

Mindless Rage Against BP

by Kenneth A. Kuhn
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This commentary concerns the oil rig disaster in the Gulf of Mexico that happened in April, 2010. The old saying, *the first thing fixed when something happens is the blame*, strongly applies. I was prompted to write this from my personal experience in the first paragraph below.

I was buying gasoline at my usual station the other day and noticed that few cars were there at a time when the station should have been busy. Then it dawned on me – this is BP and people are boycotting. It is crazy – where do people (whom I often refer to as sheeple) think the money is going to come from to pay the damages – from sales of BP's products. In theory, a successful boycott would drive BP into bankruptcy which would insure that those damaged on the coast never get paid. Few understand the big picture. People should continue buying BP products to insure the health of the company and to benefit those on the coast. But that requires thinking at a higher level than a sheep.

Who are the real victims when you boycott a BP station? It starts with whoever owns the station and their immediate family. Then employees may be affected in terms of lost jobs or lower pay depending on the effectiveness of the boycott. These people had nothing to do with the disaster. What possible good are you doing by hurting them? Whether BP, the company, is affected and by how much is debatable (doubtful is probably the better word) as their products are far more than just gasoline and they have the flexibility to shift their uses of unprocessed oil to meet market needs.

When things like this happen it is common for the sheeple to want to do something. That is really an indication that the sheeple have nothing to do – their lives are meaningless with their addictions to various forms of entertainment. They hear something on the news and have a knee-jerk reaction – the definition of a sheeple. They do not think but they have the luxury of ignorance to not realize that. With that luxury they can say and do a lot of stupid things and not feel bad about it. What thoughts they have originate in their intestines rather than their heads. Doing little, they have much time to conclude that they are somehow the victims of the hard work of others – life is not fair. These little people (and they are little people because they do little things and think little thoughts) like to feel good in the delusion that somehow collectively they are the prominent force of wisdom and good in the world. So, among other things they boycott some entity in total ignorance of what they are doing. Ignorance is bliss.

It is not that boycotts should never be done. A boycott would be perfectly reasonable and even I would join in if for example, XYZ Manufacturing instituted a corporate policy for some broadly unacceptable concept such as requiring all employees to be of a certain religion.

Those directly affected by the disaster are rightfully frustrated and mad at what happened and at those responsible. But that does not mean the entire company of BP. BP has

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many thousands of employees world wide who all work so we can have access to the many products made from oil. I have heard of verbal and even physical attacks against employees of BP since the disaster. This is moronism at the extreme.

There were calls to cut or eliminate the dividend BP pays its stockholders. Why should stockholders, many of whom are retirees and depend on dividend income whether from direct stock ownership or indirectly via mutual funds be added to the list of victims. Whether BP continues to pay dividends should only be an internal call by management and not influenced in any way by external morons who know nothing about how big systems work. BP did eliminate its dividend for at least 2010 and possibly for a very long time. The pool of victims expands – oil rig explodes, grandma pays.

I have observed that many people scrutinize every word said by any official within BP looking for some angle to criticize them on. Tony Hayward has been highly criticized for his comment about getting his life back. I was watching the original interview when he said that. I understand. I was not offended then and I am not offended now. Those that criticize him for that comment fail to recognize that when Mr. Hayward has his life back then that means that the Gulf is well under way towards recovery. What is wrong with that? Are the sheeple against recovery? Perhaps, but they do not know or understand what they are for or against – they just react to the moment. Then there is the unjust criticism against the chairman of BP's board of directors, Carl-Henric Svanberg, concerning caring about the small people. Would you feel better if he had said that BP should care about the wealthy (implying to the exclusion of the non-wealthy or so-called little people)? He was publically acknowledging the needs of the non-wealthy. These people have often been referred to as "little people" by their own advocates. So what is wrong with Svanberg using the same term with a translation twist between little and small? I am not inferring that BP is a saintly company. But these petty offenses that sheeple come up with are not helpful.

I saw excerpts on the evening news of the political grandstanding when Hayward testified before Congress. That was a total waste of time and only served the purpose of satisfying sheeple constituents. Yes, investigations are needed to produce specific results that reduce the likelihood of a repeat disaster in the future. That has to be done by knowledgeable people over time. That rules out anyone in Congress.

The ill-wishers got what they wanted – the status of Tony Hayward has been reduced in BP and he is no longer in charge of some things. So, he attended a yacht race and the sheeple were again outraged. What is the poor man supposed to do? Like all of us he does have a life. Life goes on. Except for those directly in the disaster I do not observe the multitude of complainers stopping their lives as a result.

Some have called for the government to take over drilling for oil since we can not seem to trust private companies. Would you feel any better if the disaster was on a government rig instead of a private rig? Given the government's pathetic performance on most things in the past do you really believe the government would do a better job? The idiocy that sheeple come up with amazes me.

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There are fears that BP may not pay all of the damages, particularly damages to the “little people”. As of this writing it is too early to predict other than using the past as a guide to the future, one can confidently say that those who are the craftiest liars will obtain the highest payments thus detracting from what could be paid to honest victims. A massive portion of the payments will end up in the pockets of ultra rich lawyers who experienced no personal loss in the disaster. It is a very corrupt system. I have already heard of some far-fetched claims of damage and many more are being fabricated.

What happened in the Gulf was an accident – let those who are perfect cast the first stone at an imperfect BP. Yes, the accident was caused by rushing the process as is the cause of most accidents – including those who speed, run stop signs, etc. As I write this the projected costs are in the tens of billions and will likely rise to hundreds of billions over the years. We always knew that such a disaster could happen. The only way not to have man-made disasters is to not do anything. The call for BP to pay for everything fails to take into account where that money must come from. Portions of the damage will be paid by insurance and rates for all oil companies will rise accordingly and will be reflected in the price you pay for all products based on oil. That is as it should be. We are all in this together as we desire products made from oil and the costs should be shared by all of us. To kick BP when it is down is a low blow – should you lose your job if you caused an accident while you were rushing in traffic – either to the job or on the way home? Put things in perspective. Things would be radically different if BP had intentionally caused the spill. But they didn’t. They are not benefitting from this in any way.

You can hate the oil companies all you want but you are highly dependent on their products. If you are really serious about a boycott then stop buying gasoline from anyone, stop all uses of plastic, do not use cosmetics, do not take a variety of pharmaceuticals nor use most personal items, do not use most anything you use right now. If you can not live that way then stop your whining you hypocrite. With a wide variety of products the oil companies have made your pitiful life tremendously better than it otherwise would be. Their large profits come not from price gouging but from high volume of sales – duh! The real issue is greed – by the common everyday lazy sheeple who lust after the success of those who have worked hard.

Disclaimer: I own stock in many companies but have never owned any shares in BP. At various times over the years I have considered buying stock in BP but never did. I do continue to buy gasoline at my local BP station. I have full confidence that the station owner had nothing to do with the disaster. I wish him the best. I need for him to stay in business.