To Melt or Merge: Ben and Jerry's Transition Board, 2007

Thomas Jefferson Model United Nations Conference

TechMUN XXXI

Middle School Specialized Agency

Co-Chairs: Aashka Doshi and Dev Srivastava

Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to TechMUN XXXII's Ben & Jerry's Transition Board Committee! We are thrilled to have you engage in critical discussions about balancing ethical business practices with corporate demands. As your chairs, we seek delegates who demonstrate strong background knowledge, actionable solutions in speeches, and collaboration to draft innovative working papers. Each delegation has a unique role—stay true to your position while building alliances. Participation isn't just about speeches; contribute actively during unmoderated caucuses with fresh ideas. Relevance and creativity will set you apart!

We aim to create an immersive, realistic committee experience with a touch of fun. Our goal is to help you grow as delegates—take risks, articulate bold ideas, and leave empowered to advocate for change. For questions, email us at meltormergebenandjerrytechmun@gmail.com. Let's make TechMUN XXXII unforgettable!

Aashka Doshi and Dev Srivastava

Co-Chairs, Psyched Out: To Melt or Merge: Ben and Jerry's Transition Board, 2007

Topic A: Preserving the Original Vision – Staying True to Ben & Jerry's Roots

Background

Ben & Jerry's was founded in 1978 with the mission of producing high-quality ice cream while also standing for progressive social and environmental causes. From its early days, the company championed fair wages, sustainable ingredient sourcing, and environmental activism, distinguishing itself as a business that prioritized values over pure profit. Through initiatives such as Fair Trade-certified ingredients, climate justice campaigns, and outspoken support for social movements, Ben & Jerry's built a brand that resonated deeply with ethically conscious consumers. However, when multinational conglomerate Unilever acquired the company in 2000, concerns arose about whether these values could be upheld under corporate ownership. Many feared that Unilever's emphasis on efficiency, profitability, and global standardization would overshadow Ben & Jerry's dedication to social activism.

To address these concerns, the Transition Board was created as a safeguard, with the goal of ensuring that Ben & Jerry's business decisions remained true to its founding principles. The board was composed of individuals committed to the company's original mission, tasked with maintaining its advocacy for social and environmental causes while operating within Unilever's corporate framework. On paper, this arrangement seemed to provide the necessary protection for Ben & Jerry's identity, but in practice, it quickly became apparent that the board had limited authority. While it could provide input on ethical business decisions, Unilever retained final decision-making power, creating an ongoing struggle between corporate interests and Ben & Jerry's activist legacy.

Over time, this tension manifested in various conflicts, particularly regarding ingredient sourcing, environmental commitments, and public stances on social issues. Unilever's global supply chain meant that sourcing decisions often prioritized cost-efficiency over Fair Trade or local partnerships. Additionally, environmental sustainability measures sometimes clashed with Unilever's broader operational strategies, leading to compromises that frustrated both activists and company loyalists. The question remained: Could Ben & Jerry's continue to be a force for good while still operating under the financial and structural constraints of a multinational corporation?

By 2007, Ben & Jerry's faced an identity crisis. The Transition Board had successfully preserved some of the company's founding ideals, but critics argued that its influence was largely symbolic. As corporate pressures mounted, it became increasingly difficult to balance ethical business practices with the realities of a globalized industry. The fate of Ben & Jerry's as a values-driven company depended on whether the Transition Board could assert its influence effectively, or if the company would gradually become indistinguishable from any other profit-driven subsidiary within Unilever's vast portfolio. Delegates must determine how to navigate this precarious situation, finding solutions that allow Ben & Jerry's to maintain its activism without jeopardizing its place within a corporate structure.

Relevant Issues

Another major issue is the Transition Board's limited power. Although it was designed to serve as a buffer between Ben & Jerry's and Unilever, it lacks direct authority over key business decisions. The board can make recommendations and advocate for ethical policies, but Unilever's corporate leadership ultimately has the final say. This structural limitation raises concerns about whether the board is truly capable of protecting Ben & Jerry's identity or if it serves merely as a symbolic gesture to appease critics of the acquisition. Delegates must consider whether increasing the board's authority is a viable path forward or if alternative mechanisms are necessary to preserve the company's values.

Consumer perception is another critical factor. Ben & Jerry's built its reputation on being a trailblazer in corporate social responsibility, and any perceived dilution of its values could result in significant backlash. In an era where socially conscious consumers demand transparency and authenticity from brands, even small compromises could be met with widespread criticism. If the public begins to view Ben & Jerry's as just another subsidiary of a multinational conglomerate, the company may struggle to maintain the trust and loyalty of its core audience. Understanding how consumer expectations shape corporate decision-making will be crucial for delegates in this committee.

