

# WELCOME TO THE AGE OF OBAMA

Features inauguration special pages 15-16

Little Boots interview | Tiger's Red Olanter reviews | David Chen and Jimozart



Welcome to the age of Little Boots  
Interview with the pop sensation of 2009  
Only in Part B pages 4-5

# The Beaver

20 January 2009  
Newspaper of the London School of Economics Students' Union  
thebeaveronline.co.uk

## Conflict and occupation

### 219 for, 154 against UGM votes to condemn Israeli actions

Marie Dunaway & Joseph Cotterill

The Students' Union has voted in favour of the "Defend Gaza, Condemn the Israeli Massacre" motion that was debated at a heated UGM last Thursday.

The Motion's main calls were for the Students' Union to condemn Israel's military campaign. It also mandates the Union's Sabbatical Officers to press LSE Director Howard Davies to release a statement condemning Israel's attack on Gaza's educational institutions as well as issuing their own public statement condemning the attacks. The vote, held with a secret ballot in the Quad, passed with 219 in favour of the motion, and 154 against.

The Old Theatre quickly filled to full capacity within minutes of opening, with those unable to enter being directed to the New Theatre, where they could participate in the debate through media link up. While the crowd was being directed to seats by members of the Union's Constitution and Steering Committee, chants of "free, free Palestine" could be heard outside. Police were present on Houghton Street while LSE Security were preparing for a heated debate.

On opening the meeting, Aled Dilwyn Fisher, asked that the student body have a one minute silence in memory of all those involved in the current conflict and hoped the UGM would continue in this same peaceful vein.

Ben Jones, President of RAG, asked for donations to be made to Medical Aid for Palestinians regardless of political views on the motion.

After the election of the new Chair Azan Marwah, and Keeper of the UGM, brief questions were asked to the Executive and Sabbatical Officers. Following this Marwah invited the first speaker, Seph Brown, to the stage to start the debate. **Continued on page 4 >>**



A banner held aloft at a rally outside the Old Building on Friday, as the occupiers of the theatre inside continued their protest  
Zeeshan Malik

#### Timeline The week that was

Thursday	Friday	Monday
1300 UGM	Davies responds to the occupiers' demands. Rally held in the Old Theatre	Negotiations continue over the weekend, cease then resume
1500 Occupation begins in the Old Theatre, during lecture		

### Gaza protest occupation of Old Theatre nears end

Joseph Cotterill

The student occupation of the Old Theatre looked to be edging towards conclusion last night after a day of drama and negotiations between protesters and the LSE authorities.

The School had broken off contact with the occupiers, who were protesting the war in Gaza, earlier in the day.

Adrian Hall, the School's secretary and director of administration, said that there were no substantive issues remaining from their demands, and that the welfare of students taught in the Old Theatre would be affected if the occupation continued any longer.

"We are taking all reasonable steps to bring this protest to a close," he said in an email sent to all LSE students.

Tensions had risen earlier after police with dogs searched the Old Theatre in the morning. A School spokesperson said that police were checking premises before an antiterrorism conference at the Peacock Theatre. She added that the School had been unaware that the Old Theatre would also be checked. A Metropolitan police spokesperson declined to comment.

The renewed negotiations came five days after twenty-one activists entered the theatre at the start of a Thursday afternoon Development Studies lecture. Protesters took to the stage and unfurled a banner as postgraduate students in the audience looked on.

A spokesperson from the group explained the occupation's objectives to the audience while the lecturer called security. The lecture began ten minutes after the disruption, with the protesters sitting cross-legged occupying the stage.

The occupying students released demands to the School through Students' Union mediators, including the Union's General Secretary, Aled Dilwyn Fisher.

As well as an official statement condemning Israel and calling for a ceasefire, the demands included the School's immediate divestment from arms companies, five fully paid scholarships for Palestinian students, and the LSE's donation of old computers and books to universities and schools in Gaza.

Davies denied in correspondence over the weekend that the School invested in any arms companies, and said that LSE already provided several scholarships available to Palestinian students. Davies agreed that old books and computers could be donated by the School.

Campus reaction to the occupation has been mixed. Israel Society General Secretary Patrick Jones said: "It is ironic that the Palestine Society protesters choose to 'occupy' the Old Theatre and interrupt LSE students' right to education while simultaneously claiming that Gazans' right to education is their focus for this protest."

### Editorial Five days that have shaken campus. It's not over yet. But we must move on

All wars are hateful. There is much to hate in the war fought by Israel and Hamas in Gaza until last Saturday. The bombing of the Fakhoura school. The rockets fired by Hamas on Israeli civilians. The humanitarian crisis that is now emerging after the ceasefire. Whatever we think of who started the war, we can all find this wrong and abhorrent.

But it does not justify hate finding a home on this campus. Despite the best intentions of those involved, the events of last week went too far in the damage they have done to the diversity of this university. The priority now must be to restore calm and closure.

Last week's Union General Meeting debate on the Students' Union's response to the Gaza war brought simmering tensions and passions to a head. It should be a forum for free debate. But there are many things to regret in the way it turned out.

In the first instance, the text of the motion was flawed before it was even debated.

Many students wished to condemn Israel's actions in the Gaza strip. But they were put off and frozen out by the motion's extreme and exclusionary language. This is no way to react to a war that has killed well over a thousand civilians.

The motion should have condemned, or at the very least acknowledged, the war crimes committed by Hamas in this conflict. It would have detracted nothing from the motion's power or meaning, and it would have left this Union's moral stature intact. As it is, that stature has been unmoored. But we must move on.

Jewish and Israeli students in particular must be able to feel that we can move on, and that they can study and live on campus without fear of threat. Israeli students shouldn't have to feel that criticism of their government is an attack on their

identity. That was not the intention of the motion's proposers. But they should have taken it into account.

The speeches at the UGM were well argued and avoided demagoguery. That included Joseph Brown's first speech in favour of the motion. The problem, however, is Brown's position as Anti-Racism officer of the Students' Union. Someone else should have been on stage.

As a rule, officers of this Union should be allowed to hold political views in a personal capacity. But it becomes dangerous when those views are expressed in an arena that is sensitive to the effective carrying out of that officer's brief.

How can Jewish or Israeli students not feel uncomfortable about approaching Brown in his role as Anti-Racism officer now? Brown has not taken part in racist activity at all, of course. But after the

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## From Right to **Left**: the political columns

### Hayek

Alex  
Blance



### Love handles of experience

There aren't enough fat people in politics these days. This hasn't always been the case. Back in the 1980s, there was so much lard on the Tory front bench that you could have fed a small mining village for a year and still had enough left over for Nicholas Soames' breakfast. Between the voluptuous curves of Geoffrey Howe, the cascading chins of Willie Whitelaw, and the Juno-esque bulk of Nigel Lawson, it's a wonder anyone else could even squeeze into the cabinet room.

I blame Gordon Brown. Is it any coincidence that the Blairites he was keenest to get rid of were the ones with the most capacious waist measurements? In a government determined to stamp out all the pleasures in life, from junk food to binge drinking, having fatties like Charles Clarke and John Prescott in the cabinet was decidedly off message. In their place came Peter Mandelson, living proof of the inverse relationship between waist size and wickedness.

This always struck me as a shame. There's something faintly reassuring about a politician who clearly enjoys his dinner. Perhaps it's the thought that there is more to their lives than back-stabbing in the corridors of the House of Com-

mons. Or maybe it's just the thought of snuggling up to their warm, protective bulk to shelter from the coming economic winter.

For that reason, I was delighted this week to see that the biggest belly in British politics is back in the game. So gigantic they named him the original Big Beast, Ken Clarke is the wonderful epitome of the fat politician. This is a man who enjoys life, equally happy puffing away over dinner in a jazz club or having the opposition for breakfast. David Cameron's expected appointment of Clarke as shadow business secretary offers the wonderful prospect of Ken versus Mandy, a sort of Westminster Laurel and Hardy.

I'm not alone in seeing the appeal of Big Ken. Despite having gone through 18 years as a government minister, he is still a remarkably popular figure in the country at large. While the Tories bickered their way through four leadership elections, the polls showed the public would have gone for Ken as party leader every time.

Indeed, sometimes it seemed as though the only people who couldn't understand Ken's appeal were the Conservatives themselves. The reason for their suspicion, of course, was simple. Ken has always been openly pro-European; a brave

move in a party of fierce eurosceptics.

The political benefits of rehabilitating Ken are obvious. In one stroke, Cameron has thrown back in Brown's face his claim that the current economic crisis "is no time for a novice." After all, one doesn't get politicians any more experienced than Ken Clarke. This is the man who brought the British economy back from the recession of the early 1990s and laid the foundations for the ten years of growth that Brown was so quick to claim credit for.

But Cameron is also sending a clear signal about the changed face of the Conservative Party. The destructive divisions over Europe have finally been put aside in favour of sorting out the much more pressing matter of our collapsing economy. With this move, Cameron has shown that he is a leader with sufficient strength to unite the party in the service of a greater vision, not least the need to win an election.

With his no-nonsense manner and his unquestionable authority, Ken is just the man the Tories need to complete their rehabilitation as a serious party of government. Let's hope he also marks the beginning of the rehabilitation of the more rotund politician. Nicholas Soames for foreign secretary, anyone?

### Laski



Vlad  
Unkovski-  
Korica

### An occupation for education

Now this is one occupation I can support: students taking over the main lecture theatre at the LSE in solidarity with Gaza. Since last Thursday, students have kept a 24-hour presence in the Old Theatre. They intend to maintain pressure on the School to move their tracker fund from Barclays and to set up various solidarity programmes with educational institutions in Gaza. The occupation started following a Union General Meeting vote demanding an end to the Israeli assault. I won't lie; I've been occasionally participating. And it's been great.

My first occupation was a set of teach-ins in the Old Theatre in October 2002, demonstrating against the coming invasion of Iraq. But I cannot pretend that we were nearly as creative back then. We did not sleep the night either. My next one was when Bush came to London in 2003. On that occasion, we pre-booked the Peacock Theatre just in case we lost the vote over occupation in the Extraordinary General Meeting. Fortunately though, our motion passed, so it wasn't a total catastrophe.

This time, things have been different. The occupation is into its third day as I

write. Students maintain a sit-in on the stage but do not seek to prevent lectures from going ahead. They just make a five-minute declaration of their demands before the lectures start and then sit through them. The guiding maxim is 'minimum disruption, maximum discussion'.

The intention is to reach out to the majority of students and progressively involve as many as possible. For this reason, we have devised a rolling programme of leafleting, announcements in lectures, rallies in Houghton Street and public meetings at times when there are no student lectures in the Old Theatre. We have had Lindsey German, convenor of the Stop the War Coalition speak on the steps of the Old Building, and Tony Benn address an audience of hundreds in the Old Theatre on Friday. More alternative events and actions are planned for the coming days – in anticipation of a response from the School.

By all standards, this has been a constructive, moderate and peaceful protest. Everyone involved has been careful not to alienate students or do damage to property. Security has been correspondingly unassuming and assiduously watchful. No scenes of students storming buildings, locking themselves in or physical confron-

tations on the streets.

Not that an escalation of creative forms of non-violent protest should be ruled out: the stronger the pressure, the greater the chances of success. We simply cannot sit by while Gaza is burning.

There should be no reason for the School to refuse to come out against the Israeli attack on the right to education in Gaza. Just last year, Howard Davies had set a precedent when he felt he could condemn an attack on academic freedom at a University and College Union motion to debate the pros and cons of an academic boycott against Israeli academic institutions.

Regardless of what I think of his position on the boycott, I think it should be only consistent for Howard Davies to now take a stand on the latest outrage of the Israeli Defence Forces, when it bombed Palestinian educational institutions. He should also seriously re-consider banking with Barclays – not just because there is much speculation about the future of the Barclays – but because Barclays invests on-and-off in companies linked to the Israeli military.

Anything less would be a failure of moral responsibility at a time of a humanitarian catastrophe in Palestine.

### Measured musings



Just about everyone has a Facebook account these days. Online social networking, for better or for worse, has sealed its place in the middle class youth experience as an indispensable source of entertainment and instrument of interaction.

But Facebook is more than a mere platform for shameless self-adulation. Its virtual tentacles grant users extensive reach to potential audiences, and ergo, a platform for activism.

As the Israeli offensive rolled onward into Gaza, a steady stream of Facebook messages filled my inbox, calling for my support and participation in online and physical demonstrations of solidarity with the Palestinians.

Although I can scarcely claim to be well-informed and up to date with the historical and political intricacies of the conflict, I have always placed my sympathies with the Palestinians. But something in a few of those messages just did not

strike me as appropriate.

Those offending messages were generally fine in terms of their main content. What I take issue with was invariably the very last line. The messages were signed off with the slogan, "Long live Palestine."

To be precise, I loath the phrase of exultation "long live". It's a phrase that I've never found any love for, despite my familiarity with its use in various guises and languages.

During my formative years, I watched many a period Chinese drama that centred its plot around the imperial court. Whenever the emperor takes centre stage, his subjects invariably throw themselves to their knees and exclaim: "Huang Shang, wan sui, wan sui, wan wan sui." In English, the rhythmic chant literally means "May the emperor live for 10,000 years." But Western audiences will probably be more familiar with the translation: "Long live the emperor."

The Japanese too showered their

emperor with cheers for his longevity. "Tenno Heika, banzai!" was the common refrain with which the Japanese traditionally hailed their sovereign when they were in his presence. Again, the cheer best translates as "Long live the emperor."

And of course, there is the less commonly intoned, but no less resonant "Le Roi est mort, vive le Roi!"

If slogans are judged merely on their emotional hook and effectiveness in rallying popular support, there is little to malign this phrase for. It is short, evocative and catchy.

However, being steeped in centuries of imperial dynastic history, it is hard to disassociate this phrase from the notion of blind and unquestioning faith, be it in a person, an ideal or a political entity.

As a stimulus of critical thought and inquisition into the issues at hand, it is utterly useless if not wholly counterproductive.

A slogan that extols the longevity

### Viridian

### Runaway runaway to climate disaster

Justus Rollin

Environment and Ethics officer

After much debate and delay, transport secretary Geoff Hoon finally announced last Thursday the government's approval of a third runway at Heathrow.

The runway is scheduled to be completed by 2020, and will add approximately 400 flights per day and increase annual passenger volumes by 15 million.

Three conditions are attached to the approval. The runway will only run at half capacity, leading to a smaller increase in flights per year. Aircraft used will have to comply with strict greenhouse gas emission standards. Finally, Britain has to reduce its aviation-produced carbon dioxide emission levels to below 2005 levels by 2050.

But other problems are abound. The entire community of Sipson, consisting of seven hundred homes and a school, will have to be demolished. Unsurprisingly, the village has become the centre of protests against the third runway over the last two years. They also set up the 2007 climate camp at Heathrow, which saw thousands protesting for over a week.

Many protesters believe the battle is not over yet. There are still a number of planning permissions that have not been granted. Residents from Sipson and neighbouring villages and climate activists have promised to take their struggle to the streets and the courts. Greenpeace, along with some actors like Emma Thompson, have started buying up land that would be needed for the expansion. The government has also been forced into concessions such as the implementation of so-called "mixed mode" flights, without which there would have been approximately a hundred more flights per day.

While lobbyists argue that the expansion is economically necessary, the government commission on Sustainable Development and environmental NGOs believe that this is not apparent. Expansion would create additional jobs but money could be lost from tourism revenues.

Moreover, studies have revealed that almost a quarter of the flights from Heathrow are to destinations within 500 kilometres; routes that could be well served by train. The expansion will raise nitrous oxide emissions, the levels of which have already reached the desirable limit.

Meanwhile, an interesting hiccup has occurred on the political side of things. London mayor Boris Johnson has signed up to the Tory promise not to expand Heathrow should they come into power. Yet he hypocritically allows other London airports to expand by fifty per cent.

Rather than expansion, we should invest in public transport infrastructure and develop a green transport policy. Despite the fact that 70 per cent of British citizens are against airport expansion, the government still persists with aggressive policies that harm local communities and adversely affect the environment. This is simply unacceptable.

## No one ought to live forever

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A slogan that extols the longevity

of anything or anyone is intellectually vacuous. It gives off an air of pompous self-righteous conviction and serves a completely rhetorical purpose.

It is a clarion call to stoke masses into unquestioning support. A slogan to manipulate, not to educate. To condense and over-simplify, not to clarify and qualify.

Hardly the ideal approach to take towards the resolution of a bitter and seemingly intractable conflict. And when used in this context, it is no less ironic for the fact that it represents a position diametrically opposite to that of ultranationalist Israelis.

No amount of utility that activists can derive from this archaic slogan can justify its use. This vestige of a bygone era ought to remain just that. Antiquities consigned to period dramas stay in period dramas.

Chun Han Wong  
Features Editor



## Collective

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## Positions of the week

### LSE careers service's pick of the best jobs

**Meltwater News**  
International Management Trainee

**Nomura**  
Summer Analysts positions

**Brook Lyndhurst**  
Researcher

**International Peace Fellowships**  
The Advocacy Project

**Sony BMG**  
European Graduate Programme

**Gallup**  
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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](http://www.lse.ac.uk/careers)

## LSE events

### Highlights of this week's public lectures and talks

**Designing Policies for Growth**  
Parts two and three in Prof Aghion's mammoth lecture series.  
Tonight and Weds, OT, 1830-2000

**World War Two: Behind Closed Doors**  
Laurence Rees discusses his new book. Tonight, HKT, 1830-2000

**The Reality of Hope: Obama and Europe after the Election**  
Robert Kagan, Charles Grant, Robin Niblett and Prof Michael Cox debate.  
Wednesday, SZT, 1830-2000

**The incompatibility of science and religion**  
Prof John Worrall ruffles feathers.  
Wednesday, U8, 1830-2000

**The Great Transformation: How China changed in the long 1970s**  
Thirty years in the making. Prof Chen Jian. Thursday, OT, 1830-2000

**Online**  
Prof Julian Le Grand talks choice, markets and competition in a new short film produced by LSE and the Independent newspaper.  
[tinyurl.com/7ngk24](http://tinyurl.com/7ngk24)

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Thursday, 29th January

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# Goodbye, Goldman Think small and skilled to land recession jobs



**Look beyond banking to benefit when the upturn comes, LSE careers head advises**

**Analysts warn of worst graduate labour market in twenty years**

Joseph Cotterill

LSE students should drop their search for the perfect job and look for vacancies that will help them to prepare for the revival of the economy, the head of the School's careers service has advised, as the scale of the recession's impact on the graduate labour market becomes clear.

"Make sure you're in a good place when the upturn comes," is Fiona Sandford's central message to students, counselling against taking a year out to travel or to "burger-flip" in despair at the disappearance of traditional job opportunities for LSE graduates.

Sandford spoke to the Beaver in a week of bad news for graduates seeking jobs against the headwinds of recession.

According to a poll of a hundred top recruiters in the UK, including Morgan Stanley and HSBC, employers' average graduate intake will decrease by 17 per cent this year.

Analysts have also warned that last-minute job hunting at this point in the recruitment cycle has effectively become impossible, because of continuing uncertainty in the finance sector.

Hard, Sandford says, but not impossible. KPMG may have filled its vacancies at the earliest point in the recruitment cycle since 1986, but fifty per cent of openings at Deloitte so far remain open. In any case, students should no longer rely on entry-level or analyst positions being available. It remains to be seen how LSE students

will be affected by the new economic environment. Sandford is confident that they have the skill base to adapt.

"LSE students do better, significantly better" in the labour market than their university peers. Graduates from the School have a "magic combination" of analytical skills, a global outlook, and an entrepreneurial attitude, all of which are favoured by major recruiters.

#### Investment banking

But many of those major recruiters were investment banks, hedge funds, and other mainstream financial services firms - which either no longer exist, or survive only in severely straitened circumstances. Few are in a position to be marvelled by LSE students' credentials. This is a vast change. Almost thirty per cent of the 2006 to 2007 graduate cohort found jobs at these institutions.

"We are more exposed as an institution," Sandford admits. But she says the careers service is adapting to the new economic climate.

Former investment banker graduates have been recruited on a sessional basis to help prepare students for applications and interviews, and Sandford advises students coming to Tower 3 "to make every use of every resource that you can".

It is possible for students to continue making investment bank applications, Sandford says, if they aim their prospects at the eventual end of the recession.

"There's a lot of evidence to show that being hired in a small cohort leads to greater benefits and promotion later," with "a vacuum above" created by credit crunch

## How to survive the recession job lottery

**Make strategic applications with the eventual upturn in mind**

**Develop a portfolio of options, including possible postgraduate study - but don't rely on it**

**Maximise the skills you have and the skills you think you should acquire now, while jobs are tight**

**The labour market is challenging, but complex - look for niche or boutique firms that may still have vacancies**

**Don't drop out of the market - it may be difficult to reenter come the upturn**



casualties in middle management. Graduates who manage to enter the industry now and survive in the meantime could rise quickly.

But Sandford is at pains to point out that this is a "high-risk, high-gain" career route, which graduates entering the field may balk at. "It assumes an upturn within eighteen months to two years" - which is possible, but far from guaranteed.

The other option is to explore areas of the finance sector that new graduates often neglect, but which are excellent places to start a career even in a recession.

Insurance markets, shipping agents and project finance in industry "have been traditionally completely ignored by LSE students," Sandford says. But all involve the movement of capital, remain good sources of jobs, and are good places to develop skills. "It's about going for the less well-known," she adds. "Thinking in a stepping stone way is useful."

This will be difficult advice for some LSE students to take. Sandford accepts that "it's incredibly hard for students who have come to LSE with the view to getting an investment banking job at the end of it." But the skills and "terrific exposure" that can be gained by taking your first job in a small organisation will be a much better route to surviving the recession, Sandford

points out.

The advice is "spot-on," says Rishi Madlani, a former LSE Economics student and General Secretary of the Students' Union from 2005 to 2006. After leaving LSE, Madlani took a position at ABN Amro and now works at RBS.

In a challenging economic climate, "it's better to have some role now, rather than no role later," Madlani says. His advice to students mulling careers choices at the moment is the same as Sandford's - find something that will develop your skills, rather than what matches your idea of the perfect job.

"You need to show more adaptability and flexibility than in the normal job market. You may not know what you're doing when you enter the job," he adds. "Increase your skills base. If it involves training, studying - do it."

#### Non-economics jobs

Graduate job-hunting versus postgraduate studies is a familiar dilemma for LSE's non-economics student population. Sandford acknowledges that continuing study is an attractive reflex response to the uncertainty of recession.

"Do postgraduate work if you're doing it for the right reasons, but not to hide from the recession," Sandford says - it may

not provide much benefit when the upturn comes.

While the job market is "always tough, always fragmented" for graduates of International Relations, History or other social science subjects, Sandford says spillover from the crisis in investment banking recruitment will affect the jobs available in this sector as well.

Cases of what Sandford describes as "public sector displacement" have already hit this year's recruitment cycle, as banking hopefuls scramble for safe positions.

Teach First, a government-sponsored scheme for graduates to teach for two years before entering a deferred position in the private or public sector, has already filled vacancies in several teaching subjects well ahead of schedule.

The Civil Service Fast Stream, another competitive public sector programme, received over twenty thousand applications this year - far above previous years.

Sandford's advice is much the same as to budding investment bankers - diversify and seek out the small and unusual. Policy groups and think tanks, while still tough to get into, are one viable option.

As Madlani reiterates, it is not a good idea to be a "one-club golfer" in the midst of a recession or on the verge of an upturn - whenever that may come.

## Gaza on campus

# Week of debate and controversy



### UGM votes to condemn Israeli actions in Gaza

>> Continued from front

Brown, the Student Union's Anti Racism Officer, attacked "the futility and hypocrisy of Israeli actions". He argued that the Israelis were pushing further away from peace with their current military actions. Brown said this was not a "War on Hamas" but a "War on 1.5 million people". He went on to say that given the Palestinians have nowhere to go, "this was as bad as any other death penalty". He added that the Palestinian and Israeli Societies can work together, but that "there comes a point where we need to condemn".

Alex Rodin, the representative from the Israeli Society was the first speaker against the motion. Rodin said that all conflicts have two sides and the motion "wholly ignored one side". He pressed that the Israeli Society wants peace, but Hamas' part has been ignored in this conflict. He directed his comments at Brown's position, asking the student body "Why is your anti-racism officer alienating me because I relate to Israel?". "Hamas have genocidal aims. This motion seeks to wholly demonise Israel," he continued. He called the proposal a "destructive motion" which would "isolate

and ostracize Jewish and Israeli students". The motion "ignored the complexities of the issues" and that "the Student Union should not be a platform for these views". He claimed that Israeli and Jewish students were using English sounding names out of fear. Rodin continued saying the LSE should not blame the Israeli's wholly and instead proposed the NUS's current motion of calling for a ceasefire.

Mira Hammad, who seconded the motion, maintained that it "in no way condemns Israeli students, Jewish students or Judaism." "Whatever the Israeli reason for defence, it is disproportionate". In response to the Hamas rocket fire not being mentioned in the motion, she added, you "couldn't condemn both sides equally" in this conflict.

Katherine Ripullone, the second speaker against the motion, spoke to represent students who were neither pro-Israeli nor pro-Palestinian, but who felt that the debate would stop discussion of other student related issues. The Students' Union was not the right body to pass judgement on such complex issues, she said. The speaker said she was "shocked" that the Union's anti-racism officer was proposing "such a biased and extreme motion." It was not for the Union to condemn countries, but to solve problems on campus. It shouldn't tribute to their escalation. It would "undermine the credibility of the Union" Ripullone concluded.

