

01924 218737

info@cpgb-ml.org

**Communist Party
of Great Britain
(Marxist-Leninist)**



Stop the privatisation of our schools!

Free, quality education for all

To be kept informed about CPGB-ML's views and activities, either by post or by email, please fill in the form below:

Name

Address

Post Code

Phone Email

www.cpgb-ml.org

More info: PO Box 110, Castleford, WF6 1XZ

The Labour government is in the process of privatising the school system by means of an array of different measures, each dressed up as a boon for teachers, parents and pupils.

Private Finance Initiative

Schools have been the primary target of PFI. Major building work in schools is now almost invariably funded and managed by private profiteers, who make their investment back through payment of instalments. Ostensibly, this is done in order to get the most 'competitive' prices and services; in reality, it is done in order to get taxpayers' money into the coffers of massive construction companies and consultancy and management firms, whilst giving the illusion of lower public spending.

The various PFI consortia make big promises but provide a terrible service. According to a recent government-level survey, half of a sample of 52 secondary schools built in England in the last five years were at best "mediocre". Nine of the worst ten had been built under the PFI. As George Monbiot points out: "*Once the consortium has its foot in the door, it starts to raise its price and reduce its services. It will discover costs which weren't envisaged before. It will price the likely inflation of labour and materials as generously as possible.*" (*The Spectator*, 10 March 2002)

And yet it's becoming extremely difficult for schools to get funding from anywhere else. When PFI was introduced, it was described as an *adjunct* to public spending; in fact, it is the *replacement* for public spending. Since there's no other viable source of funding, relatively cheap proposals to refurbish or modernise existing buildings often have to be scrapped in favour of more lucrative demolition and rebuilding proposals that attract the PFI vultures.

The outlook for schools is dangerous. Schools get stuck in a debt trap and are unable to spend sufficient money on teachers, books and resources. "*There is only one means of meeting the outrageous costs of PFI, and that is by cutting public services.*" (*Ibid*)

PFI is simply privatisation under another name, and should be opposed. Our call must be for free, high quality education for all, funded at state level.

Academies and religious schools

BBC News Online of 3 July 2007 reported that there are now only 340 comprehensive schools left in Britain – the rest have all become grammar schools and city academies.

The government target is for 95 percent of all schools to be grammar schools or city academies, which indicates a very clear policy: grammar schools for the middle-class kids that can't afford to go private, and vocation-centred, skills-based schools for working-class kids.

What's more, the funding model for the academies is heavily based in the private sector. Although they officially fall within the state sector, they are funded jointly with private 'sponsors', with the private 'sponsor' taking the lead in decision-making.

As Fiona Millar has pointed out: "*It is still the case that parents and pupils in academies receive less protection under the law on everything from exclusions to special needs and admissions than their counterparts in community, voluntary aided, foundation or, indeed, trust schools ... Staff are not protected by statutory terms and conditions, the governing body arrangements are still wholly undemocratic and large-*

ly exclude elected parents and other representatives of the community." (*The Guardian*, 9 October 2007)

Meanwhile, religious schools of all kinds continue to flourish. With increasing freedom to overthrow the curriculum (eg, some christian schools now teaching creationism instead of evolution), these schools are more than ever a breeding ground for bigotry and superstition, separating children along racial and religious lines and thus fueling racism.

The CPGB-ML is firmly opposed to academies, which are a form of privatisation, and to religious schools, which breed racism and division. Our children deserve a well-rounded, integrated, fully funded education via comprehensive schools.

Widening gap between rich and poor

A 2007 study showed that only 25.3 percent of pupils in the 10 percent most deprived areas gained at least five A-C grades at GCSE level. In the richest 10 percent of areas, the figure was 68.4 percent. This is a sharp increase in the disparity between the groups – in 2006, the figures were 29.2 percent in the poorest areas and 57.6 percent in the richest areas.

According to *The Times* of 31 December 2007, "*The figures also show that the attainment gap between rich and poor continues to widen as pupils progress through school. At age 7, the performance gap between pupils in the 10 percent richest and poorest areas was 20 percentage points in 2007. At age 16, however, the gap had more than doubled to 43.1 percent, suggesting that far from being a leveller, school was increasing the disparity.*"

The widening class divide in state education did not come about by accident but by design. Maximum resources are being channelled to the middle class and a few bright working-class kids that the bourgeoisie feels will be useful in the attainment of profit, whilst the bulk of the working class is neglected.

There is a good reason for this. With British manufacture in freefall, there are going to be very few job opportunities for the workers, and those jobs there are will not require much in the way of education; therefore, to educate the workers is to help them on the road towards radical resistance to capitalism.

Free, quality education for all

We demand free, universal, high quality education, which, apart from imparting skills and qualities for the "*world of work in the 21st century*", develops the critical and analytical skills of students.

Only socialism will bring true freedom and equality to the classroom. Meanwhile, we put forward the following demands for the interim period, which go some way towards alleviating the gross inequalities of the present educational divide:

- the abolition of all private schools, grammar schools, religious schools and city academies;
- a return to public funding and an end to PFIs;
- an end to local management of schools, the internal market, league tables, 'parental choice', SATs, the privatisation of services, and the national curriculum;
- the establishment of a proper comprehensive system of education with mixed ability teaching;
- a dramatic increase in funding;
- an end to tuition fees and loans for university students.