Finally, the long-term sustainability of Ben & Jerry's activist identity under corporate ownership remains uncertain. Unilever operates on a global scale, and its supply chain logistics, financial objectives, and shareholder obligations differ significantly from the localized, community-driven approach that Ben & Jerry's originally embraced. While some argue that Unilever's resources and infrastructure could be leveraged to expand Ben & Jerry's social impact, others worry that the constraints of corporate ownership will inevitably lead to the erosion of its ethical commitments. Delegates must weigh the potential benefits and drawbacks of operating within Unilever's structure and determine how best to ensure the company's values endure in the long run.

Past and Current Action

Since its acquisition by Unilever, Ben & Jerry's has worked to maintain its activist roots while adjusting to the corporate structure of a multinational conglomerate. The Transition Board was established to safeguard the company's values, ensuring that social and environmental activism remained at the heart of business decisions. While this framework allowed Ben & Jerry's to retain some autonomy, conflicts emerged as Unilever sought to standardize operations across its brands. In the years following the acquisition, the company continued supporting Fair Trade, climate initiatives, and social causes, but internal debates intensified regarding the feasibility of maintaining these commitments under Unilever's financial expectations.

One of the most significant challenges has been aligning Ben & Jerry's mission with Unilever's global supply chain policies. Fair Trade sourcing, a cornerstone of Ben & Jerry's identity, often conflicted with Unilever's cost-efficiency strategies. Efforts to expand ethical sourcing initiatives were met with resistance due to concerns over profitability and logistical constraints. Additionally, environmental initiatives such as carbon reduction and sustainable packaging faced delays as Unilever weighed these programs against cost-effective alternatives. Despite these challenges, Ben & Jerry's has continued to push for ethical business practices within the corporation, though compromises have been inevitable.

Public perception has played a key role in shaping Ben & Jerry's actions. The company has worked to maintain transparency through public reports, marketing campaigns, and partnerships with advocacy groups. However, skepticism remains regarding the effectiveness of these efforts. Activist groups have criticized certain decisions, such as partial reliance on non-Fair Trade ingredients in select product lines, arguing that these compromises undermine the brand's integrity. The Transition Board has responded by advocating for increased oversight and accountability, but the struggle to balance activism with financial sustainability persists.

Currently, the debate over Ben & Jerry's future remains unresolved. While the company has successfully leveraged its brand reputation to influence Unilever's policies in some areas, structural limitations continue to hinder its full independence. The Transition Board faces the difficult task of negotiating with Unilever leadership while maintaining credibility with consumers and advocacy organizations. Delegates in this committee must consider the effectiveness of past actions and explore new strategies to ensure that Ben & Jerry's can thrive without sacrificing its core principles.

Possible Solutions

One potential solution is to strengthen the authority of the Transition Board, granting it greater decision-making power within Unilever. Currently, the board primarily serves in an advisory capacity, meaning that its recommendations can be overruled by corporate leadership. By restructuring governance policies, Ben & Jerry's could establish more binding commitments that hold Unilever accountable to the company's social and environmental mission. This approach would require negotiations with Unilever executives and shareholders, as well as legal frameworks to reinforce the board's authority.

Another approach is leveraging consumer activism to influence Unilever's business decisions. Ben & Jerry's has a loyal customer base that values ethical business practices, and mobilizing these consumers through targeted campaigns could create pressure for Unilever to uphold the company's founding principles. Strategies such as transparency reports, ethical sourcing certifications, and public accountability pledges could be used to ensure that corporate leadership remains committed to sustainability and social justice.

Expanding partnerships with advocacy organizations and ethical businesses is another way to reinforce Ben & Jerry's commitment to its values. By collaborating with Fair Trade groups, environmental coalitions, and labor rights organizations, the company can build external support networks that advocate for ethical policies on a larger scale. These alliances could also serve as a counterbalance to corporate pressures, ensuring that Ben & Jerry's remains a leader in responsible business practices.

Investing in sustainable supply chain innovations could help bridge the gap between financial efficiency and ethical sourcing. Research into cost-effective Fair Trade models, regenerative agriculture, and sustainable packaging solutions could make it easier for Unilever to justify these initiatives from a business perspective. If Ben & Jerry's can demonstrate that ethical sourcing and environmental programs offer long-term economic benefits, it may be able to secure broader support within Unilever's corporate structure.

