

LSE Alumni John Phelan talks career success post-LSE

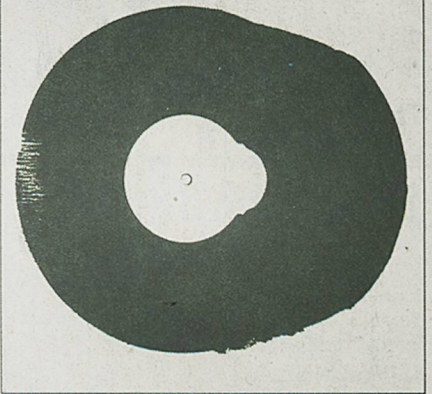
Page 11

Britain Plc sells out to the makers of canned cheese

Page 7



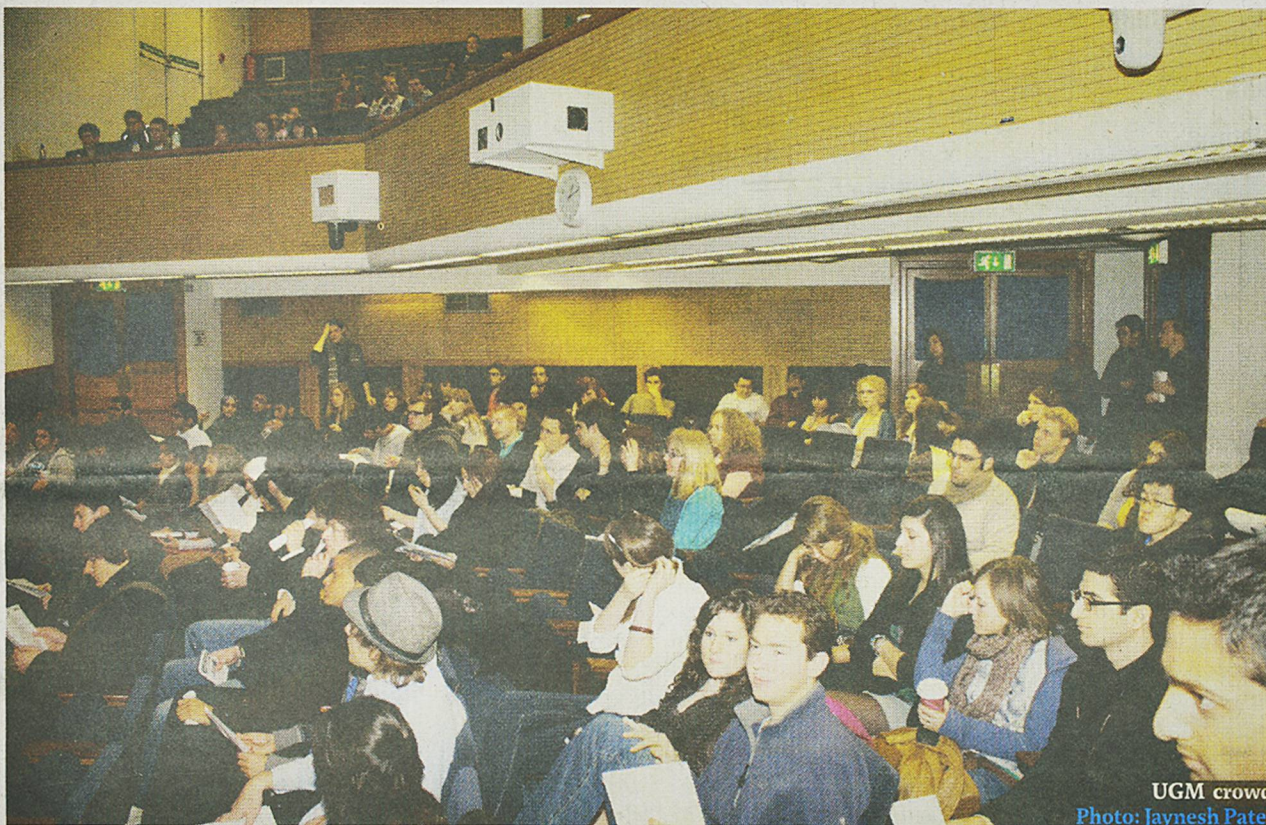
gets all L.A. with No Age discussing life and music



# The Beaver

26 January 2010  
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Students' Union  
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## Gen Sec: "Students crying out for change"



UGM crowd  
Photo: Jaynesh Patel

Sachin Patel

Last week's Union General Meeting (UGM) saw NUS President Wes Streeting address the audience, while a motion to put to referendum the constitutional reforms of the LSESU must roll over to this week's meeting after heated discussions prevented a vote from taking place.

Streeting, visiting London for a conference on international students, took the opportunity to talk about the implications of the higher education fees review, and the NUS's proposed local tactics for the forthcoming general election, as well as taking questions on subjects as diverse as Tzipi Livni, radical action and his Twitter habits.

Combating the claims made by the Russell Group, Streeting argued that suggestions that "the ivory towers are going to fall down" as a result of spending cuts were untrue and grossly exaggerated. Accusing vice-chancellors of creating "hysteria", Streeting warned that students' unions "at their peril buy into the rhetoric of Russell Group universities".

With regard to this year's general election, having assured the audience that MPs "up and down the country" have signed a pledge to vote against fee rises, Streeting asserted that collective local action would leave "politicians quaking in their boots", provided that students voted in the constituencies recommended by the online service.

Two questions were fielded in relation to the merits of radical action; in both cases, Streeting emphasised the importance of using the "right tactics at the right time". Alluding to the occupation of the Old Theatre last year, Streeting joked that though sufficiently timely occupations would be "widely supported", "if you're just going to have ten people in a lecture theatre, pissing off a load of people", then smaller demonstrations would be more useful.

In addition, Streeting stressed that

"for now, the focus is on the general election" and that civil disobedience "makes a lot of noise, but doesn't make many headlines".

Of particular relevance to the LSE was a question about Streeting's plans to help international students. He argued that a major new project which is looking at "barriers to participation" and the lack of a "welcoming environment" would do just this. In addition, he called upon the government to look again at the controversial Tier 4 regulations, which some accuse of being overly harsh on international students, adding that the problem was not the vast majority of universities, rather the "dodgy English language schools above chip shops".

A question was posed to Streeting concerning his thoughts on the LSESU's collaboration with SU ARTS, to which he responded that in a "challenging financial context", such schemes would become more prevalent. At the same time however, Streeting said that it was "important that different universities maintain their own representative identities", and that much could be learnt from this "groundbreaking" initiative's "teething problems".

Following Streeting's question-and-answer session, reports were made by some members of the SU Executive. Michael Lok, in his capacity as Chair of the Constitution & Steering Committee, made a statement condemning instances where students had been "intimidated into [not] expressing particular views in UGM motions", calling it "unbearable" and a breach of "fundamental human rights".

The first motion to be debated at UGM called for the Students' Union reform proposals to be put to referendum - a policy that has attracted a great deal of support from the incumbent Sabbatical Officers. Earlier on in the meeting, LSESU Education and Welfare Officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang was overheard telling two students: "Do not leave... I will stand in front of the door".

Proposing the motion was the LSESU Treasurer George Wetz, who referred to the current constitution as a "disaster for democracy", and insisted that the new proposals "weren't just dreamt up in the back room". He also asserted that the new documents would permit "more autonomy over budgets for societies and the media group".

First speak against was second year LLB student Mira Hammad, who argued that the reforms had been carried out in an underhand way. She claimed, "The online survey omitted some important questions," and that the idea that "people are going to read through the minutiae of what you're suggestion" was unrealistic. Hammad also suggested that the proposals were "not aimed at giving students more democracy, but giving more power to the Executive", a claim disputed by the proposers on stage.

LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher also spoke in favour of the motion, arguing that though he "didn't believe in external trustees", it was important that "the whole student body" had its say on the changes. Fisher also suggested that "It's not the right of this UGM to stop students from having their say on the future of their Students' Union".

Closing the opposition of the motion was third year BSc Accounting and Finance student Rob Charnock, who lambasted the proposals' current form. Claiming that "far too few students were involved [with the consultation process] for the results to be significant", Charnock argued that "the draft detailed very little of what was discussed in the meetings that at least I was in". Having implored the SU to "take it back to the drawing board", Charnock suggested that the expediency of this process was a result of the Sabbatical Officers wishing to "leave this as their legacy", and that the Officers should promise to take a 25 per cent pay cut as part of the proposals, in order to be more accountable to the student body.

Several questions were permitted by UGM Chair, Jack Tindale. Former Societies Officer, Zoe Cooke, asked how ordinary students were expected to understand a document that "even people who have been involved with don't understand". Cooke also used this opportunity to state that "not a significant number more than [ten] turned up to the consultation meetings". In response to a question regarding the primacy of the UGM in deciding this matter, George Wetz said, "We bent over backwards to find out what people thought" but that "we think these changes are right for the Union".

BSc International Relations and History undergraduate Teddy Nicholson questioned the likelihood of turnout for the referendum matching that at the Michaelmas Term elections, which was 20 per cent. Nicholson asked if the vote would be "genuinely representative of student opinion", given that many students would be put off reading "complex governmental reforms". In reply, Fisher argued that the turnout "will be bigger than at UGM, and that is what matters."

Before the meeting was closed by the UGM Chair, and rolled over to this week's meeting in order that further questions could be asked, a final question was fielded by a member of the Beaver's editorial board, who asked as to the legitimacy of one of the proposals, to levy a £5 charge on members of the Media Group. Responding, Fisher asked "What makes you different from any other society?" adding that this proposal would "ensure the long-term stability of the Media Group".

The Chair's decision to close the meeting was disputed by the Fisher; following a brief intervention from C&S, the decision was deemed to be constitutional. The motion will be continued at this week's UGM.



Wes Streeting  
Photo: Jaynesh Patel

## Union Jack UGM sketch

Union Jack



Jack is the Beaver's anonymous mole at the Union General Meeting, every Thursday at 1pm

All's well that ends well - or, in the case of last week's UGM, all's well that's Orwell.

Firstly, Jack must apologise for his absence in the past few weeks. The call for quoracy, the bane of so many hackling birds' existence, has been made a few too many times by a certain wayward individual. Jack can only lament the glory days of what the UGM used to be. An hour of actual debate and discussion about policies that affect students; an open forum.

Then again, it hasn't really changed all that much. Was it really only a year ago that Dilwyn Fatcher was accused of going on a tyrannical rampage?

Perhaps if Fatcher didn't have Wes Street-Car-Named-Desire to compete with, who started off the meeting rather well, things would have ended much better for the once esteemed leader. But alas, it was not to be, and he appeared rather the petulant child.

Wes Street-Car-Named-Desire put on quite a performance, no question seemed too tricky to answer. Then again, most of the kids that were there were there to hear his oratory, since a lot of people left after realising the Pankhurst motion had been bullied out of the Old Theatre. EAI was pulling out all the stops to keep the hens in the pen, going as far as to volunteer his own hulking frame to barricade the theatre. Sorry to let you know, but an occupation is not going to solve the problem, EAI.

Jack can let you know that they really tried to push those reforms forward, considering they didn't even bother with giving reports. Luckily, the Media Group knew considerably better than that, since the need to justify their existence is paramount in these troubling times of change. (Rumours of membership fees abound, what happened to free press?) Jack finds it utterly incomprehensible that these four boys, who "serve the students" on a daily basis, feel no need to let students know why they get so much money to do what they do.

Instead, sulking and trembling with anger, Fatcher made his way onto the stage after Wetz Blanket was unable to contain his disgust that a student would voice their doubts. The looks on their faces were definitely "Kodak moments"; particularly when accused of their own legacy being the driving force behind their "change" bandwagon. It may have won Obama a Peace Prize, but are you really that Nobel?

Bravo to the two who dared challenge, and riled the crowd up enough to have the meeting closed.

Jack has one simple question for his dearest Fatcher and his loyal rottweilers. You don't really want to live up to your namesake's legacy of breaking the unions, do you?

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# The Beaver

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## “Change delayed. But ... it can't be stopped.”

It is somewhat ironic that our incumbent Sabbatical Officers have chosen to use UGM as a means to destroy itself. Critics of the constitutional reform have defended the UGM's power as the ultimate means of discussing Union policy; in this case, it is less a case of informed and balanced debate, and more an occasion for Aled Dilwyn-Fisher & Co. to push through a document that few people have had the chance to read through and the Constitution & Steering Committee (C&S) have yet to approve.

“It can't be stopped” is the curious maxim published on our General Secretary's Twitter feed with regard to this seemingly inexorable wave of change. Firm. Strong. Almost – dare we say it – dictatorial? One would rather hope that a democratic process would very much have the power to stop something that the electorate might believe to be unrepresentative of their views. This is a document, after all, that was forged after the consultation of just 1,500 individuals, 500 of which took the form of online questionnaires - this from a university of over 9,000 students. A document that was supposedly eighteen months in the making, and yet appears

to have been scrawled on the back of a napkin with only passing interest in the suggestions of affected parties.

All these concerns were alluded to in a UGM that once again saw a first-time speaker heckled and repeatedly interrupted, this time by Sabbatical Officers stood barely a metre away. But the childish farce of an on-stage Punch and Judy would not suffice for our dear leaders. “Students are crying out for reform” claimed Fisher. As far as we could tell, the only thing students were crying out for was for their questions to be answered; for the debate to be fair and reasoned. A perfectly valid decision was made by the UGM Chair, to suspend the meeting and carry on with the debate the following week - a decision opposed by the persistently petulant General Secretary. Even the rational judgements of C&S members were disputed by Fisher; the UGM Chair felt sufficiently undermined as to write a letter, printed in this week's Beaver, defending his decision.

Readers might assume that we were intrinsically opposed to referendum or to reform. We do find aspects of the proposals unsavoury, yes - particularly those concerning the editorial and financial independence of the Media

Group. However, that would be to ignore our greater concerns - and apparently the concerns shared by students present at UGM - about the behaviour of the Sabbatical Officers. They have outrightly rejected points raised during consultations; even cut off suggestions made by students during a Beaver Collective meeting. They have conducted “chats” with those who have raised any opposition to the reforms. If their justified concerns are met with intimidation, strong-arming, and accusations of “lying”, how are society chairs, Media Group heads, and other individuals so deeply involved with the Union, to maintain working relationships with their overseers?

If the Sabbs get their way, eighteen months of dubious “consultation” will no doubt degenerate into two weeks of frenzied leafleting and vacuous campaigning. If this is an attempt to combat poor attendance at UGM, may we ask why there is no minimum turnout required for the referendum to be binding? Could this be, as was intimated by a speaker at UGM, a last-ditch attempt by our elected officials to leave a legacy, and condemn students to faceless bureaucracy?

## Collective

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The Collective is The Beaver's governing body. You must have contributed three pieces of work, or contributed to the production of three issues of the paper (editorially or administratively), to qualify for membership. If you believe you are a Collective member but your name is not on the list above, please email

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## CLARIFICATION

The front page story printed in last week's Beaver, headlined LSE teacher accused of holding “extremist” views, was not the final edited version of the piece. The lead should read: “The School, the LSESU and the LSESU Islamic Society were fully aware that Reza Pankhurst, the teacher at the centre of a national media storm regarding allegations of preaching extremist views, was previously a member of a “hardline” Islamist group.” and the full, correct version can be found at <http://thebeaveronline.co.uk/>

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# "Confusion" surrounds proposed reforms

Phyllis Lui

The LSESU Sabbatical Officers claim that "confusion" is the reason behind heated debate regarding the referendum motion tabled at last Thursday's Union General Meeting (UGM).

The proposed reforms which have been advocated for by the LSESU came under attack at the UGM, as accusations were made regarding inadequate consultations and the speed with which these reforms are being put to referendum. The reforms are part of the changes that the LSESU has to make in order to register with the Charities Commission.

LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher commented: "Students' Unions must register with the Charities Commission and some kind of change of Constitution is needed to comply with regulations. While this doesn't mean that we should make just any change, it is imperative that we change for the better as soon as we can. The first motion calling for a change of our structures was passed in 2006/7 - we simply cannot wait another four years to become a more relevant, effective Students' Union. All LSE students deserve better and should be given an opportunity to vote on the future of their Union. I simply cannot understand why anyone would stand in the way of all students being allowed their democratic right to vote on the reform proposals."

In a press release, the Sabbatical Officers believed that: "Last week's UGM highlighted confusion over the proposals which the Students' Union suggesting go to referendum...the UGM's role on Thursday is to decide whether or not these proposals should go to referendum, so that each student at LSE has the change to vote on how they think the union should move forward."

LSESU Treasurer George Wetz, the proposer of the motion, said: "There

seemed to be some confusion over what the UGM should be voting for. Disagreeing with the reform document should not be a reason to say it shouldn't be voted on in a referendum, it is a reason to campaign against the document and vote against it during the referendum itself."

It is also mentioned in the statement that the proposals were created following "two years of surveys, consultations and focus groups, which were almost all open to every LSE student - nearly 1,500 student interactions have been recorded. Over 1,000 hours of Union Staff and Sabbatical time have gone into researching the data, collecting the data, and creating a new document that will satisfy as many students as possible."

The Beaver had reported earlier this term that 500 LSE students had responded to an online survey regarding proposed reforms over the holidays, "with the vast majority seeing it as a positive change". LSESU Communications Officer Robin Low had stated that: "The reform proposals will deliver better representation for postgraduate students, less bureaucracy for societies, sports, campaigns and other activities, and more opportunities for all students to get involved in their Union."

The Referendum will consist of campaigning, an open debate, and 2 days of voting. According to the press release, "voting will be online and you'll be able to vote Yes or No to each individual part of the proposals", whilst an abstain option will also be available. If passed, the new documents will come into full effect on the 1st July 2010. In the interim, the Union structures will operate through the old practices where possible whereas any positions open for election will be for the positions detailed in the approved proposals.

All of the reform documents are currently available on the LSESU website ([www.lsesu.com](http://www.lsesu.com)), and a document highlighting some of the more striking proposals will be made available online soon,

which will also be distributed on campus. LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher said: "These reform documents cannot please every one of our 9,000 students, but it will certainly open the Union up to a significantly higher proportion of students than our current documents do."

## Highlights of the reform

- The creation of a Part-time Postgraduate Sabbatical, this has been long identified as a key area in which the Union needs to improve on. Through providing representation at this level postgraduates will be able to have direct influence and impact on the issues which concern them
- The Trustee Board, whatever its make up, will take on board a lot of the responsibility for the financial running of the Union, meaning the position of Treasurer is no longer necessary
- Specialist staff will be employed for communicating and marketing. This was a key area of concern following the surveys and consultations, and through employing a specialist in this field more time and expertise will be devoted to this. It will also mean the position of Communications Officer will not be necessary.
- The creation of Assemblies will change how campaigns are run and prioritised, how budgets are allocated (indeed under this model the timing of budget allocation will not be Week 9 of the first term, but at the start of it), and how Union policy is executed. This will be the prerogative of students rather than being controlled centrally.

"Wasn't aware of the reforms to be honest, or what they are trying to reform. Didn't really have the time to notice though I'm tempted to look into it."

Michael Bae  
2nd year Law

"Although the proposed reforms are by their nature a compromise, I believe that certain aspects are fantastic. For example, the introduction of Assemblies would make it easier for all students to implement their ideas, and thus devolves power from the Executive as a body."

Hero Austin  
LSESU Environmental and Ethics Officer

"I find it sad to see the UGM being effectively removed as the ultimate decision making body of the SU despite the Sabbs' assurances that it would always have the final say on SU matters. I think this has to do with the fact that the Sabbs consider it easier to force through their controversial agenda in an arena that does not allow as direct a debate as the UGM."

Peter Kulka  
MSc Economics and Finance

"The reform proposal reminds me of the recent EU treaty: nobody understands it, but it seems to be completely irrelevant to the average students life anyway"

Lorenz Caspar-Bours  
3rd year Government and Economics

# GICDF trustee linked to Mafia



Shibani Mahtani

A member of the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation (GICDF)'s Council of Trustees, which recently granted a £1.5 million donation to the LSE, was investigated and found to have ties to the Mafia.

Italian politician Giulio Andreotti, who served as Prime Minister of Italy from 1972 to 1973, 1976 to 1979 and 1989 to 1992, was investigated in 1979 for his role in the murder of Mino Pecorelli. Pecorelli was a journalist who had published allegations that Andreotti had ties to the Mafia, and played a role in the kidnapping of Prime Minister Aldo Moro.

Even though he was sentenced to twenty four years' imprisonment, the court overturned the conviction and acquitted Andreotti of the murder charge.

However, the court established that Andreotti did have strong ties to the Mafia until 1980 and used to further his political career.

