



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 1972

The Department of Justice filed a civil antitrust suit today charging the Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Tulsa, Oklahoma, two other soft drink bottlers and their trade association with conspiring to restrain competition in the sale of soft drinks in Tulsa since at least January, 1971.

Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst said the suit, which charged a violation of Section 1 of the Sherman Act, was filed in U.S. District Court in Tulsa.

Named as defendants, in addition to Coca-Cola, were Lake Country Beverage, Inc., Beverage Products Corporation and the Tulsa Bottlers Association.

The suit charged that the bottlers had restrained competition among themselves by conspiring to:

- establish deposit charges for bottles, cartons and hulls in which soft drinks are sold;

- raise and stabilize the prices of soft drinks;

and,

- discuss and exchange economic facts and information concerning deposit charges, bottling costs, competitive practices, and the need for price increases.

OVER

The complaint charged that, as a result of these practices, price competition in the sale of soft drinks in Tulsa has been restrained competition in the amounts of deposit charges required from Tulsa soft drink purchasers has been eliminated, and Tulsa soft drink purchasers have been denied the opportunity to purchase soft drinks in a competitive market.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Walker B. Comegys, in charge of the Antitrust Division, said that the bottlers named in the complaint account for over 90 percent of the soft drink sales made by independent bottling companies in Tulsa.

These companies bottle and distribute a variety of nationally known brands of soft drinks, such as "Coca-Cola", "Pepsi-Cola", "Royal Crown Cola" and "7-Up", in the City of Tulsa, he said.

The suit asked that the defendants be permanently enjoined from continuing any activities of the type charged in the complaint, and from giving prior notice of any contemplated change in prices, terms, and conditions in the sale of soft drinks to any other soft drink bottler. The complaint also asked that the defendant trade association be dissolved.

In 1970, the bottling companies named in the complaint had in excess of \$15 million in soft drink sales.