

1. The Swedish Paediatric Association has criticized the role of the infant-food industry in poor countries and it has published a code of ethics for marketing infant foods.<sup>1</sup> On May 18, 1979, the Association issued a statement<sup>2</sup> indicating that it intends to monitor the activities of the Swedish companies in Turkey. The American Academy of Pediatrics has been virtually silent about merchandising practices that were protested by groups throughout the world.

2. *Acta Paediatrica Scandinavica* carried no advertisements. About one third of *Pediatrics* is devoted to the promotion of infant-food and drugs (70 pages of ads in 210 pages of the June 1979 issue).

Are the Swedes unrealistic idealists or have the Americans been bought off?

PERPLEXED OBSERVER

#### REFERENCES

1. Editorial: A Swedish code of ethics for marketing of infant foods. *Acta Paediat Scand* 66:129, 1977
2. Round the world: Sweden and Turkey. The infant food industry. *Lancet* 2:190, 1979

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### National Committee to Abolish Nit-Picking and 'Fine-Tooth Combing'

To the Editor.—

The Academy of Pediatrics has been known for its advocacy of children and parents, its work on national health problems affecting children, and its willingness to fight the bureaucracy for what is right.

And yet, the Academy has avoided a problem that causes the loss of hundreds of thousands of days from school; causes embarrassment to thousands of school-age children; and represents the waste of thousands of parental man (and woman) hours.

I refer to the problem of pediculosis! Can it be that the Academy has ignored this problem because it is predominantly a problem of the "great unwashed" rather than affecting their own?

Granted that the Academy has a position on this scourge: the Red Book states that "a child may return to school when he or she has been treated adequately." What, pray, is adequately? "Kwell" is adequate treatment when used as directed, not more than "once or twice" in a week—BUT! Kwell does *not* remove "NITS."

NITS are the egg sacs of lice that are attached to human hairs by nature's own superglue. They are not removed by any substance known to man (or woman). Not even by going through the hair "with a fine-toothed comb." They are removed by picking them off with the fingernails—one by one by one by one. Hence, the term "nit-picking," the greatest waste of time since working with opposing lawyers on a contract. These treated egg sacs are not infectious; however, their *absence* is the only test that school systems utilize for proof of adequate therapy. Thus, children are out of school for days and weeks, and parents are nit-picking.

I hereby urge the Academy to take the strongest possible position (1) that "adequate therapy need *not* include demonstration of the absence of "NITS," and (2) also urge massive funding of a crash program to uncover a method of dissolving nature's superglue to free the hair of NITS.

I urge this as a member (name withheld on request) of the Academy and as President of the recently founded Committee to Abolish Nit-Picking and Fine-Tooth Combing, called "A Better Way."

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### What Is Proper Food for Human Infants?

To the Editor.—

This letter is in response to the article by Pisacana et al (*Pediatrics* 61:360, 1978) concerning the prevention of obesity in infancy.

I take issue with a number of statements, implications, and the general tone of this article. The authors seem to be suggesting that starting infants on solid food at 2 months of age and cow's milk at 3 months of age is a good thing to do because it may result in infants who weigh less (weigh less than whom or what?).

We, as pediatricians, should not be concerned *primarily* with infant obesity, but with infant nutrition. Is it not reasonable to think that if an infant is fed the proper food at the proper age and in the proper way that he or she will neither be obese nor have any other problems related to diet?

The question then becomes "What is the proper diet for an infant during the first year of life?" not "How can we keep infants from becoming obese?" The above physicians refer to a *conventional* diet of formula for three months followed by cow's milk and solids. In this case, the word *conventional* seems to be used to imply proper, which it is not.

I also take exception to the implication that the Prudent Diet is proper for infants, which it is not. The proper *food* for human infants is their mothers' milk. At a certain age the infant's digestive system must undergo a change that makes it ready to handle a very different type of food. No one has *proven* what this age is, but logic and observation would clearly indicate that one needs a certain number of teeth to eat something other than milk. Granted we can now process solid food so that it can be eaten without teeth, but there is no reason to believe that the nutritional needs of human infants change coincident with changes in technology and convention.

I shudder to think that these physicians are recommending this "Prudent" diet as proper for normal human infants.

As to the question of obesity, this is putting the cart before the horse. Since by some estimates 90% of American infants are improperly fed, ie, not receiving breast milk as their only food until they have teeth, and since most growth charts that set limits of normal for weight are based on these improperly fed infants, we need to first start recommending proper feeding for infants and then