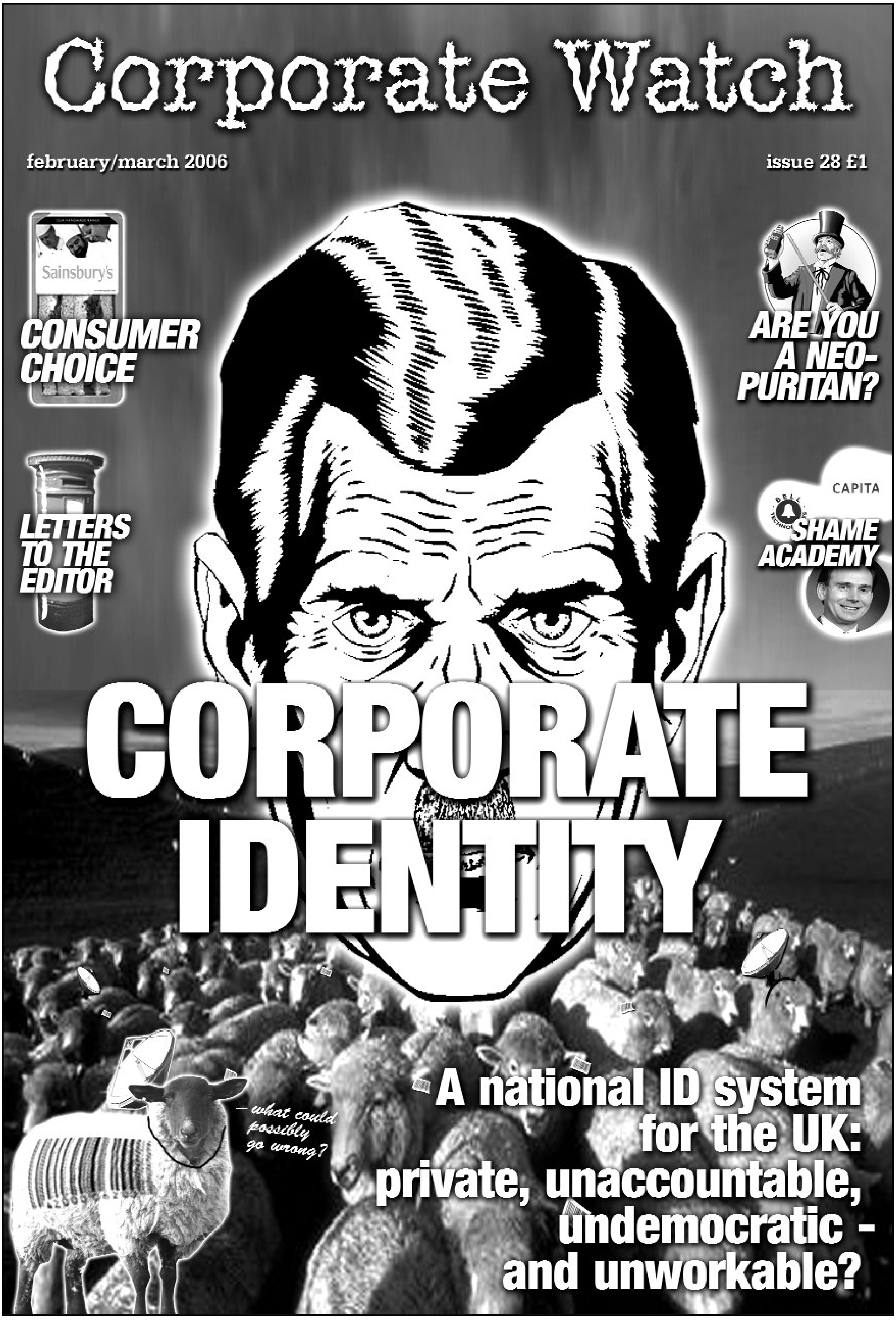
Corporate Watch

february/march 2006

issue 28 £1



CONSUMER CHOICE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ARE YOU A NEO-PURITAN?

SHAME ACADEMY

CORPORATE IDENTITY

A national ID system for the UK: private, unaccountable, undemocratic - and unworkable?

february

march

NEW REPORTS FROM CORPORATE WATCH AVAILABLE ONLINE!

