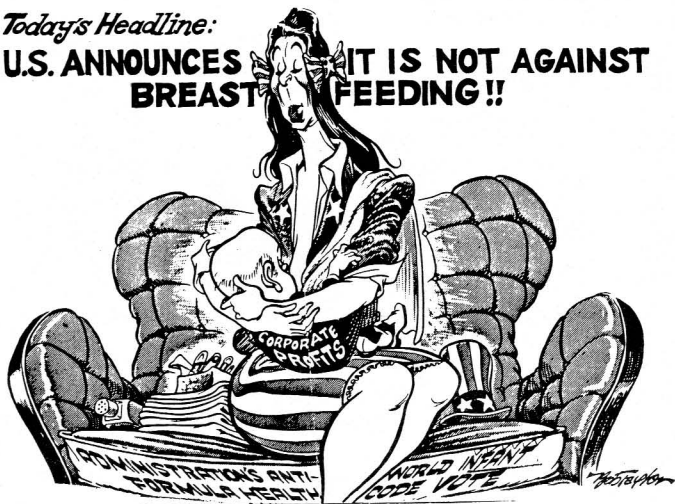
Baby-formula producers—and others in business—worry that the formula code could lead to more attempts to control products sold by multinational companies. As one European delegate to the WHO conference put it: "I think we can live with this code, but that's as far as we are willing to go." □

By JEANNIE THORNTON and ALFRED ZANKER



Today's Headline:

U.S. ANNOUNCES IT IS NOT AGAINST BREAST FEEDING!!



The Miami Herald



MORIN



H.C. Bennett/Copy News Service

'There's a real mother'



Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Bottled Milk Can be Dangerous to Third World Nation's Health.



KATE THE DENVER POST '81



ONEAR CHICAGO, ILL. U.S.A. 1981

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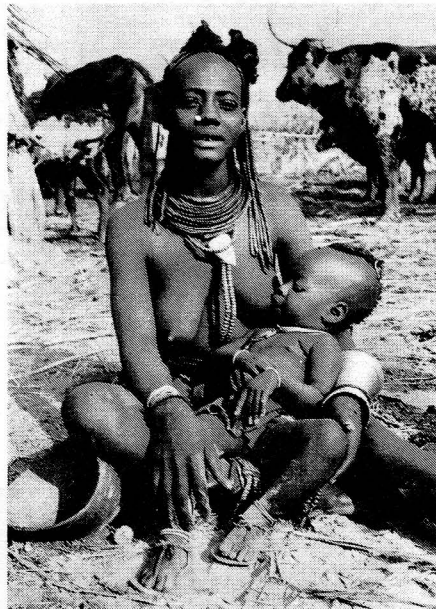
The Battle of the Bottle

In Geneva it was the U.S. against the world

The outcome of last week's World Health Organization vote was never in doubt. Delegates to the WHO meeting in Geneva were considering an international code of conduct to restrict the advertising and marketing of baby formula, a processed, usually powdered substitute for mother's milk. The formula can lead to infant malnutrition and death when used improperly, so the WHO code had the support of doctors and government health officials all over the planet. The final tally was 118 to 1, a near miracle of consensus in any international forum. Which nation was it that cast the only no vote, thus appearing to align itself in opposition to good health for babies? The U.S.

That dissent, ordered by the White House and based on concern that the code would restrict free speech and free trade, touched off a wave of outrage, much of it in the U.S. Dr. Stephen Joseph, the top health official at the U.S. Agency for International Development, and Eugene Babb, the agency's top nutrition expert, resigned their jobs in protest. Joseph called the vote "contrary to the best interests of my country, inexplicable to my professional colleagues . . . and damaging to the health and growth of the world's children." Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts convened an unofficial hearing on the U.S. dissent, which he denounced as "shameful." Republican Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon warned that the vote could send "a message of indifference to the sanctity of human life." Outside the U.S., the reaction was more puzzlement than anger, though even London's conservative *Financial Times* declared, "It is special pleading of the worst kind to invoke the right to free expression and free competition if a potential danger to life and health has been identified."

The infant-formula controversy began about ten years ago, when Dr. Derrick Jelliffer, a public health specialist, declared that infant malnutrition could be linked to the use of baby formula. That substance, usually made from a milk base with vegetable fat, milk sugar, vitamins and minerals added, is nutritious if correctly used. In poor areas of the world, however, that is sometimes impossible. Mothers may unknowingly mix powdered formula with contaminated water or, to save money, dilute it too much. Moreover, breast feeding is healthier and more economical, assuming a baby's



A Namibian infant feeds for free

mother is healthy and able to produce adequate nourishment for her child.

Critics have also complained that the infant-formula industry, which has worldwide sales of \$2 billion, compounded those hazards by stepping up marketing efforts in Third World countries. Some of the sales tactics were questionable. Employees of some formula companies, dressed as medical personnel, would go from village to village promoting the products. New mothers were routinely given advertising brochures and free samples while still in the hospital.

As a result of such practices, a world-

wide boycott was organized in 1977 against the Swiss-based Nestlé company, which accounts for 50% of formula sales to the Third World. Three U.S. firms—Abbott Laboratories, American Home Products and Bristol-Myers—together share 20% of that market. Two years later, Nestlé and the U.S. firms agreed to voluntary guidelines that banned such marketing abuses in developing nations. Antiformula activists say those rules were widely violated, so they pressed the WHO, an agency of the United Nations, to draw up the code adopted last week. Though they are not binding on any nation, the new guidelines apply to infant-formula promotion in industrialized countries as well. Strictly following the code, all nations would prohibit company incentives for doctors to promote formula, free samples for mothers, and consumer advertising generally.

