Counternutritional Messages of TV Ads Aimed at Children

Editor's Note: The following testimony was presented to the Subcommittee on the Consumer of the Senate Commerce Committee, March 2, 1972. It has been edited slightly to conform to the style of JNE.

My name is Joan Gussow. I am a nutrition educator on the faculty of the program in nutrition at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City, and a candidate for a doctorate in education at that institution. I am here today to give you a progress report on a food advertising project which I recently undertook, together with eight of the students in my department. Before I present the report, I would like briefly to share with you the origins of my involvement in this area.

I came into nutrition as a professional belatedly. I graduated from college with a pre-medical degree, was a Time magazine researcher for six years, a free-lance writer briefly, what is known as "just a housewife" and mother for some years, and most recently, co-author of a book concerning the relationships between the physical hazards of poverty and the mental development of poor children.

I began my formal study of nutrition in 1969. Thus I am in one sense a late-comer to the field—my personal interest and concern are longstanding, but my professional status is relatively recent.

There is at least one advantage in entering the field as belatedly as I did at the graduate level. I seem to have avoided the undergraduate conditioning which has made it so difficult for many more experienced professionals in the field to look objectively at the American food supply. One of the things that troubles many of the dietitians and nutritionists I know is the difficulty they have had in freeing themselves from the assumptions of what I have come to call the "Nutritional Dogma." The tenets of this dogma are brief: "Americans are the Best Fed People in History" and "The American Food Supply is the Best in the World."

I came into the field of nutrition because—as a shopper, cook, and mother—I had heard those reassuring slogans, and I had ceased to believe them. They did not square with what I saw happening in the supermarket, in friends' kitchens, and in park playgrounds.

Over the years that I had gone to the supermarket, I had watched it turn from a food store into an amusement park. I watched juice drinks, juice cocktails, and dry powdered breakfast mixes crowd out fruit juices on the grocery shelf. I watched the frozen food cabinets expand to fill aisle after aisle, offering the casual shopper everything from a frozen instant omelette for breakfast to a frozen hero sandwich for lunch and frozen chow mein for dinner.

I saw the shelves fill up with an overwhelming array of cookies, crackers, breakfast cereals, soft drinks—and snacks and snacks and snacks. Everything from Bugles to Funions, from Onyums to Screaming Yellow Zonkers—and fake bacon made out of bargain basement soybeans to sell at Fifth Avenue prices. I have since learned that the number of items in the average supermarket went from around 900 in 1928—the year I was born—to over 7,500 in 1968. Large supermarkets now carry more than 10,000 items. All I knew at the time was that the things I wanted to buy were occupying a smaller and smaller proportion of stores that were growing larger and larger.

During these years, I watched children I knew growing up on snacks—munching from bags of chips, or crackles, or pops, or chews, dipping into boxes of breakfast cereals made in nursery school colors and intensely sweet and artificial flavors. These same children were always too full for lunch or dinner or whatever meal it was they were supposed to eat. I watched mothers, affluent, middleclass mothers, take their preschoolers to the park with a bag of miniature donuts and a bottle of juice drink for the child's lunch.

**Back to School**

I believed that good nutrition meant good health, and I was convinced that the children I saw could not be healthy on what they were eating. But I was not a nutritionist, so I went back to school to learn to become one. The essence of what I learned was this:

1. I found out that we do not really know the nutritional status of children or anyone else in this country—first, because we have not looked at it, and, second, because—for most nutrients—we do not have very good indicators of malnutrition unless it is severe. This fact has made us crisis-oriented. Because we don't have reliable physical and biochemical measures that tell us whether someone is just "not very well nourished," we have tended to pay very little attention to preventive nutrition.

2. I found out that we don't really know what people in the U.S. are eating because we haven't done any regular surveying of the diets of individuals; it is, in any case, singularly difficult to find out what individuals eat by asking them—as you can find out for yourself if you try to write down the exact amounts of everything you have eaten in the last 24 hours.

3. The third thing I found out was that most professionals were much more worried about the excesses of the "health food" stores than the excesses of what at least one observer has called the "unhealthy food stores."

4. Finally, I learned that most of the people in the field who were involved on a day-to-day basis in attempting to influence what people ate were quite discouraged. While therapeutic dietitians have had some marked successes in teaching people who were ill how best to eat to live, most of those attempting to teach what is called normal nutrition had a strong sense of frustration. They knew, without really knowing why, that they were not shaping, or even affecting to any significant degree, the nutritional habits of the country. They found it hard to argue—even in their own defense—against those who described nutrition education as a disaster.

