



The Beaver

3 February 2009
Newspaper of the
London School of Economics
Students' Union
thebeaveronline.co.uk

Let it snow School closed for two days during big freeze

Photo
More snow pictures
page 21



Dr Johnson feels the cold outside St Clement Danes church in Aldwych by LSE on Monday. Subzero temperatures shut the School for second day today
Joseph Cotterill

Tories: we'll only campaign against 'far left' fascists

Abortion stall raises tempers on Houghton St

Conservative Future chair declines to support LSE Students' Union campaign against BNP

Ali Moussavi & Joseph Cotterill

The leader of the Conservative party's youth wing has refused to join a LSE Students' Union campaign against the British National Party unless it is identified as a left-wing party.

Michael Rock, the national chair of Conservative Future, declined to support a Union drive against the BNP ahead of European parliamentary elections in June.

Rock was on Houghton Street to discuss coordinating the Union's anti-ID card stance with the Conservatives' national NO2ID campaign.

Rock told the Beaver that he "would find it very difficult to authorise a coordinated campaign against the BNP if the

terms of discourse and engagement are not properly defined."

"The BNP are a party of hate and have their roots in the left-wing traditions of fascism," he said.

"The consistent mislabelling of extremist parties is very damaging to liberal democracy, as it creates false tensions and misaligns people with causes they do not understand fully," Rock added.

Union Education and Welfare officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang said that Rock had declined to run an anti-BNP campaign unless the BNP were outed as a far-left party.

Akpan-Inwang said that he was "shocked and appalled" that Rock had refused to pledge Conservative Future's support, and that the Students' Union would "pursue this campaign with organisations that recognise the danger that the BNP present."

Union Residences Officer and Conservative party member Helen Roberts, who had introduced Rock to Akpan-Inwang and suggested the meeting, said she disagreed with Rock.

Roberts said that it was wrong to im-

pose "pre-conditions on promoting an anti-BNP message" and that she denounced fascists "regardless of where they stand on the political spectrum."

Rock posted his position on the BNP on his blog on the Conservative Future website. The comments generated attention in the Conservative blogosphere over the weekend.

Rock was defended by political commentator Iain Dale and criticised by Welsh Assembly Member for Plaid Cymru Bethan Jenkins.

Other LSE Students' Union officials reacted angrily to Rock's comments.

Union General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher said that it was "politically, historically and morally disgusting" to see the BNP as a far-left party.

"If Conservative Future don't want to join us in fighting fascism and racism, we will get on with it ourselves. I am shocked that he is more interested in bogus theoretical debates than the possibility of a fascist being elected in London to the European Parliament," Fisher added.

The BNP is regarded as racist and fascist across Britain's political spectrum and

the mainstream media.

The party is committed to ending non-white immigration and to "voluntary" repatriation of immigrants and their descendants.

Its domestic policies include capital punishment and workers' cooperatives.

Party officials have said they would fight terrorism by banning Muslims from flying in and out of the country.

The BNP has cultivated a moderate image in public since Nick Griffin became leader in 1999.

Griffin was convicted in 1998 of incitement to racial hatred. Several other party members have criminal convictions. Griffin and other members have a history of antisemitism and Holocaust denial.

BNP candidate Richard Barnbrook won a London-wide seat in the London Assembly and gained 5.3 per cent of the mayoral vote in the May 2008 local elections.

Online Michael Rock's blog post bit.ly/gjmr

Phyllis Lui

A Students' Union official has expressed outrage against a stall set up on Houghton Street by a pro-life group.

Education and Welfare officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang engaged in a debate with two representatives of Created4Life, who were on campus last Tuesday to raise awareness for their cause.

Created4Life Director Alan Thorne rebutted Akpan-Inwang's claim that they did not want to debate in an interview with The Beaver, saying: "Discussion was very difficult...[he was] talking over me."

Created4Life is a "new charitable organisation" set up to "encourage women and men not to choose abortion". Representatives from the group distributed leaflets to students and displayed models that depicted the human foetus at various stages of its growth.

Thorne said that LSE security asked them to "move models out of sight."

Thorne also said that Akpan-Inwang picked up one of the foetal models and smashed it onto the table.

Akpan-Inwang did not deny this accusation. Further, he spoke of how one of the

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Collective

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The Collective is The Beaver's governing body. You must have three articles or photos published in the paper to qualify for membership. If you believe you are a Collective member but your name is not on the list above, please email

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LSE events

Highlights of this week's public lectures and talks

Russia after Georgia

Profs Margot Light and Marie Mendras with Dr Bobo Lo.
Tonight, SZT, 1830-2000

Here Comes Everybody

Here comes new media guru Prof Clay Shirky. With Charlie Beckett.
Tonight, HKT, 1830-2000

Europe in the World

Luxembourg foreign minister Jean Asselborn.
Wednesday, Shaw Library, 1830

Are the BRIC economies taking over the world?

Dr Jim O'Neill and Prof Danny Quah.
Thursday, NT, 1830-2000

Obama and the Empire of Liberty

Prof David Reynolds discusses his new book and the new presidency.
Thursday, HKT, 1830-2000

Celebrities and Aid: new humanitarians or just another fad?

With Kris Torgeson of MSF and the Sunday Times journalist Ann McFerran.
Thursday, SZT, 1830-2000

Positions of the week

LSE careers service's pick of the best jobs

Deloitte, multiple graduate opportunities

in China, Spain, Middle East, South Korea and South East Asia through the Global Universities Programme, Deloitte's newest initiative to match top international students from select universities with career opportunities in their home country or another location of interest.

Barclaycard, graduate trainees in HR, Marketing, Risk and Commercial Programme

The Environment Council. Finances Assistant and Public and Stakeholder engagement assistant positions

Internship opportunities at Société Générale, including IT Trainee, synthetic credit structuring...

MVA Consultancy - graduate analyst / researcher.

As a graduate Analyst you will be working in a busy transport consultancy. You may find yourself contributing to a major piece of policy research for a central Government department, a transport assessment in connection with a private residential or commercial developer, development of a transport strategy for a city or region, or a bid for a railway or toll road franchise, or for a new tram system.

3M - Graduate opportunities, in business, IT, science, manufacturing and engineering.

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De Beers. Junior Product Manager/Analyst - Marketing Internship. Joint-venture between De Beers and LVMH, De Beers Diamond Jewellers Ltd. is based in London and operates 50 stores around the world. This internship is proposed within the Head-Office Marketing Department doing the product strategy for all the markets.

Policy Advisor to the Communications Consumer Panel. Associate. The role of the Communications Consumer Panel is to influence Ofcom, Government, the EU, and service and equipment providers so that the communications interests of consumers and citizens are protected and promoted.

Interested?

For details of these posts and over three hundred more, log in to My Careers Service and click on 'search for opportunities' at www.lse.ac.uk/careers

The Beaver

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Check our website for daily updates throughout this term - and find out how you can get involved

info@thebeaveronline.co.uk



**School's out as snowed under
Aldwych enters new ice age**

LSE and its environs were swathed in snow and ice yesterday after a Siberian weather front swept through the UK.

Snow began falling on Sunday evening and continued through the night. Thick blankets covered London by morning, preventing many staff and students from coming to the LSE.

The School administration cancelled teaching for the day on Monday morning.

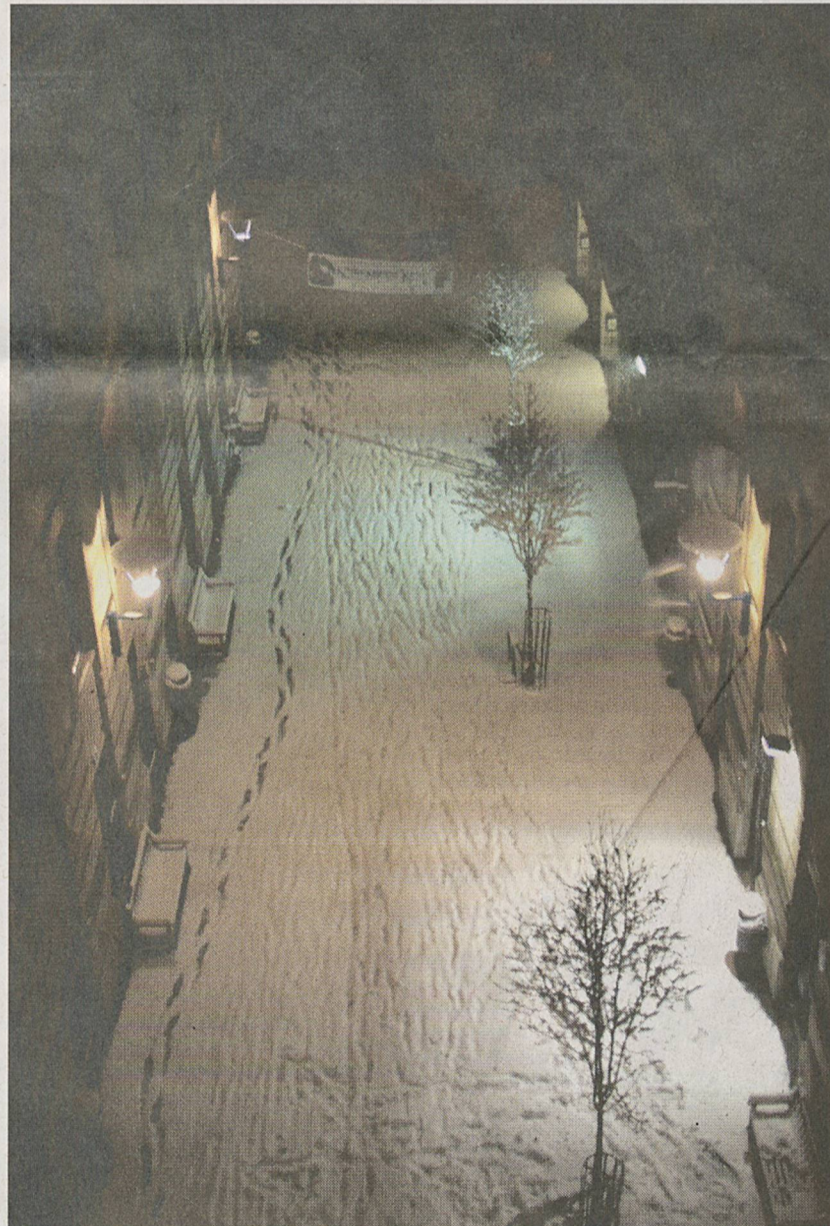
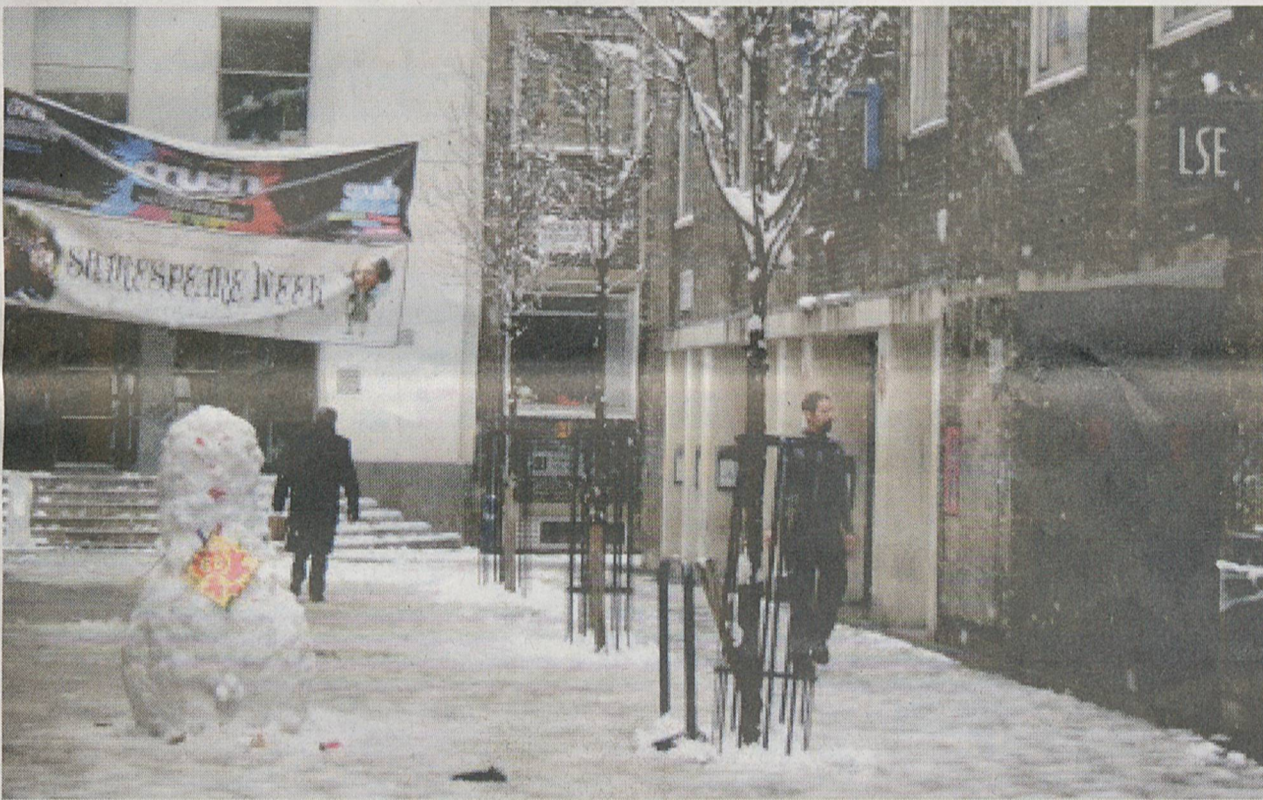
Students' Union services were also closed for the day.

Students built snowmen on a largely deserted Houghton Street and a snowball fight was held in Lincoln's Inn Fields in the afternoon.

The School was last shut down during term time in February 2007. Flooding in Kingsway left the campus without electricity along with most of the WC2 area.

Joseph Cotterill

Clockwise from left: statue looks on outside St Clement Danes; Houghton Street on Sunday night; Bush house; an empty bus stop at rush hour on Monday; the Old Building after the first snowfall; Snowman on Houghton Street
Joseph Cotterill/
Chun Han Wong



LSE cultural diversity steals show at Sadler's Wells

Zeeshan Malik

The LSE Students' Union's annual cultural show has raised £14,000 for charity this year.

"Timeless", headed by a committee of ten members took place at Sadler's Wells Theatre last Sunday. Hundreds of LSE students turned out to watch the performance of arts and dance from the cultures represented in LSE's student body.

Producer Nikhil Sangani described the production as "a story: emotion, expression and energy. Exposing talent on stage and having a ridiculously good time."

The producer's vision materialised in a three-hour long show with a core storyline intertwined with various acts boasting the LSE's talent and international diversity.

Highlights of the night included singing and dancing from a broad international spectrum, a fashion show, a "hip-hop vs: tap dance" showdown and a spectacular bollywood dance segment to finish.

"It's been a long journey: 330 days and 170 performers later, the result is beyond words," said Deputy Head of Sponsorship Dhiraj Nainani, who also performed on the night.

Photo: Cherie Leung



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Campus unity motions and election reforms attacked at Union meeting



Higher Education & Research

LSE and sector news

Part-time students vanish

The number of university students in the UK dropped for the first time this year after previous years of continual growth. It is thought that higher tuition fees may be the main reason since numbers are significantly lower amongst part-time students, who must pay their tuition fees up front and are not entitled to the same level of government support.

Professor of Public Economics Nicholas Barr said: "Part-time students are disadvantaged. They receive no loans and have no option but to support themselves."

Director at Davos

LSE Director Howard Davies has recently returned from a meeting in Davos, Switzerland which played host to the World Economic Forum.

Davies spoke of a need for people to accept a reduction in living standards, saying: "In the United States and the UK people are going to get poorer. They are going to have to spend less than their income for a while as the economy deleverages. That is going to be politically extremely painful."

Online

Davies' FT Davos blog bit.ly/568s
BBC interview bit.ly/264mx2

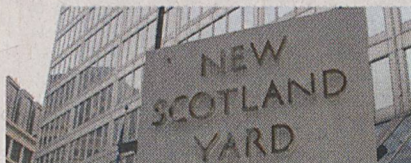
Professor off to Princeton

LSE Professor Christian List will spend a year at Princeton University after being given the Lawrence S Rockefeller award.

The award is presented to academics of an outstanding calibre who are interested in spending a year contributing to the study of ethics and human values. List expressed his delight at the opportunity, saying: "It is a wonderful opportunity to be able to spend a year pursuing my research and interacting with colleagues and students in the vibrant interdisciplinary environment of the Center for Human Values."

Shape up, Stephenson

Tony Travers, local government expert and chair of the Greater London Group at LSE, has said the new Metropolitan Police commissioner Sir Paul Stephenson must "re-position his force" amid allegations of corruption, logistical chaos and the removal of Sir Ian Blair under Mayor Boris Johnson's administration.



Climate centre founded

Lord Nicholas Stern, chair of the India group at LSE, has launched The Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy, which will research the economic implications of climate change. The project will be chaired by Lord Stern and directed by Judith Rees of the LSE Department of Geography and Environment.

'Vague' unity motion amended before passage

Ali Moussavi

An amended motion was passed at last Thursday's UGM after a clause which called for unity on campus in the aftermath of the occupation of the Old Theatre was removed.

Postgraduate student Eli Lipmen's motion, which made reference to a Beaver newspaper editorial, argued that "the events of last week [the occupation of the Old Theatre] went too far in damage"

He continued, stressing the need for "unity on campus... to fight against antagonism and intimidation" and for an organised dialogue between members of the Palestine and Israel societies through the newly set-up Dialogue Commission.

Charlotte Galvin opposed the motion. "fundamentally the clause is vague: unity behind what?" she said.

Galvin went on to say that "unity on campus [is] unworkable, unachievable and essentially impossible" and that the clause "curtailed the right to freedom of expression". Lipmen later said: "I was disappointed that people wanted to strike the line calling for unity amongst students on the need to respect for each other's views, and I question why they would not want unity on campus."

Returning officer attempts resignation

Joe Rennison & Joseph Cotterill

Student's Union Returning Officer Ossie Fikret came close to resigning in exasperation last Thursday after a landmark election reform motion failed to pass at the UGM, prompting a brief constitutional crisis on the eve of Lent term elections.

Quoracy was called in the meeting just before the motion went to a vote. Fikret had just spoken in favour of confirming the proposals.

The motion proposed liberalising the current rules in favour of campaigning on facebook, so far forbidden in student elections at LSE.

The reform was also designed to give the Union's Media Group greater freedom to report on the forthcoming elections. The union noted that currently, "Pulse is unable to participate in LSESU elections" and "The Beaver is currently unable to report an 'objective and factual' representation of elections."

It is understood that fears over the fate of society endorsements and mass society emailing under the reforms prompted the quoracy call.

The motion is expected to be re-submitted and heard again at this weeks UGM.

Returning officer Ossie Fikret speaks before the UGM last Thursday. Above: after the fall of the election motion
Photos: Zeeshan Malik



Students outraged at foetus display stall

>> Continued from front

pamphlets described, "Abortion - worse than the rape".

The Student's Union has previously set up a 'Right to Choose' fund, which provides financial assistance for who wish to terminate or continue with their pregnancies.

Akpan-inwang continued: "I actually got a text from a student who complained that there were pro-lifers on Houghton Street, who are espousing their filth... that they had dolls or foetuses which I thought was beyond ridiculous."

When asked whether a pro-life girl, seeking advice, would feel comfortable talking to him, Akpan-Inwang defended the stance he took at the UGM last Thursday, saying: "I stand by what I said."

Akpan-Inwang, accompanied by a group of students that included the Student Union's Women's officer Ruby Buckley, initiated a petition in an attempt to expel the group from Houghton Street.

A second-year Law student agreed with the Union official's action, saying: "[Created4Life's] imposition of views on students is outrageous."

"We don't impose our views", Thorne maintained. "We do not aim to induce guilt in anyone."



Education and Welfare officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang altercates with pro-lifer Alan Thorne last Monday
Photo: Chloe Crewe-Read



The Beaver

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come rain, shine, or snow

Out on Houghton Street
every Tuesday
and at thebeaveronline.co.uk

CHURCH

BUT NOT AS YOU KNOW IT.

SUNDAYS
11:45AM



VENUE:
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LONDON
SCHOOL OF
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EQUIPPERS
CHURCH 

IT'S LIKE THIS. HE SAYS JUMP, AND WE SAY, HOW HIGH? WHY? BECAUSE HE'S GOT A MASTER PLAN, AND WE FIGURE HE'S GOT A BETTER VIEW FROM WHERE HE'S SITTING. TAKES TRUST THOUGH, AND A WHOLE LOT OF FAITH, BUT IT'S WORTH IT. SO WE'RE WORSHIPPING WITH PASSION, VALUING THE ETERNAL, AND EXPECTING THE MIRACULOUS. HE'S BLESSED US AND WE WANNA PASS THAT ON. SO HERE'S TO YOU MRS ROBINSON, JESUS LOVES YOU MORE THAN YOU COULD KNOW...

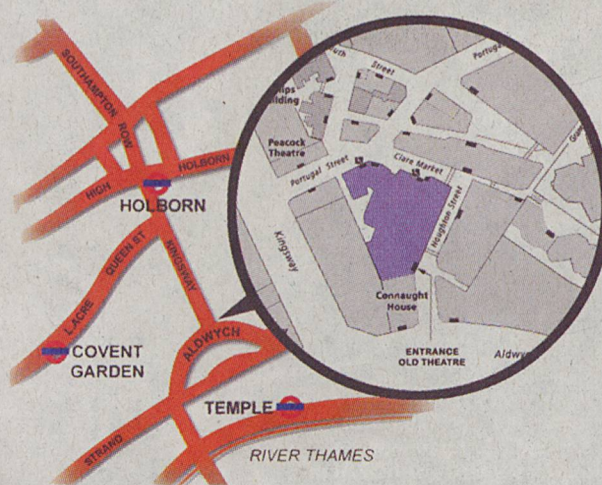
SUNDAY
11:45AM

VENUE

Old Theatre,
London School of Economics,
Houghton Street,
Holborn
WC2A 2AE

SENIOR MINISTERS
Mark & Monica Collard

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hello@equippers.co.uk



Don't fall for phishers' bait, student computer users warned

Beth Cherryman

A fraudulent e-mail has infiltrated the LSE network with the purpose of obtaining the usernames and passwords of LSE students and staff.

Student login details can be used to access personal computers and generate hundreds of thousands of spam e-mails, which could block legitimate LSE e-mail as well as being used to commit fraud and identity theft.

IT Services have responded with a blanket e-mail claiming it "is impossible to stop all phishing e-mails."

Ira Winkler, an IT security expert and author of 'Spies Among Us' says, "a well funded IT organisation should be able to filter out phishing e-mails."

Phishing is the practice of gaining personal information like passwords or bank details by impersonating a reliable source in an electronic communication.

The fraudulent e-mail got into the LSE system twice, first on Monday evening and



again on Tuesday morning.

The Beaver understands that of the 1.1 million e-mails sent and received by the LSE weekly, approximately 250,000 are blocked by "a specialist spam filter provider". However, LSE said that "this type of phishing e-mail goes 'under the radar' of the big spam-filtering companies, which is why they can get through."

Winkler asserts that spam filters should prevent phishing messages from

reaching their potential victims along with 'extrusion prevention' tools that look for sensitive information, like user IDs and passwords, leaving the organization.

Andromeda Edison, Chief Marketing Officer at Internet Defense Technologies, agrees that "a good spam filter would definitely be able to catch phishing attempts and stop them going through to e-mail in-boxes."

LSE IT Services advise students to ig-

nore and delete the phishing e-mail. IT services reminded students that they will never ask for their network password.

Winkler stresses that, "most importantly a large organisation should have a security awareness programme in place that educates their users about phishing attacks."

LSE say they "have been working to raise awareness of the issue of identity theft for some time". Blog postings and LSE-wide e-mails remind people not to give out their LSE network password.

A spokesperson said: "we have published information and advice on phishing scams as well as an archive of example scam e-mails that have been reported to LSE".

LSE deal with phishing attempts by blocking the original e-mail address to prevent replies being delivered. If anyone replies to the phishing e-mail before the block is in place, IT services can identify and assist them in taking the appropriate action.

If you are worried your account has been compromised, LSE advise you to "contact your IT support team" and "change your network password through the LSE For You 'change password' utility".

Course rep training reveals teaching issues

Marie Dunaway

Course representative training sessions have highlighted communication problems between staff and students.

Education and Welfare Officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang organised training sessions to help students who sit on the Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) fulfil their roles as student representatives.

There were many complaints and issues raised about access to tutors, lack of contact time and the need for better feedback for students. The role of Graduate Teaching Assistants and need for transparency was also called into question. Some departments were accused of an excessive 'find out for oneself' mentality.

Akpan-Inwang said that currently there wasn't a united student front in order to tackle these problems. Course Reps are a "vital link between students and departments and could make a real change" and he hoped that training and support from the Students Union could help this.

The training session was open to undergraduate, postgraduate and research students although many of those in attendance were Masters students. Some students at the meeting were unaware exactly how the union system worked and how and where to raise problems.

Akpan-Inwang said after the meeting that "it was important to touch-base with Course Reps" however further developments were "subject to the Your Union consultation". Currently their "role is not clear and varies very much in each department." It was important for Course Reps to understand how the Union works so they could best "represent the interests of the students they represent".

Currently Course Representatives are elected and organised via their departments. Through the Your Union Consultation process there are plans to make Course Representatives, as well as Hall Committees, part of the Union by electing them in a way that is similar to other school committees and giving them training and support.

There are large variances between departments, with some departments being more pro-active than others.

The Your Union plans aim to create a more efficient and standardised way of representing students at academic levels.