February

1 Bury My Heart in Palestine and Schnews movies: Brighton. Benefit night for SchNEWS and Smash EDO campaign; 6.30 pm Duke of York cinema, London Rd. 01273 602503 *www.picturehouses.co.uk*
3-5 Hack the Knowledge Lab: **Lancaster**. Weekend gathering on technology, creativity and social organisation. Institute for Advanced Studies, University of North West England, Lancaster. Participation is limited to 100 people; children are welcome, but please let us know ASAP *n.moeller@lancaster.ac.uk*
3 Peace Not War Live Music Room: London. A five-room spectacular at the Synergy Project, SeOne Club, with a diverse showcase of positive anti-war musicians. Contact *sarah@peace.fm* or 07905 514049. See also *www.peace-not-war.org*
4 Northern Anarchist Network Conference: Bolton. Speakers include Dennis Pye on syndicalism, with reference to Tom Mann and Bolton. There will also be a discussion on commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Spanish Revolution. Wood Street Socialist Club, Bolton 10am-5pm.
8 Save Council Housing - Mass Lobby and rally: London. Noon Central Hall, Westminster, 020 7987 9989 www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk
11-18 No Sweat/Students Against Sweatshops, Week Of Action & Zanon Speaker Tour: UK wide. Actions, discussions, film shows, alternative fashion events and speaker tours during a national week of action against sweatshops. Speaker tours will include a representative of the workers' committee which runs the occupied Zanon factory in Argentina plus film showings of Naomi Klein's *The Take* (about the factory occupation movement in Argentina). *www.nosweat.org.uk*
12 Seedy Sunday community seed swap: Hove. Old Market, Upper Market Street, Hove 10am - 5pm, £1; tel. 01273 381 686 *www.seedysunday.org*
12 ZineFest: Manchester. 'A festival of zines, anti-corporate artwork, and diy publications'. Basement Bookshop, 24 Lever St. *manchesterzines@riseup.net*
14 Bell-ringing demo at EDO arms factory: Brighton. 6pm at EDO MBM, Home Farm Rd, Moulsecoomb, Brighton. Bring bells to toll. Call 07891405923 or email smashedo@hotmail.com for more details. *www.smashedo.org.uk*
17-19 Homes for Good: Taunton. Sustainable homes exhibition at Somerset College of Arts and Technology; *http://www.sustainablehousing.org.uk/h4g.html*
18 Anti-war Action Forum: London. A monthly open space for people who want to organise (and take part in) actions related to the so-called 'war on terror'. An initiative of the Corporate Pirates, Iraq Occupation Focus, Justice Not Vengeance, Peace Not War, Rhythms of Resistance and Voices in the Wilderness UK. The Forum will have no fixed membership or agreed platform and no actions will be organised under the name of the 'Anti-war Action Forum'. 2-5pm, London Action Resource Centre, 62 Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel, London E1 1ES (nearest tube Aldgate East). *www.londonarc.org* For more info 0845 458 2564, e-mail *voices@voicesuk.org www.voicesuk.org*
18 Unite Against Fascism national conference: London. TUC Conference Centre, Great Russell Street, London WC1; *www.uaf.org.uk; unite@natfhe.org.uk*; 020 7833 4916 / 020 7837 4522
22 - March 20 No M66 Campaign, ten year anniversary exhibition: Manchester. Basement Social Centre, Lever Street, Manchester.
23 The Radical History of Cycling: London. The subversive nature of bikes, trikes and penny farthings revealed by London Radical History Group. 56a INFO SHOP 56 Crampton St, London, SE17 (Elephant & Castle tube) *mudlark@macunlimited.net*
25 SPEAK monthly demo against monkey laboratory: Oxford. Noon, Carfax Tower, corner of Cornmarket and Queen St; 08453 307985/07986 559012 *info@speakcampaigns.org.uk www.speakcampaigns.org.uk*

March

3-4 Dublin Anarchist Bookfair. Books, ideas, revolution in the air, radical films all day, meetings on Social Centres, Radical Republicanism, and Workplace Organising. If you are interested in having a stall at the book-fair please email *wsm_ireland@yahoo.com* before Valentine's Day.
18 Stop the War Demonstration: London. Mobilise for international demonstrations on **March 18-19 2006, the third anniversary of the war and invasion**, calling for the immediate withdrawal of troops and an end to the occupation. CENTRAL LONDON
19 Sixth Annual Anarchist Theory Conference: California. University of California, Berkeley campus, 10am to 6pm. Panel discussion on 'The New Anarchisms' plus a Spelling Bee. Please submit workshop proposals for any topic in anarchist theory. Workshop proposals are available online at http://sfbay-anarchists.org/conference.
24 SPEAK monthly demo against monkey laboratory: Oxford. noon, Carfax Tower, corner of Cornmarket and Queen St; 08453 307985/07986 559012 *info@speakcampaigns.org.uk www.speakcampaigns.org.uk*

Corporate Watch

Newsletter 28: February/March 2006

Corporate Watch is an independent not-for-profit group, which aims to expose how large corporations function, and the detrimental effects they have on society and the environment as an inevitable result of their current legal structure. Corporate Watch strives for a society that is ecologically sustainable, democratic, equitable and non-exploitative. Progress towards such a society may, in part, be achieved through dismantling the vast economic and political power of corporations, and developing ecologically and socially just alternatives to the present economic system. If you would like to help with research, fund-raising or distribution please contact us.

Disclaimer: The objectivity of the media is generally an illusion. Corporate Watch freely acknowledges that it comes from an anti-corporate perspective. It attempts at all times to be factual, accurate, honest and truthful in its reporting. We welcome any comments or corrections.

 ISSN 1470 5842

www.corporatewatch.org.uk
mail@corporatewatch.org

Credits: Jennie Bailey, Loukas Christodoulou, Josh Gilbert, Chris Grimshaw, Rebecca Spencer, Kathryn Tulip

Editor: Loukas Christodoulou

Layout/Graphics: Jean Paldan @ rareformnewmedia.com

Corporate Watch is a member of INK, the Independent News Collective, trade association of the UK alternative press. www.ink.uk.com

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper by Oxford GreenPrint www.oxfordgreenprint.com

subvert of the month

5 A DAY - NOT SO HEALTHY?

The Department of Health's '5 a Day' campaign is designed to encourage people to eat more fruit and veg, as part of a healthy diet. Like so many government initiatives, it attempts to achieve its ends by working with corporations, many of whom are also involved in rather unhealthy practises.