So I found I had to ask myself where people were actually learning what to eat. On what basis did the shoppers who walked down the aisles of supermarkets make their decisions on what to choose from among those 10,000 items? If the professionals were not reaching them, who was? That is what led me to advertising. For it is an article of faith among nutritionists that the reason we have so much trouble altering people's diets for the better is because eating habits, once established, are hard to change. Yet somehow, between 1928 and 1968, people had learned to eat thousands of new food items. Some change agent much more persuasive than we were must have been at work.

What I want to report on is only a piece of an exploration into the role of advertising in all media in shaping the eating habits of Americans. We have begun by looking at the television advertising of foods in order to find out what foods are advertised to whom, how they...
are advertised, and whether the total advertising message is working for or against good nutrition.

**Saturday Morning Ads**

The project involved eight masters' degree students, myself, and Ruth Eshleman, a dietitian and nutritionist with over 20 years of experience. For this portion of the study, we viewed Saturday morning children's TV, and, having familiarized ourselves with the products and the ads which were currently promoting them, we worked from story boards—that is, photo boards carrying still pictures and the written scripts of the commercials. By these means, the students were exposed to more than 300 food ads, and I, myself, to at least 500. I have personally monitored each of the major networks on assorted Saturday mornings, reviewed with Miss Eshleman all the story boards—some 300, and discussed at length with the students the conclusions which I am presenting to you here.

I should point out that I, myself, did not suddenly become interested in television commercials in the last week of January, 1972. I have scowled at children's television commercials off and on for years; but until we undertook this project, I had never really analyzed the ads. I had only deplored them, and, in my concern about them, I found myself strangely isolated from the other members of my profession. I had remarked earlier that nutritionists seem to be more worried about health food stores than about the supermarkets. Until very recently, this misplaced concern extended even to advertising.

Soon after I entered the field, I had an incredible conversation with a dietitian of long experience, to whom I expressed my bewilderment at the amount of time and energy the profession seemed to invest in fighting health food promoters. "Oh," she said to me, "that's because their advertising is so dishonest."

I found the remark astonishing. I couldn't imagine that anyone ever saw health food store advertising unless he was already in a health food store or was one of a small but stalwart band of readers of *Prevention* magazine. How was it possible to conceive that such advertising was misleading more people than the commercials being pushed out every day over the electronic media? I finally decided that if the profession was ever to take commercials seriously, someone would have to seriously study them.

There are a number of things one can find out about television commercials without looking at them. Three weeks or so after they are aired, complete listings of all commercials which have been broadcast are available. From these reports we already knew that food, drink, and vitamin products were much more heavily advertised to children than to adults. Robert Choate had previously reported that during the week of April 11, 1971, food, drink, and vitamin ads—which accounted for 26% of all commercials on adult television—accounted for 64% of the commercials to children. Since then, however, things have got considerably worse. When we checked the total listings for the week we monitored, we found that out of 388 network commercials run during 29 hours of children's television, 82% were for ingestible items—food, drink, candy, gum, or vitamin pills.

These percentage figures are actually low because they omit local spot announcements which are heavily weighted toward food. NBC also lowers the average since it carries only about one-third as many commercials on its children's hours as do the other networks. On the Saturday morning we monitored, for example, NBC ran only 44 ads—33 of them for edible products—in five hours of children's programming. In the same time period, ABC ran 112 commercials, of which 87% were for food, drinks, or vitamins—that is, only 15 ads in five hours were for anything you couldn't eat. In six hours that same Saturday, CBS ran 126 commercials, of which 87% were once again for edible products.

If a child had gotten up at 8:00 that morning and turned on CBS, he would have seen no commercials for anything except food and vitamins until after 9:00. In other words, by the time his folks crawled out of bed to feed him breakfast, he would have already been subjected to 27 ardent salesmen trying to tempt him to eat their products.

**Which Products?**

We have now analyzed the distribution of the 319 network food commercials which ran on the 29 hours of children's TV during the week we sampled. The chart I have here shows the distribution of ads into product categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast cereals</td>
<td>38½%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookies, candy, gum, popcorn, and other snacks</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamins</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverages and beverage mixes</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frozen waffles and pop-tarts</td>
<td>7½%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned pasta</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned desserts, drive-ins, peanut butter, oranges</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This distribution is really no surprise. With minor variations, it is virtually indistinguishable from what one could have found by looking at children's television any time over the last year or so, as I have done. Since my long acquaintance had made me something of a biased witness, I wanted the nutrition students to tell me what the impact of this barrage of commercials would be on them.