At present the voting system of student representatives differs considerably. Some departments have organised a system whereby students wishing to participate submit a mini manifesto and are put forward to an electoral email vote. Others are voted in during introductory lectures when students aren't aware of the full role and responsibilities or there is little interest in the cause.

One second-year undergraduate Management student said that the Management department took the SSLC and student views quite seriously. He stood for the position as he "wanted to help make improvements to the course." He said he found the training session useful and that the new suggestions were a good idea.

A student representative for the History department also agreed that the training had been useful and "Emmanuel was very approachable" for non-departmental guidance.

On the suggestion of the Student Unions involvement she agreed on bringing students together and the need for uniformity but felt the Union "could be a middleman that was unnecessary" as most problems were departmental issues.

Initial proposals from the Your Union consultation, which will look at new facilities to match students needs and the role of the Students Union, are set to come out early this month with eventual implementation from April onwards. Plans will be put to a referendum in Week 8 of Lent term.

Got a story?
The Beaver's news section would love to hear from you.
news@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Controversy stoked at 'liberal fascism' talk

Nathan Briant

Jonah Goldberg, the American journalist and current columnist in the LA Times and National Review Online, spoke to a full Hong Kong Theatre on Tuesday 27th January to publicise his controversial new book 'Liberal Fascism: the use and abuse of the F-word'.

In the "unprepared" yet dynamic lecture, chaired by Professor Paul Kelly, Goldberg talked of how he felt that 'fascism' as a political ideology has been misinterpreted by the west, particularly after the Second World War.

Goldberg attributed this misinterpretation to the definition of fascist coined by Joseph Stalin after 1928 and went on to declare how he believed that various progressive political measures taken around the world, such as The New Deal initiated



by the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration in the United States in 1933, possessed strands of fascist influence.

Speaking about the most infamous fascists, Goldberg said that Adolf Hitler was a "socialist...who would bulk at the free market" and that Benito Mussolini had been brought up on the left, fed "on the mother's milk of socialism".

He said that these "extremists" were housed on the left wing of politics.

Goldberg dismissed the idea that the German and Italian governments of the 1930s and 40s possessed right wing agen-

das, saying: "All extremism was essentially housed around the same points."

Goldberg also spoke on the economic downturn and the Obama presidency.

He was in support of the free market and further deregulation. "We live in a moment where, like the 1930s, liberal capitalism can be discredited," he said.

President Obama's preference for pragmatism did not meet Goldberg's favour.

As someone who believed strongly in his own chosen ideology, Goldberg said he found the idea that Obama does not feel the need to follow a defined ideology "of-

fensive".

Goldberg admitted that much of the fascistic references were to aid publicity. The cover design of his book features a yellow smiling face with a toothbrush moustache, most frequently seen worn by Adolf Hitler.

Goldberg spoke against an article which described "police coming round to check someone was using their Tupperware properly", indicating his feeling that government should respect individual freedom because even "an unwelcome hug can be unhelpful".

Students, academic debate grimness of north



Dr Tim Leunig defends urban regeneration critique before LSE northerners

Joseph Cotterill & Keiren Buchanan

LSE economic history department head Dr Tim Leunig defended his controversial findings on economic regeneration in the North of England during a heated but fruitful discussion with Northerners@LSE society members last week.

Leunig argued in a think tank report last year that urban regeneration projects in Liverpool, Bradford and Newcastle had failed to catch up with economic growth

in the country's south, and would never restore the ports and cities of the north to their industrial revolution heyday.

Councils in London, Oxford and Cambridge should be given more freedom to attract northern jobseekers southward, Leunig proposed.

Conservative party leader David Cameron branded the proposals "insane" and northern groups on Facebook made threats of violence against Leunig on publication of the report last August.

The report coincided with a tour by Cameron of northern cities.

Newspapers published Dr Leunig's LSE email address at the height of the furore.

Leunig emphasised at the Northerners@LSE event that he believed northerners should be encouraged rather than forced to seek jobs in the south, a distinction he said had been lost in last summer's

media storm.

Society members were eager to question the logistics and morality of Leunig's argument.

One student said that the flight of skilled workers to the south under the report's plan would worsen the northern economy even more.

Speaking after the meeting, Alice Kirk, who is from Lincolnshire, said she had found his comments on the fate of England's northern cities upsetting.

"The north might not be perfect but it's got a great sense of community," she said. "The people are much friendlier and more laid back. These are things money can't buy".

Other students welcomed Leunig's proposal. Zach Landes, an economic history student, praised Leunig for "telling it like it is."

"I don't understand the anger associated with the report. He's only suggesting that they can move, not that they have to," Robbie Maddison, a second-year economic history undergraduate, said.

Northerners@LSE committee members said the debate had been beneficial to both northerners and Dr Leunig. Society president Rachel Leighton said she was "pleasantly surprised by what a canny guy he was."

"Even though I couldn't argue with his evidence on poverty and income deprivation, I still think it's a privilege to come from the north and there are other ways to go about solving these issues," Leighton added.

Online Tim Leunig's original report
bit.ly/ydix

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Comment

Quality, not quantity: we're all in favour of life

Women's
week
special

Choice is essential for a woman, but some people just want to shut down the debate

Anna Krausova
LSEU Feminist Society Treasurer



Joe Sammut

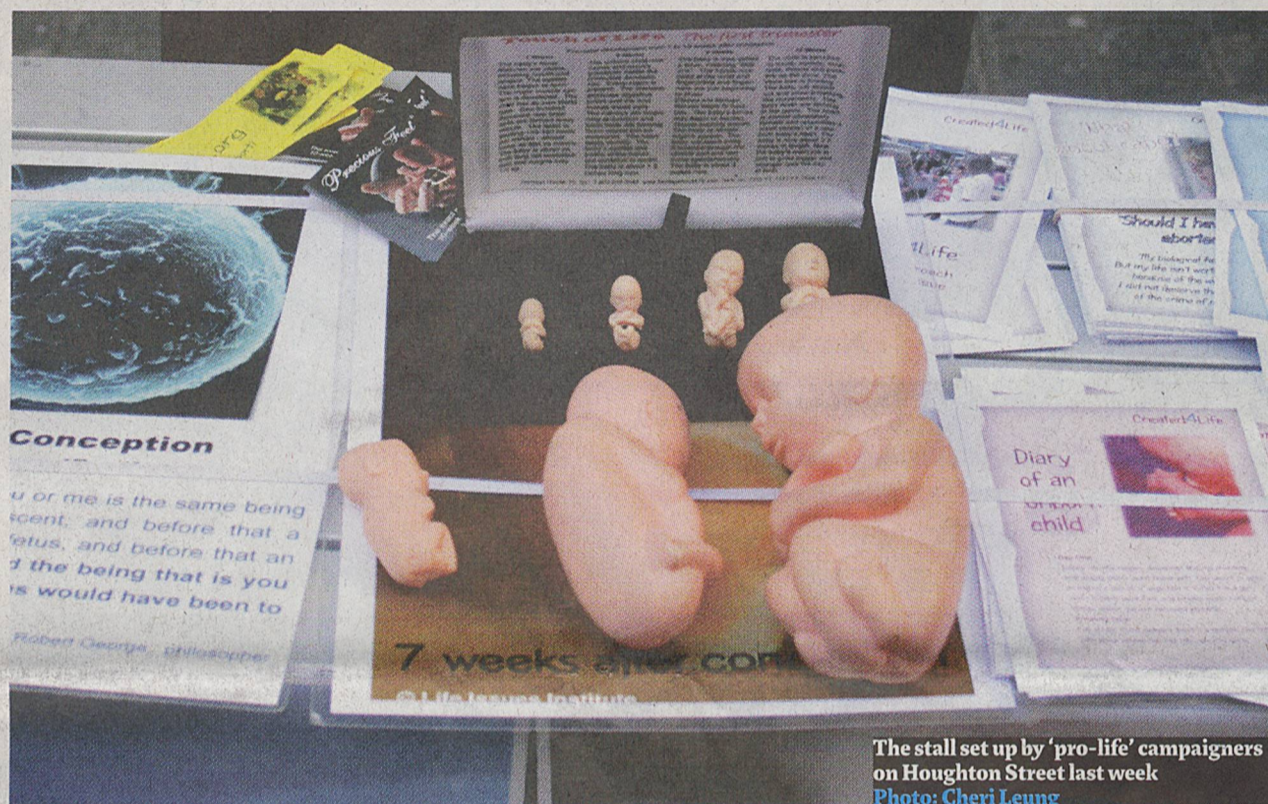


Isn't everyone pro-life? In our view, being pro-life means being in favour of humans living a decent life, as opposed to suffering and dying. Surely we are all in favour of a good and happy life? It seems not – the people who are most vocal in proclaiming their “pro-life” stance are, in actual fact, amongst those most against the idea of a good life in practice.

This week a group of the self-proclaimed ‘noble defenders’ of the cluster of cells that exist in the womb of a woman before the development of a baby came onto campus, on behalf of the organisation ‘Created 4 Life’. These ‘campaigners’, in the words of Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang, the Students’ Union Education and Welfare Officer, “drew a parallel between abortions and the Holocaust, said that an abortion was worse than rape, and therefore that the doctors that perform them are worse than rapists”.

According to the organisation’s website, their “motive is compassion and our attitude non-judgmental.” Now, we don’t mean to stifle debate about the pros and cons of abortion, but calling women and girls that have an abortion ‘murderers’ seems pretty judgmental to us.

Choosing to have an abortion is a difficult decision for a woman to make, and it shouldn’t be presumed that those who chose to do so make the decision lightly. After all the negative physical and psychological effects of an abortion, the last thing someone recovering from such an experience needs is being called a Nazi. Yet the problem with the anti-abortion campaign is not just their offensive language, it’s their attempt to kill debate before it even starts. I see nothing wrong with campaigns that draw attention to the risks of abortion. Although these are low, seeing as in 2004 only 381 out of more



The stall set up by ‘pro-life’ campaigners on Houghton Street last week
Photo: Cheri Leung

than 170,000 women who chose termination in England and Wales experienced any complications, a rational debate about the issue is important. However, we do find offensive an attack on a person’s freedom of choice based on someone else’s fundamentalist ideas.

The damage such open attacks on abortion can do is immense. The obsession with life at any cost is damaging to the progress that the women’s movement has made in the recent decades. There shouldn’t be pressure on young women to start a family just because of one mistake or accident. Of course, there are women who choose to have a family at a young age, and there is nothing wrong with that. However, women aren’t simply baby-making machines: they are human beings with dreams and ambitions and these should not be trampled on just because of other people’s extremist views.

There is also the question of quality over quantity. Would it not be better for a young teenage mother who doesn’t feel ready to raise a child to have an abortion and wait a little longer before starting a family? Having children is not just about

the crude process of giving birth, it is about the time and love the parents are able to give. An independent woman who has made a rational decision to have children can actually enjoy being a mother and give her child the best she can. Following the argument of the anti-abortion lobby, are women who never decide to have children also murderers, because potentially they could have happy and successful children? What about the women and men who use contraception?

The crucial word here is choice, and this reveals with clarity the position of the actual pro-lifers in the literal sense. Many women and men are opposed to abortion on religious, ideological or philosophical grounds, and their views must be respected as long as they don’t try to interfere in other people’s choice-making. People who are indeed in favour of a good life are those in favour of a woman’s right to choose what is best for her and what will make her life most enjoyable. This is an empowering belief counterposed to the urge to decide the “morally correct” path

of other people’s lives.

This is also linked to the issue of women being seen today as the only ones responsible for raising a family. Just as women can be mothers, men are also often fathers. The decision of a man to sideline a family life due to education or work commitments is seen as normal – yet their female counterparts who make such a decision are blamed for not fulfilling their ‘role’ as women. The anti-abortion campaign is a part of a wider issue of women still being seen as the ones solely responsible for bringing up children, and an attack on such conservative and traditionalist views can only help advance the struggle for the equality of women and men.

There has always been and will always be a need for abortions in human society. While debate on abortion is necessary, those who seek to ban it for everyone are not looking for debate. They are seeking the imposition of their own extremist views on the rest of the population. They intend to deny the freedom of opinion and the freedom to choose to others. If the anti-abortion extremists are not fought

then they could potentially reverse some of the major gains won by women in the last century.

Yet the current system still has a way to go to be called a real pro-life and pro-choice system. Currently there is a postcode lottery on the cost of an abortion. In some regions the local health authority will pay for an abortion in 90 per cent of the cases compared to areas where 40 per cent of desired abortions are denied or have to be paid for privately. This depends largely on the personal decisions of the two doctors whose consent is needed to carry out an abortion. It is thus not a value free system as a woman is only allowed to have an abortion after the moral judgement of two doctors. Thus, there are still changes to society’s attitude to abortion that need to be addressed, and that is precisely why the mistakenly-called ‘pro-life’ arguments need to be attacked vigorously before they can backtrack on what has already been achieved in women’s emancipation.

The anti-abortion views should be opposed even when they are presented as ‘moderate’. The apparently moderate argument is that if abortion is not to be banned, it should at least not be paid for by the state. The current rate in private clinics is between £300 and £500, which would price out a substantial amount of women from being able to exercise their right to choose. Working class and disadvantaged women would be forced into less legal and more dangerous places to have a termination. Additionally, there could be a resurgence of the kind of superstitious thought that has thankfully largely been discredited due to fifty years of the NHS. A tragicomic moment in Brecht’s *Threepenny Novel*, set in Boer War era London, outlines advice that an onion may help in the search for a termination. While this may be slightly comic, it reveals the undeniable fact that in extreme desperation the most implausible solutions seem to become more rational.

The legalisation of abortion was a huge leap for the women’s movement and it is crucial that we don’t allow it to be backtracked on, not only in legal terms, but also in terms of what we allow as an acceptable argument to make. Just like with any issue that concerns our society, debate about both the benefits and the dangers of abortion is important. However, people who strive to close the discussion before it even starts should not be allowed into the room.

Ending the gag rule

US aid can once again go to organisations that deal with abortion - which will help millions

Helen Roberts



Abortion has never really been politicised in the United Kingdom. It was legalised by a private members bill, with no whip, as a result of the thousands of women having abortions every year regardless of the law. It wasn’t made into a left versus right, or a pro-life versus pro-choice issue; abortion was made legal because women were having abortions already and it was

important to make sure that they received the care, counselling and support they needed.

In the United States, however, views on abortion can change the outcome of a presidential race. Heated discussions on this topic are common and impassioned, and voting population care deeply about the issue. Abortion was legalised in the States in 1973 with the case *Roe v. Wade* which held that a woman may abort her pregnancy up until the point at which the fetus could survive outside the womb. However, for the past eight years of the Bush administration, the emphasis across the States has been pro-life. In 2001, on his first day of office, Bush introduced a

‘global gag rule’ on abortion. This rule prohibited funding for groups that raise awareness and provide information about abortion, and also groups that lobby to legalise abortion. Additionally, it banned US aid from going to international family planning groups that provided counselling about abortions or performed abortions. Health providers were effectively ‘gagged’ from mentioning the word abortion if they wanted to receive funds from the government. This not only does nothing for freedom of speech, but prevents women from being offered the full range of family planning services, advice and care that they need when making a decision on abortion.

A woman has the right to be in charge of her body and make decisions on whether she wants to terminate a pregnancy or not. For the American government that professes to believe in freedom, individual rights, and equal rights for women, it is hypocritical that they would attempt to remove this decision from a woman’s hands by making information, advice and counselling so difficult to come by.

Despite the worry of some that Barack Obama’s promise for change had raised expectations too high, he showed his commitment to his promise of reform on his second day in office with the removal of the global gag rule on abortion. Firstly, bravo! Finally, someone with common sense running the super power that is the United States! Welcome to free speech and rights for women to control their own bodies. In the *Washington Post* on 24 January, Gill Greer of the International Planned Parenthood Federation in London declared, “For eight long years, the global gag rule has been used by the Bush administration to play politics with the lives of poor women across the world.”

There has been a mixed response in the States. Jim DeMint, a Senator who voted in favour of keeping the ‘gag rule’, argued that Obama campaigned for president with the stance that he would try to help reduce abortions, whereas this amendment would, surely, increase them. However, many Democrats argue that the global gag rule was counter-intuitive because by reducing access to condoms and

other forms of contraception, the number of abortions in low-income countries increased. Regardless, it appears that times are changing for the States.

A few nights ago, I was sitting in a bar with a group of friends and somehow the topic of abortion cropped up. I ended up debating with an acquaintance of mine who informed me that, in her opinion, women who were ‘irresponsible enough’ to get pregnant should keep the baby. Women who are raped, are, according to my acquaintance, ‘unlucky’, but should not be allowed to have an abortion, and should instead give the baby up for adoption. My acquaintance also argued that abortion is ‘now used as a form of contraception’. I can imagine that a lot of you, like me, would be shocked by this. In today’s world, how can people think that a woman should be denied the right of choice when it comes to her own body; especially after the ordeal of rape? America, by repealing the ‘gag rule’, has finally come round to working against this view. For the sake of women’s freedom of choice, let’s keep moving in this direction.



The Beaver

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To parse a jackboot

It is exceedingly curious that Conservative Future leader Michael Rock placed political history and theory over present urgency and expedience. In declining to participate in a cross-party initiative to combat racist politics espoused by the British National Party, he has chosen to preserve his standing on the perceived intellectual high-ground. Practical and urgent political compromise, in the form of encouraging students to vote in the European parliamentary elections to keep out the BNP, is much too low of a road for him it seems.

His objections to the initiative? It labels the BNP as a far-right party when it ought to be rightly placed (or so he claims) with the political left.

Rock speaks on the subject, which delves deeply into modern history Western political philosophy, with such authority that the uninitiated might suspect

that his arguments are in fact the accepted academic wisdom. But this does not appear to be case. He appears to subscribe to the arguments of political columnist Jonah Goldberg, perhaps the most famous proponent of these views in the book *Liberal Fascism*. Quite by coincidence Mr Goldberg expounded his views in a public lecture at LSE last week. Whether or not Goldberg's views hold up to scrutiny, it is known that many esteemed political commentators have critiqued and criticised them for alleged fallacies and misconceptions.

It is safe to say there is no general consensus over this intellectual controversy – but politicians ought to be used to that. And conflict over political philosophy has not stopped politicians from across the spectrum to unite against common foes. So why now?

If theory mattered this much to Rock, then perhaps he might be moved to educate his prospective voters (even constitu-

ents) on the political history and philosophy of the Conservative party before allowing them anywhere near the ballot box. Surely for him, informed voter loyalty is better than misguided allegiance?

But more likely than not, Rock would be compelled to campaign for his party with pragmatic prudence and measured tact. If politics is about getting and using power, then surely expedience and practical need trumps high-brow intellectual conceit.

One might hope that Rock realises that such (perceived or real) intellectual elitism was partly responsible for turning people away from mainstream politics in the first place.

The leaking of the infamous BNP membership list in November presented everyone with a useful glimpse into the social constitution of one of the vilest political parties in Britain today. Most appeared to be normal everymen, with regular jobs and lives from across the country.

It seems rather unlikely that members sign up to Nick Griffin's leadership because he presented to them an inspiring and authentic political programme with precisely defined theoretical groundings.

Many just appear to be closeted bigots, and it is against these bigots, not ideologues of the extreme right or the extreme left, that all decent politics should be directed.

To be blunt, Rock's careful distinction between right and left, understandable enough for a politician of a party in the past too casually smeared as fascist itself in Britain's rowdy political arena, will not help us understand where the BNP's slime has come from and why its poison has crept into the ears of not a few Britons. It is just a speed bump on the road to the fight against fascism.

Ironically enough, the modern Conservative party has been one of the toughest and most determined fighters against the encroachment of fascism in

this country in the twenty-first century. But incidents like this should make students wonder whether the Conservatives really are fit for government if they can seriously parse the meaning of the jackboot.

At a time of massive economic crisis, threats from abroad and social dislocation, there is neither the time nor the patience for delicate division of who stands on which side of the political spectrum. And it should be irrelevant to stopping fascists get their chance at power.

Whether or not their political lineage was the product of left-wing liberalism, it hardly matters. Even the most level-headed and politically-disinterested attempts to convince them that they are in fact "far-left", as opposed to the familiar epithet of "far-right", will not bring them any closer to the fold of tolerance and mutual understanding that the governance of our society ought to be based upon.

Our everyday language is inherently sexist



Grammar and convention in English language and culture use the subordination of women

Chris Westgarth



When a friend corrected my use of Miss before her name stating that it was in fact Ms, I was slightly taken aback. "Doesn't that mean you're divorced?" I clumsily responded, before being corrected that the social title Ms is used by women who do not wish to be defined by their marital status – in the same way that 'Mr' doesn't for men. Immediately a light turned on in the far reaches of my mind – something I had never considered as an issue of sexual inequality had been rectified. It felt strange that something so basic could be so basically unfair.

Coming from the deep reaches of the Yorkshire Dales, equality for women is hardly top of the discussion agenda when you're counting sheep, and as such it's not wholly surprising that I've missed out on some of the more obvious sexist archaisms that still exist. Inevitably though, I began to question what else I was taking for granted in my sheltered country life. The list seems endless. The English language is littered with grammar that subordinates women, perhaps the most obvious examples being that the word 'man' forms the suffix for the word 'woman', or that when referring to a generic person we generally use the pronoun 'he'. Clearly, sexism in the English language prevails. Then I began to question something that falls even closer to my own identity than social title: my surname, and consequently the history of my family.

My own surname, incidentally, is Nordic, and I am told that it means 'field in the west'. That leads on to the history of surnames, for it is only in the West and particularly northern countries that the father's name takes precedence. When surnames were first used, they served a purpose long forgotten. They would denote a profession (Clark), who a person was related to (Jackson), or where that person was from (Hill). Today, surnames do none of these things; instead they give us a shared identity, a common line of



Traditionally, women have to take a man's name when they get married
Photo: flickr user hoyasmeg

descent that nearly universally finds itself on the male side of the tree. As a word that you use every day it unsurprisingly becomes a very important part of most people's identity. "Smith's of the world unite" hails one facebook group, and it's almost a rite of passage to suffer a mid-life crisis of identity and find your roots.

When I was ten I trailed around libraries in the Northeast as my dad tried to uncover the Westgarth history in the wake of my grandmother's death. I was, for the most part, uninterested. I found it bizarre that someone I'd never met or ever would meet could have any bearing upon my own life. My dad managed, through a great deal of investigation, to trace our family line as far back as Lancelot Westgarth of sixteenth century northern England. Quite an achievement, but one that leads me to question why at every step the female side of my family was discarded as less important.

The reason is that, in taking her husband's name, a woman gives up her heritage. Across the world, the emphasis of heritage lies in male predecessors. Barack Obama's autobiographical book "Dreams from my father" also highlights the importance that we associate to our

family name's line, as he too searches for his father's family's roots. Most children will be aware of their grandparents on both sides of the family, but beyond this the female roots of the family are often shrouded in distant census reports and cobwebbed libraries. I'd be wrong to imply that my family didn't investigate my mum's ancestry, but the battle to discover maiden name after maiden name proved too great, and again it was her father's name that formed most of the family tree.

We can introduce legislation for universal suffrage or try and ensure equal rights in the work place, but the most difficult step that women have to conquer is convention. It has taken centuries to even begin to reverse the expectation that women should be looking after children in the home, but in the English language the change has been even less evident. Despite all my meanderings of thought I can't actually begin to claim a solution. Forcing language change is nigh impossible, as France has found in trying to remove the Englishisms like 'le weekend' that have crept into French over the last few years. More often than not, language change is subtle and happens over decades without anyone really noticing or making a con-

The most difficult step that women have to conquer is convention

scious effort.

Similarly, what can we do about surnames? Once solution used is double-barrelled names, but ultimately we'd all end up sounding like the bastardised inbreeds of Royal Ascot. It seems then that the only way to avoid this endless catch-22 is for a man to be prepared to give up his surname every once in a while. When I think about giving up my own surname I find myself strangely uncomfortable, as though abandoning this part of my identity is somehow unimaginable. Why is it then that society continues to put this burden of loss at the door of the prospective wife? In a world where we strive for equality, conventions like the neglect of women's surnames need to be addressed, and men have to be prepared to help promote this change. It's not acceptable that we continue to expect a woman to fall into line leaving only the most daring to challenge a tradition that lost its purpose during the medieval ages. Perhaps I'm being pedantic and missing the bigger issues, but I can't help but feel that when something as powerful and subconscious as the words we use continues to imply subordination, then wider change will never materialise.

'Mr LSE' mocks our achievements

We are not 'post-feminism': the gains we have made are at risk of being lost

Jessie Robinson



Does the Mr LSE contest to be held this week confirm that we've gone beyond feminism? Have we passed the age of tiptoeing around gender? Are we ready for ironic male beauty pageants? I would argue not.

Doubtless the women's movement has come a long way since the 1920s, and many mountains have been climbed. However, these achievements do not mean we can breathe a sigh of relief and prance around in our underwear mocking the feminist struggle. The values of feminism have not faded. They have,

however, been persistently misinterpreted and misrepresented.

To be a feminist doesn't require you to be a bra-burning, ugly, aggressive female with facial hair. On the contrary, the values of feminism are ones which I would argue verge on the innate or universal. If you believe that all people are entitled to equal pay, equal access to education and health care, the right to live a life free from violence and oppressive relationships, then you are a feminist. The negative connotations that have been attributed to feminism are quite simply myths: a feminist is someone who respects all people equally regardless of gender, and I would say that most of the people I have met at the LSE can indeed fit neatly into this category.

If this is the case, if most people do share these values, why does such discomfort surround the idea of proclaiming yourself to be a feminist? And why do we feel the need to constantly challenge the concept, with competitions such as Mr

LSE, jibes at our women's officer, and on-cue sniggers if you show any allegiance to a feminist cause?