Also on the Council is Jose Clveria de Venecia Jr, a former Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Philippines, and ran against Joseph Estrada in the 1998 election. GICDF is chaired by Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, LSE alumnus and eldest son of Libyan Leader Muammar Gaddafi.

As reported by the Beaver, the donation from the GICDF was intended to support the LSE Centre for Global Governance, a centre that has "shifted debate away from the role of individual governments in global affairs to far-reaching analysis of the framework of principles, rules and laws necessary to tackle global problems".

In Libya, the GICDF has been praised in particular for its work in supporting

human rights for Libyan citizens.

Aside from accepting this donation, the LSE also runs the Libyan training programme. The School was approached by the Libyan Economic Development Board in 2007, to "tender for the design and delivery of a programme that would expose middle and senior ranking civil servants to new ideas and good practice in public management," according to an article in the LSE magazine. A contract for the course, led by professor of public management Francis Terry, was signed in January 2008. The two part course is run in Sabratha or Tripoli in Libya, and in London at the LSE.

Prior to this, LSE Director Howard Davies was an economic envoy to Libya at the request of the UK Government.

# Reza Pankhurst hits back at claims

Phyllis Lui

Following the national media storm of a LSE teacher's membership of a "hard-line" Islamist organisation, the School has released a further statement in support of Reza Pankhurst, who will be taking legal action against several national news outlets.

The Beaver reported last week that Reza Pankhurst, who is a PhD student in the Department of Government and also a Graduate Teaching Assistant, was embroiled in accusations regarding his membership of Hizb ut-Tahrir. The Evening Standard had published an article accusing Pankhurst of grooming the suicide bomber for Tel Aviv attack, which can no longer be found online.

Further, it has surfaced that Pankhurst's personal details along with several other academics were leaked by a government-funded think tank, as opposed to the allegations that a student at the School had done so.

When asked whether he would be taking further action, Pankhurst reiterated his previous press release which stated that, "solicitors are now instructed to act on my behalf to ensure that the false allegations made against me in several newspapers are withdrawn and are never repeated". Further, he did not intend on making any further comments until those claims have been dealt with.

In the LSE global email which was sent last Wednesday, the School also released a statement further to the one which was released to the media earlier

last week. It read: "We are not aware that Mr Pankhurst is a member of a proscribed organisation or has broken any laws or LSE regulations. He did not disguise his past when he applied to the School."

"Senior officers of the School are in regular contact with the Islamic Society, to which most of its Muslim students belong. Our understanding is that a range of views are expressed at Friday prayers by speakers who are restricted almost always to members of the School community. The LSE's Code of Practice on Free Speech seeks to ensure freedom of thought, conscience, religion and expression within the law. We have not had complaints that Mr Pankhurst, or any other speaker, has said anything unlawful during sermons at Friday prayers which would breach our code of practice."

Pankhurst replied that he was grateful for the support he received, and when asked how he felt about the School's statement said: "I would like to thank all those involved for the continued strong support that I have had from the LSE, the Government department, my colleagues and students, the student body and all those who have contacted me personally, who have stood by me in the face of the unwarranted media witch hunt which took place solely due to my beliefs and political convictions".

# What kind of Economics should we teach?



## Eunice Ng

Last Wednesday's 'What kind of economics should we teach?' public lecture marked the start of a series run by the LSE Department of Economics on the changing trends in teaching economics.

Speaking first was Professor Geoffrey Hodgson, Research Professor of Business Studies at the University of Hertfordshire and Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Institutional Economics*. He spoke about how students are not trained to be critical, and that concerns about a discipline that put "technique over substance" began

twenty years ago. Economics, in short, was more about mathematics than theory, more about calculations than questions. There was also a lack of testing in the discipline: economists can easily present models, but those models are rarely tested.

Professor Hodgson also commented that students lack training in the philosophy of science, and therefore lack the ability to question assumptions in models.

"Models are important," said Hodgson, "but we must be aware of their limitations."

Next up was Professor Albert Marcet from the LSE, who stated that economics is a "science where theory interacts

with data". Models necessarily rely on simplified assumptions and therefore will fail. But he cautioned against excessive disparaging of models.

"It's easy to make fun of models in economics, but unless you have a better model, it isn't fair," explained Professor Marcet.

He went on to say that students should be taught the assumptions behind rules, as well as models about human expectation.

Paul Ormerod, from Volterra Consulting, an economics consultancy firm, began by saying that economics' "one great insight" was about the role of incentives and how agents respond to

incentives. Over the past years, the field of economics has moved towards a study of irrational human behaviour, which was a welcome move.

However, the study of irrationality had to be backed up by empirical studies, especially with technology that makes it easier to model and analyse behaviour. Simultaneously, economics should not be shy about borrowing techniques from other fields such as anthropology. Finally, he called for a curriculum of economics that is "more eclectic, more empiricist and not based on a priori assumptions".

Finally, Professor John Sutton, Sir John Hicks Professor of Economics at the LSE, stated that economics was inherently

"messy" because its models had to take into account many circumstances. But modern economics was too attached to a certain type of model that assumes agents are rational and aware of their circumstances. Teaching should seek to study both the assumptions and the model. Every discipline from physics to medicine had intellectual crises that pushed them to further success, and the financial crisis should be economics' crisis to help us understand its limitations.

The common theme was that economists had to move beyond simple mathematics, to reinforce the empiricism championed by the discipline, and ultimately, to develop critical minds.

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# New residential structure to be implemented

Eunice Ng

According to LSESU Residences' Officer, the South University Management Services Consulting Report (SUMS Report), commissioned to investigate the support and welfare in Halls of Residences, will be put forward to the LSE Council for final approval in the coming weeks.

Staff consulted include various wardens in Halls of Residences and the Pro-Director of Teaching and Learning, Janet Hartley. The report believed that the LSE needs clearer objectives for its halls of residences so they can be linked to the school's broader objectives of improving student life. The Pastoral Care Team, the staff in charge of Halls of Residences that include wardens and sub-wardens, also needs to be more accountable and better managed. A set of institutional standards needs to be established for the team and implemented so that the Team knows what is expected of its members. Above all, the strategy of halls governance is still disparate and uncoordinated.

LSESU Residences' Officer Andrew Wright said: "In terms of a report, it represents a thorough and conclusive comment on LSE's residential provision, and highlights significant areas of improvement. Its outcomes will display a major step forward in our residential provision, however we must be careful to continue addressing and resolving many current issues which are apparent from the report."

Currently, the Pastoral Care Team is not part of the LSE's governance mechanism, and Halls of Residences do not op-



erate on a common strategy. The Pastoral Care Team also receives little staff training and in the report said that more training would be beneficial. Findings from various surveys also showed that students have a

negative experience of life in halls. Some did not feel that wardens did not provide anything beyond the minimum level of care. The report also noted that other comparable universities – even those

located in busy cities such as Columbia University and University of Bristol – focused on fostering a sense of community, something which is distinctly lacking in LSE halls. Job expectations are also clearer

for residential staff at other university such as King's.

Apart from setting clearer expectations and roles for the wardens and sub-wardens, the School also hopes to standardize disciplinary procedures for students and set up mandatory training for staff. The SUMS report produced proposed many options for changes, from keeping the current hall structure with only some operational changes to creating a new Residential Life unit in charge of managing wardens, to creating US style residential advisors for halls.

SUMS consulting will continue to help the School with its new residential strategy. Ultimately, the School hopes to restructure its residential services, and the SUMS report marks the first step in what will be an extensive procedure.

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Photo: Rob Charnock

# UGM withdraws Reza motion

Marie Dunaway

A motion in response to the recent media storm around teacher Reza Pankhurst was withdrawn barely 12 hours before last Thursday's UGM.

The motion, titled 'Defend the LSE community - Stop the Islamophobic witch hunt', was publicized in a global email sent by the LSESU last Tuesday. Despite the UGM being quorate for the first time in weeks, the withdrawal of the motion compelled some students, who had come specifically to discuss the issue, to leave the Old Theatre.

In an email to an LSESU member of staff, proposer of the motion Estelle Cooch

stated: "I am sorry to say that such has been the atmosphere on campus this week that many of my friends who were going to vote for the motion now feel too unsafe and uncomfortable to come to UGM."

Cooch elaborated saying that members of the LSESU who would have voted for the motion feared "being labelled supported to Hizb ut-Tahrir", the "hardline" Islamist group that Pankhurst is a member of. The group is banned in Germany and is currently under review by the Home Office, though not illegal in the United Kingdom.

The motion aimed to identify what the proposers describe as the "media witch hunt" of Pankhurst on the part of the Times and the Evening Standard in the context of growing Islamophobia and the

electoral support received by the BNP. It also noted that this incident followed the attempted plane bombing in Detroit and the ban of Islam4UK last month. According to the proposers, it aimed to unite campus in solidarity with the Muslim community, who may be smeared by such allegations.

LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher, had submitted amendments to the motion on Wednesday which he felt would be more acceptable to the UGM. Fisher said he currently understands that the motion will be put forward for this week's meeting, after several debates with the proposers before the UGM.

Due to the controversial nature of the proposal there seemed to be substantial debate over the final contents of

the document Fisher said "I had a long conversation with one of the proposers on Wednesday evening and was going to send a slightly changed version of the amendments to them later on, building on our discussions. I was then told by another person involved in the writing of the motion that they had decided to pull it and that they would consider putting it again next week; they added that they would contact me to discuss changing it in line with the amendments."

Fisher concluded that he would "look forward to any such further discussions about the motion."

In response to students feeling victimised over expressing opinions and views on campus, Chair of the the Constitution and Steering committee (C&S) Michael

Lok issued a short statement at the opening of the UGM. Lok said: "Without commenting on or referring to specific issues, it has been brought to my attention that some students at the LSE find it unsafe to express their views in public. I am truly shocked and disappointed to hear that such has been the case on the LSE campus."

He continued: "In my capacity as Chair of the Constitution & Steering Committee, I call upon all students to respect and support our constitutional right of expression, a fundamental right emphasised not only by the LSESU Constitution but by the entire global community."

# Climate change suffering from knowledge gap

Nicola Alexander

"We need a 21st century renaissance", argued Professor Sir David King in his public lecture on the importance of innovative policy to protect dwindling resources, held last Thursday.

Offering an insightful perspective into the area of sustainable development, Sir David identified that the greatest challenge we face today is managing finite supplies of water, food and fuel with the dynamics of climate change and population growth.

Sir David was keen to stress that this challenge is by no means beyond the capacity of human intellect, but rather an issue of breaching the "knowledge gap" between universities and government policy. This dislocation between the scientific knowledge base and the practical politics of international governments has already claimed its first victims. According to Sir David, one hundred and fifty thousand lives could have been saved in the Indonesian tsunami of 2004 if policy makers had heeded the warning of scientists studying tectonic and volcanic activity. The recent Australian bush fires, a result of irresponsible water practises, are a further indication that governments and households have for too long ignored the concerns of scientists. Decades of apathy have been "damaging our planet to the point where our survival is at risk", stated Sir David.

There is potentially even more to lose. As land and water resources are stretched, conflict is inevitable, suggested Sir David. Already India has constructed a fence along the India-Bangladesh border to avoid environmentally motivated migration as sea levels rise due to climate change and people living in the vulnerable country of Bangladesh are displaced. The Iraq War could be seen by future historians as the first of numerous wars over resources, claimed Sir David. With the negligent management of resources and

careless disregard for pollution "we need to expect consequences".

However, whilst these issues of the 21st century are a "many-body problem" and consequences are serious, Sir David reasoned that between science and politics there are tools available.

"We need to get ahead of the game and make the right decisions early," concluded Sir David.

Scientists are consistently providing the innovation; now, consumers will need to embrace the technology and governments will need to maximise the benefits. With the UN predicting that by 2030 crop production will have to increase by 50 per cent, food scarcity is at the top of international priorities. Sir David argued that the science to cope with this crisis already exists, in the form of genetically modified (GM) crops that have their DNA altered to better resist fluctuating climates.

However, the reluctance of society to accept this pioneering agricultural discovery and the subsequent resistant political action has slowed down the process. Similarly, Sir David argued that public resistance to nuclear power could delay solutions and exacerbate existing problems. Remarkably, in Rwanda, the united front of scientists, producers and politicians in dealing with dire soil erosion by using hillside terracing technology has illustrated just how successful and productive the 21st century could be if all actors of the economy work together.

With a hopeful tone, Sir David identified that though we will face intimidating issues this century, history shows us that we do have the capacity to rise to the challenge. It is no longer a question of whether we can deal with the international problems that we face, but rather a case of how long it will be before we embrace the solutions as a united body.

"We need a paradigm shift, we need better global governance... prepare for a new renaissance" concluded Sir David to a captivated audience.



Sir David King  
Photo: SSEE/Wikipedia

## News In Brief

### LSE graduates alleged to be part of Somali jihad

An article in Sunday Times claimed that students from the LSE, Imperial College and King's College London have been recruited to fight with a terrorist group linked to Al-Qaeda. It further said that "almost a dozen young British Muslims, including a female medical research, are said recently to have joined Al-Shabaab, an extremist rebel organisation blamed for hundreds of deaths in the east African state". One LSE graduate was alleged to have called his pregnant wife from Mogadishu, the Somali capital, telling her: "I am here defending my country and my rights. Look after my daughter. I don't think I will see you again." However the article ended by stating: "LSE, Imperial and King's College said they had no record of the students".

### LSE to cut number of degree places

LSE, along with Essex and Edinburgh Universities was reported in the Sunday Times to cut the number of degree places offered, following a £915m cut in the higher education budget. The Higher Education Minister David Lammy wrote in a magazine that universities will have to find new sources of money before public spending rises again. Furthermore, this has come amidst plans by LSE to include a foreign language at the GCSE level for all applicants.

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# Comment

## Britain sells more family silver

### Short-sighted strategy bodes ill for the country's future prosperity

**Richard Bullock**

**A** new year, the end to a six month corporate dog fight and goodbye to more British family silver. It seems that Britain plc has once again rolled over, had her tummy tickled and handed over the goods to foreign buyers. An increased bid offer of 840p per share from American giant Kraft, enough to persuade Cadbury's management that this is after all the perfect home for their company, and bang goes two hundred years of independent British corporate history. So fickle is the corporate world that just days ago, the Cadbury's board was rejecting a bid just 10 per cent lower as "derisory" and criticizing Kraft's own corporate performance.

For even the casual observer though, the writing has long been on the wall. Britain, the world's first industrial nation, has been perfectly content over the last twenty years to focus less on selling its manufactured goods to the rest of the world and to focus more on selling its own industries. The list from the last ten years or so alone bears some very familiar household names: ICI, O2, BAA (owner of Heathrow and Gatwick), P&O, Thames Water, British Energy and this neglects to mention the banks swallowed up by foreigners before and during the credit crisis and English football clubs bought at the whim of the mega-wealthy Russian or Arab tycoon. More incredible still is that the financing to help foreigners buy British industry was, and is, often put together by British banks. In effect, the British are lending money to foreigners so that they can then relieve us of our industries.

Now I hear the theoretical arguments of neo-classical liberal economists, that the market is right in assessing the valuation and future prospects of companies and that strong overseas buyers are in a better position to take weak British companies forwards. They also argue that shareholders in British companies are free to invest their generous takeover proceeds in newly developing businesses and so drive the economy forwards. However, I still have some serious misgivings, not because I am protectionist and fear for the future of lowly skilled workers who very often are the victim of the buyer's rationalization plans – that part is inevitable in this highly globalised world. My misgivings arise from the fact that top corporate decision making for British industry – in matters such as capital investment, research and product development – are now taken in American, French or Spanish boardrooms. These are decisions that affect the future of the British economy and the future of British competitiveness but are no longer taken by the British or in the interests of the British.

The French, Germans and even liberal Americans have been quicker to spot this problem and have blocked foreign takeovers of what they perceive to be key industries. Now I am not suggesting that we go as far as having parliament intervene in the statute book but a more far sighted approach is certainly needed. In my opinion, the problem rests with the deeply entrenched vested interests of the triangle that is government, institutional shareholders and corporate management. For government, the crux of the problem is the ticking pensions time-bomb. The woeful state of public finances and the urgent need for private pensions means that they are happy to encourage short term stock market behaviour. If this means the sale of British industry and the raising of a few extra million pounds in capital gains tax revenue all the better. Institutional shareholders for their part are singing from the same hymn sheet. They are giving shareholders (often pensioners) the

short term returns they crave, even if it means selling Cadbury's to Kraft at 840p. It may have been 2012 before the shares naturally reached this level.

Finally, although corporate management are mandated to deliver long term returns to shareholders, such juicy short term rewards – in the case of Cadbury's an extra 80p per share – may be enough to see them reach their share option targets

### Britain Plc has once again been rolled over

and to throw in the towel. The problem is that nowhere within this poisoned system is there room to consider the long term competitive prospects of Britain's industry.

For starters, what is needed in my view is a better awareness within this triangle of government, shareholders and management that short-termism resulting in the sale of healthy British industry to the highest bidder may work for a while. But, as a long term strategy, it is not enough to cover the growing deficiencies in Britain's international economic competitiveness.

**Alastair Hill**

**I**n recent weeks much has been written about the return of bankers' bonuses and the reform, or lack thereof, of the whole sector. Yet what remains more troubling are questions about whether the whole financial sector is run for the benefit of a small group of insiders, rather than the population as a whole. One key problem is that financial activity conducted in the City is essentially short-term in outlook, and this week's hostile takeover of Cadbury by the American conglomerate Kraft is an excellent case in point. Many commentators had been quick to point out that the outcome of the Cadbury's deal effectively hinged on the fact that almost a third of Cadbury's shareholders were hedge funds. Such investors of course hold little interest in Cadbury's long-term future, or the interests of the British consumer, but are instead motivated primarily by the possibility of achieving a quick return on their investments. Add to this the plethora of legal attendants, financial advisors, PR advisors and accountants who are also set to profit from the deal, and there can be little to no doubt that when takeover offers materialised earlier this month, a successful takeover remained all but a formality. Indeed not only are Kraft's advisors amply rewarded for the successful acquisition, but Cadbury's managers

are also set to be rewarded handsomely for the fact that they managed to secure a price much higher than the opening offer. With the combined fee to such attendants believed to be around £250 million such companies are set to make their employees a tidy profit.

Putting aside the regrettable loss of one of Britain's most historic manufacturers, the more fundamental issue is that of the institutional framework that has allowed such a hostile deal to go through. In many respects British companies are often deemed to be easy targets as a result of the "open doors" approach upheld unswervingly by New Labour. Allowing large multinational companies to come in and make a quick buck at the expense of consumers and employees is somehow seen to aid the long term health of the British economy. Takeovers are of course inevitable under globalisation, yet many developed economies still regulate them to a much greater degree than in

### Cadbury's may not be an engineering company but it manufactures real products

the United Kingdom, and it remains to be seen whether there will be any benefit to consumers or workers. Indeed we may all turn out to be losers. Ironically as we move through life many of us will

become indirect owners of companies like Cadbury through insurance, pension and other investments. There is a strong case to be answered that this endless takeover activity creates short term gains for the insiders at our expense. Similar concerns can be expressed about many other activities in the finance sector. What's more the short term gains are paid for by us in the form of lower long term returns on our investments. Not so long ago the Trade Secretary, Peter Mandelson, said that this country needs more real engineering and less financial engineering. Cadbury's may not be an engineering company but it manufactures real products. Its demise passes with little comment from the government.

A somewhat unlikely alliance of Will Hutton and Phillip Blond in Thursday's Financial Times questioned the prevailing wisdom of the last few decades that mergers and acquisitions were inherently good for the economy and the consumer. In the case of Cadbury such wisdom is evidently misplaced. Blond is an interesting collaborator. He has picked up from a right of centre perspective, that the "little guy" is getting angry that "big finance" is benefiting the few at the expense of the many. Bankers' bonuses and the Cadbury's takeover are flashpoints for a much wider discontent with the role and benefits of the financial sector. It is to be hoped that as we proceed with our four month election campaign that these serious concerns are given some attention. With a (New) Labour Party which has sold its soul to market ideology and a Conservative Party which is bankrolled by big finance, I'm not hopeful.



Open for much longer? Cadbury World, Birmingham  
Photo: flickr user ell brown

# Rights for all must be secure

Potentially vetting particular groups is a modern day witch hunt

Mira Hammad

**T**errorism is the new monster under the bed. It leers at us from every airport, leisure spot and hotel. It stalks us when we are at home and it stalks us when we go travelling. It lies in wait for the old, the young, the healthy, the ill, the rich man and the beggar. The question, then, is not "Are we scared?" it is "Who are we scared of?"

In Roald Dahl's children's book "The Witches" a practiced eye could spot a witch by looking out for several tell tale signs: blue spit, square feet and claws among others. Can a practiced eye spot the terrorist by tell tale signs, and if so, are those signs race and religion? The proponents of racial profiling certainly believe so and they do not appear to be in the minority.

