

The Little Engine That Shouldn't (a political metaphor)

by Hugh Barlow

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(a political metaphor)

Listen my children
And gather around
As I tell you a story
Of a dipstick I found

This story I tell you
In sight and in sound
Is quite similar in substance
To one long around

The message, I fear
Long familiar to some
Is one long neglected
To some others, new-come

A dipstick, I'll tell you
Is a useful device
Meant for use as a measure
Of some lubricant's heights

Our dipstick, our measure
One time did reside
In it's proper position
Of an engine's inside

This little old engine
Was quite useful indeed
As a part of an auto
Used for transport, not speed

It was not meant for racing
Or for hauling big loads
It was not meant for towing
Or the paving of roads

The engine's main purpose
Was for movement, you see
Of a small group of people
From point A to point B

On a day that was fateful
And for reasons unclear
Our poor little engine
Felt a change was quite near

So, our dear little engine
One so useful, but old
Made an awful decision
All at once, that was bold

“I am tired of my smallness
I will no more be slow
I despise all my weakness
To the track I will go”

“I will gather up pieces
From afar, and from near
I will attach them at random
To my front and my rear”

“This will make me look bigger
It will add stature and weight
This will give me more length
And make me first out the gate”

“As for the power that's needed
To the speed shop I'll wander
There'll be bolt-ons I wager
All this strength I'll not squander”

To the speed shop our engine
With alacrity retired
A pit crew was needed
A crew quickly was hired

The crew had no experience
In fast auto repair
The crew had not even
Tried changing a spare

They were all experts, it seemed
Of one sort or another
But of auto repair
No-one was to bother

These experts, they tinkered
They welded, they molded
Until every last piece
That was purchased was bolted

Not a person it seemed
Had a thought or a clue
Of what truly was needed
What they really should do

No thought had been given
To the chassis, suspension
To transmission, to seals
No thought given to engine

No rebuild was done
To any component
Just new parts tacked on
Where they fit at the moment

Our old engine, once useful
So gleaming, so proud
Found himself at the racetrack
He was stunning the crowd

With new body all gleaming
With new chrome, shining bright
Our old engine sat idling
At the gate, at the light

His opponent sat rumbling
He had been here before
He was shorter and lighter
He had power galore

Our old engine was boastful
He was confident, proud
He was certain to win
His exhaust was quite loud

As the signal descended
The lights lit on the tree
The contestants took off
Amid a shower of debris

Our old useful engine
Not designed for a load
With old parts all worn out
Did quite quickly explode

The rings on the engine
Not designed for race gas
Did allow for some seepage
Did allow fuel to pass

The fumes were quite powerful
To the pan they did charge
The spark was quite forceful
The explosion was large

The dipstick was tiny
The tube like a gun
The mass was too small
For the force of a ton

All the pieces were scattered
And while most were around
The dipstick was launched
And not easily found

The moral of our story
While not easy to see
Do not waste an engine
On a wild racing spree

If you must go out racing
Use parts and a crew
That are designed for the purpose
And who know what to do

Or like our useless old engine
And our dipstick ejected
You will find your parts scattered
And your measure rejected