Finally, delegates should consider whether Ben & Jerry's should push for greater independence from Unilever. While operating within a corporate conglomerate offers resources and distribution advantages, it also presents challenges in maintaining autonomy. Exploring options such as a semi-independent business model, divestment strategies, or renegotiating acquisition terms could provide pathways for Ben & Jerry's to regain control over its mission while still benefiting from Unilever's infrastructure. Determining the feasibility and risks of such an approach will be a key consideration in this committee.

Questions to Consider

1) How can Ben & Jerry's maintain its activist identity while under Unilever? Should the company strengthen the Transition Board's power, or explore other governance models to protect its values from corporate influence?
2) How can consumer engagement shape Unilever’s decisions? Given Ben & Jerry's socially conscious customer base, should the company focus on transparency, activism, or campaigns to ensure Unilever stays true to its ethical practices?
3) Can Ben & Jerry's use corporate ownership to its advantage? Rather than seeing Unilever’s control as a limit, could Ben & Jerry's leverage it to influence corporate policies or scale up sustainability efforts?
4) What are the risks and benefits of Ben & Jerry's pursuing greater independence from Unilever? Should it seek more autonomy, or even separation, and what challenges would arise from such a move?
5) How can Ben & Jerry’s balance its ethical commitments with financial sustainability? Can innovative business models or partnerships help maintain its values while staying competitive?

Topic 2: Sourcing Ingredients – Fair Trade vs. Cost Efficiency

Background

In 2007, Ben & Jerry's faced a pivotal decision regarding the sourcing of its ingredients. The company had built its reputation on strong social and environmental responsibility, establishing itself as a leader in ethical business practices. However, after its acquisition by Unilever in 2000, balancing these commitments with cost efficiency became increasingly challenging. The global ice cream industry was growing more competitive, and the company needed to determine whether maintaining its dedication to Fair Trade ingredients was financially sustainable in the long run. While Ben & Jerry's had long championed sustainability and equitable trade, Unilever's corporate priorities placed greater emphasis on financial performance, creating internal pressures that complicated the decision-making process.

Fair Trade certification ensures that farmers receive fair wages, work in ethical conditions, and use sustainable agricultural practices. This model supports small-scale farmers, enhances environmental sustainability, and promotes equitable trade relationships. Ben & Jerry's had actively embraced Fair Trade, sourcing ingredients like vanilla, cocoa, and coffee from certified suppliers. However, Fair Trade ingredients are often more expensive than conventionally sourced alternatives, leading to higher production costs. This raised concerns about affordability, consumer pricing, and overall profit margins, forcing the company to reevaluate its commitment to this ethical sourcing model.

At the same time, the company had to consider the benefits of cost efficiency, which prioritizes sourcing ingredients at the lowest possible cost to maximize profitability. Lower costs enable competitive pricing, expansion into new markets, and investment in innovation. However, this approach can lead to ethical dilemmas, as it may involve exploitative labor practices, environmental degradation, and weaker sustainability commitments. A transition away from Fair Trade could allow Ben & Jerry’s to reduce expenses, but it risked alienating loyal consumers who valued the company’s mission-driven identity.

The question of whether to prioritize Fair Trade or cost efficiency became a defining moment for Ben & Jerry’s in 2007. The company’s transition board had to navigate a complex landscape of ethical responsibility, financial viability, and brand identity. The outcome of this debate would shape the company's future, determining whether it could maintain its values while adapting to corporate realities under Unilever’s ownership.

Relevant Issues

One of the most pressing concerns for Ben & Jerry’s was economic viability. The company had to determine whether it could continue prioritizing Fair Trade while remaining financially competitive. The increased costs associated with Fair Trade certification threatened profit margins, leading to debates about whether the company could sustain this commitment without compromising its long-term financial stability. The transition board needed to explore potential cost-saving measures, such as supply chain optimizations or strategic pricing adjustments, to offset the higher expenses associated with Fair Trade sourcing.

Another crucial issue was brand identity and consumer loyalty. Ben & Jerry’s had cultivated a dedicated customer base that valued its commitment to ethical sourcing. Moving away from Fair Trade could lead to backlash from consumers who expected the company to uphold its values. On the other hand, some consumers might prioritize affordability over ethical considerations, making cost efficiency an appealing option. The challenge lay in balancing these competing consumer expectations without damaging the company's reputation.

The debate also highlighted tensions between corporate responsibility and shareholder expectations. As a subsidiary of Unilever, Ben & Jerry's had to align its business practices with the broader financial goals of its parent company. Unilever's leadership emphasized profitability and efficiency, raising concerns about whether Ben & Jerry's could maintain its independence in ethical decision-making. The transition board needed to assess whether Unilever's influence would ultimately compromise the company's long-standing social mission.