Supporters of the idea propounded by governments on both sides of the Atlantic subsequent to the Detroit Christmas Day plot have been as surprising in their identity as they have in their number, Khalid Mahmood, a Muslim Labour MP, among them. Racial profiling would involve subjecting Muslim people and people from certain national backgrounds to greater scrutiny in airports and other high security areas. The justification given by such a scheme was summed up by Mahmood who commented that "the majority of people who have carried out or planned these terror attacks have been Muslims" and that racial profiling is a "price we have to pay" for security. Better, he said, to be profiled than to be blown up.

To many, however, we may end up living in a secure country but we will not be living in an equal one. The singling out of a minority, the justification of suspicion based upon identity sits ill upon the modern "multi-cultural" conscience. Furthermore, the effect of such measures will arguably alienate the minority, as pointed out by Massoud Shadjareh, the chairman of the Islamic Human Rights Commission. Imagine feeling that you are constantly a subject to the suspicion of your fellows, that you are carrying the burden for the actions of others in order to satisfy

## We may end up living in a secure country but we will not be living in an equal one

a majority that is prepared to gamble with your liberty for its security while leaving its own liberty intact. From another angle, racial profiling is a dangerous introduction to the minds of the enforcers of the law. One only has to remember Jean Charles de Menezes in order to envisage the point to which suspicion based upon appearance takes us. Despite these arguments, despite equality and liberty and democracy, there is an argument to be made that security must be given priority. Our principles, we are told, must not amount to a suicide pact.

But is the choice between inequality and security a real one? Would you feel safer knowing that your fellow Muslim passengers had been subjected to greater scrutiny? You probably would. But logically, you shouldn't. The arguments made

by Mahmood and others may stand as rhetoric but surely fall when one considers practicality. There is not one example that I have been able to find of a terror attack or even an attempted terror attack which was allowed to occur because of a lack of racial or religious scrutiny. Not one terrorist perpetrator was unknown to the authorities and could only have been brought to their attention through a system of racial profiling. Take the example of Umar Farouk Abdul Mutallab, the Detroit bomber and the very case which has sparked the widespread enthusiasm for racial profiling. Umar's father had previously voiced concerns to the US embassy in Abuja regarding his suspicions of his son's terrorist links, Umar was on a terror watch list and, to top matters, was travelling on a one-way ticket to the US. From all of these indicators, the only tell tale sign was his identity as a Muslim or his Nigerian provenance? The idea is laughable. Then why is it that governments fail to ask the real security question posed by the attempted attack: why is it that people like my father, an Iraqi born Palestinian, cannot seem to make a plane journey without being held by security for two hours and questioned, while suspected terrorists can waltz through security checks unimpeded when dressed to the nines in explosive gear? The answer, ironically, is probably unofficial racial profiling.

Will the government consider these niceties? Will they sniff around such trivialities as morality and practicality or will they simply pander to the creation of popular hysteria and suspicion while wallowing in the praises of companies such as BAA? The answer, if the past is anything to go by, is vested in the latter suspicion. We may not have found our tell tale signs, but we will certainly be having our witch hunt.

# Reforming the SU

This Thursday is vital for the future of LSE

Hero Austin

**I** was amazed, perhaps a little naively, at the response to the referendum motion at last week's UGM. The SU, I think, is partially responsible in that we did not make clear enough the link between student polls/feedback and the final documents for reform. Perhaps we also failed to properly clarify all the different steps of the reform process. This seems to have led to large-scale scepticism of the motivation behind these reforms and also an astounding amount of misinformation.

Accordingly, I believe that it is important to address some of the allegations and suspicions raised by speakers at the UGM.

First, the allegation that students have not been properly consulted is entirely false. In a bid to find out what would improve student participation, face-to-face discussions have been held with those groups that often don't consider themselves involved in the SU. While some may argue that we have consequently neglected the core group of UGM-ers, that again would be mistaken, for we publicized open discussion groups and open online polls. These feedback groups and surveys constitute one of the largest investigative programmes that the SU has ever undertaken. It has stretched over two academic years, and in the last term alone we have consulted 500 people face to face and a further 500 people by online surveys, which each took around 15 minutes to complete. This has taken huge organisation, resources and commitment from the SU officers and the staff; I hope that it will convince people that we have been absolutely committed to ensuring that this process has been as democratic and open as we could make it.

Second, with regard to the claim that these reforms are an attempt to consolidate power within the executive, that is

simply not true, and the majority of LSE students we polled agree. The assemblies will mean that it is easier to address concerns and will give students an opportunity to participate more in the implementation stage of the policy process. 78% of the 500 students that participated in the online reform poll agreed that the system of assemblies would allow for more participation with the union. Moreover, being a part-time Exec or a Sabb is hard work because you rarely feel as if you are completely on top of projects. I would welcome a body that distributed power and responsibility more equally and was subsequently more effective for students.

Third, the idea that these reforms are representative of the Sabbs' wish to impose a legacy on the Students' Union is extraordinarily mistaken. As a member of the Exec, I have sat in long meetings on constitutional reform and I can report that firstly the Sabbs do not always agree, hence even if they did want to impose a legacy, it would be impossible. And secondly, there has never been a proposal to limit options because of the personal belief of any officer. Indeed, if we have had a strong commitment to a particular institution, such as the UGM, we have seen that as all the more reason to seek out students' opinions, so as to ensure that we do not impose a legacy or our ideas.

So, at the UGM this Thursday, I hope that some fears about what these reforms represent will have been allayed. If the motion passes, this will not mean that the reforms pass: it will mean that they can go before the entire student body as a referendum where they can be voted on by everyone. It would be a shame if the chance to vote on such important issues as whether or not we have external trustees, how the Students' Union operates and which positions should be in the Exec, were taken away from the wider student body by a couple of hundred people who do turn up at the UGM. Please attend - this will affect you.

Hero Austin is the Environment and Ethics Officer for the LSE Students' Union

# Then and now

The subject of religion now seems completely immune from criticism

Vincent Prieur

**T**he main things that I have learnt throughout my education is to think for myself, never take things for granted and challenge every opinion on the basis of rationality. Well, I am not sure I will ever be able to do that, because

some opinions and beliefs are not to be challenged anymore. A growing trend in our European multicultural societies is the reduction in freedom of speech concerning religions, especially Islam. Undeniably, Islamic culture is in some aspects different from the one prevalent in secularised, democratic European countries. The status of women in society or the rights of homosexuals are some of the most obvious differences between the Western and the Islamic worlds. We should always keep in mind that today young homosexuals are still hanged in the Islamic Republic of Iran and that Wahhabist Saudi Arabia did not sign the UN declaration

of rights in 1948 because it contested the article on the equality of sexes.

Western societies also give people the right not to believe in God, or even to change religion and do not punish apostasy by the death sentence, unlike certain countries under Islamic rule. Another difference between Western and Islamic societies is their approach to religion. The former grants people the right not to believe in God or to change religion, and some even made secularism their central value. On the other hand, some interpretations of Islamic rule punish apostasy by the death sentence.

However, criticizing Islam in the way

Voltaire mocked religion, specifically Christianity, in the 18th century, would now seem unthinkable, even though it is this very effort that allowed us to free our societies from religious power. Today, it seems Islam's tolerance does not go as far as to accept any form of questioning. In Europe, many have eventually given up their freedom of speech, daunted by the risk to be either accused of Islamophobia or to actually put their life in danger. Indeed, any journalist, intellectual or writer taking a harsh stance on Islam, or sometimes only daring to raise the possibility of a debate, has a pretty good chance of seeing his life threatened. The

fatwa against both Danish cartoonists in September 2005 and Salman Rushdie in the 1980s (for representing Muhammad) or the murder of the Dutch politician Pim Fortuyna in 2002 are some examples making this quite clear. It may be the act of isolated fundamentalists, but it is still a systematic answer to critics. Is the rule of reason being slowly replaced by the rule of fear and silence? As a fellow reader of the Beaver, I know how much Islam is about tolerance and peace. But looking at the constant intimidation of anyone who challenges Islamic beliefs, I sometimes wonder.

# Daily Mail Blues

Prejudice and hate is what to expect from Britain's second-best selling daily newspaper

Estelle Cooch

**I** am generally not into masochism, but when a copy of Britain's most terrifying newspaper was left next to me on a particularly long and tedious ride home on the tube this week, in a moment of boredom (and perhaps madness) I decided to pick it up. The Daily Mail has a readership of over two million a day and is Britain's second best selling newspaper. I picked it up in full knowledge of the unfounded bigotry that lies within and yet like a moth to a flame, like George Bush to a pretzel, knowing the act I was about to partake in would probably ruin my day, I did it anyway. Mid-way through one of this week's Daily Mails as a jubilant story with the headline 'Ban women wearing the burka from benefits and public transport, demands French government spokesman'. The article was a report on Nicolas Sarkozy's recent announcement that women wearing a full

face veil should not be granted nationality and spokesperson for Sarkozy's party declaring that they should be prevented from receiving benefits or riding on public transport. The racism inherent to the article was compounded by its closing sentence being a quote by Al Qaeda's North African network, about as representative of the Muslim community as Beyonce is of the national birdwatchers' society.

This similar stench of prejudice and Islamophobia has been something quite close to home this week, following the allegations made against Reza Pankhurst, an LSE post-graduate teacher who is a member of the Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir. Rather than a straightforward denouncement of the allegations as a victimisation motivated by Islamophobia, the tone of the debate has been centred around the rights and wrongs of Pankhurst's membership of the group. The result of this has been two fold; firstly it has led to the Islamic Society at LSE being subject to a similar 'guilt by association' style witch hunt, but secondly it has led to the divorcing of the allegations from their context with the consequent suggestion that those 99 per cent of Muslims at LSE who are not a member of Hizb Ut Tahrir

should be defended, but the 1 per cent (or indeed one) who is, should not have that luxury.

Many have disagreed with me this week, positing the hypothetical scenario of discovering that a teacher at LSE was a member of the British National Party (BNP). In such a situation would my reaction be the same? Unresoundingly no. For a start the BNP are a national electoral party who have made a considerable breakthrough this year. They have done so by profiting from Islamophobia,

## I picked up the Daily Mail in full knowledge of the unfounded bigotry that lies within

misplaced fears about immigration and the impacts of the economic recession. But their members are not ordinary mediocre suit wearing politicians, but

men and women who not only preach bigotry but act on it in a violent racist, sexist and homophobic way on a regular basis. Furthermore we have to consider the objective circumstances. Are the BNP a response to long term and institutionalised victimisation in Britain? Of course not. Groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir that emerge from oppressed groups simply cannot be considered and dealt with in the same way as the BNP.

A much fairer parallel would be to imagine that a Jewish student was attacked by fascists. If the said student was an extreme Zionist who thought that the expulsion of the Palestinians was entirely justified, that would be wholly irrelevant to the attack. I would like to think that as students we would defend the student without even mentioning their beliefs, in what was an attack clearly motivated by anti-Semitism.

The fact that in Pankhurst's case we feel obliged to list exactly what we regard to be acceptable and unacceptable about Hizb ut-Tahrir is only testament to the atmosphere of irrational fear of Islam in which we live and the idea that all Muslims must go out of their way to renounce violence or extremism in a way

that we would never expect any other group to do. It is worth remembering that the allegations against Mr Pankhurst were investigated and found to be unreasonable a year ago, yet it was only following the attempted bombing in Detroit and banning of the Islam4UK march at Wootton Bassett that the media found need for a new flurry of Muslim-bashing articles.

Since 9/11 we have seen the systematic scapegoating of the Muslim community and an unprecedented increase in Islamophobic attacks. The columns of Daily Mail journalist Richard Littlejohn that declare 'Welcome to Britain, land of the rising scum.... We've cornered the market on welfare layabouts, drug addicts and feral gangs' bare an increasingly strong resemblance to the 1930s columns of anti-Semitic Nazi newspaper Der Sturmer. As students we have to say we will not partake in the victimisation of a historically oppressed community. Uniting students is not about finding the middle ground, in a society that is dominated by an unfair and biased racism. It is about unequivocally denouncing that prejudice and leading the way away from it. That is the task ahead.



# In defence of banker-bashing

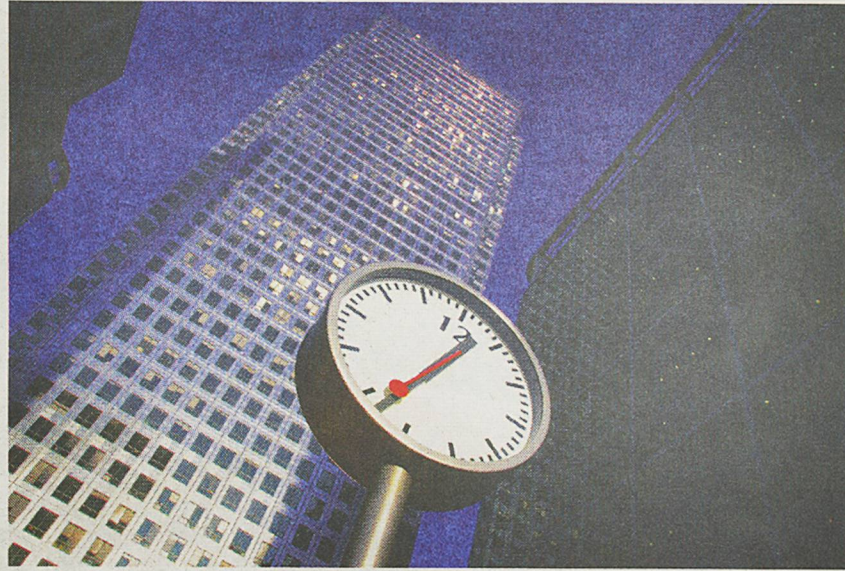
It's not just a populist sport, it's in the name of fairness

Luke Smolinski

The Economist takes the view that we shouldn't banker-bash. It is foolish, it is inefficient. Look at the Laffer curve, they say; efficiency, wages, they add: proof! Ergo, it is counter-productive to condemn them. It is borne out of crass populism, class warfare and envy. *Quod erat demonstrandum*. Mention greed and you carry the scent of Marxism. Bring up inequality and prepare for the hounds to be released. These are old ideas, we are told, of a bygone era. They belong in the 1970s with flared trousers, awful haircuts and casual racism. There is no place for moral judgement in today's society. We hold these truths to be self-evident (or at least in LSE we do), that all men shall remain unequal.

Should we disapprove of bankers, then? What can we indict them for? Here is one answer: they made the decision, having been bailed out by the public, to dish out for themselves a platter of rewards. They had the temerity, in the middle of a recession, to insist that they needed the bonuses. As unemployment rose and families worried about the hardships they would face, there was still an unrepentant culture of bonuses. The pride and selfishness which is bound to this culture is unmistakable. The notion that they deserved this, that they had a right to these bonuses, while the rest of us struggled because of the mistakes they made, is not just wrong, it is morally wrong. We should not be indifferent to this. We should not be afraid to be judgemental. We should rightly condemn their moral character.

In an interview in 1987, Margaret Thatcher proclaimed, "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families." This individualistic notion of humanity misses something: it misses the duty we all owe each other; it misses the notion of public service; it misses the very moral ties which bind us together as a society. The old idea that "we are all in this together" is replaced by a prehistoric one that we are in a struggle to survive - humans are not companions, but competitors.



It was this idea that drove the bankers in the time of the crisis. There was no mention of public duty. There was no talk of public service. The bankers, as they saw it, were entitled to the bonuses

## Banker-bashing, says The Economist, is unfounded populism - envy, sheer envy

that they earned, and the suggestion that they should sacrifice their earnings for the common good was ludicrous. There is no such thing as society, after all, and the 'common good' is just a fanciful way of saying the 'good of other individuals'. There is no duty to give one's own profits to other individuals in such a struggle to survive.

This way of thinking is wrong, is it not? Surely, we can see that the bankers were greedy, and selfish, and self-righteous in their justifications, and we can condemn them for this? All that had to be done, in the midst of the recession, was to - at the very least - postpone the bonuses for a year or two, sacrifice these to fund more lending to small businesses, thereby realising the duty towards one's fellow

citizens. The public duty was not acted upon. Rather, two worlds were created; in the US, Main Street and Wall Street; in the UK, the City and the rest of the country. While Wall Street recovered, Main Street continued to be broken. While the City sank their teeth into their juicy bonuses, the rest of the country strove hard to pay their bills. In times of crisis, it is expected that we pull together as one nation, as a society, and face the perils as one. This was not done.

In spite of all this, banker-bashing, says The Economist, is unfounded populism - and envy, sheer envy. Any redistribution from the bankers to the people would be petty. Any tax on bankers shatters the foundations of a free capitalist society. But these were shattered when we bailed out the banks; they lie in the rubble like shards of unearthly crystals. Having burst our fortunes and stolen our dosh, the banks owe a debt to society. This is vengeance, they cry! No. It is fairness. You can't cause a crisis and expect recompense in return.

Furthermore, we have the right - and the duty - to condemn them. It's not true that moral judgement is baseless. It's not true that it is "not for us to judge". The vices of selfishness and sheer greed in the midst of crisis ought to be condemned by society, in the same way that virtues ought to be praised. It is a fair assessment that bankers acted dishonourably in the recession, and we shouldn't be anxious to bash them for it. So banker-bash ahead, my friends, it's a fair sport.

# Gen Sec ignoring campus extremism

An open letter to Aled Dilwyn-Fisher

Doug Cartwright

The Students' Union website says you are the "public face" of the students at LSE. But it has become increasingly clear as this academic year has progressed, that more often than not the Students' Union Secretary General seem to represent the voice of the extreme few rather than all students. It is time to end this tyranny of fanatics.

To recap: a September lecture by Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon is cut off by an hour of heckling, full of jeers, boos and hysterical rants by Palestine Society Chair Mira Hammad and her cohorts. An opportunity for dialogue wasted, drowned out by those seeking to suffocate discourse. The response: nothing.

Then, with barely two per cent of the student population in attendance at the UGM, the all-powerful LSE Palestine Lobby manages to pass a motion to "twin" with the Islamic University of Gaza, an institution affiliated with terrorist organization, Hamas, which has killed more 500 innocent Israelis since 1993 and whose mission it is to kill all Jews worldwide (a fact Hamas does not hide). IUG's own Rector of Advanced Studies has proclaimed that "The Jews must be butchered and be killed." (Those who wish to advance this noble cause may do so via the collection buckets that can now be found on Houghton Street.) The response: none.

Next, during vacation Abdul Farouk Abdulmutallab becomes the fourth president of a London university Islamic society to face terrorist charges in three years after attempting to blow up an airliner. The LSE, of course, has a murky past with regards to Islamic terrorism. Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh studied at the LSE before going on to become one of the kill-

ers of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl. Yet another international terrorist plot with connections to Britain reinforced its status as the European hub of Islamic extremism. Your response: nothing.

Then finally, just weeks before Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day), Zachariah Sammour penned a Beaver column with a truly heinous analogy, comparing the position of "the Jews in 1930s Germany" to "the Muslim in the west today." Muslims, Sammour alleges, are victims of the "British and American media machine." Even if this were true (no evidence is provided), the comparison is disturbing. To draw a parallel between purported media bias and the gas chambers and extermination camps of Nazi Germany is truly vile historical revisionism. Again, no response.

Thus, I was surprised to read your statement that "this Union does not tolerate genuine bigotry or extremism" following the revelation that a member of Hizb ut Tahrir is employed by LSE. With homophobia and anti-Semitism reaching record levels in the UK, you directed students to be "vigilant" about Islamophobia. (Never mind the 4,000 known terror suspects who currently reside in Britain).

Double standards are at work on many levels here. You denounce "bare-faced lies" in the Times, yet offer nary a comment on hate speech in the LSE's own Beaver. You claim to oppose "bigotry and extremism," yet only select forms of prejudice attract your attention. If the actions of the "oppressive Israeli government" (also known as self-defense) are of concern to you, why do the 12,000 rockets fired at Israel between 2000 and 2008 not draw similar criticism? If you endorse the Students Union's ban of the BNP, why rush to protect a member of the racist and totalitarian Hizb ut Tahrir?

You ought to explain your stance on these issues, or else clarify whom exactly you represent in your position as Secretary General. The LSE deserves a voice that represents all students instead of one that perpetuates the agenda of a select group of campus ideologues.

