
BOYCOTT NEWS



Demonstrations wake up Nestlé management

The annual demonstration at Nestlé (UK) HQ in Croydon took place on 17th May and helped to prompt a change in Nestlé policy on the marketing of complementary foods. The week before, on the Saturday before the start of National Breastfeeding Week, demonstrators gathered at other Nestlé sites around the country. The biggest turn-outs were in Halifax (right) and York. Every 30 seconds a child dies somewhere in the world because it was not breastfed and so demonstrators marked each needless death with drums, trumpets, anything that could make a noise to wake up Nestlé management. This prompted Nestlé's Head of Corporate Affairs, Hilary Parsons, to agree to be interviewed on the BBC Radio 4 Today news programme head-to-head with Patti Rundall, Baby Milk Action's Policy Director. A few days later Ms. Parsons wrote to Baby Milk Action with a Nestlé statement claiming its complementary food labels would now comply with international standards, which indicate they shouldn't be promoted for use before 6 months of age. Nestlé's headline promise needs closer examination as reports coming in from around the world show that Nestlé continues to label complementary foods for use from 4 months of



Photo: Mike Brady

age and has launched campaigns in a number of countries to promote these since giving its undertaking (see [Update 33](#)).

Actress and boycott supporter, Emma Thompson commented: *"I've listened to Nestlé and have seen their new Action report. I'm impressed by their goals but I can't say that I've seen much evidence of their global practice shifting."*

Who is the least ethical company'?

A survey by Ethical Consumer Magazine found Nestlé is viewed as the 'least ethical company'. Nestlé refused to collect the award, so Baby Milk Action presented it to the Chief Executive's representative at the Croydon demonstration in front of a television crew from Swiss television.

TUC says no to Nestlé

Nestlé has used its presence as an exhibitor at Trade Union Congress annual meetings to present itself as an ethical company and to claim trade union support. After protests from UNISON and other unions, Nestlé will not be exhibiting this year.

The Transport and General Workers Union (which has Nestlé (UK) employees as members) has responded by inviting Baby Milk Action to debate with Nestlé at a TUC fringe meeting. We have accepted the invitation, though we recall that six year's ago, when it had a stand, Nestlé refused to attend a TUC fringe meeting organised by SE Region TUC Women's Rights Committee, stating: *"it is not our policy to participate in public meetings with campaigning groups such as Baby Milk Action since this unlikely to be helpful in resolving the current conflict."*

- Nestlé has offered a Fire Brigades Union branch £10,000 towards its benevolent fund in return for an activity day for Nestlé staff. This was turned down in June.
- Colombian trade unionists in the UK in June to highlight human rights abuses were critical of Nestlé's anti-trade union stance. A boycott of Coca Cola has been called over similar allegations.

Nestlé desperate to link with Mandela

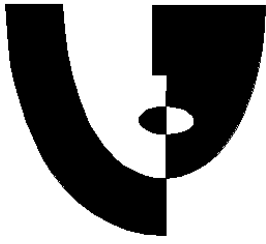
Health campaigners were amazed at scenes of Lord Richard Attenborough attempting to persuade Nelson Mandela to take half a million pounds for his Foundation from Nestlé in return for a photo opportunity. South African media reported that Mandela's Children Fund charity would not only refuse money from Nestlé, but had done so in the past (see inside).

In the BBC programme Lord Attenborough was seen telling Mandela and his assistant: *"I know that if you said, 'I want more money', knowing Nestlé as I do, if (someone like you) said I wanted another half million or another whatever it is for his own trust, you would have it like that. They (Nestlé) are so desperate to reinstitute themselves in South Africa, to be seen to have changed their philosophies and that they are now totally in favour of everything he [Mandela] stands for. May I ask him to ring you?"*

UNICEF stated that Nestlé "routinely" breaches the marketing standards for baby foods and that it would be discussing this with Lord Attenborough, a UNICEF Ambassador.

Donation dilemma

Author Richard Platt was put in a moral dilemma when he won the Smarties Silver Book Prize. He didn't know he was being put forward and decided to donate an equivalent amount (about £750) to Baby Milk Action. We don't touch corporate money and after much thought judged Richard's generous donation to be acceptable and not corporate money through the back door. Please let us know your views.