All speakers were met with applause and boos having spoken, with emotional and angered shouts from the floor. One member of the audience shouted "Where's your Hamas scarf?"

Questions from the floor mostly were directed to Brown's position as Anti Racism Officer. Helen Roberts, the Union's Residences Officer, said that the Palestinian society's activities on campus, including the UGM motion, had created an atmosphere that had scared Israeli students. "How can an anti-racism officer do this?" she asked.

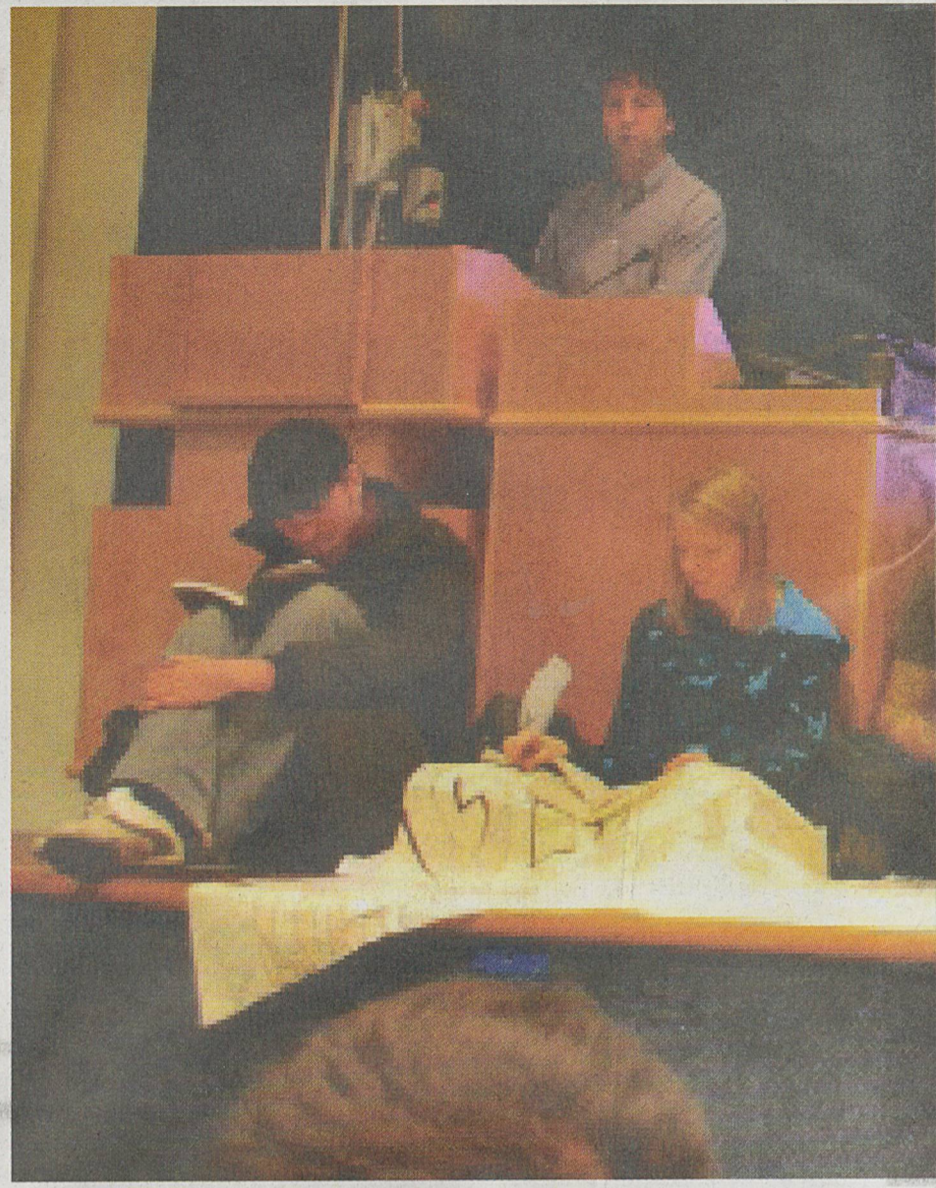
Brown was also asked why the motion did not condemn Hamas alongside Israel. He replied that the root cause of the conflict was Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory.

On closure of the debate, students filed out with a hand-stamping process, in order for them to vote in the Quad. The ballot boxes were open until 4pm, however were extended in order for those who had classes between 3 and 4. A LSE ID card checking system was in place to ensure only those who were students and stamped voted. The whole process was overlooked by C&S.

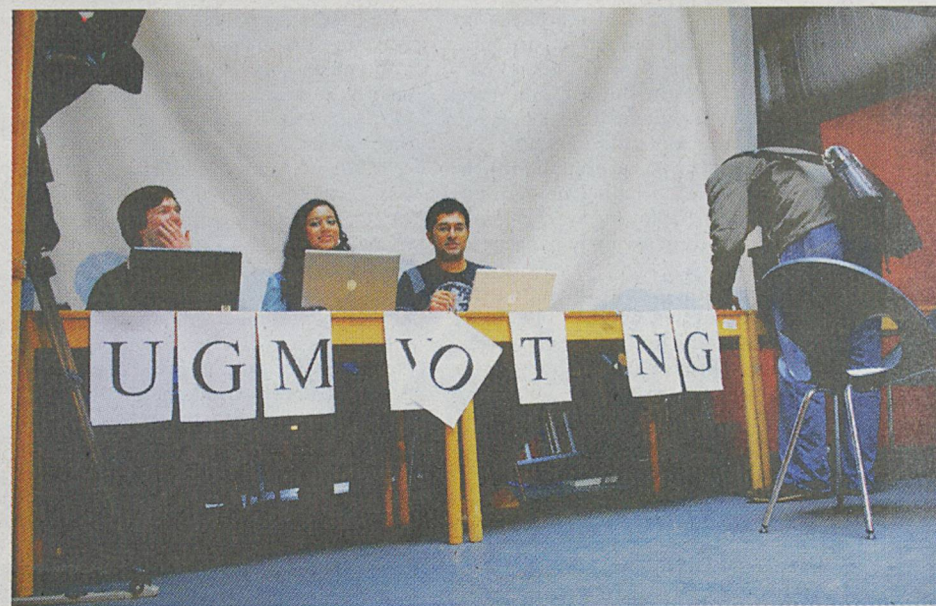
Queues extended right outside onto Houghton Street, yet the street remained calm and little campaigning was continued by either side. Students waited relatively quietly with little animosity surrounding the vote. The Police presence remained on campus throughout the afternoon and evening.

The results were announced after 5pm and were greeted with praise from the Palestinian society who had taken up occupation of the Old Theatre.

The Union is now acting on the resolution, with demands being asked from the Occupiers of the Old Theatre, mediated by Union representatives.



Pictures by Zeeshan Malik; clockwise from above: Protestors occupy a lecture in the Old Theatre; debate over the UGM motion; cause petition clipboard; UGM motion voting station; one of many peace posters; questions at the UGM debate; speakers line the stage during the discussions





## Occupation faces backlash

Shortly after the UGM motion passed and pro-Palestinian students occupied the Old Theatre, another group of students set up an online petition to oppose the occupation of the Old Theatre.

The petition was in the form of a letter addressed to Howard Davies, criticising the protesters' alleged disruption of lectures. The petition reads: "This protest goes beyond the right to free speech and interrupts the learning environment for students. Therefore, this protest aims to deny LSE students their right to education... This protest cheapens our education and should be brought to an immediate end."

The occupiers of the Old Theatre also set up a blog about their protest in the Old Theatre. One blog entry makes reference to the petition: "We wish to make it clear that we have at no point disrupted lectures. We have sat on the stage during lectures and given short speeches before they begin. Lectures have then been allowed to continue as normal. LSE Director Howard Davies noted that we have 'held scrupulously' to our promise to allow lectures to proceed... Part of what we are fighting for is the assertion of the right to education. It is evidently untrue that we would do anything to threaten this fundamental right."

## Some comments from an online petition opposing the Old Theatre occupation

**"This is a disgusting way to protest. I am insulted that the LSE administration has not put a stop to this already. Students should not be forced to listen to a protesters or even be distracted by them during their lectures. I have paid to hear a lecture. Get them out of the theatre. get them out of the university."**  
**Alex Rodin**

**"A divisive and excessive publicity stunt. This school has plenty of political space for this debate and for this to encroach on our educational space is disgraceful. Furthermore, the irony of staging an 'Occupation' shows a total disregard for the facts of the recent conflict which has been a direct result of the Israeli Forces de-occupying the Gaza Strip."**  
**Ben Grabiner**

**"Absolutely ridiculous that a serious academic lecture on Friday was cancelled because of these protesters. They can protest outside, like everyone else. Surely it's some kind of trespass anyway?"**  
**Francesca Lewis**

Flickr user  
lewishandreamer

## Benn speaks at impromptu occupation event

Phyllis Lui

Tony Benn, President of the Stop the War Coalition, was on campus to speak out in support of the LSE student activism against the conflict in Gaza at an impromptu event organized by the occupiers of the Old Theatre last Friday.

Professor Alex Callinicos from King's College and Lizz Wheatley, a former LSE student, also spoke at the event. Earlier in

the day, Lindsey German, one of the founders of the Stop The War campaign, had spoken outside the Old Building.

Benn began his speech by congratulating the occupiers on not being "an isolated group at LSE" as there is, "lots of support from around the world".

He went on to suggest that the Israeli ambassador be withdrawn from London and that British forces such as the Royal Navy and the RAF be used to transport supplies and media into Gaza. He added that Palestine should be recognised as a state which had democratically elected

Hamas.

Benn also criticised the British media on their coverage of the conflict, saying that it's, "their responsibility to report both sides."

Benn also spoke at length about the United States' support to Israel by their supply of arms to Israel's military.

Lizz Wheatley, who was at the LSE in the 1980s, spoke after Benn. She mentioned SOAS' students recent occupation of their Brunei Gallery and attributed the success of the protest to the efficient management of the college, something she felt

was not present at the LSE.

Professor Alex Callinicos speech focused on whether this "cycle of wars", caused by "settler colonialism", can reach an end. He saw the relationship between Israel and Palestine as being that of the "expropriator" and the "expropriator displaced." He believes that it can be solved by political transformation and that a single secular state can be formed.

An LSE staff member told the audience that there is a list of staff that are against the war on terror and that they support what the students are doing.

## Union Anti-Racism Officer attacked for owning Hamas scarf

Ali Moussavi

LSE Students' Union Anti-Racism Officer Joseph Brown has come under fire for his possession of a Hamas scarf.

During the UGM debate on the motion to condemn Israel, a student heckled Brown about the scarf.

The Jewish Society later sent a letter to the editor of The Beaver condemning Brown's ownership of the scarf. The letter goes on to claim that Brown brought the scarf on to campus, a charge which Brown denies.

Furthermore, Israel Society General Secretary Patrick Jones issued a statement over the weekend saying: "As a friend and colleague, I found this extremely disappointing and disturbing. It would be difficult for Jewish, Israeli, or Israeli-supporting students to take their concerns to someone who possesses paraphernalia of an organisation sworn to the destruction of their state and race. Therefore, his public ownership of this Hamas scarf unnecessarily prevents Joseph Brown from executing his duties as Anti-Racism Officer."

Brown has since sent a response letter to the editor of The Beaver. Brown stated that he did not support Hamas. He said: "I denounce and deplore their insistence on targeting civilians. I do not believe that their constitution is an acceptable or defensible document."

Brown went on to respond to the charges made against him over his possession of the scarf. He claimed that he found the scarf on the street at a rally and that he took it home but did not display it. Brown said: "I stress in no uncertain terms that this is not an indication of an endorsement of Hamas. In order to allay further concerns; by the time you read this I will have disposed of the scarf."

When asked to comment on Brown's possession of the scarf, Union General Secretary Aled Fisher said: "Any organisation that calls for the killing of Jews has no place in the Students' Union. If students feel uncomfortable about an officer's conduct, they can address their concerns to me. Some students already have done, and I hope the issue can be resolved. If not, students have democratic channels through which to further pursue the issue."

Photograph  
Zeeshan Malik

## Medical Aid for Palestinians collections begin

Ali Moussavi

LSE RAG have been supporting the charity Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) in the wake of the recent conflict in Gaza.

RAG was collecting in buckets on Houghton Street throughout last week.

MAP is a British charity that operates in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Lebanon. They "strive to establish a permanent medical infrastructure in Palestinian communities by training health care practitioners, teaching medical vocational skills and addressing the requirements of particularly vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities."

The group of students who have been occupying the Old Theatre since Thursday

in protest to the Israeli operation in Gaza have expressed support for the efforts of MAP.

Israel Society General Secretary Patrick Jones said that he supported the effort by RAG to collect money for MAP. Jones also suggested that it could be useful to also raise money for an Israeli medical charity aiding those Israelis affected by the conflict.

RAG Chair Ben Jones said that RAG was approached by the Palestine Society and asked for its help in fund-raising.

Ben Jones said: "After it was made clear that our non-political stance was going to be respected, we were more than happy to shake buckets for Medical Aid for Palestinians - a brilliant charity that has been working in and around Gaza for more than 20 years. No one has complained about this, although some are less willing to give as they feel RAG is taking sides."

## Fears of campus anti-Semitism

Ali Moussavi

Student supporters of Israel have claimed that there has been a rise in anti-Semitism on campus in the wake of the war in Gaza.

Some students writing pro-Israel articles in The Beaver have asked to have their names omitted from the byline for fear of alleged intimidation.

At the UGM on Thursday, during debate on the motion to condemn Israeli actions in Gaza, Students' Union Residences Officer Helen Roberts criticised Anti-Racism Officer Joseph Brown, who spoke in favour of the motion, for creating an atmosphere which scared pro-Israeli students.

The Jewish Society on campus has further criticised Brown in a letter to the editor of The Beaver claiming that his signing of a letter comparing Israel's military operation to the Nazi Holocaust was "a deliberately provocative use of language which falls under the EU's definition of anti-Semitism".

The letter went on to claim that Jewish students felt "intimidated and marginalised."

Brown responded saying: "It is a sad day when any pro-Palestinian activist has to return to the bygone days of defending oneself against accusations of anti-Semitism when defending the human rights of an oppressed people."

Sources in the Israel Society have pointed to comments posted in an online petition which was set up to oppose the occupation of the Old Theatre as evidence of a threatening atmosphere.

Some comments have been made on the petition under pseudonyms of prominent Israelis. One comment posted under the name: "Ehud 'I LOVE ISRAELI APARTHEID' Olmert" reads: "I am a fucker and a racist like most of my country man cos i believe that Palestine should be Jewish and all non-Jews should be ethnically cleansed... that is what I am doing in Gaza - kill em all!"

The Students' Union issued a statement after the passage of the motion addressing concerns. The statement read: "The Students' Union is committed to maintaining a safe environment for all students. LSE should be a place where students feel comfortable, not only to study, but to express their views without fear of intimidation or reprisal. We are deeply concerned over reports we have received of students feeling intimidated, uncomfortable and reluctant to come to campus. Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia have no place on our campus, and we working with our societies, the School and others to ensure that our lively political debate does not cross the line into racism or harassment."



Photograph Joseph Cotterill

# SOAS Gaza activists occupy campus gallery

Joseph Cotterill

Students of the School of Oriental and African Studies occupied the Brunei Gallery on the SOAS campus from Tuesday to Wednesday in protest at Israel's military campaign in Gaza.

Twenty students remained in the gallery after closing time at half past six on Tuesday evening, arriving immediately after the SOAS Student Union's general meeting with sleeping bags, laptops, food and posters.

A bike lock was placed on the front entrance to the gallery and what the occupiers described as a "detailed action plan"

went into effect.

Police were called to the gallery by the university authorities overnight. No arrests were made. The protesters issued a set of demands to Professor Paul Webley, the school's director, on Wednesday morning.

Students from the SOAS Palestine Solidarity Committee, and Socialist Workers' Party, Respect, Middle East and Direct Action societies were involved in the occupation.

Protesters demanded that the school's director issue a statement condemning Israel's actions in Gaza.

Professor Webley had said that "it would be inappropriate for the School to make any overtly political statement as an institution" in a 7 January statement.

'We Were There', a Ministry of Defence exhibition in the Brunei Gallery that highlights the historical contribution of ethnic minorities to the British armed forces, sparked the occupation.

"We were planning direct action in support of Gaza for a while, but this occupation was timed in conjunction with the exhibition," said Elly Badcock, a first-year Politics student.

Badcock said that the exhibition is a "celebration of British colonialism, which ignores the fact that ethnic minority soldiers were used as human shields by their officers."

"It was inappropriate anyway, but together with the colonial occupation of Gaza, we had to act," she added. Cancellation of the exhibition was the protesters'

first demand.

The occupiers said they were also protesting against the presence on campus of Sodexho, a French company that is contracted by SOAS to manage catering and the Brunei Gallery.

Sodexho provides food and facilities management for the Harmondsworth detention centre in the UK and military bases in the United States. The protesters allege that the company also provides catering for the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

Badcock criticised Sodexho's management of the Brunei Gallery. "They charge £1000 per day, which means no students can afford to use it," she said.

"The Brunei room is being wasted," Katerji added. "It's our university. It should be our space, for our students," she

said.

The school had agreed to all of the occupiers' demands early in the afternoon, apart from removing Sodexho from SOAS. It is understood that a contract with the company which is effective until 2011 makes this impossible.

The school's agreement to the demands was conditional on the occupiers leaving the gallery by the end of Wednesday. By late afternoon there was some dissension within the ranks of the occupying students whether to leave the gallery, or to stay on in solidarity with the people of Gaza.

The protest ended in the evening. The students continued to make use of the space to hold events and protest the war in Gaza to the end of the week.

# LSE students' oyster card protest disrupts London Assembly

Joseph Cotterill

LSE students disrupted a London Assembly session today as part of a protest by London Liberal Youth in favour of reduced student fares for single oyster card journeys.

First-years Edwin Loo and Scott Macdonald joined activists from UCL who entered the Assembly's plenary session on transport waving placards and banners. Security staff ejected the students from the City Hall Chamber ten minutes later.

The protesters demanded that Trans-

port for London end "unjustified fare hikes" on Tube services and reduce the cost of single oyster card journeys for students by 30 per cent.

Liberal Youth are the youth wing of the Liberal Democrats. Mike Tuffrey, the Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the Assembly, reiterated the protesters' demands after the ejection.

"Recent fare hikes by TfL are now taking out on average £20 a month extra from the typical student budget," Loo, the campaigns officer of London Liberal Youth said.

It is understood that London's mayor Boris Johnson, who was in the disrupted session, agreed to consider reforming student fares.



Flickr user Phil of Photos



# Protesters disrupt Director's live interview

James McGibney

A live television interview with LSE Director Howard Davies was disrupted by members of the LSE Students' Union Palestine society last Tuesday, in protest at the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

Fifteen protesters stood behind Davies holding a banner reading "Defend Gaza, condemn Israeli massacre" and placards showing graphic images of wounded Palestinian children during the interview with Bloomberg Television.

Charlotte Galvin, the Palestine society's secretary, said that "the main aim was to raise as much public awareness as possible about the suffering of the population of Gaza."

"We seized upon the opportunity to get national media coverage when we saw Howard Davies being interviewed," she added.

Bloomberg television crew threatened to call the police after the protest began. "You should know that I have powerful friends," one of the journalists conducting the interview is alleged to have told pro-

testers after recording finished.

Society members said they had not realised it was a live interview and apologised afterwards to Davies for any disruption they had caused.

Davies, who chaired the Financial Services Authority before becoming director of the School, was being questioned about financial regulation as part of network coverage of Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke's speech at LSE.

Davies said that he had not minded the peaceful nature of the protest. "The students did not intrude. They stood behind with a banner - that was fine by me. The interview happened as planned," he said.

The director said he had told the protesters that he supported their right to demonstrate and that they had not caused any inconvenience.

Society members were impressed with the director's positive response. Galvin said that "he came across as quite supportive of our cause and our right to protest, so we appreciated the nature of his reaction."



Photograph Estelle Couch

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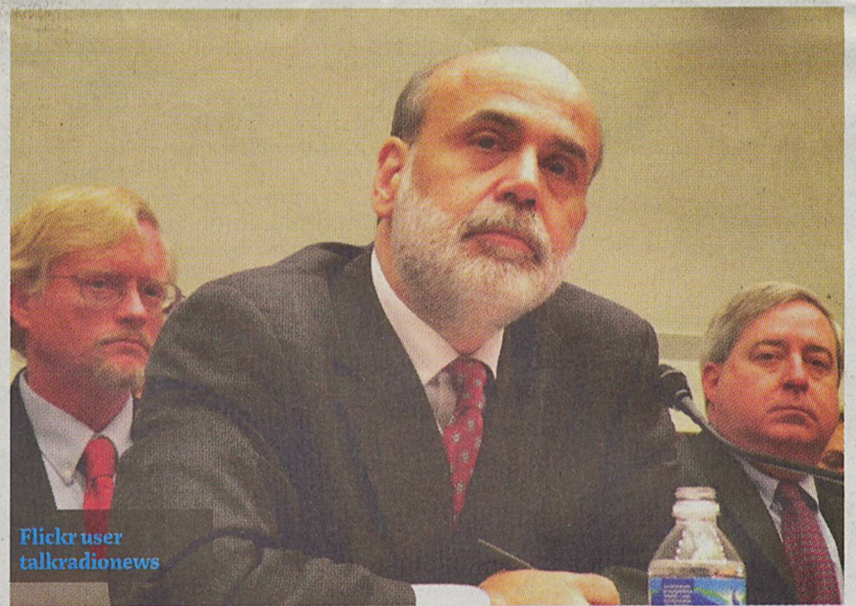
We held a series of these workshops at the end of 2008, in which dozens of overseas students from across the world took part. The sessions were a great success and very enjoyable both for the students and for our journalists.

You'd receive a fee of £50 (plus travel-expenses if necessary) for taking part in one of these 2-hour sessions. They will be held in central London on January 27<sup>th</sup>, February 5<sup>th</sup> and February 17<sup>th</sup>.

### For more information, contact:

RAHUL SARNAIK, at BBC World Service, on 0207-557-3879 or e-mail me at: rahul.sarnaik@bbc.co.uk

## Students allege queue jumping at Bernanke lecture



Flickr user talkradionews

### Srikanth Narayanamohan

Students who secured tickets for Dr Ben Bernanke's lecture on Tuesday have alleged that they were turned away in favour of alumni, donors and LSE governors while they queued to enter the Old Theatre.

Tickets for Bernanke's lecture, on policy responses to the financial crisis, sold out soon after release on Monday morning. Students had formed queues outside the Student Services Centre as early as half past five.

Aquil Esmail, a second-year Economics student, said that he had queued for tickets at seven in the morning on Monday.

"On my ticket it was printed 'to arrive 15 minutes before the lecture began', so I arrived at 12.40pm. I was second in line upstairs, when I was told to wait. They started seating people who weren't queuing. The person in front of me asked the usher why they allowed in, the usher replied they were invited LSE alumni donors who were on the list," he said.

Aquil added, "I think that it was totally unfair. It should have been first come, first serve."

Sophie Geng, president of the Students' Union Economics society and second-year Economics student was also turned away. Geng had queued for a ticket on Monday morning and arrived at the Old Theatre a quarter of an hour before the lecture began. Told that the theatre was full, Geng said she was instructed to queue at

the upper entrance until someone left the lecture.

After 10 minutes, Sophie felt her effort was futile and descended to the entrance on the first floor. To her shock, she saw late-comers being admitted. "I came downstairs again, and found that several commercial journalists who arrived much later than many of the students were able to argue their way in, and so were a couple of LSE governors. On the other hand, the Conferences staff told all students to go off and watch the online webcast," Sophie said.

Other students who did get in said that the lecture had been poorly organised, citing a lack of overflow rooms. "I wish it was in the New Academic Building, it would have seated more. It was very chaotic and I didn't know if I would get in," said Sharon, a second-year economics student, who preferred to remain anonymous.

There was a sliver lining for Aquil though. Spotting cars with special license plates parked outside the Old Building on the lot facing the Peacock Theatre, Aquil waited with an assortment of students and onlookers.

Fifteen minutes after the lecture ended, Dr Bernanke exited the Old Building with Howard Davies, encircled by bodyguards. Aquil cried out for his autograph, to which Dr Bernanke agreed.

"I gave him a five pound note. He asked 'Is this even legal?' before graciously signing it. He was fantastic and it more than made up for not getting in the lecture," Aquil quipped.

# Comment

## Protecting LSE's values along with its finances

Universities have to be run responsibly to carry on investing in tough economic times

Howard  
Davies

LSE Director



If someone describes you as 'businesslike' it's normally a compliment, so I am very happy if people associate those qualities with the London School of Economics and Political Science or with its students and staff. But I do not accept the LSE Not for Profit campaign's argument that LSE is pursuing the ethos of business at the expense of our primary purposes – research and teaching. This is emphatically not the case.

Unlike businesses, LSE has no shareholders, pays no dividends, and does not exist to make a profit. It is true that we sometimes show a surplus, as we did at the end of the last financial year, but consider how this money arises and how it is used. In fact the core activities of the school – degree teaching and research – normally operate at close to breaking even. The surplus arises largely from other activities, such as the summer school, executive education, Enterprise LSE and so on. And it is invested back into the School to strengthen our research and also improve the education and experience of students – the very issues which critics accuse us of neglecting.

