



April 2006

Coke to Pay \$300,000 (US) Fine to the Government of Panamá

The Supreme Court of Panamá ordered Coca-Cola to pay a \$300,000 fine and to clean up a river and the Bay of Panamá. In April 2003, the company was cited for spilling 4,500 litres of chemical colouring used in the production of their products. The chemicals spilled by the company turned the water red causing “visual impact, contaminated water, negative impact to marine and terrestrial flora and fauna”, according to Panamá’s National Environmental Authority (ANAM). At the time of the incident Coke asked the Supreme Court to declare ANAM’s fine illegal. Eventually the company agreed to the fine, but still has yet to pay

Dannon Uses the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry to Peddle Bottled Water

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) has partnered with Dannon in a campaign designed to promote fluorinated bottled water for children. Spring! Fluoridated Spring Water is the Dannon product associated with the campaign. The irony of the association becomes apparent when we realize that Dannon Fluoridated Spring Water is actually a Coke product. In August 2005, Coke completed the purchase of Danone Waters North America Inc. (DWNA), thus becoming the sole owners of DWNA and responsible for their bottled spring and source water business in the United States.

This is not the first time the AAPD has sold out to Coke. In 2003 the company donated \$1 million dollars to the Academy prompting The Center for Science in the Public Interest to say that the AAPD “is burnishing the reputation of a company whose products cause tooth decay, obesity, and other health problems in children”. The AAPD’s newest relationship with Dannon, regardless of the

name on the bottle, will end up promoting Coke; the company that helps pediatric dentists pay the bills.

Bottled Water Industry Lobbied for Dangerous Labeling Legislation in the US

When the US House of Representatives passed a bill on March 8, to create uniform food labels nationwide, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestlé USA, and the International Bottled Water Association were literally and figuratively behind the policy. All four are members of the National Uniformity for Food Coalition, a lobby group set up to pressure the United States government to pass the National Uniformity for Food Act, in what the lobbyists say is a move aimed at simplifying food labels. In reality, however, the act will eliminate over 200 state food safety laws and, in the words of a critic of the measure, “keep the public from knowing about the harm they may be exposed to in food”. Under the bill, any state that wants to keep tougher standards will have to ask permission from the Food and Drug Administration, but such requests may be turned down under trade law.

With the new legislation bottled water companies would no longer have to warn consumers about arsenic, benzene or other dangerous elements in their products. In California, for example, the state's Proposition 65, a law requiring labeling of substances that may cause cancer or birth defects, would be undone. In the past, Proposition 65 has forced bottled water companies to cut arsenic levels in their products.

Additional concerns regarding benzene in soft drinks have been raised by Senators who will be debating and voting on the bill before it becomes law. One Democratic staffer commented, “Given these benzene findings, this is not a recipe for quick action. It's hard to see the Senate launching into action on this given the concerns raised in the House and the push by the soft drink companies” to pass the bill.

However, the lobby machinery behind the bill is powerful and could succeed. The bottled water industry, through the National Uniformity for Food Coalition used its financial clout and political influence. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, members of the Coalition have contributed more than \$3 million to members of the House of Representatives in the 2005-2006 election cycle. This is a small price to pay in order for the bottlers to save millions on labeling and adequate testing. If the bill is passed, the greatest costs will be carried by consumers, through increased risks to their health.

Quote from the industry

“A lot of bottled water is no better than tap water, and the people bottling it know it...If you can sell somebody something without spending money, and they’ll buy it, you sell it to them. I’m just being honest”

Jerry Smith, Chief Executive Officer of LeBleu, a North Carolina based bottled water company quoted in The News and Observer, March 28, 2006,
<http://www.newsobserver.com/150/story/422751.html>

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