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TOM TOM ENGLISH



What would you do if you were King for a day?

VOCABULARY

Eradicate =
Completely wipe-out,
destroy.

Pander =
To gratify, indulge

Pander =
To gratify or
indulge

Slosh =
Splash, pour carelessly

Discussion questions

1. Do you think Coca-Cola is especially unhealthy? Why? Why not?
2. Do you think sugary drinks like Coca-Cola should be banned, restricted, taxed, or allowed to be sold freely? Why?
3. Do you think the world would be a better place without Coca-Cola? Why? Why not?
4. If you were King/Queen for a day, with absolute power, what would you do?
5. Do you think any of the ideas given by your classmates are good ones? Are any of them likely to happen? Why? Why not?

VOCABULARY

Ramshackle =
In a state of severe
disrepair

Ubiquitous =
Found everywhere

Beverage =
Formal word for a drink

Gushing =
Flowing rapidly, with
great volume

The absolute power to do anything, but for one day only.

Not enough time to **eradicate** poverty, find a cure for

cancer or ensure equality of esteem between academic and vocational education. I could turn QPR into Premier League champions, but it's important not to stray into fantasy.

One thing: a single proclamation, that requires no **pandering** to public opinion or consultation with a focus group. It's simple. I'd ban Coca-Cola and all its offshoots, lookalikes and variants.

I considered restricting my banning order to consumption by the under-25s. **Sloshing** this sugary chemical into the throats of children has no beneficial effect whatsoever. If fluoride gives poor kids rich kids' teeth, cola can do the opposite. It neither quenches thirst nor increases energy. It's responsible for damaged teeth, thicker waistlines and lighter purses.

Its **eradication** would have a positive effect on educational attainment and improve behaviour in the classroom. Ideally, the ban would be accompanied by the introduction of free healthy meals in every primary school.

But why restrict these benefits to children? My power allows me to save adults from themselves; to push them towards healthier **beverages** such as rooibos tea and mango juice - or good old Adam's Ale, that marvellous, refreshing drink that's free at the tap (and expensive at the supermarket). As king of the world I would make this ban international. The global

British Newspaper "The Guardian" invites famous people to write a column called "King for a Day" in which they explain one thing that they would do if they had absolute power. This week's King for a Day is Alan Johnson, formerly UK Health Minister

power of a huge corporation would be removed at a stroke.

When I was at secondary school, our geography teacher, Mr Woosnam, would show reel-to-reel cine films from exotic and remote parts of the world. They often had a car rally involving a driver named Paddy Hopkirk. The film would flicker from a huge projector on to a shaky white screen or the classroom wall. One image was common to them all - the Coca-Cola sign hanging off the corner of a **ramshackle** shop. Whether it was a Peruvian city or a clearing somewhere in Africa, that white lettering on a red background was **ubiquitous**.

That was in the early 1960s. Goodness knows how its reach has expanded since. Amazonian tribes making contact with the outside world for the first time will probably emerge from the jungle clutching that familiarly shaped bottle. As a symbol of socially useless power it is rivalled only by those investment bank products that brought our economy crashing to the ground.

On this one day, my power will exceed theirs. Coca-Cola would disappear, irrespective of its attempts to make itself respectable by producing a "diet" version. A great **gushing** waterfall would release it into sealable caverns previously reserved for nuclear waste, with a proportion kept back to be used for steam-cleaning heavy machinery. The result will be an army of happy children marching forward together, eyes bright, teeth gleaming; instead of teaching the world to sing, they will teach it to stop consuming sugar. Humanity will be all the sweeter for it.