Most people in nutrition, like most other adults, have never subjected themselves to a morning of children's television. When these nutrition education students did so, they found the total impact blatantly anti-nutrition.

On the Saturday morning we monitored, one of the students began her morning by logging 21 food commercials between 9:17 and 10:25, starting with Quake (a cereal) and ending with Pals, shaped and colored vitamins. When she reached ad number 22 for Kellogg's Rice Krispies, she wrote, under "general reaction," "I can't believe it. There are millions of Kellogg's commercials." On ad number 23, her comment was "sick and tired," and by number 25 she was up to "disbelief." By the 33rd food commercial, we felt obliged to relieve her.

Watching children's television if one likes and respects food—and children—is sickening.

**Food Habits: Learned, not Inborn**

Nourishing ourselves is a learned skill. The ingestion of food and drink is a physiologic survival behavior which, unlike other physiologic behaviors such as breathing and sleeping, must be taught. (If you doubt that eating behavior has to be taught, remember that a one-year-old human will eagerly swallow a bottle of aspirin tablets or a cigarette butt.) Humans beings have always had to discover how to select from all those things they could potentially swallow, those substances which would sustain life and health. And this nutritional wisdom, once discovered by trial and error, has traditionally been passed on from one generation to the next as rules about what is good to eat.

Children left to their own devices cannot choose a nutritious diet, though an early study by a researcher named Clara Davis is widely misquoted to.

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defend the notion that they can. Dr. Davis took a number of newly weaned children who had never eaten solid food and exposed them to a variety of foods, which were served unseasoned and unmixed. Even salt was not added to foods but was served separately in a dish. No sugar was available at all. The table below shows the list of foods offered.

1. **Meats** (muscle cuts)
   - Beef
   - Lamb
   - Chicken

2. **Glandular Organs**
   - Liver
   - Kidney
   - Brains
   - Sweetbreads (thymus)

3. **Sea Food**
   - Sea fish (haddock)

4. **Cereals**
   - Whole wheat
   - Oatmeal (Scotch)
   - Barley (whole grains)
   - Corn meal (yellow)
   - Rye (Ry-Krisp)

5. **Bone Products**
   - Bone marrow (beef and veal)
   - Bone jelly (soluble bone subst.)

6. **Eggs**

7. **Mills**
   - Grade A raw milk
   - Grade A raw whole lactic milk

8. **Fruits**
   - Apples
   - Oranges
   - Bananas
   - Tomatoes
   - Peaches or pineapples

9. **Vegetables**
   - Lettuce
   - Cabbage
   - Spinach
   - Cauliflower
   - Peas
   - Beets
   - Carrots
   - Turnips
   - Potatoes

10. **Incidentals**
    - Sea salt

As you can see from the table, the diet offered consisted basically of various meats and eggs, milks, fruits and vegetables, and grains. These, not by accident, are what nutritionists call the four food groups. They are the foods from which we say children ought to have some servings every day in order to get the nutrients which they need. Given a choice of only these foods, Dr. Davis found that children could select a well-balanced diet.

Note that among the foods offered, however, there was not one snack food, not a single rich dessert, not a single soda, candy bar, or colored sugared breakfast cereal. The diet offered by Dr. Davis was so nutritious that it would have been hard for a child to go very far wrong. The diet sold to children by television, on the other hand, is so impoverished that it makes it impossible for a child not to go wrong.

Thus, whatever one may think of individual products or of individual commercials, it is clear that the diet children's television commercials are promoting is an imbalanced one. Yet most advertisers deny that they are teaching nutrition—they point out, in fact, that nutritional messages do not move the product.

**TV's Implicit Messages**

Assessing television's impact as a teaching medium is a trap. Traditionally, when television is attacked for failing to live up to its potential, we are told that it is not a good medium for teaching—and we are given examples of its failure to teach. To suggest that television does not teach anything to small children who sit in front of it for up to six hours a day is, of course, arrant nonsense—a fact which the success of Sesame Street has tended to underscore. To say that we have not yet learned to measure all that it teaches appears to be true. What is misleading, I think, is that we often fail to look at the right messages. The most powerful messages television delivers are its implicit one—the things it sells us when we don't even know we are being sold. The heavy advertising of beer and soft drinks, for example, delivers a message far more potent than the urging to buy any single product. It terms of this message it doesn't really matter whether someone going to the refrigerator gets out a Pepsi or a Coke, a 7-Up or a Budweiser. What matters is that a thirsty American in the 1970s goes to the refrigerator to open up a container rather than to the sink to open up the tap. That behavior has been sold to us.

