

best. If we do that, everyone will jump on us immediately, but a lot of groups are allowed to say whatever they like without their errors being raised for discussion. That does amaze me sometimes.”

PROFESSIONAL ANNOYANCE—THAT’S about the strongest emotion you can catch the Shell boss having. Otherwise he follows a clear maxim: Stop talking and get on with things. Ask him who inspires him in this regard, and he sighs somewhat uncomfortably and confesses, “That’s a question I can’t answer. I’ve never had a favourite singer or a favourite book. I don’t have a role model. Listening is very important to me. I often get the best ideas that way. I listen to our people, but also to journalists, demonstrators, analysts. I want to understand where they’re coming from, how they think. I often ask them questions too. Then you can have a dialogue. And then you understand each other better. Many problems can be traced back to a difference in pace: One person is further along than the other.”

He glances at his watch, eager to get back to work. We try one more time: Do you ever have moments of pride?

“Once again, I never think about things like that. I’m proud of this company in a general sense. Of course, we aren’t perfect, but some things, like the attitude of our staff, are pretty good.”

But what about real euphoria—butterflies in your stomach?

“No. When I’m watching a game at my hockey club and we score a goal, everybody around me might jump up and cheer, but I always stay sitting down. And back when I used to play myself and I’d score a goal, I’d think, *All right—goal*. But I’m not one to cheer.”

But you must need to do something now and then to recharge your batteries, right?

“Set the alarm and get out of bed, is what I always used to say. Roll up your sleeves.”

WE’RE NOT GETTING ANYTHING MORE genuine than that out of Jeroen van der Veer. He’s said what he had to say, and he wants to get back to what he was doing when we came in. “OK, back to work!” he says, shaking our hands. Two seconds later, he’s back at his desk.

Money makes the world go around

By Amy Domini



MANY PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THAT when you’re buying food, price is not the only consideration. It’s also important to think about the additives and pesticides you’re putting into your body, whether certain kinds of fish are being driven to extinction and how the people who grow your vegetables are being treated.

People are beginning to ask similar kinds of questions about their investments. By putting their money into the stocks of certain companies, and then pressing those companies to do the right thing, investors are starting

to create change. Being a conscious investor is a lot like being a conscious shopper.

Once people realize certain options are open to them, they start down paths that can transform their lives. For instance, one of my local supermarkets specializes in healthy and organic food. I was first attracted to it because of the wide selection of fresh fish, beautifully displayed on crushed ice. Returning frequently to the store, I started paying attention not only to whether the fish looked and smelled good, but whether it was caught in the wild or farm-raised using organic methods. Eventually I started seeking out fish that was caught or raised locally. The choices the store made available actually turned me into a more conscious shopper.

Something similar happened to me years ago when I was working as a stockbroker. The financial industry often assumes that investors care about nothing but making money, but as I got to know my clients I realized there was more to them than that. They cared about a lot of things—the forests and birds, issues of war and peace, their children’s health—in addition to making money. So when I was asked to recommend a company that was on the verge of getting a big military contract, I realized I didn’t want to ask the compassionate people who were my clients to invest in killing machines.

Like many important ideas, this one was pretty simple: The way you invest

your money matters. If you’re a doctor or care about health issues, it makes no sense to invest in tobacco companies. If you’re a birdwatcher, it makes no sense to invest in pesticide manufacturers that kill birds. That’s when I really started connecting the dots. It became obvious to me that we should invest our dollars according to the same values that we use to live our lives.

One recent example brings us back to the supermarket. Families of coffee-growers were going hungry in many countries because the prices the growers received for their crops in the world market no longer covered their expenses in growing the coffee. After dialogue with Procter & Gamble, one of the companies in which my socially responsible fund invests, the company agreed to begin buying Fair Trade coffee, which guarantees the growers a minimum price per pound. It’s now one of the major U.S. buyers. Of course, conscious shoppers who seek out Fair Trade products create the demand for this coffee and play an important role in supporting peasant coffee-growers.

As we sometimes say, money makes the world go around. A conscious approach to shopping and investing can profoundly affect the way that it makes the world go around.

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