



MASTER IN EUROPEAN BUSINESS 2010

ENGLISH TEST

PART 1

TIME : 60 Minutes

MARKS : 60 Points

A : SUMMARY

20 Points

Instructions:

Using your own words, **summarize** the text in approximately 150 words.

B : ESSAY

40 Points

Instructions:

Give your opinion and present your arguments on the subject

FAMILY NAME: _____

FIRST NAME : _____

DATE : _____

A : SUMMARY :

An Anti-Tax Argument That's Hard to Swallow

New York Times September 21, 2009

By Randy Cohen

The proposals to tax sugary drinks as a way to fight obesity and finance health care reform has met a great deal of resistance from the beverage industry in general and Coca-Cola C.E.O. Muhtar Kent in particular: "I have never seen it work where a government tells people what to eat and what to drink," he told the Rotary Club of Atlanta last month. "If it worked, the Soviet Union would still be around."

This sort of argument is so dubious when it comes from the maker of products so damaging, that Muhtar Kent should be dragged off in handcuffs!

I am an expert on neither tax policy nor nutrition, but it is worth examining a few of the arguments against taxing sugary drinks as examples of the reasoning all of us can encounter when making moral choices or weighing the issues of the day.

Muhtar Kent's assertion is fishy because it confuses a positive and a negative. The various plans under consideration do not tell us what we should drink; they are concerned with what we should not drink — sugary beverages, what critics call "liquid candy." Urging people not to drive short distances is different from saying they should reach the corner store by hopping. Urging people not to drink cola is different from pressuring them to drink cat pee.

And of course our government does tell people what to eat and has for years. Perhaps "tell" is too coercive a term. But "strongly recommend" is apt.

Our government, as many a nation does, also tells people what to eat in other ways, both directly, by creating menus for public-school cafeterias, and indirectly, influencing our diets through farm policies, tariffs, trade agreements and food regulation.

Assuredly, many factors affect our weight. But it doesn't follow that because a policy fails to address all of them, it should not address any. That the feds devote few resources to going after counterfeiters who make fake coins doesn't mean they should decline to pursue those who run off \$20 bills.

What's more, the multiple causes of a problem need not share equal significance. Studies suggest that sugary beverages are a key contributor to obesity. In its analysis, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities notes that "Americans consume about 250-300 more daily calories today than they did several decades ago, and nearly half of this increase reflects greater consumption of high-sugar soft drinks." So there's a case to be made for giving serious consideration to a soda tax even if other steps are not taken.

Such errors of reasoning might be seen as intellectual, not moral, failings, but it is difficult to extend that benefit of the doubt to Americans Against Food Taxes, which describes itself as "a coalition of concerned citizens — responsible individuals, financially strapped families, small and large businesses in communities across the country." As was reported in *The Times*, A.A.F.T. looks like a veiled industry organization; calls to a media contact listed on the group's Web site go to the American Beverage Association. This smells like Astroturf, or corporate lobbyists posing as a grass-roots organization. It is entirely suitable for interested parties to participate in public debate; it is not suitable to conceal who's doing the debating.

