



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER JARGON BUSTIN'

# SchNEWS

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## THE COCA-COLA KIDS

**"Education in the West is fast becoming indistinguishable from any other industry"**

**Chris Brazier, Chair of Governors of an Oxford primary school**

Privatisation of education was this week put in the spotlight with the National Union of Teachers threatening strike action not just over performance related pay, but also over big business moving in on the classroom.

But what the hell is 'Best Value', 'Outsourcing', 'Action Zones', and the 'Private Finance Initiative'? Shall we peer into the New Labour Dictionary of Gobbledee Gook to find out just what it all means?

How about "Privatisation, privatisation, privatisation." Yes, New Labour are busy selling off everything – they just dress it up in fancy jargon to try and pull the wool over our eyes.

Still, why would private companies want to move into education? McDonalds' 'operations manual' gives us a clue: "Schools offer excellent opportunities. Not only are they a high traffic (sales) generator, but students are some of the best customers you could have."

And with £38 billion spent on education a year, there's a lot to play for.

### EDUCATION ACTION ZONES

The 25 zones that have been set up around the country allow big business to get a say in the running of schools by coughing up some cash. Launched in June 1998 from Shell International's HQ in London, businesses involved so far include Shell, British Aerospace, BT, IBM, ICL, Marks and Spencer, Rolls Royce, Rentokill and Edison Schools Inc. And of course McDonalds.

As one member of the National Union of Teachers commented, the policy "opens the door to the privatisation of the education service in a way that the Tories never dreamt of."

### NEW DEAL FOR SCHOOLS

Kirkless Council has chosen Jarvis, the construction company, to upgrade and run 20 schools in West Yorkshire under the New Deal for Schools Programme. This New Cash for Big Business is worth an estimated £245 million to Jarvis over the next 30 years, with Jarvis having a twenty per cent stake in the management of the school.

As you expect from a construction company, Jarvis have been quick off the mark moving into the education system under the shadowy PFI in London and Leeds.

### PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVE

The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) is New Labour's third way of sorting out the backlog of repairs to Britain's school buildings (SchNEWS 246). As they obviously couldn't do it themselves they offered the contracts to big business. These contracts can last for up to thirty years, which is quite a long time to patch up a few classrooms, but then that's not what the 'Initiative' is about. The companies get ownership of the site and will decide how the buildings get used out of school hours so they can make a profit, with staff forced to reapply for their jobs.

The Public Services union UNISON has likened the scheme to "a rental agreement in which you pay over the odds but end up never owning the asset." And you can see why. At the Pimlico school in Islington the government gave St. George's Square Partnership a £250,000 grant to cover the expenses of their City consultants along with a £25 million credit approval agreement with the government. As a teacher told SchNEWS "This seems to run against the whole rationale for the PFI deal. The alternative option, a refurbishment through government funds, was ruled out because it was deemed unaffordable as it would cost about £10 million."

### OUTSOURCING

Big business are licking their lips at this one, with one firm, Capita, who are riding on the crest of the privatisation wave commenting that outsourcing in education was "just about to start."

Outsourcing means, would you believe, privitisation (you might now be detecting a common thread running through this article). About 15 local authorities are currently being threatened with the privatisation stick because of critical inspection reports by OFSTED (who are themselves a private body). Islington in London is the first local authority to have wholesale outsourcing imposed, with Cambridge Education Associates, a front group for the destruction company Mott MacDonald (SchNews 246) running the show. The George Orwell School was given a name change and one of the first superheads (who resigned after just six months) while all the teachers were sacked and had to re-apply for their jobs. Meanwhile at another school in the borough cleaners wages were slashed from £12.70 to £5.40 an hour.

### CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

**For Videoing:** A Glasgow resident was arrested for "taking unrequested photographs" of a truck dumping a skip containing some very smelly waste on an unlicensed site. After the skip load was emptied 5 children fell ill with gastro-enteritis, one being hospitalised. Any chance of an arrest for GBH there? The skip is owned by Mr Combe, who has a waste disposal contract with the local Council. SchNEWS asks readers not to phone Mr Combe (0141-7712187) about his business from remote country phone boxes that get left off the hook. But please do phone 01436-820901 for further details and a planned big action.

