I have heard folks say that drinking cows’ milk may transmit “mad cow disease.” If this is so, why hasn’t the government done something?

"Mad cow disease" has a long name, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). About 30 years ago, the medical community was discussing "slow viruses." A disease seen in cannibals in Papua New Guinea called "kuru" was shown to be transmitted by eating diseased human brain tissue. Since that time, the causative entity called a prion has been discovered. Prions are "rogue proteins," not viruses, that cause disease in man and animals. Some prions can be passed along in genetic material from one generation to another, and require some trigger or activation to become operative.

There has been no documented case of "mad cow disease" (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) in the United States; in Europe, there have been a total of one hundred cases.

The transmission of "mad cow disease" (BSE) is more likely when neural (nervous) tissue is used. Laboratory animals can be easily infected. Milk though – even from infected cows – has not been able to transmit the disease, even to the same type of laboratory animals easily infected with other infected tissue.

Milk in the United States is, therefore, as far as "mad cow disease" (BSE) is concerned, not a significant concern, on the two counts that: 1. there are no known "mad cows," and 2. milk does not transmit it even when from "mad cows." Cows’ milk has potential for contamination. However regulations concerning the dairy industry have successfully controlled infected herds, bacterial counts, and disease outbreaks related to milk.

There are excellent soy-based substitutes for cows’ milk available in some countries, and these contain fortification with Vitamin B$_{12}$ and calcium. The "bean juice" many use to substitute for milk is just not an adequate replacement, and the fortified soy milks are what is needed. Check the labels when you buy them.

Ellen White stated that the time would come when we may have to give up cows’ milk. She also said we should not unnecessarily bring the time of trouble upon ourselves by making things difficult. In many developing parts of the world, cows’
milk (especially if it is fat free and from healthy cows) is an excellent food source, and fortified soy milks are just not available.

So, don’t go and eliminate everything but oils rich in MUFAs, now, will you? Use balance and moderation. There may be unidentified risks or benefits in other aspects of diet.