I agree that those of us who have in recent years gone by the label of feminists have often made the mistake of alienating others who don't seem to immediately support the cause. By positioning ourselves as a radical and distinct group we don't do ourselves any favours. I think it's time for us to agree that feminism isn't something to be snorted at, and that it's not in itself extremist or particularly controversial. Feminism amounts to more than just another 'look at me' facebook status; it's a stand for equality.

The Mr LSE competition serves to do nothing but mock. It seems to say, 'check us out, we're men who don't mind being objectified, what was all the fuss about girls?'

Unfortunately, the fuss was about a far broader spectrum of injustice. Just 11 per cent of directors of the UK's top 100 companies are women. One in five single

To be a feminist doesn't require you to be a bra-burning, ugly, aggressive female with facial hair

women pensioners risk being in poverty in retirement. It's statistically improbable that you'll serve a prison sentence for rape until you have committed thirty-seven rapes. For every sixteen points' rise in IQ a man is 40 per cent more likely to find a desirable partner, but for every sixteen points' rise in a woman's IQ, she is 40 per cent less likely to find a desirable partner.

If you find these facts unacceptable, then you are a feminist – like it or not. It can become easy (especially if you're a woman at university) to think the battle is won – our great grandmothers won the vote almost a century ago. But as these statistics show, inequality still exists. Just as the election of a black president does not mean we are 'post race equality', the achievements of the women's movement do not mean we should drop our guard on gender. Equality is not a fixed point, and feminism is not a fad. It is a continuous struggle to assert and sustain the essential truth that human beings are equal regardless of race or gender.



Female pensioners are at greater risk of living in poverty
Photo: flickr user hoveringdog

Email: editor@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Fax: 0207 852 3733

Letters must be received by midnight on the Sunday prior to publication. They must state your full name and be no longer than 250 words. Letters may be edited.

Letters to the editor

Sheikh theatre is just self-promotion

Dear Sir,

As a former student at LSE in the late 60s and early 70s, I was browsing today through the upcoming events at LSE and see that on Thursday 5th February there is a public lecture in the Sheikh Zayed lecture theatre entitled 'Celebrities and Aid: new humanitarians or just another fad' with the aim of debating whether, when celebrities become involved in fundraising, 'Are they genuinely committed to the causes they espouse or have causes become another path to self-promotion?'

I couldn't help but see the irony in this situation, namely that in accepting millions of pounds and naming a lecture theatre in the name of a known supporter of Holocaust denial and Zionist conspiracy theories, promoter of virulent anti-Semitism, and alleged abuser of freedom of speech in his own country, LSE has helped another 'celebrity' along this path to self-promotion and to achieving some kind of respectability.

It makes Bob Geldof and Bono look rather harmless in comparison, doesn't it? At least the worst that they might be trying to do is revive a fading career in the music industry and sell a few more records while making themselves and others feel a bit happier!

I fear for the integrity of LSE where financial considerations appear to have finally taken precedence over academic debate, freedom of expression and human rights. At LSE in 1968 we were taught that academic freedom should never be subject to economic pressure and that human rights should be respected above everything. How times change.

Yours Sincerely

Helen Mordsley
BA 1970 and MSc 1973

Like rain on your wedding day

Dear Sir,

How very ironic of Khadijah Asaria and Aliabbas Virani to us the Beaver's 'Comment' section to voice their opinion that they "do not read the Beaver to discover the opinion of the Executive Editor" ("The Beaver's Biased Reporting").

Yours,

Kevin Heutschi
MSc '09



Photo: Chun Han Wong

Remembering the Holocaust

We must continue to learn if we want to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past

Beatrice Da-Col



United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/7, adopted 1 November 2005, designated 27 January the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The Resolution urged Member States "to develop educational programmes to instill the memory of the Holocaust tragedy in future generations and to prevent genocide from occurring again". The resolution was adopted by consensus and condemns "without reserve" all manifestations of religious intolerance, incitement, harassment or violence against persons or communities based on ethnic origin or religious belief, whenever they occur.

Since then, on 27 January – the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-

Birkenau death camp – crowds gather at a number of events around the world to listen to speeches, pray, light candles, and mark the day in silent contemplation, in memory of those killed during the Nazi massacre of World War Two. Survivors – this fragile treasure the world possesses – are asked to recall and share, once again, their horrifying experiences, in the awareness that no words can describe justly, no image depict clearly, and no song produce the right harmony. But as Primo Levi said, if "understanding is impossible, knowing is imperative".

Shows are put on stage to give life to those musical operas composed in concentration camps by Jewish victims of the Shoah, Catholic Poles, Italian soldiers and officers. Exhibitions are installed for those art works created in the stalags. Small and fascinating incidents – those you cannot find in textbooks – are recalled and narrated by men and women who have lived them, seen them, heard of them. And they add one more detail, a person, a town, a day, to our own picture of the events of the

1940s.

This year's Memorial Day, two details have been added to my picture. The first I learn from the name of a play, "Paragraph 175", a friend of mine went to see in the local theatre in Italy. As we know, during Hitler's Nazi dictatorship, homosexuals, branded with a pink triangle, were considered minorities and were therefore imprisoned and ill-treated. What I didn't know was that the German penal code, which blamed them guilty of the so-called "Paragraph 175" crime, remained active until 10 March 1994. The second detail I learned was from the news of the inauguration of a memorial museum in Nardo', a Baroque coastal town in the heel of Italy. Between 1943 and 1947 more than a hundred and fifty thousand Jewish refugees headed for Palestine passed through the beautiful region; while Britain was trying to limit and slow down the influx of survivors in its Mandate territory, many buildings of the region became places of refuge. The local population narrates that, after initial moments of difficulty, they

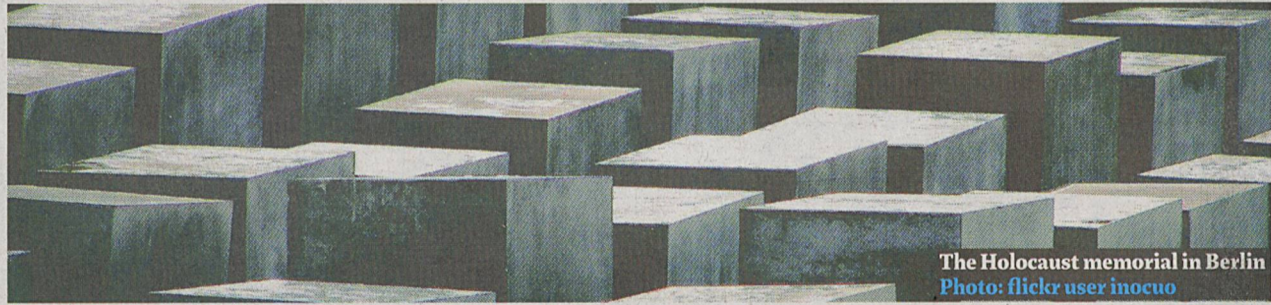
managed to create solid and still existing ties with the future Israeli citizens.

Unfortunately, every year the day is also accompanied by tensions, disputes, bitterness and misunderstandings. In Germany, attention has been drawn on the boycott by the German Jewish Community Council of the official state ceremony held at the Bundestag, Germany's Parliament, marking International Holocaust Memorial Day. Such unprecedented protest was called because the Speaker of the Bundestag, the host of the memorial service, refrained from acknowledging the presence of the leaders of the Jewish community in Germany in the chamber, even though they are all Holocaust survivors. Internationally, attention is also still drawn on the Pope's decision to undo the excommunication of four traditionalist clerics – among whom Bishop Richard Williamson, an unrepentant Holocaust denier. Tensions between the Jewish world and the Catholic Church are still palpable. If anything, one must say that the timing of the Pope's decision – in such proxim-

ity to the Holocaust Memorial Day – is an unfortunate, not to say inappropriate coincidence, particularly when one knows that the United Nations General Assembly on 22 March 2007 adopted a further resolution, 61/255, which condemns "any denial of the Holocaust as a historical event, either in full or in part, and urges all Member States unreservedly to reject any denial of the Holocaust".

The Holocaust was a turning point in history, which prompted the world to say "never again". The significance of resolution A/RES/60/7 is that it calls for a remembrance of past crimes with an eye towards preventing them in the future.

As UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said recently, "New initiatives in Holocaust remembrance and education have given us an authentic basis for hope. But we can and must do more if we are to make that hope a reality. We must continue to teach our children the lessons of history's darkest chapter. That will help them do a better job than their elders in building a world of peaceful coexistence."

The Holocaust memorial in Berlin
Photo: flickr user inocuo

Features

Industrious social animals

Seven hundred issues in, Beaver editor Joseph Cotterill looks over the paper's past - and what it tells us about LSE's history

The all-night rave in the Old Building had been long awaited. Camp beds and inflatable life rafts would be installed in the Shaw library for revellers unable to last through the night. "Psychedelic freak-out events" were to be held in the library earlier in the evening, following a revue in the Old Theatre "sometime during the night."

Proceeds from the night would go to groups campaigning against apartheid in South Africa, as well as to the widow of an LSE porter. For this was Friday, 9 March 1967, and the Beaver's report came two months after an occupation in the Old Theatre had blown up tensions on campus and led to the porter suffering a fatal heart attack when protesters clashed with School officials.

Readers may conclude that nothing much changes on this campus. Apart, that is, from all-night raves in the Old Building.

The newspaper you are holding was less than twenty years old in 1967. It will reach its sixtieth birthday in May this year. In the intervening time, the Beaver has become an indelible part of LSE and the lives of its students, hundreds of whom write for the paper each academic year.

But I would not exactly call the first edition of the Beaver in May 1949 a good omen for the future - all four pages of it, a far cry from the gargantuan forty-page tabloid of the last few years, or the present twenty-four page Berliner/sixteen-page half-Berliner hybrid, designed to meet the diverse and voracious needs of LSE students.

The Beaver's first front page was devoted, of all things, to a somnolent report on a National Union of Students conference in Bangor. I doubt I would commission it today, in preference for a hardboiled investigation of the School's finances or the latest society scandal. Nor would I have had much truck with the 1949 Beaver's wholly female phalanx of typists, a blast from another, less equal past.

But I think I would have been at home as editor with the early Beaver's predilection for "international editions" and news and views on the world outside LSE. Students then as now came to study from all over the world, and they were just as pretentious in believing they could set the world to rights as they are today. The United Nations and Free Europe societies seem to have been the big power players in the Students' Union back in this distant past.

Ah yes, Free Europe: the Cold War. Early Beaver editors appear to have been obsessed with it. And for a newspaper traditionally seen as left-wing, the editors really seem not to have liked communism one bit. The Beaver's second-ever front page outed the International Union of Students as a communist front organisation and the "antithesis of democratic ideals." The Beaver was still on the attack against IUS in 1955.

In 1956, the Beaver featured dispatches from Polish and Hungarian correspondents as the Soviet empire rose in revolt. Red Army troops would soon roll back into Hungary to restore control. Dictatorial rule in Poland carried on for decades afterwards, contrary to the pro-Western hopes of the Polish writer. It is hard to imagine now what it must have been like to have lived through and experienced one of the darkest crises of the Cold War, but



Nothing changes Eerie affinities between LSE news then and now

- 1. Misogyny**
1955: Marion Puddick, 'Miss Fresher' candidate and "the Beaver's Maid Marion," is given a front page splash.
2008: The annual 'Miss LSE' contest is picketed by feminist protesters and becomes a national news story, provoking much campus debate.
- 2. Robbery**
1955: Explosives expert and ex-LSE economics student Ronald Littlewood is caught redhanded in a bank raid.
2008: Student William Mears is sentenced after raiding convenience stores near his hometown of Exeter.
- 3. Teaching quality**
1955: School vice-president Roy Gardiner lambasts Beaver journalism standards after criticism of the LSE tutorial and examination system. Blame the disruption of evacuation in World War Two, he says.
2008: Rumbles of discontent with LSE's use of graduate teaching assistants and disengagement with lectures provokes reform. Beaver reporting generally praised by School officials.
- 4. The Three Tuns**
1955: The Three Tuns Club offers comfort, popular drinks and London's lowest prices to LSE students.
2008: OK, not much affinity there then.



November 1968: possibly the Beaver's most artistic - and anarchistic - period

there it is in our student newspaper, as fresh as if it had appeared in last week's issue.

Some of the Beaver's international coverage is downright eerie in its relevance to the present. The same 1956 "Special Crisis Issue" also covered crisis in the Middle East, as the war in Suez between Egyptian and British, French and Israeli forces raged on through the Soviet invasion of Hungary.

Egyptian student M E E Al-Khadoury said that the war would strengthen Nasser, Egypt's nationalist leader, rather than toppling him, and that the invaders would face determined resistance from an antiwestern people. Britain's moral prestige had been damaged by starting this war, he added.

An Israeli student rejoindered in a piece opposite that his country had been forced to act by clandestine fedayeen attacks over a period of months. Nasser could have avoided the war if he had negotiated in good faith with David Ben-Gurion's government, the student said.

Both pieces bear uncomfortable echoes of the recent conflict in Gaza and the justifications surrounding it.

So engrossing is the international engagement of these Beavers that the ordinary business of student politics and School bureaucracy, which no doubt filled most of the Beaver's news pages then as they do now, look a bit bemusing from a distance.

Take, for example, the 1967 occupation by Socialist society members of an "elitist" School sherry party. Society members had attacked Students' Union officials for accepting invitations from the Director in a stormy Union General Meeting. Water pistols were fired. The Beaver's editorial line does not seem to have approved of the doings of "Soc-soc" at this time.

Some of the domestic coverage catches the eye. The great Passfield rent strike of 1975 presages the trouble that Grosvenor House residents had with rental contracts earlier this academic year. Strike action was narrowly averted.

"Houghton Street - excitement mounts," the front page screamed in 1974, reporting that an end to vehicular traffic down LSE's main thoroughfare was "in sight." Yes, that's right - cars used to drive past the Three Tuns. And they did so until relatively recently in the School's history: the Beaver's prediction was way off.

Elsewhere in time, a 1977 edition throws impartiality and sobriety to the wind and splashes "FEES STRIKE!" across its front page. "The struggle against the fee increases continues," it said, decades before the advent of top-up fees. The struggle goes on.

But then we enter the Eighties and Nineties, which to me are the dark ages of the Beaver, where the same news happened, to the same people, using the same old political rhetoric, ad infinitum. And with principles of newspaper design that time forgot.

The paper's old political bravery returns at some points, with front-page coverage of the 1977 Battle of Lewisham, a legendary left-wing protest against a National Front march, and in 1984 news of anti-National Front pickets inside lecture theatres.

Sadly, from that point on it is wall-to-wall reporting of public lectures by Michael Heseltine and constant Conservative-Labour warfare at the Union General Meeting. At least the UGM meant something back then.

So we shall pass over to the Noughties and the paper today. Well, you know about how the Beaver is doing today. I think I can speak for the Beaver's whole (massive, diverse, fearless) present editorial board, and its Students' Union publishers, in saying that the state of the Beaver on reaching its seven hundredth issue is pretty good. We have recently rebooted the paper's website and have grabbed hold of the coattails of the social media revolution. Our Twitter account is going live this week. We'll probably lay off the anticommunism, mind.



Out of sight, but keep in mind

Sonya Pillay offers some explanations as to why some conflicts stay low on the media agenda

The crisis in Gaza has taken centre stage in news headlines for the past month, but with the spotlight focused on the potential for peace in the Middle East we are neglecting similar struggles going on in Sudan, Sri Lanka, Burma and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), to name a few. The phenomenon of 'forgotten wars' call into question inevitable media bias, but also reflects a disheartening political myopia and the terribly short attention span of our public consciousness. Only when the dust settles from the latest high-profile rocket bombing, will the ensuing silence perhaps give us an opportunity to hear the gunfire from the other parts of the world mired in perpetual conflict.

At one point or other, these conflicts dominated headlines too. In 2004, Sudan's systematic discrimination against its black African citizens in the Darfur region, amounting to persecution, apartheid and genocide, captured widespread international attention. The war in Darfur has been called "the world's greatest humanitarian crisis." To date, at least 5 million Darfuri have been displaced and are still under attack by the government-backed Janjaweed militia. However by 2006, after repeated condemnations and half-hearted attempts by the international community to discourage China from supplying weapons to Sudan in exchange for oil supplies, media interest waned. Nothing 'new' or 'exciting' seemed to be happening on this front.

International attention then swung

to Burma's military junta, the compelling hunger strikes of saffron-robed monks and the ill treatment of political dissidents. The international community rallied against this Southeast Asian dictatorship. In the first half of 2008 one could not escape the iconic and highly-publicised image of pro-democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi or her oft-repeated quote, "Please use your liberty to promote ours". It took months before United Nations Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari was allowed to meet with her and attempt to negotiate national political reconciliation with the junta. But of course no conclusion was reached, the conflict bubbled on and this will be the twentieth year of house arrest for Aung San Suu Kyi.

It is perhaps the hopelessness of so many conflicts that relegate them to the category of 'Forgotten Wars'. We abhor the ritualistic rape of Sudanese women, the child soldiers and sexual slaves recruited in the lengthy civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. But after years and years of press reports, it seems like there is nothing to be done. These are not just 'forgotten' wars, these are 'hopeless' wars. The problem of asymmetric empathy overlaps with public apathy or disenchantment. As the body count rises and diplomatic talks are resounding in their lack of progress, our political attention span is overstretched and public weariness sets in. We resign ourselves to Conrad's portrayal in the Heart of Darkness.

In this light, the longevity of our

sustained interest in the Middle Eastern conflict is astounding. The media has not seemed to tire of this part of the world. What makes the action-reaction spiral between Israel and Palestine so fascinating that each chapter commands priority space, right up till the round-the-clock reporting during the recent December offensive in Gaza? What makes one region or issue so much more riveting than others, that we virtually ignore and forget other bloody conflicts?

This asymmetric empathy is at once intriguing and worrying. Certainly it is symptomatic of the short or overstretched attention span of the liberal West. Many of these 'forgotten wars' are slow-moving, invisible or inaccessible in the international media. By contrast, urgent and dramatic threats make front page news. This is partially down to the "CNN effect." It is undeniably in the interest of the media to ferret out and sensationalise events. This results in headlines that focus on conflicts that 'top' the list and a deliberate shelving of less dramatic or less viable issues. For example American involvement and its huge Jewish lobby are good reasons to capitalise on the Middle Eastern issue. Unfortunately this political myopia is at the expense of more holistic journalism and news consumers are deprived of constant updates of conflicts that are deemed geopolitically obscure.

Besides, if it is purely drama that they want, there is much of it to be found in many of the forgotten wars. Just a fortnight ago, an article by Lasantha Wickrematunge, chief editor of the

Sunday Leader, the first independent newspaper established in Sri Lanka, was published three days after he was shot in the head. This 'voice from the grave' continues his inspirational fight and even hints at the identity of his murderer. It is both sobering and chilling to read. Is this not dramatic enough? Theoretically the media could exploit similar stories of tragedy and inspiration to draw attention to these lost wars.

A second reason for the asymmetric empathy of modern audiences is that human empathy is derived from an ability to identify with people. News consumers are more sensitive to issues that affect them directly and tend to pay more attention to the 'near-abroad' as opposed to the 'far-abroad'. This is a legitimate concern. The British public is more aware or anxious about the Middle East in general because of the deployment of British troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. There is less public empathy for the civil war in the DRC due to the lack of British involvement in this 'far-abroad' land. Public interest hence favours conflicts in which they have a stake.

If human empathy is tied strongly with identifying or understanding certain peoples, then is there a racial or religious aspect to this asymmetric empathy? Elizabeth Wurtzel radically asserts in her Guardian commentary (16 January 2009) that the liberal political spectrum is subconsciously keyed into issues of antisemitism; by ignoring Chinese treatment of Tibetan minorities or genocide in Darfur, the media spotlight

"on what the Jews may or may not be doing wrong in Gaza" demonstrates that we are more willing to point fingers at some people than others. It is difficult to believe that antisemitism motivates media sensationalism over the conflict, and unconvincing to equate public attitudes towards Israel with our attitude towards Jews.

Instead, the enduring public fascination with Israel and Palestine lies in the palpable duel of religion. In no other conflict are the fault lines of religion more blatant, the clash of thought and ethnicity more profound or more impossible to disentangle. The implication of holy lands magnifies the symbolic importance of this conflict vis-à-vis 'normal' or 'traditional' categories of civil war or totalitarianism.

Nonetheless, Wurtzel makes a salient point: in our irrational concentration on one conflict, are we doomed to neglect others? It is disappointing that political interest waxes and wanes to the sound of beating war-drums. All conflicts should be treated equally, despite our irrational tendency to treat some conflicts more equal than others. Unfortunately we do rely on the media to raise our awareness of international issues and foster our political empathy. In particular, the absence of international focus grants these conflicts a permissive atmosphere to continue unchecked. The potential for peace should not be exclusive to high-profile conflicts. It is timely to resurrect our attention towards these 'forgotten wars', and remember the lost boys of history.

SOME CORNER OF A FOREIGN FIELD

SONYA PILLAY AND MADEEHA ANSARI
BRING FORGOTTEN CONFLICTS
INTO THE SPOTLIGHT



Lamenting the paradise lost

Madeeha Ansari speaks of the tragic despoilment of the once tranquil valley and its people

In summer 2005, my father decided it was time we saw the “real” Pakistan. How he defined that I didn’t know, but after hours of driving without roads we found ourselves surrounded by the raw beauty that once characterised Swat.

It is impossible to reconcile news reports with images of that summer vacation. While the mountains may withstand guerrilla warfare and American drone attacks, the valley is a shell of its former self. One third of the population has been displaced by the military operation that began in 2007, and the rest has been cut off from virtually all means of existence. Tourism, which used to make up 80 per cent of local income, is at a standstill. Horticultural products cannot be transported out; basic necessities cannot be transported in.

Caught between Western expectations and local indignation, the government continues to retain a façade of optimism. Unfortunately it no longer seems credible. They said that the troops would be out in two weeks – fifteen months ago.

In hindsight, it is difficult to say if the average visitor could have gauged the presence of the brewing conflict. Swat was a showpiece for tourists by virtue of its natural beauty, whether or not there was a conscious effort to preserve them. Its very lack of development worked as a charm for foreigners who wanted to photograph the quaintness of local lifestyles. The people themselves were renowned for their hospitable traditions, even while being protective of their values and culture.

There was no clash between those living on the inside and those coming from the outside, especially if payments were made in dollars.

Now, the picture sketched is of an embittered, alienated community. On one side, there is sympathy for the extremist militants and on the other – no one really knows. Reports of the numbers of “militants” range from 600 to about 10,000. There is no idea about whether they are or ever were united by a single campaign. It may be that government efforts to regain control of the region are simply being thwarted by the sporadic resistance of resentful locals.

When the operations first began and militant casualties still made the headlines, I always wondered how exactly they were identified. When it comes to weapons, Swati boys possess them for “protection” purposes from a fairly early age. Our young tribal guide had the eyes of a poet and a gun in his pocket. Whether or not he used it, it was part of their culture. Nor could facial hair be used as a criterion to assess militancy. The gentlest Pashtun could be sporting a beard, and often was. Even if some beards were kept as symbols of religion, Islam has always been an integral part of public and private life. It is only now that the significance of facial hair has been redesigned and reassembled by a network of engineers specialising in different forms of ignorance. A whole range of internal and external factors has aided the creation of this warped version of religion, which is seeping ever deeper into the consciousness of the Pakistani

In Swat, there is no longer any choice involved; refusal to cooperate could result in public lynching

northerner.

In Swat, there is no longer any choice involved; refusal to cooperate could result in public lynching. Radical cleric Maulana Fazlullah’s decrees are issued via radio and implemented by a brutally efficient parallel judicial system. Interestingly, the radio has been the medium by which he emerged from obscurity in 2006. It is ironic how the methods of such clerics seem far subtler than those of the powers-that-be, which felt they had to send 30,000 troops to undo the effects of neglect.

Now, there is no going back. Pakistan’s extension of the war on terror has blurred the distinction between the local and the militant to such a degree that the likes of Maulvi Fazlullah can simply sit back and watch their armies grow. They have revelled in the anarchy of the past year, adding to it by burning over 200 schools. Having “banned” girls’ education from 15 January, Fazlullah has effectively showed off the power he wields in the area. Even small private schools have ceased to function out of fear of backlash and the government has appealed for the extension of “winter holidays” till March. So, while a large part of the population lives in refugee conditions, the rest is regressing further and further backwards.

The point of the invasion of Swat was presumably to weed out harmful elements and clear the way for progress. Instead, the exact opposite seems to have happened and the future of an entire generation has been cast into uncertainty.

