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Danny Smith: Up Bournville Boulevard

2 February 2010 By Danny Smith

Last Tuesday Jon sent me to cover the BBC WM public forum debate about the Kraft takeover of Cadbury, it was held in Bournville. Bournville, for those of you that don't know, was built by the do-gooding Cadbury family who thought booze was the devil's piss.

The reaction to the news across the the media has ranged from the predictable hysterical cloying nostalgia of 'oh no they're going to make wispas taste of Stilton and and shoot curly curls into space, how dare they mess with things from my childhood'.

I was shocked when I arrived to find a grey woman — my presence bringing the teenage age down to about sixty. Seeing as, to me, the only real issue was the potential loss of jobs. There was a surprising lack of people who actually work there, as opposed to used-to-work-there or my-family's-been-working-there-since-we-made-chocolate-from-pterodactyl-eggs.

I'd be hard pushed to call the meeting a debate as everyone in the room obviously agreed that the takeover was a Bad Thing. The main argument then came between the capitalist apologists personified by Eddie Large look-alike Lord Digby 'biggest dog in the world' Jones and Carl Chin, tonight looking like a Vulcan making a guest appearance in a Bristow cartoon.



One woman stood up and said that she "didn't want to see it [Cadbury] turned over to the yanks" as if they were going to force her to wear ten gallon hats and pitch baseball instead of knit.

It was was about then the atmosphere changed, before it had been one of pleasant — but excited — solidarity, like Marks and Spencer's during a blackout, but as the feelings of betrayal came out people started to get upset.

It wasn't a good way for the residents to express their feelings because the issues were complicated enough to leave no clear pariah to shout at. It wasn't a good way of disseminating information because there wasn't really any, and as representatives from neither Kraft or Cadbury turned up, and it wasn't even a good way of finding out what your average Cadbury worker thought of it all because everybody that still works there was either there working or had an early night because they had to work there in the morning.

What does the future hold? Well, on the 2nd of Feb the votes will come in and the shareholders will have voted unanimously in favour of the sale. That's seeing as almost 25% of the shareholders are hedge funds that stand to double the worth of their stocks.

Will there be great change? I don't think so, well not immediately. You don't borrow a huge amount of money to acquire a company like Cadbury without respecting it as a brand, a brand with an identity, a story, and an ethos.

If anything Kraft workers in Illinois should be out the front with placards because the money has got to come from somewhere.

The opinions of Danny Smith do not necessarily reflect the views of the publishers of this blog, its affiliates, or any sane adult human beings. He currently lives in your cupboard, watching, always watching.

Tags: Birmingham, Bournville, cadbury, history

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dave harte 1 year ago
For the record, Rowheath Pavillion, the venue of the debate, does have a bar which opened when the debate ended - they do a nice pint there.

Jon Bounds 1 year ago in reply to dave harte
Never let the truth get in the way of a good smile.

probablydrunk 1 year ago
bugger - thought when somebody suggested going to the bar at the end and everybody laughed, they were taking the piss

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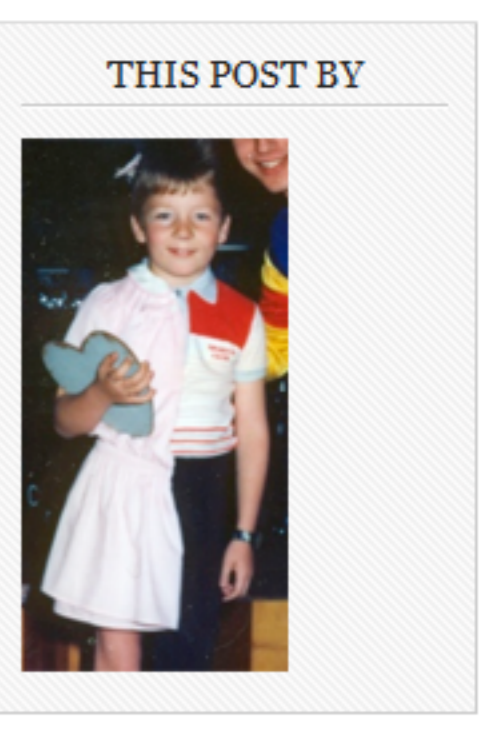
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- johnfreeman\_dtb 1 year ago From Twitter
RT @peteashon: Very much enjoyed @probablydrunk's reporting of the Bournville / Cadbury public meeting.
peteashon 1 year ago From Twitter
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urbanfly 1 year ago From Twitter
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BiNS is mostly by Jon Bounds, a Birmingham based social web consultant, producer and writer. You can hire him to work on your stuff, or follow him on twitter. There's also the odd bit of stuff from Danny Smith. Feel free to send us anything you're interested in - or think we might be. If you've got gigs to promote, best to chuck them on the talk board.