What is a nutritional message? On public television's Sesame Street, one of the most popular characters is a Cookie Monster, which predictably and amusingly devours boxes of cookies. The Cookie Monster is a nutrition message—and one which puts Sesame Street in the same nutritional league with other children's programming.

On commercial TV it is a nutrition message—and a positive one—when the Campbell's Soup Company in advertising its products shows them as part of a complete meal whose nutritional value has been considered in planning the ad. It is a negative nutrition message when 15% of all the commercials aimed at children advertise vitamins—"to keep you growing right even if you don't eat right." It is nonsense to say that the companies who advertise ingestible products to children do not or cannot give nutrition messages; they are doing so all the time, and many of them are, at least by implication, lies.

One of the messages delivered by children's television commercials has to do with what is not advertised. As we have seen, the food groups are very poorly represented at the table television sets for children. There is no milk (though there are things to make milk "palatable"), and except for hot cocoa mixes there are no milk products—not even ice cream. There are no eggs, no meat, no cheese, no vegetables, and—but only of late—just a single fruit. That is a nutrition message. That tells little children what kinds of foods we do not think it is important to excite them about.

To a nutrition educator, plain old food—not food products but food—is conspicuous by its absence from the children's hours. When I asked the students to sum up what they thought a child would learn about food from all this, one of them said "If a child had to depend on television to know what food was, he'd never know."

There are thousands of good and nutritious and valuable products on the grocery shelves. Unfortunately, these products are seldom promoted with any nutritional sophistication even to adults, and, so far as we have been able to determine, they are almost never promoted to children, informatively or otherwise. Let me give a couple of examples. Libby, McNeill and Libby makes lots of fruits and vegetables and meats, canned and frozen. On children's television, Libby is represented by only one product—a set of three "fun" frozen meals containing a strangely unbalanced mix of high-carbohydrate foods that, in the words on the box "youngsters prefer." The dinner comes complete with a packet of "chocolate super stuff" to add to your milk—the whole "seasoned and proportioned for the younger tummy"—whatever that means.

Kraftco is another company with a line of products regularly advertised on grown-up television—cheese, milk, cottage cheese, yoghurt, and even ice cream—all of them good foods for children to eat. Yet on children's television, Kraftco promotes candy.
For Kratt and Libby, as for every advertiser, the decision on what and where to advertise is, of course, based on marketing wisdom, not nutritional wisdom. Unfortunately, the combined impact of all these marketing decisions delivers a rather stunningly counter-nutritional message to our children. We may notice what foods are absent. To a child what is present is insistent.

**Findings and Comments**

Our intention when we looked at commercials was to pick out the bad or misleading ones. What we found was that the whole was considerably worse and more misleading than the sum of the parts. But some of the parts are misleading too—and I will comment very briefly on a few of them.

Something approaching 40% of children's food commercials are for cereals. In light of Mr. Choate's attention to them, I will say only this. As Mr. Choate knows, I have many quarrels with his cereal evaluations—and even with the excessive enrichment which has been their aftermath. His basic point, however, that the cereal manufacturers were advertising almost exclusively their worst cereals to children is as true now as it was when he first said it—even if he doesn't think so. Cereals on children's television are oversweetened, overpriced, and overpromoted, and, I think, at times overenriched.

Nutritionists as a group have what I think is an unfair reputation as pleasure prohibitionists. When we got around to considering what we ought to say about candy, cookie, and Cracker-jack commercials, one of the students expressed the hope that we wouldn't seem to come out saying "children shouldn't eat sweets." I hope I can make it clear that Hershey's chocolate syrup ought to be poured over and into everything. "It makes even milk a dessert" the copy says—as if milk needed to be a dessert. Another ad for Hershey's Instant shows a lot of cows against the background of what appears to be San Francisco. They are leaving the country, a voice says, because kids have stopped drinking their milk. Chocolate saves the day, of course. Now that we have Hershey's Instant which makes milk taste like a Hershey Bar, all the cows are going back to the farms. Kids shouldn't be sold on the idea that milk, as milk, is unacceptable. We don't think milk has to taste like a Hershey Bar in order to taste good—and, what is probably more important, children don't think so either unless someone has taught them to.