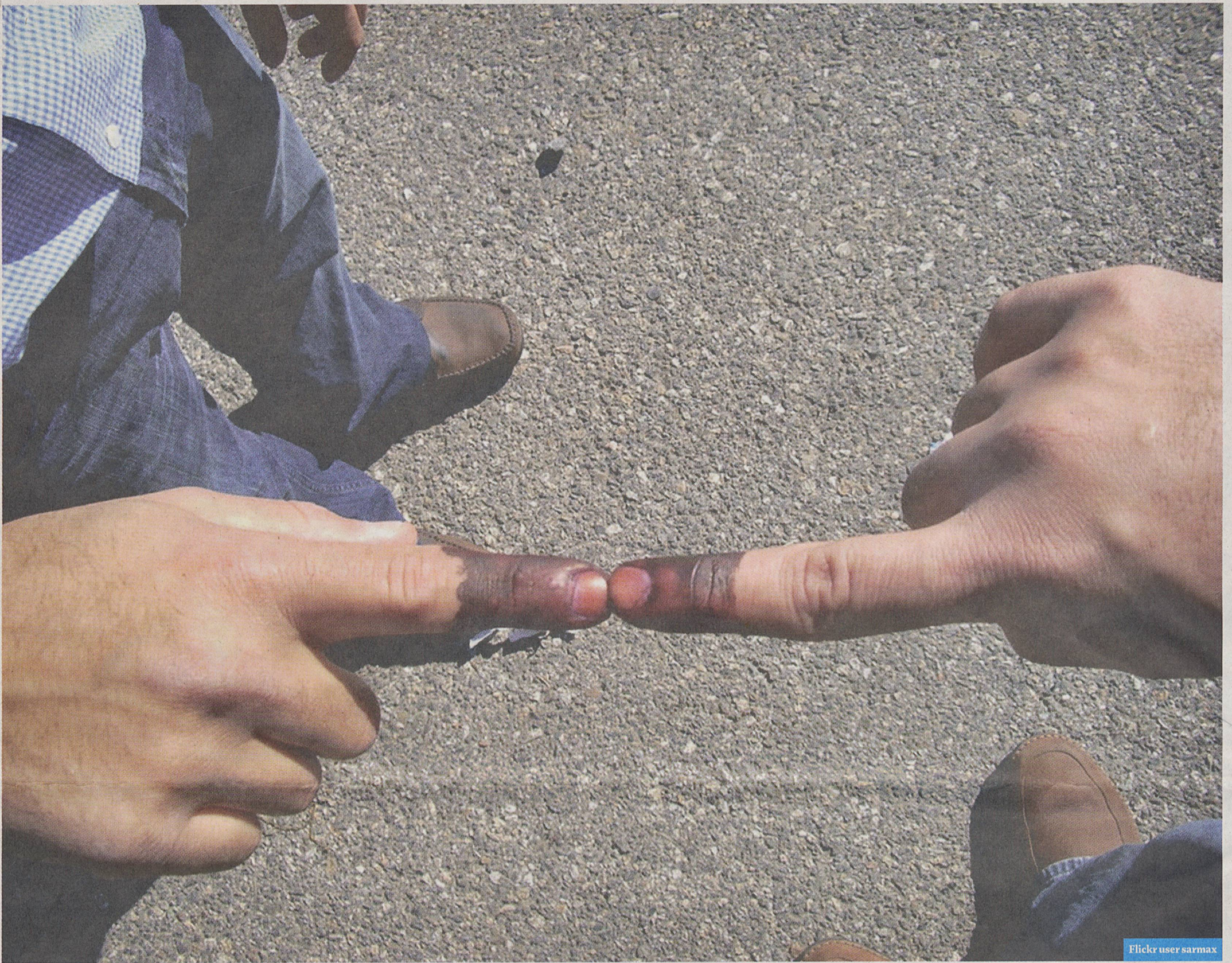
Previously, there were concerns about preserving the local identity in spite of

rapid development. Although too much too fast could be overwhelming, the gradual development of male and female education would have stuck at the roots of most problem in the area. The alternative hard-line agenda has introduced startling new realities in society. Children who have seen the countless casualties of the war and been exposed to the half-baked notions of the Taliban-controlled neighbourhood perceive reality in a very different way from the urban middle class. Unless steps towards redress are taken soon, the differing perceptions are bound to clash. We have grown so used to viewing its different faces in isolation, that it becomes hard to remember that the people of Pakistan have a shared reality. It is indeed one country, represented by a single word in the international community.

As is always the case with humanity, people still dare to hope. A recent editorial in a national newspaper lauded the resilience of the community, saying the people of the Frontier province still looked forward to welcoming tourists back. However, the quotation cited possibly had an unintentional dark undercurrent.

“Come to the Frontier,” it said. “It will be a blast!”

If that was a pun, it was a cruel one.



Redemption in a box

Shibani Mahtani explores the importance of the electoral process to ailing states

Purple forefingers have now become the new symbol of hope in Iraq. As Iraqis took to the polls on the 31 January to vote for the provincial councillors who they hope will better represent the ethnic and sectarian diversity across the country, general sense of triumph and a chance for a better future was prevalent.

Election day in Iraq was marked by high security and surprisingly little violence. There were even huge turnout jumps in Sunni areas that had boycotted previous elections. With Iraqis voting in record numbers, the election seems to have passed the test; perhaps proving that the fragile nation can once again embrace a stable and democratic electoral process.

With US President Barack Obama calling the elections "an important step forward" and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki lauding it as a "victory for all Iraqis", it might be easy to forget the turbulent and fragile state of affairs that still exemplifies the political and social situation in the country. While January 2009 was the most peaceful month in Iraq since the US-led invasion in 2003, there were still 191 civilians, soldiers and policemen deaths, according to the BBC. This number itself represented a 42 per cent drop from December, which recorded the lowest casualty figures over the past three years; further testament to just how much blood has been spilled on Iraqi soil.

Turning towards another ailing state, Afghanistan has pushed back its presidential elections by three months in light of tenuous security conditions and

technical and logistical problems. This is unsurprisingly a problem, particularly in the areas where the Taliban still maintains a stronghold and have continued to thwart any form of Western intervention in the area. With the Obama administration planning a troop increase similar to the recent "surge" in Iraq and Britain, too, reaffirming its commitment to restoring peace and stability to the area, increasing opposition to Afghan President Hamid Karzai's government, widespread corruption and social unrest in Afghanistan does not bode well for flourishing of democracy in the state.

The struggle between Western influence and the Taliban's continued grip on certain sectors of the populace does not seem to have a near or easy end in sight. Taliban rhetoric only add to the existing problems; spokesman Zabiullah Mujahed recently claimed that "[the elections] are just symbolic and everything will be chosen by the US President Obama".

However, it is quite clear that democratic elections are not enough to save failed states, and Western ideals of democracy can not always be transposed on countries with deep divides and tensions. Zimbabwe has just signed a power sharing deal in which Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), will be prime minister and Robert Mugabe would remain President. However, this power-sharing deal has been a long time coming and technically, even though MDC won a minority in the general election last March, they have not been given due rep-

It is nearly impossible to have a working democracy without credible elections

resentation within the government. Members of the MDC and supporters of the MDC alike still suffer from intimidation, arrests and torture from the supporters of Mugabe's highly criticised, undemocratic and corrupt regime.

When states have been plagued by violence, unrest, sectional fragmentation, ethnic and religious conflicts, and a myriad of other problems, it is hard to imagine how democracy and a fair and transparent electoral process can take off. Iraq, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe might all seem like easy targets and rather extreme examples; all three being in the top ten of the Brookings Institution's index of the weakest states in the world, published last year.

However, the issue of the democratic process and voting is one that remains to be contentious in less fragile states, such as the 2007 elections in Kenya. Mwai Kibaki, the incumbent, was declared the winner of the election while polls suggested that the populace of Kenya favoured the challenger, Raili Odinga. According to critics, the elections reeked of American intervention and meddling in the politics and preferences of a sovereign country that they have no legitimate influence over.

As early as Plato in the Republic, elections and the electoral process has been criticised by political thinkers as sometimes allowing "tyranny of the majority" and enabling the interests of the majority to be put so far above the interests of the rest of the population. However, it is nearly impossible to have a working

democracy without credible elections. We sometimes forget the amount of violence and unrest that is linked to the political process in other corners of the world that are not lucky enough to have a well-established democracy, and who may have strong and influential groups that do not even desire a well-established democracy in the first place.

However, it is impossible to form a new world order, free of rogue states and save havens from terrorists, child soldiers and drug lords, if we do not start somewhere. While simply transporting Western ideals and an American version of democracy in countries in Africa and the Middle East is far from an appropriate solution, it is arguable that the steps forward that has been proven by Saturday's election in Iraq is far better than the "democracy" under Saddam Hussein, even if Iraq has taken a long and bloody route to get to this point. It is hoped that with Obama's new commitment to American military efforts in Afghanistan, some stability will be restored to the country, but much grounds for cynicism still remains.

It is perhaps asking for too much to leave the immense task of restoring normality to the world in the hands of the electoral process. However, if Iraqis, who have been tossed around between the hands from one questionable regime to another, still are able to find some hope and joy in putting a piece of paper in a box, then perhaps it is not too tall an order after all.

From Right to Left: the political columns

Hayek

Alex
Blance



Our lords, and faithful servants

The latest uproar over the behaviour of parliamentarians is, for a second time, concentrating on members of the House of Lords. This time it is regarding 'cash for amendments' allegations made in the Sunday Times, and it is thus perhaps unsurprising that focus is returning to the issue of reform.

As it stands, the upper House of the British legislature is still entirely unelected. The 743 members sitting on the red benches are made up from 614 appointed 'life peers', 26 Church of England bishops, as well as 92 remaining hereditary peers. The undemocratic nature of the House has been reiterated by the latest debacle. The 'constitutional outrage' that the shadow Business Secretary and former-Chancellor, Ken Clarke, described about top government ministers sitting in the unaccountable Lords (a returning fashion under Gordon Brown) also throws doubts on the current formulation.

It is in this context that people are now calling for Parliament to go the way that the last Commons vote on Lords reform went, in the direction of an entirely elected upper chamber. However, it is not that simple. While one cannot understate the significance of democracy, account-

ability and legitimacy, any changes to the chamber must be very carefully considered.

The Lords, as with much in our constitution, is a uniquely British phenomenon and only replicated in the former colony of Canada. Yet its virtues seem massive, and must not be ignored. The permanency of its membership means their Lordships have both the time and the independence from a fickle electorate and whipping party to amend shoddy Commons legislation, from a government famed for pushing through measures with its massive majorities and strict timetabling.

The increasing appointment of life peers has also contributed to a massive acquisition of expert knowledge in the House. The Committee responsible for appointing members has a quota to be filled by captains of industry, academics and community representatives; amongst other experts, who all contribute greatly to legislation as it is scrutinised by the chamber.

The Lords have also been famous recently for rejecting some of Labour's most repugnant policies, including 42-day pre-charge detention and ID cards. The peers have been nowhere near celebrated enough for their protecting of civil

liberties from a paranoid government. Beyond these concerns, the Lords have also worked to oppose the government on many deeply unpopular measures where Labour's (previously enormous) Commons majorities have allowed them to whip through whatever they wanted with little scrutiny.

When one thinks about the Lords objectively, it becomes clear that the public have much to gain from the House in its current guise - any changes in the direction of an elected chamber would threaten this. While not traditionally democratic, their Lordships work for us and are accessible to us, and their legitimacy is gained through truly holding the government accountable and in producing better quality legislation than our elected officials seem able to do.

While the rules need to prevent sleazy goings on, as the Sunday Times alleged, and Ken Clarke is right that top government members should be accountable to elected officials, it is also right that we should think carefully about the upper house we currently enjoy, and should consider the effects of any more Labour instigated constitutional vandalism.

Laski



Vlad
Unkovski-
Korica

Reviving the spirit of Mai 1968

The spectre of 1968 is haunting Europe. This was the observation of the French President Nicolas Sarkozy, made in December to his cabinet in reference to the recent riots in Greece. They ring true if we conduct a short survey of continental politics. Just last week, France witnessed a massive general strike in which unions claim 2.5 million workers downed tools over the handling of the economic crisis.

Job losses, wage reductions and proposed cuts to paid preparation time for teachers brought hundreds of thousands on the streets all over the country.

A poll in Le Parisien on 25 January showed 69 per cent of the French people backing the strikes. There is rage and fury in France that billions could be found to rescue floundering banks while nothing was being done to boost wages and consumer spending power.

France is not isolated. A general strike also shook Italy in December. Moreover, Greece witnessed nothing short of a popular uprising at the close of 2008. This was sparked by the police killing of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos, but stoked by accumulating anger over

neo-liberal 'reform' centred on pension cuts and longer working hours. Unrest there continues.

Protesters in Iceland, too, took to the streets and toppled their government in the wake of the financial meltdown in that country.

There is something of the unexpected and the sudden nature of political developments today that makes the situation comparable to 1968. But I would prefer to draw a parallel with the drying up of credit and the development of a trade war that ushered in the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Observing the developed countries since the 1990s, we could certainly pick up the whiff of Weimar. The comparison works, of course, only if consumed with a pinch of salt.

The crisis back then took a much shallower form than in the 1930s. The fragility of the legitimacy of the political centre was clear but not at the point of collapse, the growth of the far right was marked but clearly rejected by the majority of the population as we saw in France in 2002, when Le Pen was decisively defeated in the second round of the presidential elections, and the slow rise in working class

militancy saw strikes topple governments, as in France in 1995.

With the bursting of the credit bubble, though, we face the risk of much greater instability. And the recent dispute around gas supplies between Russia and the Ukraine, which enveloped all of Europe east of Germany, has highlighted the threat posed to world peace by the revival of economic and military competition.

This year has started under the shadow of renewed war in the Middle East and an economic crisis that threatens to turn into a prolonged slump: it is as if the 1930s are being rerun at heightened speed.

Britain, too, faces tough times: the deepest recession in a generation, if one is to believe the International Monetary Fund. National protests and university occupations against the war in Gaza provided a glimpse of the potential for resistance.

Workers across Europe face the axe because of the recession. This is why it is a tragedy to hear that mass strikes of oil workers have swept Britain with the racist slogan: 'British jobs for British workers'. It ought to read: 'United we stand, divided we fall!'

Measured musings



What does it mean to "win"?

If the occupation blogs are to be believed, countless student crusaders across the country have showered themselves in a blaze of glory. In a matter of days, even hours, they have met the fiendish foe and returned triumphant, coating themselves with the sweet nectar of victory.

Or have they?

Sure, they have achieved some laudable things. At LSE, the occupiers secured the Director's disapproval of the loss of life and property in Gaza, increased access to scholarships for Palestinian students, and donations of surplus books and computers to the occupied territories. Similar commitments were made by school administrations at King's, Warwick, the School of Oriental and African Studies, Sussex and Manchester Metropolitan following student occupations.

But "victory"? Against whom did they achieve this?

The vile, oppressive university administrations? The impassive and materialistic vice-chancellors? The unmoved

student populations who stood by on the sidelines, bleating and moaning about minor inconveniences while the occupation dramas unfolded and civilians in Gaza suffered under the Israeli offensive?

It is anyone's guess, really. None of the slick PR machines that are the collection of university occupation blogs deigned it necessary to illustrate their struggles in dispassionately clear and simple language. That some of the bloggers diluted their declarations of triumph with meaningless exultations of "partial" (see: Manchester Met) or "transient" (Warwick) victory served only to thicken the fog of war.

The ease with which the term was used carried an eerie familiarity. Where else did the notion of "victory" become so banal and trite?

This country, of course. In fiction, in the year 1984. Allegedly.

In that Orwellian dystopia, the term is cheapened into a meaningless brand name, adorning everyday commodities with drab insipidness. What used to

connote success became shorthand for mediocre. What once exuded grandeur came to offer an air of servility.

In that fiction, the superficial was a fine substitute for the real. No one noticed the difference, perhaps because no cared enough to do so. If it made life livable, the manufactured notion of constant success was tolerable. Perhaps the occupiers were playing the same Ingsoc game - the belief in perpetual triumph gave meaning to their endeavours, justified their actions, and sustained the larger struggle.

But my mental machinations proved a fruitless exercise. The unseen enemy of the occupiers still eluded me. So deeper I went into the rabbit hole. I waded through an unimaginative repertoire of tasteless rhetoric, hoping to strike upon an answer and perhaps also some succinct and cogent arguments into the bargain. I was not disappointed. In fact, there were rich pickings amongst the blog posts - wise musings from the likes of Oxford historian Avi Shlaim and MIT linguist extraordinaire Noam Chomsky.

Viridian The nurturing mothers of our nature

Justus Rollin
Environment and Ethics officer

Deforestation, ecosystem degradation and climate change are hitting hardest against the people already being marginalised - the global poor, who are directly reliant on nature for food, fuel and fodder. Of these people, women are the worst off, with 70 per cent of those living in poverty being female.

When the vagaries of climate change strike, it is women who will have to spend more time of the day collecting wood. In rural India, girls and women spend as much as one to five hours a day collecting wood for fuel, while in East Africa women spend as much as 60 per cent of their day collecting wood. This time is spent with the opportunity cost of other useful activities like growing food or finding other income.

It is these women who are most vulnerable when environmental disasters hit - drought, flood and storms. Moreover, they often live in the most disaster prone areas.

According to the World Health Organisation, women are also affected massively by extensive pesticide use, increasing the amount of miscarriages. Certain pesticides such as DDT are still being used regularly, even though they have been linked to breast cancer, which is still a predominantly female illness.

The prevalence of patriarchal societies today is nowhere more apparent than in the developing world. In East Africa, for example, 90 per cent of the arable land is owned by men. Ironically, in many cases, it is actually women who are working on them.

Eco-feminism has introduced the notion of women being more caring for the environment. And there are indeed a number of studies that indicate that women are more likely, even when living in poverty, or especially so, to manage natural resources sustainably. In many villages in India, women are collecting the branches that are broken by the storm, rather than cutting branches of trees.

There are also amazing examples of female environmental activism - the Chipko movement in India for example - also known as tree hugging. In 1906, a logging company moved in to log the Himalayan forest. The women, realising the importance of their local forest, hugged trees to stop the deforestation. It didn't work back then but later in the 20th century, women actually stopped deforestation in India by hugging trees.

Environmental degradation has hit the poorest hardest. And the poor are mainly women, who are far too often disempowered from overcoming their desperate situations. An awareness of this should guide our actions to ensure that real redistribution of wealth, as well as ensuring the fulfilment of basic needs happens. We are far off from a gender equal world, in a time of true hardship for hundreds of millions of women. It's time to take action to put an end to it.

Unfortunately, such brilliant prose were at a premium. I soon had to settle for seeking drollery in irony.

The occupiers at the University of Leeds were quick to oblige with an excellent parody of the Israeli ultranationalists they were so eager to condemn.

On the lack of support from "pro-Palestinian activists" and the "left on campus", the Leeds occupation bloggers insinuate them of a "lack of radicalism" and cowardice for hiding "behind their rhetoric to maintain credibility whilst attempting to destroy the most militant aspects of protest in order to further their appeal to mainstream students." Self-righteous conviction, check.

Stirring stuff. Their amusement value spiked when they described in the very next paragraph how they were "helpful and amicable to people of all political viewpoints". Spin doctoring, check.

Now, if only they had a mirror.

Chun Han Wong
Features Editor



Flickr user sarmax

Age shall not weary them

Alex Wolynski desires the physical preservation of Holocaust history, so that we may learn good

Last Tuesday, the world celebrated the 64th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp - the moment when the world was finally made aware of the true horrors of the Holocaust.

Auschwitz earned its notoriety for being the largest of the Nazi concentration camps in the Second World War, and for being a labour as well as a death camp. Its dark history has been featured in films, books and documentaries; you can't escape the name. Located in the south of Poland near Krakow, the camp has received countless visitors every year since its conversion into a museum in 1947.

Unfortunately, out of financial and morality issues, proposals for closing down the museum has arisen. Historian Robert Jan Van Pelt, a world-renown academic authority on Auschwitz, believes the camp should only be left open for so long as its survivors wish to re-visit it. Once the last survivor of Auschwitz has passed away, he suggests that it should be left to decay and eventually forgotten.

"The best way to honour those who were murdered in the camp and those who survived is by sealing it from the world, allowing grass, roots and brambles to cover, undermine and finally efface that most unnatural creation of Man," he said.

Having close family relatives and friends living in and around Krakow means that I have had opportunities to see Auschwitz for myself. The first time was when I was 14, right after studying about the Holocaust at school. Despite my tender age, I was fascinated and shocked in equal measure. I went back again last summer to see how much I had forgotten about it. To my surprise, despite the five-year interval, the experience had stayed with me in its entirety. I could remember it all perfectly, as if it was imprinted into

my mind. As morbid as it may sound, I would recommend to all travelling through Eastern Europe to visit the camp; it is an experience like no other.

The camp serves as more than just a signpost of memory for the survivors. It is a memorial for humanity, a monument for an appalling episode in history that should never be forgotten. We need a physical memory of what happened because human memories last only as long as our lifetimes, so if we shut it off to the public, how long before everyone forgets about it?

Abandoning Auschwitz would be akin to denying that the horrors perpetrated within its walls had ever happened. It is foolish and naive to commemorate and remember only the glorious chapters of our history. Humanity remembers its triumphs with ease, but hastens to forget its evils. Yet so many of our "victories" were the fruits of struggle against those very evils we wish to evict from memory. Auschwitz was not a historical aberration or an isolated incident, it was the culmination of careful human design and a product of modernity. It is a manmade atrocity and therefore should be preserved as a sombre reminder of the evils that we humans are capable of and should never repeat. Otherwise, we would only continually vindicate George Santayana's dire warnings, that "those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

The Auschwitz museum is not merely a memorial either. For anyone who wishes to learn more about the Holocaust or get a sense of the catastrophic ends which racism and discrimination can lead to, Auschwitz would provide an ample education. It offers contemporary resonance for generations who have never experienced war or mass violence. Polish school children, for instance, are taken to Auschwitz to learn about the horrors that occurred within their country. Surely they have

Otherwise, we would only continually vindicate George Santayana's dire warning, that "those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeating it."

the right to know about the thousands of Poles who were killed alongside the Jews?

The Times recently featured a story about a group of children from low-economic and violent areas being taken to the various concentration camps, including Auschwitz, to learn more about racism. The trips have had profound impact on them; allowing them to learn, almost firsthand, about the hideous face of racism and its consequences if taken to extremes. So many more people could reverse their prejudices if they just saw the concentration camps and understood for themselves the futility and horrors of racism.

Van Pelt argues that the museum offers no more than just the "the shell, the shadow" of the "wartime reality of endless, uninterrupted fear" and can teach little to those who were not imprisoned there. This may be true in some ways, but surely even the shell is better than nothing? Thousands of people have been deeply moved by the experience of seeing Auschwitz, so why deny future generations this opportunity?

Sure, one could easily peruse the countless literature and watch myriad of documentaries about Auschwitz. But no vicarious relation of the camp's history can truly replicate the experience of actually being there. Beyond the museum staples - galleries of photographs, charts with chilling statistics and quotes, it is the parts of the camp that have been preserved unaltered that make Auschwitz such a deeply-moving experience. While parts of the camp have been restored, key landmarks remain mostly untouched - the infamous iron gate crowned with the motto "Arbeit macht frei" (work brings freedom), the gas and torture chambers, the crematoriums, the death wall, the electrified fences...

To know that you are in a place where gross inhumanity once pervaded forces

you take in the otherwise impassive facts and figures with emotion. Walking through room after room of hair, suitcases, glasses, crutches and prosthetic limbs, and the reality of it all hits you. The sheer size of the camp brings home the magnitude of the horror being done onto the hundreds of thousands of inmates that once filled its premises. The cramped conditions within the bunks convey the claustrophobic nightmares to which the victims were subjected to. The thousands of fingernail marks on the concrete walls of the gas chambers, left by men, women and children who had blindly struggled for an escape, reveal the macabre and gruesome ends suffered by countless innocents.

The concentration camps are physical evidence of the Holocaust. Proof of the unimaginable tragedy that some still deny ever happened. By preserving Auschwitz, we can do much to undermine the vile intentions of these historical revisionists. For future generations who will hopefully not experience similar horrors, stories of the Holocaust will grow increasingly surreal and unbelievable. But these camps will serve as physical evidence of that tragic history.

For all the unspeakable horrors and inscrutable evils that Auschwitz has come to represent, its story also gives us hope that in the end, good will triumph over evil. Having suffered the insufferable and endured the unendurable, thousands of Auschwitz inmates survived their ordeal and were returned to freedom on a fateful January day over six decades ago. Perhaps we when we lament the passing of their brethren and enshrine their stories in the preservation of the camps, we also give praise to their fortitude and spirit in their feat of survival.



The United Nations security council in New York
Flickr user tomdz

Modelling the UN: an exercise in optimism?

Tomás Guilherme da Costa compares his experiences at Model UN events to the real thing

There is certainly much more to the United Nations than what goes on in the General Assembly, Security Council and other such assemblies that usually come to mind when we think about it. Behind the scenes, bureaucrats quietly operating beyond the attention of the cameras slowly but surely change small aspects of the world's life today – hopefully for the better. Model UN conferences have a little of both this background activity as well as the public element.

As a Model UN Officer in the UN Society, I have seen my fair share of conferences. They follow a particular pattern. First, there is optimism and excitement in the assembly: 'Yes, we have a problem to solve, and we're going to solve it'. Then, the realisation that this is not the first time the topic gets addressed: 'Well, if the Iranian/North Korean/US/other

First, there is optimism and excitement in the assembly: 'Yes, we have a problem to solve, and we're going to solve it'.

problematic country's) leadership had not ignored our efforts for the past ten years, we would not be in this situation.' After a while, everyone gets slightly bored of the rhetoric, and becomes eager to get their own solutions passed: 'If you vote for my resolution, not only is it guaranteed to solve all the problems in the world, but you can win a chance to get a free foreign aid package.'

