

An end to the brazen rip-off

The late Peter Strevens, language teacher, linguist, and a contributor to *ET*, did not mince his words when it came to some language schools in Britain.

His varied career included Director-General of the Bell Educational Trust in Cambridge (1976–88) and Chairman of IATEFL (the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language: 1983/86), and one of his key concerns was raising the level of professionalism in the teaching of EF/SL. In his entry 'English language school' in *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* (1992), he notes: 'Such schools can be found in many parts of the world, but the 1,000 or so in Great Britain are particularly well publicized. They cater for some 150,000 foreign students a year [and] standards range from acknowledged probity and effectiveness to the brazen rip-off.'

That comment is clear enough – as is the statement on the facing page. The ARELS declaration, from an organization of acknowledged probity and effectiveness, urges the British government to round up its EFL bandits. This announcement is also to appear in the October issue of the *EFL Gazette*, the monthly newspaper of the ELT world, with whom we are happy to cooperate in this matter. The declaration deals with a subject that should concern everyone involved in a business that, some say, has more longterm value to Britain than North Sea oil. Comments are invited on this highly charged issue.

Also in the *Gazette* recently, and the newsletter *TESOL Matters*, are accounts of a US development that illustrates the positive side of British ELT. In the past, where the UK has favoured an intensive hands-on start to careers in EF/SL (academic depth – maybe – developing later), Americans have preferred masters degrees in ESOL methodology (practical skills – maybe – developing later). Now, however, the University of Georgetown has designed a 5-week, 150-hour course that leads to the basic British 'cert' in TEFL: the RSA/UCLES certificate (run by the Royal Society of Arts in London and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate). By taking this step, James E. Alatis, Dean of the School of Languages and Linguistics, and his colleagues at Georgetown have broken not so much a mould as a taboo, and it will be intriguing to see what happens next.

Tom McArthur

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