

Diocese Responds to Boycott Questions

Prepared by the International Justice and Peace Commission, Diocese of Rochester

Why is Nestle's Corp. being boycotted? Why not other companies which also market infant formula?

Nestle is not an American company; therefore, other actions such as "resolutions" by stockholders are unavailable to persons concerned with this issue. Therefore, the only means available to exert pressure is through a boycott. Companies such as Bristol-Myers, Abbott Laboratories and American Home Products have been served with "shareholder resolutions" from concerned shareholders asking management to implement the international code of marketing at all levels of operations.

Stouffer's does not manufacture or sell infant formula in the Third World. Why then should it be boycotted?

Stouffer's is wholly owned by the Nestle's Corp. The boycott has been called against all Nestle's products and

services which include both food products as well as the many services of a hotel. To be selective in boycotting only certain Nestle's products or services or those marked "Nestle" would appear arbitrary and incomplete. There have been cases in which companies or products of individual companies have moved out of Nestle's ownership (Jarsberg Cheese, McVitties and James Keillor companies). As soon as this happens, they have been removed from the boycott list.

What kind of boycott is this? Are you going to picket?

This is what is known as a "consumer's boycott." In a consumer boycott the issues being addressed are brought to the awareness of the community and an appeal is made to each individual to take a look at the information provided and take a stance. Therefore, picketing is not a planned part of this type of boycott.

A successful boycott of Stouffer's would create hardship and maybe unemployment for 13,495 Stouffer's families. How does this help anyone?

When one speaks of unemployment resulting from a boycott there are two assumptions contained therein. First, that the Nestle's Corp. has no ability to change its policies and comply with the WHO/UNICEF code. Nestle's has already made some change and perhaps will enter into full compliance with the WHO Code shortly. In this case, the boycott would be immediately terminated. Second, unemployment would imply that there is a large endorsement of the boycott freely made by many individuals and groups. The INFACOT Coalition has issued a call to conscience and people who choose not to purchase products or patronize a hotel, do so out of conviction of their own individual consciences.

In this personal stance, a large number of persons in the community express by their actions the conviction that the Nestle's Corp.'s actions are morally wrong. The aim of the boycott is to change Nestle's policies and make it comply with the WHO/UNICEF code. It is our hope that Stouffer, concerned about the welfare of its employees, would use all the means at its disposal to convince Nestle to comply with the code.

Won't this cause local people to be unemployed if the boycott is successful?

If a local group is planning an event and chooses not to hold this event at the Stouffer's Hotel, it still will be held at another local facility therefore there is no loss of jobs for the community.

The Nestle's Corp. contends that it does comply with the WHO/UNICEF code and accuses INFACOT of making unsubstantiated charges of violations.

Two days previous to the conference of religious leaders, INFACOT provided Bishop Clark and others with photocopies of labels which clearly violated the provisions of the code and copies of a telex from field workers in Jakarta, Indonesia, and Manila, the Philippines, specifying violations which currently happen.

The Nestle's Corp. has appointed an Infant Formula Audit Commission. They contend that any report of a violation can be brought before that commission which will investigate them and resolve them. Why isn't this satisfactory?

The Nestle International Boycott Committee has repeatedly called for an independent audit commission. The fact that this commission is funded and was appointed by Nestle, that its members were flown to Berne, Switzerland, and offers were made to pay them an honorarium or make a donation to their favorite charity raises questions about the ability of this commission to assess facts in an unbiased way.

In a letter from the Stouffer's Corp., the following quote was contained:

"It (the commission) shall answer inquiries from the public, as it deems necessary (understanding, of course) regarding the Nestle's implementation of the WHO code or compliance with the National Code."

To date the commission has not deemed necessary a response to inquiries raised by INFACOT having to do with a letter signed by the director of Nestle's subsidiary, FILIPRO, which resulted in successfully stalling a national code in the Philippines.

This staff has been in frequent communication with Bishop Richardo Ramirez who provided us with the reasons why he decided to serve on the commission. He consistently encouraged us to continue participation in the boycott which he considers effective in pressuring Nestle to move toward full compliance. In his letter to INFACOT notifying it of his resignation due to being named bishop of Las Cruces, N. Mex., he states:

"I support the boycott because Nestle has not given instructions at this time which completely implement the WHO Code."

Hasn't the United Methodist Church withdrawn its support for the boycott?

The Council on Ministries of the UMC never endorsed the boycott. Thirty-four regional conferences and several of its agencies including the Board of Global Ministries and the Board of Church and Societies have endorsed the boycott and continue to do so. The task force that did not endorse the boycott had as its chair the treasurer of the Nestle's Audit Commission, Mr. Philip Wogaman, and one of its members also is a member of the audit commission, Ms. Mildred Randal. This may raise some questions about conflict of interest in regard to recommendations to draw up the boycott.

