



protecting communities
from commercialism

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Dear Ms. Bellamy

We are unsatisfied with your August 13 letter dismissing our request that UNICEF protect children's health by severing its partnership with the McDonald's Corp., and canceling "McDonald's World Children's Day."

McDonald's is the world's largest fast food chain. It peddles precisely the kinds of high calorie meals that children should avoid, given the international epidemic of childhood obesity and soaring incidence of type 2 diabetes.

You write that you are "proud" of UNICEF's "tradition of eliciting corporate support." But serving as a public relations prop for McDonald's, along with the predictable harm to children's health, is nothing to be proud of. Your partnership with McDonald's will likely damage UNICEF's integrity, good name and long-term fundraising prospects far more than any pittance McDonald's may offer.

McDonald's exploitation of children is well established. For example, a 1997 decision by a British judge, The Hon. Mr. Justice Bell, found that McDonald's "exploits children" through its advertising. It is hard to understand how UNICEF could justify partnering with a firm that exploits children, or why UNICEF would abet this exploitation.

We are alarmed that UNICEF has become a marketing tool of the obesity lobby. As if "McDonald's World Children's Day" is not enough, this year:

- UNICEF endorsed the so-called "Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition" ("GAIN") which is a coalition to promote market access and consumption of unhealthy processed foods across the planet. Members of GAIN include Kraft Foods Inc. (a subsidiary of Philip Morris), Procter & Gamble Co. and H.J. Heinz (a violator of the baby-food Code, according to the International Baby Food Action Network).
- The U.S. Fund for UNICEF endorsed the "Coca-Cola Unity Chain," providing a public relations boost for the Coca-Cola Co., which aggressively markets its high-sugar, caffeinated soda pop to the world's children.

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UNICEF's support for the junk food industry seems to be part of your longstanding insensitivity to the toll of corporate marketing on children. For example, a 1990 internal Philip Morris USA memo recounts your comments about the company: "I like Philip Morris...I think it is a great company."

Does UNICEF have standards that a corporation must meet to be a UNICEF partner? Or will UNICEF rent itself out indiscriminately as a public relations tool to the highest bidder? Is there any corporate conduct that UNICEF finds too unacceptable to partner with?

We ask you, once again, to drop your partnership with McDonalds, cancel "McDonald's World Children's Day" and to stop acting as an agent of the global junk food industry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Ruskin". The signature is stylized with a large initial "G" and "R".

Gary Ruskin
Executive Director