# Letters to the Editor

**Madam** - As Louis XIV didn't say, "L'UGM c'est Moi". I am convinced that many people may be witnessing what they see as the establishment of a tyranny over the Union General Meeting. I am quite sure that in the minds of some people, I am rapidly becoming an autocrat, content only with manoeuvring myself into a position from which to launch a great coup d'etat against our fledgling democracy on Houghton Street. Worse, for elements of the student body at least, I am mealy snotty little first year, fit only to cook and clean for my superiors. With this in mind, I am sure that little was done to avail such fears at the most recent UGM in which I harangued people making long-winded statements, enforced time limits for speakers and, to a mixture of shocked sighs from elements of the members present, suspended the referendum motion until the next week. However, I feel that I should state what I perceive my mission as UGM Chair to be.

First of all, my position is to the efficient running of the UGM. Ultimately, the meeting exists for the benefit of the entire student body, not simply the members present. People have every right to be passionate about the motions debated in the meetings however cat-calling, profanity and arguments between cliques is not what the meeting is about. While it may

be seen as snobby, I do not feel it was right for certain people to swear at each other during the course of one debate at the last UGM. It was rude, childish and did little to endear us to the people who stay away from the meeting on the grounds of 'it's full of snooty twits on their own ego trips', hence why I commented on it. While not everyone may put their views on the UGM in such Edwardian ways, the fact remains that the more politicised it becomes, the greater the haemorrhaging of members becomes. When members overstep the lines of mature debate, it falls to the Chair to put a stop to it.

Secondly, I am aware that many people may be annoyed if they do not have time to speak, however, such is the time available that the Chair must be firm with regards to time limits. Limiting the number of questions or the time permitted for statements may seem artificial, but it is at least fair. The LSE was founded on egalitarian grounds, and all timings with regards to speaking must be the same. While unpopular with some, the choice made on the 21st January to defer discussion on a motion the next week was the right thing to do in the circumstances. Equally, when I asked a member to get to the point of what was an exceptionally long statement veiled as a question, I was

looked at like I had asked him to murder a kitten, however, the fact remains that the NUS President only speaks to the Student Body on rare occasions, hence why questions should be as short as possible in order for as many people to have their say. Though far be it from me to pass comment on sesquipedalian loquaciousness, the UGM works best when questions (and indeed answers) are short, sweet and to the point.

Finally, as Chair, there naturally come occasions when I am forced to make unpopular or controversial choices with regards to the running of the UGM. These were seen at the most recent UGM. While I am aware that I am only a humble Chairperson, ultimately, it is up to the Vice-Chair and myself to make a final ruling. While speakers, the floor and even Sabbatical Officers make cry foul, it is the duty of the Chair to do what is right, not what is popular. I attempt to do what is in the constitution and hence will always submit to what the Constitution and Steering Committee state to be the most accurate course of action. I was more than a little peeved towards the end of the UGM when even Sabbatical Officers were attempting to tell me what they thought I should do. Order is all important, and if I have to step in to prevent the UGM falling

into farce then I will do so. I do not wish to be a dictator, I have never once told people what to say, only the rules and regulations that we must all abide by.

I am but mortal, I do make mistakes, I cannot please everyone, however, I will always try and do the right thing for the student body, regardless of what it may do to my personal popularity.

Jack Tindale  
UGM Chair

**Madam** - The idiom 'the devil is in the detail' springs to mind when considering this 'new' wholesale constitutional reform on the LSESU. A few points sprang out as being of major concern when taking the time to actually read this fine specimen of ineptitude. So here is a brief but illuminating look at the legacy of our two favourite Sabbaticals seeking to etch out their legacy ahead of their NUS election campaigns.

For the first time in our long history we look set to gift trustee power to non-students, destroying what has always been an organisation that is managed by students, for students. New rules see power lying, for the most part, with sabbatical offices whom have the power to appoint these new trustees, thus shifting the bal-

ance away from directly elected students to sabbaticals and appointed minions.

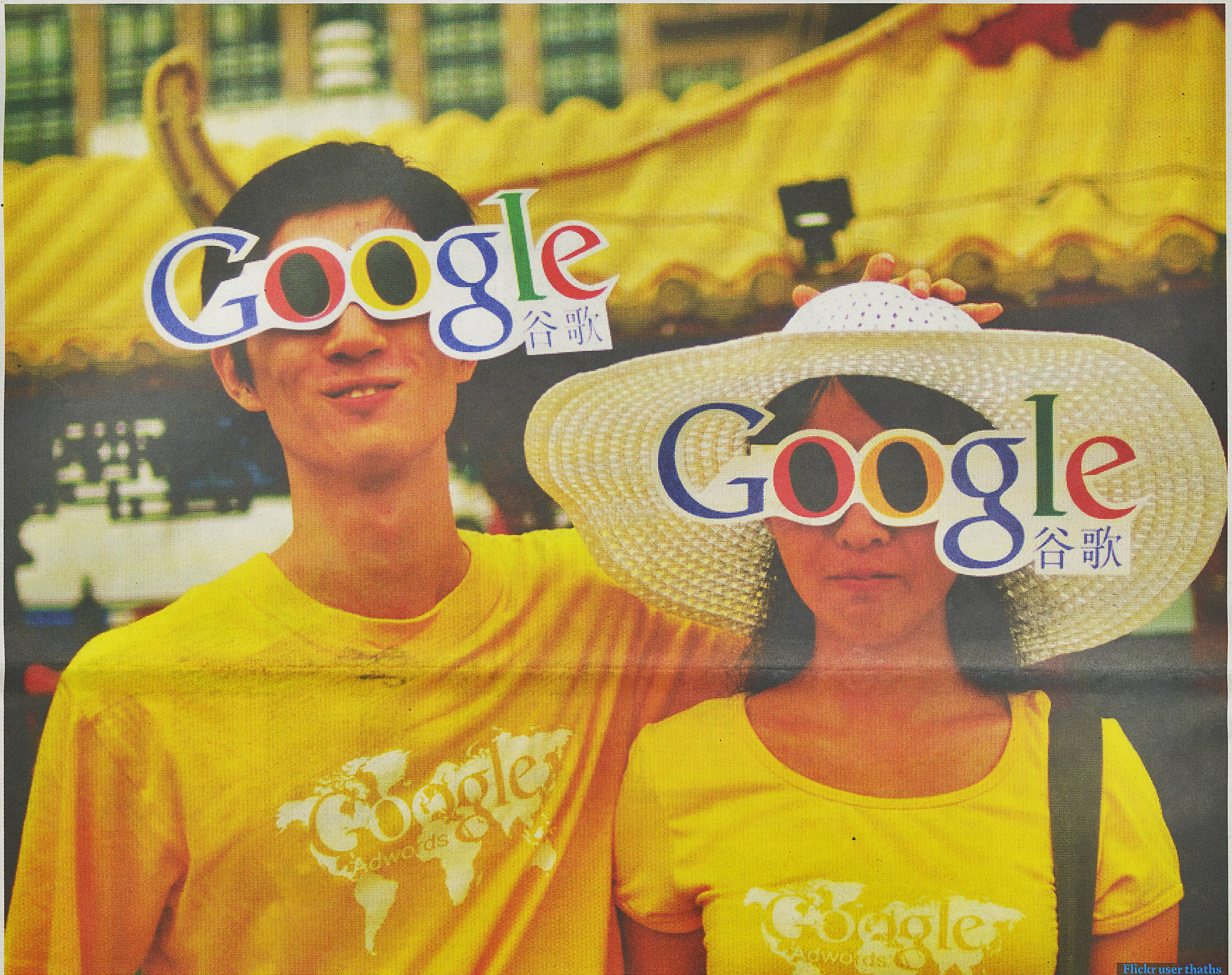
Next were the perplexing new arrangements for budget allocation. Rules that appear to give the same power and influence to small, twenty person, national societies as they do to the likes of large media group institutions and huge sports clubs; clubs that require specialist equipment and institutions that provide not only a service to all students but to the Union itself.

Lastly and potentially most worrying, though admittedly a little boring, was the shift in the power to interpret the great beast. At present interpretation of governing documents lies with a seven-person committee but that more importantly can be overruled by the UGM. Essentially the will of the people reigns supreme. Shocking though it may seem this new great work installs our esteemed General Secretary as a 'dictator of interpretation'. Did I hear someone say tyrannical rampage?

Sadly this is but the tip of a mighty iceberg and perhaps things have changed since I roamed the corridors of East Building, I simply thought at least one person ought to read the damn thing!

James Bacon  
Former Returning Officer & UGM Chair

# Features



Flickr user thaths

## Google's new ethos

**Sandra Smiley** analyzes the web giant's decision to take a stand in China

**T**he ubiquitous web brand Google announced that it would pull out of the world's most populous market this week if the censoring of its search results was not stopped. Spooked by "highly sophisticated and targeted attack on [its] corporate infrastructure" – Chinese e-assaults aimed at human rights activists – Google execs have threatened to cease google.cn operations if an agreement on filtering results cannot be reached.

This marks a volte-face for the new media conglomerate: it has hitherto ceded to Chinese demands that some politically and socially sensitive information be omitted from search results. Such were the conditions agreed to in 2006, when the California-based web outfit set up shop in the Chinese capital. This acquiescence spurned outrage among human rights activists, stakeholders and the public at large, who opined that Google's cooperation with China drew into question the search engine's ethics.

The website has seemingly seen the error in its ways: as one senior official has recently proclaimed, "it's time the Chinese people had unfettered access to information." Make no mistake about it: Google's moral muscle-flexing comes by way of

an ultimatum. "Over the next few weeks," blogged the company's chief legal officer David Drummon, "we will be discussing with the Chinese government the basis on which we could operate an unfiltered search engine within the law". If an accord cannot be reached, the communications colossus is prepared to leave the country.

Google doesn't split any metaphysical hairs on the issue of its subjectivity and its moral machinations. It responded to the jeremiad in the same righteous rhetorical in 2006, insisting that despite its deference, the search engine's presence would surely erode the Great E-Wall sundering the stalwart proto-Communist autocracy. "Although we weren't wild about the restrictions, it was even worse to not try to serve those users at all," Google CEO Eric Schmidt said of the issue. "We actually did an evil scale and decided not to serve at all was worse evil," he said, evoking company's tongue-in-cheek "don't be evil" credo.

It is unlikely, however, that Google's gambit would have made a modicum of difference in Chinese Communist Party policy "given the fact that marketization is a state-orchestrated project and it is intended to strengthen rather than to undermine the legitimacy of the Party-state" notes Bingchun Meng, Lecturer and China expert in the Media and Com-

**Google's execs have preferred to grapple with their personal ethics in the company of reporters rather than rely on the sterile and guarded idiom of the press release**

munications department at the London School of Economics. The government's take-no-prisoners track record suggests that anticipating any belt-loosening from Beijing would be a "gross underestimate of the power of this authoritarian regime."

In turn, many posit that Google's pullout is profit, rather than morally-motivated, notwithstanding the clarion calls of the conglomerate's execs. This, coupled with the fact that business has lagged painfully behind the obeisant Beijing-based search engine Baidu, has added to the hue and cry by human rights activists and sympathizers.

That the entire issue has been so steeped in principle begets interesting questions of politics, ethics and international business. What of the mop-board premise of the multinational's 'moral responsibility' in public discussion? And why would Google self-style as arbiter of free speech and expression in China? According to Meng, the concept of the 'multinational as missionary' comes within a "broader liberal democratic thinking that conflates market with freedom of choice, freedom of information ... which are then directly linked to democracy". Present day, 'market' has taken on the form of a 'frictionless capitalism', a post-industrial society in which we witness the end of

labour, the primacy of software over hardware, and the annexing of the entire work week by the chinos and v-necks of Casual Friday. It is laden, at least on the surface, with the same liberal-democratic wisdoms that dominate straight-up political diplomacy – collaboration, creativity, dialogue and respect – and are similarly posited as the keys to success.

This business model has done little wrong by Google— except, of course, for in its pursuits on the Pacific Rim. But however futile and contentious are the ethical crusades of the 'frictionless economy' abroad, one can't help but be heartened by its implications. What has been remarkable about Google's treatment of the issue is the evident transparency and casualness of the conglomerate's decision making. Google's execs have preferred to grapple with their personal ethics in the company of reporters rather than rely on the sterile and guarded idiom of the press release. Voicing their doubts and bearing their necks, these web heavyweights have touted their humanity and potential folly, opening themselves up to criticism. Unsound business practice? Maybe. But I'd like to take it as propitious.



Flickr user qgil

# Caught in Transit

**Eden-Maria Vance** gives an account of the hardships facing illegal migrants

Globalization is constantly developing a wide spanning network, integrating economies, societies and culture through communication, foreign direct investment, trade, capital flows and migration. Transportation links have substantially minimized the perceived distance between countries, fuelling the movement of people. Consequently, this has heightened concerns for the national security of citizens. Effective border controls to combat terrorist insertion, ensuring a robust asylum system is in place and dealing with unemployment among native workers due to an influx of foreign labour has become a salient issue. Also, there exist concerns for maintaining national values to strengthen ties and common identities.

Labour migration heads the policy agenda of many countries. Cheap labour prevents investment in training and technology, which can be unattractive for native workers and could potentially force them to migrate to countries providing better resources and quality of life. Secondly, there's concern that migration leads to increased job competition for native workers. Gulf countries, for instance, are extremely dependent on foreign labour. However, in an experiment to tackle this situation, the Bahraini government charges firms for obtaining work visas as well as forcing them to incur a monthly fee for every foreign employee on their payroll. Bahrain has also given foreign workers the right to remain on the island for up to a month should they wish to change jobs and search for another employer.

This wasn't always the case in the Gulf. Take for example Dubai, a city that refuses to stop growing; 80 per cent of

their population consists of migrants, 90 per cent of whom make up their workforce. In the economic downturn, United Arab Emirates authorities instructed firms to dismiss foreigners first, which left many Indian and Bangladeshi migrants jobless and in precarious circumstances. It has been suggested that migration is very receptive to economic busts as well as booms. Hence, in difficult times, migrants return to their home countries rather than attempt to compete with native workers. But this isn't always necessary. In Dubai, though many migrants lost their work visas many remained within the country despite the constant threat of being deported due to their new illegal status.

From the moment an individual contacts a coyote (migrant smuggler) migrants enter into a liminal state of transit immersed in risk, even if they are still in their home country. Unauthorized migrants disappear on their home soil and can be subjected to many kinds of abuses; being forced into carrying illicit goods, rape, or at worst, murder. Travelling on top of trains, in cargo departments and sewer pipes are simply a few examples of the difficulties which must be faced in order to permeate into a different region. A recent case of two Afghan teenage boys shows the extent of these hardships. One was discovered squashed into a suitcase in the trunk of a car attempting to enter Italy, having just travelled by ferry from Greece. The police were told that the two boys had paid £2,300 to be smuggled into the country.

Those who successfully enter their host country also never fully arrive. Even if they have escaped circumstances back

**An Afghan teenage boy was discovered squashed into a suitcase in the trunk of a car attempting to enter Italy, having just travelled by ferry from Greece**

home, their illegal alien status makes them invisible to the society which they occupy.

Due to this absence of legal rights, individuals become entangled in webs of constraints which may severely impact their health. Not only do they lack health insurance, but often have low incomes, limited language skills, little access to transportation, and frequently having to shift accommodation as well as work-place - if they manage to find any. Above all, the fear of being deported by authorities is omnipresent. These everyday stresses are extremely detrimental to their health.

Germany has severe laws on the medical treatment of unauthorized migrants - these can criminalize healthcare workers for providing their services. The healthcare system rests on employment status and welfare eligibility neither of which migrants have. Consequently, health services have a low utilization despite few clinics in Berlin still attempting to provide medical assistance to illegal migrants.

Whether illegal or not, as migrants cross borders they threaten national identity. Hence David Cameron's emphasis in foreign policy discussions, on the need for migrants to demonstrate knowledge of the English language and life in the UK. Having worked in a bookstore, the most common question which I was ever asked was, "Excuse me, where do you keep the life in the UK citizenship test book?" I've lost count of the number of times the friend accompanying the customer turned to me after flicking through the questions and said, "I haven't got a clue as to what the answer to that is - and I was born here!"

Lenient border controls can have the benefit of creating positive net migration in times of acute labour shortage. Transnationals can be viewed as a threat by some as they link their societies of origin and settlement, whether it is through gaining access to services for their family in their host country; maintaining cross-border kin bonds through frequent reunions and visits; or transferring remittances back home. However, the benefit of these remittances must also be considered, as they can help to alleviate poverty in receiving developing countries if invested into education, entrepreneurship and health. They also help in situations of unexpected events such as floods or illness.

It is not surprising then, that following the devastating earthquake in Haiti, the question arises as to whether a new wave of migration is likely to occur. With the lowest GDP per capita in the western hemisphere, Haiti is barely able to react to such a crisis. At present, people are still trying to digest the current situation which has shaken thousands. Once that shock turns to the feasibility of reconstructing a life in Haiti for the long haul is when we are likely to see if there will be new patterns of migration, possibly to the U.S or the Dominican Republic.

There is no doubt that border controls need to be monitored for the sake of national security, economic welfare and national identity. However, let us hope that any future policies regarding those seeking asylum or employment, do not turn a blind eye to those who may be caught in web of anguish, that is made still more complex by closed borders.

# CAPITALIZING EDUC



Europe  
New York  
capital  
business  
London  
value  
bankrupt  
in  
M

**John Phelan is a co-founder and Managing Partner of MSD Capital, L.P., a private investment firm that manages the capital of Michael S. Dell and his family. Mr. Phelan co-founded the firm in 1998 and has overseen its growth from \$400 million in assets under management to more than \$10 billion today. Mr. Phelan currently serves on the North American Advisory Board for the LSE and sponsors scholarships for General Course, Masters and Ph.D. students studying at the LSE. He earned a General Course degree with an emphasis in Economics and International Relations from the LSE.**

#### How did you end up at the LSE?

I was an undergraduate at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas majoring in Economics and Political Science and decided that I wanted to study abroad. I thought the LSE had one of the best Economics and Political Science programmes and a very strong global reputation. From a political standpoint I also thought there were a lot of fascinating things going on in Europe at the time. So, studying in London where I could be close to the dynamic changes happening on the continent, while also experiencing the English educational system, really appealed to me.

#### What was LSE like when you arrived? What was the atmosphere of the school and the student body like?

It still had a reputation of being a left-wing, radical school, but there was in fact a larger conservative element than I would have guessed. The debates in the Students' Union were quite vitriolic at times with

Labour sitting on the left, the Tories on the right and the Independents in the centre. These debates often became quite heated, but were always great exchanges of ideas.

The refreshing thing for me about the LSE was that professors always welcomed balanced views. In the US there is sometimes a suspicion of professors leading students one way or the other; that was not the case at the LSE. The other aspect that surprised me was the amount of anti-Americanism in London at that time. That was during the Reagan era when the US had just deployed cruise missiles in Germany, which led many pundits to believe that the US was trying to make Europe the nuclear target for Russia. With all of these geopolitical tensions, especially in Europe, it was a very interesting time to be at the LSE.

#### Were there a lot of Americans at the LSE when you were there? Did it live up to the acronym Let's See Europe?

I was a General Course student and was at

## The debates in the Students' Union were quite vitriolic at times with Labour sitting on the left, the Tories on the right and the Independents in the centre

the LSE for an entire year; however, some of the GC students were only there for a semester. I would say, generally speaking, that the GC students who were at LSE for the entire year took it fairly seriously. There was certainly an element of "Let's See Europe" in that we travelled around Europe during breaks, but for the most part I would say that those of us who were at the LSE for the whole year were quite diligent.