Paul Atkins, a teacher from Islington, commented "Privatisation is what the government is doing instead of investing in education... No examples were given of other countries where it has been a success. There is a simple reason why. There aren't any."

### BEST VALUE

When the Conservatives were in power they forced councils to put out to tender various bits of their services to the lowest bidder under a catchy little number called Compulsory Competitive Tendering. Now New Labour have dreamt up Best Value, where Councils don't have to take the lowest bid any more but do have to look at *all* their services to see if the private sector could run them better. When SchNEWS spoke to someone from Labour Research magazine to ask about the difference between these schemes we were told there was "bugger all. The driving philosophy is that private is best."

Maybe SchNEWS is just being its usual cynical self and big business really does have the best interests of children at heart, and doesn't want to have to turn them into factory fodder and unquestioning consumers of the future. But as Nicole Bradley, a teacher from an infant school in Islington pointed out "Whenever private companies put themselves forward you have to ask what is in it for them. They see education as an open market."

\* There's a Home Educators' Seaside Festival 14th - 21st May in Dorset. PO Box 20284, London, NW1 3WY Tel 0208 300 7236 [www.choicemeducation.co.uk/](http://www.choicemeducation.co.uk/)

\* For a list of books on home education contact Educational Heretics Press, 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham, NG9 3FQ

\* Issue 9 of 'Living Lightly' magazine devoted much of its coverage to alternatives to the present schooling system. £1.50 + SAE to No.5 Bicton Enterprise Centre, Clun, Shropshire, SY7 8NF Tel 01588 640 022 [www.positivenews.org.uk](http://www.positivenews.org.uk)

\* 'The great education scandal' (August '99) issue of New Internationalist with some frightening examples education in America. £3 to Tower House, Lathkill St., Market Harborough, LE16 [www.newint.org/](http://www.newint.org/)

## ARE FRIENDS MICRO-ELECTRIC?

The campaign to shut down Huntingdon Life Sciences intensifies. Ex-eighties new wave pop star Gary Numan turned up in a microlite (not in cars?) circling the police helicopter while between 500 and 2000 protestors (according to police or campaigners) rediscovered their new wave roots by dressing in black with skull masks (maybe some dry ice next time?) 150 people managed to get inside the perimeter fence, 2 on the roof and 2 getting inside the buildings and confronting workers. Later the A1 was closed for an hour with people barricading the road with logs. Rumours of a comeback tour with Tubeway Army have not been confirmed. Next demo June 22nd noon. SHAC: 0121-6326460 www.welcome.to/shac

\* Would you Adam and Eve it - a vet that worked at Shamrock Farm (suppliers of monkeys to the vivisection industry which recently closed down after a 15 month campaign) who was responsible for, in the words of the Government, "poor standards of care and handling and a lack of effective management and control" has been appointed Assistant Chief Veterinary Officer - for the RSPCA!  
\* The Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry has warned that drug firms may pull out of the UK because of the threat from Animal Rights groups.

## BAD NEWTS

National Power are spending £150,000 to move a colony of newts from a site they want to develop at the former Elstow Storage Depot in Bedford to a new specially built habitat. The authorities are not publishing the location of the new colony as "it is important they are allowed time undisturbed to settle into the new site with the minimum of disruption from human activity". SchNEWS wonders what effect being forcibly evicted from their home by a huge alien species and then moved to a different one would have on the newts. As previously reported in SchNEWS (183), "translocation" doesn't work. The World Wide Fund for Nature are concerned that translocation is becoming a first resort for developers when faced with protected species rather than finding alternative sites "Translocation is often used as the answer to move inconveniently positioned wildlife out of the way, but the priority must be to conserve plants, animals and habitats at their original sites".

