

November 17, 2004

Secretary Tommy Thompson  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave. SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Thompson:

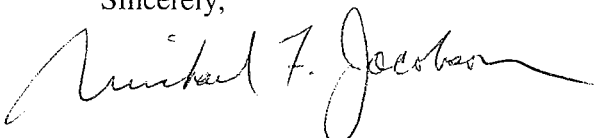
At a time when the Department of Health and Human Services is urging Americans to improve their diets by cutting back on calories, saturated fat, and sodium, the Hardee's restaurant chain is publicizing its newest, biggest dietary disaster.

The company is marketing Thickburger hamburgers, the worst of which is the Monster Thickburger. It consists of two 1/3-pound patties, three slices of cheese, four strips of bacon, and mayonnaise on a buttered sesame seed bun. According to news accounts, it provides 1,420 calories, 107 grams of fat (165% of the Daily Value for a 2,000-calorie diet), and 34 grams of saturated fat (170% of the DV). It also contains about 2,000 milligrams of sodium (80% of the DV). Hardee's offers other sandwiches that are in the same miserable ballpark. Adding a small soft drink and medium order of fries would add another 800 calories and additional fat.

Hardee's irresponsibility offers you, the top federal health official, an opportunity to send an important health message to the public and to the restaurant industry. Why not use this as an opportunity to urge Hardee's and all other chain restaurants to list calories on their menu boards and menus? Even better, why not lend your support to the Menu Education and Labeling (MEAL) Act, which would require fast-food chains to do just that?

You have indicated that you would praise food companies for marketing healthy food and otherwise use the power of your office to encourage more healthful practices in the food industry. As we have told you previously, we regret that you haven't done much of that. The Secretary of Health and Human Services should be a participant, not just a spectator, in America's struggle against obesity, heart disease, and stroke. The debut of the Hardee's Monster Thickburger would seem like as good a time as any for you come down from the bleachers and get in the game.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Jacobson, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

