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## 9-21-83 **The Reactor**

### Don't Give Up—Feingold Didn't

If you are concerned with something important, and the battle seems to be never-ending and uphill all the way, take heart.

Right here in San Mateo County, 10 or 12 years ago, a man named Ben Feingold found a connection between the food kids were eating and the way some behaved. Dr. Feingold, (he was a retired Kaiser hospital physician in South San Francisco) noticed that some kids who were hyperactive, or suffered from Dyslexia or certain other learning disabilities, could be helped if they avoided artificial flavors, artificial colors, salicylates, and some natural fruits like gooseberries.

I first heard him at a local meeting of the California Association for Neurologically Handicapped Children. Feingold told us of his studies.

One case he talked about was a boy who had been off artificial flavors and colors for several weeks, ate one commercial, artificially colored donut, and was "climbing the walls."

The fight is not over yet. Ben Feingold is gone. He was elderly when he began his battle. After I heard him he went on to write a book, appear on talk shows, and carry the story that children's behavior is sometimes literally a case of "you are what you eat."

In the 10 or 11 years since I have heard him, though, the story has gotten around. Look at the food packages on your shelves. Read the labels that say "No artificial Flavors or Colors." Look at the ones that advertise "no preservatives."

Each one is a memorial to a doctor who cared very much that children who were sick with the illness that is hyperactivity be helped.

There is absolutely no need for artificial flavors and colors. They contribute nothing that anyone needs in his diet. Many are coal tar derivatives, whose only value is that they are a cheap imitation of something else that is wholesome, natural (and expensive). The problem is that as long as no one knows they are harmful (and as far as we know, they harm only some people, not everyone), they will drive out natural ingredients from the market, because they are cheaper.

The Feingold story is important. He first discovered one of the causes of a serious problem, one that affects an average of one or two children in every classroom. He documented his discovery, then went on to tell everyone who would listen what he had found.

He set wheels in motion. Thousands of people who never heard of the little doctor with the mild speech impediment have heard of his theories, and they are asking for, and buying, products that do less harm to their children.

If we knew all the causes of hyperkinesis, we would be a much healthier nation. But Ben Feingold pointed toward some clues, even in those troubled children he wasn't able to help directly.

Is there a serious problem you're concerned with? When you've written your thousandth letter, and talked to your hundredth person, and feel that you aren't getting anywhere, remember Ben Feingold.

His monument is on the shelves in your kitchen.