

# CRUNCH

their children.

But the fighting on these issues is old hat for boycott groups. To them, Nestle disclaimers are feeble-minded attempts to erase a guilt that has long been established. Their job now is to watch the company's behavior in Third World countries and make sure it conforms to the WHO code of marketing recommendations. Nestle says it abides completely by the Code. Boycotters claim they have many pieces of documented evidence to prove the opposite.

The Code forbids the hanging of promotional posters of any kind in hospitals. To INFACT's reports that posters persist in hospitals, Nestle answers that all poster production has ceased long ago and whatever posters still hang on walls are old ones no one has bothered to take down.

Hallman says the company is using only a single piece of perhaps inaccurate evidence to cast doubt on the freshness and reliability of all anti-Nestle accusations. Of greater concern than the posters, he says, is the distribution of free formula samples to new mothers in hospitals. This is forbidden on all counts by the Code, but INFACT says it has proof of violations in India and Malaysia made as recently as this September.

The Code forbids the presence in the health care systems of all health workers on formula company payrolls. Nestle admits openly to employing 235 of these people worldwide whose job it is to meet directly with mothers and explain how to use the formula. Though the WHO Code forbids them, Nestle says these medical reps are working in countries where the national government permits them. The Code, however, lays the responsibility of its implementation on manufacturers of the formula as well as individual governments.

*"Independently of any other measures taken for implementation of this Code, manufacturers...should regard themselves as responsible for monitoring their marketing practices according to the principles and aims of this code, and for taking steps to ensure that their conduct at every level conforms to them."*

If Nestle were to obey this rule, its medical reps would immediately have to disappear from the scene.

The accusations and the disputes continue, which do much to confuse the issue. The facts are so obscured that the taking of sides on the matter must have more to do with gut reaction than with objective judgement. The prejudice most people seem to share, according to Peterson, is a "pre-determined attitude...against big business," which makes it easy for most people to side with the Boycott.

Peterson, for his part, refuses to



Photo from Infact Canada

**The boycott of Nestlé products includes:**

- Wispride
- Gerber Cheeses
- Provolone Lacatelli
- Roger's
- Libby's
- Maggi Soups
- Souptime
- Beech Nut Baby Foods
- Nestle Cookie Mixes
- Keiller
- James Keiller and Sons Ltd.
- L'Oréal
- Lancôme
- Nestle's Crunch
- Toll House Chips
- Choco-Bake
- \$100,000 Candy Bar
- Tasters' Choice
- Nescafe
- Nestea
- Decaf
- Sunrise
- Pero
- Cains Coffee
- Manhattan Coffee Co.
- Montclair Bottled Water
- Deer Park Mountain Spring Water
- Pine Hill Crystal Water
- Quik
- Hot Cocoa Mix
- Beringer Brothers
- Crosse and Blackwell
- Los Hermanos
- Cherry Hill

debate publicly with members of boycott groups because they have turned any past encounters with him into a "circus". They are "not interested in communicating with us. They're interested solely in making a media event out of it."

"That's crazy," Hallman responds. Peterson won't debate publicly, he says, because he "loses ground" when an informed member of a boycott group debates with him. In the past, says Hallman, "I have debated with Peterson mostly in churches and public meetings and I have never called the press to be there."

"The four-year-old boycott has had no effect whatsoever on Nestle's profits. In fact, this year is expected to be the best for the Swiss company," Peterson claims. Nor can Peterson foresee the day the boycott — which he considers a dying phenomenon — will ever be strong enough to influence Nestle's decision making. "We are not going to change our policies because we feel they are correct," said Peterson.

From the point of view of boycotting groups, the movement has already achieved several victories. One was the establish-

ment of the very strict WHO marketing code which was initiated in 1981. The strictness of the recommendations is highly unusual, they say, and couldn't have happened without the pressure of public indignation the boycott raised. Additionally, boycott groups claim responsibility for Nestle's 1978 decision to stop all mass media formula advertising in Third World countries.

Characteristically, what Nestle sees as a growing movement. INFACT Canada reports it can't keep up with the flood of volunteers offering to help in the fight. The list of endorsing organizations is large and growing. Recently, the Toronto Board of Health voted to re-endorse the Boycott, making it the first board of health in the world to do so.

But that decision, says Peterson, was not an informed one. He says he has had to devote thousands of hours of investigation just to fully understand the complex issue, something the board of health has not done.