The 'Five a Day' logo is intended to indicate items that contain at least one portion of fruit or veg; companies can use it on their products for a £100 fee. So far it has been taken up by companies including Burger King, McDonalds and Asda. In schools it is being promoted by 'Jazzybooks', an advertising company that specialises in sending schools educational materials that are plastered with advertising, including for supermarkets such as Tesco and unhealthy food makers such as Pepsi, Walkers, and Heinz.

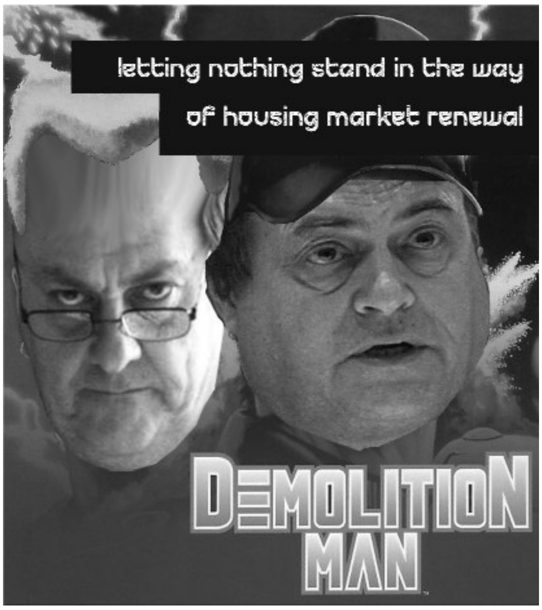
In response to a Freedom of Information request, the Department of Health has revealed to Corporate Watch that PR company Munro & Foster have the contract to promote the 5 a day scheme and have received the unusually large sum of £334,343 for 'press office and media monitoring, and the development of PR and marketing activities to support the campaign'. Munro & Foster have a history of doing health industry work - mostly with big pharmaceutical firms such as AstraZeneca. They have also worked to promote the 'wakefulness' drug Provigil , favoured by the Ministry of Defence to keep soldiers awake .

5 A DAY

Just Eat More
(fruit & veg)

HOMES DEMOLITION LATEST

The government's 'Pathfinder' housing market renewal scheme is set to demolish tens of thousands of houses across the north of England and the midlands. A report has just been released by SAVE Britain's Heritage. 'Corporate Watch has covered this issue in newsletter 23 (April/May 2005)



The new report confirms our fears:

Registered social landlords, owners of social housing, are stretching the limits of the system to maximise their incomes through dealing with councils, who in turn deal with private developers - running down areas to then capture the "marriage value". Marriage value is the difference in value between the run down area and the value of the site cleared in anticipation of redevelopment. This is the economics process that oils the financial cogs of Pathfinder. However, this additional "marriage value" surely belongs to those from whom the land is compulsorily purchased, not the RSLs.

The real winners here will be the house builders, who stand to gain from the compulsory purchase of people's homes at artificially low prices (through the blight caused by the spectre of clearance) and redevelopment of more expensive housing, often out of reach of the displaced residents. Also cashing in on the bonanza are the consultants, on whom to date £168 million has been spent - enough to restore over 8000 terraced houses.

The full report is available from SAVE Britain's Heritage, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ tel 020 7253 3500 fax 020 7253 3400 email

What do companies really get out of CSR? Find out in Corporate Watch's new report. Coming soon.

SHAME ACADEMY

Got £2 million quid? Wanna encourage a new generation of stock market experts in a business focussed school? Coz it's all about the kids, innit?

'Academies' (formerly City Academies) are schools that are privately run, publicly funded and sponsored by whoever can afford it.

The academies initiative was brought in as part of the government's obsession with 'choice' and addiction for private finance initiatives (PFI). The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) cite academies as '...a radically new type of independent state school, intended to transform education in areas where the status quo is simply not good enough.' They are outside state, or rather local education authority (LEA) control . From their conception in 2001 and the seminal academy in Bexley, academies are still under scrutiny for many reasons, from curriculum offerings to teaching standards.

The academies system is loosely based on US style 'Charter schools': independent schools which receive state funding . An academy is, in theory, an 'all-ability' school, established by sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups, working in partnership with Government and local education authorities. Running costs are met in full by the DfES. There have already been criticisms of the American model as being 'socially divisive', profit driven and unaccountable, especially in the running of the Edison Charter schools.

To be able to sponsor an academy a prospective philanthropist needs to make a minimum donation of £2 million (or £1.5m for redeveloping a 'failing' school) towards the capital cost of the Academy. This sum can be put up by a team of sponsors.

Successful sponsors are often allowed to excercise a worryingly large amount of influence over how the school runs and what is taught (academies are not oblidged to follow the national curriculum). This has incurred the wrath of unions such as the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and Unison, who believe that privatisation will lead to problems in employment rights and also in accountability.

Current sponsors for schools include companies, such as Dixons (The Dixon's Technology College in Bradford), Capita (various schools) and the Vardy Foundation (various; particularly in the North East). Individual sponsors include Roger de Haan, CEO of Saga Holidays (The Marlowe Academy in Kent) and Vice-Chancellor of Nottingham University, Sir Harry Djanogly (Djanogly City Academy). Other sponsors include religious foundations, such as United Learning Trust and United Church Schools Trust, raising fears of science subjects being taught alongside 'creationism', and that some foundations are looking at ways around anti-gay discrimination laws.