#### Was there a particular professor or class that you especially enjoyed at the LSE?

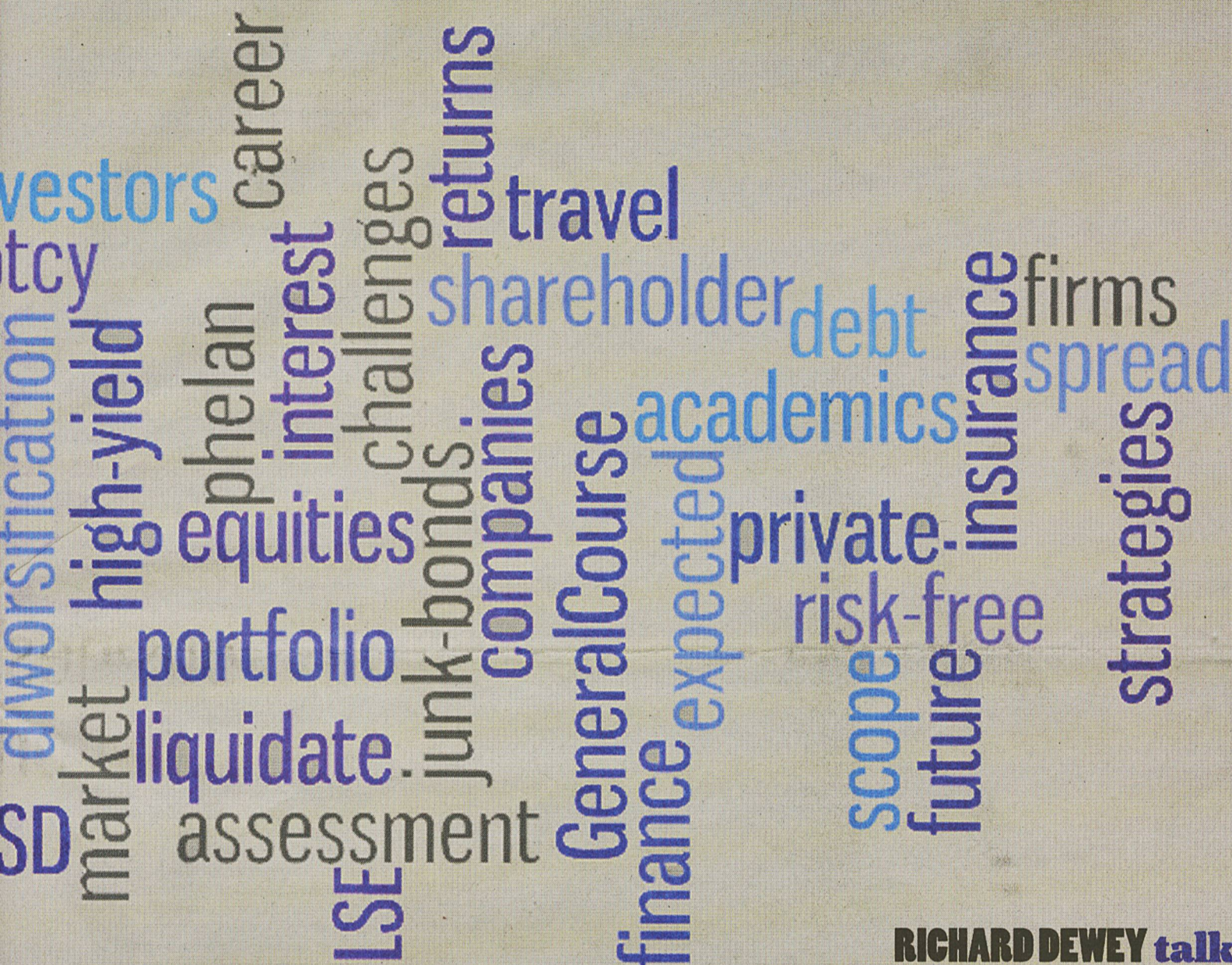
Jeffrey Stern taught a class on US and Soviet relations that I found very interesting. I thought it was a great class and he was a very compelling professor. On the economics side I had Michael Pyne for a class on the History of Economic Thought, a class which has been incredibly useful to me over the years. The arguments have not really changed that much and it is really interesting to have looked at them from a historical context and see many of the same arguments being made today. History does repeat itself!

#### Could you give current students at the LSE a brief synopsis of your career: how you found your way after the LSE and ultimately how you came to be the co-head of MSD Capital?

When I graduated from Harvard Business School in 1990 it was a very tough period and jobs were scarce. I ended up working for Sam Zell, a noteworthy real estate investor, and we started looking at some corporate opportunities, including Executive Life, which was a very large bankrupt life insurer that had a significant portfolio of high-yield - or what they called back then - "junk" bonds. Working on that deal and analyzing a significant number of troubled companies with outstanding junk bonds made me realize how much I liked investing in the public markets. We ended up not winning that deal, but afterwards I went in to Mr. Zell and suggested that we open an operation to invest in publicly traded junk bonds. I thought there was a huge opportunity and we had already done a lot of the work. Mr. Zell wanted to own companies rather than pieces of companies so I ended up joining Eddie Lampert and ESL Partners where I applied much of that thinking in the context of distressed investing and merger arbitrage.

After seven great years, I left Eddie and ESL to take some time off and had decided to start my own firm. I spent an enormous amount of time thinking about what type of investment firm I wanted to run and writing up a business plan. During this process I had lunch with Michael Dell. He asked me what I was planning to do and I gave him this business plan. He said,

# ATION



**RICHARD DEWEY** talks to alumnus **JOHN PHELAN** about his successful career and how he achieved it after leaving Houghton Street

"Why don't you do this for me?" I ended up partnering with Glenn Fuhrman and we have been running MSD together for the last 11 years. We now have a team of more than 80 employees in our offices in New York, London and Santa Monica.

**Would you describe a little bit of the investment approach of MSD and where it sits relative to hedge funds or private equity funds?**

MSD Capital has a flexible/opportunistic investment approach. We invest in multiple asset classes across the capital structure. We have eight separate investment strategies, including publicly-traded securities, traditional private equity activities, and real estate and special opportunities.

We view ourselves as an investment firm that has a long-term fundamental value approach. We do not behave like traditional investment firms. We try to be contrarians, which is much tougher than you think and we firmly believe in taking concentrated approach to help us avoid what I call "diworsification". The thing we focus on the most is expected value analysis and risk-adjusted returns. I think there are quite a few hedge funds in the US and Europe that have exceptional records, but they have done so by taking on a fair degree of leverage. If, like them, you are

going to run a 3, 5 or 10:1 levered firm, you better deliver 25-plus per cent annualised rates of return - because you're taking that risk. We evaluate our performance differently. We rarely use leverage and we look for investments that will yield an appropriate spread over the risk-free rate (I say that hesitantly, given what is going on today) or government debt.

The great thing about our approach is that companies often seek us out as a partner because they know we will be a good long-term shareholder. We tell people who want to sell their companies: "Your business is a painting and you get to hang it in our museum." What I mean by that is we are there to take care of their business, to be a steward of it and to help them build long-term value.

By contrast, a lot of investors pursue similar strategies and are constantly trading or buying and selling companies. They have very little incentive to make the intelligent-but-with-some-reasonable-probability-of-looking-like-an-idiot decision. We try to do the opposite of what everyone else is doing. Two of my favorite mantras are, "Invert everything," and "It is a thin line that separates courage from stupidity." People tend to forget two important things: one, high price means high risk, low price means lower risk; and two, the more capital that goes into a specific

**We try to be contrarians, which is much tougher than you think and we firmly believe in taking a more concentrated approach to help us avoid what I call "diworsification"**

space, the lower the returns will be.

In 1937 the market dropped very rapidly - almost 50 per cent - and Keynes, who was on the King's College endowment committee, began to get letters saying, "Don't you think you should reduce your exposure, the market is falling." Keynes, finally exasperated, wrote a memo back, "I wouldn't consider it improper to own a few shares at the bottom of the market. Your apparent approach is that I should be liquidating as the market gets more attractive and that I should be buying as it goes up." He then went on to say one of my favourite lines, "I consider it the duty of every serious investor to suffer grievous losses with great equanimity." So we try to be opportunistic and we take a very long-term, value-oriented, research-intensive approach to investing.

**As a member of the North American Advisory Board of LSE, what do you see on the horizon for the School? Are there any specific challenges or opportunities that you see facing the School?**

I think Howard Davies has done a fantastic job and has a real vision for how to run the School. The enormous diversity of students who go through the LSE is one of the School's great assets and a real advantage. I also think the new Management programme is a very interesting idea

and the School has an ability to add value to both students and employers with the addition of that program.

The main challenge facing the LSE is to update its ageing infrastructure. It's especially difficult in London, where space is at a premium, but I think the New Academic Building is a great step in the right direction. Another issue facing the LSE will likely be government budget cuts that take money away from higher education institutions. The LSE has a dedicated alumni base, but I think we can engage them a bit more to give back to the school.

When I reflect back on my time at the LSE, I know it was a life-changing experience and I feel as though I owe a lot to the School. I'm sure almost everyone who goes through the LSE feels the same way, so the alumni can be instrumental in ensuring that LSE is able to update its campus and classrooms and remain an elite university.

I think the School is very well positioned to meet the challenges that lie ahead and that it will continue to attract world-class professors and students. I'm very excited about the LSE's future.

## LSE Diary

### Facebook as a life-habit

Poorna Harjani explores the dynamics behind the networking

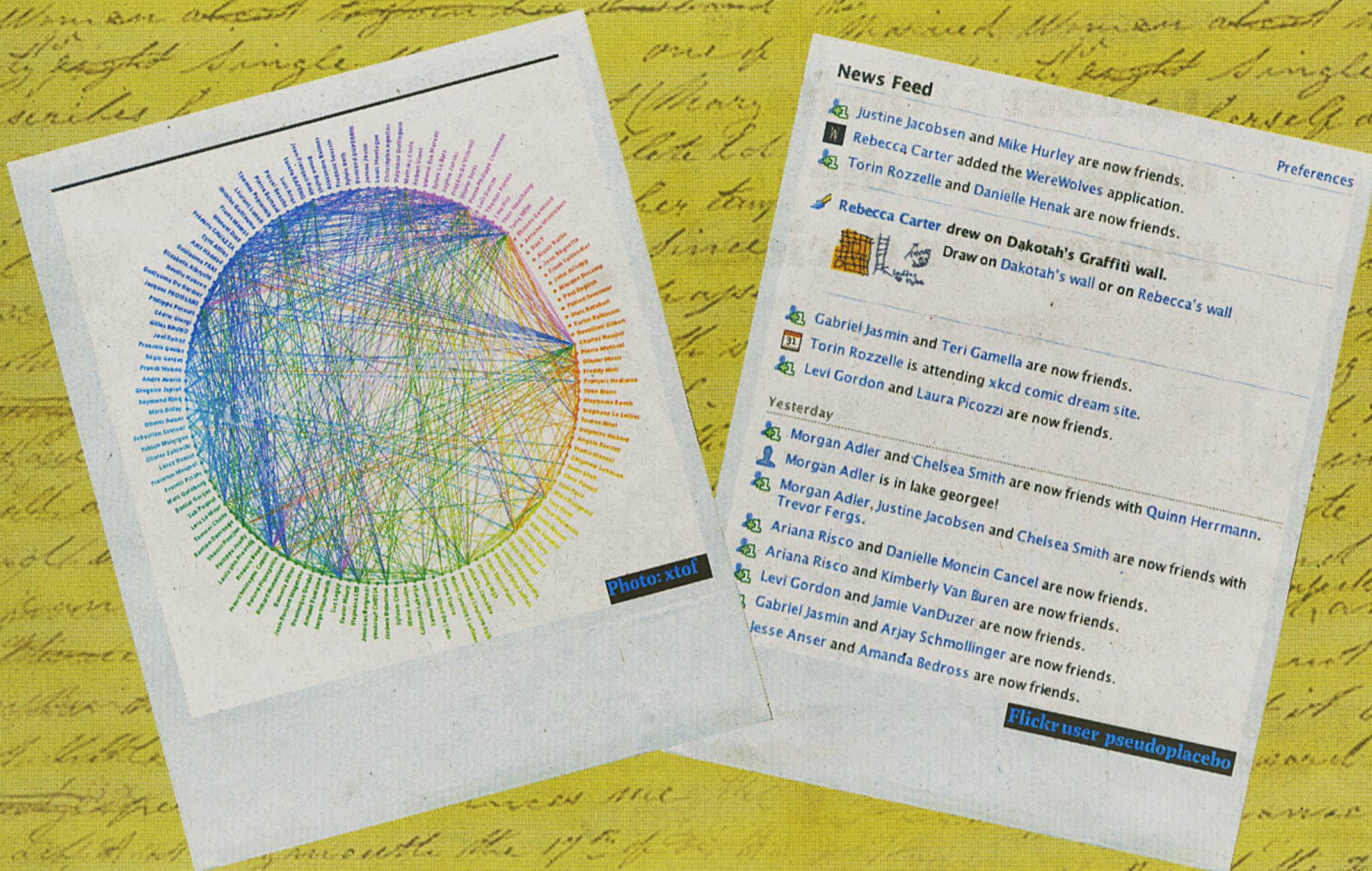


Photo: xtof

Flickr user pseudoplacebo

Last Tuesday, the Business Society organised a talk by Blake Chandlee, one of the Heads of Facebook for Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Chandlee left his job as the commercial director Yahoo! UK to work as the first international employee of Facebook. With just over 1,200 employees, this is possibly one of the most sought after companies to work in within the media and technology hierarchies today. Google has around 22,000 employees and Facebook has decided not to employ more than a tenth of this. Chandlee's role is to build the UK sales team and work directly with advertisers and agencies to develop commercial opportunities to help generate further revenue. Like a true salesman, Chandlee managed to sell us Facebook with a history of developments and controversies many of us had never known.

According to Chandlee, 50 per cent of Facebook users log in every day and spend an average of 25 minutes on the site. Within the demographics of users, more 18 to 24 year olds use Facebook than those within the 50+ range. However, when you break down these figures, more 55 year olds use Facebook than 18 year olds. This surprised us all due to the fact that Facebook started from a college campus and the first networks expanding all over America were those of college students.

Facebook can be seen as a digital living room. We socialise on it, network, hang up our qualifications and emblems of

interests such as fan sites on it. The profile page has become so personal that when Facebook received its most dramatic face-lift, during which the Newsfeed item was created, Stanford University students used pickets and posters aimed at Mark Zuckerberg, the creator of Facebook, hounding him to get rid of the Newsfeed, considering it as an invasion of their privacy. News headlines read: 'Facebook reports on you behind your back' and newsfeed was called an "autostalker". There was a Facebook group made on Facebook itself called: Students against Facebook News Feed (Official Petition to Facebook) with over 170,000 people joined.

Instead of the "Live Feed" with friends status updates and activities, "News Feed" picks stories that Facebook thinks its user will enjoy based on a variety of factors including how many friends have liked it and commented on it. The News Feed has slowly gained acceptance as users learned they could control which stories were sent out. Ironically, now, Facebook users spend 70 per cent of their time on News Feed itself.

We also learnt that Facebook itself does not know its growth limitations. They are growing by 5 per cent a month and this penetration level has not flattened off. Facebook recently left China due to China's insistence upon access to its user's information and filtering content. Facebook decided it was against the company's ethos. Global technology gi-

ants such as Google, Microsoft and Cisco Systems have cooperated with the Chinese government in implementing a system of internet censorship in mainland China. Yahoo also stated that the company will not adhere to the privacy policies of its Chinese customers from the authorities.

Facebook is an enormous source of personal data. Chandlee spoke of how internet users behaved differently on Facebook than anywhere else online. They use real names, mobile numbers and personal emails. However, rather than jumping at such a fruitful business opportunity, Facebook took a stand and decided to back out of China. This is admirable that such a modern company with an aim to reach a network of one billion people will manage to keep to its company values.

Chandlee stated however that Facebook does on occasion work with governments to track criminals with Facebook accounts and also stated that it does not ban Pro-Palestine content in the world except Germany.

Facebook launched the Facebook Platform in 2007 which provides a framework for software developers to create applications that interact with core Facebook features. The number of Facebook platform applications had grown to 33,000, and the number of registered developers had exceeded 400,000. Farmville has been the most popular, as well as chess. User's moves are saved on the website too allowing them to pause until their next log-in.

Facebook has struck a chord with millions of students. Any technology that is able to captivate so many students for so much time not only carries implications for how those students view the world but also offers an opportunity for educators to understand the elements of social networking. In a social experiment, five journalists are planning to lock themselves away in a French farmhouse with access only to Facebook and Twitter to test the quality of news they can gain. This shows the type interest even from academics.

Facebook has a 30 day policy of taking down a profile once they have learnt a user has deceased; however, on request, Facebook evaluates a request and many of the profiles stay online, leaving a lasting memorial for the student and their friends. People share their pain through comments and notes. A person's profile can be a virtual memorial.

In 2008, The Collins English dictionary declared "Facebook" as their new Word of the Year. The beauty of Facebook is that it connects people regardless of geographical barriers with an importance of creating content over simply consuming it. Mark Zuckerberg's mantra of 'Efficiency, Effectiveness, Scale', is working towards a worldwide domination, its penetration levels unknown, and its popularity ever increasing. Its critics need to face up to this reality.

## WHAT IF...

### we could evolve still further?

Jaynesh Patel

"I'm so three thousand and eight, you so two thousand and late." So say the Black Eyed Peas, who have clearly grasped the importance of transhumanism. This movement advocates the enhancement of the human body using emerging and bio-technologies as to avoid the unnecessary and undesirable characteristics of the human condition. Symbolised by H+, it has been labelled by Francis Fukuyama as 'the world's most dangerous idea'. This is because it entails nothing less than the ability to shape the future of our species, viewing our current stage in evolution as 'a possibly quite early phase'.

Transhumanist thinkers predict that we may be able to transform ourselves to such a high level as to merit the use of the term 'posthuman', and hence our species in three thousand and eight may be very different to that which we recognise now. Some critics of the movement (labelled 'bioluddites' or 'biocconservatives') argue that changing the body's capacity is unnatural. Arguably, however, the process of using technology to improve ourselves has already begun, even though it is still very much in its infancy.

For example, contact lenses enable short-sighted people to see as well as normal-sighted people can, but with hardly any noticeable difference in terms of external looks and internal intrusion. And if a cure for cancer could be discovered, or an end to ageing, or even something as simple as being able to have better than 20/20 vision (for example not having to use binoculars to see long distances) then you can be sure that the critics would be the first to sign up for an enhanced life.

Imagine being able to remember everything - no more forgetting people's names, panicky exam revision and fear of Alzheimer's disease. Education could be streamlined so that we had more time for social interaction, and cameras would be just a distant memory, with everything recorded and captured by the eyes alone. Nano-robots in the bloodstream would destroy harmful bacteria, and the wastefulness of the number of hours of sleep currently required would be greatly reduced. The amount of food needed to sustain ourselves could also be greatly diminished, significantly reducing world poverty and allowing more efficient use of the world's natural resources.

Even our mental potential could be improved; one day we may download information directly into our brains and upgrade its memory. This would greatly bridge the gap between the staggering amount that we do not know and the almost pitiful amount we currently do.

In millennia to come, people will be born into societies where such technological advances are so commonplace that they will be thought of as being natural. To achieve such a future for humans is an intriguing proposition; in the words of Aquila, 'life in plastic is fantastic'. Ultimately, however, it remains to be seen what effect a move along the transhumanist path will have on our lives.

## Measured musings



Flickr user: Richard Messenger

The latest addition to the news reporters' dictionary seems to be "Yemen: n, potential failed state". In the light of recent events, the country has suddenly emerged out of obscurity and come under international scrutiny. What we see is almost too clichéd to be true.

Yemen is among the poorest countries in the Middle East, rife with internal strife. The authoritarian Sunni government does not hold significant influence over more than one-third of the territory, which is divided among the separatist Southerners and Shi'ite Houthi rebels. Sectarian conflict has left thousands dead and hundreds of thousands displaced since it became serious in 2004. Over the decades, different sources have drawn jihadists from the Yemeni population for causes as varied as the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan, and establishing government dominance in the 1994 civil war. Predictably, their popularity could not last forever.

So far, Yemen seems to have followed the well-trodden path of countries

## Sidestepping the cliché

steeped in corruption, with adversity arising from negligence. The question arising now is, what hand the international community will have in forging its future direction. There have already been headlines playing with the idea of this being the next Afghanistan. No matter how many opinions there may be about the use of pre-emptive force there, most agree that peace and stability remain an illusive dream.

Words, then, must be carefully chosen while drafting the next policy decisions. The trade-off is between appearing to take decisive action, and pursuing the less glamorous option of long term development. The rhetoric supporting the former would be far grander, but what would result would be yet another tattered community, seething with resentment. There is no way the Yemenis would perceive the War on Terror to be one of liberation, if extended to their homeland. Instead, they would become easy prey for manipulative forces promising vengeance, salvation, or financial stability for their families.

Already, the situation looks grave. The all-important oil reserves are running out, while the spectre of a water crisis looms ahead. Ironically, a large chunk of the present water consumption is dedicated to nurture the country's addiction to *khat*, a local narcotic that is not even of the commercial value of the poppies of Afghanistan. Aggrieved rebels have discovered the effectiveness of using foreigners as hostages to make demands of the government. Now, the world is tracing links between these rebel groups and the notorious Al-Qaeda.

Whether or not Al-Qaeda is a cohesive network of organized terrorist groups is anyone's guess. If, however, it is to be used as a loose term encompassing all those factions that capitalise on poverty, ignorance and anti-West sentiment, then it is indeed a very real threat. Perhaps it needs to be realised that its fragmented manifestations cannot be pounded out of existence. If anything, they will simply emerge stronger and with more hatred to unify them. As Gregory Johnsen, US

expert on Yemen told TIME magazine, ignoring the underlying issues means "you'll just be fighting a different incarnation of Al-Qaeda every few years".

