Putting a Band-Aid on a Broken Arm

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Watching this video is very inspiring as we see companies and groups putting money into the development of oil-spill cleanup. As demonstrated with the Gulf Oil Spill, there is a clear need for a more efficient cleaning process. This video excites my environmental side, but at the same time, creates a deep sense of doubt about our moral and ethical compass.

Why do we need an entire industry to clean up oil spills? Elastic, as stated, has been involved for nearly 20 years, and we are just now seeing groups put forward real money for real progress in cleanup. That is great, and my hat goes off to the companies that are pioneering new technology to clean up big oil, and little oil, messes, but the real issue is the fact that this industry is needed at all.

Corporate money and charities are putting money into oil cleanup, when we should be funding engineering that makes for safer, more efficient collection of oil. Moreover, we should be funding innovation that steers away from this quickly disappearing resource. As need and want drive innovation, it will be very clear, very soon, that this direction has been a long time coming.

It was reported that leaded oil will be completely gone by 2013. Even though the majority of us no longer have use for leaded oil, we've developed vehicles, and therefore, a new need for unleaded**.** Are we going to just continue to limp along until all fossil fuels have been expelled?

George Carlin once said "the greatest arrogance of all is that we have to save the planet … the planet has been through worse than us, and the planet isn't going anywhere, we are." As damning as this may sound, what Carlin was getting at is that the planet is fine, but we are creating our own extinction. The notion that we have an entire industry to fix something like oil spills is utterly ridiculous, when we should be funding a much needed industry for energy beyond fossil fuels.

This isn't to say that I am criticizing these companies. They have done some great engineering, are working to keep our world as clean as possible, and are following a great engineering philosophy; see a problem, create a solution. The issue is that we have this problem in the first place, and the fact that the problem is so bad that we have an industry dedicated to it.

Our society is incredibly reactive, rather than proactive, when it comes to major problems. It is one thing to be reactive when a kid falls out of a tree and scuffs his knee, you put a band-aid on it; it is when this continues to happen, or maybe he even breaks his arm, that it is time to be proactive and cut off the lower limbs of the tree. This is strictly in the figurative sense, there is a lot of grey in any situation, and

each circumstance requires a thoughtful evaluation. In this concept, the limbs of the oil industry need to be trimmed.

Funding for oil cleanup is like a perpetual Band-Aid that we will always need to keep in stock, whereas funding for proper containment, less consumption, and safety regulations can become the trimming of the limb and complete elimination of the need for band-aids.

What's your take? Email chris.fox@advantagemedia.com *[1].*

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