



Our Ref: ALR/kab

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Mike Brady
Baby Milk Action UK
34 Trumpington Street
Cambridge
CB2 1QY

Dear Mike

There's always a bit of a tension between people who want to make change happen. Both sides find it difficult to accept that those who want to work from the inside - or those who want to work from the outside, or even those who want to do a bit of both where appropriate - might have something to offer. Actually, of course, they're all necessary if anything is going to change at all.

You tell me that Baby Milk Action is threatening to boycott The Body Shop, which - of all the companies you could choose - has at least tried to make a difference.

Why am I agreeing to the sale of The Body Shop to L'Oreal, one of the many investors in which happens to be Nestlé? Perhaps, in answer, I might put some questions back to you:

What would you say, if you go ahead with this boycott, to the 15,000 or so small producers - in the poorest communities in the world - who earn enough to support their families, and build schools and clinics, because of their link to The Body Shop's community trade programmes?

Why do you object to ownership by a company in which Nestlé has less than a quarter share, but not to The Body Shop's current ownership structure - mainly by a collection of amoral city financiers, asset-strippers and fund managers in the City of London, who eat communities for breakfast?

Why, of all the companies that supply your everyday needs, do you choose to target one of the very few that challenge the way corporate business is run?

What do you say to the ethical investors who buy shares in Nestlé - something I'm not doing - because they believe, as I do, that it can give them leverage on the corporate world?

So yes, I object to the way Nestlé behaves. I am all too aware of their track record on baby milk, GMOs and Ethiopia, you have to be living in space to not know of their reputation.

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But I am asking the campaigners to be open-minded enough to imagine other complementary strategies to bring about corporate change - not in little ways, but on a major scale.

I've been working to spread community trade wider than The Body Shop for decades. Now I can see an opportunity to do so, I just can't settle for puritanical inactivity.

I'm not an investor in Nestlé myself. I'm not giving them any money. I'm not even taking money from them. I am taking money from a company where they have a small stake, and - as I have always said - I will be giving this away to further the cause, just as I did last year to help Amnesty move into a new office.

I make choices as to which companies I buy from. And I have learnt from organisations like the National Labor Committee, who take on the issue of sweatshop labour, that boycotts rarely work and the people you hurt are primarily the weak and the frail. And when all you do is boycott, there is no chance of getting a lever on the way the world is.

So if you have to bloody boycott - then boycott. Boycott all the products that Nestlé own 100 per cent - Perrier, Kit-Kat, Shredded Wheat, Nescafe, Carnation Milk, Branston Pickles. And boycott every pension fund that may have holdings in Nestlé for whatever reason, and everyone who benefits from them. But for goodness sake strengthen the arm of anyone who sees an opportunity of changing the black hole of the corporate world.

Otherwise, that's just puritanism. And I would risk action in the world, even if it fails, over my ethical purity every time.

I want to make a difference, and I believe I can. But I can't achieve anything if I wrap myself in cotton wool, because the world isn't like that - it is too inter-connected - and change doesn't happen like that.

And if a handful of people choose The Body Shop to boycott - out of all the slash and burn monsters of the corporate world we run across every day - what can I say? At least I'm trying.

Yours sincerely

**Signature obscured for
security reasons**

DAME ANITA RODDICK