Good financial management allows us to improve our environment and facilities. So the recent surpluses have helped pay for the New Academic Building, and will allow us to build a new Students' Union and students services complex in the coming years. Without them, we could not think about that. It also means we have been able to invest an extra £2 million each year to improve teaching and learning across the School, hiring more lecturers, reducing class sizes and giving students better support.

Students are directly involved in the issue of improving student experience, especially through the Student Affairs Committee, which has already identified priorities to work on – for example the best way to use the office hour. Indeed, students are represented on every one of



LSE was able to build the New Academic Building due to its prudent financial management  
Photo: Erik Lang

LSE's major decision-making bodies – including Council, the Academic Board and the Academic Planning and Resources Committee.

So our finances are vitally important in maintaining academic excellence and student experience at LSE, and it is also important that they are not misunderstood or misrepresented. As I have recently written elsewhere, it is simply not true that we hold shares in BAE, either in stocks or bonds. Nor do we have any similar investments in other arms companies. The School's own surpluses, which arise from our own operations, are invested in cash. That position dates from 2006, when concerns were expressed by students about where money was invested before it is spent on education. In addition, the school manages some endowment funds, donated by outsiders, which back scholarships (mainly). Some of that money is invested in index funds, mainly one called Charitrac, a fund administered by Barclays for charities like us. Barclays have confirmed that the fund does not hold any BAE shares.

We can all agree that ethical investment is a good thing – although no two people will ever agree on precisely how that term should be defined. The School continues to work, through Council and

other groups with student representation, to develop a Socially Responsible Investment policy. It has been agreed by Council that our SRI policy should be based on engagement but there is no reason why this should constrain the policy developing in any particular direction.

The naming of the Sheikh Zayed theatre was another issue which exposed different views. A motion to campaign on this point was defeated at the UGM – so this question has been fully and democratically aired. The theatre's name was approved by Council, including students, and after consulting the faculty with most knowledge of the region, with no objections two years ago. We have formalised our ethics policy in relation to donations. The procedures agreed were followed in the Zayed case.

Aside from finance, LSE's values also need to be defended and upheld. These values – freedom of speech, academic inquiry, tolerance, respect for differing opinions – are harder to hold on to at times like these when they are needed most. Thankfully I'm not the only person trying to uphold them – the School's Council is just one arena where you will hear many people (students included) speak passionately about LSE's founding principles and its current academic mis-

sion. The suggestion that governors and council could somehow be browbeaten into adopting a 'corporate' mentality is laughable. These are tough-minded and plain-speaking people, who are passionate about education and the way that LSE provides it.

They recognise that in competing with Harvard, Oxford, Stanford, Cambridge and a host of other outstanding universities around the world, we have to defend our values while also thinking carefully about how we finance LSE.

A good example would be the future arrangements for LSE's nursery. Let me be clear that we are keeping the nursery (indeed we invested £500,000 just three years ago to expand its number of places). We did consult on whether the current system was the right one when initial evidence showed that we might be able to refine the way it operates. Suggestions from the consultation are now being carefully considered. On the library, I have asked for more work to be done on 24 hour opening. There are security concerns which must be addressed, but I think we could find ways of extending opening further, where there is demand for it. Cost will not be the primary issue.

In an educational world of limited state funding and fierce competition to

achieve the highest standards, we can't ignore financial realities, or pass up reasonable opportunities to enhance the School. But this doesn't mean LSE is just a business – it isn't and it never will be. I am quoted as referring to "loss-making students". Anyone who was at the UGM will know this was a response to heckling from students claiming that they "paid" for the school's facilities, and after a question about top-up fees. The truth is that the fee for domestic undergraduates, plus the government's contribution, is less than the cost of their education. But I apologise to anyone who thinks this was a general point, or that it reflects a view in the school that we regard students as just consumers, or products. We – I – do not look at it that way.

Running a university is a complex balancing act, which involves making regular trade-offs between a set of objectives. They are easier to make if you can do so against a background of sound finances. That is the fortunate situation in which we find ourselves. Unlike some other universities, we are not having to make cutbacks now in response to the recession, for example, precisely because we have run the school prudently in the past. And we will go on doing so. I am married to Prudence, as it happens.

## Students do profit

Students should look at their own actions before criticising LSE's ethics

Leyla Aliyeva

Somehow the comments of 'that rascalish' Howard Davies about 'loss-makers' at the LSE have sneaked their way into the New Year. It is, however, difficult to understand why students have taken this suggestion of 'loss-making' so close

to heart. It is either because they feel indignant at their secret being revealed in public or because they feel a certain rush of benevolence and a protective urge towards the less able among us.

Clearly, though, some take this issue rather seriously, as their letter last week to Howard Davies shows – in fact they take it rather too seriously. Firstly, the writers' holier-than-thou attitude is a little bemusing since, from my experience, it is LSE students themselves who think of their education largely in terms of profit. Upon my arrival at the university, I was kindly greeted by a number of LSE students informing me that as a history

student, I would never be able to find a job. They could not comprehend why someone might choose to study a subject just because they found it interesting, and it is amusing to listen to so many students rant about the lack of ethics at the LSE, when practically everyone here raves about being an investment banker to earn great sums of money. Why general course students choose to complain about 'profit-driven' LSE is completely inexplicable, since compared with university fees in the States, LSE is practically a bargain.

Student protests at the naming of a New Academic Building theatre after Sheikh Zayed are also rather unintelligible. It is virtually impossible to justify calling Zayed a dictator or a tyrant, especially in light of the social welfare measures for the citizens of UAE. Before claiming anything about Sheikh Zayed's intolerance we should follow our university's motto of 'rerum cognoscere causas' and actually do some research about the man. If not,

then do the writers of the letter suggest we rename buildings named after Western monarchs too? After all, Henry VIII does not seem to have developed a particularly acute taste for 'human rights'.

We live in a capitalist society, and it is very common to name university libraries, theatres and buildings after those who contribute towards their construction. It is interesting therefore that upon mention of an Arabic name our minds have suddenly referred back to the LSE's Fabian roots for help. Observe especially how the writers of last week's letter chose to name and shame the UAE Sheikh in full, as Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, for an extraordinary effect. It is also doubtful whether many of the campaigners have actually read works by Sidney and Beatrice Webb or George Bernard Shaw, whose ideals they now aim to defend passionately.

Referring to money donated by the Sheikh Zayed foundation as 'dirty money' is incredibly intolerant and unctuous. In the end, all money is dirty, but we live with it. Our taxes are used to fund wars

and most of us have little scruple about dreaming to work in banks, which have frequently been observed to dispossess people of their homes, while our TV licences fund 'entertainers' like Jonathan Ross. It is also interesting to talk of democracy when we live in a country governed by an unelected Prime Minister, who sends troops to Iraq and Afghanistan, despite belonging to what was very briefly in the 1940s a 'left-wing' Labour Party.

With regards to calls for the LSE's government to adopt an ethical approach, I can only suggest that students first focus on observing an ethical approach themselves. The way in which Remembrance Day on 11 November was completely ignored by LSE members this academic year, and the incredibly insensitive decision to choose that date for holding an LSE beauty contest, are just one example to consider. And never, except at LSE, have I heard students asking if Remembrance Day poppies were for Halloween. We really should think about our own ethics first, before forcing others to do so.



# The Beaver

Established in 1949  
Issue No. 698

Telephone: 0207 955 6705 Email: editor@thebeaveronline.co.uk

## Continued from page one >>

sensitive area.

This leaves the issue of the occupation of the Old Theatre, extending from last Thursday to the time the Beaver went to print, by which point it appeared to be wrapping up.

For students who are cross at having their lectures re-scheduled this week, it's worth remembering that most of us do accept that student sit-ins and 'direct action' can be justified sometimes - as in the great anti-Apartheid sit-in of the Eighties.

And proportionality is the key to any student protest. For that reason they often deserve the benefit of the doubt. In this case, however, by the end of the occupation on Monday this had all but gone. The protesters should have balanced the disruption they were causing with the aims they had already achieved.

The protesters wanted the School to officially condemn Israel's actions in Gaza. The concession they received, Howard Davies' statement of his personal concerns, was very generous, especially from an institution of the worldwide activities of

which make it very important that the School remains politically neutral (without sacrificing its core principles) as much as possible. Gaza's violence was the right exception to make.

Indeed, Howard Davies' response to the occupation has been very measured overall, reflecting the tolerant community that he leads.

At the same time the School should recognise the depth of feeling that has been exposed by the events of the last week. It should continue to engage in serious dialogue with the Students' Union's Israeli and Palestinian societies, not out of a desire for quiet life on campus but in order to protect LSE's diverse and open environment as a moral imperative.

For many students, last week's events were a minor hindrance at best and a good chance to moan at champagne socialists and poseur radicals. But the protesters were much more serious than this. And the problems that campus relations at LSE face go much deeper than that.

For now, we should all be happy that a ceasefire is holding in Gaza. But we should look to our own School as well.

## LSE and the audacity of hope



**A**s this newspaper hits Houghton Street, preparations will be underway for the inauguration of the 44th President of the United States.

A little over four years ago, it would have seemed absurd to suggest that on this day an African-American former junior Senator by the name Barack Hussein Obama would be mounting the podium to take the oath of office after an epic battle with Senators Hillary Clinton and John McCain - two respective giants in American politics.

Barack Obama embodies the values of our Fabian founders. A little over 100 years ago a group of thinkers came together. Their ethic was simple: a commitment to public service and the curing

of social ills. They established an educational institution to foster such values among its students. 100 years later, the London School of Economics has earned such a reputation.

As Honorary President of the LSE Students' Union, Barack Obama is an example to this student body. At a time of heightened tensions on campus, when our faiths collide as often our rhetoric, Barack Obama's message of bridging divides by understanding one another's good intentions in spite of disagreements is significant.

Later this evening, teenagers across the Muslim world will see a young man called Barack Hussein Obama become the President of the United States. Barack Obama's mixed race and multi-

cultural background is unique in American Presidents. However, it is simply convention on this campus. Nowhere more than at the most international university in the world can we appreciate the ability of those whose backgrounds transcend boundaries and cultures to bridge the great divides of our world.

On this day, we reaffirm that we live in a world of infinite political possibilities, where what may have seemed impossible four years ago is a certainty today. Our university is home to some of the brightest minds of our generation and our collective ambitions, which may seem like student pipe dreams today, could well become tomorrow's certainties.

# There is no hope for peace if the debate continues in this tone

We must respect the rights and views of people on all sides of the conflict if it is to be resolved

## "John"

The author wishes to remain anonymous for reasons of personal safety

One of the most disheartening things about the current atmosphere on campus regarding the subject of the rocket attacks on Israel and Israel's attack on Gaza is the extent to which reasoned and genuinely open dialogue has come to a standstill. Instead, what we have is a campus inflamed to the point of extreme intellectual and moral self-righteousness, severely impeding communication.

At the recent UGM meeting this atmosphere of self-righteousness boiled over, making it all but impossible to respectfully, meaningfully, and sincerely examine the continuum of opinions on campus regarding the conflict.

The nature of the debate on campus and in the union is not merely impassioned - it is shrill. This has paralysed and polarised us as a student community, and marginalised us from each other.

It is undermining the welfare of many of our students who have found themselves intimidated, ostracised, and maligned for not sharing the dominant view at the recent UGM meeting regarding the conflict in Gaza and southern Israel, and who find the LSE campus unwelcoming.

As a human rights activist, I find it ironic and profoundly hypocritical that those who claim to be most passionately committed to the values of freedom and democracy show such callous disregard for the minority perspectives of those students who disagree sharply with their assessment of the causes of the conflict, and of the relative legitimacy of Israel's actions in Gaza.

Many students in the Israel Society and Jewish Societies, and many students who are neither Jewish nor Israeli, nor affiliated with these societies, would like to demonstrate their solidarity with Palestinian civilians who are suffering unbearably in the Gaza Strip. They want nothing more than an end to the conflict, to Israel's bombings of Gaza and to the Hamas rocket attacks on Israel.

But they found it impossible to support the UGM motion because it does



Photo: flickr user hoyasmeg

not acknowledge the most fundamental principles of human rights and of international human rights law: the sanctity of human life and the universality of human rights.

The UGM motion does not speak substantially, forcefully, and unequivocally in condemnation of thousands of Hamas rocket attacks on Israel and in the resulting murder and maiming of innocent Israeli civilians, and the terrorising of thousands of Israeli civilians who live in fear of constant rocket attacks.

At the UGM meeting, Joseph Brown, the Union's purported Anti-Racism Officer, spoke in a mealy-mouthed way when confronted about this, saying in essence that even acknowledging Hamas rocket attacks would somehow imply justification of Israel's response, which has culminated in such wide-scale violence in the Gaza Strip. He said he feared it would imply proportionality in terms of moral responsibility.

But acknowledging the truth and standing up for basic moral norms of international human rights law as codified in the United Nations Charter and numerous UN resolutions and treaties does not imply comment, one way or another, on whether Israel's response to the rocket attacks was proportionate, or even if it was justified.

What it does do, however, is acknowledge that the human rights of Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel are intrinsically valuable and must be respected, and that Israelis bear the same human rights as Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

NGOs that are highly critical of Israel's actions in Gaza and under the occupation generally, such as Amnesty Interna-

tional and Human Rights Watch, routinely acknowledge that Hamas rocket attacks on Israeli civilians are war crimes and crimes against humanity, and constitute egregious violations of human rights.

Not to protest these rocket attacks is to actively take a discriminatory stance against one group of civilians in the conflict because of their particular nationality. It is deeply distressing that one needs to make a point that is so patently obvious, that one needs to advocate, pleading, that Israeli civilians have the same rights as Palestinian civilians.

The UGM motion that passed is bigoted, and it fails the most basic moral and legal tests of universality of human rights. If ever there was a facile and reductive view of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the motion is the perfect exemplar. One can only conclude from it that this is a conflict of black and white, good guys and bad guys, saints and demons. There is one innocent party and they are the Palestinians and one guilty party, and they are the Israelis. That the truth might fall somewhere in between, that history and morality and human behaviour are generally more complex than this, is totally overlooked.

At the UGM meeting Joseph Brown made a comment that the root of the conflict and the injustice is the occupation. It certainly is one of the roots; it is hugely destructive to Palestinian rights, dignity, and freedom. It causes immense suffering and it can and must come to an end with the creation of a viable Palestinian state that lives beside Israel in peace and security. One which respects the rights of the Jewish people to self-determination in Israel, and one which is in turn respected as reflecting the rights of self-determina-

tion of the Palestinian people.

But Hamas rockets do not merely protest the occupation. They do not target Israeli soldiers. They deliberately target Israeli civilians. Hamas has previously made it very clear in the statements of its ministers and in its various public and private pronouncements that it is against the existence of the State of Israel and aims for its destruction.

At the UGM meeting, Brown said that no one on campus should feel threatened. But Brown's stance in support of the UGM proposal and its discriminating language contribute to the feeling of intimidation and threat on campus. He seemed to want to wish away the feelings of students who feel insecure on campus, but he offered no concrete explanation for measures he would take, and the Union would take, to promote inclusivity and tolerance.

It is unfortunate that at a time when anti-Jewish attacks, including arson attacks on a synagogue, hate speech, and verbal and physical assault in the UK have skyrocketed, with more than 150 attacks recorded since Israel's actions in Gaza, the Union motion made no explicit and vigorous condemnation of this outrage. Recently, twenty prominent British Muslim leaders signed a letter unreservedly condemning such violence which is being circulated to over 1,200 British mosques. The Union should, however belatedly, draft and pass a similar statement.

Some time ago, visiting a community development project for disabled children in the Gaza Strip supported by a Jewish American NGO I volunteer with and support, I tried communicating with one of the boys, sputtering the few words that I know in Arabic, and smiling. The

language barrier quickly melted.

He responded to me by taking the kippa that I had been wearing on my head, and placing it on his own. I had no way of communicating to him how my kippa was for me a symbol of infinite worth. My mother had sewn it for me and sewn my name on it in Hebrew. It embodied both my love for and relationship with my mother, and, more broadly, my love for and relationship with Judaism and the Jewish people and with Israel.

In his own way, though, I think he intuited how central my kippa was to my values and identity. He wore it for a few minutes, running around with it, showing some of his friends how he looked with a big smile and great enthusiasm, and finally, holding it in the palm of his hand, he felt its texture and then placed it in my hand so that I could place it back on my head.

We all have a great deal to learn from that Palestinian boy.

There is a profound empathy gulf on our campus. There is, as there should be, sympathy, understanding, and active concern for the Palestinian people, and especially for Palestinian civilians. But there is no such sympathy, understanding, and active concern for the plight of Israel's citizens, and especially for Israel's civilians.

Until each of us feel the same moral indignation in the face of violations of human rights of all people, irrespective of their religion, nationality, ethnicity or any other such factor, then we had better search our consciences and do everything in our power to reach out to one another, and in doing so, ultimately find in the other a reflection of ourselves.

## Breaking barriers

The LSESU Dialogue Commission will give us a chance to explore our opinions in depth

### Erin O'Halloran



It's pretty easy to grandstand. Get an opinion, google a few like-minded media outlets, and start yelling. And campaigning. And writing articles for the Beaver.

Especially at university - and especially at a university like the LSE - grandstanding is a fixture. Protests, debates, motions, leaflets, boycotts. It's all a part of what makes Houghton Street the vibrant thoroughfare it is; and undeniably, there's no faster, louder way to get your point across. But for me, at least, there's a point where partisan debates and protests cross the line between free expression and a slogan shouting match. We see it on television, when politicians yell over

one another to drown out their opponent's voice or make a show of 'not listening' when the other speaks. We read in our newspapers and watch on the evening news as one set of facts or arguments is held up as 'right' - the truth, the good, the honourable - while another is rejected, often as lies; more amusingly as 'evil'. Even the structure of an English essay involves the upholding of one argument via the rejection of one or more rivals. We live in a society where standing up for something inherently presumes the wholesale dismissal of one or several alternatives. Indeed, to a certain extent, that's what democracy is about.

To put it mildly, I'm not a fan of polarisation. I've been brought up in a multicultural Buddhist community whose leader, Daisaku Ikeda, has spent his adult life conducting dialogues with prominent leaders including Arnold Toynbee, Johan Galtung, Joseph Rotblat, Hazel Henderson, Nelson Mandela, Majid Teheranian and Mikhail Gorbachev. Ikeda employs a method which brings parties together to speak about common concerns based

on the principle of mutual respect and the goal of creating a shared understanding. He was, for example, instrumental in bringing about the Sino-Soviet detente in the 1970s and has since been given the UN Award for Peace, among sixteen other prizes for peace and humanitarian efforts.

There are three key points about a dialogic approach: first off, it presumes that no one has a monopoly on the truth. Second, it presumes that participants are inherently worthy of respect. And third, it presumes the absence of grandstanding. It's also probably important to emphasise that none of the above requires anyone to check their principles at the door. The goal is not to reach middle-of-the-road compromises which suit no one. No thanks. Rather, dialogue allows diverse and/or opposing views to contribute to a greater and more holistic understanding of a complex issue - for the benefit of both participants and the broader public. In short, disagreement is welcome; disrespect is not.

The LSE Student Union's Dialogue Commission is a new forum designed to promote precisely this kind of con-

structive interaction, collaboration and understanding between student societies and their members. The basic format is as follows: representatives from two or three societies with a common concern (interfaith, business-environmental, current events or conflict-oriented, investment or humanitarian) are invited to participate in a public dialogue - not a debate. LSE professors and staff members with a specific interest in the issue at hand will be invited to mediate, and these three to six individuals will meet for an informal workshop session with representatives of the Commission. During the workshop, participants plan the general outline of the dialogue. The idea is to construct something together: reaching agreement where agreement is possible, but also better accounting for disagreements without resort to accusation or dismissal. Following the workshop, the dialogue is presented in much the same way as a public lecture.

In order for this to work, all parties, including the mediator, will need to have done their homework, be well informed on the facts and ready to back up their

point of view; but they will also need to be ready to respect the opinions of others, acknowledge inconvenient truths and cooperate with sincerity and an open mind. Instilling parties with this 'dialogic ethic' will be one of the Commission's key goals.

The Dialogue Commission is holding its AGM this Thursday, 22 January beginning at 5pm in room S75. We're looking for a committed and innovative team of students to take on the challenge of getting dialogues up and running. We're also looking for suggestions of topics students would like to see covered. But above all, we're looking for societies and society representatives to take part in dialogues, be they political, philosophical, business and investment-oriented, or simply a good laugh.

Face-to-face interaction and non-competitive human exchange can yield insight and creative problem solving on a level not found in speeches or debates. The LSESU Dialogue Commission seeks to tap this potential for the enrichment of our student community and the pursuit of knowledge.



Effective dialogue can reduce conflict  
Photo: flickr user theJoSoS

## Letters to the editor

### Allaying your concerns

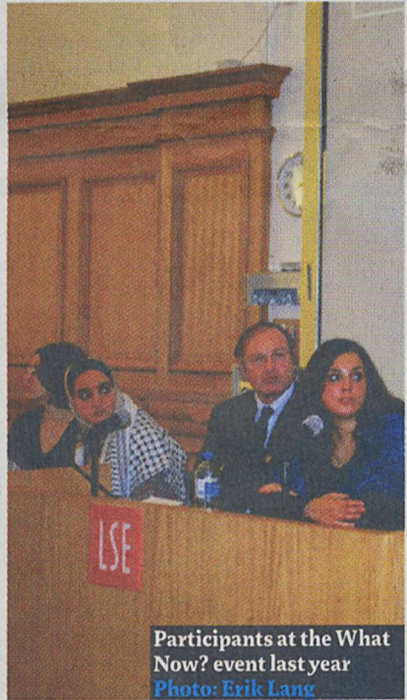
Dear Sir,

It is a sad day when any pro-Palestinian activist has to return to the bygone days of defending oneself against accusations of antisemitism when defending the human rights of an oppressed people. I write this letter as the Students' Union representative who organised the first fair and balanced joint event between the Israel and Palestine Societies last term entitled "What Now?" with aim to discuss where Middle Eastern advocacy must go from here and it pains me that such questions have even arisen.

I will use this space to clarify unequivocally my position with regards to Hamas. I do not support Hamas. I denounce and deplore their insistence on targeting civilians. I do not believe that their constitution is an acceptable or defensible document.

These worries have appeared in part because of the allegation that I own a Hamas scarf. I would like to clarify this. I found such a scarf, discarded on the street at a rally outside the Israeli Embassy and have since taken it home. It is not affixed to my wall and I do not bandy it around. I stress in no uncertain terms that this is not an indication of an endorsement of Hamas. In order to allay further concerns; by the time you read this I will have disposed of the scarf.

**Seph Brown**  
Students' Union Anti Racism Officer



Participants at the What Now? event last year  
Photo: Erik Lang

### The Union's new 'Palestine Officer'

Dear Sir,

In a letter to The Beaver last week, there was a call for Joseph Brown, the Students' Union Anti-Racism Officer, to work with Jewish and Israel Societies to ensure that LSE remains a friendly environment for their members. In a meeting of the Executive Committee earlier this week, Joseph was asked directly what his plans were to prevent antisemitism on campus, in light of the recent spike in anti-Semitic violence and vandalism across the UK. Jewish students are waiting patiently for a response from Joseph Brown.

In the meantime, Joseph has been very busy. He signed a letter comparing Israel's military operation to the Nazi Holocaust – a deliberately provocative use of language which falls under the EU's definition of antisemitism, as recommended by NUS and the Parliamentary Committee against Antisemitism.

Last week, the Beaver featured an article penned by Joseph describing Hamas as "simply Fatah without the endemic corruption and with a smattering of Islamic influences". Given Hamas' founding charter, which references The Protocols of the Elders of Zion; its recent calls for the killing of Jews worldwide and its track record of holocaust denial, this seems a rather odd thing for an Anti-Racism Officer to be writing. We thought that Joseph may have simply 'forgotten' to condemn the fascist and racist tendencies of Hamas, until he learnt that he owns a Hamas scarf, which he has taken onto campus. The offense this causes needs no explaining.

**On behalf of the Jewish Society:**  
**Debra Freedman** - Chair  
**Hadassah Wachsmann** - Secretary  
**Daniel Jaffe** - Treasurer  
**Alex Rodin** - Education Officer

### Attention seeking helps nobody

Dear Sir,

Publicity stunts and one-sided motions are unconstructive and divisive. If our Students' Union is going to take a stand on such complex issues of international importance then it has an obligation to do so fairly and constructively. Believe it or not, there is something that ordinary citizens of both Israel and Gaza and the students at the LSE agree on, and that is the need for a long-lasting and just peace.

The UGM motion passed last week barely mentions peace and gives no emphasis to working toward this mutual goal. Furthermore, the motion will fail in its intentions (ending suffering in Gaza) and succeed in what it does not intend (sparking anti-Semitism on campus). I am ashamed that an officer in our Union, whose responsibility it is to speak out against racism, hatred and discrimination, proposed this ineffectual motion and then refused to condemn Hamas, a clearly racist and anti-Semitic organization, even when pushed to do so. It is a disgrace to the Students Union, the school, and the wider LSE community.

We are all students; we have no obligation, like politicians, to draw up black and white party lines – what is really required is a little bit of recognition on either side of the fence. Recognition of a common interest in a peaceful resolution, an end to the violence and a future viable Palestinian State alongside a secure Jewish State of Israel – no doubt there are obstacles in between, but let us moderate work together to really support initiatives that encourage co-existence, peace and an end to the violence, rather than slanted motions and publicity stunts.

