



# CORPORATE PUNISHMENT

It was an end of term school report that you wouldn't dare show your parents, but despite the poor marks Jarvis will carry on raking in the cash.

That's Jarvis, the engineering giant who've received numerous fines for their poor safety record on the railways and who are under police investigation for the Potters Bar rail crash. Jarvis, a name synonymous with education, who've been taking over schools across the country because they just want to make sure kids get a better education (yeah, right). Jarvis who took control of Varndean and three other Brighton schools in a £105 million deal under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) that will last 25 years.

Neo Labour wanted to sort out the £3.2 billion backlog of repairs to Britain's school buildings, but as they obviously couldn't actually do it themselves, offered the rebuilding contracts to private firms. These contracts last for 25 years, which is quite a long time to patch up a few classrooms - but then, that's not what the PFI is all about.

Just as with PFI hospitals, the companies get ownership of the site and all the non-teaching services, forcing all staff doing care-taking and school dinners, to reapply for their jobs. So PFI is sort of like a mortgage, except we hand over our public buildings to private corporations then pay them back over a long period for what we already own while company shareholders make a tidy profit. Top of the class logic!

At Varndean things didn't get off to a good start with the school gates staying locked for a few extra days after the summer holidays because Jarvis hadn't finished the building work in time. As the months went by and things went from bad to worse the headmaster kept a diary of events and eventually got so fed up he stopped meeting with the company. The annual governors' report then handed Jarvis the dunce's hat. It complained that Jarvis "promises the earth to an increasingly sceptical audience and fails to deliver, either on time or to an adequate standard." Improvements to the canteen are described as "distinctly shoddy" and that "for some members of staff dealing

with Jarvis and the council is not only completely overwhelming but also incredibly demoralising."

'But' - the company replied - 'we have gone way beyond our obligations,' and to show, the sceptics gave the example of a new roof fitted to the school's swimming pool. Except that the school, er, doesn't have a swimming pool!

Also putting in the boot was Year 9 student Tim Glebocki, who wrote in the school's newsletter "As an example of the ridiculous bureaucracy instituted by Jarvis, it is now necessary for any teacher wishing to have the glass from a broken window cleared away to ask reception to ring Jarvis to ask if the job may be done. Then Jarvis has to ask a caretaker to fix the window. That's right, no less than two phone calls to fix one window. The teachers have to do this even if a caretaker is standing next to them."

## JARVIS COCK-UP

Jarvis also run Dorothy Stringer, Patcham High and East Brighton College of Media Arts (Comart).

Brighton and Hove City Council now want to close Comart but under the PFI terms it won't be that simple - or cheap. Jarvis was given a contract to build and run Comart for 25 years and closing it means that the Council will have to pay a financial penalty - which some say could be up to £17 million!

Kevin Dale is from the Local Education Action Group who wants to keep Comart open and turn it into a smaller community school. He told SchNEWS "We are told the school should play a bigger role in the community and we agree. But if the school wants to do anything after 6pm, at weekends or during the holidays it's impossible financially because they will be charged by Jarvis for using its own building!"

Get along to the **22nd Anarchist Bookfair** - Saturday 25th October at ULU Malet Street, London, WC1 10am - 7pm Stalls, meetings, workshops, food, bar, videos, creche and evening event. [www.anarchistbookfair.org](http://www.anarchistbookfair.org)

## CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For Going on Holiday! (well, sort of...)

A 62 year old retired schoolteacher faces up to 12 years in jail and a fine of between \$10,000 and \$1 million for traveling to Iraq to act as a human shield during the war. The US Treasury Department says Faith Fippinger has broken the US economic embargo of Iraq by traveling there and spending money. The human rights organization Voices in the Wilderness are also being persecuted. [www.humanshieldaction.org](http://www.humanshieldaction.org)

Like Varndean, Comart has its own Jarvis related problems. One parent told SchNEWS "Students and parents have been left in the dark, being fobbed off with bogus consultations when closure was a foregone conclusion. Jarvis are paid a stupid amount of money; there are state of the art science class rooms with new equipment, never been touched by the students, a new Drama hall locked and out of bounds. It makes you wonder what they are intending to use this building for in the future, whatever it is you can bet it will make Jarvis money."

While Neo Labour puts money into campaigns to try to get kids to eat healthy school dinners, Brighton and Hove Council has no control over what Jarvis wants to cook up for the kids. "Their food is unhealthy and expensive an even the parent governors have no powers to improve the menu. What's the point of promoting healthier life styles while pushing them to eat burgers and chips?" added the parent.

So while Jarvis might have been given a rotten school report, their shareholders are laughing all the way to bank and giving us all an education in how to make money out of our public services.