Case Study, lessons in the free market: The Business Academy Bexley

Proudly declaring its standing as '...the Government's flagship Academy, pioneering the way for other publicly funded Independent schools in the future', the Business Academy Bexley, with its science fiction-esque architecture was opened in September 2002, replacing Ofsted-failed Thamesmead Community College. It is one of the new 'all through' academies, providing education from 4 to 18, and currently has 1000 secondary students, 420 primary pupils and 90 infants in its neighbourhood nursery . It claims to provide a 'continuity of education that is not available elsewhere in the state sector in the UK.' The school has its own mini stock exchange, and Fridays are dedicated 'business days'.

'Construction company Corus built the school under PFI and AMG Security Systems provides CCTV system for the '...particularly deprived area with many social problems'. Bell Technologies Ltd supply, integrate and maintain the cameras.

The school's funder is Sir David Garrard, ex-CEO of Minerva Property group who put up the £2.4 million for the school. Garrand 'gave £200,000 to Labour...gave Tories £70,000 for a call centre...[and was] knighted in 2003 for charity work.' . Garrard is also chair of the Garrard Education Trust. In 2004 the Trust donated £25,000 to the Police Foundation, of which Garrard is a trustee. And after all that, the Business Academy has 'received a critical Ofsted report, which [Garrard] felt moved to challenge.'

The academy system does not seem to be working. According to the *Telegraph* 'some academies have turned out to be worse than the schools they replaced. The Unity city academy in Middlesbrough, sponsored by the construction company Amey, has been judged by Ofsted 'to be a failing institution'. It has run up debts of more than £1m and has had to be bailed out by the education department.'

CAMPAIGNS

***http://www.casenet.org.uk/* - The Campaign for State Education**

http://www.education-otherwise.org - information and network for home educators

***http://www.teachers.org.uk/topichome.php?id=44* - NUT Privatisation in Education campaign**

***http://www.unison.org.uk/positively-public/index.asp* - Unison Positively Public campaign**

THE TRUTH TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

A new study by the Future Foundation portrays opponents of unregulated corporate excess as puritanical 'Neo-Cromwellians'.

Last summer the strategic consultancy, the Future Foundation (FF), claimed to have discovered a new social trend in Britain - a creeping menace they call the 'New Puritans' or 'Neo-Cromwellians'. This movement of moralising killjoys are apparently pushing an 'Assault on Pleasure' in general.

According to FF's proposal for their 'Assault on Pleasure' project, manufacturers of luxury goods may need to rethink their marketing; if advertisers position their products as well-deserved treats, what happens when society decides that such treats are no longer socially acceptable? Furthermore they warn of new and repressive regulation. At least one of FF's clients aims to use the completed report, due this spring, as a lobbying resource for use in Brussels.

FF's research is based on very flimsy logic. It notes new legislation, such as the fox-hunting ban, widely held health concerns (e.g. about the effects of smoking and a poor diet), and environmental worries (about SUVs, long haul flights, etc.) and from these imputes the emergence of a new social trend, the 'Assault on Pleasure'. They seem not to have considered the possibility that these are disparate concerns and issues held by very different people. Nor have they considered any evidence to the contrary, such as the relaxation of drinking hours, the downgrading of the classification of cannabis or the popularity of SUVs.

Are these findings supposed to frighten the FF's corporate sponsors into bankrolling further research, or is it meant to push a corporate PR agenda aimed at discrediting any campaign that threatens corporate profits - everyone from Jamie Oliver to Christian Aid?

The report, written by FF associate, James Murphy, director of the consultancy, Model Reasoning, is simply daft in places. It warns that humble pleasures, including the bacon sandwich and blogging, may find themselves subject to 'incipient regulation' within another five years. Amongst those things likely to be heavily regulated the FF identifies 'biscuits at meetings'. Corporate Watch asked Murphy if he was simply conflating a random set of concerns, and mistaking it for a real social trend.

He disagreed strongly... but was unable to explain the difference. He refused also to explain the supposed threat to biscuit eating and bacon sandwiches. Murphy, formerly of public relations consultancies First & 42nd and Cohn & Wolfe, also denied the suggestion that the project is really a strategic PR offensive designed to belittle the many concerns people have about his corporate clients' activities.

So why the publicity campaign for what is basically a market research and analysis project? Why the media-friendly, sensational language - so artfully vague as to appear meaningful, yet so loosely defined as to smear almost anyone with a concern about public health, animal rights or an environmental issue? Unfortunately Murphy abruptly ended our interview before we could ask these questions.

Either way, expect more sound and fury in the press this spring when the 'research' is completed and another round of media hyping begins. The PR industry's Assault on Reason continues.

Companies previously involved in IT disasters are lining up to bid for contracts under the ID cards scheme. They include:

>EDS, of Child Support Agency fame, which last year had to pay out £71m compensation to HM Revenue and Customs over the catastrophic introduction of the tax credits scheme.

>Siemens Business Services, responsible for the Immigration and Nationality Directorate computer system, which was supposed to speed up processing asylum applications, but was scrapped in 2001 after costing around £80m.

>Atos Origin, which built the NHS e-booking system and also ran the biometric registration trial scheme in 2004, which was quietly buried. After registering and verifying biometrics in a large-scale real-life scenario it encountered major problems, particularly with disabled participants, some of whom were unable to register any of the 13 biometrics.

