

Photo opportunity 13 December 2006 - London

Demonstration at Nestlé book prize award ceremony over Nestlé targeting kids



Baby Milk Action is a non-profit organisation which aims to save lives and protect infant and young child health through independent controls on babyfood marketing.

We are a member of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), a network of over 200 citizens groups in more than 100 countries.

www.babymilkaction.org

www.ibfan.org

Baby Milk Action is organising a demonstration at the British Library, Euston Road, London at 11:00 am on 13 December as people arrive for the award ceremony of the Nestlé Children's Book Prize. Baby Milk Action aims to raise awareness Nestlé's record of aggressive marketing of baby foods, which contributes to the unnecessary death and suffering of infants around the world. Companies should be abiding by international marketing standards adopted by the World Health Assembly, but Nestlé is found to be responsible for more violations than any other company. It is one of the world's most boycotted companies as a result. Nestlé is also accused of failing to act on reports of child slavery in its cocoa supply chain.

Nestlé is sponsoring the children's book prize organised by the Booktrust. The book prize is a scheme where short-listed books are distributed to a number of schools, whose students vote for their favourites. Campaigners say Nestlé involvement is an attempt to divert criticism from its activities, improve its image amongst students and reposition itself as a responsible company. The main element of the sponsorship appears to be providing public relations services to the prize through the PR company, Spreckley's. Hence, the press release refers not only to the book prize, but states Nestlé UK is: "a major supporter of charities helping children and teenagers." Spreckley is a specialist in:

"CRISIS AND ISSUES MANAGEMENT – All businesses face problems at some point and the best strategy is to be prepared. We can help clients devise a crisis and issues strategy plan, as well as providing counsel and advice when incidents arises."

In addition to its aggressive marketing of baby foods, Nestlé has been taken to court in the United States by the International Labour Rights Fund (ILRF) for failing to act to end child slavery in its cocoa supply chain in the Ivory Coast. Nestlé has also refused to support moves to bring farmers within the Fairtrade scheme in Ivory Coast, meaning registered farmers are unable to sell all of their produce within the scheme. Nestlé buys the surplus on the open market at lesser prices, according to ILRF. If cocoa is bought within the Fairtrade scheme the farmers are guaranteed a fair prize and are paid a community surplus used to ensure children go to school.

Patti Rundall OBE, Policy Director at Baby Milk Action, said:

"The Nestlé book prize is a great opportunity for teachers and students to investigate and discuss a whole host of issues about corporate power, public relations and human rights. Our Seeing through the Spin pack encourages critical analysis of materials from all sources and includes an exercise where students develop their own vetting procedure for corporate and campaign materials offered to schools."

"If schools question or even pull out of the book prize because of the contradictions of Nestlé's involvement it will send a strong message and help our campaign to protect infant health and mothers' rights. If the Booktrust ends the sponsorship that would be a victory for infants around the world and end this route of corporate propaganda for Nestlé. The long-running Nestlé Perrier Award at the Edinburgh Fringe ended after 25 years this year, so longevity has nothing to do with keeping the link with Nestlé going. The Award continues in Edinburgh with a new sponsor."

In 2003 the Booktrust scrapped plans for a Nestlé teenage book prize after leading authors said they would refuse to accept it. This has gone ahead with a charitable trust backing it instead.

For supporting documents, pictures and video see www.babymilkaction.org/press/press12dec06.html Email: mikebrady@babymilkaction.org Tel: Patti Rundall on 07786 523493 or Mike Brady on 020 8816 8210.

Notes follow on page 2.

Notes for editors

1. You can see a news report about the controversy of the Nestlé children's book prize and wider issues of campaigning groups and companies targeting schools in the Teachers' TV news of 10 November 2006. See the website version of the press release www.babymilkaction.org/press/press12dec06.html for links to view the programme.

2. Nestlé said in a statement to Teachers' TV:

Nestlé is a socially responsible company. It is regrettable that a UK campaign group is attempting to undermine a unique and well-regarded book prize, aimed at rewarding high standards in children's literature."

See Baby Milk Action's Campaign Coordinator's response to this on his daily-updated blog at: <http://boycottnestle.blogspot.com/2006/11/nestl-statement-of-regret-over.html>

3. Baby Milk Action is a not-for-profit organisation and the UK member of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN). It is funded by membership fees, merchandise sales and donations, along with grants from development organisations and charitable trusts.
4. The boycott of Nestlé focuses on Nescafé, its flagship product, but Baby Milk Action lists the brands from which Nestlé profits so boycott supporters can avoid them all. Guardian reported on 1 September 2005: "What do Nike, Coca Cola, McDonald's and Nestlé have in common? Apart from being among the world's most well-known brands, they happen to be the most boycotted brands on the planet. That finding came from this week's global GMIPoll, an online opinion poll that surveyed 15,500 consumers in 17 countries. Nestlé emerges as the most the most boycotted brand in the UK because of what respondents consider its "unethical use and promotion of formula feed for babies in third world countries."
5. Nestlé won a global internet poll for the world's 'least responsible company' coinciding with the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2005. Nestlé received 29% of the votes. This was more than twice that of joint second Monsanto and Dow Chemicals (of Bhopal infamy), each on 14% (see website for details).
6. According to the World Health Organisation, 1.5 million infants die around the world every year because they are not breastfed.
7. Nestlé is one of the companies targeted by Baby Milk Action November 2006 Campaign for Ethical Marketing action sheet, over its attempts to undermine legislation introduced in the Philippines to regulate the marketing of baby foods.