\* Despite the mess Jarvis is making of Brighton's schools Brighton and Hove city Council are still in love with PFI - the new library is being built under the scheme. The council have also signed a £1 billion 25 year deal with Onyx Aurora to deal with our waste by burning it. And if we all recycle too much and there's not enough waste to burn - well the company can sue the council!

\* Private company Patientline, supply phone, television, e-mail and internet systems to 84 hospitals around Britain, with another 50 contracts in the pipeline. Good stuff - except calls cost between 5 and 12 times the standard BT rate. Making money from sick people has never been easier.

## WAT-ER SHAMBLES

Once upon a time South African President Thabo Mbeki made an international speech attacking capitalist globalisation as the 'new global apartheid'. Being the philanthropist that he is, Mbeki didn't want to deprive South Africans of the pleasure of sampling the fruits of this new apartheid and so he proceeded to concoct a local version courtesy of the IMF and a horde of happy multinationals. Over the years Mbeki's new local apartheid has developed all sorts of shiny, modern characteristics: it's based not on racist forces but market forces. It's focused on the superiority of profit rather than race. It's a policy that has seen multinationals grabbing public services while poor communities struggle to their bare bones to preserve these basic rights.

Johannesburg's privatised water services are a striking example of this economic apartheid. Johannesburg Water (JW) was privatised in 2001 and it fell into the hands of the dodgy French multinational, Suez-Lyonnaise. Suez's track record around the world is, to say the least, crap. They have drastically increased water charges in every town where they have a contract. In Paris, France, where Suez controls the water, auditors have attacked them for "an absence of financial transparency" while in Grenoble the company was found guilty of bribery. Rostock in eastern Germany privatised its water and sewage systems for 25 years to Eurawasser, 50% owned by Suez. Two years later water charges rose by over 20% and sewage levies by 30%.

Obviously, Suez-controlled water services in Johannesburg have gone down the same pipe. Water rates have risen and when 'the poors' are unable to pay they have their water cut off. JW has recently embarked on a programme throughout the township of Soweto, installing pre-paid water meters which are 20% more expensive than normal meters. Dry of water but not of

energy, 'the poors' have risen up - angered by the ruling ANC's broken promises of water, electricity, health and education for all - and have given birth to the Anti-Privatisation Forum, the Coalition Against Water Privatisation and a determined community movement. The poors of Soweto have rejected JW's claims that it consulted local residents about the pre-paid meters and have laughed off the company's claims that the expensive meters will help the poors to "own" their water consumption. "You cannot just come into our area and change our water system without consulting us. This is a top-down way of running government," said one Soweto water warrior.

In a country where 60% of the population live in poverty, many poors will be unable to pay for clean water and will have to resort to using unsafe water sources. Many fear a repeat of what happened 2 years ago in KwaZulu Natal, on the east coast of the country, when more than 200 people died of cholera after having been forced to drink water from polluted streams because of the local water board's unaffordable water rates. Instead of listening to the community's fears, JW and the local council have brought in the coppers and private security guards to crack down on community opposition. Eight community members were arrested on charges of 'malicious damage to property' for resisting the installation of the water meters. They were held for two weeks, refused bail as they were 'a threat to public security' and have finally been let out under apartheid-era bail conditions that include: a ban on any 'interference' with water meters; and a ban on attending any meeting dealing with resistance to the installation of water meters. This court ban has now been extended to all community members resisting water privatisation in Soweto, and the Anti-Privatisation Forum.

Despite the combined corporate and council repression the resistance hasn't dried up. Last Saturday an anti-privatisation march, banned by the police, attracted over 1000 people and raised awareness about the rampant privatisation grab of SA's public services. Over the last week, the Coalition Against Water Privatisation sprouted, mobilising support for the struggles in Soweto and taking the court ban back to court. "A militant opposition has invented itself in other places in the world, but in South Africa it has happened very quickly: the miracle here is how quickly the ANC has donned the cape of the IMF and unsheathed the sword of structural adjustment," points out community activist, Ashwin Desai, "The pace of opposition has had to be very quick." The community movement is growing throughout the country as the poors in the ghettos mobilise against water and electricity cut-offs, evictions and the like. The first step towards this surge in community power has been people losing faith in the political parties and ideologies with which they fought apartheid. Betrayed by an ANC government drunk with privatised ideas, communities are having to take direct action to protect their basic human rights and in doing so they are discovering a new sense of power. This power is bursting not from traditional workplaces but from communities of single mothers, disillusioned youth and the rabble of the ghettos. Such are the *Vulumanzi* Boys ('water opening boys'), a youth group who teach others how to reconnect their water. As Desai puts it "People are ready for activism. Delivering free basic services by reconnecting water and electricity. Building structures of sharing resources... We really are creating liberated zones."