Sincerely,

**Member of the LSE SU Israel Society**  
The author wishes to remain anonymous for reasons of personal safety



Photo: Erik Lang

### Beaver's poor reporting

Dear Sir,

I am writing this letter in response to the reckless, poor, and pitiable writing that seems to have taken hold of The Beaver during these past few weeks of Palestine-mania. Perhaps I could be excused for thinking that this school newspaper is now essentially just a rag concerning itself with disseminating agitprop regarding the Palestinian plight. I suppose this is all well and good for a student population that prides itself on academic excellence and global involvement. But if this is the case then I question why we see no articles regarding the cholera epidemic in Zimbabwe and its government's shameful and criminal response. What about the unmitigated and unceasing horrors in the Democratic Republic of Congo, or fighting in Sri Lanka, or the situation in Afghanistan?

These are articles picked at random of just four of the many countries mired in conflict, disease and destruction. If The Beaver fancies itself an incisive journal of international politics, then why not give coverage to just a few of the other tragedies befalling this bloody 21st century? I'm not trying to give editorial advice here but maybe you could even cut the heartbreaking tale of the "dreams of Fresh night" that were "Crushed by students" (Jan 12 2009)? I guess I'm wondering what this paper's mandate is: to be The Guardian or The Sun?

Furthermore, I'd say the shoddy quality of the reportage regarding the Palestine issue does nothing to further the reputation of this paper or give an accurate picture to the situation in Palestine and Israel. Quoting Estelle Cooch, who had been to Palestine five years ago, as likening "the scenes she saw in Gaza to images of the Warsaw ghetto" is nothing but lowest common denominator reporting, morally invidious and embarrassingly reductionistic. While I'm sure Ms. Cooch is an expert in Nazi German policy and has visited the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II, before getting to go on a nice little tour of a Palestinian refugee camp, something about that comment just smacks of idiocy, irresponsible reporting and (yes) latent antisemitism. The fact that this is what gets published in a newspaper that has such aspirations for pointed critical thought and political discourse is both embarrassing and offensive. I sincerely hope to see better and more balanced coverage in the future. Or maybe you should just stick to reporting about the volleyball team posing naked for a calendar.

**Ariel Rubin**  
Msc '09

### Anti-racism on campus

Dear Sir,

Recent events in Gaza have inevitably had an impact on LSE. As a Union, we support the right of students to protest and make their opinions heard.

However, it has come to our attention that several students feel intimidated by the atmosphere both off and on campus. Complaints range from fear of reprisals for expressing opinions to being spat on. LSE is a space for all students to freely voice their opinions and any acts of intimidation, harassment or violence will not be tolerated.

Some of the antisemitic and Islamophobic comments that have been reported are not only against the Equal Opportunities Policy of the Students' Union, but also constitute racial harassment.

If any of you feel that you have been harassed or victimised by a fellow student or member of staff, please contact Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang, Education and Welfare Officer, immediately.

The Students' Union is organising an open meeting for anyone who wants to talk about their experiences and how we should respond on Wednesday at 12:00 in The Underground. Students may also be interested in the first ever meeting of our new Dialogue Commission, led by Erin O'Halloran, which is meeting on Thursday 22nd January at 5pm in S75.

The Students' Union is committed to fighting discrimination wherever it arises. With the upcoming European elections, and the possibility that the racist British National Party (BNP) might win a seat, we hope you will support us in making all students at LSE from the EU aware that they can vote, and join us in campaigning against the BNP with anti-racist organisations working throughout London. A motion on this issue will come to this week's UGM, and we hope you will vote for it.

Yours,

**Aled Dilwyn Fisher**  
LSE SU General Secretary

**Wil Barber**  
LSE SU Treasurer

**Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang**  
LSE SU Education and Welfare Officer

**Dan Sheldon**  
LSE SU Communications Officer

## Bored of the credit crunch?

Long-term unemployment is crippling and, unfortunately, on the rise again

### Rachel Leighton

I had the recession chat with my hairdresser, Debbie, the other day when I was back home. It seems you can't get away from the credit crunch anywhere these days. Debbie said that she expected the same people to come in, but that they'd probably be leaving longer between visits. That could spell trouble for the 'blondes' round my way.

So I wasn't surprised when one of my friends professed to being 'BORED' of the credit crunch this week. The mate in ques-

tion said they couldn't see what the whole darned business had to do with them. Of course, the extent to which it dealt them a blow was down to what their parents (who most of us are dependent on) did or, more to the point, didn't do for work. And, I explained fairly clearly, recession spells trouble, because it means mass unemployment. But this just drew blank looks from my confused pal.

My recession-wearyed chum couldn't see the tragedy because they had no direct experience of unemployment. It occurred to me that many other LSE students might feel the same. We often talk about LSE diversity, when really we're a very privileged bunch. Many of us have been privately educated, and even when we claim to have gone to a 'bog standard comp', it was in reality, well, a really rather good school, actually. Many of us have lived sheltered lives, no matter how much you claim that gap-year on a beach in Thailand taking hallucinogens opened your mind.

Every week the Beaver cries, 'don't panic, diversify!' But, if we're honest, even though the banks are lessening their recruitment drives, which means you might not get that Holy Grail graduate scheme with Goldman Sachs, we won't be the real victims of this recession. Most graduates from LSE will be able to secure a job, even if it's not as flashy as they were hoping, and chances are that if they don't, their parents will be able to support them, for a time. And hey, you can always do a masters!

Maybe it's time to think about the real story of this recession. In recent weeks we've seen job losses from Nissan, Woolworths, and Zavvi amongst others. Particularly at risk is anyone in the construction industry, as house prices plummet and all new developments come to a grinding halt. Often with unemployment it's difficult too see

beyond the figures, but personal experience of long-term unemployment tells me the horrifying truth of being one of many stuck on Job Seeker's Allowance.

There are many emotions associated with being jobless. Desperation, depression and often shame. So when my stepdad lost his job for two years, he didn't tell me. He waited for me to notice that the car wasn't in front of the house. Unemployment can be a depressing experience as you go through the weekly job centre routine (where they don't really want to help you find a job, but really would like to find a way to stop you claiming) only to be told you have to wait six months before they'll let you retrain.

Unemployment can make you desperate, as you apply for jobs you don't really want, only to be rejected because they didn't like your shoes. Seriously. Unemployment can be a soul-destroying experience, particularly for those who don't have time on their side because they might be

pushing fifty and have to meet mortgage repayments. This will be a pressing concern for many who, perhaps unwisely but certainly not unexpectedly, borrowed high when times were good.

At the extreme end of the spectrum, one close relative of mine, having been without work for many years, gassed himself in his own kitchen, leaving behind a wife and eight dependent children. And this happened post-1945; this man was not without financial support. It is just that the meagre payments received by the unemployed can do nothing to chase away the despair stemming from the sense of hopelessness that comes with unemployment. So for all of you who are bored with the recession already, maybe reconsider that the issue isn't so boring for the millions who are already unemployed, and the millions more whose jobs are on the line, teetering on the brink of long-term unemployment and all the misery that comes with it.



Photo: flickr user iovike

# Features



Flickr user army.mil

## Iraqis will miss you, George W.

**Ali Auda** looks at how the Iraqi people have benefited in the wake of the American invasion

It's been more than five years of suffering and anguish for the Iraqi people since their supposed liberation on 9 April 2003 – another tragic episode for a people who have already been suffering, since 1963, at the hands of murderous tyrants one after the other. I can remember that day vividly, the exhilarating freedom Iraqis felt as they tore down, with the help of American soldiers, and repeatedly hit the statue of the dictator that had brought them so much misery for the past 23 years. But what did happen after 2003 and how has Bush's legacy been formed in the heart of the Middle East?

Iraq is presently an emerging democracy, joining the ranks of the few democracies that exist in the Middle East. Its economy is booming and development is occurring at a rapid pace. An example of this is the fact that direct flights will soon open between the UK and Iraq. Hopefully, for the first time in my life, I'll soon be able to fly to my home country directly by plane – a luxury that most other people take for granted. This contrasts greatly with the tortuous sanctions and wars Saddam put Iraqis through since 1980.

However, after 2003, even as Iraqis expected freedom at last, they were once again put through a vicious cycle of violence largely thanks to foreign terrorists who believe slaughtering innocent Iraqis is somehow 'resisting the occupiers'. Their perverted and brutal ideology caused, and is still causing, so much hardship for the Iraqi people and scarring so many families through their senseless killings – cowardly suicide attacks on schools, mosques and markets. And we cannot forget Saddam's final wish

to his Baath party where he infamously told them to join the insurgency and loot the country – as if he hadn't done enough damage in the past 23 years.

George W. Bush's approach to Iraq was far from perfect. It was very unlikely for Iraq to have weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) as international economic sanctions from 1990 to 2003 had reduced it to a pre-industrial state. Then we had the invasion, where Saddam rejected the demand for him to leave the country within 48 hours – yet another sign on how he 'cared' for Iraq – and the haphazard post-war administration which left the borders open to terrorists who would be treated as heroes by Saddam's banned Baath party members. One must remember that most of the civilian deaths that occurred after 2003 were not committed by the US soldiers but by cowardly suicide attacks by foreign terrorists in collaboration with Saddam's banned Baath party.

However, despite all the problems Iraq was going through, elections were held for the first time in over 50 years in 2005. I distinctly remember the ink on my parents' index fingers after they had voted. Iraq was free, and despite all the terrorists' wishes to slaughter as many Iraqi civilians as possible, Iraq held together and now has one of the best developing security forces in fighting guerrilla warfare.

Iraq is now a democracy. At this moment some people may be saying it is a false democracy under occupation. I say go to Iraq and see how all the ethnic groups are free to express themselves rather than being brutally repressed all the time – just like the approximately 300,000 Iraqis who were massacred in the space of two months after Saddam crushed the

uprising in 1991. I have spoken to a lot of Iraqis who are grateful for Bush in that he gave Iraq democracy. I visited Iraq twice, in 2002 and 2004. In 2002, the atmosphere was one of fear and nobody was able to say anything for fear of being sentenced to death. I remember driving through Baghdad past one of Saddam's many palaces with high walls and no one walking on that side of the footpath – while Iraqis were dying, Saddam was busy building himself palaces that ironically use to house the US soldiers and now Iraqi government officials. In 2004, security was far from perfect, but Iraq was free, they could curse anyone they wanted, and people were allowed to own mobile phones, computers and satellite television for the very first time. These trivial things that we take for granted in the West were prevented from reaching the Iraqi people by Saddam.

Another infamous event that demonstrates a democracy in the making, albeit for all the wrong reasons, was the action of one Iraqi journalist, Muntadar al-Zaidi. He became a hero after he threw his size 10 shoes at Bush last month, allegedly accusing the outgoing American president to be the cause of Iraq's problems. He was hailed as a 'hero' by many and I couldn't help but wonder what would have happened had he dared to throw those size 10s at Saddam. Firstly, he would not have been heard from again, not to mention his family who would have been tortured and killed, and maybe if Saddam was in a particularly grouchy mood, his whole tribe would be exterminated as well. He would have been tortured and had his sisters raped in front of him – one of Saddam's many methods of torture – and that's only the beginning.

**Bush, whether anyone likes it or not, is a hero in many Iraqis' eyes for freeing them from a dictatorship**

The fact that Bush brushed off this attack and held that a free and democratic Iraq will deal with him is another testament of how Iraq is emerging into a democracy. A day later, around 30 innocent civilians were slaughtered in a suicide car bomb attack in Baghdad. I wondered, shouldn't this 'hero' throw his shoes at the people who are slaughtering Iraqis every single day and have been for the past five years?

The fact is Iraq has had a tortured history and its neighbours haven't been exactly helpful, as Deputy Prime Minister Barhem neighbouring surrounding countries for the fact that Iraq had to resort to concluding a military deal with the US – if neighbouring countries would stop supporting terrorists in Iraq, then they would have no reason to request further American military assistance. However, many people believe this deal is ultimately in Iraq's best interests as having the world's strongest superpower protecting Iraq from invasions and coups will also guarantee its young democracy and allow it to flourish.

Bush, whether anyone likes it or not, is a hero in many Iraqis eyes for freeing them from a dictatorship infamous for its brutality against its own people. Iraq will emerge as a beacon of democracy in the region and will rise out of the ashes like Japan and Germany did in the wake of 1945. It will join the ranks of its ancestors who created the first codified sets of laws known as Hammurabi's Code. Iraq's partnership with the US will continue to grow stronger and stronger. For me personally, if I were to stand against the invasion in 2003, it would be no different to delivering a slap in the face to the millions of innocent Iraqi civilians who perished under Saddam.

NICK BROTEN AND LSE ACADEMICS WEIGH IN:  
DOES AMERICA REALLY HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO

# CHANGE

## Presiding with prudence

Nick Broten thinks progressive policy making, not race, will define Obama's years in office

Ralph Ellison opens *The Invisible Man*, his eviscerating meditation on race in America, with a provocation: "I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fibre and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me."

For many, Barack Obama's swearing-in as president on Tuesday will represent an end to invisibility; the very presence of a son of a Kenyan and a daughter of Chicago's South Side in the White House will represent the very change that his campaign promised. To add to the political theatre, the inauguration will take place just days after Martin Luther King's birthday, a historic day that reminds Americans of their still smarting racial wounds. It is unlikely that Obama will resist the temptation to borrow from King's vast lexicon of inspirational rhetoric in his inaugural address. Indeed, many have come to see Obama's victory as the realisation of the dream that King so eloquently described on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in August 1963.

But despite the inevitable invocations of a new chapter of American racial history, Obama's newly-minted administra-

tion will disappoint his more fervent supporters who have been clamouring for a wholesale change to the political process. Since his speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention catapulted his unusual name to the centre of the political spotlight, Obama has always been a politician with two separate identities. In one he is transformative: a young, thoughtful man with the intellect and veracity to carry the country beyond its partisan and cultural divides. In the other he is shrewd and careful: a savvy master of the media and public opinion.

While seemingly contradictory, this combination can be deeply effective. A politician with a vision for his country as well as the skills to achieve it—Lincoln is an obvious example—will likely be given history's favour. But a politician with too little vision and too much savvy—Bill Clinton in his second term, perhaps—will inevitably survive on false platitudes and empty promises.

Obama's well-crafted transition and wickedly smart cabinet picks indicates a presidency of the former type, albeit barely.

While the moderate right has been largely satisfied with Obama's cabinet—the conservative New York Times columnist David Brooks was beside himself, calling Obama's team "more impressive than any in recent memory"—many self-

defined progressives have chided Obama for his centrist, Clinton-esque picks.

The Left first began to cringe when Obama announced his economic team, mostly consisting of high-profile neoclassical economists whose free-market theories directly oppose the fears of America's increasingly protectionist blue belt.

Erwin Height, an 83-year-old retired engineer from California, expressed his concerns this way: "One compromise [Obama] has already made is in his economic team. He has selected members of the financial class, some of whom have enriched themselves in the derivative mess they helped create. Maybe he thinks they are the only ones who understand the mess they participated in." Height went on to say that "we need more taxes" on the wealthy to pay for the government's necessary expenditures.

The characterisation of Obama's economic team as a cabal of finance-centric, hyper-technical elites is probably accurate—Lawrence Summers, chair-designate of the National Economic Council, has served as president of Harvard University, Secretary of the Treasury, and most recently, managing director of the investment firm, D.E. Shaw; Robert Rubin, another key economic advisor to Obama, served as the chairman of Citigroup after his tenure as Treasury Secretary.

But Obama has never been a people's

politician. His intangible charm and youthful appeal—largely the product of his racial 'invisibility'—have packaged a politician rooted more in the elevated discourse of America's elite universities than the discordant, sometimes xenophobic passion of the country's progressive base.

While Obama's race and rhetoric have cemented his place in history, Obama as Commander in Chief will likely show more promise as a scientific compromiser than principled visionary.

Though Obama has promised swift action from his first days in office, it is his tendency for playing the cards of history in words but not action that most concerns old-school progressives like Height. Born in the wake of the First World War, Height's career has been shaped by public service. He grew up during the Great Depression and absorbed the Keynesian rhetoric of the New Deal. After serving in Manchuria during World War II he returned to study engineering in Southern California under the GI Bill. And after a long career, both as an engineer and a sales manager, he retired in a small town in Eastern California, where he spends his time educating senior citizens about Medicare and Social Security, two lasting vestiges of America's brief experiment with social welfare.

In his most recent calls for a renewed public works project, Obama himself has

tapped into this history. But even as he promises a new Keynesian generation and billions of government dollars ready themselves for America's vast infrastructural interior, one of Obama's campaign mantras—Change—seems to dampen the comparisons with America's progressive history.

The change that Obama will bring to Washington, it seems, will be more about competence than the people's revolution that some of his early supporters may have wanted. Two of the more controversial components of his stimulus package make this clear: in addition to spending on schools and health care that will please his leftist base, the plan offers tax benefits to companies that create new jobs and an overall tax cut for 95 per cent of working people. Both policies are sensible but are unpopular with the Left. Democratic congressmen have already begun muttering that the President-elect should not expect to have all of his policies ushered through the legislature without a fight.

Nevertheless, when the fight comes, Obama will be up for it. Bringing us back to Ellison's ironic provocation, "I am an invisible man...and I might even be said to possess a mind," Obama most certainly does. It is a sweet irony of history that America's first black president will be more distinctive for his pragmatic policy-making than his revolutionary poise.



Flickr user bodhithaj

## LSE Democrats' Events for Inauguration Week

### Tuesday:

The inauguration will be screened live at the Underground Bar, some come catch a drink and watch the ceremony with fellow supporters, politicians, Obamaniacs, interested foreigners and even Republicans!

Barack Obama will be officially sworn in at 12 noon Eastern Standard Time (5pm London time), but the screening will start from 4pm to 7.30pm to catch the speeches, festivities and other events that will take place on the steps of the US Congress.

### Wednesday:

Mark Lanning, the assistant cultural attache at the US Embassy, will be presenting a lecture. This meeting will be followed by an informal pub meeting at that Knights Templar for interested people to discuss the intricacies of US politics with members of the Democrats' Society.

### Friday:

Round off the week with the great American game of beer pong! The Democrats' Society has acquired a proper keg and solo cups that define the American college experience.

# On top of the agenda

The Beaver asks LSE academics for their thoughts on Obama's policy priorities

Currently, there are 50 million Americans (that's one in six) who don't have any effective health insurance. Most of them because they cannot afford it and some because their lives have already been blighted by severe illnesses or chronic conditions that make it very hard for them to get reinsured in a free market system.

President Clinton got badly burned trying to push through healthcare reforms in the 1990s, even with a Democratic Congress. So there is no great basis for optimism, except that Obama looks serious on this. The current recession will make the problem much worse unless something is done. Also, many Americans now recognize a need to rehabilitate their image in the world. No aspect of US domestic policy casts more of a blight on the 'city on a hill' vision of the United States internationally than this one.



**Patrick Dunleavy**  
Professor of Political Science and Public Policy,  
Chair of the LSE Public Policy Group

Whether we like it or not, the United States is still the 'indispensable nation' when it comes to many of the world's problems, from climate change to genocide prevention. President Obama's first priority should be to re-establish America's position as the natural leader of those states who wish to address these problems. This involves displaying intelligence, calmness, and a willingness to listen to others, all qualities that the incoming President possesses in abundance. In his own person, he refutes the stereotype of Americans as obese, ignorant racists, and he must build on the goodwill he has already generated to become the leader of a genuine 'coalition of the willing'.

**Chris Brown**  
Professor of International Relations



**Conor Gearty**  
Professor of Human Rights Law,  
Director of the Centre for the Study of Human Rights

As far as the rule of law and international relations is concerned, the new President's first priority must be to return the United States to true leadership of the democratic world. This should entail: signing up to the International Criminal Court; closure of the Guantanamo Bay detention camp; support for radical reform of the United Nations so as to make it better reflect the balance of world opinion, as gauged by population and statehood; a commitment to the proper enforcement of international law and international humanitarian law backed by economic and intellectual sanctions as appropriate but accompanied by an unequivocal undertaking never to use force unilaterally in international affairs.

**Christopher Coker**  
Professor of International Relations



There will be no major changes in the first two years of the Obama presidency, only a change of tone. The last two years of the Bush presidency - the post-Rumsfeld years - saw a significant change in the direction of US foreign policy: more conciliation of potential enemies (China and Russia) and greater co-operation with allies - the unipolar moment was already history when Obama won. Expect no change in the Middle East, continued sanctions against Cuba, no sign-up to the International Criminal Court, and possibly a major reversal on American support for free trade - forget the Doha Round. Whatever Hillary Clinton means by the US becoming a 'smart power', the smart money should be put on continuity. The Europeans, not the Asians, have invested a lot in the Obama futures market and they are in for a big disappointment.



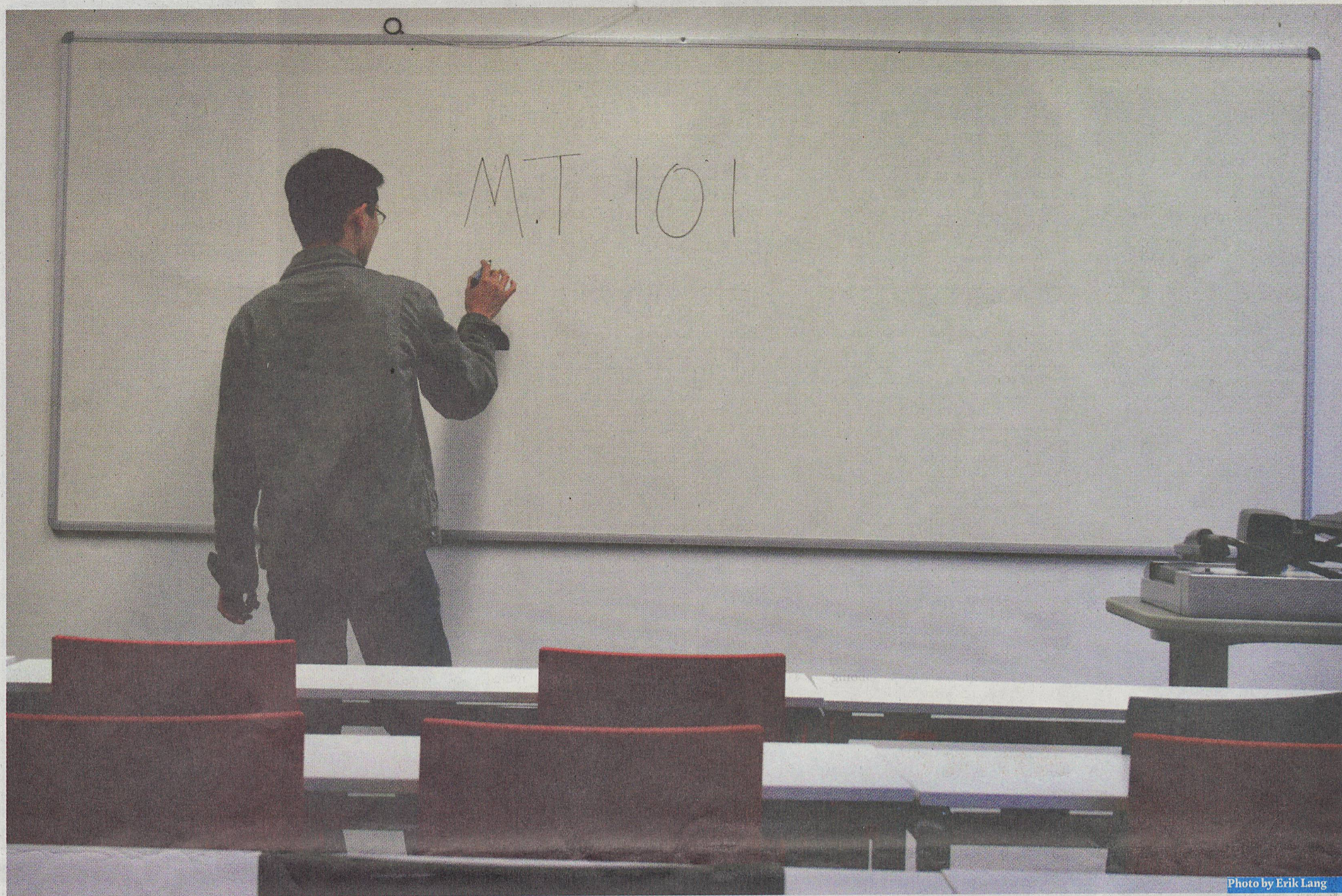


Photo by Erik Lang

# More time for seminal studies

**Louisa Clare Evans** contemplates the merits of seminars for teaching and learning at the LSE

**D**espite the ongoing troubles in Gaza and gloomy reports of a worsening economy, LSE students are not too preoccupied to espouse strong opinions on another favourite topic around campus: teaching.

But rather than the familiar discussions of teaching quality, this discussion is focused more specifically on the merits, or lack thereof, of a lecture and class teaching arrangement versus the seminar format.

Not everyone on campus has experienced both; the course teaching arrangements vary from department to department. Many courses do not have seminars at all. But for those who have, it is clear that students have preferences for one over the other.

The students I approached for this article come from a range of departments. Nonetheless, given that I am a member of the History department, the majority of the students polled were fellow historians. It is perhaps also the History department that is most affected by the marked differences between the two different styles of teaching.

Many history students prefer seminars to lectures and classes. Third-year undergraduate Adrian Grocock is one of them, who says that "they allow more time for open discussion and deeper analysis of the subject."