There are some good commercials for orange juice on television now—unfortunately they do not run on children's television. On children's TV, the closest approach to "fruit juice" is a Hi-C, Hawaiian Punch, Tang, and Kool Aid. None of these is a fruit juice, though some of them contain fruit juice.

I had an experience recently which is relevant here. I had talked to a group of high school girls and, after the talk, a girl of about 17 came up to me and asked what she should drink since she didn't really be better off drinking fruit juice. I said "Well, you might just as well drink a glass of water and take a vitamin pill. It would have more nutrition, less additives, and less sugar." But, I said, she'd really be better off drinking fruit juice. It turned out that she wasn't really sure what fruit juice was—that is, she asked me if I meant "Orange Plus"—one of those half-synthetic, half-natural fruit juice products which are proliferating like rabbits in your grocer's freezer and on his shelves. It's probably not surprising—it's getting harder and harder to find fruit juice in the market even if you know what it is; but the incident is depressing. We in nutrition don't really know the nutritional implications of this increasing dependence on progressively more synthetic products. If we are going to raise a generation of children who do not know what fruit juice is, hadn't we better make that decision ourselves and not leave it up to the advertisers to make it for us?

**One Positive Note**

There is one positive note in the fruit picture. Sunkist has begun to advertise oranges—delightfully on children's television and sensually on adult television—and some of the ads are not only appealing but nutritionally informative. It's refreshing, as you sit there watching children's TV and drowning in syrup, to have a fresh fruit suddenly pushed at you as imaginatively and vigorously as a breakfast confection or a sweet snack food.

It was difficult choosing the most offensive vitamin ad—they're all nutritionally outrageous. Their overall message—that vitamin pills make up for poor eating habits—is a lie. If it weren't so misleading, such a message would be actually funny, coming as it does hard on the heels of all those commercials selling poor eating habits.

The single most offensive commercial is one for Chocolate Zestabs, in which a loveable old cartoon professor who has invented chocolate chip cookies, chocolate sundaes, and the like has now invented chocolate vitamins covered like M & M's with a colorful candy coating. (We are not told whether or not they melt in your hand). "Mom," the copy says, "since kids don't always eat right, one Chocolate Zestab gives them all the vitamins they normally need in a day along with their favorite thing to eat, chocolate." This linking of candy with vitamins is both dangerous—children should not be encouraged to confuse candy and pills of any kind—and nutritionally insidious.

**Ads: How Effective?**

So much for the commercials. What our survey has told us is that nutrition messages are numerous on children's television, that few of them even hint at proper eating habits, and that altogether they encourage poor eating habits. A few of them, especially the vitamin ads, are directly misleading. In short, the messages are there but are they effective? What are children learning from them?

One of our participating students told a first-hand story of a four-year-old boy who was watching television when a Cheerios commercial came on. The message of the commercial was, in effect, that after eating Cheerios you'd feel "groovy." "Mommy," the little boy said, "that ad lies. I ate some Cheerios at nursery school, and I felt just the same afterwards as before."

I suppose that anecdote ought to be encouraging—it's not. For one thing, I don't really like the idea of a four-year-old skeptic. For another, as a believer in good nutrition, I think eating the right foods does, in the long run, make you feel groovy. If a child learns, as he...
should, that these promises of instant energy and strength are lies, will he conclude that the food he eats has nothing to do with how he feels and that he should eat whatever at the moment is made to seem appealing to him, namely the sweet and delicious, chocolatey or fruity, rich syrupy goodness that pours out of his TV set?

How does a child decide what tastes good? Clara Davis' study—which I mentioned earlier—demonstrates that children find a surprisingly large number of tastes attractive, even some we would consider strong or unusual, if their appetites are uncorrupted. Another early study is relevant here, I think. In this experiment, nursery school children given a choice of two tastes initially preferred a pleasant-flavored chocolate over a very sweet sugar which had a medicinal taste. Subsequently, the children were read a story in which the chocolate taste the children liked was portrayed as tasting very bad while the overly sweet unpleasant taste was enjoyed by the story's hero. As a result of hearing the story—which lasted about five minutes—the children reversed their taste preference. Immediately following the story-telling and for some days after, they showed a preference for the bad-tasting substance which they had originally disliked.