In the end, independently of whether a conclusion is reached or not, any attentive observer cannot help but feeling a slight disappointment with the outcome – it is never quite so grand, beautiful, and cohesive as she and everyone else had imagined. Fortunately for the light-heartedness of the conference, attentive observers are rarely seen in the either alcohol-impregnated or rush-dominated post-conference scene. Perhaps this is a good thing, to deflect the inculcation of that slight feeling of cynicism that those experienced in such things have come to

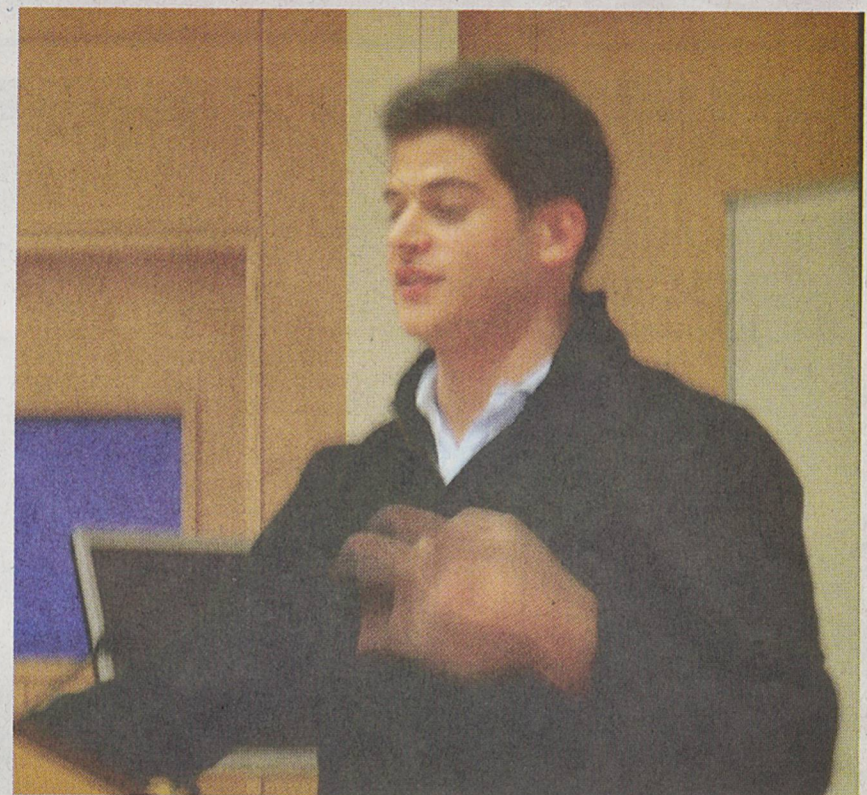
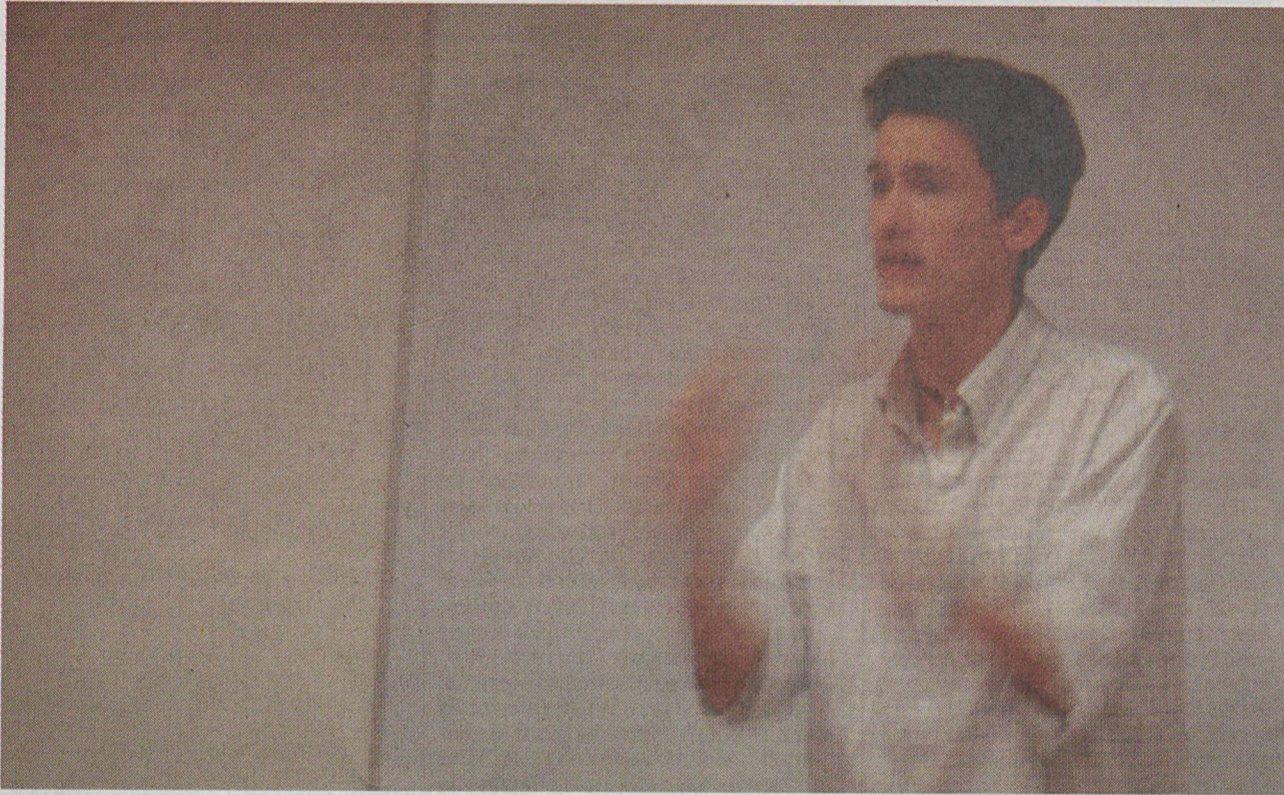
notice.

I cannot help wondering whether, fundamentally, the UN assemblies follow a similar pattern in their work. After all, apart from the profusion of grey heads, they are not too different from their student-run emulations: everyone is pursuing totally different objectives, while knowing that no-one will get what they want without cooperation; the developed and developing countries tend to cluster into groups; and everyone laughs when someone cracks a good joke on the podium. Does this mean that trying to get a large group of human beings from around the world to agree on even the most basic aspects of their mutual coexistence will be forever an extremely difficult task?

Perhaps. There is, however, an aspect we are missing in this analysis, which is the fact that Model UN conferences are simply that – models. Over many topics – but certainly not all – most of the participants have vaguely similar

ideas of how they would like to see themselves, even if you happen to be sitting in a particularly international committee. A realistic simulation, on the other hand, also simulates the disagreements that exist in the real world. Although it would be a much more satisfying experience, with regard to end results, to ignore this fact, it would be illusory to do so.

After all, such models help everyone to see the fact that coming to a solution is important, and many disagreements are artifacts that we would do well to disregard. Modeling a conference is thus not simply an exercise in optimism. Rather, it is an experience that, in its international scope and composition, will hopefully diminish the cleavages between nations by promoting their understanding, and the understanding of how they are discussed. If the debaters of today are those sitting in the forums of tomorrow, giving them a taste of what happens when people don't agree is probably a good thing.



The utility of futility

Pantellis Palividas argues the case for the decaying art of public speaking

Right, picture this: you have to devote two hours of your life arguing about whether or not celebrities deserve harsher sentences. You are in a room with three other teams, and you have fifteen minutes to prepare a coherent line of argumentation. Sounds like fun? Perhaps. Is it relevant to anything? Probably not. Or at least when taken at face value.

This is the world of parliamentary-style debating. A place where week after week, people come down to test their ability to develop arguments on motions that range from abortion to the legitimacy of assassinating presidents, to forcing overweight children to go to fat camps. Many roll their eyes when they hear the motions to be debated, or look puzzled as to how the exercise is in any way relevant to the 'real world'.

However, debating is one of the best ways to develop the art of public speak-

ing, and that is a skill which works magic wherever you decide to use it. While there are a host of activities or circumstances in which you can improve your public speaking skills, debate is paralleled by no other. Not only must you address an audience but must think quickly on your feet, as you have competitors itching to prove you wrong. Add the odd motions and you find yourself thinking outside the box, developing new ways to look at issues. This gives you an edge that few other public speakers get. It prepares you to speak eloquently and coherently at any time and respond to any question, as opposed to only being able to deliver a great speech that you have worked on, practiced and perfected. When you can do this, your confidence will soar.

This becomes particularly relevant to our academic life here at the LSE. Ultimately our education is based on small classes in which we are meant to discuss the issues that we study. This exchange is

the heart of the education process. Being able to debate gives you the ability to take all the material that you have read; process it; and churn out an argument expressing your view on the issue. It makes things far more interesting compared to mere oral regurgitation of the material that all the others have read (unless of course they haven't, in which case I concede regurgitation is useful). At any rate consider it an act of generosity towards your fellow students. Your ability to argue is essentially providing them with a more substantial educational experience, and minimising those long awkward silences when the teacher asks a question that nobody can answer.

Looking further on to the not-so-distant future where most of us are going to be bankers, lawyers, politicians, maybe accountants if all else fails, being able to debate will be indispensable. Firstly, it helps in getting your foot in the door; employers value debating like they do few other things. Why? A successful debater is essentially confident, intelligent, articulate, competitive and able to think quickly on his (or her) feet. All employers are looking for some sort of combination of these traits and if you debate, you prove

that you have them.

Secondly when the time comes for the interview, you will be able to perform. I have been debating since the seventh grade. This means that I was not the least bit nervous for my first internship interview and even when I got thrown a couple of curve balls, I was able to hit them. Why? Not because I was more intelligent than the other candidates. It's just that I was able to remain calm and think clearly. I have been asked infinitely tougher questions on topics I have had no clue about, in front of large audiences. A one on one interview is no more than a chat.

Career implications aside, debating is particularly relevant to LSE student life, where the exchange of ideas often assumes the form of intellectual sparring. Our vibrant student culture - which is more than willing to immerse itself in the most contentious issues of our time - places a high premium on the ability to articulate sound argumentation and accurate refutation. Debate, apart from teaching you how to communicate your point more effectively, teaches you to always think on different sides of any issue. One week you are arguing that big corporations should be allowed to pollute oceans, the next, that we should place sanctions on countries that pollute too much. This is crucial, because by being forced to think about the other side, you begin to see the validity of opposing arguments. As you search for where your disagreements really lie, you begin dealing with the issues that are truly in contention.

Therefore, debating makes for a more tolerant and understanding student body. A great deal of tension has risen on our campus unnecessarily, with certain students intimidating others. These people do not want any reflective discussion on

issues; they merely want to enforce their view. The fundamental problem is that they reject the possible validity of arguments they disagree with. With debating, this is not a possibility. The Debate society's first show debate was on whether or not we should accept Sharia law in the UK. Certain representatives from the Students' Union came to watch because it coincided with our elections, and to the surprise of the Debate society committee, expressed great concern because it 'might cause tensions'. Why? Quite frankly, in broader society some think that we should embrace Sharia, others do not. If you cannot put people with these differing views in a forum to argue it, how can anything be resolved? Tensions are caused when people are offensive, not when they merely disagree. People who blur this line need to realise that having opposing views is not only acceptable but necessary, especially in the diverse and plural society that the LSE represents.

The debating community is considered to be absorbed in its own little world on most university campuses. Although many debate, few call themselves 'debaters'. I believe that the only thing that makes you a 'debater' is your willingness to engage and disagree intellectually with others. Not to believe in something only because you belong to any camp, party or even ethnicity, but to force yourself to think. To ask 'why' after every premise you make, and not be content with 'because'. If you do this, regardless of whether you have been to a single debate meeting or tournament, you are a debater.

This is for all the cynics out there. If I have managed to convince of the utility of futility - enough said.



Courtesy: Fahad Shakil Khan



Having opposing views is not only OK but is necessary, especially at the LSE

Listings

Tuesday 3rd February

China Theme at Fourth-Floor Restaurant

Photo exhibition

Venue: Houghton Street

Theme: Growth and Development in the Cities and Countryside in China

LSESU China Society presents

Film Screening: Bruce Lee

Time: 6-8pm

Venue: G11 (Confucius Institute)

Wednesday 4th February

LSESU Finance Society presents:
Thirty Years On - China Celebrates the Reform Process by Dr Kerry Brown,
Senior Fellow at Chatham House
Where: NAB206, 3:00 - 4:30pm

Thursday 5th February

LSESU Swing Dance Society presents:
'Strictly Come Swinging'

Where: The Underground, 7-11pm

Friday 6th February

China Week Crush

Date: Friday 6th February 2009

Time: 8pm-1am

Venue: The Quad/ Underground



A campus of reverberating rhetoric

Social editor **Madeeha Ansari** celebrates the spoken word

Ours is a campus of reverberating rhetoric. Two weeks ago George Galloway was standing outside the Old Building with a microphone, talking about how the occupation of the Old Theatre saved the "honour of the LSE" from the "merchants of death". While his style was a tad theatrical, it worked - his speech was punctuated by wild applause from the audience. The representative from Jews for Justice who followed made far more sense in my estimation, presenting a beautifully balanced humanitarian perspective. He didn't get a single cat-call.

It makes one wonder, really, about how success has been achieved since the time of Mark Antony. The verbal packaging is important, irrespective of how competent or sincere one may actually be.

In this as in everything else, LSE mirrors the real world. Life is fast-paced; in-

dividual people show streaks of brilliance; and those who make it to prominence in this vast student body understand the value of oratory skills. The UN week show-debate brought together four societies whose members include students from all possible disciplines.

Perhaps it can be said that the Debate, Grimshaw, UN and American Democrat societies do not accurately represent the entire population of the LSE. Perhaps every single student here does not care about whether or not the veto power is removed from the Security Council. It doesn't matter if nobody listens.

Those carrying microphones down Houghton Street will still "build" for their protests, those prepping in corridors on Tuesdays will still continue debate-practice with or without an audience. One day they will be heard, possibly as activists, possibly as demagogues, maybe even as

the CEOs behind the seemingly whimsical economy.

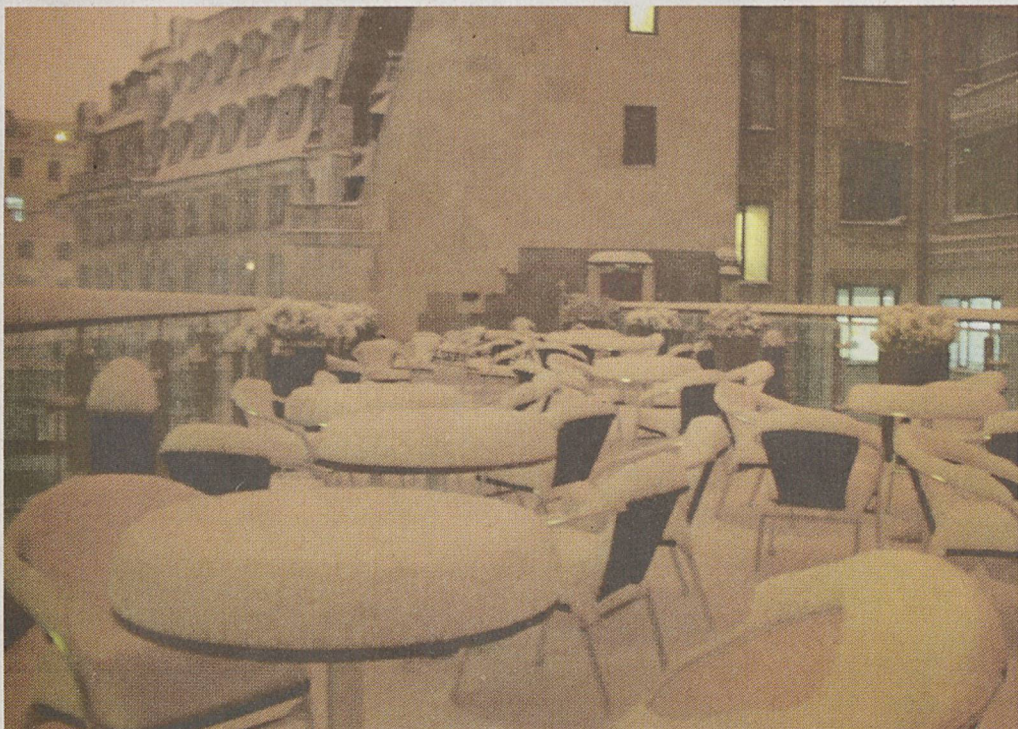
Whether or not they can stop wars or restructure international organisations, words are important. They can expose or obscure the truth; mould opinions; and establish the positions of different individuals in society. That is why this week's segment is loosely based on the role of the spoken word, in LSE and beyond.

Tell us what you'd like to see in Social

- drop an email to social@thebeaveronline.co.uk



**White Aldwych,
Whiter School**
Pictures by Joseph Cotterill
and Chun Han Wong





Two boys one head: Treible (far right) and Minke Whale gaze in wonder at the back of Andy Lee's head

Brothers not grim

Sam Tempest Keeping
Sports Editor

Move over Library and Novelty Crow, there's a new set of siblings lighting up the LSE FC. When 1st team Captain Ed Healy graciously allowed Joe Knoertzer to join the ranks of the 5th team to regain his fitness after a break from the game, Captain Carrig Ryan hoped history would repeat itself. Had he found an attacking Frenchman who could help the 5ths stave off relegation as his countryman Christophe Dugary had done for Birmingham in 2003? For one match at least, he'd doubled his money.

Knoertzer scored a brace to lead the 5ths to victory, probably geed up by his desire to show his worth as he looks to find his way back into the top team, while his younger brother made a first appearance in what is sure to be an equally illustrious footballing career for the LSE. The goals sandwiched an Imperial strike which resulted from another STK howler; that makes four in an already young term leading many to call for the flamboyant keeper to be dropped. Seldom-used Finn-

ish centre back Minke Whale made up for the keeper's incompetence, anchoring the defence on his return from an expedition to the north sea. The deep sea fishing trip and casting of heavy nets had clearly paid dividends as his monstrous throw caused chaos time after time in the opposition area.

This crucial victory, the fifth first in the league since November, came three days after vanquishing Holloway in the cup, a win which kept alive dreams of a return to Motspur Park, the scene of a controversial defeat to Kings in last year's final. The only goal of the game was scored by the second best Kevin Clark in the FC. Ignoring cries for him to show that he can actually use his left foot, he managed to slip the ball into the net from the left channel with the outside of his right foot.

Two games, two wins, two brothers. The number two seems to hold favorable portents. Sadly none of our remaining games fall on the second of the month and second team players don't seem worth signing judging by results. Lets just hope that the fact that two teams are playing in each game means that there can only be one winner. Vive la France.

Womens rugby ratings

With a score of 30-10, LSE once again proved far too strong for Strand Poly. But how did the players score? **Words by Laura Smith and Hannah Riches**

Kirsty Rice

This good time girl proved that a dislocated shoulder just couldn't keep her away for long. Bringing in the New Year with a bang, this hooker showed us what we have been missing - Kamikaze tackling, constant encouragement, and a post away from the first forward try of the season. Apparently now a 'smug married,' we are looking forward to Kirsty's 'game' being confined to the pitch this term.



Rebecca Kean

If only we could clone her. The dilemma of whether to use Becky's strong force at second row or her breathtaking tackles at flanker would be resolved. Blonde and Essex she may be, this didn't stop her always being part of the action, having another awesome match as Women's Rugby's unsung hero.



Alex Peters-Day

Probably our most improved player this season, which is no mean feat given the ref asked us if we were the same team as last term. This Le-Haye prodigy was spurred on by calls of "come on my bay-bay" to show strong ball carrying and sound scrum-maging. She has proven our pre-season jitters about the future of the front row to be foolish.



Nil Sangarabalan

It's always the quiet ones you have to watch. Less mouthy than some, Nil-tolerance constantly proves that actions speak louder than words. Squeamish spectators should be warned as her tackles aren't for the faint hearted. We are pleased that she has stayed committed to the rugby cause despite her 'dramas' in other LSE societies.



Danielle Kogut

Her spring is by no means confined to her hair; ever a smiling face, she was rapid down the wing, with great running and ensuring any opposition breakaways ended up with their arses in touch. Although she didn't bring a cameraman to this match, her loud American tendencies more than made up for it.



Lizzie Bacon

"Egg and Bacon" had probably her best game all season. Her newfound fitness levels suggest she did something other than send emails over the Christmas holidays. She was one of our most valuable players, showing pace worthy of the wing. For those wondering, Miss Bacon was given the title "Egg and Bacon" for her less than well-received photo of a fried egg she sent round in a group email; you'll have to ask her for an explanation why as we still don't understand. Great player, s**t banter.



Sarah Dawes

Overcoming her dilemma of not being that kind of girl", Sarah was constantly involved in the mauls and pulled out some awesome tackles. Don't be fooled by her netballer appearance, she is firmly dedicated to Women's Rugby, confirming our belief that it is a superior sport. After all, "where else can you bash people?!" (Unless you're Bacon on a night out.)



Hannah Riches

Brilliant leader of the forwards when it comes to rucking, she shows that despite being social sec her abilities aren't confined to creating dirty pints, although she does make a mean snakebite and bailey's. Hannah is often hauled through positions, but contrary to popular belief, she is as good as flanker as she is hooker.



Judith Jacob

With her eye-watering repertoire of positions, Judith's versatility has been a gift to the team. Despite being unlucky for some, 13 has provided her with many a scoring opportunity. We're disappointed that she's missing our next match for a debating tournament, but it's a price worth paying to have this intellectual in our team.



Hannah Chia

Captain mini-chi is loved by all, bar the opposition. Hannah opened the scoring and fed the backs consistently good balls throughout the match. However, her on-pitch performances pale into insignificance after seeing her on the Walkabout balcony.



Kate Strivens

Looking red-hot, this 'welsh' dragon was running as if her hair was on fire down the wing. Despite Kate's ability to turn up to matches still drunk, constantly flash her knickers in short skirts and never follow the conversation, she has great positional play and terrifies the opposition.



Katerina Soukeras

Showed her characteristic resilience in the game. K Wilson never stopped battling until the 75th minute, at which point she was carried off against her "will" with a twisted ankle. Kat gets to every maul and every ruck, never giving the opposition space. We are hopeful that she will return for our next fixture, that's if she can stop her frequent walks of her newly acquired puppy.



Laura Smith

Laura's understanding of tactics is unheard of in Women's Rugby. She commands the back line; being the only real contender for the Number 10 shirt. This match, she broke a lifelong scoring drought: although her nickname 'the mouth' is now surely attributable to her actual love.



Sophie de la Hunt

Frankly unimportant: too busy with governors' 'meetings' and general hackery. We are all confident that her recent try scoring is solely due to her singing at the opposition.



Nadine Marshman

Played with an immense amount of energy and was rewarded as our chosen Woman of the Match. While Nadine may not be your stereotypical forward, she shows that with the right technique you can bring down 'ladies' twice your size. Some speculated that this was probably due to her strict no junk food diet; although there was some talk that it may also be on account of some rather unorthodox blood transfusions she had recently been partaking in with a member of the RFC.



Vanessa Duckworth

Double try scorer and currently unstoppable. Vanessa displays an inherent understanding of the game that is entirely unexpected from a rugby virgin. Miss Muckworth was keen to follow-up such scoring later that evening. With recent form she must be an outside contender for AU liaisons.



Rebecca Lehrman

She left the forward pack this week in favour of the more "beret-friendly" back line. From this position she pulled off a magnificent dummy before legging it up the pitch. Becca's communication and aggression make her unmissable on the pitch. However, she has questionable judgement capabilities off the pitch, given how she mistakenly spent Wednesday night at the wrong Walkabout.



Results

Mens Football

- 2nd 0-7 UCL 1st
- 3rd 0-6 SOAS 1st
- 4th 7-1 Kings Medics
- 5th 2-1 Imperial 4th
- 6th 2-1 Kings 3rd
- 7th 1-3 Poly

Womens Badminton

LSE 7-1 Reading

Mens Tennis

LSE 1st 5-5 UCL 1st

Netball

- 2nd 25-31 Kings Medics 2nd
- 2nd 50-25 Roehampton 1st
- 3rds 15 - 25 UCL 4th
- 3rds 12 - 20 KCLM 4th
- 4ths 25-7 RHUL 5th

Running Team Results:

- 5th ICL race, Reading Men (4.8 miles)
- 9. Domien De Witte, 23.58
- 44. Greg Opie, 31.33
- 49. Alex Boyce, 32.47
- 57. James May, 36.48

Women (2.4 mileS)

20. Stephanie Lowe, 17.33

Women's Basketball

LSE 39:37 Goldsmiths

Mens Table Tennis

1st 9-8 Reading

Womens Table Tennis

1st 3-2 KCL

Ladies Squash

1st 4-0 KCL

Boys Rugby

2nd 53-0 3rd

Womens Rugby

1st 30-10 Kings
1st 22-20 St Georges Medics

Womens Hockey

1st 2-0 RHUL

Sport's dumbest criminals



Philosophical Barry

This past Wednesday heralded another all too common occurrence in the world of sport. The front page of The Sun was where I first saw the story. In the kind of forthright style that we have come to expect from Britain's most famous tabloid, the headline read: "Robinho Rape Arrest".

Talking to a close friend this week, I was informed of yet another tale of off-the-field sporting misdemeanor. He had found himself eating at the same Kingston restaurant as a former New South Wales and Australia rugby union star. The plan was to have a nice quiet meal at the Blue Hawaii, enjoying some of their world famous Malibu Floats, in order to say goodbye to a colleague who was moving to the famous footballing mecca that is Barcelona.

As they sat and exchanged tales of public school brutality and loneliness, he couldn't help but notice the wallaby legend's gaze being firmly fixed on his beloved signet ring. Perhaps he was fascinated by the family crest emblazoned on the face of the sovereign or maybe just by the shininess of 'the little ripper'. One thing remains clear, when my chum sat down on the train back to London, the ring was gone. The disappearance remains a mystery to this day.

Recent memory is littered with examples of sportsmen finding themselves on the wrong side of that which safeguards the moral fabric of our society. OJ Simpson just couldn't resist another high-profile criminal case and Chris Lewis made the error of mistaking peaches for class A drugs. However the worst case in point has to be Luke McCormack's inexcusable

decision to get behind the wheel after a friend's wedding, leading to two children having their lives cut tragically short.

In an article last term I talked about the most talented of competitors seeming to be stalked at every turn by vice and controversy. Returning to this point, the reason for this, more often than not, appears to stupidity rather than anything malicious or vindictive. While there is nothing funny about the loss of young lives, one can't help but chuckle at Glen Johnson's daring in shoplifting a toilet seat or Bradley Wright-Phillips and Nathan Dyer's audacity in raiding handbags from a nightclub staffroom. All could have easily afforded the items they chose to steal, which says a lot about their particular motivations.