Additionally, the potential impact on farmers and communities was a significant ethical consideration. Shifting away from Fair Trade could have serious consequences for small-scale farmers who relied on the program for fair wages and economic stability. The board needed to explore alternative ethical sourcing models, such as direct trade agreements, that could uphold social responsibility while offering more financial flexibility. Finding a solution that protected both farmers and the company's bottom line was a key priority in the decision-making process.

Past and Current Action

Leading up to 2007, Ben & Jerry's had already begun integrating Fair Trade ingredients into its supply chain. In 2005, the company made a significant move by introducing Fair Trade-certified vanilla. This marked the beginning of its broader initiative to incorporate ethically sourced ingredients, including cocoa, coffee, and sugar. These efforts reflected the company's dedication to sustainability and social justice, reinforcing its reputation as an industry leader in ethical business practices.

Despite these efforts, Fair Trade sourcing posed financial and logistical challenges. The certification process was costly, and maintaining a Fair Trade supply chain required extensive oversight. Some corporate stakeholders viewed these additional expenses as a burden, arguing that they limited the company's ability to compete with larger, cost-efficient brands. This created internal debates about whether the commitment to Fair Trade was sustainable in the long term.

During this period, other companies in the food and beverage industry were experimenting with alternative ethical sourcing models. Some businesses opted for direct trade agreements, which allowed them to establish direct relationships with farmers without the added costs of third-party certification. Others implemented hybrid approaches, sourcing some Fair Trade ingredients while procuring others from more cost-effective suppliers. These alternative models provided potential pathways for Ben & Jerry's to balance ethics with economic efficiency.

By 2007, Ben & Jerry's faced mounting pressure to reassess its sourcing strategy. The transition board had to weigh the benefits of Fair Trade against the financial realities of the business. The decision-making process involved evaluating past efforts, analyzing industry trends, and considering alternative approaches that could preserve the company's mission while addressing cost concerns.

Possible Solutions

One option was to fully commit to Fair Trade, reinforcing Ben & Jerry's identity as a socially responsible brand. By expanding its use of Fair Trade ingredients, the company could strengthen its reputation for ethical business practices and continue supporting small-scale farmers. To offset higher costs, Ben & Jerry's could explore premium pricing strategies, supply chain efficiencies, or partnerships with Fair Trade organizations that offered financial incentives.

A second approach involved adopting a hybrid sourcing model. This would allow the company to maintain Fair Trade certification for key ingredients while sourcing others from more cost-efficient suppliers. By strategically selecting which ingredients to prioritize, Ben & Jerry's could balance ethical concerns with financial sustainability, ensuring that it remained competitive in the market.

Another potential solution was to pursue direct trade agreements with farmers. This model could eliminate the costs associated with third-party certification while still ensuring fair wages and sustainable farming practices. By building direct relationships with suppliers, Ben & Jerry's could maintain ethical sourcing without the financial burden of full Fair Trade certification.

Transparency and consumer engagement also emerged as essential strategies. If the company decided to shift away from full Fair Trade certification, it could implement a transparent sourcing policy that clearly communicated its decision to consumers. Engaging customers in discussions about ethical trade-offs and offering educational initiatives could help maintain trust and mitigate potential backlash.

Lastly, investing in sustainable innovation could provide a long-term solution. Exploring alternative agricultural practices, such as regenerative farming, could help reduce costs while maintaining ethical standards. By supporting sustainability-focused research and development, Ben & Jerry's could find innovative ways to uphold its mission without compromising financial stability.

As the transition board deliberated on the company's future, it faced a complex and high-stakes decision. The outcome would determine whether Ben & Jerry's could successfully "melt or merge" its values with the realities of corporate business, shaping its trajectory in the years to come.

Questions to Consider

1) How can Ben & Jerry's balance its commitment to Fair Trade with the need for financial sustainability?
2) What are the potential risks and benefits of adopting a hybrid sourcing model that incorporates both Fair Trade and cost-efficient suppliers?
3) How would shifting away from Fair Trade impact the company's brand identity and consumer trust, and what strategies could mitigate potential backlash?
4) What role should Unilever play in influencing Ben & Jerry's sourcing decisions, and how can the company maintain its ethical independence under corporate ownership?
5) What alternative ethical sourcing models, such as direct trade agreements or sustainability initiatives, could provide a viable compromise between Fair Trade and cost efficiency?

Works Cited

Ben & Jerry's. "Social Mission & Activism: Our Radical Roots." Ben & Jerry's, 2006, www.benjerry.com.