But what of the alternate route? Those with an interest in development economics will know how much scepticism surrounds development aid. It is smothered in red tape and corruption, so that it hardly ever reaches those who need it. However, there are indeed ways to sidestep clichés. "Innovations for Poverty Action" (IPA) is one of the organisations that aims to come up with more creative solutions than military intervention. Here at the LSE, Dr. Greg Fischer can probably suggest some interesting ideas for policy-makers.

In theory, it is possible to get the local people on board in such a way that they help create an infrastructure for sustainable change. If there must be intervention, it is worthwhile to test that theory.

Madeeha Ansari  
Features Editor

# SECURITY



Photo: Jaynesh Patel

**With the rise in the number of thefts on campus, the photo team decided to review potential crime-spots, and the security measures in place around the LSE.**



Photo: Ben Phillips

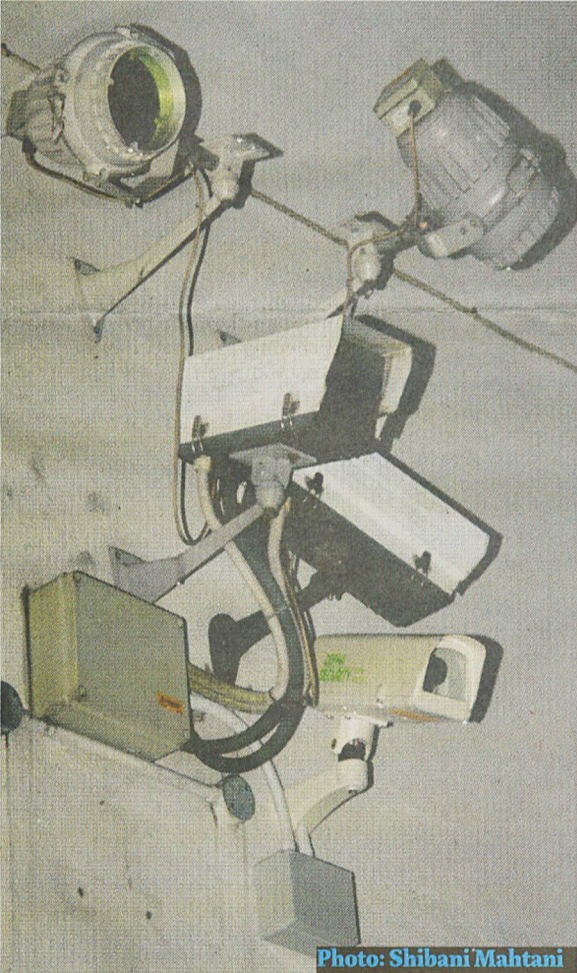


Photo: Shibani Mahtani



Photo: Ben Phillips

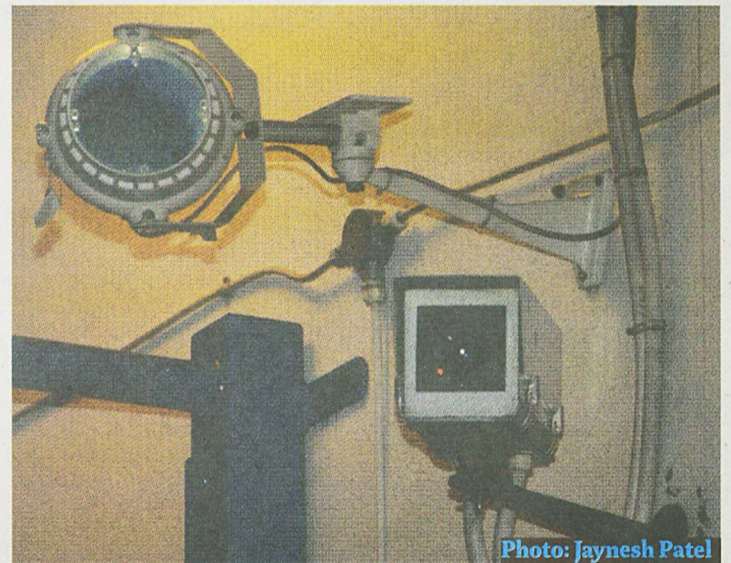


Photo: Jaynesh Patel



Photo: Ben Phillips

## Reality check

**Joy Damschroder** firmly believes that LSE is not a political arena

There is a growing religious 'passion' at LSE which can only act as a destructive force, standing in opposition to the productivity of the student body as a whole. This is a place of learning, a secular, liberal university - not a forum for religious debate. A student's beliefs are entirely their own affair, a private matter that should neither be a subject of discussion nor a source of conflict.

Furthermore, a small minority of religious zealots do not represent the majority of students at LSE, who are Atheists, agnostic, or who have no interest in the subject whatsoever. What about these students? Where is their voice at the LSE? The debate over religion is out of

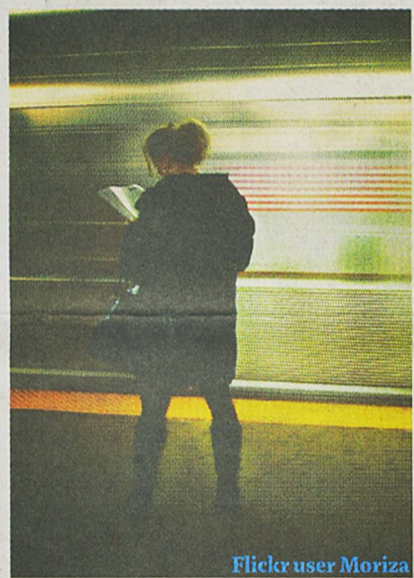
**We should focus on Union campaigns that all students can support**

all proportion to the number of students it actually engages. To compound the problem, we are so preoccupied with these interminable and infantile debates that we spend very little time actually achieving anything.

We should focus on Union campaigns that all students can support, such as better resources, co-ordination and teaching standards within LSE, instead of endlessly arguing about political or religious issues we can do nothing to change. It is flattering ourselves to think that the 'voice' of the LSE has some influence outside its four walls. It doesn't. That is the plain, simple fact. To believe otherwise is not only delusional but supremely arrogant on our part.

## A failure of imagination?

**Neil Hampton** entreats us to cultural enrichment



Flickr user Moriza

seek comfort in literature.

Some of the great figures of the political and economic life of the last two centuries were also literary figures, Disraeli, the great reforming Tory, wrote novels to rival Dickens' (although not as cherished), John Maynard Keynes was a member of the Bloomsbury group, not far up the road from LSE, and even Gordon Brown studied classics at university. In that spirit, over the coming weeks, the LSE will be donning its gay apparel and giving way to its own worst instincts for a second

**I can only hope that with our diverse backgrounds we will once again seek comfort in literature**

Literary Festival. The event takes place officially from the 11 to 13 February but other events, such as an Open Mic night for short poetry and Haiku precede it. This is a chance for all of LSE's otherwise covert

and secretive literati to shake their shaggy manes, throw off their sackcloth and join with their fellow students, in a celebration of their talents.

I will leave it to others to describe the program of events, the illustrious speakers, the complimentary drinks and the massive cultural enrichment being given away on the very doorstep of our studies. All I want to do here is put in an early warning to all those undecided heads who might secretly desire tickets to the talks, but are too embarrassed to broach the subject to their friends in their guise as prospective uber-financier or would-be world leader. The likes of President Kennedy aside, this school has another, quite different tradition. The Shaw Library (incidentally, where the Languages Department's production of T.S. Eliot's Sweeney Agonistes will be performed on the 10th) pardon the pun, is the surest example of this.

So, come on guys, do you think Mick Jagger let his studies stop the Stones? No. In fact, Keith Richards, that notorious waster, met him on a train coming back from lectures, a bundle of R&B records under his arm. In a similar vein, it's time to give in to those, admittedly less rock and roll, creative instincts and enjoy a few weeks of cultural enrichment before the countdown to the exams begins in earnest. If the AU can get out and chant in The Tuns (to widely held nerdy disdain) every Wednesday night then, for one week a year, it must only be fair that all those would-be poets, playwrights and actors, take over.

I'll see you in The Underground for the first event, Haiku Night, in The Underground, on the 3rd. Mine's a large, literary one!

## When Mozart mee

**Jonathan Weir** questions a bankers' commitment



**A**logo says a lot. Just take a look at LSE's; A red square, with three simple capital letters written within it. It is functional, ruthlessly efficient and decidedly clear. It is also devoid of any creativity, flare or imagination. It is a corporate symbol, a badge that every banker, lawyer and social scientist wishes to wear. Barbara Hepworth wouldn't touch it with a barge pole. In fact, wandering around the hospital style 'refurbished' Quad or the glass, plastic and steel of the NAB you'd wonder if there had ever been an artistic touch to the LSE. Yet, delve deep enough, and you find something amazing; a secret sub-culture of artists, literature lovers, comedians, writers and actors, often unheard of and unseen by the student mass. They exist; providing an imaginative release from the blandness of LSE's incessant corporate aspirations.

Last Friday, in a quiet NAB209, there was the launch of this terms issue of Itchy Feet's travel journal. A beautiful and innovative creation, it contains a healthy selection of holiday accounts from America, Sicily, Spain and even Iraq and North Korea; all very LSE experiences. The quality of the writing was remarkable, it showed a bursting level of creativity and originality as well as sensitive perceptiveness but the event remained small and relatively unknown to those outside of the contributors.

Most people have heard of Pulse,

LSE's seemingly underfunded and underheard student radio station, but who really knows much about LooseTV? It is LSE's student TV; you won't find it on Freeview but on YouTube you can watch a regular, hilarious, sketch. It is depressing to see that the entire channel has a mere two hundred odd views, isn't the obvious exceptional hard work worth more than that?

To most people the Shaw Library is a power nap station or somewhere to check your stocks in the FT before that two hour Asset Markets class. To those in the know, however, it is a place to enjoy the sound of a pianist in the latest lunch-time classical music performance. Every Thursday, 1pm, the Shaw Library becomes the LSE's Albert Hall with the appearance of an often renowned musician and the recital of some beautiful classical works. Last week it was Bach, next it will be Haydn. This artistic gem is little known to most students and yet it provides a beautiful uplifting break from the monotony of London life.

Why don't more people know more about these brilliant creative LSE niches? It is not that people aren't interested; I've overheard many a conversation exclaiming at the delight of their sudden discovery of the Shaw's classical music sensation. Take a look at the turnout for LSESU Literature Societies' Poetry Night last term, and you might have made the mistake that CRUSH was on but instead the Underground had become a heaving mass of

## A man's true wealth

**Mizha Mizver** shows us LSE through the eyes of a Muslim fresher

**W**e were never the same to begin with, but it was that one similarity, that one faith - Islam, which we all had in common.

My very first days at LSE taught me a lot about the Muslim world, a world I had never before experienced. Back home in Sri Lanka, an island nestled in the Indian Ocean, most of the Muslims we came across spoke the same language and dressed almost alike.

Here in the heart of London, was a whole new world where you had Muslims from a diverse range of backgrounds; be it language, ethnicity or culture, you name it! However, as the seconds on the clock flew by, the respective prayer times arrived and as this plethora of Muslims began performing similar actions during prayer, the similarities between them began to unveil themselves. It is then I re-

alized that although culture, nationality or ethnicity may form borders, Islam merges us all into one.

It is through unity that we can perform the most intricate duties at the core of Islam, and that duty is helping those in need, regardless of them being Muslim or Non-Muslim.

Nihad Ahmed, a first year economics student, having walked through the doors of LSE, has a similar story to add: 'Originating from a more cultural than religious background, it is only after coming to LSE and joining the Islamic Society that I have gained so much insight into Islam. I am now fully aware of how the defining principles and practices of Islam are so intrinsic to the two most important goals of my life; contribution to the betterment of humanity and the pursuit of knowledge. As the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said "A man's true wealth hereafter is the good

he does in this world to his fellow man".

And interacting with so many different Muslims on campus every day, all of us enjoying the diversity present among us; has reinforced my strong belief that all Muslims cannot be categorized under one headline. Coming to LSE I have come to learn the true essence of Islam from both Muslims and non-Muslims; it is a faith that truly transcends all boundaries and embraces all.'

Following on from what Nihad mentioned, it is true indeed that, 'A man's true wealth Hereafter is the good he does in this world to his fellow man'. All of us here at the LSE, though we may not realize, do practice this wise saying. LSE respects each of us for our individuality. This for some may not be the easiest thing to do, but the fact that each one of us is respected in this institution is a good deed none can surpass. Also, how many times

**It seems that the culture LSE creates engulfs us, regardless of where each one of us come from**

does one walk down Houghton Street and see the many people at stalls or carrying buckets, raising money to make the lives of the less privileged better? I am sure many of us here at the LSE bear the proud title that we made someone somewhere smile with our little donations.

As a first year at LSE I realized that though this prestigious institution has set its landmark across the globe for its research and teaching, there is more to this wonderful place that we walk into everyday. The vast number of societies here offers all of us different perspectives and helps us reach for our goals better. Having been part of the LSE SU Islamic Society (ISoc), I am happy to say I was able to experience this first hand.

From mentoring sessions to career booster workshops to socials to lectures on Islam to so much more. The ISOC has a lot to offer. It is a complete package. I am



# ts the LSE

o the arts



Flickr user Rex Chen

avid poetry listeners, enjoying the linguistic delights of LSE and local London poets eager to have their work heard. The MUSE too, the Literature Societies creative writing magazine, last year received an overflow of submissions and the finished product was a testament to imaginative writing. This year has been the same, with an even more beautiful edition on its way.

The lack of awareness must have something to do with publicity. Think about how often you see Finance Society posters, how many CRUSH leaflets you have been handed and the massive number of emails you receive about the latest guest Economics lecturer. It isn't often you see adverts for the latest gigs, theatre trips and writing competitions, and yet the demand is there. Even if you do see a poster, it is often not attractive to outsiders. The only exception I must mention is the brave souls last term who cried on Houghton Street 'No Sex Please, We're British!' At first I thought it was some radical religious group, only to shamefully realize it was the Drama Society's latest performance. So then it is almost as if to be creative is to be part of a secret LSE society, if you're not in there from the beginning you'll never hear about it.

Yet surely art, music, literature and drama are not just for the committed followers, but for any passing future banker who might like to forget his power lunch and enjoy an hour of Mozart?

sure many of us here, at this prestigious institution have had similar experiences too and would wholeheartedly agree with my view on societies.

It seems that the culture LSE creates engulfs us, regardless of where each one of us come from. Nizam Hussain, a first year Economics Student, having lived in London all his life, sums up his view by sharing the following:

"Despite having lived in London all my life, I was pleasantly surprised at the diversity and number of practicing Muslims I met at LSE. The various cultures, languages and ideas that often represent London are truly embodied in the LSESU ISOC. From the very beginning, the society members have been offering help, advice and friendship to help me navigate through the whirlwind of university life, in addition to providing a small haven in the L Building, we call the prayer room. I



Flickr user Siemar

## Ask for visions!

**Christoph Kreieder** challenges the Germans

**T**he former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt coined the now famous quote: "If you got visions, you should seek for a doctor!" Even though this is kind of funny, the quote highlights a problematic truth: due to heavy use, the term 'vision' has become blurred and gives the impression of wishy-washy political concepts. The example of Barack Obama shows that it is one thing to speak of visions like 'change' - but a completely different one to put them into action.

However, regarding present challenges like the disaster of Copenhagen, there appears to be an urgent need for visionary political concepts. In the case of Germany, Angela Merkel has to defend herself against members of her own political party who accuse her of acting inconsistently with the conservative vision. This somehow reflects the present political atmosphere, not only in Germany, where the absence of political visions characterizes the public debate, but also in the rest of the world. While the 1960s and 1970s were the time of left-wing revolution and emancipation, the 1980s a time between cold war ideology and environmental activism, the 1990s - at least in Western Europe - a time of "fun-society" and capitalist reorientation, the chaos of the events of 2001, the global financial crisis and a wide range of processes of social transformation have left more than just German politics in a visionary vacuum. Besides the absence of political visions it is the lack of 'right' questions being asked, that seems to undermine world politics from taking

an inspiring new direction.

Therefore, LSE's German Symposium (Feb 1st - 5th) is opened by a political panel discussion on 'Agenda 2020: Visions for pressing issues'. Members of all big German parties will try to deal with questions such as what topics are really moving people into the next decade and what solutions they want to provide. Moreover, since the world has become a cross-linked global village, national politics alone cannot provide sufficient solutions. The discussion will therefore also reflect global challenges and hopefully assess political approaches to these issues. In recent years, the Symposium was always able to attract a huge audience of students from LSE. Gerard Schröder and Angela Merkel have both been guests of the German Society and this year's panel discussion will be simultaneously translated into English.

However, one should of course be aware of the fact that panel discussions and speeches can easily create a comfortable atmosphere of self-presentation. Therefore, students attending this and other events at the Symposium should stand up after any event and ask critical questions such as what solutions can the speakers offer to the problems we are facing at the moment? And what, besides all the political day-to-day problems, are their visions for this decade? It is up to us to determine how this Symposium will turn out. Lets take the opportunity and challenge these prominent guests a bit - they will survive it.

have been most impressed by the strong voice of the Muslims at LSE and how active the Muslims are in the LSE community, especially their numerous charity events and their attempt to address the misconceptions of Islam portrayed by the media. The unity and support I have found at the ISOC has been invaluable and has definitely made the difference to my university experience.

University is not university without its experiences. It is these experiences that mould us into who we are. Be it the experiences of mastering the art of time management or balancing your social life with your study life. Everyday may not have a happy ending, but it is our will, courage and determination to fight our battles and make our days happier than the previous that mould us into who we are and who we will become.

Being a young Muslim at LSE as

Nizam mentioned, is not always the easiest, you need a lot of patience, one trait that the Prophet (PBUH) encouraged all Muslims to have. The current negative image being constantly portrayed in the press about Islam and violence is in fact saddening, as they tend to judge the religion as a whole due to the actions of a small minority, who resort to, or incite violence.

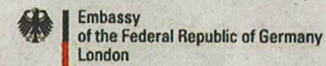
However I take great pride in conveying, as a first year, that despite the negative media attention that seems to be plaguing the press, the atmosphere at LSE is otherwise. Everyone at LSE, from the hugs and smiles in the prayer room, to everyone you meet and pass, generate a feeling of warmth, helping make each other feel more at home.



## German Symposium

Feb 1st - 5th 2010

at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)  
organised by the LSE SU German Society  
in cooperation with the



German Society - London School of Economics - Students' Union Reception, East Building  
Houghton Street London - WC2A 2AE - <http://www.lsegs.de> - [Su.Soc.German@lse.ac.uk](mailto:Su.Soc.German@lse.ac.uk)  
<http://twitter.com/SuSocGerman>

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## OVERHEARD AT LSE...

**IR teacher:** "I had a Facebook, but have permanently deleted it twice. I'm just so busy and it was so distracting"

**Two American girls outside NAB this morning:**

**First girl -** "I really don't get what the old curiosity shop is?"  
**Second girl -** "Totally! I think its some sort of shop but I'm not sure"

**ST107 lecture, James Abdey:** "Who likes things hard?"

(general laughter...)

"...mentally speaking! Behave, honestly!"

**In the Library Lifts:**

**White English Girl:** "Ugh, LSE is so the place in the world with the highest concentration of Asian students!"

**White American Girl:** "Yeh totally"

**Me Thinking:** ....ehm... what about Asia?

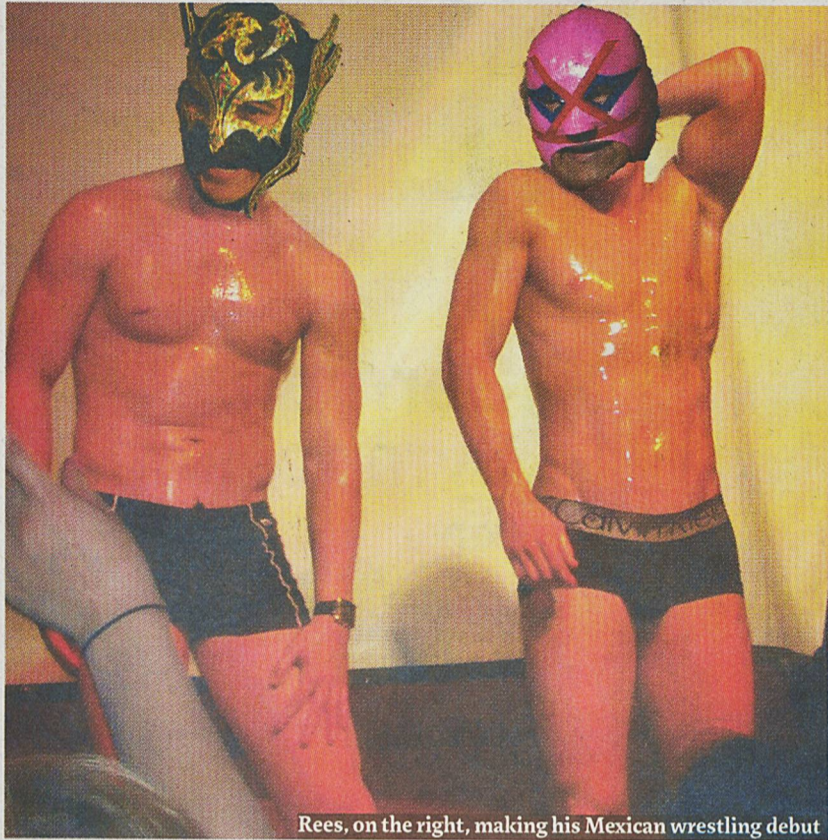
**Person writing a bibliography for his essay:** "I wonder if UPenn has a university press... Because I'm making that up now!"

