

KPMG are the very last people to train civil servants -...

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August Bank Holiday Monday is no a day for news, as this morning's emails are confirming. But then I noticed that this headline [had slipped into the FT](#):

KPMG wins £223mn UK government contract amid plans to cut consultant spend

What are those at the firm at which I worked from 1979 to 1983 up to now, I thought? The FT explained:

KPMG has won a UK government contract worth up to £223mn to train civil servants, the second-largest public sector contract ever awarded to the Big Four firm, before the Treasury set out plans to drastically reduce Whitehall's reliance on external consultants last month.

In fairness, they note in the article that the contract was agreed by the last government and not this one. But as they note:

[T]he consulting firm will manage learning and development services across Whitehall, including overseeing courses on policymaking, communications and career development.

Let's be clear about this. In 2021, this firm was banned from bidding for government contracts because it had been involved in so many scandals. No firm has paid more in fines for its inability to undertake its core activity, which is auditing. Unsurprisingly, the private sector has noted that KPMG is a firm in decline as a result, compared to its competitors.

And lest anyone forget, this firm still runs a massive network of tax haven operations whose primary purposes are to undermine the legitimate tax revenues of governments like that of the UK and to simultaneously undermine the regulations that they create.

Dedicated to the private sector, they promote the core profit-motivated philosophy of the neoliberal agenda, which inevitably brings with it the 'market good/state bad'

thinking so associated with right-wing politicians, think tanks and consulting firms.

And these are the people who are now going to teach our civil servants. Let me guess the curriculum content:

- * If in doubt, ask a consultant
- * If the answer isn't to privatise or outsource, start again
- * Always make sure wealth trickles upwards
- * The only people who matter are wealthy because only they can pay the fees
- * If you want to get on, leave public service, put yourself first, and join a consultancy

Variations on this theme will, no doubt, be available, but what else are they going to say?

And so large is this contract that it will form eight per cent of KPMG's UK revenues.

I reiterate: this is a Tory contract. But if I were Labour, I would be looking for a break clause. This is dangerous to the well-being of this country and a sure indication of the destruction of the capacity to think independently within the civil service. It is important to do better than this in the future: a strong and independent civil service is vital, and that is the last thing KPMG is going to create.