Mandela charity refused to take Nestlé money

When Lord Attenborough suggested Nelson Mandela be photographed accepting a large donation from Nestlé (see page one), Mandela's Personal Assistant, Zelda La Grange, explained on the BBC TV programme which filmed the encounter:

"Obviously to be associated with Mandela means a lot – but people come from other angles wanting him to engage in different things. Some of them may be laudable projects – but people over expose him – they use him - they abuse him. I've learned to be extremely suspicious about people in this job, but you have to be that way."

According to a report on iAfrica.com (12 March 2003):

"In a statement it [Mandela's Children's Fund] reiterated the position it took in 2000 regarding a donation Nestle proposed to the Fund. In July 2000 the Fund was approached by Nestle, to contribute towards its Aids Orphan Appeal, a theme it had adopted for Mandela's birthday celebration with the children in that year.

"However given the Nestle debacle in relation to HIV/Aids infected mothers and their campaign on promoting formula milk as opposed to breast milk and the disadvantages they put out publicly regarding breast feeding, the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund declined the donation."



Photo: Nestlé in profile

Nestlé was active in South Africa throughout the apartheid era, despite Nelson Mandela's call for sanctions. It's infamous strategies for undermining breastfeeding included 'milk nurses' (pictured above in the 1950s), who promoted Nestlé formula to poor mothers. It is currently promoting its *Pelargon* infant formula for counteracting diarrhoea (see *Update 33*).

Eat processed food, Nestlé's tells the hungry poor in Brazil

Nestlé Chief Executive Officer, Peter Brabeck-Letmathé, met with Brazil's new President, Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, earlier this year, offering to donate thousands of tons of Nestlé foods to his 'Zero Hunger' programme. Although President Lula has spoken of the importance of promoting family-scale agriculture, Nestlé is providing processed foods, including powdered whole milk. In past decades the distribution of powdered whole milk has had a detrimental impact on breastfeeding rates and infant health as poor mothers sometimes use it for bottle-feeding infants. Nestlé displays its powdered whole milk brands alongside the much more expensive infant formula in the infant feeding sections of pharmacies and supermarkets and, so far, is ignoring calls from Baby Milk Action and others to stop this practice (pictured).

• Nestlé's attempted takeover of old Brazilian family chocolate business, Garoto, is being considered by the Brazilian competition authorities.



Photo: Mike Brady

Nestlé in Ethiopia cash grab

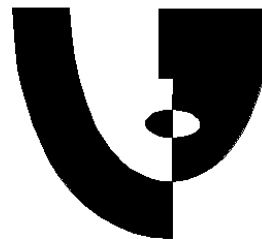
In December 2002 Oxfam launched a campaign against Nestlé's attempts to extract US\$6 million from the cash-strapped Ethiopian Government as the country tried to deal with a famine, prompting 40,000 people to protest to Nestlé. It was estimated 11 million people were at risk of starvation. Nestlé criticised Oxfam for launching a public campaign instead of discussing the issue with them in private - a little disingenuous as the Ethiopian Government had been calling on Nestlé to accept a lesser amount for a year.

Nestlé's combative Communications Director, Francois Perroud, gave a radio interview saying it was in the Government's interest to pay the compensation to earn the trust of transnationals. He did not reveal that it was the Government itself that first offered payment for a nationalisation that had occurred 25 years before, even offering interest. Nestlé disputed the exchange rate being used and wanted four times as much. Following the Oxfam campaign Nestlé settled for the Government's initial offer and promised to use the money in Ethiopia to alleviate hunger.

It is not yet known if it will follow the same strategy as in Brazil.

Update

boycott news supplement



Debates

A video of a recent debate between Nestlé and Baby Milk Action is available for a handling fee of £10. Nestlé continues to lose. For example, the University of East Anglia held a cross-campus ballot after a debate and the boycott was renewed by a 2 to 1 majority.