See: [www.southafrica.indymedia.org](http://www.southafrica.indymedia.org), [www.pambazuka.org](http://www.pambazuka.org)

## SchNEWS in brief

**No New Oil** organized by Rising Tide will be themed around the campaign against new oil exploration and development, and the connections between the oil industry, climate change, human rights abuses, and the Iraq war. It's happening on Oct 11th, 10.30am -6pm, LSE, Aldwych London. To book call 01865 241097 [www.risingtide.org.uk](http://www.risingtide.org.uk) \*\* Check out **Where Vultures Feast** a new book about Shell, human rights and oil, from Verso Books [www.versobooks.com](http://www.versobooks.com) \*\* The fox-hunting season has started again, the hunts are out cubbing where they train young hounds to chase fox cubs. In Sussex Hunt Saboteurs were attacked when they rescued a traumatized fox, the fox was then thrown to the hounds. Don't wait for Parliament to ban fox hunting get out there and stop it yourself. For your nearest group contact the Hunt Saboteurs Association: 0845 4500727 [www.huntsabs.org.uk](http://www.huntsabs.org.uk) \*\* Keep up to date with the sinister world of David Blunkett's proposed **national ID card** and actions on how to oppose it at [www.defyid.org.uk](http://www.defyid.org.uk) \*\* There's a national Grassroots Anti-War Conference this weekend(26-28) at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL (nearest tube Holborn) £12/£7 conc. For all the details [www.j-n-v.org](http://www.j-n-v.org) \*\* The new issue of radical ecological journal *Do or Die* is out now! 384 pages long, full of pics and crammed with reports and analysis from the world-wide ecological frontlines. For each copy send £7 (UK)cheques/postal orders made out to 'Do or Die' to: DoD, Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 2GY, UK. [www.eco-action.org/dod/](http://www.eco-action.org/dod/)

## MONEY GROWS ON BUSHES

In February - before the invasion of Iraq had even begun - the US Government 'drafted sweeping plans to remake Iraq's economy ... based on free-market principles.' These plans include 'the mass privatisation of Iraqi industry' - including Iraq's oil sector - and 'fundamental tax reform'. Bush's corporate chums such as Bechtel and Halliburton have already been awarded lucrative contracts for 'postwar reconstruction' and last Sunday the American-appointed administration in Iraq really got the ball rolling by passing a series of new laws on tax and foreign investment - laws which, "effectively put [Iraq] up for sale."

It just so happens that in London next month there are two major conferences aimed at businesses who want to get a slice of the action - 'Doing Business in Iraq' (13-14 October) and 'Reconstructing Iraq' (27-28 October - a snip at £1099 per person). Protests are being organized - if you'd like to get involved get along to 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 (nearest tube King's Cross) on 7th October 7pm. More details 0207 837 0561, [www.voicesuk.org](http://www.voicesuk.org).

\* Did you get stopped and searched under section 44 of the anti-terrorism act during the DSEi arms fair protests? Then Liberty needs to hear from you urgently for their high court legal challenge taking place next Thursday (2 October). Anonymity guaranteed - call Mona Arshi (the lawyer handling the case) at 0207 378 3653 ASAP. See: [www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk](http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk) \* Activists dressed as delegates blagged their way into the MRO arms fair in Cardiff last week and wandered around for three hours gaining valuable information on who was exhibiting what etc. Meanwhile demonstrators outside blockaded a coach load of delegates leaving to inspect RAF maintenance facilities.

## Inside SchNEWS

Iñaki Garcia Coch is serving five years for sabotaging the construction of the Itoiz Dam (see last week's SchNEWS). Write letters (preferably in Spanish) to: Iñaki Garcia Coch, Prision Provincial de Pamplona, Calle Sanroque sin numero, Apartado 250, Codigo Postal 31014, Pamplona, Navarra, Spain.

\* Sherman Austin, the webmaster of [RaisetheFist.com](http://RaisetheFist.com) who was jailed for one year for stuff on his website (see SchNEWS 417) has received death threats from white supremacists while in jail. Supporters want people to contact the facility to demand he be moved to a permanent jail, for copies of a sample letter [www.raisethefist.com](http://www.raisethefist.com)

## ...and finally...

At SchNEWS we know we do a lot of corporate-bashing so we'd thought we'd let them have a bash!

The first goes to Mark Curtis, former head of advocacy at Christian Aid, who recently lashed out at NGOs for being "co-opted by the powerful" and too concerned with income growth. "They should be locking themselves and ministers into buildings. But they feel they can't because they are too close to them."

The second bash goes to the Bush-influencing American Enterprise Institute, proud owners of [NGOwatch.org](http://NGOwatch.org). The big business-controlled 'think tank' asks "Do NGOs influence international organizations like the World Trade Organization? What are their agendas?... And to whom are they accountable?" Fair enough, fat cats. Then again you're just the same - all direct debit and no direct action!

## Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers to finish their lines then go straight to the tuck shop... Honest!

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