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Letter to the Editor

Teachers who care must be aware

Schools are permanently short of funds and are grateful for any input from the private sector which can improve the service they offer to their children. And it is right that the private sector should contribute to an educational system which has benefited them enormously.

But teachers must be prepared to scrutinise very carefully the sponsorship offered to our schools. Especially that offered by multi-national companies and to question the motives behind the offers. Most of these offers are accompanied by very high profile and clever advertising campaigns and we must be aware that in some cases these campaigns are designed to mask a very dubious record indeed in the actual performance of the companies involved.

One example which springs readily to mind is the ESSO Wildlife Challenge. This, with any other backer, would be a most praiseworthy competition raising awareness of the environment at local, Irish, school, level and providing a valuable service to school and community. The prizes are good and the involvement of a well-known Irish wildlife artist, Don Conroy, will attract the children. So, what is the problem?

The problem is that Exxon-Mobil, who are ESSO, are a multi-national oil company with a most pathetic and deplorable environmental record, which continues to this day. They spend massively to deny global-warming, they spend massively to open up protected areas of the planet to oil exploration, and they spend massively to persuade the Bush administration to allow them to continue their despoliation of the planet. Their actions are reprehensible, but here they are using our schools and our children in a cynical exercise to disguise their totally deplorable record on environmental issues. And, sadly, In Touch, the primary teachers magazine, seems happy to support them, accept their advertising money, and help them to work their self-serving and dishonest message into our classrooms.

At what stage will we waken up and say NO?

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