## Rum Deal!

That well known radical union, the NUS expelled itself this week by signing a 3 year deal with Bacardi to exclusively supply rum to SU bars around the country. Bacardi is owned by Cuban expats who left when Castro took power in 1959, and have supported the US boycott of Cuba which has been condemned by the UN. The NUS refused to debate an emergency motion about this - we at Schnews can't say we're surprised.

Rock Around The Blockade, BCM Box 5909, London, WC1N 3XX Tel 020 7837 1688 www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk

## Mayday-Mayday

Just in case you find yourself being nabbed by the long arm of the law on the day ring the Legal, Defence and Monitoring Group 020 8245 2930

\* A coach has been organised from Brighton to the guerrilla gardening event. Tickets £6/5 available from the Peace Centre, Gardner St.

For media coverage of Mayday www.indymedia.org.uk

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Keep SchNEWS FREE! Send 1st Class stamps (e.g. 20 for next 20 issues) or donations (payable to Justice?) Ask for "Originals" if you can make copies. Post free to all prisoners. SchNEWS, c/o on-the-fiddle, P.O. Box 2600, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 2DX.

Tel/Autofax : +44 (0)1273 685913 GET IT EVERY WEEK BY E-MAIL: schnews@brighton.co.uk

## SchNEWS in brief

Fancy helping out with a SchNEWS stall on Saturday afternoons in the North Laine, then give the office a call \*\* A history of the 121 Centre in Brixton needs contributors, newspaper cuttings, photos, cartoons, etc. Contributions to: South London Stress, Box Stress, c/o 56a Infoshop, 56 Crampton Street, London, SE17. e-mail: southlondonstress@usa.net \*\* PROCESS, The Espionages new play is at the KOMEDIA, Gardener St, Brighton, 2 - 4th May 7:30pm £5/4 (01273) 647100 \*\* Interested in joining the **The Corrupt Party?** Then check out <http://msnhompages.talkcity.com/CapitolDr/thecorruptparty> \*\* An **anti-censorship** web site (Campaign Against Censorship of the Internet in Britain) has been censored. It is now based on computer servers physically located in the USA. www.liberty.org.uk/cacib \*\* There's a talk by US community activist and former **Black Panther** Lorenzo Kom'Boa Ervin at St Peter's Church Hall, Old Steine, Brighton next Tuesday (2 May), 8pm. \*\* **The Wages for Work Campaign** are holding two events on May 3<sup>rd</sup> to follow up the Global Strike which took place on International Women's Day (SchNEWS 250). Meet opposite Downing Street at 1pm for a picket to highlight women's unpaid and unnoticed work. There's a video showing **'Women and the Battle of Seattle'** at Kentish Town Church of England Primary School, Islip St, Kentish Town. Tel 020 7482 2496. \*\* Check out the **Edinburgh Independent Radical Bookfair** 11-13 May at the Assembly Rooms with Shere Hite performing in the evening Tel 0131 662 9112 wordpower@free4all.co.uk \*\* Also by the **Wages for Work Campaign**, there's a picket against the 40% benefit penalty from single mother's income support on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May. Meet opposite Downing Street 1pm \*\* **Dissent = Terrorism?** is an exhibition in Reading recording dissenters in the Reading area over the centuries who could now be classed as terrorists. It's organised by Reading Roadbusters, and is launched on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May at the Global Cafe, 35-39 London Street, Reading. 0118 954 6430. \*\* **The Erotic Oscars and Sex Maniacs Confusion Ball** takes place on Sat 6<sup>th</sup> May at The Drome, St Thomas St, London Bridge, London SE1 from 9pm to dawn. It's a benefit for Outsiders, a club where disabled people can meet partners. There's striptease, erotic fashion shows and a ball. Strict dress code (no street clothes) Tickets from Paradiso, 60 Dean Street, London W1 £28 \*\* If anybody is interested in getting hold of a share to get along to the **Premier Oils** (dodgy company involved in Burma) AGM at the beginning of May, contact RHarrisUCL@aol.com asap \*\* A full list of this years **GE farm scale trials**, including addresses and grid references can be viewed at [www.primalseeds.org/testsite](http://www.primalseeds.org/testsite). \*\* Next **Close Down Campsfield Campaign** public meeting Tuesday 2nd May, 7.30pm Oxford Town Hall. \*\* There's a video showing of the **Simon Jones Memorial Campaign** on Thursday 11th May 7.30 pm at Queens Head Pub, Action St., WC1 (Kings Cross tube) Tel 020 7837 1688