Crime is endemic in society: sociological theory tell us this. Those who argue

crime is the result of a lack of effective redistribution are correct to a certain extent but the physiological consequences are also a big draw. It is no coincidence that these mirror those which we would expect to see at highest level of sporting attainment. When John Terry walked up to take that infamous penalty in Moscow last May, he was probably feeling remarkably similar to Johnson as he walked down Isle 4 in the Dartford B & Q. So maybe Wright-Phillips and Dyer were simply trying to gain some experience of the type of pressure they hope to face in the future at the zenith of their careers? Unlikely. They're probably just morons.

philosophicalbarry
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Singing their praises

Alice Pelton talks to John and Rudy, the Tuns' Wednesday night resident karaoke jockeys.



If like me, you often walk into the Tuns on a Wednesday night and watch inebriated people screaming into a microphone, then you may have also noticed John and Rudy, the two guys running the karaoke. Every week they are there, entertaining the masses with their own pre-rehearsed renditions of karaoke classics. This is no mean feat considering the abuse they have to put up with from various members of the Athletics Union.

I think I speak for everyone in the AU in saying that without John and Rudy, Wednesday nights wouldn't be the same; last time I sang a song, they put up pornographic images on the TV screen to try and distract me from singing the lyrics. So I decided that it's about time that the students at the LSE knew more about these two remarkable people, and just why they do the job they do.

How did you get into running karaoke?
It all started many years ago when Rudy and I met through adultfriendfinder.com. As well as both having a foot fetish we also discovered we both loved karaoke, and the rest is history.

How did you end up doing the karaoke on Wednesday nights in the tuns?
Oh you couldn't make this one up. One Wednesday we were booked to do department party for PriceWaterhouseCoopers but messed up the post-code in the sat nav and went to the wrong venue. We began to suspect something was not quite right when members of the rugby team dropped their trousers and started spanking one another.

Do you have any complaints about the AU?
John - NO, actually yes... Stop stealing

my f*cking glasses and why have we not seen the AU calendar? (Which we believe may feature semi-naked members of women's rugby)
Rudy - The calendar thing for sure and the fact that I can't get someone from the AU, or a whole team, to sleep with John or myself.

What's the worst karaoke you've ever seen sung by an AU member?
Rudy - I'd say anything by the rugby boys and girls. I feel the girls lack the passion nowadays; it's almost like sleeping with a manic-depressive.

"Rudy and I met through adultfriendfinder.com"

John - I have to totally disagree, I have slept with a manic depressive and the sex was really good.

How about the best karaoke you've ever seen sung by an AU member?!
'Ballroom Blitz' by glam-rock band 'Sweet', sang by Felix. But only for the leg shaking as it looked like he was going to have a fit.

Are you sports fans? If so, what teams do you support?

Neither of us are sports fans but Rudy is constantly mistaken for Ian Wright (with an afro).

What do you like about working Wednesday nights in the Tuns?

Rudy - For the first two or three years it was getting mugged off by the girls but now it's the friendly bar staff.
John - There is a really good bagel shop on Grays Inn Road which is still open on my way home.

Ever done the karaoke for a rich/famous/interesting person's party?

John - Erm, we both signed a secrecy contract not to talk to the press about this. But Rudy was flown out to the south of France to do the karaoke at Philip Green's son's bar mitzvah. He can now proudly say that Simon Cowell has watched him sing 'Angels'. As a team we have worked at many celebrity events, including the Celebrity Big Brother wrap party - where an irate guest threw a drink over me.
Rudy - Out of all the celeb things John and I have done together, he's only ever recognised the Cheeky Girls.

What's your favourite team in the AU?!
And why?

John - We love them all! We think of them as our children and couldn't possibly pick a favourite, Netball are buff though.
Rudy - I agree with John on that one. However my mind could easily be changed if a team made me an offer I couldn't refuse.

And finally, you'll scream if you have to hear another person sing...what song?

John - Oh that's easy, Stand By Me.
Rudy - I believe I can fly.

Hockey girls left hollow

Danielle Priestley

Wednesday's match was the first of the term for the Women's Hockey Club, since the three before were cancelled for various irritating reasons. Never mind - with Captain Fish Fingers Heap at the helm, we've cracked on with some hardcore fitness training three times a week; my trusty pedometer informs me that we should all be marathon material in no time.

So, come Wednesday we were chomping at the bit to kick some Holloway arse. When we finally got there, we had to barter our way into the changing rooms by threatening to get changed in the Warden's office if he didn't unlock the door for us. On the pitch, we were two men down, since Satters was horsing around on a pony somewhere, and the much-documented Clare Pickering is still virtually immobile and reliant on her primary carer, Alice.

By half-time, the game had been pretty even, reflected by the 0-0 score. Soon after the second-half whistle was blown, a dodgy umpiring decision and some very unsportsmanlike behaviour resulted in Holloway robbing the ball on the sideline and sneaking a goal past both our bemused defence and the so-far impenetrable Serene. Betty was playing a blinder at the back picking up any stray balls, and despite Alison Chadwick falling over in her usual fashion and grazing her knees at least a dozen times, she and Azra were

invaluable pivots in the centre of the pitch. There were some excellent runs at the front from under-the-weather Alex Webb and Emma Haugh, and Tj, Gine and Caroline persevered on the right, but we just couldn't get the ball over the line. Holloway's second goal came from a classy short-corner, and the game ended 2-0. The journey home was epic, seeing as

half the team ended up being abandoned at the pitch waiting for a promised-for, but elusive, lift to Staines train station. Not to worry; the Holloway captain made some frighteningly angry phone calls and someone came to the rescue (we suspected on pain of death).

Serene Allen got a well-deserved player of the match for her smashing performance at the back, and for only losing it once in the whole match. The "Dick of the day" award went to Alex Webb, for simulating vigorous bedtime activity on the train and inadvertently jolting the head of the old man sat behind her, and then trying to hide behind her seat, while he waited for an apology, though a close contender for the prize was Alison Chadwick for forgetting the team's kit.

A fun time was had by all who turned up to party on down with Clare and her cast in Kennington, followed by some standard fun at Walkabout. Zoo still gets my vote though, if only for the pole.

After Sunday's match was called off at the last minute, it was too late to cancel post-match teas at the pub, so seven of us got ourselves down there to eat twenty people's worth of food and discuss the merits of weight-watching. Needless to say, after cleaning off two platters of cheese and mayo sandwiches on white bread and nachos, we decided it was all a load of bollocks. If you want to count the calories and cut out carbs, join the rowing team.

We also discovered that an aerial view of my home town in the North-East of England looks not unlike the wonderful appendage (see photo). You'd be right in thinking, dear reader, that we have genitals on the brain in the WHC, especially when I tell you we're having ourselves a nice Ann Summer's party in a couple of weeks time. After that, our presence on Wednesday night's could be severely diminished as we all rush home to tend to our rabbits.



Sport



2 games, 2 Wins,
2 Brothers
« Page 22

Frisbee Team are Ultimate champions



Photo: Joe Rennison

Joe 'Token' Rennison

This weekend the LSE Ultimate Frisbee team, the Hot Sweaty Beavers, became champions of the South East Region for the second year in a row. This tournament is coupled with qualification to the University Ultimate National Championships where we finished 10th last year.

In winning this tournament the Beavers have proved that rest and recuperation are by no means necessary to give an all star performance on the field. Although half the team travelled down to the retired, medieval, university town of Chichester, who were hosting the tournament, the night before our first match and lived the high life in a penthouse hotel suite, the other more meagre half made do with a 4am wake up call to catch the train from London Victoria and arrive at the fields by 8.

I had to make do with the early start because I'd had a late class the other day, or 'hour long occupation' as people seem to call them these days, followed by another occupation in a restaurant whereby I and one other demanded free food, were denied free food, negotiated with the manager, ended up paying for the food, and then told people that we wanted to pay for the food all along.

Before continuing onto how our weekend panned out I feel a short note on the rules of what Ultimate actually entails might go some way to shed some light on what I talk about later. The idea with Ultimate is to throw and catch a Frisbee, moving up a pitch about the size of a football field, until one of your team catches the Frisbee in the oppositions end zone which scores your team a point. There are seven players on each team (at least there's meant to be), you can't run with the Frisbee and games last around 40 minutes or first to 13 points, whichever comes first. Possession switches between teams when the disc hits the floor and you alternate ends of the field after each point.

Our first game was against Royal Holloway's depleted second team, HU Knew, who were only able to field five of the required seven players due to the rest of their team being lost south of London somewhere. Needless to say they proved a welcome warm up as we strolled to a 13-0 victory before time was up.

Our second game against 'Kent Touch This' was one of those that could have turned messy. They're a team that we were always expected to beat but who, because of their reasonable consistency and solid play, could have easily proved more difficult than actually became the case. Strong zone defence highlighted their weakness to throw in the wind and patient handling with sensible offensive cuts opened them up at the back.

Imperial Seconds were our third match. It finished, quite quickly, 13-0. They were nice guys though.

Next came Essex. This was a tricky match because we knew that we had to play Kings, the strongest opposition in our group, straight after and we didn't want to exhaust ourselves. Bob Liu, our Pittsburgh MVP, said we would 'win with our legs' and Stein, our captain who is carving a dynasty for himself at the helm of LSE Ultimate, told us to think of it as one match and to not think about the fact we had to play Kings after. We were playing an amalgamation of Kings and Essex, it was just one long match.

That said, the 'half time' score was good as we polished off Essex with some textbook 'huck and zee (zone - it should be 'zed')'. This is a tactic used in strong winds when it's difficult to throw the disc far. We would throw it, going with the wind, all the way down to their end zone. They could not do this back to us as the wind would stall the disc in the air, so they were forced to work the disc up the field with many, many throws - which isn't easy.

The 'second half' saw Kings move to a 2-1 lead early on but points were being exchanged as each team threw down wind. We got the all important upwind score which proved the difference come full time. This victory saw the end of the first day, LSE top of their group and a semi-final against Portsmouth waiting for us.

Now, Portsmouth, who call themselves 'Sublime', are not a nice team. Individually, they all equally epitomise an ignorant prick, collectively they are widely referred to as: "that bunch of dicks." We played them in last years regional final and beat them, at which point we came to the conclusion that their team name must be stark irony. I tried to qualify whether this was the case but their language skills are worse than their ultimate and they didn't seem to understand the insult. I hate that bunch of dicks.

They turned up to the game ill-pre-

pared. Glow paint still smeared across their fugly little faces from the night before, eyes only half open and knuckles scraping along the ground. I'm pretty sure the latter is a permanent defect of this half-witted, loud-mouthed, well, bunch of dicks.

LSE, on the other hand, came out strong and fired up. We'd warmed up on the field and gauged the wind as a result. It was 4-0 before Sublime even saw our end zone. They managed to pull a couple back but as the game drew to a close the win was more certain than prospect of the doll queue to a Sublime graduate. A triumphant win for good over evil.

Our final opposition was against the far more amicable Sussex Mohawks. The win came as a result of the first point. LSE played tidy offence to work the disc and score against the wind. From there on in it was an exchange of downwind points. All credit to Mowhawks however, as there solid offence saw them come close to levelling the match on numerous occasions and they certainly showed a good ability to read the flight of the disc in choppy winds.

I think the team will agree that we began on Saturday unsure of our chances of retaining the Regional Champions title. I think the team will perhaps also agree that based on raw individual ability we may not have been the best composition of players out there. However, I think the team will also agree that we won the tournament due to phenomenal team support, phenomenal effort on the part of every player and phenomenal determination not to allow the strong wind, extreme cold or fatigue ever get the better of us. We are a team that has come together this year but that played together as though we'd known each other since childhood. We are LSE, we are the Hot Sweaty Beavers, we are regional champions.

As a last note I would like to formerly announce the re-branding of the LSE Ultimate Frisbee team. Last year we went by the name of equilibrium. It's an economics term as was the result of our largely Singaporean founders. This year we have been renamed, largely by the american contingent of the team, as the Hot Sweaty Beavers. We are always looking to expand the team so should you see a Hot Sweaty Beaver on campus then please go and talk to it. I've heard a lot of Hot Sweaty Beavers go to the AU night but beside the netball team and woman's football and hockey the Frisbee team will also be there, so you can come and talk to us there too. End.

Seven goals and one BJ

Matt Perkins

Kings' Medics 3s: 1
LSE 4s: 7

The task of motivating yourself when you know that your talismanic goal-machine Palvir Athwal is absent is an unenviable task at the best of times. Al, who shares a "special relationship" with him, seemed especially downcast, but the whole team was affected; without Palvir's incessant top-quality banter and completely un-irritating accent, something seemed amiss on the journey over to Cobham. Anyone would assume that the performance would be uninspired and the result would be poor... What can I say? We got over it.

Consistency has been something which has troubled LSE 4ths in the league thus far, but the pressure-free fixture in the cup provided a welcome relief from the turmoil of ULU Division 1, and the full potential of the team was finally realised. The travelling group of players was made up of a combination of regulars, fringe players, and ringers from the 1sts (Fenton and Jacquesy) who sought a break from Ed Healy's gruelling dictatorship and wanted to sample the ladsy enjoyment of playing for the filthyies. Rumour has it that at least one of them might try to engineer a permanent move before the end of the transfer window.

As we rocked up to Chelsea's training ground, we contemplated the international nature of professional football today. Can Robinho understand Mark Hughes at Manchester City? Can Torres understand the scouse chat of Gerrard and Carragher? As all of the best teams in the world have to contend with this issue, it will not surprise you to discover that the 4ths have similar insurmountable problems to contend with. Can any of us, including our resident German (Berni Schultz), understand the profanity-littered incomprehensible Irish rants of Simpson or Deeny? No.

Thankfully, for once, communication difficulties were not an issue for us. The defence was well organised, including the ever-present Jarrett in goal, who managed to make several world class saves despite the dreadful hangover, captain Rog, who managed to prevent their strikers from converting, rather than merely preventing

himself from doing so, and G Crow who did very well, despite having only just returned from a long-standing injury sustained at Fabric. The play in attack was equally coherent, and the fluidity of play was comparable only to the silky golden locks of BJ Watson, which now sadly lie in pieces on the barber's floor.

The new streamlined head of BJ did show its worth early on, however, as he met Jacquesy's cross sweetly at the back post to put us one up. This was followed swiftly by a bit of daylight robbery by Al: a quick turn and volley on the edge of the box by Matt sent the ball heading for the bottom corner, only for Al to get in the way, deflect it against the opposite post, watch it trickle over the line and then turn and run away from goal triumphant, as though he had smashed it in from thirty yards.

More good play, especially in midfield, meant that a third goal was bound to come, and, just before half time, two consecutive tackles by Matt on their very slow defenders put Vik into the clear. He took the ball well and ran through to slot it past the "poor at best" keeper, leaving the whole team feeling very good about ourselves at half time.

The dominance from the first half continued straight from the off in the second, Simpson scoring a sublime goal from the edge of the box in the opening minutes. Vik finally lived up to his form of last season by scoring a further three goals, all of which began with a through-ball down the left from midfield, and ended with him easing it past the hapless goalkeeper into the bottom right-hand corner. The shine was somewhat taken off the victory, however, by a well struck free kick in the last few minutes which left Jarrett powerless, but we will blame Roggo's outstretched leg on the edge of the box for that one.

It would appear that now, at the business end of the season, the 4ths are beginning to show their real ability as a team. Although the results at the beginning of the season did not live up to expectations, and at times were even embarrassing (including losing to LSE 5ths!), we are starting to push on and make up for such poor performances. The most renowned team of the LSE FC off the pitch is fast becoming a force to be reckoned with on the pitch too, but you will continue to see our unforgettable characters, such as Nadir, the "beautiful" lightweight, and G Crow, albeit with the newly acquired ball and chain, out on a Wednesday night.

Spotted a hottie around LSE?
Bored of feeling like a stalker?

Send us an email at:
thebeaver.sport@lse.ac.uk

We'll publish the best love messages
in a Valentines special next week

PART B

Was ist **dada**?
Eine Kunst? Eine Philosophie? eine Politik?
Oder: Staatsreligion?
ist dada wirkliche **ENERGIE**?
oder ist es **Garnichts**, d.h.
alles?



THE ABSURD ISSUE

03.02.09

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goes on a trip. yes, that kind

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the movement is still relevant today

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two genders definitely aren't enough

EDITORIAL

Blassa galassasa! Having spent our week with Dadaist sound poetry drilling into our ears, we're very much in the mood to dispatch this latest issue, brimming with absurdist entertainments, into your loving arms. The stropo icon on the cover is a bit burnt around the edges, because we fried him in Country Life butter after he so happily sold his putrid soul to them. The stench of irony was overpowering though and we had to stop. Now we're off to translate the King James Bible into Esperanto.

**JULIAN BOYS &
SACHIN PATEL**

FAQ! FAX! FACTS!

Dear Sachin,

I was sitting in an Econ B lecture the other day, when I suddenly questioned why I was there. It came to me that I'd been drifting through my life without ever making a conscious decision. I'm off to Vegas to dance on tables.

See yous later,
Eleanor Pifflesnot

Dear Julian,

Echoing the complaint of Ms. Capone in a previous issue, I too have been issued with a fatuous TV Licensing warning letter. I'm all in favour of the BBC, but come on guys, I don't even have an aerial socket in my room.

With regret,
Miss Rose Berry

DON'T BE ABSURD: COME AND WRITE FOR PART B (OR WE'LL TURN YOU INTO A RHINOCEROS)

A HIGHER STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

lizchezboro is tripping the night fantastic

As I looked up, eyes burning and ears ringing with groaning thrums and popping drums, I saw that her face had transformed into the glowing purple grin of the Cheshire cat. The wide smile twisted and flung itself north towards her golden pupils, an exotic, luminous Disney-flavoured fantasy of only 35 seconds. Momentarily beautiful, more than a little threatening - and above all truly absurd. Those who dabble in the psychoactive all have their own surreal stories. The young man frozen in a hallway; trapped in a painting of a mountain that he then scaled barehanded, awaking with bleeding palms after an hour of motionless staring. The two friends clutching each other in a pub carvery, tears rolling as they were gripped by the fear of the buffet turkey coming to life and crawling across the carpet to gorge on their human flesh. The shy boy who cried as he realised he was murdering an orange, blubbing as the sweet, bloody juice ran down his fingers. Why would anybody put themselves through the fear and danger of dabbling in what even their own minds can't control?

The answer is simple, as it was for the writers whose melancholic tales of Naked Lunches and Brave New Worlds illuminate readers who have no desire to follow in their hallucinogenic footsteps. To read or observe the surreal insights of others gives little indication of what it truly feels to be consumed by them yourself, to sense the fear and freedom of losing a little of what makes you human. You threaten the ability to choose what you see, hear, smell and feel; all your senses are thrust upon each other in a swirling volcano of sounds that taste like raspberries. Why don't we all partake in this glorious journey of seeing what can't be seen? Beyond the challenge of finding the necessary chemicals and the health risks that go with them, we are afraid of what we might become if our minds become truly free. The tales of 'bad trips' that leave their victims trapped in a lifetime of paranoia serve as an example, but more so it is the notion of risking ones own sanity to transcend the rational which implants the indisputable fear. What does it say about a person if they are willing to risk themselves so terminally, just to get high? What does it say about a person

if they want to get high at all?

Our world still likes to see drug use as an excuse, a desperate reasoning in the face of poverty, anguish or at best simply a youthful mistake. The need to escape reality is seen as a weakness, as if the lack of moral fibre forces such actions on to people who simply don't know better. The smackheads and junkies immortalised, in films are different to those we see at the tube station; their stories are ones deserving pity rather than fascination. Drugs are dirty, intertwined with criminality and stupidity, setting a path to the dark side of a society that is near impossible to exit. The concept of risking ones own well being is a threat to the conforming masses - someone who is willing to be a hazard to themselves may well be a hazard to others.

Away from this supposed reality of druggy darkness, we idolise the glamour of celebrities with powder around their nostrils and the sitcoms starring school children smoking bongos. For all the victims there are the gloried insights of Baudelaire and Kerouac, the Stones and the Beatles. Drugs may destroy people, but they have created some of the most beautiful absurdities of music and word.

I defy those of you who haven't considered the fun of going to Las Vegas with Hunter S. Thompson, armed with "two bags of grass, 75 pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powered blotter acid, a shaker half full of cocaine, and a whole galaxy of multi-colored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers." In case you haven't heard, he had a bloody good time.

The truth about drugs is a great social secret-dabbling in drugs is tainted by its illegal status as easily as alcohol is legitimised by legal sanction. Do drugs damage you? Why of course. They keep you up until lunchtime on a Sunday, rambling romantic embarrassments while your teeth grind uncontrollably. They cost you money that would have been better spent on a course text. They can cause life-risking dehydration, mental illness, liver damage or even death. But do they threaten you more than alcohol, cigarettes and 'bad' fats? 'Sensible' drug use - a notion that some will spit their tea out at - is not only possible, it's increasingly common.

Perhaps the most obvious step is to get the

facts straight.

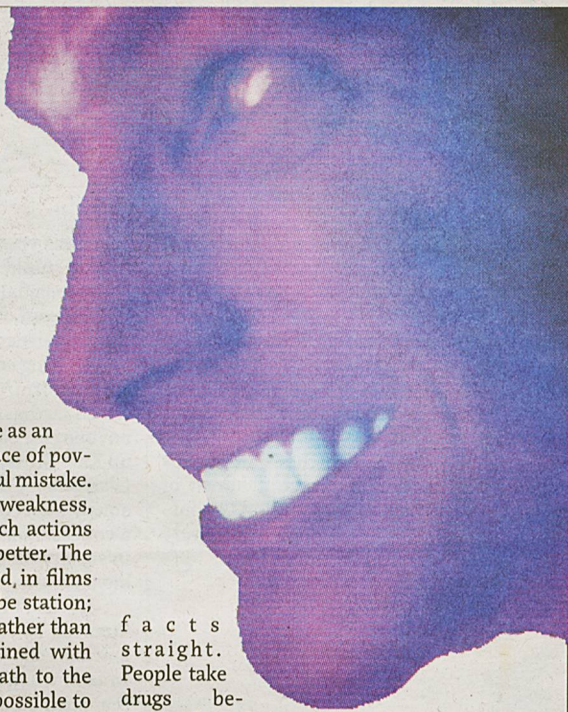
People take drugs because they feel good. In fact, they feel amazing.

Chemically speaking, anything that floods your brain with serotonin and induces feelings associated with orgasms (and childbirth, unsettlingly) is going to feel good. Ecstasy, a poster-child of deviant youth culture, is associated with only 27 deaths a year compared to the 8724 deaths from alcohol. While it is true that more people drink than drop pills, the odds are still looking good considering you're ingesting something bought from a stranger in a club toilet. If you want to escape reality just for one night, not only is it relatively easy, it's an educated risk that many people decide is more than worth it. Perhaps reality is accepting that drugs are not only a part of life but also a potentially positive one, and the vehement denial of any good coming from them is truly unrealistic and damaging. If drugs come from a doctor they save lives, if they come from a dealer they end them.

While we can enjoy the surrealism of others riding the hallucinogenic wave, perhaps it is too

Two bags of grass, 75 pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powered blotter acid, a salt shaker half full of cocaine, and a whole galaxy of multi-colored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers.

much to expect society to accept people who do so without creating glorious works of art. Our politicians smoked pot (Obama even enjoyed a cheeky line at high school) but they concurrently tighten legislation on even the safest of drugs in the name of defending societal morality. Perhaps when the generation currently dabbling in the illicit becomes the generation in power then things will change. It is foolish to believe that the drugs we simultaneously condemn and glorify, reject and enjoy will ever be less of a presence in today's world - and hopefully they will continue to add to the beauty of the absurdity that PartB recognises today.



DADA PUNK

Liam McLaughlin delves into dada

For a town that is commonly considered dull and mundane, which itself is situated in a country generally thought to be one of the most boring in the world, Zürich in Switzerland was, unbelievably, the birthplace of Dadaism.

But what the hell is Dadaism? Well, it's definitely not a philosophy about Fathers. It's actually a highly influential cultural movement whose genesis occurred in the Cabaret Voltaire (the original one which was a nightclub, not an 80s electronica band) in Zürich, where a bunch of exiled German pacifists hung out around the outbreak of World War One. As with practically every

"Dada was a war, but over souls, not bodies."

other cultural movement of any force and influence, there was a dialectic to Dadaism. It came as a direct reaction to what these people perceived to be the negative and destructive influences on society of bourgeois, nationalist and colonialist interests/ideologies which were believed to be the root causes of the war, itself fuelled by greed, power and money. It seemed that the 'reason' and 'logic' on which capitalist society is based had in fact malfunctioned and led people to war. The Dadaists manifested this sentiment through their art, which was completely absurd, chaotic and irrational. In this sense Dadaism represented a reaction against wartime cultural and intellectual conformity via absolutely bizarre artistic leanings. Unlike the Italian Futurists before them, who saw constant warfare as a means to create a culture that existed for art, Dadaism was seen to be "anti-art". Anything that traditional art stood for; be it aesthetics, sensibilities, emotions or the intellect, Dadaism sought to be the opposite; to offend and destroy everything which traditional culture upheld and thus also destroy the seeds of war, and ultimately, war itself.

So, it could be seen as a kind of anarchist political movement disguised as a cultural one; seeking to overhaul the corrupt society with its own combative ideology of nihilistic principles designed to destroy the war-mongering culture of the day with complete artistic chaos and fury and start afresh again once society had been smashed. A more aggressive Marxism perhaps?!