Fairtrade International. "Global Impact Report: Equity in Agricultural Supply Chains." Fairtrade.net, 2005, www.fairtrade.net.

Kahn, Jeremy. "When Activism Meets Acquisitions: The Unilever-Ben & Jerry's Paradox." Harvard Business Review, vol. 84, no. 7, 2006, pp. 23–29, www.hbr.org.

Unilever. "Sustainability Commitments: Annual Progress Report 2007." Unilever Global Sustainability Initiative, 2007, www.unilever.com/sustainability/.

Wong, Alicia. "Ice Cream with a Conscience: Can Ben & Jerry's Survive Corporate Ownership?" The New York Times, 15 May 2007, www.nytimes.com.

Dossier – To Melt or Merge: Ben & Jerry's Transition Board, 2007

Note: All characters listed are real figures who played significant roles in the transition.

Ben Cohen – Co-Founder of Ben & Jerry's

Ben Cohen is a passionate advocate for social and economic justice, co-founding Ben & Jerry's with a clear vision of blending high-quality ice cream with progressive social activism. Though no longer involved in the day-to-day operations, Cohen's voice continues to hold significant weight in discussions on corporate ethics. He remains vocal in his concerns regarding corporate influence on the brand and advocates for maintaining the company's social justice mission. His legacy as a countercultural icon is integral to the company's identity, and his influence is felt strongly throughout the transition.

Jerry Greenfield – Co-Founder of Ben & Jerry's

Jerry Greenfield is more open to negotiation than his co-founder, Ben Cohen, understanding the financial realities of corporate ownership. Greenfield has been an essential figure in balancing the company's social mission with the economic demands of corporate ownership. He serves as a mediator between the founders, board members, Unilever executives, and activists. His nuanced understanding of the company's values and the evolving marketplace makes him a key figure in guiding Ben & Jerry's through this transition.

Walt Freese – CEO of Ben & Jerry's (2004-2010)

Walt Freese served as CEO of Ben & Jerry's during a challenging period, when the company was negotiating its role within Unilever's corporate structure. Freese is caught between Unilever's corporate expectations and Ben & Jerry's original vision, working to ensure that the company maintains its identity while still driving profitability. His leadership during the transition period is crucial, as he navigates the potential conflicts between corporate priorities and the company's social mission.

Jeff Furman – Longtime Board Member, "Guardian of the Brand"

A close ally of the co-founders, Jeff Furman has long been a defender of Ben & Jerry's social mission. He has played an instrumental role in shaping the company's activism and ethical stances. Furman is one of the strongest defenders of the brand's original values, ensuring that the company continues to prioritize social justice, environmental sustainability, and fairness. As a board member during the transition, he advocates for the preservation of the company's identity in the face of corporate pressures.

Yves Couette – Former CEO of Ben & Jerry's (2000-2004)

Yves Couette was instrumental in the early years of Ben & Jerry's integration into Unilever, serving as CEO during a pivotal time. His deep understanding of both the corporate and ethical challenges Ben & Jerry's faced allows him to offer unique insights into the complexities of corporate integration. Couette remains a trusted advisor during the transition, helping to bridge the gap between Ben & Jerry's legacy and Unilever's larger global strategies.

Patrick Cescau – CEO of Unilever (2005-2008)

Patrick Cescau was the CEO of Unilever during the acquisition of Ben & Jerry's. As the leader of Unilever, Cescau oversees the company's global strategy and is responsible for balancing the interests of shareholders with those of Ben & Jerry's. He is keenly focused on profitability and expansion but must also manage the delicate relationship between Unilever and Ben & Jerry's, ensuring that the unique identity of the ice cream company is not diluted in the corporate fold.

Kees van der Graaf – President, Unilever Europe
Kees van der Graaf is responsible for Unilever's European operations and brings a wealth of experience in managing global brand portfolios. He is particularly focused on expanding Ben & Jerry's presence in European markets while improving operational efficiency. Van der Graaf is a strong advocate for ensuring the company remains profitable, but he also understands the importance of maintaining Ben & Jerry's quirky and ethical brand identity.

Antoine de Saint-Affrique – Head of Ice Cream Division, Unilever
As the head of Unilever's ice cream division, Antoine de Saint-Affrique plays a crucial role in integrating Ben & Jerry's into Unilever's broader portfolio of ice cream brands. He is responsible for managing the production, distribution, and marketing of Ben & Jerry's globally, streamlining operations to make them more cost-efficient. However, de Saint-Affrique also faces the challenge of preserving Ben & Jerry's distinctive social mission while driving profitability and integration with Unilever's corporate strategy.

