

Script AgInt02,12b

“The time now is 20 past 8. Now how powerful is the consumer to change global policies? As we’ve been hearing, there’s a campaign to persuade motorists to boycott Esso petrol stations from today because of global warming. Nestlé in the past has been the object of campaign because of its marketing of powdered milk in the developing world, McDonald's is not the environmentalists’ favorite fast-food chain. But does protest change the way the big corporations work or is it simply gesture politics?”

Well I’m joined in the studio here by Anita Roddick who’s the founder of the Body Shop, and on the line by Doctor Madsen Pirie, he’s president of the Adam Smith Institute. Doctor Pirie, first of all, gesture politics to encourage this sort of boycott? Oh, we’re told Dr. Pirie is not quite with us yet so let me go to, first of all to, Anita Roddick. The accusation is that it is gesture politics to suggest a boycott; I mean I think Body Shop itself has been the object of boycotting in the past. What do you feel about that?”

“It worked, this campaign works if it’s determined and educated and well-funded and this campaign definitely is. It also works when customers or consumers get information which encourages a choice and they don’t always get the right information from the media, they get it from other forms now and especially in the last decade, you go onto the internet and there’s a whole rise in dissenting media and it has worked in the past, I mean you just have to look at the assaults against Nestlé, as you mentioned. There's of course South Africa which was the biggest and of course even in the mining industry and the beauty business where there were the accusations of testing on animals, and that worked and the law was changed in this country.”

“That worked in the sense of the law being changed. Does it work with huge companies like a big oil company when what people are trying to do is, I suppose in a sense, is to make their profits reduce or to make them -- and we didn't hear any indication that it was going to work from the man whom we saw earlier on this program -- to make them divert some of their profit towards research into renewable resources.”