Without citing the relevant studies, I would like to bring up one more apparent fact. There is some evidence that an attraction to sweetness, as a sought-for taste, may be present at birth—perhaps even before birth while a child is still in the womb.

What I think it is fair to conclude from putting together these pieces of information is this: 1) that when adults preselect a variety of nutritious foods to offer children—children who have nothing else influencing them, can learn to enjoy and eat all of them; 2) that young children can be taught to enjoy even an initially unpalatable taste if it is invested with a positive meaning; and 3) that a sweet taste may well draw a child to a food, all other things being equal.

We have seen, however, that all other things are by no means equal. The foods advertised to children tout a curiously limited range of flavors—from a kind of fruity to a kind of chocolatey sweetness—what I would call a dessert taste. No food on children's television is crisply fresh like an apple or a salad. Nothing on children's television is tart, or spicy, or meaty. Everything is fun, sweet, sparkly, gay, colorful, thick and chocolatey, magicky, or crunchily delicious. The appeal is repeatedly a sweet one. It's either a chocolatey mouthful or, in the words of one particularly revolting commercial, a "frootful snooful."

It is possible to stand fast against this if one is nutritionally informed, stubborn as a mule, and as morally self-righteous as I am. But how does a mother stand against it who is unsure of herself nutritionally and trying hard to be a good —and popular—mother? How especially does she stand against it when products as outrageous as Count Chocula and Frankenberry carry proudly on their boxes the admonition to mothers: "This is a nutritious cereal . . . it provides eight of the essential vitamins and iron . . ." etc?

I would like to believe that children and their mothers are not being sold by these insistent messages. I would like to believe it, but the profit pictures of the heaviest advertisers and the evidence of my own eyes in the marketplace convince me that it isn't true. I am also convinced by some rather astonishing recent statistics accumulated by Scott Ward and his associates at the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration on the effects of television advertising on children. Dr. Ward found, among other things, that attention to commercials was greatest among the youngest children and that they were most concerned with products which "relate to immediate impulsive needs." But few preschoolers do the shopping. How do they satisfy their "impulsive needs?" Dr. Ward has a table which he entitles "Percent of Mothers 'Usually' Yielding to Child's Purchase Influence Attempts." For five- to seven-year old children, the following were the percentages of mothers "usually" yielding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakfast cereals</th>
<th>88%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Snack foods</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Making a Change?
Are you changing your address or your name? PLEASE send us the changes as soon as possible so we can correct our address cards. Also, be sure to add your ZIP CODE. Our records are keyed to Zips. If you use it, our service to you will be zipper.


Candy .................................. 40%
Soft drinks ................................ 38%

By the time children were 8 to 10, 91% of the mothers were yielding to their children's influence on which cereal to purchase. Advertisers are not so dumb!

Who is Responsible?

We do not really know who is teaching adults whatever they know about choosing foods for themselves and their children. Television undoubtedly has a role. Advertising in other media may have a larger role. Certainly we have no evidence that nutrition educators are making much headway. What is, in any case, obvious is that children—when they are still young enough to be forming their notions of what is good to eat—are being urged on television to eat foods which produce neither present good health nor healthful lifetime food habits.

What is equally clear is that parents are failing to stem the tide of Devil Dogs, Kool Aid, Hostess Twinkies, and Frankenberry which are rotting their children's teeth, setting them up for obesity, and building up in them a taste for sugar which will force these same children as overweight adults to indulge in whatever noncaloric sweetener is then in vogue to satisfy their insatiable craving for sweets.

There is one last thing I should like to say. Two years ago as I was nearing the end of my first year of formal nutrition study, I wrote an outraged paper raising—if not dealing with—many of the issues I have touched on here. I was enraged at the passivity of my profession, at its silence in the face of what I saw to be an assault upon good nutrition, and at what I viewed to be its willingness to trade the health of our children for the untrammeled expression of free enterprise in the marketplace. I wrote then something which I should like to close with now:

"The growingly poor diets of many affluent Americans are—in the context of a world much more poorly fed in spite of itself—irrelevant, immaterial, and not worth worrying about were it not for the example we set to the world of what is an advisable end point of technological and material progress. Moreover, in a world context the attitude of some American food manufacturers toward food—that it is just one more of the world's raw materials to be played with and manipulated for our amusement and for the greater delight of that 'consuming prince' the American—is immoral."

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