>Unisys, involved in introducing a national ID card system in Panama. The four-year contract was terminated in 2002 after security breaches led to a Colombian man being found with 500 blank high-tech digital cards, and the company admitted having 30,000 more cards which should have been handed over to the government.

A Unisys executive told the Guardian last year, 'A national ID card for the UK is overly ambitious, extremely expensive and will not be a panacea against terrorism or fraud, although it will make a company like mine very happy.'
Companies, including Microsoft and QinetiQ, have expressed serious doubts over both the security of the planned National Identity Register and the capabilities of biometric technology. Former chair of QinetiQ, Dame Pauline Neville-Jones, pointed out just how overambitious the scheme is, 'The requirement for 100 per cent accuracy is huge and I don't think we've ever seen a system which is 100 per cent accurate.'
Companies can't take all the blame, however. Poor planning and mismanagement by government departments and the lack of transparency in government IT procurement are a large part of the problem.

IDEN
CRIS

The government could be w
scandal over ID cards, acco
Corporate Identity - a cri
companies' engagement with
We set out to look at which co
records, the government's
projects, and what th
of the ID car

But surely problems can be avoided by proper drafting of contracts? In an ideal world, maybe, but the writing of public-sector technology contracts itself is currently contracted out. 'The government has no lawyers who deal with technology procurement.' according to a specialist technology lawyer quoted in *The Lawyer* magazine, who went on to add, 'The government is the dream client.'

Obviously, there are more issues around corporate involvement with the ID cards scheme than are covered in the published report. One of these is profiteering. When a company or government body makes part of its money from selling the data it administers, the incentive to sell can be stronger than the obligation of privacy. This was exposed in November 2005 in the case of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), which was found to be selling drivers' personal details - including home addresses - to 157 companies including a clamping firm run by convicted criminals. In March 2005, a Science and Technology Select Committee report into the privatised Forensic Science Service (FSS) questioned the lack of ethical oversight in selling access to genetic data on the police National DNA Database (NDNAD).

In June last year the *Independent on Sunday* reported that card-holders' details could be sold to private companies. The Home Office denied this, though Immigration Minister Tony McNulty told the BBC that banks would be able to verify card details against a database - for a fee. But apparently any claim the information would be sold was 'without foundation'. Privacy campaigners at Spy Blog have also pointed out that there is no criminal sanction in the ID cards bill to prevent 'fishing' for information on the NIR. There will be no shortage of potential buyers for data from the NIR - silicon.com columnist Martin Brampton reports that the music industry is already starting the queue to gain access to data in order to clamp down on music piracy.
Since writing *Corporate Identity*, we have heard about another report by industry-funded 'ID-entity', which asserts that 'If the UK decides to pursue [the ID cards scheme] technology will not be the limiting factor.' However, the UK Computing Research Committee (CRC), an expert panel of academics and representatives of the British Computer Society and the Institution of Electrical Engineers, issued a scathing response to the ID-entity report, attacking its assertions on technical feasibilty ('premature'), and pointing out that without knowing in detail the requirements for the NIR, 'it is impossible to know if the assertions made here are valid'. Most interestingly, the CRC holds that, whatever the state of existing technology, the NIR needs something different:

> *'The UK-NIR will necessarily have a completely different status from existing systems ... It will have a fundamental formal and operational status as the basis of citizenship for every individual citizen in the UK. For this reason alone it requires an altogether higher standard of design, specification, implementation, and operation than ordinary database systems.'*

So the bad news is that there is more to worry about with ID cards than just the civil liberties and state control issues. But the good news is that, given who's likely to be running the scheme, they may never get here...

Read the full version of Corporate Identity on the Corporate Watch website.

HEALTHCARE, LIMITED

Many healthcare professionals and patients are concerned at the growing presence in the NHS of private sector providers, which stand to profit from this role. Unions and campaigning groups have argued that the private sector tends to provide a more expensive and lower quality service, and that the core NHS values of equality and universality in healthcare are being compromised. This article looks at some of the companies that might be gaining a growing role in providing our healthcare and benefiting from our taxes, and the links between government and business.

The government has been stepping up its programme of 'reform' in the NHS, in clinical as well as non-clinical sectors. More foundation hospitals and plans to transfer primary care staff to the private sector have been announced. A second round of the Independent Sector Treatment Centres (ISTCs) programme has awarded private companies contracts to operate NHS units. This has already damaged local health economies according to a British Medical Association (BMA) survey of clinical directors. The current emphasis on 'choice' will see hospitals competing with each other for funding; the introduction of markets brings the risk that selection and differentiation in service will compromise NHS values.

Government receptiveness to the private healthcare industry is probably helped by the flow of senior NHS/Department of Health (DoH) figures into the private sector, and vice versa. The current Health Secretary, Patricia Hewitt, is a former director of Andersen Consulting (now Accenture), which has gained from PFI contracts. This is a good time for companies to promote private health care. In October 2005, six private healthcare companies conducted a national media campaign 'to champion the benefits of private healthcare.' A DoH report has advised that the government should increase the role of private healthcare providers - not to solve a crisis in the NHS, but to prevent a potential collapse in the private healthcare sector market.

Some companies involved in NHS clinical services:

·**Patients Choice Partners**, a PFI consortium including construction company Carillion, Nestore Healthcare and South African hospital company Medi-clinic

·**InterHealth Jarvis is** another consortium, made up of Canadian hospital company InterHealth Canada, with UK construction company Jarvis.