In terms of art though, no matter how you feel about post-modernism, Dadaism had to come before in order to create it. And thus it gave us a much-needed sense of irony in relation to the overblown, pretentious place the art world can sometimes be. Consider Marcel Duchamp's picture of the moustachioed Mona Lisa (*L.H.O.O.Q.*, or *Elle a chaud au cul*, 1919). Or his signed urinal ("Fountain", 1917). These playful yet cynical pieces were exhibited as art in the early 20th century, which must have been completely groundbreaking. They undermined everything art stood for, and made a mockery of snobbish artistic hegemony, classical conceptions of aesthetics and the intellectual/cultural pride associated with an appreciation of 'high' art. Unfortunately this also

paved the way for humourless, opportunistic and frankly stupid artists like Tracy Emin and Damien Hurst to pedal their derivative bollocks and make millions out of it. If they were truly influenced by the Dadaists they'd kill themselves and exhibit their rotting corpses, as a new form of art. In their current form, they're as much a part of the system which Dadaism sought to destroy as anything or anyone else considered today to be 'far out': stand up Kate Moss, Vice magazine, The Libertines and Glastonbury festival; all tools endorsed by hideously subversive corporations designed to fulfil a concessional quota of 'coolness' and 'rebellion' in society, all the while under the watchful eyes of big business. But I digress.

It wasn't only art which was affected and influenced by Dadaism either. Incidentally Dadaism has echoes in music too. Incidentally in punk. In fact, when you think about it, it's only natural that such an angry and destructive movement as Dadaism could find a soul mate in the foremost genre in abrasive, aggressive "anti-music". Although the Sex Pistols' vocalist Johnny Rotten said he'd never said or heard the word 'dada' since he was a baby, the same themes of inspiration can be found in punk and Dadaism; anger, nihilism, destruction, the will to unconformity, absurdity and the will to rail against the system. In his book 'Lipstick Traces', music journalist Greil Marcus explores the jump from the black and white Cabaret Voltaire club days and the genesis of Dadaism to the Sex Pistols and the punk movement. Marcus writes "Dada was a traffic accident; it was a cult. Dada was a mask, eyes without a face. Dada was a religion, spawn of ancient heresies. Dada was a war, but over souls, not bodies. So are all wars." So how does he relate punk to Dada? He says that both are completely nihilistic; propagating "the belief in nothing and the wish to become nothing: oblivion is its ruling passion." Punk's rails against everything and ultimate nihilism (see the Sex Pistols' damning sneer of "we don't care" in 'Pretty Vacant') were indeed consistent with the Dada cry of "nothing is true; everything is permit-

"Postmodernism gave us a much needed sense of irony."

ted". As the Dada Almanac defines it, "Dadaism is a stratagem by which the artist can impart to the citizen something of the inner unrest which prevents the artist himself from being lulled to sleep by custom and routine. By means of external stimuli, he can compensate for the citizen's lack of inner urgency and vitality and shake him into new life." And indeed punk was about shocking people; about offending them. The Sex Pistols' treasonous 'God Save the Queen' and their use of expletives on 'Never Mind the Bollocks' are just two well-known examples in a stinking pool of social-boundary/taste barrier pushing activities that the legacy of punk has to offer us. Punk was about attacking the audience, punk was about de-

manding. Hell the audience even attacked punk; Joe Strummer used to have to scrape hardened phlegm off his guitar before every Clash gig during the 70s!

But even after punk, in the new-wave days of the late 70s and early 80s, musicians co-opted Dadaist artistic methods (but interestingly ignored the rage and nihilism, probably due to the periods sustained economic stability). For example, the Dadaist technique of 'sound poetry' created by Hugo Ball in the early 20th century was used by the Talking Heads on the opening track of their album *Fear of Music* in 1979 where they used an actual poem by Ball as the lyrics:

Gadjiberibim ba clandridi
Laulibnnicadorigadjam
Abim beriglassala glandride
Eglassala tuffm Izim bra

Bim blassa galassasa
zim brabim
Blassa gallassasa
zim brabim

Abim beriglassala grandrid
Eglassala tuffm Izim bra

Gadjiberibim ba glandridi
Laulibnnicadora gadjam
Abim beriglassasa glandrid
Eglassala tuffm Izim bra

It means nothing. It's completely absurd. But as one of the main figures of alternative music said in the late 80s in an interview with music critic Simon Reynolds, "...if you say something without thinking about why you said it, and because it has a root inside you, it's much more 'real', true to you, than if you think and analyse everything..." The man who said that was Black Francis of the Pixies who also aptly admitted "I'm a Dadaist but in a very naive way". This continued appreciation of the scrapping of meaning/understanding in favour of absurdity in art represents a more primal essence of humanity reappearing throughout history. And to artists influenced by Dadaism this is a wonderful, quirky and absurdist antithesis to the homogenous style of superstructure based art aesthetics we're constantly force fed on the TV and radio even today.

These modern musicians and artists, punk

or not, wanted to change the world. The parallels that can be drawn between Dadaism and them are enormous and shocking considering the fact that they were relatively unrelated and occurred roughly 50 years apart. And it's interesting to wonder why this is, in the frame of a wider context: what are the common denominators which led to such 'anti' movements at completely different times? It's not war, as the original Dadaists thought, because there was no war that punk-era Britain was involved in during the 70s (the Cold War doesn't count, it being bloodless).

"If you say something without thinking about why you said it, and because it has a root inside you, it's more real."

I myself would venture a guess that these movements were in fact fuelled by tantrum-like rage at living in a world seemingly devoid of meaning. In a capitalist, Godless, individualistic consumer-centric society, meaning is removed from everything we naturally and rationally hold dear to us as humans (community, mutual respect, morals etc.) and replaced with hollow life goals dictated to us by adverts and faceless corporations. As Hugo Ball said, "The war is founded on a glaring mistake, men have been confused with machines". Movements like Dadaism and punk sought to strike out at this empty existence not through 'simple' Marxist methods, but by completely contradicting the shallow life goals set for us and instead trying to throw

everything into chaos and disarray via absurdist art in order to destroy this type of society altogether.

A noble cause, and one I'm willing to bet will reappear throughout the future of culture for a long, long time to come.

If you're interested...

Greil Marcus - *Lipstick Traces*

Marcel Duchamp - *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*

Simon Reynolds - *Rip it Up and Start Again*

Dawn Ades - *The Dada Reader*

Hans Richter - *Dada: Art and Anti Art*



One sunny June morning a fair amount of time ago, I was required to expand on the subject of an Absurdist play for a French literature oral and I was as thrilled as you can possibly be in such circumstances. The main reason for this is that Absurdism is a brilliant, complicated, twisted and very, very weird literary and philosophical movement.

The passage I had to talk about in my oral was taken from *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, which in many ways epitomises the general tone of Absurdism. The two main characters, Vladimir and Estragon, wander around aimlessly throughout the entire play, occasionally joined by another couple Pozzo and his slave Lucky (who are in a kind of sado-masochistic, mutually dependent relationship) and wait for Godot (God?), who never shows up. In my oral I chatted happily about the identity crisis of the characters, how the general suggestion was that mankind had been abandoned by God, the impossibility of expressing yourself through any form of language, the Hegelian master-slave dialectic as well as the general grotesqueness of human nature.

By now you probably get it: Absurdist plays are potential minefields of bizarre connotations and philosophical concepts. The second you start digging into these texts you are pursued by symbols and ideas expressed through the grotesque characters, relationships and situations as well as at times total destruction of intelligible language.

The Absurdist movement is all about plays. The playwrights were a bunch of rebellious and anti-bourgeois Parisian intellectuals out to challenge pre-conceived ideas about what theatre was about, as well as generally holding up a mirror to mankind. In many ways they reflect the state of mind of the post-war era: traumatised and trying to come to terms with what had just happened.

The roots of the Absurdist movement can be identified in Alfred Jarry's play *Ubu Roi*, which was first performed in 1896. *Ubu Roi* is a kind of parody of Macbeth: the characters are grotesque, the humour is coarse and the provocation is in your face. In it, Mère Ubu encourages her husband Père Ubu to seize the crown because it will enable him to "obtain an umbrella" amongst numerous other, mainly monetary, advantages. Throughout the play all speech from the main character, Père Ubu, is punctuated by the exclamation "merdre" - a deformation of the classic curse "shit". In *Ubu Roi* you already get a sense of the underlying desire to show the grotesqueness of human nature. You

also feel the trend towards the destruction of the language, although in this case the language is manipulated so as to emphasize the sheer atrocity of Père Ubu's personality.

Other dominant Absurdist themes can be found in Jean-Paul Sartre's play *Huis Clos*, written in 1944, which explores the suffering caused by others as well as the general entrapment of the human race: Hell is quite literally other people!

The foundations were therefore in place for the arrival of Absurdism in the fifties. The movement was kick-started by the dawning realisation of the slide of humanity during the Second World War. The Absurdist playwrights' artistic creation is therefore centred on the absurdity of the human race in the light of these traumatic events. They abandon all pre-established forms of classical theatre. The plays show the impossibility of communication; the impossibility of expressing oneself and a general incomprehension and anxiety as to what human existence is even about.

Aside from the aforementioned Beckett, the Grand Master of the movement is undoubtedly Eugène Ionesco. This playwright of Romanian origin writes in impeccable French, and appears to have the objective of purposefully messing with his audience. In his plays he systematically removes all our reference points as to how human beings are supposed to behave and interact. All logic, reason, language and morality is pulled apart. Human bestiality, incomprehension and general emptiness are the resonant themes. His plays seem to reflect the playwright's permanent anxiety concerning the condition of mankind.

A play written by Ionesco can trigger different reactions: sometimes you find them mesmerising and at other times all you feel is genuine annoyance at the inaccessibility of something you can't understand. For instance I found sitting through

LANGUAGE, DISMANTLED

hélène taberlet examines her
love of absurdist theatre

The Chairs one of the longest, drawn-out and painful experiences in my whole life. An elderly couple decide to celebrate their wedding anniversary by throwing a splendid party. The only problem is that all the guests are imaginary and represented by empty chairs, and at the end of the play both characters kill themselves. Throughout the entire play the couple have long discussions with their imaginary, distinguished guests. The emptiness is everywhere, the two main characters loathe each other and although they talk, they somehow do not manage to communicate. Personally I found it pointless, but many would undoubtedly disagree with this opinion.

Ionesco is definitely a writer with whom you maintain a love-hate relationship. I hated *The Chairs* but clicked with *Rhinocéros* and *Killing Game*. Both plays are powerful, and neither allow you a second of breathing space. *Rhinocéros* deals with the conformity of human beings and how quickly they accept a situation, however horrific. The inhabitants of a small town start coming down with an illness, "rhinocerotis", and slowly they all turn into rhinoceroses. One interpretation is that Ionesco is showing the relatively easy rise of fascism in Europe or the collaboration of European countries with Nazi invaders. This play is considered emblematic of the 'Theatre of the Absurd' as it depicts a worrying portrait of human nature.

Gradually however, this highly avant-garde movement became rather more *arrière-garde*. Other forms of theatre took over. However, deconstructing human nature on the stage seems to be a theme that will never really go away. A further legacy of this movement is the destruction of language to get a point across. One example of this is the contemporary playwright Valère Novarina. In his play *Inquiétude*, language is completely dismantled into something unrecognisable, but which allows the characters to dialogue in a way that zigzags between tragedy and comedy, as well as rendering their raw human emotions all the more powerful. Clearly, the spirit of the 'Theatre of the Absurd' still finds a home in some artists' minds, and not just in those of students of French literature.

ABSURD ASYLUM

jackblumenau thinks oppression is madness

In *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, a play by Tom Stoppard with music for an orchestra by André Previn, the National Theatre has provided both a complete and complex theatrical experience. The play moves beyond expressions of social indignation and makes a profound moral argument on the perennial struggle between order and truth.

Alexander Ivanov (Joseph Millson) is imprisoned in an 'Ordinary Psychiatric Hospital' for 'paranoid delusions'. The reality, however, is that Ivanov is a political dissident and he has been locked up for, if you'll excuse the metaphor, not playing from the same sheet music as the Soviet orchestra. Ivanov shares both the cell and – in a conceit upon which the resolution of the play depends – name of another patient who has also been institutionalised, but for seemingly genuine psychological reasons. This other Ivanov hears the continuous playing of an imaginary orchestra, of which he believes himself to be the conductor. The two Ivanovs thus represent the dual insanity of the Soviet establishment – that which resides within the people incarcerated by the system, and that of the system itself. As Soviet doctors, themselves fearful of their superiors, pressure the two men towards their 'cures', the dissident Ivanov is forced to consider whether the attainment of personal liberty is justification for a denial of truth and the abandonment of justice.

The music provided by Previn is much more than incidental to the piece, providing, as it

does, elucidation and complexity to the central theme of insanity. The Southbank Sinfonia, a young orchestra of talented and energetic musicians, capture beautifully the bleakness of the asylum while also portraying how a mind in free-fall can move rapidly from euphoria to despair. Moreover, the gentle underscoring of Ivanov's rhyming letters home to his son, Sacha (Bryony Hannah), help to highlight a moment of true emotional connection and empathy – facets that can often seem somewhat thin on the ground in Stoppard's work.

The theatricality of the production is well supported by two strong central performances. Millson's Alexander is a gaunt and haunting figure, whose righteous opposition seethes with a quiet anger and yet avoids toppling into a sermonizing diatribe. The lunatic Ivanov is unpredictable and dangerous, whilst also funny and fickle in Toby Jones' charismatic portrayal. However, Morris and Barrett make two mistakes in their casting. Sacha, Ivanov's son, is played by a woman, rather than a child; a choice that reminds the audience more of pantomime than of serious political theatre. While the portrayal of Sacha is tender and touching, the father/son relationship at the centre of the piece seems fundamentally undermined. Further, Dan Stevens' Doctor is allowed to overplay the comedy of the character at the expense of fully developing the oppressive fear inherent in the writing – the Soviet officials should seem just as scared of the system, and their superiors, as the patients are.

In his introduction, Stoppard suggests that the heart of the play revolves around the idea of a person as a discordant note, refusing to be muted, in an orchestrated society. Ivanov claims that sane people are sent to mental asylums for political reasons, and, as proof of this, points to the fact that he himself has no symptoms, only opinions. "Your opinions are your symptoms," replies his doctor, "Your disease is dissent." The play is thus a perceptive and precise criticism of Soviet systems of intellectual and political oppression.

And yet, beyond this more concentrated, political argument, it is a story of admiration for those with the courage to stand up against the type of subversion of truth that Ivanov experiences at the hands of the KGB. It is precisely because of this wider message that Stoppard's play transcends the simple binaries of Cold War politics in which it was written and remains relevant in the post-Soviet era. In an enlightening programme note, Vladimir Bukovsky, a political dissident who spent more than 12 years in Soviet prisons and psychiatric hospitals, suggests that one must treat a weakened political regime as one would a wounded animal: "You can't leave a wounded animal, it will get a second breath and be at your throat."

The National, then, is providing important and prescient work, as Stoppard's play ensures that the maimed figure of an oppressive conductor does not disappear, with the wave of a baton, from our minds.

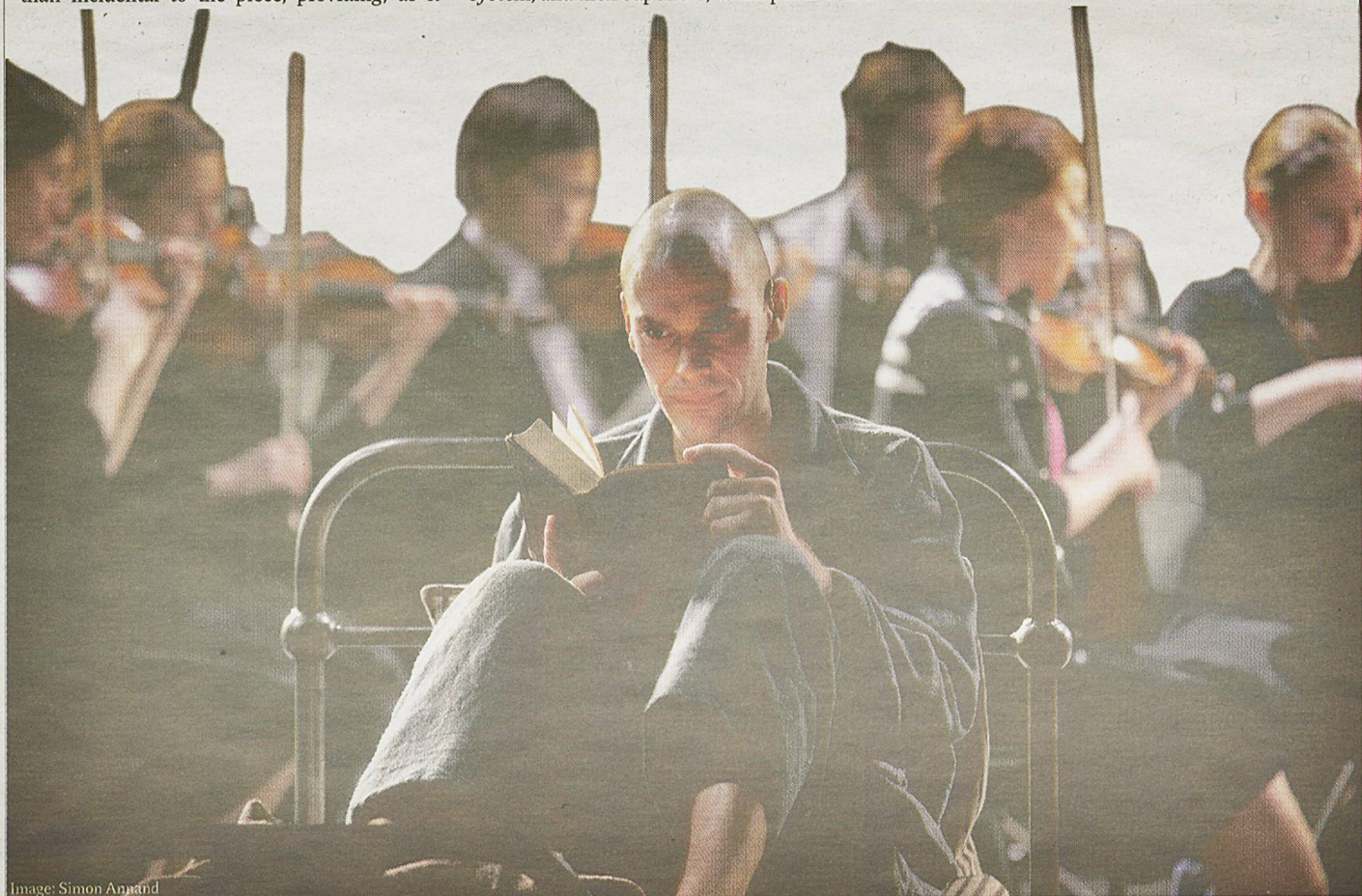


Image: Simon Annand





IN WITH THE ABSURD...

nathanbriant is absurdly obscure

Before I started at the LSE in September and problems with 'amore' and what may develop into a fatal addiction to 'vino' began, I listened to loads of music which I thought was rare: in my pretty nondescript West Midlands town, I thought I was, in the words of Frank Skinner, a 'hip-hop dude'. No one I ever talked to knew **Gang of Four** or **Gong**; they liked **Muse** or the **Red Hot Chili Peppers**, bands that are alright if you're about 14. Now I've met people in London and stuff, I've realised I'm a bit of a shallow popscener with a bit of a Midlands drawl. I feel distinctly normal (bad) not knowing obscure/absurd bands like **Beefmulehomebasegambster14000**. Especially, I feel bloody awful about having all of **Blur's** B-sides (like the excellent Popszene - recommendation number one) when people much cooler than me have all **Neil Young's** or **Bob Dylan's** B-sides in original vinyl. I liked feeling detached from particular scenes, but now I realise that in fact I was pretty crap at it; people have better hair, prettier faces, better glasses (which, unlike me, they actually don't need) than me. Really, as an owner of a mop of a haircut, cheap glasses and Clarks shoes I thinking I'm learning that I'm just not 'cult' enough, or at least not as much as I thought I was. People are just more obscure than me.

My chosen band today as I sit here, half-pissed, listening to Vanessa Feltz on BBC London, is the truly unique **XTC**. All members of the original line up were all brought up in the distinctly average town of Swindon, Wiltshire, and made their real break through with their excellent-but-average third album *Drums & Wires*, released in 1979. I say excellent-but-average in that I love the album and parts of it verge on pop genius, particularly the tracks 'Making Plans For Nigel' and 'Scissor Man' - I was even told when I bought it by a ginger-specky guy in HMV in Birmingham that I'd like it - and sometimes (in my more optimistic, alcohol-fuelled moments) I tell myself that that it's my favourite album. But then the laborious 'Day In, Day Out' rears its ugly head.

This 'excellent-but-average' theme doesn't continue throughout XTC's career. Every album from *Drums & Wires* to 1989's *Oranges & Lem-*

ons belongs in everyone's record collection, each shrouded in the band's unique delivery and verve, each record extremely different, yet similarly weird. *Mummer* is pastoral and one for people who like their churches and country walks; *Black Sea*, one of their easiest records to listen to, is edgier and deals with subjects that their contemporaries, like **Duran Duran**, would never have thought to have dealt with. 'Respectable Street', for example, confronts lower-middle classes stuffiness and life in a way **Simon Le Bon** simply couldn't while he was sailing on that fucking yacht in **Phil Collins**-esque tax exile; 'Now she speaks about diseases/and which sex position pleases best her old man/Avon lady fills the creases/when she manages to squeeze in past the caravans/that never move from their front gardens'. 'Dear God', not one for God-believers, caused them much infamy amongst the Christian Right in the USA after basically doubting the existence of God. Have **U2** ever taken such risks?

In truly British style, they have one truly weird member, their bespectacled and seriously loopy front man, Andy Partridge, who had a breakdown on stage at the height of their fame because 'his wife took away his Valium', which consequently forced the band to stop touring permanently. But it is this loon that is the driving force on their best, most heartfelt songs.

Their influence lives on in bands like **The Futureheads** and **Franz Ferdinand** (well, the first album, at least) and, if you listen really, hard, 'Sgt. Rock Is Going To Help Me' from the pre-Partridge

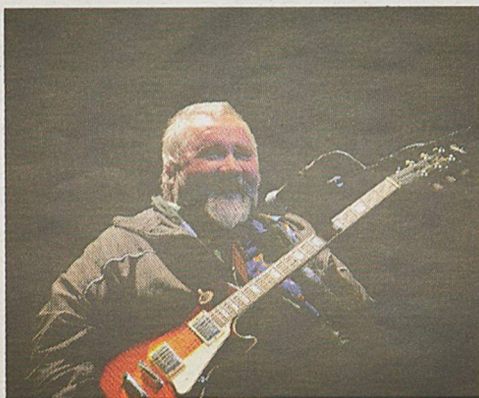
breakdown days is played in the background of the West Country-shot *Hot Fuzz*. If you're looking for one album to get to the level of my absurd musical obscurity, then get the essential *Skylarking*. A beautiful album set clearly in the mould of **The Kinks' Village Green** album; like Ray Davies, Partridge seamlessly threads the themes of love and the nasty things that come with it. '1000 Umbrellas' is one of the most beautiful love songs I know. And it's set around a weather forecast. Truly absurd if you listen to **Leona Lewis**, but absolutely dazzling lyrically; 'How can you smile and forecast/weather's getting better'/and you'll soon forget her/if you let the sunshine come through'.

In something that would seem truly ridiculous if you knew who I was, copy me and buy it. But don't copy me and drink too much and then feel neglected about things that were never going to happen anyway...That would be truly absurd.



OBITUARY

liammclaughlin laments the late **john martyn**



John Martyn, one of the UK's most diverse and celebrated songwriters, passed away last Thursday, aged 60, after a series of alcohol-related health problems. Although never very well-known besides a die-hard live following, Glaswegian Martyn left a legacy of music which passed beyond the arbitrary boundaries of the 'folk' genre and passed through jazz, ambient, blues and rock. He was born in 1948 and started his musical career at 17. He signed to Island records in 1967 with whom he stayed for over 20 years. He quickly developed a unique guitar style and his early experimentations with guitar effects including the 'Fuzzbox' and 'Echoplex' pedals were groundbreaking and are still relevant today. Martyn however is probably best known for the tribute

to his close friend and another great UK songwriter, Nick Drake, with the title track on his brilliant album *Solid Air*, written after Drake died in 1974. Martyn also came to be known as 'the Father of trip-hop' after the release of his 1977 album *One World*. It was made in Jamaica with reggae producer Lee 'Scratch' Perry.

Martyn's rich, smokey vocals and gorgeous guitar voicings - whether applied to spacey jams, blues n' roll or just trad folk - will always be a cut above and here's wishing him *bon voyage*. A few lines from one of his most popular and beautiful songs would be apt as a closer: "May you never lay your head down/Without a hand to hold/May you never make your bed out in the cold." Good night John Martyn.

... OUT WITH THE OLD

emerharrington paddles in the mainstream

I don't know whether it's the New Year, or the feeling of finally settling into a new city or 'scene', if you like, but it finally feels like everything is clicking into place. Obviously, I don't mean everything. (I'm a student. Things are never all going just fine.) Musically, I mean, the world seems to have struck some kind of welcome balance. The wheels of music have turned and finally clicked together with a chiming synchronicity that sounds awfully like pop electronica.

Having put to bed my teenage rebellion demons quite some time ago, I now feel comfortable and not at all embarrassed about my affinity for a decent pop tune. I have paid my dues to the gods of alternative music. I have realised the secret that no one is really different, we just identify with one band of oddballs more than others. When I was 16, I thought I was the definition of cool with my cartoon t-shirts, baggy jeans and crush on John Frusciante. When I discovered **Pearl Jam** I thought my life had changed forever. Boys with guitars were the most endearing, cool creatures in the world. If they had a box of b-side mix tapes and a Fender Stratocaster, they were officially eloping material. Whatever the question, rock was the answer. Then, I went to university, realised I wasn't as hip or cool as I liked to tell myself, and opened the musical dam and discovered only after letting down the barriers of musical snobbery did I truly understand the sacred truth: cool isn't cool. Uncool is cool.

