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**School Caffeine Rule Uneven**

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**John Borowski**

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PepsiCo's foray into Salem-Keizer schools raises ethical and moral questions. Is public education now up for sale? Those who defend PepsiCo seemingly have forgotten that public schools are meant to practice what they preach — and teach.

West Salem's own Parent/Student Handbook (Page 33) outlines a "zero tolerance" policy for the new school. "No-Doze" or caffeine tablets will not be tolerated.

No-Doze is considered a problem apparently because it contains 100 milligrams of caffeine. Yet if a student consumes two 12-ounce soda pops during the day, with each can containing 55 milligrams of caffeine, does this not violate the school's own rule? I have seen many a student walk the halls of my school with 2-liter bottles of pop in the morning, clearly liquid No-Doze in a bottle.

With many corporate plans to exploit children for profit, the devil is in the details. This \$5 million contract is based on a yearly increase of sales by 5 percent each of the 10 years of the contract. In other words: Show me increased sales and I will show you the money?

PepsiCo's own contract suggests that we consider the use of "credit cards" that let students buy pop without using cash. Would the parents receive a pop bill in the mail?

For every case of Pepsi sold, the district gets 50 cents to use toward "Pepsi scholarships." "This program is to act as a volume incentive for students in the district," reads the contract. "The more they drink, the more scholarship money is earned."

To suggest that one of the most popular beverages sold is Pepsi's own bottled water, Aquafina, is simply incorrect. Students often bemoan the fact that bottled water is the least available of the PepsiCo's products.

What is mysteriously absent from this whole debate is, are we willing to distribute a product with known health hazards? Our own health classes explore the downside of soda pop:

- Carbonated drinks are the single biggest source of refined sugar in American diets.
- Intake of pop lowers calcium intake, resulting in lower bone density and increases the risk of developing osteoporosis.
- Between 13 percent and 19 percent of all teenagers are now obese. For the average 13-18-year-old student, 9 percent of their calories come from soda pop.
- Caffeine increases excretion of calcium in urine. Drinking a 12-ounce can of caffeine-containing soft drinks causes the loss of about 20 milligrams of calcium. With low calcium intake of young female teens, this increases the risk of osteoporosis.

Why does federal law forbid the sale of soda in school cafeterias during lunchtime? They know the risks of this caffeine- and sugar-laden product.

These vending contracts are encouraging kids to eat poorly and taxing kids to pay for their own schooling.

Will the public turn their heads away and say, "What can we do?" Will children's health be held captive to the lure of scraps from corporate giants? As a parent and teacher, I say students are not for sale.