

Readers of this page should not be fooled by W.Quinn's claim of "*Gordon Brown's latest announcement of an outlay of £36 billion to rebuild 21,000 primary and secondary schools*".

Far from latest spending, most of the above has already been committed in previous budgets, the new money amounting to less than a tenth of the total. The trick is called double counting and is much favoured by the "Iron Chancellor" to inflate his spending commitments.

But whatever the figures, much more important is the way in which it is spent. Brown offers little beyond new buildings for the same schools, refusing to engage in the latest consensus on choice and freedom, which would turn spending into investment.

A monopoly politician to the core, Brown's enthusiasm for dishing out other people's tax comes at the cost of central control. The perils of which are evident in the £1 billion wasted on a national truancy programme which has delivered virtually no improvement compared with the local Every School Day Counts initiative which, tailored to local needs, has seen more encouraging results. For schools in Sunderland, the Chancellor's apparent generosity is a poisoned chalice.

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