·**BUPA** is bidding to run diagnostic and treatment centres for the NHS. In 2003, BUPA's profits rose almost 20%, reportedly as a result of increasing treatment of NHS patients. BUPA also plans to build and run a private oncology centre with Hammersmith NHS Trust.

·**Netcare** is a South African healthcare company that has signed contracts with the NHS . It has NHS contracts for mobile cataract units. In February 2005 the British Medical Association reported that another company, Healthmark Partners Inc, had claimed to have lost a contract to Netcare because of being 'too focused on quality of care.'

·**Aspen Healthcare** is owned by United Surgical Partners International, a US-based healthcare company which states on its website that it 'sees a great deal of opportunity in the United Kingdom.'

·**Alliance Medical** runs diagnostic services for the NHS, including in Birmingham and Falkirk. UNISON reported that services were giving patients sub-optimal care, losing the NHS money because of below-capacity uptake, and pressurising hospitals into using private sector treatments. When the contract was awarded, Alan Milburn, then Health Secretary, was a consultant for Alliance Medical's parent company.

·**MercuryHealth** was awarded contracts in 2005 to build and operate ISTCs in southern England. Centres have opened in November 2005 in Medway and in December 2005 in Portsmouth.

·**BMI Healthcare**, a division of the General Hospitals Group, is providing procedures and consultations for the NHS, and is planning to expand its NHS work. It says on its website that on sites it shares with the NHS, its hospitals benefit from the access to NHS resources gained by links with NHS hosts.

·**CapioHealthcare UK** has 'chosen to collaborate with public healthcare'. In 2005 it was awarded contracts for nine ISTCs for the NHS, in Boston, Gainsborough, Kettering, Newcastle, Reading, Salisbury, Banbury, Bodmin, Milton Keynes and York.

·**UnitedHealthcare**, a US company, was awarded a contract for advising the DoH on the Evercare pilot scheme for keeping elderly patients out of hospital, despite academic research showing that in the US the scheme operates by focussing care on profitable patients.

·**Boots** has begun to move from eye tests into eye surgery performance, and was among companies bidding for NHS work.

These companies make clear that they stand to benefit from an involvement in NHS services. Their involvement will fundamentally change the nature of the NHS.

For further information and to get involved, see:

UNISON -
www.unison.org.uk

Keep Our NHS Public campaign -
http://www.keepournhspublic.com/index.php

Allyson Pollock, NHS Plc, (Verso, London 2005)

METRO! EXTRA! LOCAL! CENTRAL!

Despite planning controls, the big four supermarkets (Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury and Morrisons) continue to battle for increased market share with ever more ambitious expansion plans.

Tesco plans to double the number of 'Express' stores, its small in town convenience format, to 1200 by 2015; and if it continues to expand at current rates, is likely to triple the number of out of town hypermarkets (Tesco 'Extras') to 300 by 2015. In common with all the other supermarkets, Tesco has been buying up land with development potential and is sitting on a 'land bank' of more than 185 development sites. If all of them were to receive planning permission this would create more than 4.5 million sq ft of new supermarket space.

Successive governments, recognising the damage to town centres caused by the growth of out-of-town retail sheds, have put limits on out of town development. Supermarkets have responded to these curbs on their growth by moving back into the high streets of large and small towns. The number of Tesco stores has increased from 568 in 2000 to 2,365 in 2005. Tesco says that stores in (or more commonly on the edge) of market towns now form the core of its business, and both Tesco and Sainsburys have shifted part of their expansion programmes to focus on smaller format inner city stores - Tesco 'Metro' and Sainsbury's 'Central'. Sainsburys Local and Tesco Express are also rapidly replacing neighbourhood convenience stores and corner shops and are appearing on petrol station forecourts; Tesco now has 5% of the convenience store market. Temporarily thwarted in its plans to build out of town retail sheds and rapidly losing-market share to Tesco, Asda has recently shifted direction and is also about to enter the convenience store market for the first time, with plans to open discount mini-supermarkets to compete directly with Tesco Metro stores. Independent retailers, however, cannot compete and in 2004, 2,157 of them closed, compared with 1,079 going bust the previous year. A leaked report from the Parliamentary All-party Shops Group recently indicated that all of our independent retailers will have disappeared by 2015 . Yet the big supermarket chains clearly have the ear of this government, who show no signs of taking action against them. This is partly due to supermarket supporters within government, like Lord Sainsbury, and the revolving door between the Cabinet Office and Tesco, for former Blair advisers such as Lucy Neville-Rolfe, Philip Gould and David North. But it is also due to fierce direct lobbying by the supermarkets themselves. There are also macroeconomic reasons why the government does not want to break the power of the supermarkets - the competition between Tesco and Asda keeps prices and hence inflation down. This may be good for economic stability, but at what cost!

Case Study: Portobello Campaign Against the Superstore (PCATS)
www.pcats.org.uk
In May 2005, Scottish campaigners successfully opposed a planning application for an 85,000sq ft superstore development in Portobello, Edinburgh. Although the supermarket developer was never revealed, local campaigners suspected it was an application from Tesco.

Top tips from PCATS include:

1. Try to appeal to a broad spectrum of supporters. We had every age group, from eight weeks to eighty years old, at our public meetings.

