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Weapons of Mass Destruction
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Imagine the frustration of the weapons inspectors searching in vain throughout Iraq. All they had to do to find the true “weapons of mass destruction”, would have been to look at the U.S. school lunch program.

The food currently provided through the national School Lunch Program has not kept pace with what we know today to be truly healthy and nutritious food. Rather, the foods provided in the program under the guise of good nutrition – chili cheese dogs, pepperoni pizza, cheeseburgers, and pork chops – are there to prop up farm incomes and are a part of the problem that has created a generation of overweight children.

Federal policy, which is heavily influenced by the meat and dairy lobbies, literally forces the Secretary of Agriculture to favor beef, pork and other high fat foods over healthier items when purchasing surplus commodities for federal feeding programs. As a result, in 2001 the USDA spent \$350 million on surplus beef and cheese – more than double the amount spent on fruits and vegetables. Federal policy also **prohibits** schools from serving soymilk or other nondairy beverages as part of a subsidized lunch unless a child brings a doctor’s note saying he or she has a medical reason not to drink cow’s milk.

What a discriminatory policy considering the fact that so many Blacks, Hispanics, Native and Asian Americans are lactose intolerant.

Last year, the USDA dumped 420 million pounds of pork, beef and other unhealthy products on our kids and other recipients of feeding programs just to prop up sagging farm products. In fact, the government’s two biggest expenditures for the national School Lunch Program were \$179 million for cheese and another \$170 million for beef. Does anyone really believe that our already out-of-shape kids need more cheeseburgers?

The National School Lunch Program provides food for more than half of all children in the U.S. and one in ten has school breakfast. Eight million breakfasts and 27 million lunches are provided each day. Schools that choose to participate in the program get cash subsidies, donated commodities, and free bonus shipments from the USDA for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve lunches that meet federal requirements, including nutritional requirements spelled out in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, dominated by input from the meat and dairy industries.

In 1997, the commodities program’s school lunch component spent \$436 million – more than 70% of its money- on animal products, which contain no fiber or complex carbohydrates and help clog the arteries of American children because of their high fat and cholesterol content.

Nothing like selling your kid down the river for a few bucks!

Aloha!