## Positive SchNews

The Women's Environmental Network (WEN) have been running an innovative waste reduction project in Spitalfield Market, East London. A dishwasher has been installed so that real crockery can be used instead of polystyrene throwaways cups and plates. Vegetable and tofu waste are now collected by WEN staff, and taken to a nearby city farm for composting and animal feed, with over 12 tonnes of organic matter collected since January 1998. Cardboard waste is also being recycled. From 18- 21 May the market is playing host to *Live Life- Don't Waste it!* Ring WEN 020 7481 9004 www.gn.apc.org/wen.

## Good to talk?

Before Xmas, British Telecom workers all over the country staged a one day strike against conditions in call centres and the continued use of agency staff. This month, however, it was the turn of the agency workers to get shafted - as if they weren't shafted enough already Manpower, the scumbag employment agency who are part of the Working Links partnership running the Employment Zones (see SchNEWS 243) used to have the contract with BT to supply the labour force. In March, they lost this to Hays Management Consultants. And it soon became clear why Hays got the contract.

In Brighton, workers at the BT repair centre were informed that there would be no change in their pay after the new Hays contracts came into force. But on the first day of the new contract the bombshell was dropped. Without prior notice the agency workers were all expected to take a pay cut of at least £30 a week! Many workers left immediately, even the old Manpower rep. at BT who had switched to Hays left too because of the bad feeling. Others took more satisfactory measures. It was reported that over £15,000 of overseas phone calls were made - one unverified claim suggested that the Zimbabwean Speaking Clock had been called and left on over night! As well as this, top of the range equipment was sent out to callers with faulty phones etc.

It now seems that Hays have had to relent in the pay cut because they are required to give staff three months notice. What remains to be seen now is if workers can get together to resist the pay cuts in three months time.

Have actions like these happened at other BT call centres around the country? If anybody involved in this action at BT or anyone working at other call centres has any information or tales to tell please write to: Undercurrent, c/o Brighton and Hove Unemployed Workers' Centre, 4, Crestway Parade, Hollingdean, Brighton BN1 7BL or e-mail: undercurrent00@yahoo.co.uk

\* **Global Phone in Sick Day** Tuesday 2 May, go on you know you want to! <http://rtmark.com/sisk>

## ...and finally...

Do you have hassle from bolshy workers who seem to know it all? Do you find employment laws get in the way of sacking the dead weight in your company? Then SchNEWS has found the answer for you. A company is touring the country doing one day seminars called 'How to legally dismiss staff with attitude problems' - honest. They promise that they can not only "help take the stress out of dismissing" those workshy employees who just won't pull their weight, but also "you'll discover the guilt-eliminating secret of making problem employees understand that they have essentially sacked themselves - you haven't".

They offer to help you deal with those nasty little formalities such as employment tribunals, where they unreasonably claim for unfair dismissal. You can learn how to handle the employee who refuses to sign a written warning, and also how to "avoid documentation slip-ups that can be used against you in a tribunal". They even offer ways to protect your company from "dismissed employees who want revenge". Employers can now surely sleep safe in their corporate beds free from the stress of sacking their employees. Some of our more cynical readers may ask "What about the stress of being sacked if you're an employee?", but we have decided it's time to stick up for those poor oppressed bosses. So call 08709 049 049 to enrol for the conference now - they even offer your fee of £164.50 plus VAT back if you're not completely satisfied!

### disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all gardeners; if you dig up the streets of London yew won't be poplar so don't hedge your bets on not getting pulled, hoe-hoe-hoe