2. Inform supporters regularly through as many channels as possible - email, newsletters, leaflets in shops, libraries, pubs, etc. or delivered through doors. Press releases, web sites, public meetings and demonstrations.

3. Use planning arguments (employ consultants, independent of local authorities if necessary) and don't just rely on emotion.

4. You need to be organised and persistant.

5. Organise a wide programme of enjoyable fundraising activities. Use events to help keep the campaign momentum by getting people together, especially during fallow periods. The Portobello campaign, with Ceilidhs, a Burns Night Supper, coffee mornings and a film-themed calendar of local traders, raised £6,000!

Fighting Back!

More and more people are deciding to take action against the corporate takeover of their communities by the big supermarkets. There are already at least 200 local groups (that we know of) fighting supermarket developments in their town. Armed with campaigning skills and some knowledge of the planning process many groups have taken on the supermarkets and won.

For more information see our recently updated guide *Checkout Chuckout: A diy guide to fighting supermarket developments* www.corporatewatch.org.uk

For more information on the damage that supermarkets do to local communities, economies and the environment see our reports *Whats Wrong with Supermarkets?* and *A Rough Guide to the UK Farming Crisis*.

Also see *www.tescopoly.org.uk*

ARE CLIMATE CARE'S CARBON OFFSETS WORTHWHILE?

The Phone Co-op is an ethical consumer co-operative that provides phone services (*http://www.thephone.coop*). the following motion has been proposed to its 2006 AGM. It proposes that the Phone Co-op should stop using Climate Care to 'offset' its carbon emisisons.

'This meeting, mindful of the importance of taking action on climate change and noting that The Phone Co-op pays Climate Care for its carbon offsets, which includes forestry schemes, requests the Board to end the arrangement with Climate Care, and to take other action which does not involve purchasing carbon offsets.'

Climate Care is a company that 'offers organisations and individuals a way to reduce their impact on global warming' by selling 'carbon offsets', such as tree planting, and funding and managing renewable energy projects (http://www.co2.org).

George Monbiot, in the *Guardian* has claimed that 'the accountancy behind many of the "carbon offset" schemes is flawed,' and that planting trees is not the solution.

YES

I have read the article by George Monbiot that you refer to and see no obvious connection between the abuses of the carbon credits system taking place under the Kyoto Mechanism, which he describes, and the carbon offsets offered by Climate Care, which are not part of the Kyoto mechanism and are entirely voluntary and additional.

Climate Care offers some carbon offsets relating to forestry. These are projects in national parks in Uganda to restore forest destroyed during war years. They include a good margin of error to overcome all conceivable uncertainties that may attach. Furthermore, the projects would be a good thing even if there were no carbon benefit, as they restore habitat for endangered species such as chimpanzees. They also employ local people in an area of considerable poverty and underemployment.

Climate Care also generates an increasing proportion of its offsets from non-forestry sources. These include the provision of energy efficient light bulbs to poor households in South African townships; and improved cooking stoves in India, which burn less wood and produce less smoke than those they replace. It is hard to see any reasonable objection to projects such as these.

If you are really so much opposed to offsets from forestry sources, I think a more constructive approach would be a motion to the Phone Coop that it should ask Climate Care to provide its offsets entirely from non-forestry sources. This might even be acceptable to the Board. Too bad for the chimpanzees, I guess, but at least there would be a benefit to the Indian farmers and South African township dwellers who would get more clean stoves and efficient light bulbs.

However as your motion stands I would oppose it, and advise everyone else to do the same. - Oliver Tickell

NO

Firstly, Monbiot's article and much other writing about carbon offsets certainly argues that carbon stored in trees cannot be equated with fossil carbon. Larry Lohman's work at the Cornerhouse, which Monbiot references, strongly makes the point that fossil carbon must stay in the ground. Moving it around the dump space in the biosphere is not equivalent. You suggest that Climate Care's projects in Uganda would be a good thing even without the 'carbon benefit'. Why not then put money into that, instead of administering a system of carbon credits, which is of dubious value for anything but corporate PR and salving the consciences of those that choose to fly despite knowing the disastrous consequences for the climate?

The question is, why does the Phone Co-op feel it necessary to give money to offset carbon emissions? Because the phrase 'carbon neutral' has become a selling point. An ethically minded company such as the Phone Co-op should be above such manipulative PR games. Climate Care is promoted by airline BA, who encourage passengers to offset the emissions of their trip. Their involvement is purely designed to encourage those that are concerned about the environment to keep flying, and to improve its corporate image. - Claire Fauset

Star Letter TESCO TRASHED

I am a regular cyclist. Three or four weeks ago I was cycling on a cycle path next to the river Colne, from Garston to Watford (roughly three miles) when I noticed about 15 shopping trolleys in the river and on the banks. I have been in touch with the chief executive of Tesco, Sir Terry Leahy's management team, but they keep making excuses, why they cannot remove the shopping trolleys either from the river or riverbanks.

I am one person trying to keep England a clean and tidy place, I cycle as much as I can, so as not to pollute the atmosphere by driving a car, but I do expect the countryside and cycle tracks to be clear of shopping trolleys in this day and age.

I have taken some photos for you to look over. See what you think about the mess Tesco is making. You might have more success than I, in having them remove their trolleys from the river and countryside. I would be most grateful if you could look in to this matter.

