



THE CHURCH
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Press Release

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Communications Unit
The General Synod

General Synod welcomes study on Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes

The General Synod passed (15/7/97) by a substantial majority, a resolution welcoming *Cracking the Code* the report of the Interagency Group on Breast-feeding Monitoring,* a coalition of almost 30 non-governmental organisations, including development agencies and church bodies, including the Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England.

The full text of the resolution as passed is:- *That this Synod*

- a) *affirm the need to promote infant and maternal health by all available means;*
- b) *affirm the conclusions of the report Cracking the Code, produced by the Interagency Group on Breast-feeding Monitoring, its emphasis on the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, and the subsequent resolutions of the World Health Assembly which clarify and amplify the Code;*
- c) *endorse the efforts of UNICEF and the World Health Organisation to achieve universal implementation of the Code and Resolutions;*
- d) *call upon all national governments to establish the legal basis and adequate instruments to ensure national compliance with the Code and Resolutions; and*
- e) *call upon the manufacturers of breast-milk substitutes and health workers to adhere fully to the letter and spirit of the Code and Resolutions.*

The main motion was moved on behalf of the Standing Committee of Synod by Dr Christina Baxter. The Bishop of Coventry, the Rt Revd Simon Barrington-Ward (former Chairman of the International and Development Affairs Committee), speaking at his last appearance at Synod prior to retirement, successfully moved an amendment which had the effect of strengthening the response to *Cracking the Code* by Synod. Other amendments failed to gain majority support in Synod, including one which would, in effect, have called for a reimposition of the boycott on Nescafé which the Synod had commended from 1991 until 1994, when it was suspended pending further inquiries into the marketing of breast-milk substitutes.

In introducing the motion, Dr Baxter had addressed the issue whether reimposition of the boycott of Nescafé was required by the findings of *Cracking the Code*. The argument presented to Synod emphasized rather:

- the need for the main manufacturers to adhere fully to the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes*, and the subsequent resolutions of the World Health Assembly which clarify and amplify the Code;
- the fact that a number of the main manufacturers were found during the research process leading to that report to be engaging in practices which had the effect of undermining the Code and promotion of breast-feeding more generally, and
- the need for international organisations and national legislative bodies to press for full adherence to the Code and subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions.

As background material for the debate, Synod members were provided with a descriptive paper by the Board for Social Responsibility, *Promotion of Breast-milk Substitutes* ** and the full IGBM report *Cracking the Code*.***

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Note for editors

* The report *Cracking the Code* was prepared by The Interagency Group on Breast-feeding Monitoring (IGBM) - a group of organisations, supported by academics and practitioners in the medical field, which came together in order to implement the research conducted in Poland, Bangladesh, Thailand and South Africa. The report has specifically been welcomed on behalf of UNICEF by the Executive Director, Carol Bellamy, who called the report "a careful and sound analysis of the marketing practices of a number of breast-milk substitute manufacturers". The **main conclusion** of the report is that major manufacturers of breast-milk substitutes continue to contravene the international code of marketing of breast-milk substitutes thereby jeopardising the lives of infants. Violations include the donation of free samples, the publication of information materials which undermine breast-feeding and unsolicited visits by company representatives to health facilities.

** Board for Social Responsibility, *Promotion of Breast-milk Substitutes* (GS 1253) - on sale from the Church House Bookshop, 31 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BN, price £1.90 + (60p. p&p). Telephone orders on: 0171 340 0280.

****Cracking the Code* is available, price £6.50 from Interagency Group on Breast-feeding Monitoring, c/o UNICEF (UK Committee - distribution centre: tel. 01245 476315, quoting reference number 16027). Further information on the research can be provided by the report's main researcher, Anna Taylor, via IGBM Tel: 0171 405 5592.