

Who passed go? Who collected \$1 million?

FBI has charged McDonald's Corporation with Monopoly fraud

In the wake of the FBI's recent arrests of those found trying to defraud McDonald's through promotions like the Monopoly game, the world's leading food service retailer wants the public to know that it has been a victim of corporate deception. However, the victim is not McDonald's, but, instead, anyone unfortunate enough to have put their trust into a money-driven institution like a fast-food chain with hope it would deliver any kind of legitimate contest to the public. McDonald's, as a world-wide retailer with 29,000 restaurants in 121 countries, had a social responsibility to ensure that its promotions were both secure and fair, so they hired Simon Marketing. This objective ultimately fell short of meeting McDonald's initial incentive.

Admittedly, Americans are beginning to expect less from their national fast-food franchises. McDonald's has compromised the one aspect of franchise business with no room for error, the ever-popular game promotions, and they are destroying consumer trust. At first glance, it does not appear to be McDonald's fault. An FBI investigation found that since possibly as early as 1995, supplier Simon Marketing has been duping McDonald's patrons of millions of dollars. But McDonald's failed to do its part to stop Simon Marketing from defrauding the public, a responsibility that comes with running a national, high-dollar prize promotion.

No one in the corporate offices seemed to take notice as Jerome Jacobson, a top security official at Simon Marketing, was concocting a pyramid scheme in which he would collect, then illegally distribute, winning game pieces for all of the most valuable McDonald's prizes. Those receiving the stolen game pieces then would fraudulently redeem them, collect the money or prizes and then a cut of the payout would go to Jacobson himself. This went on for six years, and McDonald's still feels that it should not, in any way, be held accountable. Since the incident, McDonald's has issued several carefully-worded press releases in an effort to save

face and shift some of the blame off of the golden arches. McDonald's CEO Jack M. Greenberg insisted that his restaurant was "betrayed by a long-time supplier in a highly sophisticated game of fraud and deception."

But, in spite of these reassurances, the question on everyone's mind is how a corporate giant like McDonald's could let its customers be defrauded of millions of dollars in cash and prizes and not take notice? It is only now, weeks after the incident, that McDonald's is instituting an independent security task force to "ensure the integrity of future promotions and protect its customers." This task force should have been in place years ago

sumers will hold McDonald's accountable for not doing its part to prevent this theft. America's favorite fast-food chain has taken the first steps toward regaining customer loyalty.

When there is a contest, people want to win. When there is a contest like the annual McDonald's

innocent customers, and to blame it is nothing more than sour grapes. The McDonald's Monopoly

continued to work for many years. Jacobson was allegedly stealing the winning game pieces, contacting mere acquaintances and entrusting them to get in on this scam. He would distribute the winning pieces to these people and, in return, gain a cut of each prize.

This case is not even two-sided. Blaming McDonald's is childish and silly. A crime was committed against McDonald's, and just because other customers feel that they had to suffer, it is McDonald's that currently is short at least \$13 million. McDonald's did not cheat its customers purposely — how could the company possibly benefit from this scandal? It should not be believed that just because the stealing went on for six years that McDonald's automatically knew what was going on. The large, fast-food company did not even know about the problem or the investigations until a month after the FBI had begun.

For all the sore losers out there, stop crying about how McDonald's made it impossible to win. It is just a game, and because one person cheated, it was ruined for everyone. Sadly, sometimes that is how life is, and the best bet is to just get over it. While McDonald's is in no way responsible, it still feels very sorry about the entire situation. Jack Greenberg, McDonald's chairman and CEO in the United States said, "customer confidence is at the very heart of McDonald's business. We're determined that nothing gets between us and our customers, and we're outraged when anyone tries to breach that trust."

It even introduced a new game specific for the Labor Day weekend with \$1 million dollar random prizes across the country, simply to prove itself and its desire to have true winners. McDonald's is a place where there are Happy Meals with toys, hamburgers for 29 cents on Mondays and America's favorite fries — like it or not, this company is part of our culture. The company knows that, the customers know that and there is no way that McDonald's would cheat its customers out of anything.

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game is supposed to award large sums of money to winners. The prizes range from free ice cream or french fries to a new car or large sums of money. McDonald's wanted to be fair about the game, and because of that, the company was scammed. The people at McDonald's wanted the prizes to be equally distributed across the country. They hired a company called Simon Marketing, Inc. to make sure that the contests were set up fairly. According to *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, Jerome Jacobson of Lawrenceville, Ga., worked for Simon Marketing where "among his duties was making sure game pieces were fairly distributed to various areas."

However, after a one-year investigation, the FBI believes that Jacobson was distributing the winning pieces to himself. At this point, it is believed that he was working alone within the company, but he was certainly not alone in this scandal. Seven other individuals from states including Texas, South Carolina, Florida and Rhode Island have been arrested for their involvement in what may have been the biggest scandal ever in these kinds of contests. The way that the prizes were rigged was simple, yet it

Monopoly game, with large and glamorous prizes, people want to win badly. When people want to win badly, there are two reactions people have. First, there are people who will do whatever it takes to win, regardless of the rules of the game. Then there are people who will not be able to win; they will sit back and cry about it, blaming anyone they can for their misfortune. The recent McDonald's Monopoly scandal has been plagued by both of the latter. Eight people have been arrested for connections to a scandal involved in stealing McDonald's winning game pieces, allowing them (and only them) to be the winners of the large prizes. So everyone else lost, and the losers are crying that McDonald's cheated them. McDonald's was cheated just as much as its

by having random cash giveaways at some of its locations. But the road to forgiveness is often long and rocky, and only time will tell how soon consumer trust can be restored. McDonald's officials must be prepared to go to great lengths to see to it that future promotions are not tainted in this way, or be prepared to suffer the repercussions if they are.