Do you disapprove of everything that Nestle's has done so far? Hasn't there been improvement?

Certainly the appointment of the audit commission and a new set of instructions released at the Oct. 14 press conference were positive steps toward full compliance by Nestle to the WHO/UNICEF Code. The purpose is persuasion in regard to corporate policy by people of conscience. Steps have been positive but remain incomplete. As Bishop Clark stated at the press conference, it is our hope and prayer that Nestle would soon recognize the importance of its strict compliance to the WHO/UNICEF Code and announce and carry out policies which would become life-giving instead of life-taking.



The Fire in the Thornbush Dialogue

Various Opinions On Pastoral

No. 6: "What I do hope is that this pastoral letter will offer us, as the local Church of Rochester, an opportunity to reflect, pray and act upon many questions in light of the faith which makes us one."

By Denise Mack

When the bishop met with the Diocesan Task Force on Women last September, he gave an eye-opening account of response to his pastoral. His report of affirmation from other bishops, religious orders, colleges and from parishes far removed from this diocese was heartening.

The reactions I have heard are less formal, but also interesting, I think. Following are some:

John: I could not get through the whole thing, but with a study group, I will. We have agreed to follow that guide. My daughters have helped me to realize the need for talking about our feelings. I know that good will come of it.

Mary: I read the letter and cried because I just do not see women treated with any credibility. Where I am, you are treated worse with your degree in theology than without one!

Irene: I forced myself to read the pastoral letter through. I had given up on the Church on this issue. It says more and is better than I thought it would be. But we as church have a very long way to go before women cease to be subservient to men.

Dorothy: You cannot imagine how pleased to women in our parish are that our bishop has asked us to discuss the letter. We are out in the country; no one even had a copy, but the Courier Journal reminded us of it, how to get it and to study it. These women are saying, "The bishop really cares about us!"

Jane: We should put an article in the church bulletin to see if anyone will come to discuss the pastoral. I'm afraid Father will think I'm

a troublemaker if I talk about this.

Jim: Have you compromised yourself by being on the task force? Are you being co-opted? It does not advocate women priests. Yet, there is no theological foundation for refusing to ordain women. Therefore, the document, good as it is in many respects, limps as a teaching.

Ruth: But will men discuss the letter? Only with honest and open dialogue among priests, bishops, factory workers, homemakers will people come to realize the problems that some churchy mindsets create and/or ignore. People who are sensitive to women's pain, and to the pain men experience, need to share that sensitivity with those who think women or men "have it made" or are "doing fine."

Louise: In my parish, women have preached and girls have served at the altar. I am very sad that meaningless rules can deny such beautiful girls of service. It just doesn't make any sense. I have prayed about this. I am making ministry my life's work. I study. I cannot see the resistance to women deacons. We had them in the early Church. Why are Church lawmakers so afraid of women? My daughters and their friends are all in their 20s and have told me they will not go to a church that "is so silly as to not allow girls to serve at the altar." I do not think they are unusual.

Rosemary: There has got to be better understanding between people. Dialogue should help us grow in understanding one another. I wish we would let down our defenses. It is not easy. Those who have had their way for years don't think any other way will work. So the church loses those who think and question. The bishop is on the right track. Some of his brother priests want to share their burdens but not their authority. Then again, some are so humble, you think you are with Jesus himself. I am so glad the bishop refers to Jesus' treatment of women in his letter. Jesus did not stereotype us.

Denise Mack is director of Religious Education at St. Rita's Parish, Webster.

Smokers, Want to Quit?

The United Cancer Council is sponsoring an evening Smoking Withdrawal Program beginning Tuesday, Dec. 7. Six sessions are planned, running from 7:30 to 9 p.m. at the council office, 1441 East Ave.

The program is built on group support and emphasizes a lifestyle change to become a non-smoker. Registration will be accepted until one week before the first meeting.

Further information is available from 473-8230.

Business in Diocese

Thomas F. McBrien, a member of the finance committee of St. Mary of the Lake Parish in Ontario, and financial administrator of Ontario Metal Supply Corp., has been named to the board of directors of Rochester Community Baseball, Inc.

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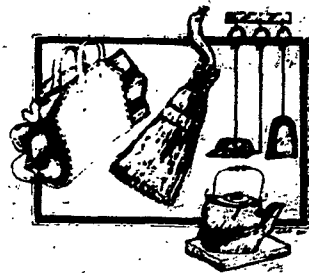
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Happy Thanksgiving Fran & Mary Pierce

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