**LSE100 Lecture. Lecturer describes stocks and flows.**

"An example of a stock is Tiger Woods' reputation. He built up his reputation by winning all those games and then it all flowed out in one night."

**Lord Stern on LSE100 lecture:** "If I look good, that's welfare for others ... though some of use are more challenged than others."

# A year in the life of Mr LSE



Rees, on the right, making his Mexican wrestling debut

## Mr LSE: The exclusive interview!

**Oliver Townsend** speaks to Mr LSE winner Rees Sutton on the ups and downs of his reigning year

**So Mr Sutton, sorry may I call you Rees? Good, right, Rees, so a year ago, did you really think that, going into the most competitive field in the history of Mr LSE, you would be the one walking away with the crown and \$1m cheque?**

I was confident going into the event; I put a lot of time and effort into the gym, and a lot of money into the salon! I had a lot of respect for my fellow competitors, even though I knew I was going to blow them out of the water. Particular mention must go to Russ "the body" Banfi for his impressive, and surprising, performance in the last round [the plank]. But at the end of the day, with my abs of steel, I knew I was always going to have too much.

**How did you celebrate? Did it take long to sink in?**

I celebrated in typical style – a bottle of Bucks Fizz in the Quad and a jug of vodka-Redbull in Zoo Bar. Did it take long to sink in – of course not! As I said, I always knew the title would be mine, so had actually been preparing my acceptance speech from about a month before the event.

**But of course it wasn't long before the serious work began. Many would say that the true prize was your role as LSE's global ambassador, and as a charitable philanthropist and role model, rather than the fame, females and financial benefits. What did you do?**

Well of course I had the world tour to start off with, on which I met most of the G8 leaders. Following that, I went to Africa to try and solve some of their issues, as well as inspire the youth of the country. Whilst in Libya I met Col. Gaddafi, and in my role as the face of the LSE was instrumental in securing a donation to the school from his son. I felt so proud to have been able to help the institution that provided the platform for my rise to fame. Between this and my numerous modelling contracts, I travelled to China to open a series of orphanages across the country.

**What was for you the highlight of the year, and what was the low point, or your biggest regret?**

The Superbowl! Performing the halftime show with my nipple tassel routine was something I don't think I, or any of my billions of fans, will ever forget. I was a bit

bitter about the way the media hounded me in the aftermath, I think they blew the whole thing out of proportion, likening it to the Nipple-gate incident of 2004 with Janet Jackson. My biggest regret was definitely not attending the Copenhagen Climate Change summit. I feel my charisma and global presence could have been what was needed to provide the breakthrough in the talks.

**There have been rumours of you falling off the rails recently, and indeed for a while you disappeared completely from the public domain. How do you respond to some of the allegations made in the tabloids about both your professional and private lives?**

I would rather not dwell on the tabloid stories – you really can't believe a word you read in the papers, can you? As for the sex tape, I think the court case speaks for itself. It was clearly a fake put out there by people with an agenda to discredit me, my victory and my celibacy [one of the cornerstones of his victory were his assurances of virginity]. Mr Box should be ashamed of his blatant attempts to salvage his reputation at the expense of my good name after not only failing to win the event, but not even coming second. However, it is true that I did disappear from view for a while, following a terrible accident in Brazil where my assistant accidentally gave me factor 10 sunscreen telling me it was factor 50. When the doctors in the burns department told me I might never be able to go topless again it was the worst moment of my life. I hope nobody has to go through what I did.

**Moving on to the competition itself, where do you stand on the issue of male objectification? The protests and demonstrations by "Humble Opposition to Male Objectification" (H.O.M.O.) threatened to pull the plug on the whole event. What do you say to them?**

I feel people have a right to experience and enjoy my impeccable body; my chiselled abs, rock hard pecs, 21-inch guns and 'cover-girl' smile. To those who disagree, they really need to get their priorities right. For example, yesterday I saw a girl wearing a sweater that was SO last year. I mean, that's far more important, right? It's right up there with Manchester United's

debt problems, and I think people should put far more effort into correcting these atrocities than worrying about people who just like to look good, and maybe flaunt that fact.

**How do you respond to claims that you are not a real man, and in fact encourage impressionable young men to destroy their masculinity in the pursuit of what you call perfection, for example by removing all your body hair and spending 19 hours a day in the gym?**

Uh, it's 20 hours actually. But anyway, I would just like to say that I feel I inspire people to achieve what they can be, and provide them with someone they can look up to, both physically and behaviourally. Its wayward young souls like Tom Jackson who I feel I can really be an example to – he could learn a lot from me.

**Of course, as last years' winner and as a global superstar, you are hosting this years' event, indeed many are seeing it as your big comeback following your recent fall from grace. What would you like to see this year, and what do you have to say about anyone considering entering?**

You're indeed right. I am looking forward to returning to the public eye on Wednesday of Week 5; to host what I hope is going to be an even more competitive event than last year. For anyone considering entering the event, I'd have to say just take the whole thing pretty light-heartedly. I think the biggest worry for potential candidates is the talent round. The better talents are going to be the ones that aren't too serious, anyone remember Boca's incoherent Geordie rant? It's these sort of banterous, light-hearted attempts that are going to please the crowd. So what would I like to see? Some stand-up comedy would be good; a Kai Greene-esque posing routine from Fola would be hilarious (see YouTube)! Plus I've heard through the grapevine that Chris Liu and Henry 'Hugo' are going to bring some real Razzmatazz to the proceedings!

But probably most of all I'm just looking forward to another successful and popular event from AU, so budding Mr LSEs if you're interested get in touch!

**Disclaimer: Everything on this page is entirely fictitious.**

## Piss Horgan's Timeline

**Veteran former tabloid editor turned talent show judge Piss Horgan spent a year shadowing Mr LSE winner Rees Sutton. Here he gives his no-holds-barred account of what REALLY happened in the time since that historic victory.**

- Feb 09** Rees wins Mr LSE.
- Feb 09** Embarks on global tour, meeting A-list celebrities and senior dignitaries.
- Feb 09** Appears at half time Superbowl show to perform his now legendary nipple-tassel routine, which makes the Janet Jackson incident of 2004 pale into insignificance. Network broadcaster fined \$7bn for public order offences related to the screening.
- Mar 09** Opens schools across China, as well as the "Rees Sutton Bodybuilding Institute of Excellence" in LA.
- April 09** Awarded Nobel peace prize for his work on the Pri-mani accessories collection 2009.
- July 09** Reportedly signs the largest modelling contract of all time with Japanese underwear brand 'Gee! String'.
- Oct 09** Bad sun burn during Rio Summer '09 Swimwear photo shoot forces Rees into hospital. Doctors tell him it will be at least 2 months before he can hit the sun beds again.
- Nov 09** Video of threesome with unconfirmed D-list celebrities hits the internet.
- Nov 09** Dropped from his big modelling contracts.
- Dec 09** Starts hand modelling for a second hand jewellery shop in Dagenham as his weight balloons and his intra-venous protein supplement addiction gets the better of him.
- Jan 10** Last seen trying to make an impact on the Mexican wrestling scene, with his first bout scheduled June 2010. You can catch it on Loose TV pay-per-view, see the website for details and pricing.



Rees with just one of the million children he helped this year

# What sort of AU player are you?

With a lack of prominent players this week, we thought it was time you aspired to be an AU legend or resigned to the anti-banter player you are.



# Jonas and Xisco tell it like it is

Speculation about Jonas and Xisco's identities has been rife over the last couple of weeks, with guesses ranging from The Queen to Xzibit. This week, as well as giving you the AU lowdown, they reveal their identities. Ooo.

Jonas Westoph  
Xisco Getege-D'ore

There were many questions posed on the AU's return to zoo bar, like why the fuck did Dyson stick a VIP wristband round her head? Unable to answer this question the John McEnroe wannabe resorted to answering the controversial question: "Who has (not is - we all know who that is) a bigger cock, Ben Robinson or Tom Davies?" Ooo.

Perhaps reading Alice 'Actually a Virgin' Pelton's grotesque verbal diarrhoea week after week has finally begun to take its toll on the men of the athletic union. As two normally placid individuals Sean Ferrarari and Tom 'Yoko' Lennon, each suffered mental breakdowns, with three metre Peter lashing out at the freshmen up man after taking offence to "no splash, no gash." Similarly upon arrival at his homestead Lemon decided to mercilessly beat his household appliances to within an inch of their warranties, leaving Matthew Box crying tears befitting of waterfall status after the destruction of his beloved protein shake maker.

Perhaps reading Alice 'Actually a Virgin' Pelton's grotesque verbal diarrhoea week after week has finally begun to take its toll on the men of the Athletic Union.

The night ended in unfortunate circumstances for three further Wednesday night thoroughbreds, with old blowjob Watson chundering relentlessly after a suspected case of Polonium-210 poisoning. Fortunately, the man who puts the



'man' in 'romance' managed to maintain his reputation by stoutly refusing to show any side affects and abused Irish heart-throb Ciaran "big man...you gotta fry it" Deeny until Belfast's finest considered suicide. Latif Baluch also left Zoo Bar in somewhat contentious circumstances after being accused of playing with himself all over the dance floor. The oil rich Pokémon has so far offered no excuse and a trial date has accordingly been set for Feb 17th.

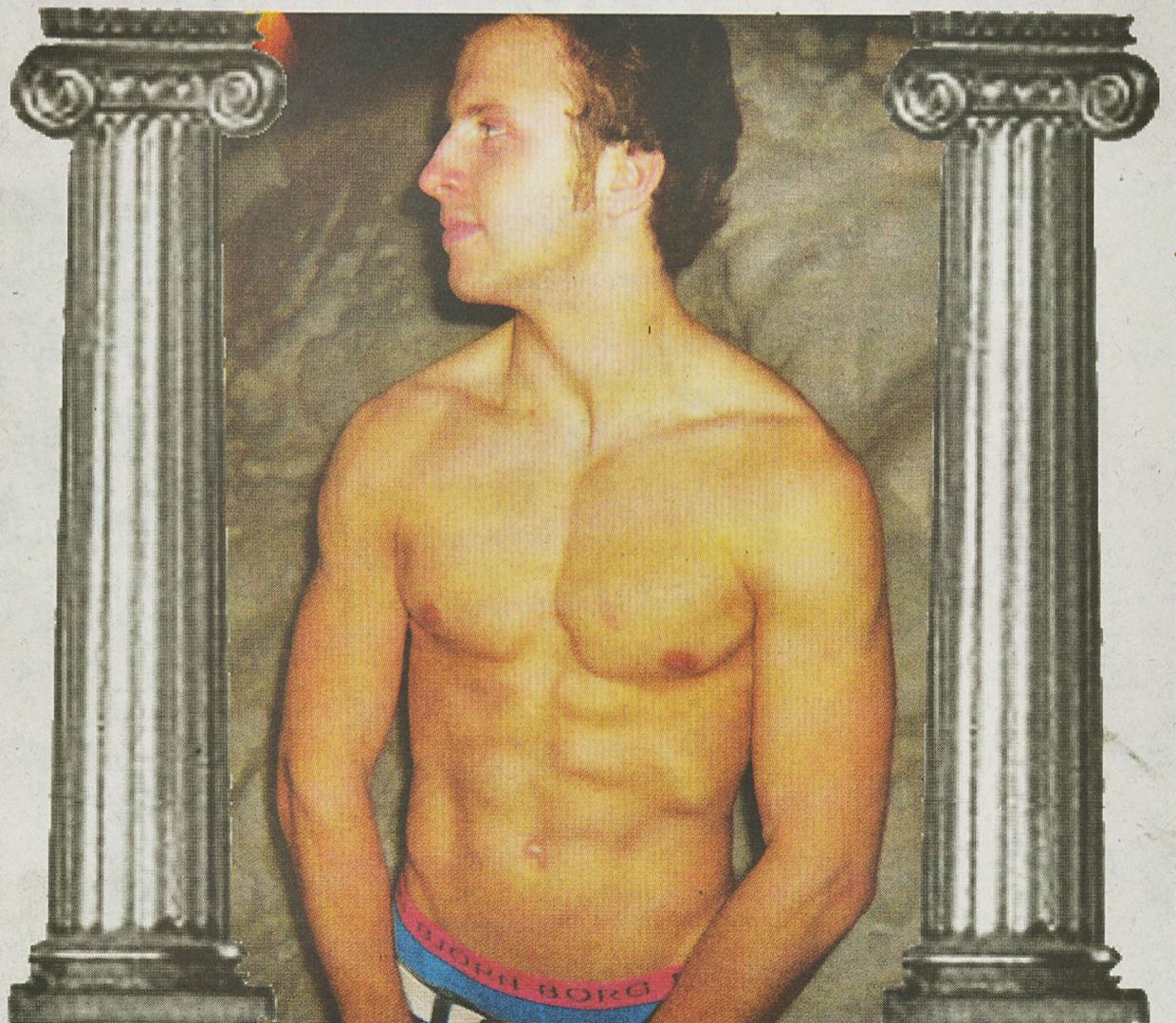
The J&XTILII filthy-dawg of the night award however, has to go to brother of Xisco Getege-D'ore and Chris Liu-Dogg's namesake Lex Cutio De-Rossi. De-

Rossi somehow lost the ability to control his sphincter and generated a large el dumpo, that even Kraft Foods wouldn't be interested in purchasing, all over his voluptuous bedstead.

Amidst the ongoing speculation of the identities of Jonas and Xisco, we, The Beaver PR department have decided to release this picture of the pair at Pearcey the Greeks fancy dress party.

Seen Will Wilson expose himself? Do you have shit hair and have shagged Christina Ivanova? Fended off Snaville? Email now at [jonas&xisco@thebeaveronline.co.uk](mailto:jonas&xisco@thebeaveronline.co.uk)

# TORSO OF THE LSE



## Results

**Football**  
 UU Cup  
 1st XI 2-1 UCL 1st XI  
 3rd XI 2-1 Holloway 2nd XI  
 6th XI 0-2 Holloway 3rd XI  
 5th XI 3-2 UCL 5th XI

**Football UU**  
 2nd XI 2-0 Imperial 2nd XI  
 7th XI 2-1 RVC 2nd XI

**Rugby**  
 1st XV 36-7 kent 2nd XI  
 3rd XV 5-53 st George's

**Womens Hockey**  
 1SE 15-0 Holloway

# Sport



A year in the life of Mr LSE inside!

## LSE karate kids make Miyagi proud

### Report from the 26th KUGB National Student Championships & Grading

Colin Spurway  
Shareena Edmonds

The London School of Economics Shotokan Karate Club achieved fantastic results yet again, at the 26th KUGB National Student Championships held in Chesterfield late last year.

The club sent along two representatives, both of whom performed to an extremely high standard, one returning home with a medal.

The club has a long standing tradition of training hard and competing at the top level of the sport in both kumite (sparring) and kata (set forms). This year was no different, and focused training started right from the beginning of the term to prepare the competitors. As usual Sensei Dario Ghazi's coaching and the team's dedication to training paid off.

The club was represented at the tournament by Georgia Marchiori and Velin Djidjev, graduate students at the LSE. Both competed in kata and kumite.

Georgia, a 1st Kyu grade (brown-belt) who started her training in her native Italy, began the day with kata. She first performed the powerful Kata Heian Neidan, comfortably beating her opponent and proceeding to the next round. Next came the more subtle Heian Sandan kata, which Georgia performed with precision and focus, just narrowly losing out to her opponent.

However, Georgia still had her kumite to come. In the first round Georgia took some excellent points, through an adept combination of fast front-hand punches and clever footwork. Focused and brave (she took and stood up to a few wild face punches as well) Georgia fought her opponents with resilience and determination, going out in the elimination rounds.

Next up was Velin, a 1st DAN grade (black-belt). Having trained hard, and with the valuable experience of competing in the Student Nationals as a brown belt in the preceding year, he felt comfortable and put all his energy into the

competition.

Velin performed very strongly in the kata rounds with an impressive Heian Shodan kata in which he showed great focus, combined with his characteristic strength and speed. In the next bout he scored highly with a spirited performance of the Heian Godan kata.

Kumite is, however, more Velin's speciality, and he used his skill very effectively to progress comfortably through the early rounds. In the first three fights he tested his opponents with deft, swift feints aimed at revealing the gaps in their defences. Velin then attacked these gaps with fast, accurate counter attacks, scoring clear wazaris (half-point blows) and beating a number of senior grades to advance

**Focused and brave (she took and stood up to a few wild face punches as well) Georgia fought her opponents with resilience and determination.**

to the semi-finals, where he narrowly lost out to his opponent.

But Velin's excellent performance had already secured the LSE Karate Club a place on the podium and he was awarded a bronze medal for his excellent fights in the senior male individual kumite category.

"This was only my second tournament competing as a black belt. In the kata rounds the finalists were very good and I have to train a lot more to achieve something there. In the kumite there was



a long wait between the rounds, but I was pleased to fight well and come out with the medal. It was great to have the coaching team there for support" said Velin.

Both Georgia and Velin intend to build on their success. They have vowed to keep training hard and to bring home to the LSE even more medals from the next tournament. Hopefully they will be joined by other of their karateka colleagues. Under the very experienced guidance of Sensei and international competitor Dario Ghazi.

#### Grading success

One would have thought that the London School of Economics Shotokan Karate Club would have had its work cut out just training for the KUGB Student

National Championships. Not so. As well as guiding Georgia and Velin to success, the club has also been preparing its many new joiners for their first grading, which took place on 11 December 2009. Each week, the new joiners, and the existing members of the club looking to proceed to the next grade, were drilled in the correct execution of those basic techniques (Kihon) and kata which would be needed to progress to the next level. The work paid off. All 11 members who took the grading passed, with 5 performing to such an excellent standard that they were deemed worthy of the next grade up and so double-graded. This is a massive achievement indeed given the exacting and high standards of the grading examiner, who was none other than Sensei Bob Poynton (7th DAN), one of the most senior grades

in the country and member of the KUGB Technical Committee.

After what had been an exacting but rewarding term, the members of the LSE Karate Club were allowed some light relief; the post grading Christmas party took place at Strada Restaurant, then Guanabara Club. The club members showed themselves indefatigable as they drank and partied 'til the wee hours, notwithstanding their earlier training session and grading. A good night was had by all, and a particularly good night by some!

"I am very satisfied with the medals at the championships and with the grading performance and achievements. We are now training hard for the future championships and many more medals for LSEKC" concluded Sensei Dario Ghazi.

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Where is Tarifa? - Andalucia, Spain (just round from Gibraltar)  
Do I need to buy anything else? - Just your flight (c. £60)  
... more questions answered on our website...

### Booking:

Fill in your details on our website  
£100 Deposit required by Booking Deadline (29th January)

[www.LSEKitesurfing.co.uk](http://www.LSEKitesurfing.co.uk)



**PART B**

# 26.01.10

ALEX WHITE - PARTB-RANT@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## RANT

SARA DOWNES - PARTB-VISUALARTS@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## VISUAL ARTS

GARETH LEWIS - PARTB-LITERATURE@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## LITERATURE

SOPHIE MARMENT - PARTB-THEATRE@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## THEATRE

## INTERVIEW: NO AGE

LIAM MCLAUGHLIN & CATHY DRUCE - PARTB-MUSIC@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## MUSIC

AHMED PEERBUX - PARTB-FILM@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## FILM

IMO OTORO - PARTB-FASHION@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## FASHION

JONATHAN STOREY - PARTB-TV@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## TV

ALICE PELTON - PARTB-SEXANDGENDER@THEBEAVERONLINE.CO.UK

## SEX AND GENDER

# Frank!

by Mark Twyford



## EDITORIAL

A wee story a' aboot ma best pleys.