Many thanks
Mr Everitt
Watford

If you would like to ask Tesco whether the trollies on the banks of the Colne have been cleared up yet, contact Michelle Cornish on cr.team@uk.tesco.com

TRUE MEN DON'T KILL COYOTES

Dear Editor,

I found the recent Channel 4 documentary on animal experimentation, *Animals*, to be an educational experience. We live in a world where scientists put a lot of effort and money into researching the totally useless task of inhabiting other planets. Yet some scientists still promote the archaic practise of cutting up cats and dogs.

I am not convinced by the pro-animal experimentation lobby, who claim to champion the causes of cancer prevention and new medicines. We should be aiming for prevention rather than cure. The reason that there are such increasingly high rates of cancer globally is that diet and lifestyle are very poor while environmental pollutants and toxins are very high. If we addressed these issues first, there would be a dramatic reduction in diseases such as cancer. I personally fail to understand how a so-called civilised and animal loving society can tolerate what can only be described as satanic rituals of a degraded science.

Yours sincerely
Chloe Hardy,
Inverness

BLINDED BY THE SCIENCE

Dear Corporate Watch,

My son and I recently visited the Science Museum, which is running an exhibition called 'Pure Iceland, experience a land bursting with energy'. It is, however, sponsored by several Icelandic corporations, including Landsvirkjun, the country's National Power Company. From reading Corporate Watch I know that this company is involved in building an environmentally destructive dam, in the Karahnjukar area. But you'd never know that from the exhibition! While it was full of nice pictures of Iceland, including a realistic bubbling mud-pit, the exhibition also went on about how clean and green hydro power was, and how the dam projects would not harm the environment, and so on. Here's a quote from the exhibition's leaflet: 'Today Iceland only uses about 15% of the hydro and geothermal energy at its disposal - and so the country is inviting foreign companies to take advantage of its spare clean power.' And, of course, one of the 'foreign companies' happens to be Alcoa, which will run a very un-clean aluminium smelter!

Ruth Matthison,
London

To ask the Science Museum about their corporate involvement, contact *anna.patterson@nmsi.ac.uk*. For more information about the Karahnjukar dam, see past CW news reports, *http://www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=1889* and *http://www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=2172*.

*You read right! CW is giving away a years subscription to the lucky person who sends us the best letter for our next issue!
Get writing!*

FREE *subscription!*

**send your letters to:
the editor
mail@corporatewatch.org
16b cherwell st. oxford ox4 1bg**

Disclaimer: letters printed do not reflect the views and research of Corporate Watch

letters to the editor

Babylonian Times

Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all of the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. Jeremiah 51:7

BURN IN SELL

Another example of life being stranger than fiction. Billboard graphic, (spotted by adrants.com)

MICKEY MOUSE MILITARY

Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz reported in November 2005 that 'ShamrockCapital Advisors, the California-based investment arm of the Roy Disney family, said yesterday that it is launching a new $125 million fund to invest in Israel over a four-year period.' The investments that are being looked at include oil refineries, media companies - and Israel's military industries, which the government plans to privatise. The Chairman of Shamrock, which has already invested $500m in Israel, is Roy Disney, nephew of Walt himself.

MANX IN SPAAAACE

The Isle of man is set to become the 'Switzerland of space', with a £955,000 push for marketing itself as one of the top sites for space activities. Readers may comment that one obstacle to this is that, while the IoM is arguably stuck in a time-warp, it is not actually in space. As well as being manxist, this comment would betray a lack of knowledge of the space market - which is a business largely involving licensing satellites from offshore bases such as Bermuda, Cayman, Gibraltar, Luxembourg and Singapore. We wish the IoM's Director of Space Commerce all the best in showing the world that British islands can compete in the top league of low-regulated tax-havens.

BOOM! PA PA

Warmonger pin ups BAE Systems are not just a pretty face, they have many other talents too, featuring their very own brass band, which tours around the UK's top venues, such as the Brook Theatre, Chatham, Kent, and the, now legendary, Bryn-Bach Park Frith Golf Course, Derbyshire. Suggestions as to what the band's favourite tunes are, to the usual address, please.

Maybe they sometimes play the theme tunes of other corporations - like this offering from some of the people at a certain well known consulting firm... 'KPMG, we're strong as can be/A team of power and energy/We go for the gold/Together we hold onto our vision of global strategy .' Now who says that corporate music is no good? You can also savour the magic in the hard rock, jungle and 'Teutonic master mix.' Suggestions as to what the band's favourite tunes are, please, to the usual address.

Subscribe to Corporate Watch Newsletter

6 issues produced bi-monthly. Individuals/not-for-profits UK £8, elsewhere £12.

Profit making organisations £25, multinational corporations £5000 (or 1 minutes profit).

Name:
Address:
Postcode:
Phone:
Email:
Date:
I would like to pay Corporate Watch a subscription of:
(circle one) **£8 £12 £25 £5000**

I enclose a cheque to Corporate Watch for £
Please complete the form and send it along with any relevant payment to Corporate Watch, 16b Cherwell St. Oxford OX4 1BG

I would like to pay Corporate Watch a donation by standing order of £
Name of Bank:
Account Number:
Sort Code:
Address of Bank:
Postcode:
I would like my standing order to start on date (dd/mm/yyyy):
Signature:
Date:

Bank instructions: Please pay the above amount on the 1st of the month to Corporate Watch, account number 50108062 sort code 08 92 50. The Co-operative Bank, 13 New Street, Oxford OX1 1LG