Typically two hours long, usually with a short break in between each half, the very nature of the session is far more conducive to the study of history. Classes on the other hand last, at best, for fifty minutes. In this time students are expected to examine 'discussion questions' on subjects that could span as much as forty years of history. Coupled with, more often than not, immensely informative and factual lectures, the volume of information that students are required to digest can be quite overwhelming. Consequently, class teachers often have to revisit material covered in the lectures in order to make sure students have the fundamental facts

straight.

So what becomes of the 'discussion questions'? Most slip off the agenda fifteen minutes into the class. Unless of course, you are lucky enough to have a teacher who insists you break off into smaller groups to consider individual questions. While it is a good idea in principle, it almost never works. How much time is sufficient for group discussion before sharing ideas with the rest of the class? And if there are, say, three discussion questions, time becomes even more scarce. The result would then be that you often leave these classes knowing slightly more about one topic but very little about the others.

Many students would argue that this can be rectified by holding longer, and more effective seminars where discussion is encouraged and supposedly integral to the design of seminars. But let's not forget too what it's like to be in the first year; it might be too much to ask of freshers to throw them straight into a seminar teaching format. Either way, being faced with a two-hour seminar from the beginning would have been unrealistic, but it does become more relevant to hold seminars as you progress through your time at LSE.

Another advantage of seminars is that they are often led by the most senior 'authority' on the subject within the department. For many of the students, the benefits of being taught by a resident professor rather than a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) were numerous: "The professors speak with more authority and clarity and better understand how to approach their subject to get the most out of student contributions," one said.

However, the vast majority of classes in the History department are taught by GTAs. Fifty minutes with a teacher who seems like he or she would much rather be in the library working on their own studies can be demoralising to say the least. If classes are compulsory and need to be a priority for students then the very same should apply to those teaching them.

**"[Seminars] allow more time for open discussion and deeper analysis of the subject."**

Some if not most GTAs have often never taught or lead a class before and their inexperience shows. Either the class begins to resemble Mrs Green's Year One class in primary school, or they jump in at the deep end expecting the volume of reading they do for their own studies. Worse still, a few unfortunate GTAs end up teaching a subject that is only distantly related to their own theses. The thought of a select few of these GTAs leading a two-hour seminar is enough to make you reconsider that root canal appointment you keep postponing.

However, students may be focusing too much on the negative and not enough on the positive. As one student pointed out: "I think the teachers are judged too harshly. We're at the LSE. The (overall) teaching here is never going to be appalling." I too, have had my fair share of less than inspiring teachers, but for every disappointing class experience, I've had twice as many good ones. This then begs the question, what are we even basing these teaching 'standards' on? If it is experience from school then that would be little less than foolish. We have gone beyond GCSE, A-level and IB standards. The emphasis at university is on independent study, we can't be spoon-fed. Or have we come to expect a certain standard of teaching thanks to those teachers who are good (If this is the case then, things really aren't as bad as they seem)?

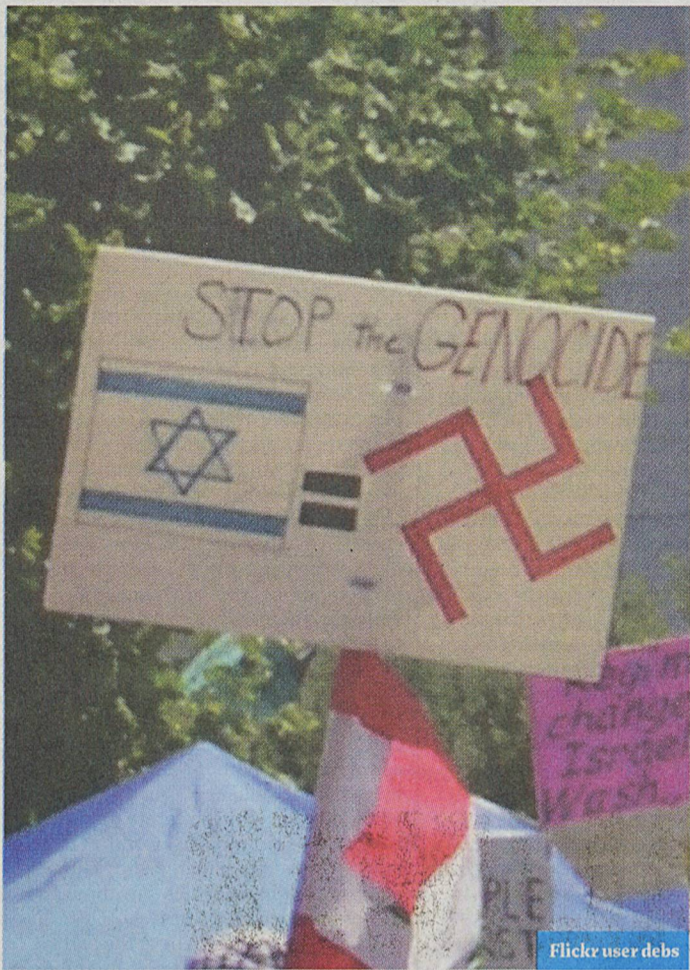
Or is it, as I suspect, that students feel they are not getting their tuition fees' worth? And what would demonstrate to students that they are getting teaching standards to the value of £3,000, or more for overseas students? There is the constant cry for more contact hours with professors but common amongst those surveyed was that they had never wanted nor needed to seek out a professor in their time at the LSE. And as the teachers I spoke to have pointed out, very few students have demanded more class time. What we seem to forget is that we are as much dependent on our fellow students

to help make a class or seminar worthwhile as we are on the teacher. Perhaps the question to ask is, are students merely blaming their own apathy, disinterest and poor time management on teachers?

With regards to mathematics-based subjects, the question of classes versus seminars seemed more confusing: what exactly is a seminar if, unlike in the case of History courses, they too are fifty minutes long? It seems that it is merely describing the number of students in the room: smaller than a lecture, but bigger than a class. Neeraj Patel, a third-year Maths and Economics student said: "The very nature of the course means you don't have to self-prepare for the classes. You are taught the method in lectures...it is factual and objective, you have to simply practise it." Entirely satisfied with the way the course is structured, Patel does not see how a seminar structure would be more beneficial.

Stephen Almond, a third-year Business, Maths and Statistics student on the other hand believes that there is not enough interaction. He explains that it is possible for students on his course to make it through their three years at the LSE without asking any questions. Almond argues that there is "little or no encouragement for developing a broader understanding of the subject." He does acknowledge that "seminars work well for what they are." Indeed, he prefers them to classes, but he also thinks that they "need to be supported with more individual staff-student contact."

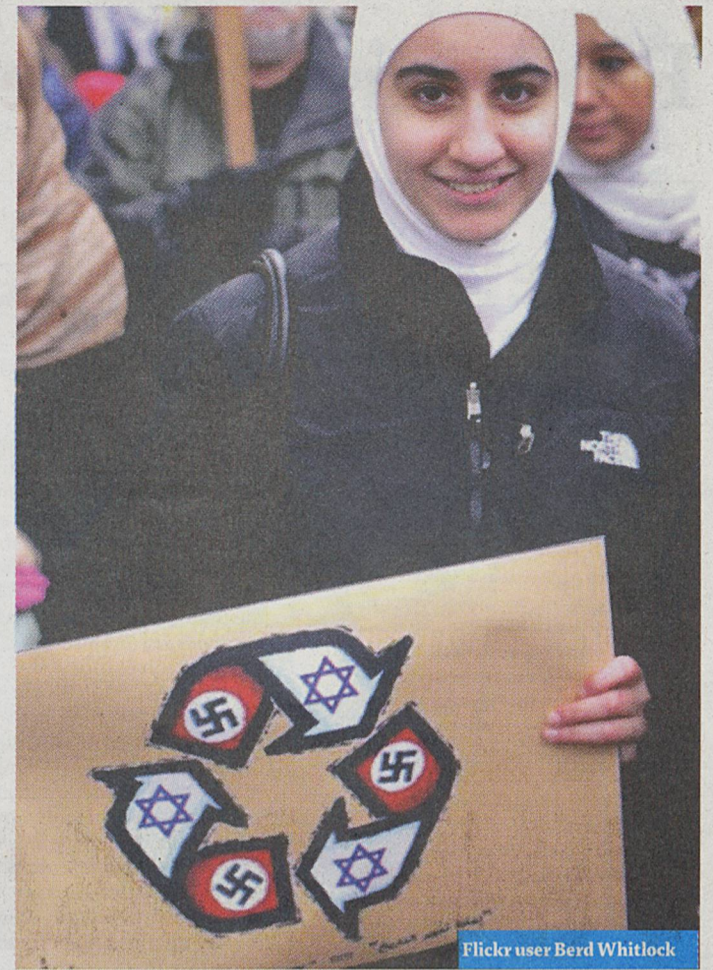
If the School were to change the structure of degree programmes and alter the balance of classes and seminars, the only logical way to do so would be allowing individual departments to do so autonomously. However, this would not be enough to assuage some of the more disillusioned students. Discontent with teaching standards is rife and it is this problem that needs to be addressed first before the issue of course structures.



Flickr user debs



'The Aryan Nation' protests Israel. Flickr user thiverr



Flickr user Bernd Whitlock

# The hideous face behind the fury

**Alex Peters-Day** calls for immediate and decisive action against increasing antisemitism

**T**he immense loss of lives in Gaza is awful, that itself is undeniable. But what is more infuriating about the conflict is the sudden spate of antisemitism that has arisen recently.

Since the Israel offensive in Gaza began three weeks ago, the Community Security Trust, a Jewish community security organisation that monitors antisemitism in Britain, has recorded over 150 incidents of antisemitism. At recent pro-Palestinian rallies across Europe, protesters held disgraceful placards with swastikas paired with the Star of David, and chanted messages such as "Jews to the gas" and "Death to Jews". In Paris, a Jewish teenager was attacked last week and told that she was "paying for Israel's crimes". A car containing Molotov cocktails was parked outside a synagogue, while several Jewish monuments, buildings and shops have been firebombed. A "hit-list" of prominent British Jews was posted on the internet.

I am not Jewish, but that is entirely irrelevant. The fact that people are behaving in such a manner is the thing that should be utterly condemned.

I'd hate to be overly dramatic, but Osama bin Laden himself has issued a statement bearing sentiments alarmingly similar to the motion passed at the Union General Meeting condemning Israel's attack on Gaza; some dangerous characters

are currently sharing not too dissimilar views with some LSE students.

That in itself is not the crux of the problem though. However, the pro-Palestine campaign is now becoming associated with openly antisemitic people, and nothing serious is being done about it. Whether some of them are using the Israeli attacks on Gaza merely as an excuse and opportunity for public displays for their veiled antisemitic beliefs is irrelevant. What is relevant is the increasing rise in antisemitic attacks in Britain. The fact that hundreds of people can march through the streets shouting "back to the ovens", which happened in Florida last month, is something that needs to be taken extremely seriously. The people chanting such antisemitic slogans will implicitly come to believe that their behaviour is acceptable, since they are not being arrested or forcibly stopped. This cannot be allowed to happen.

Many atrocities are happening across the world at this time, yet the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has come to garner the most media and public attention. Some have used this fact, like Elizabeth Wurtzel did, to argue that the outrage against Israel is a manifestation of antisemitism. The fact that Hamas is a terrorist, openly antisemitic, organisation does not help. In response to the Israeli offensive, Hamas recently issued a statement saying Jewish children everywhere had become "legiti-

**The more frequent antisemitic attacks are allowed to occur, the more insidious and common such behaviour will become**

mate targets". Not just Israeli, but Jewish, children all over the world.

Antisemitism should not have a place in any society. Currently, there are people being urged to boycott Israeli businesses. Jewish buildings across the world have been attacked. These events have invoked an awful sense of familiarity - bearing much similarities to the pogroms and persecutions of the past. If we are to learn anything from history, it should be that we have to be very serious when faced with antisemitic vibes, and that we should act quickly to quash them. The more frequent antisemitic attacks are allowed to occur, the more insidious and common such behaviour will become.

Also worth considering is the fact that within such a diverse community that is the LSE, certain actions will be making some Jewish and Israeli students uneasy. The pro-Palestine students do not consider their campaign to be in any way, shape or form associated with antisemitic figures and their views. But a tenuous association does exist, and the pro-Palestine students need to take active steps to disassociate themselves from those proponents of antisemitism.

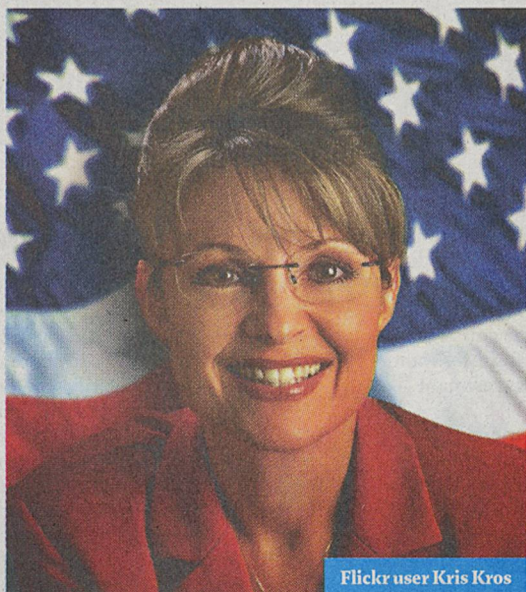
Perhaps a way to do this is for the pro-Palestine supporters to also openly condemn the other atrocities that have arisen from the latest spate of violence in the conflict - Hamas' indiscriminate violence against civilians and the startling

rise in antisemitism. Regardless whether one believes Israel has a right to defend itself or not, or even whether one believes in Israel's right to exist, it is important to condemn such wanton violence and intolerance.

Realistically speaking, direct actions, such as the occupation of the Old Theatre, in themselves are probably not going to convince Israel to halt their actions in Gaza. But dangerous antisemitic vibes could be allowed to take hold if the pro-Palestinian demonstrations and protests become associated with extremist opinions. This can be changed.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict involves extremely complex issues that require delicate handling, and I hesitate to suggest any ideas on how it can be approached. However unfortunate it is that some people are using this conflict as a stage for their own bigoted fight against the Jewish people as a whole, that is the reality. Associating with them involves associating with very dangerous ideas.

I am not implying that there are instances of antisemitism at the LSE. But the worrying fact remains, that all over the world thousands of people have been on the streets shouting antisemitic statements. And no one has done anything to stop them. That silence is deafening.



Sarah Palin - Journalism major

Flickr user Kris Kros

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# EDITORS WANTED

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**COLLECTIVE MEETING  
THIS WEEK**

**NAB204**

**THURSDAY 1600-1800**

Run for election to the Beaver's editorial board at this week's collective meeting. Want to organise all the photos that appear in this newspaper?

Want to help run and decide the content for the Social and Sport sections?

Want to decide how the Beaver develops online?

Want to gain management experience as the general manager?

Want to change the look of the Beaver and give vent to your creativity at LSE?

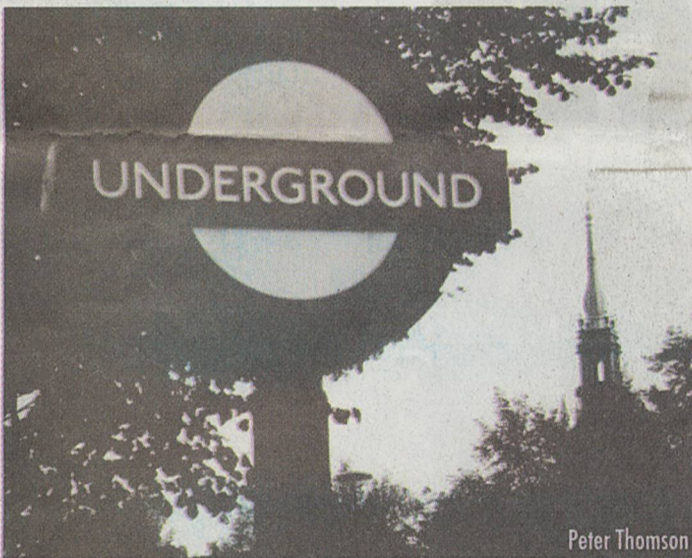
Then get involved - send nominations to [editor@thebeaveronline.co.uk](mailto:editor@thebeaveronline.co.uk) by midnight on Wednesday

# Photo

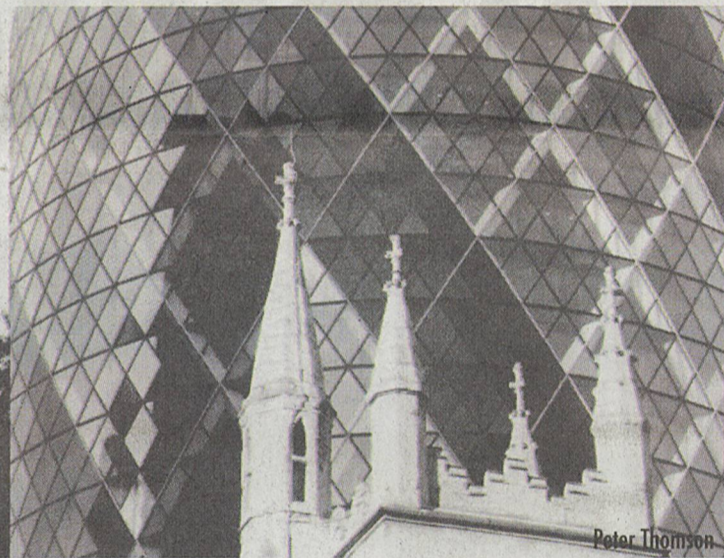
## Special Student shots of London and the United States



Elliyana jamaludin



Peter Thomson



Peter Thomson



Yuna Cho



Lorilee Evans



Mikael Francoise



Mikael Francoise



Erik Lang



Erik Lang

## Listings: This week around campus

**Film: Je vais bien ne t'en fais pas**

20 January 2009

**Film: Ne le dis a personne (Tell No One)**

22 January 2009

18.00

the underground



**Clothes swap**

22 and 23 January 2009

The Quad



**Title: 'Crisis and Control: John F. Kennedy, Lucius**

**D. Clay and the Tanks at Checkpoint Charlie'**

**Speaker: Dr Arne Hofmann**

22 January 2009

18.30pm - 20.00

NAB214

**Historical Heroes and Villains Fancy Dress Party**

22 January 2009

20.00 - 23.00

The Quad

£3 members, £4 non-members, with a £1 discount for those in costume

**Tickets: Available on Houghton Street from Monday 19th through to Thursday 22nd, and on the door**



**The Financial Sector and Sustainability**

23 January 2009

17.30 - 18.00

E171



**Tim Leunig does Q & A with the Northerners @ LSE(su)**

Northerners@ LSE(su)

26 January 6pm

D302

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# School of Hard Knocks

Marianne Fairthorne

In December, LSE sent its largest ever team to the English universities boxing championships. A squad of six fighters joined over a hundred other students in Portsmouth to compete in this prestigious event.

Of the six, only captain Chris Baugh had competed before, and some had only begun training in September. But what the team lacked in experience, it made up a hundredfold in fighting spirit. The whole team competed exceptionally well and three of our fighters Arris Angelis, Nadir Gohar and Amar Gulati even managed to reach finals in their first championships. A very rare achievement indeed. If there had been an award for the most spirited team performance, LSE would have won it hands down.

The Monday before heading to Portsmouth, the team went to tough West London boxing club Allstars for their last sparring before the big day. The club was founded by Mr Akay in the 70s for young boxers excluded from other gyms on grounds of race. Since then, he has led it from strength to strength, producing countless champions. When walking into the gym, the visitor is treated to a wall-to-wall display of famous fighters who have visited or trained there. These photographs, which include the likes of Mike Tyson and Ricky Hatton, look like a who's who in boxing.

Knowing how little time the team had been training, expectations at Allstars were low. But the team acquitted themselves so well against their hosts that all were full of confidence that LSE would have a championship to remember. With the benefit of some extra advice from Mr Akay and the trainers at Allstars, the team were ready for the challenge ahead.

When the LSE squad arrived, the coaches of rival universities were all amazed that our fighters were so inexperienced. But as soon as they saw the team perform, this feeling quickly turned to awe at what experienced coach Karim Redwood and new man Ian Streetley had achieved in such a short time.

After all this intensive training, the



Flickr user  
Jinho.jung

team were full of enthusiasm to lay into their opponents. Some people wonder how a boxer can summon the aggression to try to knock somebody out. Even the mildest-mannered person would be longing to punch someone who had caused them to go through weeks on end of hard physical work and nights in. Getting up at dawn every day in midwinter to go running does not engender love for the person in the other corner.

Day one started with a very close split decision loss by our captain to an eventual finalist. Middleweight Stewart Bevan then lifted the mood of the team with a spirited win in his debut fight. But the event that left everyone talking on the first day was the demolition by Arris "the Beast" Angelis of an outmatched and terrified opponent. After little more than a minute including two standing counts, the referee was forced to put a stop to the carnage. The other fighter had shown little more capacity to resist the Beast than the whole roast-

ed chickens which make up his diet.

On the second day, our female representative Marianne Fairthorne narrowly failed to add a boxing victory to her university challenge appearance. Despite an ultra-aggressive performance, she was unable to beat a larger and more experienced opponent who went on to win her category easily. Stewart had received an injury in his victory so despite his protests, he was not allowed to fight.

The team's aggression continued to the finals where Nadir Gohar was all over his opponent but was forced to withdraw with a shoulder injury. At cruiserweight, the Beast faced a very experienced and much larger man who proved too much even for him.

The biggest disappointment of the weekend came from poor judging. Amar Gulati looked to have won his category, but to the surprise and disgust of everyone watching, the split decision was given the other way. Few who saw his fight would

disagree that Amar should be the champion. To his immense credit, however, he took it all in his stride and was magnanimous in defeat.

Once the action was over, it was time for some well-earned treats. In the weeks leading up to the fight, the team were on strict diets which saw some members lose over 5kg. So the first priorities when it was all over were chocolate, pizza, beer, and more chocolate. With hunger satisfied, the fighters returned home for a well-earned Christmas break.

Following this impressive performance, LSE boxing club is eager to go on to even better things. If we can do so well after a few short weeks, there is no telling what can be achieved when we have been training for longer. We hope to enter even larger teams at future championships, and are confident that next time we will sweep all before us. The future for boxing at LSE looks bright.

## Gamblers Anon

We were so close to a dramatic victory last week. Then Chelsea ruined it. Bastards. Southend took the lead, then the Scolari killjoys destroyed the dreams of the Essex team, as well as those of Gamblers Anon. Such a cruel blow almost tempted us to cease the column. However, we, as gamblers, are made of much stronger stuff, so will persevere.

We aren't sure if you're aware of this, but the Bandy World Championships are currently taking place. Having researched the teams, we are pretty certain Mongolia will beat Hungary on 21st January, so much so we will place £10 on this outcome. Some would say a risky bet, but that's why it's called a gamble.

In an attempt to resemble some sense of national pride, although he is a Scot and publicly dislikes the English, we will put our remaining £10 on Andy Murray to win the Australian Open, hoping to prove once and for all that we can let bygones be bygones. Even if he is an arrogant little twerp.

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# Career Year?

Nick Drake says whether Andy Murray wins his first Tennis Grand-Slam tournament or not, 2009 will be a career defining year.

"When you win Cincinnati, when you win Madrid, when you win Doha, playing against Federer, playing against Roddick, you are ready to win a Grand Slam, no?" Rafael Nadal, World No.1 ranked Men's Tennis player, on British No. 1 and World No. 4 Andy Murray.

For the first time in his career, Andy Murray is a favourite for one of tennis' four annual Grand Slams, or majors. For a professional tennis player, no four tournaments come any bigger, and winning just one can be both career- and life-changing. Despite this, at the age of just twenty one, time may be running out.

Of course Murray is likely to play another ten, maybe even fifteen years, so there is certainly the opportunity to win many majors, but the history of tennis' great players suggests that there are distinct patterns, even to the careers of such anomalous individuals as champions. One story that Murray will be hoping to avoid making his own is that of unfulfilled talent.

For example, take Tim Henman, the English tennis player who six times made the semi-finals of a Grand Slam, but never made the next step to reaching a final. Some may dispute whether Henman actually had the talent to win it all, but there are many other examples of great sportsmen and women who could never make the final step. In fact you don't have to look far; or even leave the British Isles: consider Colin Montgomerie.

The Scottish golfer has finished runner-up in one of golf's four annual majors five times, yet never taken home the trophy. With this in mind, if we take the data since the professionalisation of men's tennis in 1968 (known as the Open Era) we can see that Andy still, seemingly, has many years to win a major. In fact, with a large proportion of tennis' majors being won between the ages of 22 and 25, Andy at 21 may just be about to step into his prime.

It is important to note that even though Rosewall, Laver and Newcombe all won majors in the Open Era, they are not included in this data set, as they also won many majors before 1968, and in fact by 1968 were towards the end of their careers and so would including them would introduce a bias towards the older age groups.

And it is important to notice very few men have won a Grand Slam after the age of 30. Interestingly, of the five men who have won a major at the age of 31 or older, all ended winning at least three majors in their career and three of them are considered as some of the greatest players of all time: Connors, Agassi and Sampras, the last of whom holds the record for major wins at fourteen.

