

Not Many BST Protesters Show For Pure Food Campaign

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— Repeated announcements by spokesmen for anti-beef, anti-biotechnology crusader Jeremy Rifkin that at least 20,000 followers would stage a massive leaflet-distribution protest at more than a third of the McDonald's Restaurants in North America turned out to be overstated.

While those spokespeople in Rifkin's Washington, D.C. headquarters did not return phone calls inquiring about the success of the Rifkin-directed leaflet distribution effort, a researcher for McDonald's headquarters in Oak Brook, Ill., said Thursday that, while not all information was yet in from the field, there was little evidence of a protest at its franchises.

Rifkin's directors of Beyond Beef Campaign and Pure Food Campaign had stated for weeks that up to 20,000 supporters would protest against the Food and Drug Administration's expected approval of injectable bovine somatotropin (BST) by handing out leaflets at more than 3,000 McDonald's Restaurants on April 17.

Although Ronnie Cummings, Rifkin's director of Beyond Beef Campaign, and Ted Howard, director of the Pure Food Campaign, said the protest was definitely going to happen, spokesmen for McDonald's said leaflets were handed out at much fewer than 1,000 of McDonald's restaurants.

The credibility of Rifkin's groups may be an illusion. The groups have never received any support from credible, recognized experts for their positions, and the "facts" the group have been

including in "news releases," have been consistently proven to be over-stated, or misstated.

Nevertheless, Rifkin has apparently convinced some dairy processors that he has the ability to convince consumers that BST presents a danger to their health.

According to Rifkin's spokespeople, if restaurants and processors don't sign on as taking Rifkin's position, then those businesses will be listed as places to avoid.

The tactics have forced businesses to decide how much marketing risk to assess to Rifkin's threats.

The leaflets that were to be distributed to "a million" consumers April 17, contained warnings that consumers should be concerned about "artificial hormones" in milk and meat and to call a 900- telephone number to get the names of "safe" places to eat.

Earlier last week, a spokesperson for McDonald's Corporation headquarters had dismissed protest threats by Rifkin's Pure Food

Campaign as a gimmick by Rifkin to sell his anti-beef book and promote himself.

The announcement of the protest initially was made March 31 in statements distributed to media during a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) hearing on bovine somatotropin (BST).

Pure Food Campaign, which describes itself as "an international boycott of genetically engineered foods," joined forces with Beyond Beef Campaign, Rifkin's other non-profit, fund-raising "awareness" organization, which has had a program against McDonald's called, "Adopt-a-McDonald's," as a way to protest the consumption of meat and milk.

While one of Rifkin's groups calls for not eating meat, the other seeks to ban the consumption of "BGH-milk and meat," which, by definition, is all bovine milk and meat.

According to a newsletter from the National Milk Producers Fed-

eration, the BST issue is gaining attention from top White House officials and there is speculation that another hearing may be held by the Food and Drug Administration on BST — this one concerning the request by the anti-biotechnologists to ensure that any milk or meat derived from cattle injected with supplemental BST be labeled as such.

Since there is no difference in milk or meat from treated and untreated cattle, the labels would be meaningless, according to a

number of experts.

Also, according to NMPF CEO Jim Barr, "We support the right of consumers to have meaningful information about the foods they consume, but labeling a product that is the same as it has always been serves no one. Further, producers of products that have been subjected to food scare campaigns have told us that labeling leads to a decrease in sales, not an increase, as labeling for the sake of labeling proponents claim."



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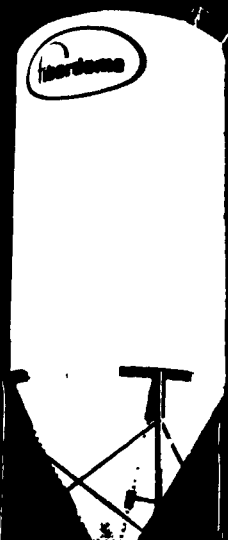
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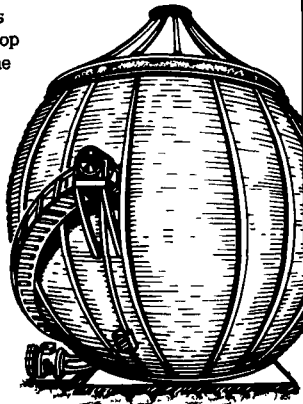
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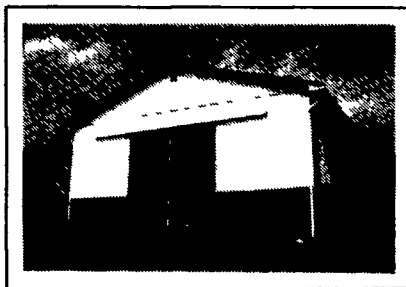
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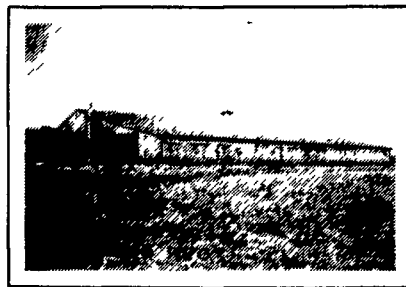
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