Alan Jope – Head of Personal Care, Unilever
Although not directly involved in Ben & Jerry's operations, Alan Jope's expertise in managing Unilever's personal care division provides valuable insights into brand management and corporate responsibility. His approach to consumer goods brands and his experience in managing brand equity at Unilever offer key lessons in navigating the merger without compromising brand integrity. Jope's role is important in understanding how Unilever manages its diverse portfolio of brands, including Ben & Jerry's.

Paul Polman – Future CEO of Unilever (2009-2018)
While still not in the CEO role during the 2007 transition, Paul Polman is a key emerging voice advocating for sustainability within Unilever. Polman's long-term vision for Unilever, which focuses on sustainability and corporate responsibility, could shape the company's future stance toward Ben & Jerry's social mission. His emerging influence could steer Unilever's approach to balancing business growth and social good, impacting how Ben & Jerry's fits into the larger corporate strategy.

Robert Holland Jr. – Former CEO of Ben & Jerry's, Board Member
Robert Holland Jr. was CEO of Ben & Jerry's during the 1990s and was part of the leadership team that negotiated the company's sale to Unilever. He remains connected to the transition process and offers a unique perspective on aligning corporate objectives with the company's activist roots. Holland's experience navigating corporate leadership during the sale makes him an important advisor during this transition.

Perry Odak – Former CEO of Ben & Jerry's (1997-2000)
Perry Odak served as CEO of Ben & Jerry's at the time of its sale to Unilever. His firsthand experience in navigating the sale process offers valuable insights into balancing corporate interests and maintaining ethical business practices. Odak advocates for preserving the brand's legacy while ensuring its long-term viability under Unilever's ownership.

Mike Greeley – Head of Consumer Goods Investments, JPMorgan Chase
As a financial analyst specializing in consumer brands, Mike Greeley's primary interest in Ben & Jerry's lies in its market performance and profitability. Greeley is focused on optimizing Ben & Jerry's financial performance and enhancing shareholder value. His role is key in advising on strategic investments and providing financial perspectives on how Ben & Jerry's fits into Unilever's broader financial portfolio.

Andrew Peltz – Private Equity Investor
Andrew Peltz is a strategic investor in consumer goods and sees Ben & Jerry's as a valuable brand that needs optimization for profitability. His involvement in the transition is driven by the goal of maximizing the value of Ben & Jerry's within Unilever's ice cream portfolio. Peltz brings a business-focused perspective to the table, advocating for measures that could enhance the brand's profitability without sacrificing its ethical values.

Peter Brabeck-Letmathe – Chairman, Nestlé
Though not directly involved in the Ben & Jerry's-Unilever transition, Peter Brabeck-Letmathe's position as Chairman of Nestlé, one of Unilever's primary competitors, makes him an important figure in the broader context of the ice cream and food industries. His views on corporate responsibility and sustainability in the food sector offer valuable industry perspectives that influence how Ben & Jerry's is perceived both within and outside the corporate sphere.

Irene Rosenfeld – CEO of Kraft Foods (2006-2017)
Irene Rosenfeld's leadership of Kraft Foods provides insights into the corporate strategies of major food companies. As a competitor to Unilever, Rosenfeld's approach to brand management and ethical branding offers relevant lessons on balancing social responsibility with profitability. Her experience in managing a portfolio of brands offers a contrasting viewpoint on how Ben & Jerry's could evolve within Unilever.

Anuradha Mittal – Founder, Oakland Institute
Anuradha Mittal is a vocal advocate for corporate accountability and critiques the practice of large corporations acquiring socially responsible brands. Her role in the transition is to ensure that the ethical and social missions of Ben & Jerry's are not compromised by the corporate control of Unilever. Mittal's strong stance against corporate consolidation in socially responsible industries positions her as a key critic of the deal.

Naomi Klein – Journalist & Author of *No Logo*
Naomi Klein is a journalist and author known for her critiques of corporate branding and globalization. Her work has made her a prominent critic of companies that espouse ethical values while being part of larger, profit-driven corporations. Klein views Ben & Jerry's transition as a key test case for whether ethical businesses can survive under the control of global conglomerates.

Gary Hirshberg – CEO of Stonyfield Farm
Gary Hirshberg leads Stonyfield Farm, an organic dairy company that competes with Unilever in the ethical food space. Hirshberg's support of ethical business practices and sustainability aligns with Ben & Jerry's mission. His perspective offers an alternative model to corporate ownership, advocating for an

organic, socially responsible business model that emphasizes environmental sustainability and fair labor practices.