I discovered folk, the beauty of **Joni Mitchell**. I discovered the true genius of **Steely Dan** and even better, the riotous appeal of my local Steely Dan tribute band, the Dan Clan and all eleven of their members. I learned the joy of singing Take

That songs ten years after you spat them out for being naff. Most importantly, I embraced the notion that pop can work. In fact, it can be something of great beauty. It just has to be done right. Look at **Take That**: the quintessential man band. I say man band, because **Take That** made me see with their comeback that every boy band should be made of members over the age of 35. The ones who have come out the other side of 'love me love me love me' efforts at music to realise that they know naff more than anyone, and the pain of fifteen years of naff love songs and heartbreak is etched all over their chiselled (but ever squiggier) faces.

I have also come to admire the true art of making pop tunes that actually manage to grab people with many diverse tastes in music. While I have a certain amount of respect for the success of today's manufactured pop icons, the **Pussycat Dolls** and **Girls Aloud** for instance, the pop that I have truly come to appreciate is the self-made, self-modelled pop; the pop that tells a story, expresses a personality and grabs people. It isn't difficult to be an underground techno DJ and have a following of people who will go to the underground clubs of London to see them do their thing. It is easy to be a Finnish death metal group and have a cult following on You Tube who will travel to a rock festival to see you no matter where in Europe you are. Being different and weird will guarantee you some size of a weird following. As I said, no one is really different; they choose a certain type of people and music with which to identify. I admire the people who do their thing, unashamedly, and capture the dancers, the pop kids, the alternative clubbers, the 'my

music has to be real' people, the freaks, the geeks and the artists.

That's why I feel like now is the time where the wheels have finally clicked together. With acts like **Little Boots** and **Ladyhawke** hotly tipped to rip the UK music scene apart in the next year, I couldn't be happier about how things have worked out. Finally, my embattled popism has been vindicated. This is what it can do. Listening to the addictive hooks and the catchy lyrics, nobody can deny the appeal of these tunes. And now it is finally happening. Thanks to cool pop, pop is cool. Dancing doesn't need to be done to underground hard house. Alternative doesn't need to be the b side of some obscure metal band. Homemade and original music from the MySpace generation can make it into the mainstream in a big way. (Thank you **Arctic Monkeys**.) If you need any proof of the success of pop in infiltrating the cool kids' camp, just do what I did last weekend. Walk into Top Shop on Oxford Circus and you will hear **Ladyhawke's** album playing. Then take a trip into Urban Outfitters and you will see her CD on sale at the checkout. The stylish people have embraced electro pop! I'm ready for the wheels to continue to turn in 2009. **Little Boots** will rule the world, and not just the pointy shoed-skinny-jeaned underground club world of East London. I mean the whole world. The main street, baby. The electro pop revolution is here, so throw away your shackles of musical snobbery and put on something colourful, let the cheesiness in and get out and start dancing to the infectious (in a sanitary way) beats of the new music of 2009.

IS THIS THE END?

possibly not says **adamutting**

London's night clubs are shutting down like there is no tomorrow. Indeed, my witty title references the conclusion of one of London's most celebrated night clubs - 'The End'. After a thirteen year reign as a top London underground club (not only is it actually under the ground, it's also full to bust with the cool-kids of London town), **The End** shut its huge metal doors a week ago last Sunday. Opening in 1995, the club came from humble beginnings and rose to hosting and nurturing stunning DJs like Carl Craig, Sven Vath, Laurent Garnier, Roni Size, Erol Alkan, and many more.

The closing of **The End** brought the tally of big clubs in London closed within the last 13 months to a whopping 5. Included in this list are the **Cross**, the **Key**, **Canvas** and, of course, **Turnmills**. On the 14th of this month, the **London Astoria** also had its final night before making way for the **CrossRail** link.

The question remains, who will fill these clubbing boots? Well, last September **Fabric's** new club 'Matter' opened at the **Oz**. Praised for the 'body kinetic' dance floor and ridiculously detailed visual projectors it may be, it is admittedly quite a trek for an average night out.

Moves, albeit slightly smaller ones, are also be-

ing made in the east of London, mainly around **Shoreditch** - the cool part of town for good reason. Not only are **Cargo** and **Herbal** both to be found there, but also many smaller and promising clubs, including the **Cube** (Studio 54 style); **Public Life** - a toilet - and **Last Days of Decadence**. So if you want to escape the onslaught of "double cheese vodka sexy RnB Red-Bull" clubs then head east.

Electro, at Last Days of Decadence. Expect anything and everything you could cram into the eclectic electronic bracket. 8pm-2am, Wednesday 4th February. £3 in advance. Find a flyer around LSE (www.electro.co.uk)



THE WRESTLER

williamcmahon gives the new mickey rourke picture *****

Oddly enough *The Wrestler* isn't really about wrestling, in the same way that *Blindness* isn't really about blindness. Mickey Rourke plays an aged wrestler (Randy the Ram) who peaked 20 years ago. The film starts off at a point where he is still wrestling in sports halls and community centres for small crowds. Despite having lost almost all of his former glory and looking like Charlize Theron in *Monster*, he's still worshipped by his remaining fans and respected by his fellow wrestlers. But a couple of matches into the film, Randy suffers a heart attack and is told that he can't wrestle any more. The rest of the film follows his attempts to regain control of a broken life outside of wrestling, as we watch the only identity that he has ever cared about slip away.

The acting in the film is extraordinary, and, not surprisingly, both Mickey Rourke and Marissa Tomei were nominated for Academy Awards (Best Actor, and Best Actress in a Supporting Role, respectively), with Mickey Rourke already picking up

the Golden Globe for Best Actor. They both offer stunning and nuanced performances that deconstruct the multilayered personalities of those who professionally entertain on the peripheries of modern society.

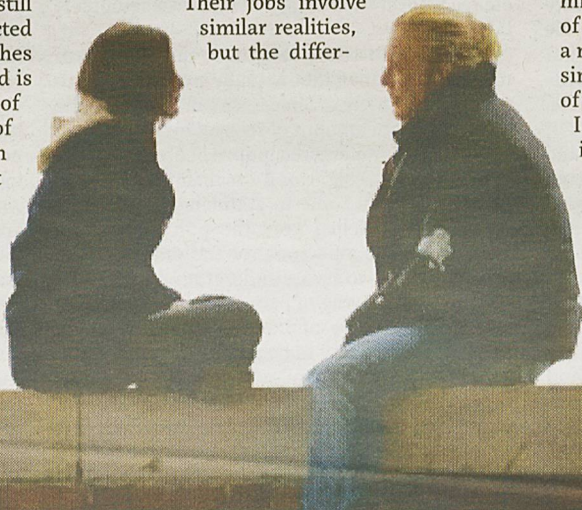
Marissa Tomei, who plays a 44-year-old stripper named Cassidy, is instrumental in contrasting Mickey Rourke's character.

Their jobs involve similar realities, but the differ-

ence between the two is that Cassidy is able to separate her private life from her work life, while Randy can only be Randy the Ram and not Robin Ramzinski, the deli-counter attendant.

The stark contrast between the two worlds of Randy and Robin is well played-out. We are shown incredibly choreographed - indeed, almost beautiful - wrestling scenes, and then within minutes we're back to the cold stark world outside of his wrestling persona. In that world, Randy is a nothing more than a gentle giant and Cassidy a single mother with bills to pay. The juxtaposition of these two realities is incredibly engrossing, and I couldn't help but become emotionally involved in Randy's struggle to live a normal life.

Indeed, it is a struggle that is universal in nature; we all come to a place where we must reconcile the person we have sought to become with the person we have been all along. The film gets its power in this basic truth that in the end, we all must wrestle with ourselves in the same way that Randy does.



SEVEN POUNDS

navjyotlehl finds the new Will Smith film worth the money

Gabriele Muccino's (director of *The Pursuit of Happyness*) *Seven Pounds* tells the story of Ben Thomas, played by Will Smith, an IRS agent with a secretive past. "In seven days God created the world," says Ben. "And in seven seconds I shattered mine." In order to redeem himself he feels the need to forever change the lives of seven strangers. It soon becomes clear, however, that the sacrifice necessary to bring that change to fruition is a daunting one.

The film, while at times feeling tedious and without direction, does find its momentum.

It delivers, for better or for worse, scene after scene of tears, anger or pain, with the occasional comedic relief provided by a chubby hotel owner. But these interspersed moments of humor do not penetrate the overwhelming, somewhat oppressive sadness of the picture.

The fact that the number seven is so crucial to the overarching theme of the film makes it frustrating that Muccino

focuses so much attention on one of the strangers - Emily Posa, played by Rosario Dawson - and not enough on the other six that Ben is also reaching out to. But the connection that develops between Emily and Ben is necessary to reveal the true impact that his sacrifice will inevitably have. It brings him back in touch with the humanity he lost with the dawn of the secret that he has been keeping.

What all seven strangers share in common is that they all need help and Ben is the man - probably the only man - who can give it to them. The film illustrates the gentle beauty behind charity and compassion, and shows how even a small gesture of kindness can turn into friendship or romance. And through taking us on Ben's journey towards redemption, it reveals that sometimes the things worth fighting and dying for are the things that are also, ultimately, worth living for. My ticket cost seven pounds and seventy pence, but seeing this journey play out on film was definitely worth much more.



HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR NEWS?

charliehodgson prefers to read all about it

I must confess that I hate TV news. I am one of those annoying people who changes the channel when the evening news comes on and settles for a Jeremy Kyle rerun instead. I have never lost that childish groan that accompanies the opening bars of the BBC news theme tune. It's not that I find current events boring, or that I am unconcerned about the issues facing the world, it's just that I think the morons employed to inform us of these issues are about as skilled at nuanced and in-depth reporting as a pack of baboons.

My problem with news broadcasting is this: the packaging of a shocking, tragic, and complex world event into a flashy audiovisual experience with a catchy tagline is just wrong. Let me illustrate this with a recent example. The BBC has taken to labelling our recent economic troubles - all of them - as 'The Downturn'. They seem to have replaced the business segment of most of their news programmes with a series of reports devoted exclusively to 'The Downturn'. On a typical night, a story about a chain of crappy retail outlets closing down is followed by news of drooping stock markets and then a piece about a 'real' family struggling to pay the bills. These items are linked by some solemn incantations from the news reader, who is sitting in front of a large 3D logo which says 'The Downturn' with an arrow pointing down from the last 'n', evoking the image of a crashing market index. This logo embodies everything I find repulsive about the news media. A series of complex issues, each of which could be discussed seriously for hours, have been neatly wrapped into five minute clips and stamped with a stylish, memorable logo.

It is in a sense ironic that, even as the BBC's supposedly 'expert' guests hold forth about how greed and consumerism 'got us in this mess', they are themselves part of a report with its own

neat, consumer-friendly logo. I need not go into detail about other instances of this sickening phenomenon; the mere mention of CNN's post-9/11 'America under Attack' logo featuring prominent symbology and lurid accompanying music is enough to make cold milk curdle.

They have to fill the screen with something though, don't they? Well no, not really. News is a format that often doesn't lend itself to television at all. Occasionally some dramatic pictures, such as those of Obama's inauguration or of the conflict in Gaza, merit TV time. However, the vast majority of news items are accompanied either by pictures of a reporter standing outside 10 Downing Street, in a feeble attempt to make us think he has done some actual investigation, or a reel of archive footage of pensioners making tea which is supposed to kindle some emotion from the news that gas prices have gone up ten pence. This kind of imagery really does nothing to enhance the audience's understanding of the story. In fact, there is usually very little information in the reports themselves that could not be gathered from a quick glance at the newspaper headlines.

The idea that it is easier for the 'average Joe' to catch up on the news through the TV than by reading the paper is the standard defence I have received when delivering this tirade in the past. However, in an age of free newspapers and on-line news-tickers, is this true anymore? It is certainly the case that most people would rather let an hour of watered down reporting wash over them than battle through the FT. But given the choice between devoting a large chunk of the evening to watching the news or reading the essential headlines on the tube home from work, I believe that most of us would opt for the latter. We want our news in bite size chunks, and it seems that we no longer care whether it is delivered by an authoritative figure on TV or a questionably accurate website. The public service

broadcasters have tried to respond to this threat by integrating 'text-in' audience responses to their programmes, but this only serves to lower the standards of broadcasting even further. If I wanted to know that Barry from Leeds thinks 'The bankers should be bailing us out!' I would have driven up there and asked him myself.

What of the 'serious' news shows like Newsnight and Question Time? There must be some educational value in these programmes? Again, I am not so sure. Question Time claims to be a forum where leading news makers thrash out the little details of the big issues. However, in reality it tends to descend into a public mudslinging arena where the most common question is 'How can we believe you will increase the NHS budget when you went into Iraq?!' As for Newsnight, the idea is there: a normal news programme with deeper analysis and some genuine reporting. However, the show tends to eschew the dramatic imagery that TV news does so well in favour of rather dry studio-based discussion. While the 10 o'clock news is far too simplistic, Newsnight goes too far in the opposite direction.

For any televised news to work, it must make proper use of television itself. The broadcast of globally important events and dramatic disasters can only be achieved through TV, and many historic moments, such as the moon landing, would simply not have entered the public imagination in the same way without the accompanying footage. However, the day-to-day news that fills up the vast majority of every broadcast simply does not belong on TV. Given the choice, I will always go for a copy of The London Paper and a bit of Jeremy Kyle over an hour of Huw Edwards, or even Moira Stewart.



THE ROAD TO MONGOLIA

alexboyce knows the way to ulaanbaatar

It's time once again for another dose of Mongolian related madness. For those of you who don't know, myself and Joe Coney are driving to Ulaanbaatar from Goodwood in a one-litre car for charity. That's approximately ten thousand miles of misadventure which in all likelihood will claim both of our lives. Things are going well on the organisational front, with approximately £500 pledged so far, and we are well on our way to meeting our target of raising £1000 for the Christina Noble Children's Foundation.

Furthermore,

will head to Stuttgart, a city rich in history and culture - but more importantly, also the home to several famous German breweries including Schwaben Bräu and Stuttgarter Hofbräu! After sobering up we will cut along the south of Germany and head on into Munich. Hopefully we'll find a stretch of Autobahn along the way so we can really put our crappy car to the test and see if we can break 50mph! Finally we will cross over into the Czech Republic and make it to Prague to meet our fellow teams and share stories about our exploits so far.

Once we have embarrassed ourselves at the party, and if the car is still there in the morning, we

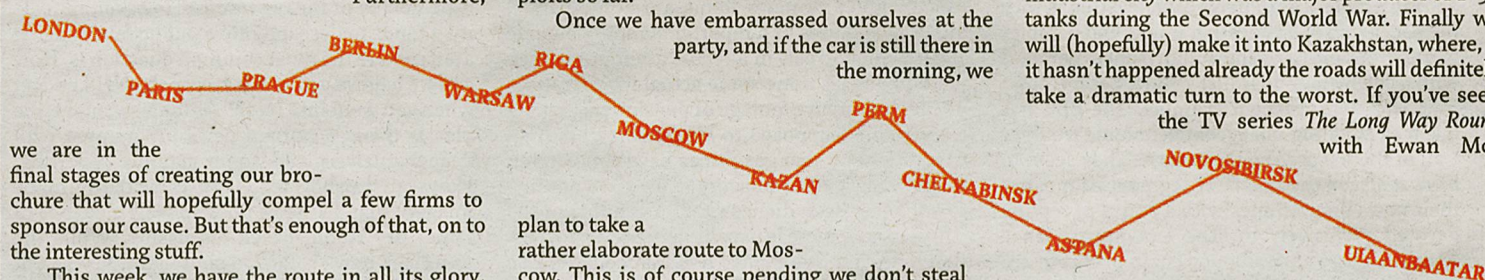
selected the biggest cities in the region and performed an elaborate dot-to-dot between destinations. From Moscow we head to Novgorod, a town steeped in history and with a large number of medieval buildings which, as sad and embarrassed as I am to admit it, actually interests me greatly. Next we "speed" past Kazan and on to Perm, which is a town, as opposed to a terrible eighties throwback.

Perm will be followed by more cities with wonderful names that I can't pronounce in the forms of Yekaterinburg and then Chelyabinsk, an industrial city which was a major producer of T-34 tanks during the Second World War. Finally we will (hopefully) make it into Kazakhstan, where, if it hasn't happened already the roads will definitely take a dramatic turn to the worst. If you've seen the TV series *The Long Way Round* with Ewan Mc-

Gregor, we are expecting something like that. If you haven't seen it, just imagine a terrible dirt track that looks like it's been excavated and not filled in again, and not travelled by locals since 1982. At least this is what we are expecting; we really hope that it's not true.

By now I will hopefully have traded Joe for a goat or married him off to one for money but, if not, we are going back into Russia briefly to visit Novosibirsk where apparently there's a big opera house that I've been advised to see. Finally it's a gentle drive through the wilderness of Mongolia to Ulaanbaatar. This is actually one hell of a distance on poor quality roads and one of the places where we are most likely to die. So if search teams are sent out at any point, please advise them to look here. And that's it; the route in all its glory. Wish us luck!

After this things get pretty vague to say the least. We have basically



we are in the final stages of creating our brochure that will hopefully compel a few firms to sponsor our cause. But that's enough of that, on to the interesting stuff.

This week, we have the route in all its glory. Sadly it's not quite as ludicrous as it once was. Originally we planned to get to Ulaanbaatar via Scandinavia. For some reason the idea of going to Lapland seemed like a stroke of genius, but after having a look at a map it became quite apparent that the additional two-thousand kilometres would probably kill the car, and the chances of us being eaten by a wolverine in Norway were disturbingly high. With this in mind we altered our plans slightly and have finally decided on a route which is more direct. Sort of.

The plan is to initially head towards Paris. This should hopefully prove easy. If we miss it we are really off to a bad start, particularly as according to Google Maps there's a big road that takes you straight there. As neither of us are very cultured - we have never visited Paris before - this will give us a chance to see the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, and other touristy activities that any true Frenchman would cringe at.

Our goal is to make it to Prague within a week as there is a rally party there. First we

plan to take a rather elaborate route to Moscow. This is of course pending we don't steal the route of another team if we find one that looks more attractive or elaborate. But anyway, our first aim will be to head to Berlin. From here, we shall enter the ex-Soviet Bloc by driving into Poland with the aim of making it to Warsaw, where Joe claims to have relatives. This should give us the opportunity to catch some rest as well as meet some locals, if these relatives turn out to exist!

Next we meander up the Baltic States, visiting Vilnius (home of the tallest tower in the Baltic States, the Europa Tower) and then Riga (a town full of strange-looking spires) in Lithuania and Latvia respectively. This will set us up nicely to take a yellow and orange road shown on Google Maps into Moscow where we have been informed that it won't be unlikely to be mistaken for spies, due to our Bond-like charm and good looks. If we get through this we plan to visit the Kremlin and hopefully not cause an international incident.

After this things get pretty vague to say the least. We have basically



THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE CREDIT CRUNCH

christinaschmidt zur nedden believes good can come of the crisis

So, what do you want to do with your life and where exactly do you see yourself in ten years? Don't you just love that question? The first time I was confronted with my steadily approaching and scarily uncertain professional future was when I was about sixteen. I was given a UCAS application card by my teacher and shepherded into a little room stuffed with files comprising information about every single university in the country. At that point the only thing I was seeing was me taking a lazy gap year in some far-away sunny place so I threw my UCAS card in the bin and avoided the dreaded question for a while. However as application deadlines approached I still hadn't made up my mind. In my despair I decided to study economics, as everyone told me what a fantastic basis that programme would be for anything I'd like to do in the future and that, in any case, I'd make some cash. I must have been totally nuts. In school my maths teacher had always prayed for me to at least manage the exam questions; he was frank about me being his worst student in the last ten years. I was quite good at history and languages though. But of course I could never have studied that, my parents told me; it would make me a jobless bum.

Studying economics lasted around two weeks for me. I called my mum and told her I was sick of thinking about the consumer all day long and was more into political sciences. However most of my friends from back home have chosen exactly the same path as I did and have stuck to their seemingly wise decision of preparing for a career in capitalism. Who doesn't know at least one finance student who genuinely hates what he is doing, but does it for the sake of security and because he didn't much know what else to study? My little brother was just like that up until December of last year. As the financial crisis was omnipresent and investment banking's perfect reputation as a dream job began to crumble, he decided to dump economics after two years and instead study what he really wanted to do - hotel management. There is no denying that this crisis is bad, but it is also good. It is a wake-up call for people. Be-

cause finance does not necessarily guarantee you a job anymore, why should you enslave yourself in a four-year programme that you don't enjoy? That is simply absurd.

The problem is, according to educator and creativity authority Sir Ken Robinson, that people don't spend enough time discovering their 'Element' - the place where natural talent meets personal passion. If you think about all the human potential sucked up by invest-



ment banking, a job which, in effect, doesn't help anyone except the money-making machine, you would get dizzy with thoughts about how much better the world could be if people would have done what they were good at and liked to do. Just remember that physics pro sitting next to you in school who could have done so much more than pushing numbers around on a computer screen in anticipation of a ridiculously high bonus. It's absurd.

The capitalist system deliberately constrains creativity and turns people into robots. It's as Picasso famously said: "All children are born artists. The problem is to remain artists as we grow up". The standard Western education system is one that educates children out of creativity and into the bondage of capitalism. Of course in a globalising world where options seem infinite, the fear of choice intensifies and makes people take the easy way out. However if they would only spend a little more time in finding out what they really want to do and what their talent is, they would enjoy their job more and automatically be better at it. Too little time is invested in preparing children for a career that will make them happy and fulfil them. Too many people who were good at languages in school are frustrated by their accounting jobs and only at a dinner party after a glass or two tend to tell you: "Well, actually my dream was always to work in publishing". I am not saying that finance is an inherently bad career choice. I am saying that it might only be a few people's 'Element', and is certainly not the case for all the millions of people who do it.

As the financial crisis continues to claim its investment-banking victims, what will be the next big trend in terms of choosing a career? One that will not necessarily make you happy but at least secures your income? It could well be the environment sector. Climate change and global warming are perceived as the major challenges to our future: will this result in a mass enrolment in environmental studies after high school? "Only when you can convince people that there's money in it", says Thomas Friedman. Nobody will choose to save the rain forest out of purely altruistic reasons. That would be absurd. And the new trend is already taking off: a cash-hungry fellow student from my Undergrad has recently enrolled in Oxford's 'Water Resource Management' programme. There's definitely cash in saving the world from water wars.

Sir Ken Robinson gave a public lecture yesterday, in the Old Theatre at LSE.

Living in Mornington Crescent, and never having enough on my Oyster for the 168, I have the pleasure of walking down Eversholt Street every morning to get to school. It really isn't an exciting walk. But after ten minutes at a good pace, I always seem to slow down and look around. Out of curiosity, and habit too, I give myself a split moment to see whether anyone is walking into Transformation – London's "premier store" for female-to-male (FTM) transgendered people. It isn't hidden in a back alley, nor does it have a darkened shop front with a neon sign. Transformation is 2000 sq ft of retail space to "Transform Men into Beautiful Women".

I remember the first time I walked past. I'm not going to lie, I felt a little weirded out – the massive pin up of a 'Before and After' shot on the front window stared out at me. The fact that the customer was unattractive both before and after the transformation didn't help his/her case. My flatmates still give the occasional snigger if I mention it. Or there would be a little excitement if a Transformation customer is reported to be seen around Camden Town. But nowadays I always find myself ever more needing to walk in and have a look around, just to see what it's like in there. I've also begun to wonder about trans-issues in general, and looking into what it all may mean.

Reading around the subject, it's pretty obvious that trans-issues aren't always taken as seriously as for those in other minority groups. Often, people might say that's because there aren't as many trans-people compared to other groups – true, but that doesn't mean they deserve fewer rights or respect. In any case, and especially at LSE, it is still important for trans-students to know that there is support for them if they need it, just as there is support available for students from all other backgrounds.

The LSE's official policy on harassment,

however, doesn't include anything about discrimination on the grounds of gender identity. It seems the school may have just assumed that transphobia falls under homophobic harassment. If this is the case, the LSE effectively equates being trans to being gay, or even suggests that transgender is nothing but an extension of homosexuality. Not true – ask anyone with from the trans community: a person's sexual orientation and gender

identity are very independent. This isn't always apparent to heteros, who are used to binary gender defi-

be heteros. Then there are transsexuals, who actively want to live as and become a member of the opposite sex, who believe they are psychologically 'in the wrong body'. Transsexuals can be gay or straight – their sexuality is independent of their gender state. MTFs are guys who become girls, FTMs are girls who become guys. You also have androgynes and genderqueers, who do not assign themselves the binary gender identities of 'male and female', and may prefer to be called 'butch' or 'femme' for example. On top of that there are those who are physiologically intersexual, and have a chromosome mutation meaning they are genetically neither XX nor XY (that means they actually have bits of both – very rare).

Trans-types are equally distributed in other cultures too – I'm sure an anthropologist could elaborate. There are frequent cases with Southern African cultures, Native Americans and Aboriginals (Two Spirits), and Indian cultures (Hijra), where genders are not distinguished by penis vs. vagina. In Thailand today, toilets for Kathoey (Ladyboys) have been springing up even in high schools (BBC Most Read sometime last year), because 10-20% of male students identify as transgendered. Compare this approach with attitudes in Britain (or at the LSE), where transgender is taken as seriously as the media are kind enough to portray it.

Most of us should be grateful that we can decide whether we are male or female – mostly by looking down there and making an informed decision. But there are plenty of people out there, whose decision doesn't match the evidence – which must be unimaginably difficult to understand. The sooner that education about transgender improves, and the sooner trans-issues taken more seriously, then the easier we can make the whole situation for trans-people to deal with.

So, for all you types out there, here's a quick distinction between the most common types of transgender: There are drag queens (guys) and kings (girls), who are dress themselves up as entertainers or to draw attention. Then you have cross-dressers and trans-vestites, who get kicks out of dressing up in clothes of the opposite sex, but may often just

TRANSFORMERS

neerajpatel shines a light on the oft-forgotten T

initions, of the LGBs seem to be the T in their or many themselves, who pretty ignorant of name.

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