Although Murray may not admit it, he certainly would have dreams of being a multiple Grand Slam winner. If we remove all the one-time and two-time champions leaving only the men who have won three grand-slams or more we get a very differ-

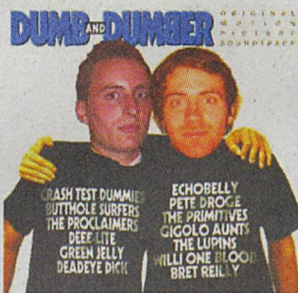
ent picture. At twenty one Murray has yet to win a major (although he has reached a Grand Slam final), if we look at the age at which multiple champions won their first championship we find that there are two distinct groups. Of the eleven men who won three or more majors and who won their first championship at twenty-one or younger, nine of them went on to win five majors or more.

Of the six men who won their first major at twenty-two or older only two won five Grand Slams or more: Agassi and Lendl. The former won his first at twenty-two, so Lendl is really the only exception in the Open Era to the rule that to win five majors or more you need to start early. In fact Lendl won his first at twenty-four, so even he was still relatively young.

Andy Murray will turn twenty-two on the 15 May 2009. If he wishes to cement himself as one of the greatest tennis players of all time and put himself up there with the McEnroes and the Beckers of the tennis world (who won seven majors and six majors respectively) let alone the Sampras' and Federers (who have won a combined 27 majors), he needs to start winning now. As the Australian Open gets under way, Murray will no doubt be hoping his last Grand Slam as a twenty one year old ends with victory. Despite being a Scot, after a decade of Tim Henman's not quite good enough, the English will hope so too.



Flickr user  
saturnshine



# SPORTY - THE

# ROBIN LOW EDITION

## Loathe to bid farewell



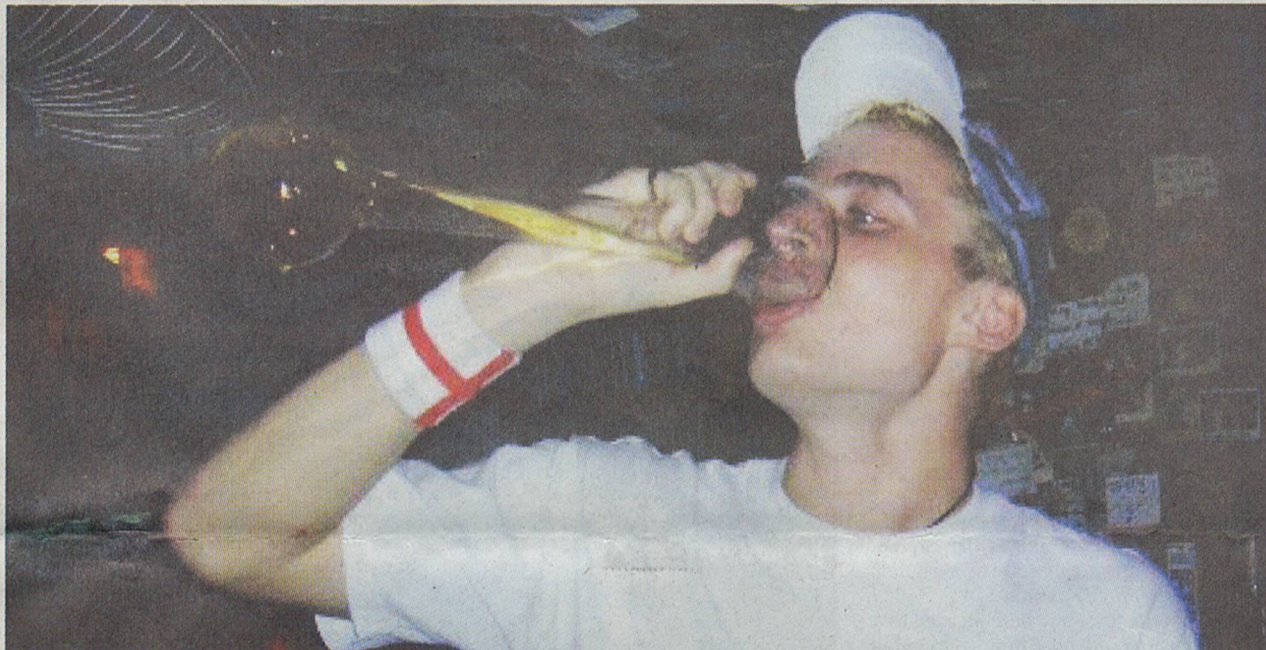
Philosophical Barry

An old maxim coined by Harold Wilson is testament to how systemic change can occur in the blink of an eye. While a week may indeed be a long time in politics, so often in the sporting world developments seem to defy the boundaries of just a single day. Imagine poor Leroy Rosenior, ten minutes after taking the reigns at Torquay learning he was to be relieved of his duties without so much as a cup of tea in his dream job. He makes Lady Jane Grey look like Queen Victoria. Sat in the Old Theatre, clouded by the rotten stench of BO wafting up from the stage that for once was not due to my lec-

turer's obvious weight problem, I learned the shocking news. My sadness was matched by a lone protester on stage who grimaced as she read reports of another strike on innocent civilians, if only these people showed the same concern for the homeless, poor and disenfranchised that are severely neglected by our own state apparatus. But they are probably put off by the fact that they would actually have to do something more constructive than just sit on a stage in a sweat filled huddle, alas this is the legacy of the middle class dominance of the LSE. But I digress.

The news I speak of regards a close friend of mine here at the Beaver; Robin Henry Cameron Low. Robin truly is a fixture here at Beaver sports, turning down the chance to appear on Channel Four documentary 'Half Ton Son' along with what was likely to be a six figure payday (or 50,000 Big Macs), in order to fulfill his commitment to the paper. It was his portly charm which first coaxed me out of my journalistic hiatus. He plucked me from my hellish existence peddling haiku and other superfluous limericks on an East London back street and gave me an avenue through which I could really make my opinions felt. Despite the criticism of Sam Tempest Keeping, no doubt a result of his bashful arrogance, Robin continued to be the motivational plinth, an ample one at that, across which I was able to drape my creative banner.

But another overused cliché is also pertinent here, that is the saying that with every door that closes, another one opens. When Rosenior was sacked, Paul Buckle fastened himself into the hot seat on the



Above: Rob Low at his finest

south coast. When Harry Redknapp left the same location and made his dash to London in the middle of the night, British sport's most conspicuous member of Alcoholics Anonymous, Tony Adams, was able to prove unequivocally that booze can make even the most wooden of us sociable. With Rob deciding to vacate the dam, a new Beaver is required to plug the hole.

That hole, once again, is a substantial one. From what I have witnessed, editing this most hallowed section of the paper

is a demanding mistress indeed. Yet for those who take the leap, deciding to set foot on this on this rocky road, the rewards are apparently endless. For one thing, you are privy to all the life counsel you desire from yours truly. The chance to be respected by your peers, and make fun of those who spurn you.

Brad Gilbert didn't opt to coach Andy Murray because he thought it would be enjoyable to listen an afro laden bamboo pole moan at his every decision in a whiney Scottish accent. All he saw was

potential. So if you think you can add something to this section, and can cope with the similarly stubborn, weedy and moody STK, then put your name forward. As always I am open for dialectic at the normal address.

[philosophicalbarry@thebeaveronline.co.uk](http://philosophicalbarry@thebeaveronline.co.uk)

# The Lowdown

**Robin Low**  
Outgoing sports editor

Matthew Hansen, Editor in Chief of Marvel Comics once said, "It's not the winning that counts, nor the taking part; it's making fun of the little fat kid who comes in last." So sorry Jacquesy, looks like this article will have to randomly poke fun at your expense. OK, I guess, as a last act of kindness, and seeing as I've already included a lovely picture of Big Fat Jacquesy with Barry from Eastenders, I should leave him alone, however difficult this may be.

Leaving as Sports Editor will not only give me back my Sundays (which have actually been pretty fun and introduced me to LSE Patel and a Nicholas Hoult look-a-like), it will act as a general relief. No longer will I have to pretend to give a fuck about the badminton results, or how women's rugby have been getting on. Honestly, I couldn't care less. Rugby was invented by someone with a careless disregard for the rules of football. Badminton is girly tennis, the same can be said when comparing netball and basketball. Loved the boxing though, nothing like a good fight, and Philosophical Barry has been a great drinking partner.

I tried to avoid poking fun at Big Fat Jacquesy, managing to offend literally tens

of people who play the previously mentioned 'sports' in the process. Oh well, life sucks. Thinking of Jacquesy, and to some extent sport in general, reminded me of this W.C. Fields line: "If at first you don't succeed, try again. Then quit. No sense being a damn fool about it." Perhaps it's time to hang up your boots and chocolate wrappers Jacquesy, and if Wednesday's performance is anything to go by, a career as an East End entertainer is looming.

**"If at first you don't succeed, try again. Then quit"**

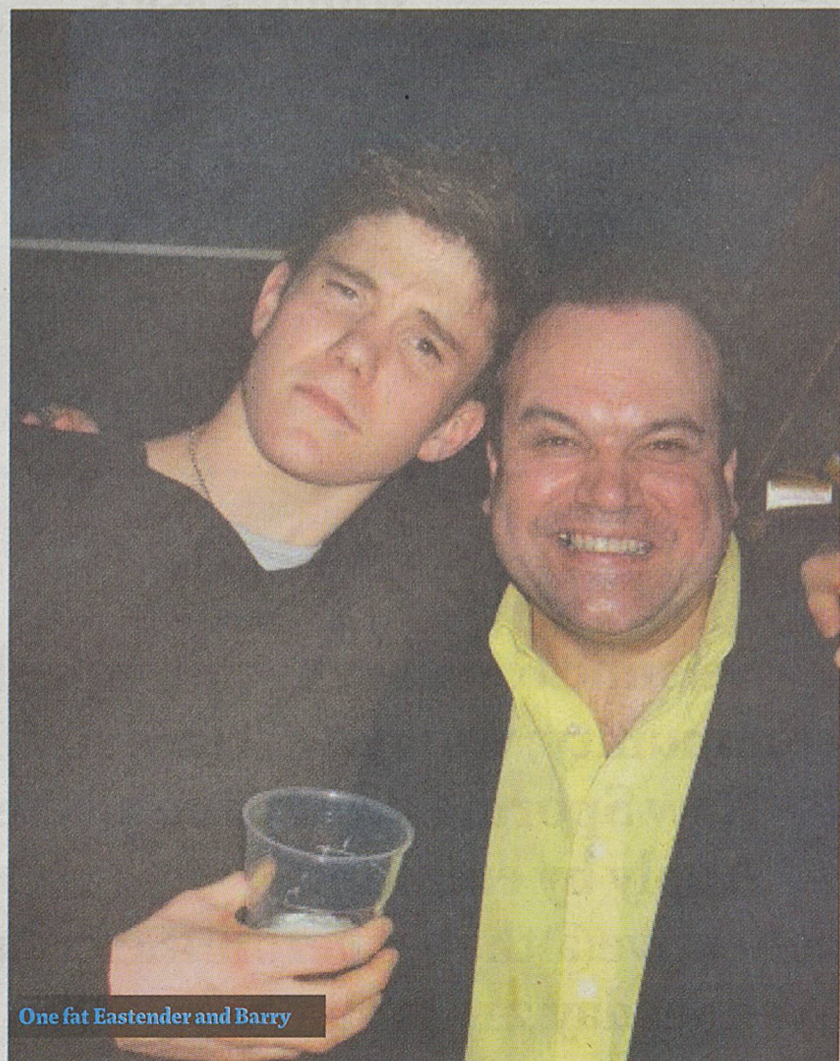
On another note which might interest some, I will be occupying the Tuns from Wednesday 7pm until further notice. I will cease this occupation when LSE and the international community recognise that the price of a pint of lager is way, way too high, and this exploitation of the drinking man must be stopped. I'm expecting an official statement from Howard Dizzle any time soon. All support is welcome. Karaoke will be provided to like minded people.

I would have loved to finish this article with some of the jokes that I told to the AU in my unsuccessful attempt to join the

exec at the end of my first year, and seeing as that was in summer 2006, I am fairly certain no one would have heard them. Unfortunately I now have a girlfriend, and she would probably abstain from sexual relations with me for about a day, which just wouldn't do. Plus my grandma gets a copy of the Beaver, and I wouldn't want to mess with her. They weren't based on diversity humour, but would be classified as sexist, and making jest of a woman's menstrual cycle. This is 2009, and that kind of humour is no longer socially acceptable, however funny it may be.

The AU Calendar was a fantastic success. Sorry to any welfare-minded busybodies, but this was wonderful achievement based upon the charitable spirit and relaxed nature of the AU. I do have one, and one issue only with it though. Why couldn't the same touching up of excess lipids be applied to those larger members of the FC that was quite clearly applied to the occupants of November? I hope this wasn't a sexist-based decision, for fear of the wrath of the SU, UGM, and British media.

Finally, bring on Calella 2009. Well done to everyone who has signed up, there is no other holiday like it. Prepare for plenty of LASH, BANTER, and MINGE.



One fat Eastender and Barry

# Sport



**Philly Bazza:**  
**A tribute**  
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## “Oh I just can’t wait to beat Kings!”

Sophie Hunt

England v Wales, Israel v Palestine, LSE v Kings. Some things are just personal. Neighbourly pride was at stake. We had waited a while to win; some pessimistic team members had even began wondering if we would go all season without victory. Alas, it was not to be. Ever reliable, Strand Poly did exactly what they were born to do - come second to LSE.

Having arrived at Berrylands, we paid homage to the fortress before getting ready on the dirty side of the fence. The changing room chat was pretty standard. Lizzie was cursed for the quantity and quality of her emails; strangely no one was fascinated by her multiple communications outlining the intricacies of train times from Swindon to London and epic tales of unpacking (she struggled to find her computer cable, for readers enticed by the subject matter).

Judith confirmed her position as the most intelligent team member, revealing that she had set a rule on her computer redirecting all Bacon emails to a separate (most probably junk) folder. Sophie and Kat Wilson, having spent most of the journey stressing about their lost gum shields and waving goodbye to their pearly whites, were both pleased to discover them in their respective short pockets. Tad embarrassing. Unfortunately, we were also without our usual hooker, Kirsty, (insert joke here) so with a little encouragement Sarah donned the number 2 shirt. Suited, booted and with a cameraman assigned, we marched onto the pitch.

We lost the toss, but were pleased that it meant we could be running downhill (silly poly couldn't get a flat pitch) for the first half. No reflection on our impeccable fitness of course; merely more flattering for those Kodak try moments. After a solid warm up and a quick recap of the rules, we were off. We wanted that ball. The kick was well caught and with the levels of aggression usually reserved for trapping young men, we began our first major attack. Great spacing and tactical passing from Laura allowed Vanessa and Judith to quickly gain space. It took just five minutes for Captain Chi to reach the try line, once again demonstrating to the team that the phrase 'it's not the size that matters' doesn't only apply in the bedroom.

At 5-0 up we knew we weren't safe, but attacking runs by Danielle and tries from Sophie and mini-Chi soon put us out of the dangerzone. Suddenly everyone wanted a piece of the action. Despite Nadine almost being broken in half from a tackle gone wrong, the forwards continued to work as one, constantly feeding the ball back to allow the backs the glory. Judith was the next to dodge through the now forlorn opposition, making the score 20-0. We were determined to keep increasing our lead, with Vanessa powering down the left wing to take the fifth try and Sophie copying on the right; half time saw the score at 30-0. The astute reader may note the divisibility by five. If only we had an adequate kicker,



Photograph Sophie Hunt

**Women's rugby winning score**

**Kings 5**  
**LSE 35**

**No joke!**

it could have been 42-0. But I guess that would have been greedy.

The second half involved less arse-kicking than the first, but nonetheless some more quality play. With some fresh legs on the pitch, Franki once again demonstrated her kicking skills and Becca (no longer held back by the burden of a beret) her aptitude and enthusiasm for rucking. Hannah needed some encouragement to take off the layers of rugby jackets and join the forwards, but once on the pitch showed what two years playing experience and a whole load of thunderbirds can produce.

Our fitness or lack thereof, began to show as the half wore on. After a few schoolboy errors we saw a few inches being lost to Kings; not unlike the netball

stomachs to Adobe. They took the opportunity to score, and we found their level of celebration mildly flattering. Unfortunately for them this gave us necessary motivation to fight back, Laura attacked off a long ball, giving Sophie the opportunity to display her conversion talents when playing contestants from supposedly high-calibre sport. 35-5.

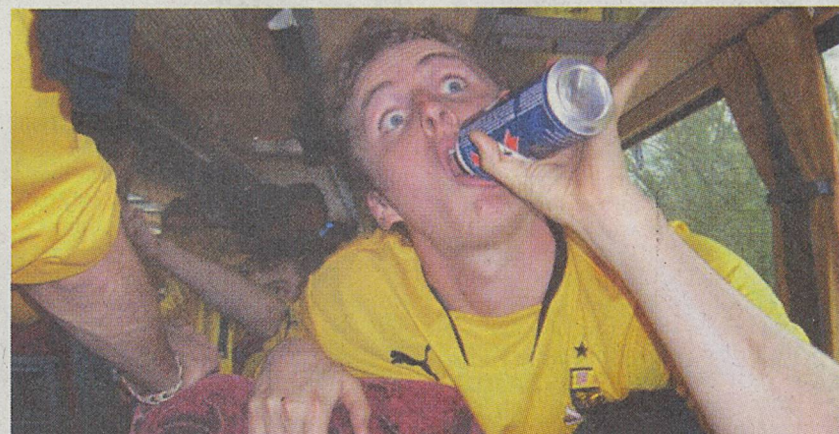
Most notable moment of the second half was some textbook mauling, with Rosebery Pres, Alex Pd and recently legal Nadine leading the charge, getting the ball a good twenty metres down the pitch. The backs were as helpful as ever, shouting insightful advice such as 'keep pushing, only 45 metres to go...'. A less notable moment, although more entertaining, was Lizzie's

try. At least it would have been a try, if only she wasn't twenty metres away from the try line and thus her Superman-esque dive went unrewarded. We admire her optimism, but do wonder sometimes about the LSE's admissions policy.

Like all good things, the game came to an end. We were officially winners. It's good to win and be able to sing that 'we are faster, stronger and more skilled' than the opposition without looking a little shame-faced. It's good to get home to a full email inbox with all the team sending each other congratulatory emails. It's good to send the result to the Beaver Sports and not lie about the score... Now all we need to do is get that second team back on their winning streak.

## Beaver Sports Editor in shock resignation

>> Seismic waves sent through global sporting community; women declare state of emergency  
 >> New Sports Editor to be elected this Thursday  
 >> Apply by emailing [collective@thebeaveronline.co.uk](mailto:collective@thebeaveronline.co.uk) by midnight Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> January





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interview*

*Tagore's Red  
Oleanders reviewed*

*David Choe  
and gonzo art*

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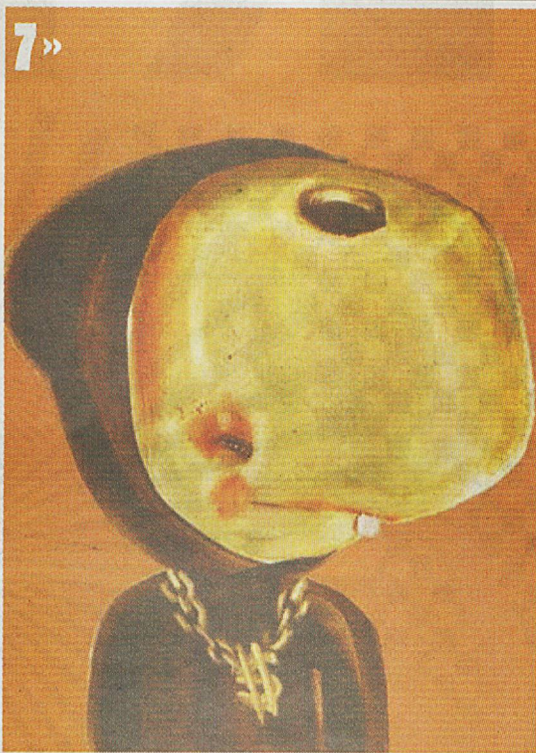
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violence against women remains a global concern

**EDITORIAL**

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We're still here! Don't worry, we haven't given up on you just yet! Once again we've hijacked all frequencies to bring you a sizeable tome on all things cultural. Sound and vision; the proscenium and the page: everything's still here. We have, however, experimented with the ink which now induces a range of life changing psychoses. Licking the centrespread will give you an out of body experience while inhaling theatre will make you see the world from the point of view of a barnacle. We didn't have time to test the others, let us know what they do!

**JULIAN BOYS & SACHIN PATEL**

**FAQ! FAX! FACTS!**

Dear Julian,

After the closure of the Astoria, are you making way for the Crossrail too?

Yours,  
S. Byers.

Dear Sachin,

I keep being overtaken by urges to sing vibrato renditions of Katy Perry songs in an operatic style on Houghton Street. Can partB put me in touch with similar sufferers? Jeremy F. Hipplebump

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# GUILTY PLEASURES OF THE BRAIN MELTING KIND

## marionkoob breaks away from the brainwash

It has now been scientifically proven: television is the number one cause of wasted time. Indeed, it has provoked much more damage than Facebook (social interaction, at least, has some sort of utility.) In all honesty, sitting blandly in front of the screen, watching poor-quality programmes until you collapse on your couch in the late hours of the night really does nothing but deteriorate your eyesight and ultimately, your mind. And, to some degree or other, we all know it.

So why does the telly still remain a viable leisure option? Why do we, instead of interacting with family, picking up a book or carrying out a creative hobby, choose to passively be fed, quite literally, a whole load of nonsense?

One of the primary reasons is a demoralising 'lack of anything better to do'. The screening sofa has become the harbour of those exhausted from a day's work, or simply bored out of their wits, who have come to be convinced that television is the solution to their fatigue.

The shows, the series episodes, and

the documentaries are all generally of poor quality. Yet we subject ourselves to such material, trapped in a vicious circle of apathy; we turn to the screen because of our weariness, but the activity is far from energizing – rather, it drains us further. And there are plenty of substitutes to the essential information which television provides: news, for instance, is just as accessible in online and print form, and these articles are of a much better standard than anything the TV presenter will ever take the time to enunciate.

The psychological influence of both advertisements and bad media is just as frightening. The majority of television programmes assume that viewers are intellectually challenged; and after a time of being considered as so, we come to accept it. Trivial disputes offered by reality shows, over-simplified, 'hollywoodian' news bulletins, and gameshows which seem to go out of their way to pick the dimmest candidates possible.

And none of it is surprising to the habituated viewer. On a more philosophical plane, it is interesting to wonder whether television is truly used as window or, rather, a mirror. Does it offer us the possibility of escape from the routine, a chance to encounter places, situations and people we never would have otherwise, or a way to better grasp our society and the grim and petty aspects of human nature?

So down with television, I say, and out with the creative ideas. Go for a run, start on that novel you've always wanted to read. Go and see a mind-boggling play, or watch an interesting film: anything to avoid the nervous reflex of flicking through channels endlessly. There are so many ways to being entertained which stimulate both your mind and your body. TV traps its victims in a lethargic loop of fruitlessness.



## catherinecapone is taking down the BBC

When I received my third letter from the BBC licensing company demanding that I licensed my non-existent TV, I decided to adhere to their instructions and let them know that no; I don't have a TV and therefore could they please stop sending me letters. The woman informed that it would immediately stop, as easy as that. Maybe they're not so bad after all. But hang on – what was my contact number, she wanted to know. What for? Well, in order for the inspectors to call me before they visited to check that I was telling the truth, of course!

Astounded, I hung up – what was the point of calling them if they were going to send the TV police round anyway? The whole system is so utterly patronising. You're considered guilty until proven innocent, and you will be hounded in the meantime to buy a license for a TV you don't even have – because of course, it's impossible to live without one. They've obviously never heard of their own invention – BBC iPlayer – for which

you don't need a license. The latest issue of the letter aggressively states that 'despite receiving many letters from us, your home is still unlicensed'. Do we need a license for a home now? It proudly informs the offender that "we are persistent" and that the inspectors are "authorised to request a search warrant" to route around your home in search of a secret telly stash under the bed, without even any proof of misconduct.

What about that scary advert that they issued this year – the one with the eerie music and the creepy voice warning you that "your town, your street, your home... is all in our database" and that it's "impossible to hide" if you don't pay your TV licence. If their technology is so good, why don't they just track down the offenders instead of wasting time and money by harassing innocent people? In response to the question of whether those vans with TV-detecting satellites actually exist, the BBC refused to comment. In other words, their so-called advanced technology is mythical – it just doesn't exist.

I am certainly not anti-BBC – in fact I believe the BBC to be a stalwart pillar of our

prized British culture – but I think their conduct towards customers is disgraceful. The BBC need to pull their socks up before they fall into terminal disfavour; an anti-TV license movement on Facebook has already attracted 248,000 supporters. The aim is to follow in the footsteps of New Zealand, where the licensing scheme collapsed after viewers revolted and withheld payment.

And what does our annual fee of £139.50 go towards? Apart from funding the hundreds of pointless intimidating letters that are sent to people every day, it pays for Jonathan Ross's £6 million-a-year wage. We mustn't forget too about the crème-de-la-crème of British Broadcasting: as Jeremy Paxman hilariously pointed out in response to proposed BBC cuts last year, do we really need shows such as 'Me and my Man-Boobs' and 'F\*\*\* Off I'm Fat'? Scrap BBC3 I say, and all other deplorable BBC produce – our money should be invested in reputable programming to save the BBC from falling into a tabloid cesspit. After all, we don't want another ITV on our screens.