- The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) has voted to allow Nestlé to continue having stands at its annual meetings. Dr. Tony Waterston proposed barring Nestlé to show disapproval of the company's activities, while Nestlé's Head of Nutrition stressed the company's 30-year relationship with the RCPCH.

Perrier losing fizz

Daniel Kitson, winner of the Nestlé Perrier Award at last year's Edinburgh Fringe, was interviewed by *The Observer* (27 July 2003) which stated: "he made it quite clear at last year's Festival that he neither wanted nor valued the award."

Book prize refuses

Nestlé money

Author Melvyn Burgess contacted Baby Milk Action to check on the latest Nestlé news when he was invited to be a judge for a new Nestlé-sponsored prize for teenage literature. Hearing of Nestlé's continued malpractice, he contacted other authors who decided to write to the Book Trust, asking it to look elsewhere for sponsorship.

Nestlé is no longer being invited to sponsor the prize.

- Nestlé was noticeable by its absence from this year's Hay Festival. Germaine Greer, one of those who boycotted the Festival last year was able to take part.

Give us a break

On the 21 March Nestlé encouraged people around the country to stop work at 3 p.m. to enjoy a Kit-Kat and a cup of Nescafé. The rest of the world had other concerns: it was the day after hostilities began in Iraq.

Shelter looking again at funding

Baby Milk Action met with the Adam Sampson, new Director of Shelter, following complaints from supporters over Nescafé being promoted on Shelter advertisements. This deal has now come to an end and will not automatically be renewed. Mr. Sampson is reviewing Shelter's funding guidelines. We will watch developments with interest.

KCN wants complaints

Kids Club Network's *Make Space* initiative is being sponsored by Nestlé. The campaign provides support to people wanting to provide meeting places for young people. Publicity materials feature the Nestlé logo. Nestlé (UK) Chief Executive, Alastair Sykes, is quoted at length in press releases produced for groups. There is nothing to prevent *Make Space* groups from supporting the Nestlé

boycott and displaying posters and leaflets to promote it.

Make Space Campaign Director said he would like to receive complaints about the sponsorship to enable KCN to gauge the public mood.

AGM goes well

Nestlé's press release on its AGM commented on how well it had gone, but did not mention that it was dominated by disgruntled shareholders. This year it was not only the baby milk issue, but Nestlé's treatment of coffee growers, trade union busting in Colombia and use of Genetically Modified (GM) ingredients in baby foods, despite a promise not to use GM in any products.

Workers dumped

Families have worked at the Nestlé's Fulton factory in New York State for generations. Yet Nestlé has closed it down after nearly a century in the name of efficiency. Chief Executive, Peter Brabeck, has overseen cuts in manufacturing costs of US\$2.8 billion by "closing dozens of creaky factories" (*Time*, 3 February 2003). The next time Nestlé suggests the boycott is putting people's jobs at risk, remember Mr. Brabeck is a Nestlé worker's biggest threat.

Rome festival ban

Nestlé boycott campaigners in Italy ran a successful campaign to have Nestlé banned from Rome's famous Eurochocolate Festival in March 2003. They reminded

the City Council of its undertaking "not to accept manufacturers of dried milk, infant food and other products covered by the World Health Organization international codes, for the sponsoring and advertising of cultural, sports and educational activities, as well as public works within the municipal area."

Nestlé goes for pop

- Pop group Muse say on their website they "are very surprised to see their version of the song 'Feeling Good' appearing in a recent Nescafé TV advertisement. Especially as Muse specifically said no when Nescafé requested the recording. Muse's management are on the case."

- If customers in Sweden buy Nestlé products for 300 SEK they get a free ticket to a concert of popular group GES. Boycott supporters have protested at concerts. The group said it would not have entered into the deal if consulted beforehand. Niklas Strömstedt of the group said: "It's awful to be associated with that company"

- Nestlé is 'sponsoring' the UK television programme *Pop Idol* with £6 million deal. Keep an eye on the voting system to see if you can text or email in 'Boycott Nestlé' as your vote.

Buxton boycott

The cancer-charity-linked, *Race for Life* is sponsored by Nestlé's Buxton water. We prepared a special boycott leaflet for those wanting to protest while still taking part.