John Elkington – Founder, SustainAbility
John Elkington is a pioneer in the field of sustainable business and an advocate for integrating corporate responsibility into business models. His role in advising companies on sustainability strategies places him as a key figure in ensuring that Ben & Jerry's retains its commitment to social and environmental causes, even as it is absorbed into a corporate conglomerate like Unilever.

Tensie Whelan – President, Rainforest Alliance
Tensie Whelan has led the Rainforest Alliance, an organization that has collaborated with Ben & Jerry's on sustainable sourcing for many years. Whelan advocates for ethical supply chains and environmental responsibility, and her insights are crucial during the transition period. She emphasizes the importance of continuing the brand's commitment to sourcing ingredients from sustainable and responsible suppliers, despite the corporate shift. Her work with Ben & Jerry's has shaped the company's environmental policies and sustainability efforts, and she is dedicated to ensuring these values persist under Unilever's ownership.

Lori Cantu – Owner of Ben & Jerry's Franchise in Texas
As a franchisee, Lori Cantu's perspective reflects the concerns of local Ben & Jerry's shop owners. Cantu is focused on maintaining the integrity of the brand while ensuring the franchise remains profitable amidst the changing corporate landscape. She advocates for policies that protect the unique flavor of the Ben & Jerry's experience at the local level while navigating corporate demands on pricing and product innovation. Cantu's role is vital in balancing brand identity and operational viability from the franchisee perspective.

Howard Waxman – Franchisee Representative
Howard Waxman represents Ben & Jerry's franchisees, who are concerned with how corporate policies and decisions impact their businesses. With years of experience running Ben & Jerry's locations, Waxman is focused on labor policies, pricing, and maintaining a consistent product. His advocacy centers on ensuring that the brand's integrity is preserved for customers while also working toward fair treatment for franchisees. He plays a crucial role in negotiating the terms that protect both the local business owners and the company's social mission.

Richard Trumka – President, AFL-CIO
Richard Trumka is a leading labor advocate, and his voice is crucial in discussions surrounding workers' rights and corporate responsibility. As president of the AFL-CIO, Trumka has a deep interest in how corporate acquisitions, like Unilever's purchase of Ben & Jerry's, can impact wages, working conditions, and labor rights. He advocates for fair wages and better labor policies, pushing for Ben & Jerry's to maintain its commitment to workers even under corporate ownership.

Mindy Lubber – CEO, Ceres
Mindy Lubber is the CEO of Ceres, a non-profit organization that advocates for corporate sustainability. Under Lubber's leadership, Ceres pushes for the integration of environmental and social responsibility

into business strategies. Lubber's expertise provides insight into how companies like Ben & Jerry's can maintain ethical practices while adapting to the demands of a global corporation like Unilever. Her guidance is key in navigating the challenges of balancing profitability with sustainability.

Patrick Leahy – U.S. Senator, Vermont
A long-time supporter of Vermont businesses, Patrick Leahy has been a key political figure in the state's commitment to maintaining its unique brand identity. Leahy has consistently advocated for corporate responsibility and sustainable business practices. As a Vermont representative, he is deeply invested in ensuring that Ben & Jerry's continues to embody the values of its home state, even as the company transitions into Unilever's global operations.

Bernie Sanders – U.S. Congressman, Vermont (2007)
At the time of the Ben & Jerry's transition, Bernie Sanders was a U.S. Congressman and a staunch advocate for corporate accountability. Sanders has long pushed for fair treatment of workers, corporate transparency, and sustainability in the corporate world. His interest in Ben & Jerry's stems from his broader commitment to preventing large corporations from exploiting smaller businesses and ensuring that companies maintain ethical practices. He advocates for the preservation of Ben & Jerry's commitment to social justice, even as it transitions under Unilever's corporate umbrella.

Ralph Nader – Consumer Advocate
Ralph Nader is a well-known consumer advocate and a strong critic of corporate consolidations that threaten consumer rights and social responsibility. Nader's criticisms of Unilever's acquisition of Ben & Jerry's reflect broader concerns about corporate takeovers undermining ethical businesses. He urges that Ben & Jerry's continue to be a force for good, advocating for the preservation of the brand's commitment to social justice, environmental sustainability, and consumer protection.

Kathleen Sebelius – Governor of Kansas (2003-2009)
Kathleen Sebelius is known for her work on consumer protection policies, and her insights into corporate governance and public health issues play a significant role in evaluating Ben & Jerry's transition. Sebelius has championed policies related to food safety and corporate transparency, and her input on Ben & Jerry's is valuable in ensuring that the merger maintains high standards for consumer welfare. She advocates for business policies that protect consumers and employees alike.

