

HM QUEEN BEATRIX OF THE NETHERLANDS
Huis ten Bosch Palace
The Hague

1st March 1999

Your Majesty

I am writing to you concerning the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company, which owns a controlling interest in the Royal Dutch/Shell Group. The "Royal" prefix confers immense prestige on this multi-national giant.

The Brent Spar and Nigerian PR disasters have already badly tarnished its former exemplary reputation, when we could all "be sure of Shell". Now we have a third global PR debacle for the Shell brand. A combination of difficult market conditions and thoroughly incompetent management has caused a financial meltdown at Royal Dutch/Shell that has hit the headlines around the world. This has inflicted further damage to Shell's reputation.

The crisis has now reached the stage whereby Group Chairman, Mr Moody-Stuart, is reportedly contemplating merging Royal Dutch and Shell Transport into one company. There is even speculation about which HQ will be closed, Shell Centre in London or The Hague. Mr Moody-Stuart has recognised the growing seriousness of the crisis by admitting that he may have to resign.

I have had a ringside seat at this unsavoury spectacle of one PR disaster after another, because my family and I have been engaged in a series of legal actions against Shell. I enclose a copy of a booklet entitled "The Shell Game", plus a selection of self-explanatory leaflets. I would respectfully draw your attention to the leaflet entitled "Return of the Robber Barons".

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The leaflet comments on Shell's oppressive conduct against Shell station operators in the UK. No wonder that 55% of respondents in a survey of over 1500 Shell stations said that Shell operates in an unethical manner.

The same ruthless conduct has been evident in my families' legal battles with Shell e.g. they have brought a £100,000 Counterclaim against me - an 81-year-old war pensioner. The Counterclaim is in direct contravention of a press statement issued by Shell that it would be in breach of its duties to its shareholders if it brought a legal action, whereby it would lose money even if successful. My family and I have also been bombarded by threats from Shell during the litigation.

Shell has ignored all of the arbitration and mediation proposals that we have put forward in an effort to resolve matters amicably. It appears absolutely hell bent on exploiting its huge advantage over a financially weaker opponent irrespective of the strong merits of our claim.

Despite a letter of apology for past misdeeds that we received from Shell UK Chairman, Dr Chris Fay, in 1996, Shell has continued to act in ruthless and flagrant breach of its own code of business ethics requiring honesty, integrity, and openness, in all of its dealings. After being cornered, Shell has admitted its association with outright deception carried out on its behalf by a sleazy undercover operator.

Although it is highly obnoxious for a multi-national to act oppressively against small traders, as far as I know, such conduct is not illegal. It is however even more repugnant given the false image of ethical trading projected by the Statement of General Business Principles published by the Royal Dutch/Shell Group. Regretfully, in reality (based on our horrendous experience), there appears to be a culture of deception and cover-up deeply ingrained at the highest levels of Shell.

Bearing all of the foregoing in mind, I have written to the President of Royal Dutch Petroleum, Mr Maarten van den Bergh, suggesting that his company should voluntarily relinquish the "Royal" prefix until such time as it succeeds in regaining its former high reputation. This action would avoid the potential embarrassment caused by the "Royal" prefix being attached to an arrogant multi-national bully, currently in a steep financial and moral decline.

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