# SMALL LOCAL CHEMISTS

joshheller interviews the heir to the vacant pop throne

It isn't the despairing screams of a million unemployed graduates. It isn't the crispy crackle of a credit crunch, nor even the icy blast of a financial freeze. The sound of 2009 is synthesizers and sequencers; it is a Blackpool accent and diminutive footwear. It is Victoria Hesketh aka Little Boots and she is the future of pop.

The death throws of bad guitar pop are still echoing through the charts, but in the coming months the electro-pop revivalists will smash the big time in a big way. Lady Gaga, La Roux and Passion Pit are just a few artists whose stars are set to shine. Little Boots though, has been picked ahead of all of them. She's been hyped for a while now and this month she came top of the BBC Sound of 2009, an industry wide poll of tastemakers that last year tipped Adele and Duffy for the top.

**"I just do what I want, the minute someone tries to tell what to do I just say no."**

Little Boots is a small northern lass with frighteningly blonde hair and an ethereal amount of glittery mascara. With classical training from the age of four, she's been making music for years. She built a fan base on the internet through posting videos of herself playing covers on her Tenorion, an instrument made of light. It sounds perhaps more exciting than it actually is, the Tenorion is simply a sequencer with an LED panel on the front that visualises sounds. It seems though, like an original way of making music, so I began by asking Little Boots how it affected the way she produces music.

I'm immediately met with a look of tired exasperation, she's clearly been asked it before, and I sense a hint of dismay as if people think her sound revolves around this gimmick. "I don't use it to write and I don't use it in the studio, the internal sounds aren't very good so you might as well use a good sequencer on the computer in the studio. So it doesn't really affect the way I make music, but they way we play it live is completely affected by

it. It's kind of the brain of it. We programme and upload all our samples and basslines and things like that. It's really great for live shows because it's really visual, with electronic music it's difficult to play it live."

About a year ago Little Boots wrote a song, Stuck on Repeat, that she originally intended for Kylie to sing. A demo was given to Joe Goddard (Hot Chip's superproducer) by a friend of a friend, much to her embarrassment "it was shit, I recorded it on a terrible mic on to Garage Band." Yet he loved the song and worked on an improved version, "the idea of it was already there, he just expanded all the themes and made it a lot more exciting." Stuck on Repeat is undeniably infectious, it was rinsed on dance floors across the country last year. The 7-minute extended mix is a beautiful piece of electro-pop. The instrumental introduction builds elegantly, you're hooked on that beat and you only realise you were desperate for the hook when it arrives (perfectly on time) fully two minutes into the track. This contrasts with the fairly de-

rivative radio edit, where the hook is unceremoniously dumped on you barely 15 seconds into the song. The radio edit is an inferior song, but it is a more accessible sound, and when the aim of the game is to sell as many records as possible, pop demands accessibility. Yet music that's made to sell can mean a watered down sound only appealing to the lowest common denominator, with accessibility, to my mind, often equating to inferiority. Little Boots though couldn't disagree more, "the more people that can connect with it the better. I think if you write a good song then hopefully it will connect with all people across the board." Perhaps this is the point then, that is what pop music is about, regardless, Little Boots clearly saw through my bullshit. "I'm not into just do-

ing some like, cooler thing that'll sell like 100 records to a bunch of scenesters in London. I don't care! I'm from Blackpool, I wanna be sold in Woolworths on the seafront you know? I want my little brother to go in the shop down the road and be able to buy my CD."

With the choruses to Stuck on Repeat, Meddle and Every Little Earthquake all jostling for attention in my brain, I was determined to investigate the idea of catchiness. I wanted to know if catchiness itself was something Little Boots aimed for? "I dunno, I try and write hooks. I like hooks. I mean what's a song without a chorus? I dunno it's just a load of noise innit? I just love choruses. I love big choruses and beautiful melodies that everyone wants to get involved with. The crazy frog is catchy but it's a fucking annoying sound. It's not really about catchiness for me it's more about like classic, like, great choruses. If you can write a chorus that's really catchy but doesn't get annoying. You know those kind of songs that you can put on 20 times and you're not annoyed and you still think they're bloody great? That's normally a sign of a pretty good pop song."

**"I just love choruses. I love big choruses and beautiful melodies that everyone wants to get involved with."**

Pop itself is increasingly difficult to define, with a hyphen being spliced between that word and every conceivable genre. Music that is resolutely not pop usually strays in to the realm of the weird. I had always thought that to make an abstract album that remains interesting is a difficult thing to do. Once again Little Boots debased my assumptions. "Pop music really challenges me,





it's so much harder than being weird. It's pretty easy to make cool albums or weird albums. You can lock yourself away for a bit and be weird. It's not that hard. It's much harder to write Michael Jackson - Thriller, with an album of number ones."

**"I'm not into just doing some like, cooler thing that'll sell like 100 records to a bunch of scenesters in London."**

People who know much more than I do keep telling me that the music Girls Aloud put out is innovative and brilliant. For the record Little Boots thinks "all their tracks sound the same, even though they're all pretty fucking good." My problem with Girls Aloud, and with so many similarly throwaway popstars, is that they don't make their music. They're just the branding that is stamped on what is apparently quite exciting pop music. With their matching dresses and contrasting hairstyles, they represent what I see, however pretentiously, as the anti-thesis of proper music, a total lack of artistic integrity. Little Boots makes music that is sometimes brilliant and often fairly tepid, but she is entirely her own person and her own brand. She doesn't have pop's most powerful voice, but she writes her own songs. Music that is made by people who fully own their sound, that is the kind of pop I can get behind. In response to a question on whether she feels pressured to look or act a certain way she just kind of shrugged, "not really, I just do what I want, I don't really think about it. I suppose girls are kind of pressurised to look sexy or whatever. I mean to be honest I'd rather look sexy than not sexy. But I just like what I like so I wear what I like, which just tends to be crystals and fancy stuff and glittery dresses and that's just what I like. It's not because I think I should try and be something that I'm not or anything like that. I just do what I want, the minute someone tries to tell what to do I just say no."



# A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS

**catherinecapone** reviews Khaled Hosseini's second novel

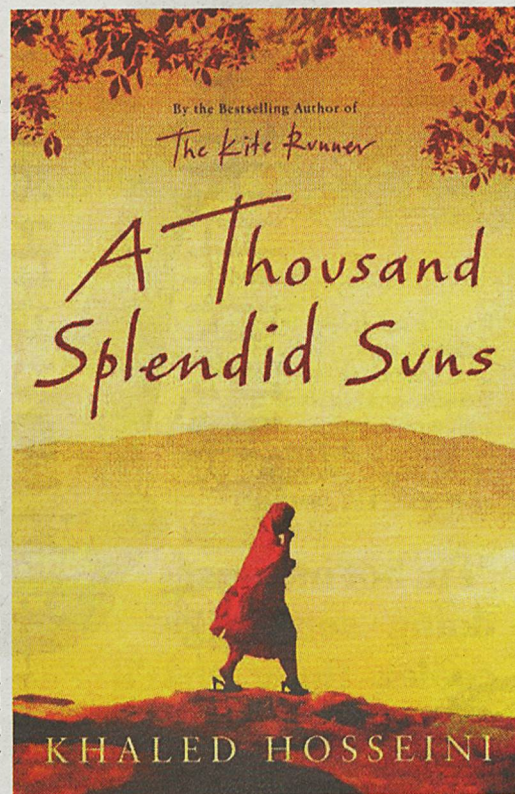
The book tells the tragic story of two women living in Afghanistan who find in each other a faith and solace from their violent husband and the oppressive patriarchal regime that they live under. After her mother commits suicide, the teenage Mariam is forced into a marriage to a 40-year-old man by her indifferent father. After many years of an abusive and unhappy marriage her husband marries 14-year-old Laila who has lost her family during the Soviet war.

The story spans the many years of a succession of devastating conflicts and wars. The terrifying rule of the Taliban after 1997 is made even rawer and chilling in the descriptions of their brutality, especially towards women. The two protagonists are prevented from travelling alone, thereby preventing escape from their increasingly cruel husband and are prohibited from working, amongst countless other restrictive enforced laws. The most excruciating scene is one in which Laila must endure a caesarean without any anaesthetic due to the Taliban's restrictions on medical care at women's hospitals.

Their friendship and sense of hope for better things is poignant and touching. Although there is a happy ending of sorts, the reader cannot help but be overwhelmed by the hardship and adversity which both women endured. What also comes with reading the book is the melancholy feeling that the experiences of the two protagonists symbolised the lives of thousands of other women liv-

ing in Afghanistan and in many other countries, many of whom still face similar suffering today.

The book is precisely and authoritatively written and Hosseini's fluid narrative style makes the book hard to put down. He captures the life of Kabul well and the ways in which Afghanistan's turbulent history has had such tragic effects on generations of people. His descriptions are vivid and certainly don't gloss over the horrors that the two women experienced. For example, the descriptions of the vicious and savage beatings that are meted out to both women on a regular basis are disturbing to say the least. Although Hosseini chooses not to focus too closely on politics, the sense of hope at the end after the fall of the Taliban provokes the reader to contemplate the very recent years of Afghan history and politics and come to their own conclusion concerning the nature of the regime's demise, and whether the optimistic final chapters actually reflect Afghanistan's current situation. The book provides a powerful insight into a country most of us have only known on our television screens and draws attention to the problems Afghanistan has faced and the hurdles it is still to face in the future. The emotional power the author has on his readers is commendable. I felt almost emotionally drained by the end of the book; the characters are so believable and the attachment and concern you develop for them is what is needed for a book engage you as deeply as *A Thousand Splendid Suns* did.



## BLOODY MYTHS

**meganjones** reckons branwen is a total legend

Legends may be seen as being only one step up from the sugar-coated, nausea-inducing stories pedalled by Disney; full of knights in shining armour, damsels in distress and happy endings, but this is far from being the case. Not only are legends full of violence, death and despair, more often than not these are coupled with some of the strangest, most beautiful, haunting imagery possible, creating a world far removed from our comfortable, mundane existence.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the second branch of the *Mabinogion*, the legend of Branwen. Following the arrival of Matholwch, the King of Ireland in north Wales as a suitor to Branwen; Bendigeidfran the King of Britain, Branwen's eldest brother agreed to the match and it was sealed with an extravagant wedding banquet. The following morning Efnisien, another of Branwen's brothers was enraged when he was informed that the marriage had gone ahead without his consent. In a fit of rage, Efnisien cut off the lips, eyelids, tails and ears of Matholwch's horses rendering them useless. Bendigeidfran compensated Matholwch for his loss with a new horse for each mutilated animal, a silver staff as tall and as large as himself and a plate of gold as wide as his face. Sensing Matholwch's unhappiness Bendigeidfran

increased the compensation giving him the cauldron of re-birth, into which a corpse can be placed and a living man will emerge in its place, but without the capacity to speak.

Matholwch and his bride Branwen journeyed to Ireland where news of the insult done to Matholwch had spread like wild-fire. Following the birth of their son Gwern, Branwen was sent to work in the kitchen of the castle, where the butcher would hit her daily as punishment for the shame brought upon Matholwch. Unable to tell her family across the sea about her plight, Bran-

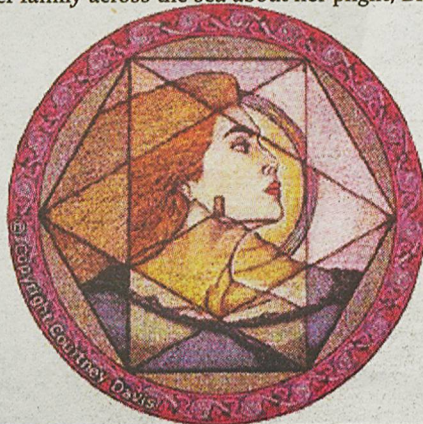
wen taught a starling to speak, and sent it away with a letter to Bendigeidfran.

Bendigeidfran and his troops sailed to Ireland, where upon their arrival all bridges crossing the river to Matholwch's castle had been destroyed. This was no obstacle to Bendigeidfran, who being a giant; lay down to create a bridge for his men. Matholwch's messenger managed to pacify Bendigeidfran by inviting him and his troops to a feast.

Unbeknown to Bendigeidfran hundreds of Matholwch's men were hiding in flour sacks within the feasting hall, waiting for the order to attack. However, Efnisien sensing some wrongdoing squeezed each sack, killing the warrior within.

During the feast Efnisien took hold of Gwern and threw him into the fire. A fierce battle ensued, in which the Irish had an endless supply of men due to the cauldron of re-birth. Seeing that British defeat was imminent, Efnisien threw himself into the cauldron, destroyed it and died in the process.

Only eight returned to Britain, including Branwen who died of a broken heart on the banks of the river Alaw. Bendigeidfran's head, still alive, was brought back and buried at the White Mount, London. It's not quite Disney, is it?



# CAPTURING HUMAN EMOTION

**meganjones** pays a tribute to photographer philip jones griffiths

Recollections, the first British retrospective of the work of photographer Philip Jones Griffiths since his death in March 2008, is being held at the National Conservation Centre, Liverpool. This exhibition concentrates, not on Philip Jones Griffiths' most well-known work during the war in Vietnam, but rather on his earlier photographs taken in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s. These might not be as easily recognisable as his images of war-torn Vietnam, but they still show his deep interest in people: their conflicts, injustices and suffering. This is not to say that the exhibition is melancholic or depressing. In fact, Philip Jones Griffiths' photographs display a well developed sense of humour.

Griffiths has a sharply attuned sensitivity to human expressions, glances and gestures. This is clear in his photograph of boys in the Rhondda Valley; the contrast of the clowning faces and the one diffident face, in their draping of arms about shoulders and the slight stiffness of their poses. This sensitivity is coupled with a finely tuned sense of photographic composition. The sense of composition is tied to social meaning; the spaces around a figure and between figures are signs of alienation and solidarity, while power relations are written into the spatial organisation of the Welsh mining towns. In a wide-angle image taken in Dowlais of a man and his dogs, lines emerging from a telegraph pole, along with the line of houses, the shadows of the man and

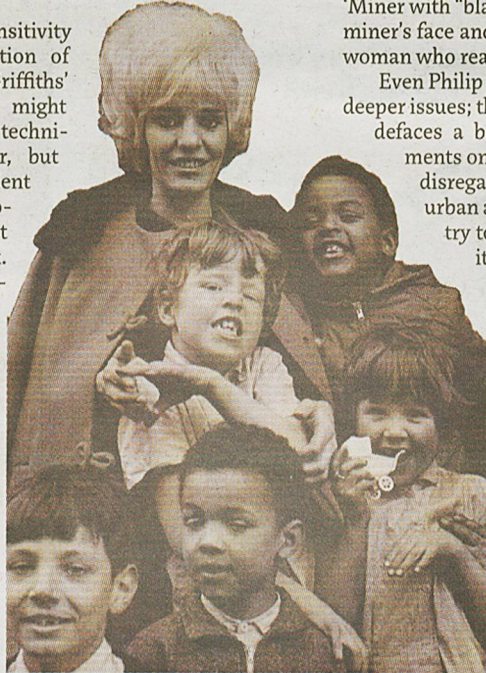
the animals, the clouds above his head and the tiny figures in the background are all perfectly placed. It seems as if the image had been carefully cut apart and readjusted on Photoshop rather than being the product of a photographer in the 1950s.

The sensitivity and composition of Philip Jones Griffiths' photographs might make them technically superior, but his true talent lay in the emotional content of his work. While the subject of Recollections is gentler than his work in Vietnam, he remains a steady and intelligent gaze directed at the solidarities and conflicts of working-class life,

the consequences of profiteering on the urban landscape and particularly in the implied fate of children abandoned to the joys and dangers of play amid old bomb sites and other ruins. This concern for injustice and suffering is present in 'Miner with "black-lung" Rhondda Valley', in the miner's face and eyes, in the blurry figure of the woman who reaches out an arm to tend him.

Even Philip Jones Griffiths' humour plays on deeper issues; the ice-cream van that blocks and defaces a beautiful valley landscape comments on an aesthetic and environmental disregard which has surrendered the urban and rural landscape of this country to motorised pursuits and strewn it with rubbish. Humour is also found in photographs of Northern Ireland in which ordinary domestic activities continue alongside soldiers taking cover behind garden shrubs.

Without a doubt Philip Jones Griffiths fulfilled his wish: 'As one deacon used to say to me, "Remember boyo, you have to leave the world a better place when you die."'



Philip Jones Griffiths / Magnum Photos. Courtesy of the Philip Jones Griffiths Foundation.

# CRAFFITI, SOY SAUCE AND BLOOD

**waynefan** on the return of the gonzo artist

Los Angeles artist David Choe is a pop art sensation and a spectacle in the making. Choe started off as a mural and graffiti artist in LA, but has moved onto everything from photography to acrylic to human blood. His art can be found from New York City galleries to Tokyo street corners and Jay-Z album covers. Choe has the type of cult following where one minute you are completely unaware of his existence but, after you have been introduced, he seems to be everywhere.

Growing up in working class Los Angeles, at his core, Choe is simply a streetwise graffiti vandal. As he points out, "Graffiti is about destroying public property, changing your environment, and creating the environment you live in." However, his spirit for experimentation has led him down a path that transcends the fate of the typical street artist. His style is raw and dirty, but his penchant for detailed layering and unfiltered social commentary allowed Choe to rise to the summit of the fickle world of pop art.

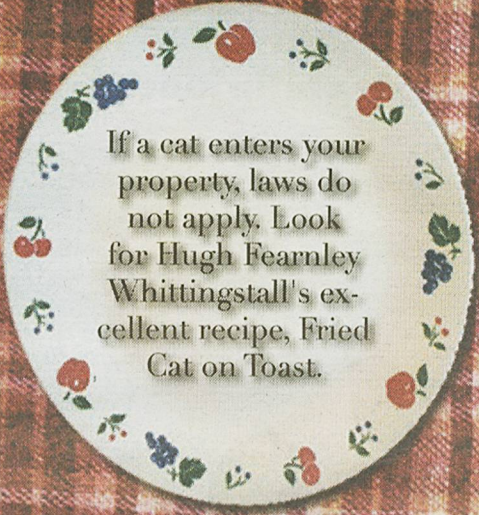
Choe has been compared to a number of artists, but the most apt comparison in terms of his approach to the arts



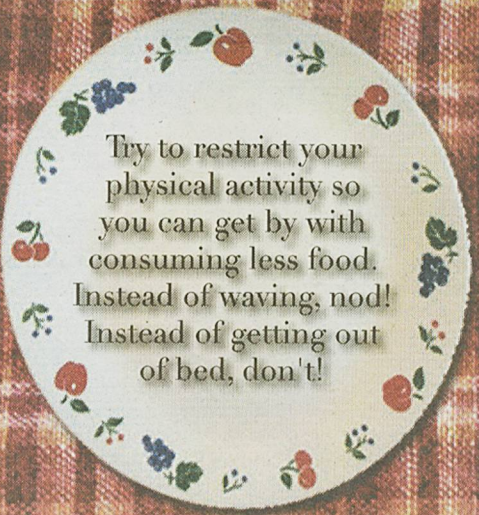
is to gonzo writer Hunter S Thompson, author of Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas. The gonzo movement is characterised by subjectivity where the actions of the artist become an inseparable part of the artistic expression. Similar to Thompson, Choe is prolific in his output with some masterworks shuffled with an equal amount of sub par contributions. Their redemption comes from their willingness to exhibit their raw emotions and their uncanny ability to portray their lives through their art.

Choe's gonzo approach is exemplified by a trip to Japan that ended with him spending four months in prison for assaulting a security guard. During his stint in prison, Choe continued to make art by occasionally resorting to the use of soy sauce and urine. Like Thompson, Choe is separated from the pack not simply by his artistic output but by his approach to life: uncensored and in the moment. Commenting on the potential fleeting nature of his pop art fame, Choe says "When people stop buying my paintings, quit wearing my T-shirts, I can still rob your fucking house."

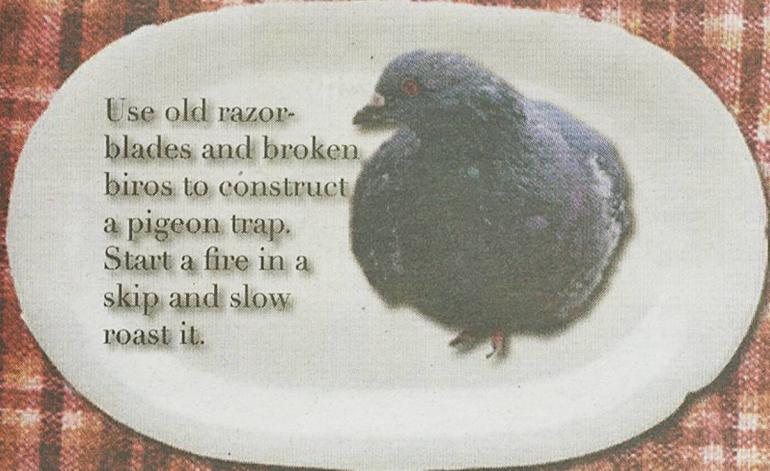
Discover more: [www.davidchoe.com](http://www.davidchoe.com)



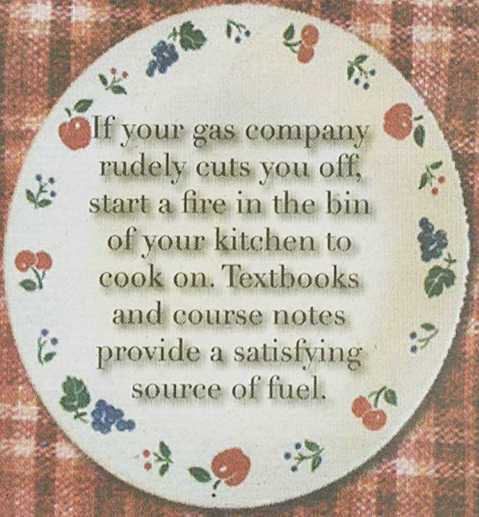
If a cat enters your property, laws do not apply. Look for Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall's excellent recipe, Fried Cat on Toast.



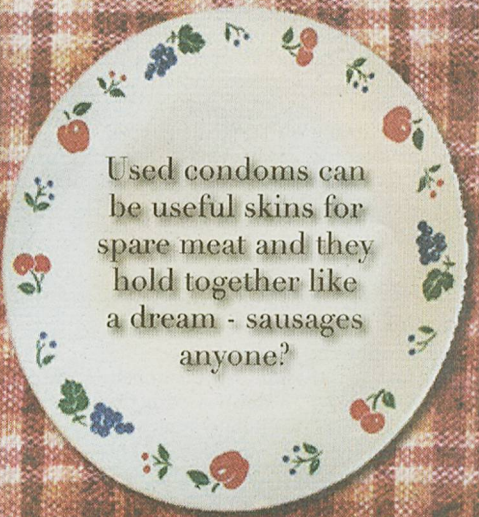
Try to restrict your physical activity so you can get by with consuming less food. Instead of waving, nod! Instead of getting out of bed, don't!



Use old razorblades and broken biros to construct a pigeon trap. Start a fire in a skip and slow roast it.



If your gas company rudely cuts you off, start a fire in the bin of your kitchen to cook on. Textbooks and course notes provide a satisfying source of fuel.

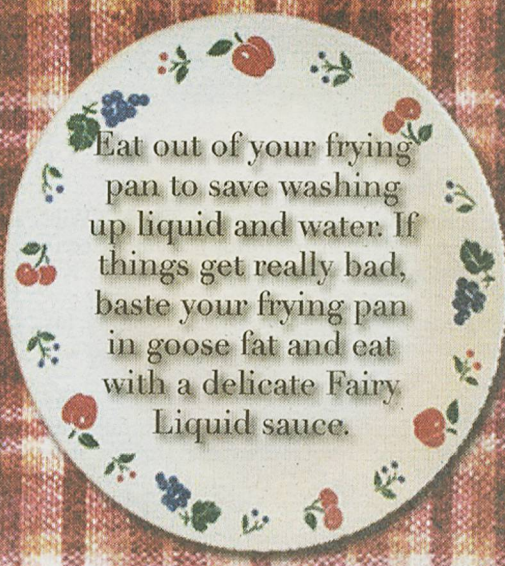


Used condoms can be useful skins for spare meat and they hold together like a dream - sausages anyone?

