

be filed in the public docket, except to the extent the report contains information the trustee deems confidential. The parties will each have the right to make additional recommendations to the Court. The Court shall enter such orders as it deems appropriate to carry out the purpose of the trust.

IV. Remedies Available to Potential Private Litigants

Section 4 of the Clayton Act (15 U.S.C. § 15) provides that any person who has been injured as a result of conduct prohibited by the antitrust laws may bring suit in federal court to recover three times the damages the person has suffered, as well as costs and reasonable attorneys' fees. Entry of the proposed Final Judgment will neither impair nor assist the bringing of any private antitrust damage action. Under the provisions of Section 5(a) of the Clayton Act (15 U.S.C. § 16(a)), the proposed Final Judgment has no *prima facie* effect in any subsequent private lawsuit that may be brought against defendants. The proposed Final Judgment provides that nothing therein contained shall be construed to provide any rights to any third party.

V. Procedures Available for Modification of the Proposed Final Judgment

The United States and the defendants have stipulated that the proposed Final Judgment may be entered by the Court after compliance with the provisions of the APPA, provided that the United States has not withdrawn its consent. The APPA conditions entry upon the Court's determination that the proposed Final Judgment is in the public interest.

The APPA provides a period of at least sixty (60) days preceding the effective date of the proposed Final Judgment within which any person may submit to the United States written comments regarding the proposed Final Judgment. Any person who wishes to comment should do so within sixty (60) days of the date of publication of this Competitive Impact Statement in the Federal Register. The United States will evaluate and respond to the comments. All comments will be given due consideration by the Department of Justice, which remains free to withdraw its consent to the proposed Final Judgment at any time prior to entry. The comments and the response of the United States will be filed with the Court and published in the Federal Register.

Written comments should be submitted to: Anthony V. Nanni, Chief, Litigation I Section, Antitrust Division,

United States Department of Justice, 1401 H Street, N.W., Suite 4000, Washington, D.C. 20530.

The proposed Final Judgment provides that the Court retains jurisdiction over this action, and the parties may apply to the Court for any order necessary or appropriate for the modification, interpretation, or enforcement of the Final Judgment.

VI. Alternatives to the Proposed Final Judgment

The United States considered, as an alternative to the proposed Final Judgment, a full trial on the merits of its Complaint against defendants Kimberly-Clark and Scott. The United States is satisfied, however, that the divestiture of the assets and other relief contained in the proposed Final Judgment will preserve viable competition in the production and sale of facial tissue and baby wipes that would otherwise be adversely affected by the acquisition. Thus, the proposed Final Judgment would achieve the relief the governments would have obtained through litigation, but avoids the time, expense and uncertainty of a full trial on the merits of the governments' Complaint.

VII. Standard of Review Under the APPA for Proposed Final Judgment

The APPA requires that proposed consent judgments in antitrust cases brought by the United States be subject to a sixty-day comment period, after which the court shall determine whether entry of the proposed Final Judgment "is in the public interest." In making that determination, the court may consider—

(1) the competitive impact of such judgment, including termination of alleged violations, provisions for enforcement and modification, duration or relief sought, anticipated effects of alternative remedies actually considered, and any other considerations bearing upon the adequacy of such judgment;

(2) the impact of entry of such judgment upon the public generally and individuals alleging specific injury from the violations set forth in the complaint including consideration of the public benefit, if any, to be derived from a determination of the issues at trial.

15 U.S.C. 16(e) (emphasis added). As the DC Circuit recently held, this statute permits a court to consider, among other things, the relationship between the remedy secured and the specific allegations set forth in the government's complaint, whether the decree is sufficiently clear, whether enforcement mechanisms are sufficient, and whether the decree may positively harm third parties. *See United States v. Microsoft*,

1995-1 Trade Cas. (CCH) ¶71,027, at ____ (Slip op. 26) (DC Cir. June 16, 1995).

In conducting this inquiry, "the Court is nowhere compelled to go to trial or to engage in extended proceedings which might have the effect of vitiating the benefits of prompt and less costly settlement through the consent decree process."³ Rather, absent a showing of corrupt failure of the government to discharge its duty, the Court, in making its public interest finding, should * * * carefully consider the explanations of the government in the competitive impact statement and its responses to comments in order to determine whether those explanations are reasonable under the circumstances.

United States v. Mid-America Dairymen, Inc., 1977-1 Trade Cas. ¶61,508, at 71,980 (W.D. Mo. 1977).

Accordingly, with respect to the adequacy of the relief secured by the decree, a court may not "engage in an unrestricted evaluation of what relief would best serve the public." *United States v. BNS, Inc.*, 858 F.2d 456, 462 (9th Cir. 1988) *quoting United States v. Bechtel Corp.*, 648 F.2d 660, 666 (9th Cir.), *cert. denied*, 454 U.S. 1083 (1981); *see also Microsoft*, 1995-1 Trade Cas. at ____ (Slip. op. 22). Precedent requires that

the balancing of competing social and political interests affected by a proposed antitrust consent decree must be left, in the first instance, to the discretion of the Attorney General. The court's role in protecting the public interest is one of insuring that the government has not breached its duty to the public in consenting to the decree. The court is required to determine not whether a particular decree is the one that will best serve society, but whether the settlement is "within the reaches of the public interest." More elaborate requirements might undermine the effectiveness of antitrust enforcement by consent decree.⁴

³ 119 Cong. Rec. 24598 (1973). *See United States v. Gillette Co.*, 406 F. Supp. 713, 715 (D. Mass. 1975). A "public interest" determination can be made properly on the basis of the Competitive Impact Statement and Response to Comments filed pursuant to the APPA. Although the APPA authorizes the use of additional procedures, 15 U.S.C. § 16(f), those procedures are discretionary. A court need not invoke any of them unless it believes that the comments have raised significant issues and that further proceedings would aid the court in resolving those issues. *See H.R. Rep. 93-1463*, 93rd Cong. 2d Sess. 8-9, *reprinted in* (1974) U.S. Code Cong. & Ad. News 6535, 6538.

⁴ *United States v. Bechtel*, 648 F.2d at 666 (citations omitted) (emphasis added); *see United States v. BNS, Inc.*, 858 F.2d at 463; *United States v. National Broadcasting Co.*, 449 F. Supp. 1127, 1143 (C.D. Cal. 1978); *United States v. Gillette Co.*, 406 F. Supp. at 716. *See also Microsoft*, 1995-1 Trade Cas. at ____ (Slip op. 23) (whether "the remedies [obtained in the decree are] so inconsonant with the allegations charged as to fall outside of the 'reaches of the public interest.'" (citations omitted).