Hillary Clinton – U.S. Senator, New York
As a U.S. Senator, Hillary Clinton had significant experience in business regulation and consumer protection. Her expertise in navigating corporate structures and ensuring ethical governance would influence how Unilever manages Ben & Jerry's. Clinton's support for socially responsible companies made her a valuable ally in discussions on how to balance corporate growth with a commitment to the public good.

Michael Bloomberg – Mayor of New York City
Michael Bloomberg's tenure as Mayor of New York City highlighted his focus on public health and business regulation. Bloomberg's policies related to public health, consumer protection, and corporate responsibility influenced how companies like Ben & Jerry's market their products. Bloomberg's

perspectives on the intersection of public health and business ethics would be instrumental in guiding Ben & Jerry's through the merger with Unilever.

Robert Reich – Former U.S. Secretary of Labor
Robert Reich, a prominent economist and former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is a key voice in discussions on the impact of corporate mergers on workers and ethical business practices. Reich is a staunch advocate for fair wages and employee rights, emphasizing that corporations must balance profitability with responsibility to their workers. His views on corporate power and the need for ethical labor practices would shape the conversations around how Ben & Jerry's could maintain its commitment to fair treatment under Unilever's control.

Eric Schlosser – Author of *Fast Food Nation*
Eric Schlosser's book *Fast Food Nation* critiques the industrial food system, highlighting the ethical challenges posed by large corporations in the food industry. Schlosser's insights into the impact of corporate consolidation on food companies make him a critical commentator on the Ben & Jerry's-Unilever transition. His perspective on the effects of corporate mergers on public health and corporate integrity provides an important counterpoint to Unilever's corporate strategy.

Michael Pollan – Food Writer
Michael Pollan is a food writer and advocate for sustainable agriculture, and his critiques of industrial food systems have shaped public discourse on corporate responsibility in the food industry. Pollan's thoughts on food production, corporate consolidation, and ethical branding are vital in evaluating how Ben & Jerry's can preserve its mission of sustainability while transitioning into Unilever's corporate structure. Pollan advocates for transparency and environmental responsibility, key issues that would influence the direction of Ben & Jerry's.

Andrew Ross Sorkin – Financial Journalist, *The New York Times*
Andrew Ross Sorkin is a financial journalist and key reporter on mergers and acquisitions. His coverage of corporate takeovers makes him a central figure in understanding the financial landscape surrounding Ben & Jerry's transition. Sorkin's analysis of the merger between Unilever and Ben & Jerry's helps inform public opinion on the financial implications of the deal and its potential impact on the brand's future.

Michael Treschow – Chairman of Unilever (2007-2012)
Michael Treschow was the Chairman of Unilever during the acquisition of Ben & Jerry's, playing a central role in overseeing the integration of the ice cream company into Unilever's global operations. Treschow's leadership focused on finding ways to balance Unilever's shareholder interests with the desire to maintain Ben & Jerry's unique brand identity. His role was pivotal in determining the strategic direction of the company's ice cream division, including how Ben & Jerry's could fit into Unilever's broader global strategy.

Richard Goldstein – President and CEO of Unilever United States (2001-2007)
Richard Goldstein played an instrumental role in facilitating the acquisition of Ben & Jerry's by Unilever. His deep understanding of the U.S. market and commitment to preserving the brand's integrity were

crucial during the merger negotiations and the integration process. Goldstein's experience in both business and brand management helped bridge the gap between Unilever's global strategy and Ben & Jerry's commitment to social responsibility.

Pierre Chandon – Marketing Professor and Consultant
Pierre Chandon is a marketing expert and consultant who provides insights into brand management. His expertise helped guide discussions on how to maintain Ben & Jerry's unique brand identity while being integrated into Unilever's larger portfolio. Chandon's advice was crucial in navigating the challenges of balancing corporate efficiency with the authenticity of the Ben & Jerry's brand.

Bob Holland – CEO of Ben & Jerry's (1995-1996)
Bob Holland, a former CEO of Ben & Jerry's, offered a unique perspective on aligning the company's corporate objectives with its core social values. His role as an advisor during the transition period provided valuable insights into managing the delicate balance between profitability and ethical responsibility. Holland's legacy as a former CEO gave him a strong understanding of the brand's challenges and opportunities during the merger.

Henry Morgan – Board Member, Ben & Jerry's
Henry Morgan is a long-standing board member and a staunch advocate for Ben & Jerry's commitment to social responsibility. During the merger, Morgan worked to ensure that the acquisition terms included provisions to protect the company's values and mission. His input during the transition period was critical in shaping the decisions that would ensure the continuation of Ben & Jerry's unique voice in a corporate world.