At first, U.S. officials found the guidelines acceptable. Then, after months of lobbying by the three U.S. formula makers and the Grocery Manufacturers of America, an interagency task force recommended that the U.S. discreetly abstain on the WHO code. Yet days before the ballot, word came down from the White House to vote no. Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, declared that U.S. aid programs would continue to encourage breast feeding, but that the WHO limit on infant-formula advertising "has grave constitutional problems for us—we couldn't adopt it here at home, and we couldn't recommend it for anyone else." Furthermore, claims Abrams, the code could so restrict availability of infant formula that "the health of children may actually suffer." Legal scholars might disagree about the gravity of those constitutional problems, but the decision is consistent with the Administration's zealous support for American business, and its antagonism toward economic regulation.

The battle is far from settled. Iowa Democrat Thomas Harkin last week promised to introduce a bill in the House that would turn the WHO recommendations into law. And the National Council of Churches next month will publish a report claiming that powdered formula is not strictly a Third World concern: they found that increased use of baby formula among poor families accounts for infant illnesses in the U.S. Vows John Pedrotti, an antiformula activist: "We want the WHO code to be adopted in this country as well."

—By Kurt Andersen.
Reported by Bruce van Voorst/Geneva and Barbara Dolan/New York



Discarded Nestlé formula cans at a Thai refugee camp

"A message of indifference to the sanctity of human life."

“The question is whether the pursuits of a few corporations can be allowed to overrule the interests of a lot of children. And the administration’s answer is: Yes, of course they can. And why not?”

Washington Star columnist
JUDY BACHRACH



A "BOTTLE BABY."
BEING BURIED WITH HER BOTTLE
IN THE PHILIPPINES (1979)

An independent newspaper, dedicated to championing individual freedom, to exposing abuse of the public trust, and to fostering a healthy environment, a sound economy and a just society.

Heartless stand on formula

Labels with a cause can focus attention and Bangladesh in voting no on the guidelines (which will not be manufactured in the United States or

Group of 20 launched successful Nestle boycott

By Dorothy Gilliam
The Washington Post
SHINGTON — How did a handful of good organizations do it? How did they talk to themselves, pattering the world with a good but un-ly cause, manage to reach the heights of the World Health Organization and humble the United States in its terrible June vote?

ST JUSTICE NO
NEWS PRESS
ously their current international boycott against the Swiss controlled S.A., the giant multinational food-iff company that is the largest producer of formula in the world. American some Products a
Infant formula
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Woman leads boycott over baby formula
GARDEN CITY, N.Y.
The Fresno Bee
Founded 1922
Published every morning
CARLOS MCCLATCHY, Editor 422-1833
Wednesday, May 20, 1981 • Vol. 118, No. 21192

Principles die so that profits live
HISTORICALLY, when the United States has cast the lone vital national interest or high moral principle, it has been on a mission to curb the direction of the Reagan-developed "excessive market-opening countries" in the Third World.

The U.S. votes wrong on a motherhood issue
On an unconvincing argument that the to do otherwise would interfere with domestic antitrust and other free-enterprise principles, the Reagan administration has put the United States in the position of opposing a World Health Organization code on the marketing of infant formulas. The controversy is literally a matter of life and death for millions of infants in the Third World.

Methodists still boycotting Nestle
What on earth is going on in the United States? Why are we boycotting Nestle? Why are we boycotting Nestle? Why are we boycotting Nestle?

Infant formula vote a bad move by U.S.

Last week, the United States boycotted the World Health Organization's vote on the guidelines for infant formula. The vote was a bad move for the U.S. because it put the U.S. in a position of opposing a code on the marketing of infant formulas.

Infant formula vote a bad move by U.S.
Stamford Advocate
STAMFORD, CONN.
what was not. We weren't cowed and they couldn't bully us. One of the things that prevented the boycott was the fact that the U.S. had a network of distributors for infant formula.

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The Mighty Eagle Has Yielded to Almighty Dollar
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Corporate greed vs. human health
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA NEWS
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US force-feeds 'Let them eat cake' attitude
HAYS, KANS.
NEWS
Staff
Comments
By BOBBY
The United States has force-fed the world a "let them eat cake" attitude by opposing a code on the marketing of infant formulas.

The Washington Post
THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1981
Formula for Trouble
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U.S. foolishly stands alone
TUCSON, ARIZ.
The Arizona Daily Star
Promote our
The Arizona Daily Star
TUCSON, ARIZ.
The U.S. always seems to end up on the wrong side of every two-bit war and rebellion, but it's our own fault. We lack a professional, highly trained diplomatic corps like that employed by the Soviet Union. We still have ambassadors assigned purely as political pawns and diplomats who can't even

Lonely stance shames U.S.
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Breast-feeding hinders infant formula
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The breast-feeding industry will put America in a bad light
THE LINCOLN STAR
LINCOLN, NEBR.
Anything for business
EDITORIAL
As our editors see it
Callahagger Democrat

Put people before profits
The World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, with its seemingly mundane debate of a code for breast-milk substitute, is enacting, producers of infant formula not out of choice or necessity but because they are put in front of them. fed to their babies. In some in- fecting or material formulas who pro- The code is dis-

VILLAIN: The U.S. will play the role of a villain in the infant formula code
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