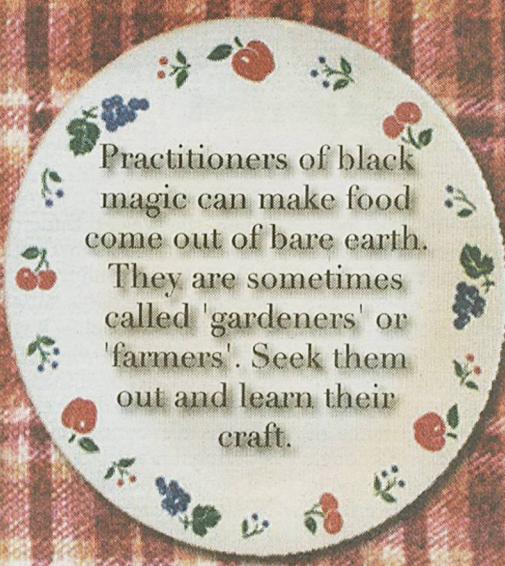
# Life's Always

But by reading our tips, you too can be exorbitantly, ec





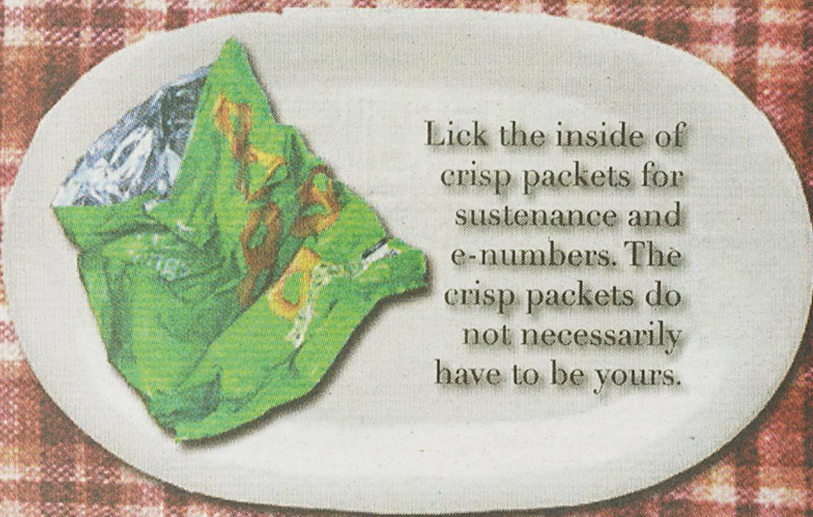
Eat out of your frying pan to save washing up liquid and water. If things get really bad, baste your frying pan in goose fat and eat with a delicate Fairy Liquid sauce.




Practitioners of black magic can make food come out of bare earth. They are sometimes called 'gardeners' or 'farmers'. Seek them out and learn their craft.

# Not A Picnic

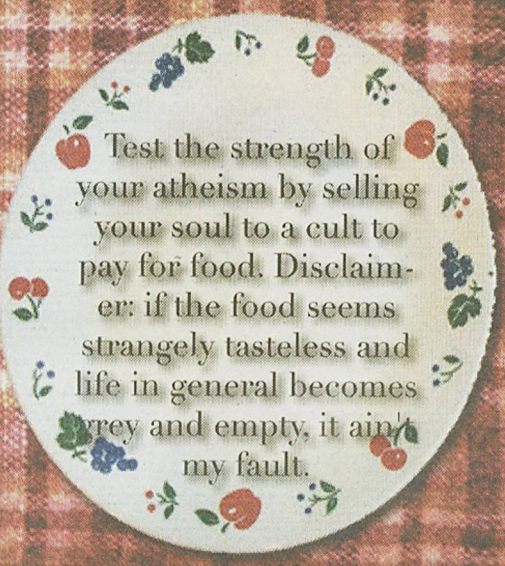
or fabulously frugal  
have an excitingly,  
conomical year



Lick the inside of crisp packets for sustenance and e-numbers. The crisp packets do not necessarily have to be yours.



Sometimes roadside greens are edible. Ask that annoying General Course student to try them in a healthy salad to check if they're safe.



Test the strength of your atheism by selling your soul to a cult to pay for food. Disclaimer: if the food seems strangely tasteless and life in general becomes grey and empty, it ain't my fault.

# BIG BROTHER FOOLS

aarrongammaliere is loving the show

Christmas came and went; the anti-climatic and retrospectively pointless celebrations of New Year have all but collected dust in our minds; the drudgery of life carries on for another eleven and half months, save only for Bank Holidays, and of course, that Holiest of Grails – the summer.

However, January isn't only the month where we fend off yesteryear's demons and try to start anew. For the past five years, the beginning of the year has pleased some and angered many as it marks the start of a new Big Brother experience. Rather than the dim-witted exhibitionists it attracts in its summer installation, its winter contemporary sees around ten or so 'celebrities' embark upon one of life's most grueling and demanding of endeavors; to sit around and look like an idiot at the beck and call of a disembodied voice. As mind-numbing as it seems on paper, Celebrity Big Brother always surpasses expectations, showing that flogging a dead horse often causes it to resurrect in Biblical style and show-jump its way into our stupid little hearts.

For those of you too cool to watch a load of fame-starved, D-List, washed up celebrities – here's a run-down: A midget; a fat, gobby Scouse bird; another bird with rather large assets; a gobby Manc; a gansta-rappin' rude boi from da ghetto; and a blonde who's said to have spent more time on her back than on her feet, or so the tabloids say. One would be forgiven for thinking this was nothing more than the jolly and rather annoying scrap that plagues the West End every Saturday night. True to sleazy Big Brother form, however, this is the shortlist for this year's show. And boy, what a treat it's been.

What makes the celebrity rendition of the franchise so damn appealing, even to the more stoic or loathsome of viewers, is the ridiculously cringe-inducing situations public figures allow themselves into. What's more, one misanthropic and generally sombre guy (yours truly) realises just how little he really knows of people when they are stripped down to nothing more than their character and paraded in front of you like a side-show oddity. Who would have thought Coolio, a ghetto-sympathising one-hit wonder known for stealing the melody to a lesser known Stevie Wonder song and making millions from it, would be so charming in his demeanor, and such a juvenile wind-up merchant? Who would have thought Ben, a once floppy-haired, pretty-boy-band member, would be so witty, kind and

grounded? The knowledge that fame, albeit lost, doesn't always spoil people and that there are people outside of your pathetic back-stabbing circle of friends that you actually like is comforting to know. The selection of contestants for this year in particular is very refreshing, sampling the best, or at least available, of cool, funny people with the odd pantomime-like bitch to boot. With glamour model Lucy Pinder the first to be given the boot, and with gobby Tina, has-been Michelle, annoying Ulrika and perpetually-pre-menstrual Mutya all up for eviction, one constantly tries to predict the outcome, making stupid bets and wagers with their mates as to who will guess right. The utter ridiculousness of the show and the compulsion that one easily becomes absorbed into it is its undeniable strength, along with the entertaining slaughtering that any unfortunate evictee will

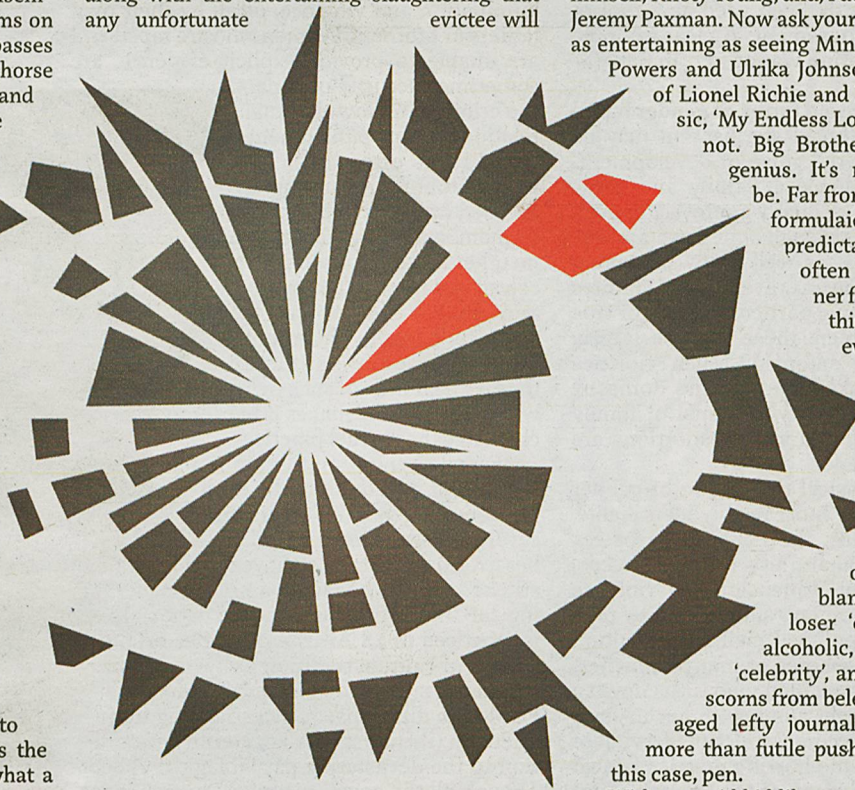
to not only stoop to the lowest denomination of journalistic writing – insulting people's appearances – but to insult at every turn both the avid viewers of the show and the producers alike. Constantly, Brooker and his fans accuse the BB team of shoveling the dregs of society into their summer show, and filling the House to the rafters with third-rate tabloid bimbos in the Winter. What Mr Brooker doesn't seem to understand, despite his obvious regular viewing of the show, and possibly the odd naughty voyeuristic watching of E4's night-time coverage, is that Big Brother has lasted a decade or so due to the very fact that it thrives on making volunteering people look their most stupid. Envision a Big Brother House consisting of Sir Robert Winstone, Stephen Hawking, Alan Yentob, Charlie Brooker himself, Kirsty Young, and, I don't know, let's say Jeremy Paxman. Now ask yourself, would that be as entertaining as seeing Mini-Me from Austin

Powers and Ulrika Johnson singing a duet of Lionel Richie and Diana Ross' classic, 'My Endless Love'? No, of course not. Big Brother isn't television genius. It's never claimed to be. Far from it; it works on a formulaic premise, full of predictable twists and an often foreseeable winner from week two. It's this simplicity, however, and snowflake episodes, no two ever quite being the same, that makes it so addictive and infuriatingly watchable. It's the only show on telly with carte blanche to put in any loser 'civilian', and any alcoholic, drug-battered 'celebrity', and so the constant scorns from beleaguered, middle-aged lefty journalists, are nothing more than futile pushings of air, or in this case, pen.

With a stupid kid like me, there are truly no airs and graces; I like my BBC 2 documentaries, and I like my celebrities making fools of themselves. I'm comfortable with that. Arrogant and pompous writers and viewers who turn their noses up at any 'lower-class' form of programming are simply wastes of space that fill a void between accomplished authors and people whose opinions are worth as much as the Bic they write them with. I stress to any Big Brother virgin or hater reading this to take one hour out of your (probably) vacuous existence and give it a chance. Make your mind up for yourselves. Yes, it will never win a BAFTA, but if it makes you laugh, and, if only for a sweet moment, removes you from the onslaughts life has to offer, can it really be that bad?

receive by the bestial crowd that awaits them. Think Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* mixed with *Gladiator*, and you'll have some idea as to what the Big Brother experience entails.

Far, though, from merely commentating on the happenings in the House so far (if you really want to know what's going on, just watch it) this writer sees it as his duty, as a bored, working-class, girlfriendless guy, to serve as the antithesis to the hatemongering that so many are guilty of towards this cult show. Not to name names, but I refer to the self-righteous driveling and shameless self-affirmation of one Charlie Brooker, and all the lemming-like plebs that hang on his beligerent and hollow words. Brooker, no stranger to Big Brother or, indeed, criticising it, saw an opportunity to fuse the two together in an effort



# ANDREW BIRD - NOBLE BEAST

by emilykaiser



It may be a strange thing to say an Andrew Bird album feels "light". He is a whistling, violin-playing artist carrying the name of the most natural of aviators, what exactly were your expectations?

But Bird's fifth studio album, 'Noble Beast', out this week on Fat Possum, is a much more quiet effort than we have been used to seeing in his releases.

2005's 'The Mysterious Production of Eggs' and 2007's knockout 'Armchair Apocrypha' both had a kick that is disappointingly missing on the first listen. Noble Beast holds less of a novelty in its tracks. Certainly not lacking in its own intricacies, the album nevertheless feels a bit flat. Songs have a more lackadaisical pace but each quality is still received with an evidently increased effort. What initially feels like a mute is actually a spotlight on the track's

purity rather than its quantity. Each element of sound holds more strength than before.

Two of the best tracks "Not a Robot, Not a Ghost" and "Anoanimal" have the intricacies that make them move faster than they actually are. With their layers of violin, guitars, and vocals, you're actually hearing at least five Birds at any given time in one way or another. Most conspicuously missing throughout the rest of the album, these are the classic musical folds you love to bury yourself into in Andrew Bird's music.

The combination of the dim music and despondent lyrics make the album a particularly melancholy one. Noble Beast holds its power in this sense. In fact Bird has lost no kick, just directing that push away from a novelty of string plucks and rotating gramophones towards one where you are graciously silent afterwards.

## FOLK MUSIC

**katystaten** has mariah in her life. do you?

"A melody is like seeing someone for the first time...But then, as you get to know the person, that's the lyrics. Their story. Who they are underneath. It's the combination of the two that makes it magical." Drew Barrymore's immortal lines in a extremely fromage infused film *Music and Lyrics* actually makes a good point. I must admit when discussing what I was writing about, many people gave me some bemused looks and aside from this being a pretty standard response to me talking, as I continued to try and explain myself, the more I realised I had made some groundbreaking work in the world of musical psychology.

So here we go; if music is the person and lyrics are the inner workings of their mind, then I think the easiest way to explain my amazing interpretation of Barrymore is to deal with the diversity of music in the world and how this fits perfectly with the plethora of different obscene Human-lings in the world, especially at this fine establishment. Listening to all those different artists on your personal walkman is just like knowing or interacting with different people.

There are genres of people, if you will, and this theory is possible to witness everywhere; take for example a regular day's goings on in the haven of the Three Tuns. You're leaning by the bar sipping a nice cold beverage which has been served by the delectable bar staff, you might even be tapping your feet to the latest commercial shite on Sub TV. But this isn't the kind of musi-

cal world we are about to experience; it is more about all those random faces scattered over the cosy cavern, some more recognisable than others.

Look around and 'listen' with your eyes and your little ears; there is Matt Bellamy sitting on a table edge frantically editing his much overdue essay on the political consequences of the US civil war, yet still having more than enough time to check on the footie.

Chilling under pictures of Ghandi, Elvis and Martin Luther King on the sofas there is Biggie Smalls with Jay Z and Mobb Deep happily missing their lectures and classes but not having a care in the world, discussing and planning in detail how things will roll when they're in charge; certainly living £\$£ the way its advised in the unofficial university guide.

Then a James 'I am now used in cockney rhyming slang for a reason' Blunt rocks up and bores everyone to tears with his down-and-out attitude while gazing at the much lusted-after Mariah Carey smoking outside, being a diva and demanding V.I.P for her Econ B

lecture which she will turn up late to and be on the phone throughout. Shameless.

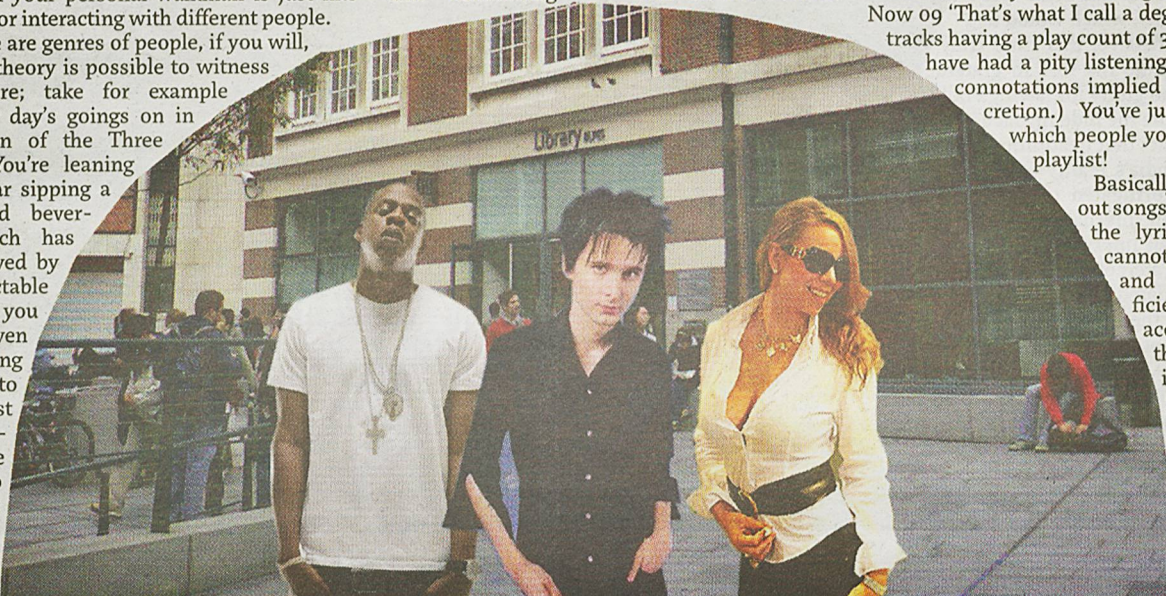
Barbara Streisand turns up in a whirlwind from the quad living her life like it's a real life musical, jazz hands and all the while Houghton Street's very own Johnny Cash is trudging along with that healthy sized Snakebite.

But not to forget the budding Mozart-a-like who has completed the required work for the year by the first day of Lent Term and is slaughtering everyone on the pool table with time to have an in-depth discussion about the solutions to the munch bunch credit crunch.

Just as people are introduced to us in life for the first time, with the musical equivalent being Zane 'the twat' Lowe premiering The Killers 'Human'; the guitar solo or the drum break might metaphorically grab you by the throat and thrust you into a world of musical enjoyment. Or you can think 'I really don't know what all the hype was about'. But a second hearing of it can make you realise that actually, it's a bloody brilliant song!

All we really are is one big compilation CD: Now 09 'That's what I call a degree', with some tracks having a play count of 339 while others have had a pity listening to of 1 (sexual connotations implied at reader's discretion.) You've just got to decide which people you want on your playlist!

Basically I believe without songs - the music and the lyrics - your life cannot be complete and to sound sufficiently soppy in accordance with the movie that inspired this piece; you can't do life without your mates. (Cue soppy music and Hugh Grant and Barrymore getting it on).



# SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE

ashmakunde brings the award-winning film back home to his India

All it took was a glimpse of the promos for me to make my mind up about *Slumdog Millionaire*. It's another story of "Slumbay Dreams". Another reel of the "real" India that the rest of the world eagerly laps up; the kind where Dharavi (Asia's largest slum) is more of a national emblem than the Taj Mahal. It's all the sordid stereotypes of an overpopulated, impoverished country brought together in cinematic harmony; the outdated image of India revived to woo Western audiences and win international acclaim. Quite frankly I went to see the film, not for the sake of enjoying a good movie, but simply to prove these preconceived notions of mine correct.

And I was right on one level. But wrong on so many more.

Director Danny Boyle really has produced a beauty - every minute worthy of a Golden Globe. He's made riches out of rags through this stunning cinematic interpretation of Vikas Swarup's book, *Q&A*. The film is a visual treat with vibrant backdrops, a spectacular soundtrack, and scene upon scene drenched in emotion. It tells the tale of 18 year-old Jamal Malik: the boy from the *jhopadpattis* (slums), betrayed brother, heartbroken lover, call centre *chai-wallah* (tea boy), and almost-there-millionaire. There are undoubtedly storyline clichés - a hero, his beautiful ladylove, the ruthless villains and a predictable ending. Yet one fairytale finale was not "feel-good" compensation enough for the many other moments that broke my heart.

This film is easily as much fact as it is fiction: filth, celebrity adulation, corruption, religious riots, television obsession, child prostitution and brutality, urbanisation - this is sheer reality. How can this not be taken seriously? The film unveils such intricate details of a hard life. People really do suffer like this. Boyle's perspective on India, which would usually make me defensive, this time truly touched me. It made me feel so grateful for all I had, and so guilty for having endless complaints. It made me hide my face in shame for ignoring the fact that destitution remains as much a part of India's reality as it was twenty years ago. The corrugated tin roofs of slums still greet us as our international flights land at Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport. Poverty may well be a stereotypical image, but it certainly isn't an outdated one.

It's the part of the story we like to omit when proudly boasting of shining India and her successful endeavours. It is the taint on our gleaming image, the blemishes on our pretty new face. It's not just nonchalance, it's frustration.

Ever since I was little, I've always been told to roll my windows up at Bombay traffic lights, before some urchin girl with a baby resting on her hip thrust

her dirty begging hands in front of our faces. "These kids are all part of organisations; they can't be trusted. They just want to rob you of your money," was the given explanation for this seemingly heartless attitude. "But they must be poor, they have no shoes!" I would reply. My juvenile interpretation of a person's income levels entailed looking at their footwear. And these young beggars walked barefoot.

They must have their pressures, for no one would voluntarily choose to live such a life. Yet they don't sit there shedding tears over 'if-onlys'. The courage and pragmatism of the slum-dwellers, especially the children, is faithfully reflected in the film. They live life by dealing with their reality. The struggles and challenges only make them stronger. There are those people who create an existence out of nothing, never losing their faith in fate. But for every Jamal who feels he can afford to stick to his morals, there are countless Salims who are willing to sell theirs for that extra disposable income.

So who must we help, and how? If the Dharavi slum has become a business hub with an annual turnover of around \$1bn, why do its inhabitants still spend their lifetimes in cramped living conditions? Why is every child not in a school? Do they really not want to trade their sense of belonging for a respectable job and constant access to clean water? Is it so hard to escape? Do they even want to? Whatever a person's ultimate decision about how to live life (even if it is in blue canvas shacks with no property rights), it should be because they had opportunities and the ability to make educated choices, and not because there was no other way. In Dharavi, there often is no other way.

I still maintain that there are many more faces of India. Yet I can no longer deny that this is equally one of them. Evidently *Slumdog Millionaire* gave rise to a plethora of questions in my mind. But with countless options and no lifelines, where do I find the right answers?



# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**naziahussein calls for change**

**I**t is a fact that women and children are often in danger in places where they should feel the safest: home, the workplace, academic centres, shopping malls or entertainment venues - the danger of violence remains everywhere. It is impossible to generalise the conditions around the world when it comes to violence against women. However, I will attempt to portray the dreadful situation in some of the countries around the world.

Gender based violence is carried out at many different levels - at the family, community and state levels - and in many different forms. For example, in the context of war, or political or military oppression of particular ethnic or national groups, or political movements, systematic rape of women by different agents has frequently been used as a tool of oppression and harassment. A clear example is during the liberation war of 1971 in Bangladesh.

Furthermore, some forms of gender based violence such as forced sterilisation may be perpetrated under the guise of development. Gender based violence at family and community levels may be tacitly approved, or even actively promoted through state laws and religious institutions, as well as by prevailing patriarchal social norms. Even where statutes exist for criminalising particular forms of violence against women, these may be largely weak and barely enforced. Much violence against women takes place in the domestic sphere, where customary, personal or family laws often prevail, and state institutions are reluctant to intervene.

Whilst the physical dimension of gender violence may be the most readily identifiable, psychological abuse, the deprivation of resources for physical and psychological needs, are also important dimensions of violence against women. Women's subjugation by men is pervasive in the political, civil, social, cultural, and economic spheres of many countries. In such societies, a woman who turns down a suitor or does not get along with her in-laws far too frequently becomes a victim of a violent form of revenge. One horrific practice is acid burning. Acid is thrown at the woman's face or on her body, which can blind her, or even cause fatal third-degree burns. Governments do little to prevent the sale of acid to the public or to punish those who use it.

Similarly, the ongoing reality of dowry-related violence is an example of what can happen when women are treated as property. Brides unable to pay the high 'price' to marry are punished by violence and often death at the hands of their in-laws or their own husbands. The legitimisation of male violence, especially beating, allows it to be seen as a deserved response to female disobedience to male demands and control in many third world countries like Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Thus, women often feel shame and guilt in reporting such violence. Even where extreme instances of abuse such as acid burning are

recognised as heinous, there is an ambiguity surrounding the question of how to deal with such severe violence in South Asian society. Sometimes violence is held in repugnance and may provoke outrage, which in itself is problematic. For example, a man who sprayed acid on and killed his new wife, on grounds of her inadequate dowry, was hacked to death by villagers in northern Bangladesh. But the vastly practiced inequality of gender relationships often let violence against women get away unnoticed.

In some societies, women are looked upon as representatives of the honour of the family. When women are suspected of extra-marital sexual relations, even if in the case of rape, they can be subjected to the cruellest forms of humiliation and violence, often by their own fathers or brothers. Women who are raped and are unable to provide explicit evidence, are sometimes accused of Zina - the crime of unlawful sexual relations - the punishment for which is often death by public stoning. Assuming an accused woman's guilt, male family members believe that they have no other means of undoing a perceived violation of 'honour' other than to kill the woman. Such violence happens in countries where it is tradition and the norm, thus we hear little of such incidents, which continually makes it harder to challenge these cruel practices.

Female genital mutilation is the removal of part or all of the external female genitalia. In its most severe form, a woman or girl has all of her external genitalia removed and then stitched together, leaving a small opening for intercourse and menstruation. It is practiced in 28 African countries on the pretext of cultural tradition or hygiene. An estimated 135 million girls have undergone FGM with dire consequences ranging from infection (including HIV) to sterility, in addition to the devastating psychological effects. Though all the governments of the countries in which genital mutilation is practiced have legislation making it illegal, the complete lack of enforcement and prosecution of the perpetrators means genital mutilation continues to thrive.

Perpetrators of violence against women are rarely held accountable for their acts. Women who are victims of gender-related violence often have few alternatives because many state agencies are themselves guilty of gender bias and discriminatory practices. Does this mean that such brutality against women will continue unchecked? I for one am not happy to just wait and see.

**In North Africa 6000 women are genitally mutilated everyday; a women is raped every 6 minutes in the U.S; this year more than 15000 women will be sold into sexual slavery in China; 200 will be horribly disfigured by acid in Bangladesh and 7,000 women in India will be murdered by their families or in-laws in disputes of dowry.**

**- Amnesty International**