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for McDonald's very first game promotion. After all, McDonald's games like Monopoly and "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" are based on consumer trust. Customers believe that everyone has an equal chance of winning, and they hold McDonald's responsible for making sure everything is run legitimately. So, just as the law will hold Jerome Jacobson accountable for theft, con-

MAIL CALL

MSC deserves no money from fees

In response to Rolando Garcia's news article:

I want my \$40 back. Tuition for each student includes add-ons such as a Student Transportation Fee, Student Computer Services Fee, and a Recreation Center Fee. All these services, and more, are provided for the student by Texas A&M. Since they are services and institutions included in our educational system, it seems only natural that we should support them monetarily. The Memorial Student Center, it seems, we should not.

To mask the shady and undemocratic removal of President Rowan, the MSC Council declared they were, in fact, not a part of Texas A&M. Let's forget the fact that Rowan was not allowed to defend himself in front of his accusers. Try to put aside how badly justice was served when the people who

accused him were allowed to vote on whether he should be removed. And try not to think about the way Rowan was slandered and called an "alcoholic" needing "rehabilitation" by those same accusers. The important thing here is that such an unjust and unfair institution as the MSC Council does not deserve monetary support from the students who traverse its halls or the University that allows it to squat on Aggieland.

Now don't get me wrong. I enjoy lounging on the MSC's dusty sofas and purchasing insanely overpriced school supplies from its bookstore. However, now that I have learned it is not even a part of Texas A&M, I question whether not only myself, but we the students, should have to financially support a company not included in our educational system. I call for all of Aggieland to write, telephone or e-mail the MSC Council and demand their \$40 dollars back. I will not stand idly by and watch the

heart of Aggieland cut itself out over a petty power struggle.

Erik Peterson
Class of 2004

Gender in schools is important

In response to Jessica Crutcher's Sept. 4th column:

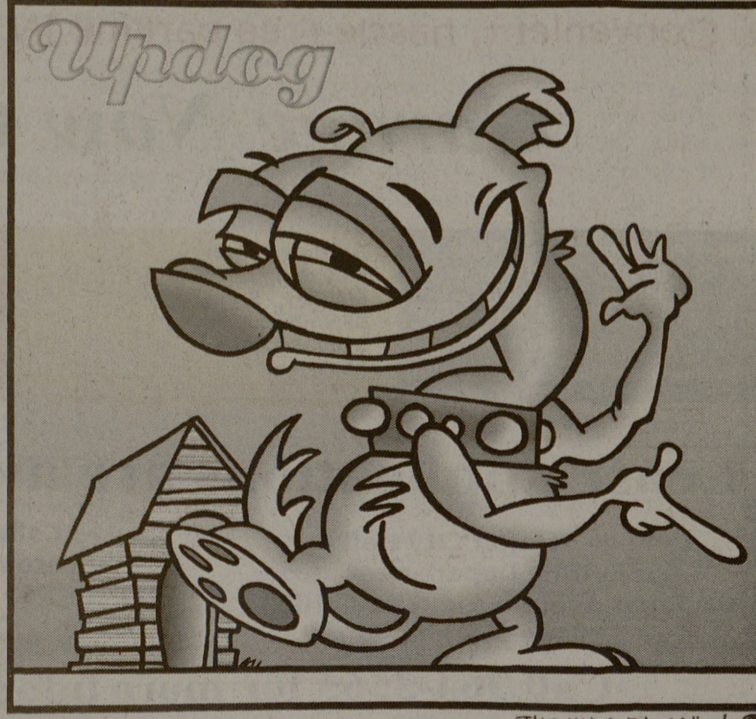
I first thought that Crutcher's column was some kind of joke. While certainly suspending a kindergarten over an earring may seem a little extreme, I found that much less disturbing than the arguments that Crutcher went on to make from this incident. Asserting that the idea of "men's clothing" and "women's clothing" are merely an oppressive cultural implementation of "archaic Judeo-Christian ideas" and that requiring elementary school students to dress according to their gender is a form of discrimination is an inflammatory exaggeration. Crutcher argues that differing

dress codes for boys and girls teaches students that "there are important biological differences between the sexes." The glaring flaw in this argument is that it ignores the inconvenient fact that there are important biological differences between the sexes. Recent studies have only confirmed this truth, which, until recently, had never even been questioned. Equal treatment of men and women is one thing, but trying to make us believe that we are all the same is insupportable.

How about a world where it is not sexual discrimination to expect men to be men and women to be women, and where the sexes can acknowledge their differences and utilize them to complement one another? Bravo to the Houston school that recognizes that boys and girls are different. I would be afraid to send my child to a school that said anything to the contrary.

L. Harris
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CARTOON OF THE DAY



THE UN-CARTOONIST ©