Business Strategies: fall-out over Kraft's takeover of Cadbury began before the sharholder's vote

It was all over when Gordon Brown made an announcement: he would be taking all steps to protect UK jobs in the event of a takeover of Cadbury by Kraft. It was clear that he would not make any effort to save one of the last large companies still in English hands. And, true to form, he would not actually try to save English jobs.

Every few days, the British government sends out a press release saying that it has temporarily blocked the sale to overseas interests of an obscure painting or other work of art. The principle is simple: British art should stay in British hands.

But not, it seems, British companies. And the last great British brand, Cadbury, has fallen to the Americans who know a thing or two about cream cheese and Vegemite but otherwise seem content, like Avis, to sit as second best in their markets.

Immediately, the shareholders' decision was made, at almost four times the price Kraft originally offered, Peter Mandelson piped up. The British government, he said, had been unsuccessful in ensuring that the management of Cadbury would remain in the UK.

And so it was. Hours after Kraft announced that its bid was successful, three of Cadbury's most senior directors left the company.

CEO, Todd Stitzer, chairman, Roger Carr, and finance director, Andrew Bonfield all announced that they were leaving after 72% of shareholders voted in favour of the takeover.

Online petitions tried to discourage shareholders from voting in favour of the revised offer. Kraft's biggest shareholder, Warren Buffet said he disagreed with it. UK and Irish unions banded together to protest against the takeover.

And customers threatened to stop buying Cadbury product if the sale goes ahead.

But many will find that difficult, for Cadbury is much more than chocolate: its brands include the highly addictive Trebor Mints and other cult brands.

There have also been concerns that Cadbury's corporate culture will be lost: the Cadbury family were always charitable in the best sense of the word; they created living conditions for their workers that even now are regarded as seriously desirable; they managed vast amounts of charity funds; they ran a highly ethical business. Even when the Cadbury family no longer ran the company, many of its ethical principles continued including fair trade.

There is now concern amongst those who support such endeavours that Kraft will pull back from those principles in the pursuit of profit at all costs.

The reality is that no one expects Kraft to leave Cadbury to do what it does so very, very well. That's why Kraft wants it. Kraft has bought up several iconic brands around the world and, to be fair, has not changed the product at all.

But it does obviously need to get its money back and there are only two ways of doing that: borrow to fund the purchase (it's already doing that which is a ridiculous state of affairs when so many small businesses can't get the money to stay afloat) or cut costs - and that almost certainly means reducing plants and people.

Hint: the Cadbury's chocolate made outside the UK is way below the UK standard which explains why airport sales of the real thing are so high.

But they will try. After all, Cadbury is only a few years younger than the country Kraft calls home. What could such a company possibly know?