

February 28, 2003

Dr. David K. Curtis, President  
Dr. John Rutkauskas, Executive Director  
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry  
211 East Chicago Avenue, Suite 700  
Chicago, IL 60611-2663

Dear Drs. Curtis and Rutkauskas:

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) is a nonprofit health-advocacy organization that focuses on nutrition and public health, as well as the influence of the business community on scientists and health/professional organizations. I am writing to you because I understand that the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) is negotiating a \$1 million partnership agreement with the Coca-Cola Co.

Coca-Cola Co., of course, is by far the biggest producer of soft drinks in the world. Its empty-calorie products contribute to dental caries and erosion, as well as to obesity and its sequelae, including diabetes and high blood pressure. Soft drinks have displaced milk in many youths' diets, leading to lower nutrient intakes and probably higher future rates of osteoporosis. Yes, the company also markets orange juice and water, but those are hardly the products that the company tries hardest to sell. CSPI's report "Liquid Candy" (enclosed) summarizes our concerns about the soaring consumption by youths of soft drinks.

I urge the AAPD, for the sake of children's health and the organization's own credibility, not to consummate any financial relationship with Coca-Cola or other junk-food marketer. Many dentists and health advocates, as well as the general public, will be outraged by the AAPD's involvement with Coca-Cola and will charge, accurately, that the AAPD has made a deal with the devil. You can be sure that some of your members, aware that AAPD's Constitution states that "The Academy shall be ever alert to its responsibility to the public and the profession in the fulfillment of its obligation in the matter of the prevention and control of oral disease," will quit in disgust.

Though the AAPD may contend that a deal would not represent an endorsement of Coca-Cola's soft drinks, many people will see that as a difference without a distinction. Furthermore, you can bet that Coca-Cola will ballyhoo to the skies its close relationship with the AAPD, hoping to gain "innocence by association" with a hitherto credible health-professional organization. It would be quite a coup for a junk-food company to use your organization's good name to burnish its own miserable reputation, all for the cost of just one national 30-second television commercial.

- Page 2 -

I would appreciate your sharing this letter with other members of AAPD's board of directors. I would be glad to talk or meet with you and your colleagues.

Sincerely,

Michael F. Jacobson, Ph.D.  
Executive Director