Reit, sae thes ane time ah went intae Auld Reekie lookin' fur a guid time, an' thers thes wee ned comes up tae me an' says eh sonny, ye lookin' fur a guid time? an' ah say'd och aye, cos ah wus, nae knowin' 'at he wus acta'ly offerin' me shmack fur a gammy. Th' kin' ay guid time ah was after on'y invov'd a bottle ay buckie an' some ee'sy burds in cuttie skirts. Anyway, ah end up back at his an' thaur nae furna'tir ur curtains, ur e'en a proper duir thaur, lit aloyn fitties an' kergo. Sae he whips oot his tossel an' produces th' shmack, an' ah suddenly gie whit thes wee cadge is aw abit, ken ma jist? Sae ah got masel th' fuck it ay thaur an' bumped intae mah mukker Boabby, ended up pished aff mah tittes in th' pub doon th' road, an' woke up in th' morn thinkin' naethin' mair ay it. Aye, weel that's Ed'nbra fur ye, ken whit ah'm say'n?

**Graeme Birrell & Calum Young**

partb@thebeaveronline.co.uk

**WHAT OUR CENTRESPREAD WOULD HAVE BEEN IF WE HAD ONE THIS WEEK:**



# AUNT BEVERLY

Do you have problems? Stuff on your mind that you can't sort out on your own? Why not email PartB's own Agony Aunt/Slut at [partb@thebeaveronline.co.uk](mailto:partb@thebeaveronline.co.uk) and see if she can help.

Dear Aunt Beverly,

I often read the sex and genders column, and I can't stop talking about sex because of it. SEX! I love sex, me! In the bum, in the ear, in the VGG, ha ha ha! That reminds me of a funny story, where my friend puked into a man's anus, and they both ended up completely covered in...

Yours sincerely,  
Looooooooook

Dear Sadandlonely,

There's nothing wrong with your obsessions. If anything you should probably just try and express yourself more often to more people - don't be weird with people, love, but developing your social skills will be a big part of you beating sex obsession. It seems to me that the main problem is that you're perhaps just a little bit immature at the moment. I know you can't help this, poppet, but it's natural for boys who get stuck in their mental development during their teenage years to feel anxious and obsessive over the female species. I know you won't understand until you're older, but trust me - it isn't the Sex and Gender column that is to blame for the way you are.

Dear Aunt Beverly

People keep telling me I am angry person. This naturally makes me angry, thus my mental health runs in a loop. Help me!  
C.Druce

Dear Angermonster

My sources tell me you're a naturally easing going person. Do you friends find it difficult to tell where your limits are? Take time out for yourself; discover the source of your frustration? See the world through rose tinted spectacles - God knows your glasses are thick enough!



## Just a Thought

This week the Iraq Enquiry has been discussing bellicosity with civil servants, politicians and diplomats. Recent testimonies have revealed that reports regarding Iraq's threat to the West was overstated. But in an ITV interview last week Tony Blair announced had he known that Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction, he would have invaded anyway on humanitarian grounds.

Philosophers continue to debate whether this sort of intervention can be justified. Tony Blair felt values of Britain and America were evidently superior to those of Saddam Hussein, further he argued they could be legitimately imposed by one state on another.

Are all cultures equal, or are some more equal than others? In the case of Iraq interventionists maintain that Saddam's policies of genocide and terror were objectively wrong. Whilst others argue that what Blair holds to be 'good' for society is merely a Western conception of the right way to govern, is liberty a form of cultural imperialism?

More pragmatic thinkers say that some governmental policies in the world are objectively wrong but that it is not practical to evict every malevolent regime in the world. They point to the ongoing lawless state of Iraq in support of their argument that intervention helps no-one.

Whatever the case, distrust those with a simple answer to this dilemma.

## HOW O'YA LIKE DEM APPLES?

### KIRSTY MAJOR IS SHUTTING YOU DOWN

I was at a loss when a postgrad student recently told me that there was absolutely no point in even turning up to a lecture if I wasn't accompanied by a MacBook. It wasn't like I was writing on a sheet of bog roll or anything. In all my fresher excitement I'd even gone out and bought one of those Pukka pads with a world map and the names of every county and its capital on the

inlay. You know, the one with the nicely coloured plastic dividers.

The comment forced me to reflect upon my technological inadequacies: so my laptop is HP not Apple, my phone doesn't take pictures, never mind sat-nav, and I'm still writing on Microsoft Word 2003 because I've yet to get my little head around the Vista tool bar. What's wrong with me? Should I just give it all up and set up my own Amish community in the Shaw Library?

Just then I was struck with the thought that maybe I wasn't lacking, by a divine revelation in the form of a Skype conversation in the middle of an IR lecture. There I sat diligently making notes like the geek I am, when I was caught off guard by an all-too-familiar blue and white layout and a series of images flickering across a screen. The girl in front of me was Facebook stalking mid-lecture. Obviously.

Now, I have no problem with facebook stalking. In fact I consider it to be an integral part of the modern day dating process: if you have even one dodgy photo there's not going to be a second date. Maybe the girl was at that obsessive phase of dating and needed to muse over the face of her handsome lover; granted it wasn't the most thrilling of lectures, and had this been a brief and isolated diversion during the lecture I would have let it slide. But then I noticed to my horror that not only was

she stalking, she was holding three simultaneous facebook chats alongside a Skype chat, web cam and all. Then came the icing on the cake as she whipped out Photo Booth and proceeded to take pouty pictures of herself and her neighbour.

What you do in the privacy of your bedroom is your own business, and I'm sure most of you take full advantage of this fact, you naughty minxes. I will think less of you when the products get published on my newsfeed, but for all that matters you might as well indulge in your Tyra Banks aspirations to your hearts contents.

But for the love of digitally enhanced Jesus, leave it out of the lecture room. I don't want to look at my image staring back at me on the screen of your MacBook just because I made the unwitting mistake of sitting behind you and your webcam.

Now I'm no Luddite, I'm not going to viciously attack any unsuspecting laptops with my slab of slate and chalk. Even if I did, I would probably get someone to film it on their mobile phone. Footage like that is far too good to waste.

I just don't understand: when did a pad of A4 refill paper and a cheeky biro from the bookies stop doing the trick? Marx didn't have a MacBook and he did alright, and I dread to think how Mussolini's twitter updates would read. Stalin's shifting top friends list on MySpace amongst all those purges could have been interesting though. Oh sorry, did I make a social networking faux pas by mentioning that archaic site? Get over it, press shut down and get on with it.



## RANT

# EARTH: ART OF A CHANGING WORLD

NASA, DIAMONDS AND CHICKEN FACTORIES WITH **SARA DOWNES**



**A**nthropogenic climate change is arguably one of the most pressing problems we as humans have ever faced and an overdue exhibition on the subject of **Earth: Art of a Changing World** has opened at the Royal Academy of Arts which addresses some of the art worlds feelings towards the prospect of a possible 6°C rise in global temperatures. Art is of course a trivial and insignificant medium in comparison but these artists do not try to be activists nor jump on a political bandwagon, instead they provide us with a vital opportunity to reflect on the dangers we are facing.

Confronted with the attention grabbing and garish pieces which are draped around the exterior of the building there is a tendency to dismiss the exhibition but once inside the tacky pulsating lights and big plastic clouds are replaced by a much more impressive artwork by **Ruth Jarman** and **Joe Gerhardt** entitled *Black Rain*. Here, a black room is interrupted on one side by a two storey projection of raw visual data which has been recorded by NASA's Solar Terrestrial Relations Observatory. The film highlights our fragile and unimportant position within the universe with its seemingly endless stream of flickering lights drifting like snow across the vast wall. Occasionally a burst of light explodes across the space accompanied by a loud bang giving us a sudden reminder of the harsh and bleak realities of the universe outside our green and pleasant land. That is what the piece aims to do; remove us from our familiar surroundings as we step inside, reminding us what is out there.

Walking on through the halls of the building there is a giant red glowing model of the Earth and broken flowers scattered around a room: all quite predictable and not particularly exciting. But along the way, tucked into a side room, is **Antony Gormley's** 1992 *Amazonian Field*. Perhaps the strongest piece in the exhibition, this installation is made up literally thousands of individually hand made sculptures of little people. They are all arranged facing towards the door of the room and fill every inch of floor space so the viewer can only peek in. Each little figure has two eyes poked into its simple clay frame which look up at the viewer in a way that is at once adorable but on second thoughts much more troubling. The title, referencing the Amazon, points to the meaning and significance of this piece. The figures represent the people of the Amazon region, all different shapes and sizes, all looking up with hope, expectation or fear. They are made out of the Earth itself which shows how closely connected the people are to the land which they live on.

A similar theme is present in **Ackroyd and Harvey's** *Polar Diamond*. All that is present in the gallery is a small glass box which encases a few specks of diamonds but what you see here is only the end point of a process that began with the artists picking up a polar bear bone on a trip to the Arctic. This was done by extracting carbon from the ashes of the cremated bone, which was then heated and pressured to create beautiful, tiny diamonds; a process which occurs naturally over millions of years. Many questions are raised; about the value of carbon, the importance of today's species and our ability to cause such funda-

mental changes. Another piece by Ackroyd and Harvey is featured in the gallery, or just outside it. A collection of young saplings has been planted on a balcony on the front of the Royal Academy building; an idea which is inspired by Joseph Beuy's 1982 planting of 7000 oak trees in Kassel, Germany. The artists have an idea of creating towns and cities which are covered in trees and plants on every available surface in an attempt to make up for deforestation elsewhere across the globe. The piece here symbolises the great changes we may need to make.

The rest of the exhibition does have some interesting artwork, notably **Lemn Sissay's** poetic film *What if?* and even a piece by **Tracey Emin**, but others such as **Edward Burtynsky** are less so, with his photographs of environmental abuse and a chicken processing factory which I feel I've seen before. **Chris Jordan's** image of millions of paper bags has the same effect; it reminds me one of those rooms piled full of junk food on a Channel 4 diet show. However, despite these few obvious pieces, overall the exhibition is a fantastic and provocative collection of art, films and scientific data that is well worth visiting.

GSK CONTEMPORARY, EARTH: ART OF A CHANGING WORLD WILL REMAIN OPEN UNTIL 31ST JANUARY AT 6 BURLINGTON GARDENS



# METAMORPHOSIS

FOR GARETH LEWIS, KAFKA'S CREATURES AREN'T HYBRIDS AT ALL

**M**ore people know that Vladimir Nabokov was a lepidopterist than know what a lepidopterist is. The lepidopterist is a collector of Lepidoptera. On Wikipedia – which I do not fear referencing – these are described as 'members of an order encompassing moths and the three superfamilies of butterflies, skipper butterflies and moth-butterflies'. This 'membership of an order' business has the downside of making it sound like Lepidoptera are sort of Masonic. That Mothdom was something they chose instead of something they were accursedly born into. That their harlequin wings are insect robes. That the thud and the flutter and the dust on the glass is not a bewildered suicide, but a secret tap-tap-tapping. Sadly, choice is

not something this lot are much familiar with. You see a light, you go to it. If you're lucky there'll be a window in the way.

For Kafka, this predicament is universal. In *Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa sees this same light. Grimed and abandoned, Gregor has already transformed into a hideous ungeziefer when he hears his younger sister playing the violin in the adjacent room. Despite being terrified – like most scuttlers – of the sound of hissing voices and clumping feet, he is still bewitched and entranced by the strings. Insectoid and repellent, he gathers himself, and against his better judgement he hulks off down the hallway. Of course, it's in this very room, and at this very moment, that the lodgers catch site of him and everything falls apart. Grete, his sister, proclaims that the transformation has occurred inside and out. Gregor must be callous and selfish, she explains, else he would already have left. Couldn't he see the suffering he was causing? One's bad luck is just that – one's own. It doesn't do to involve others in the gloomy denouement.

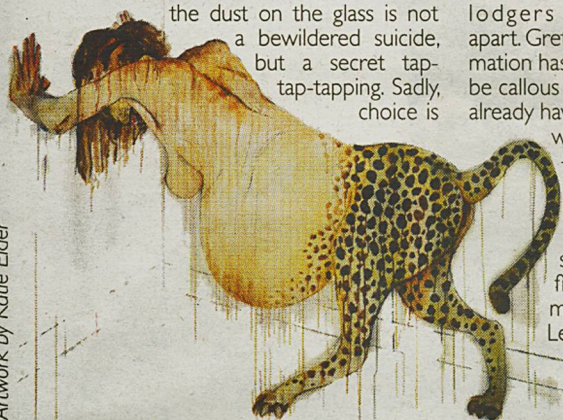
What Gregor needed was a glass pane to separate him from the Siren song. Better struggling to get in than fighting to get out, by which time it might be too late. Of course, if you're a Lepidopteran, you've already lost. You've been stuffed and restored, framed and superglued (probably to a waterco-

lour twig, which explains the shoe-box theatricality of most taxidermy). Weirdly, then, encasement is the sinister opposite to Gregor's ultimate unburdening. Doom is preserved and glazed – delicately bottled and meticulously squashed. A kind of hopeless cryogenics, death masquerading as life. No brains and no vats. Just settling dust and marble eyeballs.

Kafka, then, is all about thresholds. Everything depends – as with robberies and unzipped flies – on whether you're 'in' or you're 'out'. The true horror of Cartesian duality – that we are both inseparably wed to and utterly at odds with our material shells – is never more acutely glimpsed than here. Gregor is embodied and disembodied simultaneously. *Metamorphosis* will appeal less to those who see themselves as outsiders than to those who too struggle to negotiate this faint yet fathomless line.

There is great difficulty in trying to exist in osmosis with the surrounding world. People tend either to project outwards or retreat inside. With that in mind, we're not all hybrid creatures, and people deal with their displacement in a variety of ways. I'm not certain Kafka says anything important about mankind as a whole, or if anybody ever will. Perhaps you just can't. Those prone to speaking of us all, for us all, are usually projectors. They're the last people anybody should listen to. I don't suppose Kafka was a projector. We should listen to him instead.

Artwork by Katie Elder



## TOURING EASTERN ASIA... IN LONDON

VICTORIA TERRY EXPLORES SELF-IMPOSED STARVATION

**L**ondon is known for its multicultural and diverse population and, luckily for all us Londoners, this comes hand in hand with a huge selection of restaurants and foods from different countries. This week I will focus on the food from Eastern Asia and introduce certain gems I have enjoyed

**Chinese** – Of course, it is almost impossible to narrow down the numerous restaurants I have visited, especially as Chinatown itself is so near to campus. Of course I can't leave out is the restaurant Crispy Duck, a staple of many an LSE student's Wednesday nights. While I can't comment on its objective quality and taste I can assure you that I have never tasted such delicious food whilst in an inebriated state. I am never entirely sure of what I have consumed the next morning, but there seems to be a rough correlation between numbers being shouted-out by drunk revelers and the appearance of cuisine. If nothing else, this restaurant is remarkable for the tolerance it affords to its customers mental states.

For a delicious meal while sober, I recommend Ping Pong – you can't get crispy duck or egg fried rice but you can get delicious dim sum. If you have a good appetite go on Sundays for the all-you-can-eat extravaganza to really try out all the delightful dishes on offer. At £18.50, it is not cheap, but it is well worth looking into once in a while.

**Japanese** – A plethora of Japanese places seem to have sprung up in the past couple of years... or perhaps they were always there and my younger, more conservative taste buds had

simply overlooked them. But now life is sushi-galore and everyone has their favourite place to go. I used to regularly go to the Japan Centre on Lower Regents Street for amazing sushi as well as hot food. They also have an amazing range of desserts including green tea trifle and cheesecake! Naturally there are a myriad of restaurants which though serving some pan-Asian food, are largely styled on Japanese dishes. Wagamama is a dinner staple, I always find their Ramen dishes enjoyable. There is also Itsu (scattered all over the place but with one conveniently situated on High Holborn) which is a great lunch place with a selection of sushi and hot dishes, so there's something for everyone. To move to the other end of the scale is Roka on Charlotte Street. Unless splashing out on food is your thing, this restaurant is to be reserved for seriously special occasions but then it is definitely worth it. The food is amazing and beautifully presented with a menu that will send a seafood lover to heaven. The atmosphere is relaxed but sophisticated so I wouldn't recommend ordering the house punch as, while it was delicious, drinking a bright pink liquid out of a bottle with pink hello kitties all over it made me rather embarrassed when compared to all the smooth martini drinkers around me!

**Korean** – I can't say that I have tried many Korean restaurants but after recently eating at Koba (on Rathbone Street W1) I will definitely be hunting some more out. The restaurant itself is nicely designed with a cosy yet modern interior and the service was amazing... I think it was clear that we were novices at Korean barbecue

especially when we ate the salad which we were meant to be putting in the wraps when our meat was cooked! There are table top barbecues on each table adding to the fun as you pretend to know what to do before the staff come over and cook the food properly. All the dishes we tried were delicious and I will definitely be back to try the many we didn't get that day.



# WINNING FEELING



Over the course of two albums and four EPs, LA punks **No Age** have become the defining band of the California art-punk scene, yet they still remain under the radar of contemporary mainstream music. **Liam McLaughlin** talks to drummer and vocalist **Dean Spunt** about their recent EP, why California is inspirational, and MP3 culture, in a bid to convince you that No Age are your new favourite band.



T-shirts designed by  
No Age

I can never tell if indie bands are well-known or not. Blogs and 'zines would have you believe that nothing else exists in the world. But when I talk animatedly about bands I assume that everyone knows, I commonly end up with blank stares or embarrassed smiles, making me feel like a smug twat.

Los Angeles two-piece **No Age** are perhaps one such band. They have deservedly experienced a lot of hype on the scene, but still remain relatively unappreciated outside of the niche circle in which my tastes dwell.

Perhaps the name puts people off? 'No Age' makes drummer/vocalist Dean Spunt and guitarist Randy Randall seem like pretentious and postmodern musos; spurning time and space for an anti-musical philosophy of ideas and concepts. But this is not the case. In reality they fucking rock.

I saw them live at the All Tomorrow's Parties 'Nightmare Before Christmas' festival and at 1am, defying all my expectations as I leant bleakly against a pillar, plugs stuffed into my numbed ears, No Age played a stormingly tight set which channelled familiar emotions of aggression and frustration, but also unexpected ones of childish glee and energy. These dichotomies characterise No Age's sound and attitude. The music itself is a heady mix of ramshackle, crashing punk and hazy, twittering washes of effects-laden guitar; equal parts **Bad Brains** and **Brian Eno**. Yes, No Age are my new favourite band; offering the catharsis of a raw, unadulterated attack but the redemption of swathes of beautiful shimmering noise.

## "When I was a kid and had cassettes, I used to rewind to one song over and over and listen to it, just like an mp3"

I was lucky enough to get an interview with Dean Spunt a few weeks after the 'Nightmare Before Christmas' festival and immediately asked him if the chaotic extremes of No Age's music is a reflection of their LA heritage. "Well, California is a beautiful place" Spunt replies, "you have the ocean, the mountains and the sunshine, and the relaxing vibe that echoes throughout. But you also got the smog and the cars and the bullshit, so maybe our music is a combination of it all; y'know, we make the pop with the dirt too."

Pop. That word. But what Spunt says is true. Indie-kids like to avoid any allusions to pop, but if you strip away the layers of fuzz, crashing cymbals and Spunt's own bizarrely likeable barely-in-tune voice, No Age have written some brilliant pop hits. Take 'Teen Creeps', 'Every Artist Needs a Tragedy' or 'Sleepers Hold'; all three have catchy pop hooks but are hidden beneath aesthetically 'ugly' distortions and warpings. This shouldn't put anyone off though. No Age's crushing noise and intensity is a cure to the antidote so to speak. Once the aforementioned ambient passages of guitar lull you a little too much, a snare shot rings out and a barrage of popstastic noise blasts out once more. But the relationship is symbiotic; by the time your ears have again been shredded by the noise, a dreamy swell drifts back in to caress your senses. This is the natural flow of a No Age album and one which I think is totally novel and awesome. However I tell Dean that I think mp3s have the capacity to destroy the

carefully structured flow of an album by a band like No Age as they are commonly poor quality and can be listened to completely out of context. Does Dean worry about this too? "When I was a kid and had cassettes, I used to rewind to one song over and over and listen to it, just like an mp3" he says. "Sometimes hearing a song out of context of the record helps you digest the whole thing easier. I appreciate the compliment, we do work to make an album flow as a whole, but not lose the singularity of a song as well."

This actually makes sense to me; remembering that many years ago when I had **Nirvana's Nevermind** on tape, I used to re-wind back to 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' endlessly, which eventually led me on to loving the whole album. However, it still seems strange that Dean would endorse mp3s because, upon buying No Age's latest album, *Nouns*, you'll find that the attention to detail on the artwork is the hard work of someone who assumes people still buy and appreciate albums. Why do No Age do this in an era where mp3s trump CDs and lacklustre artwork commonly appears in sleeve-notes? "Mainly because it's fun for us" says Dean, quite fairly. "We like to make art and music, and are constantly working on things in that sort of expressive nature. An mp3 is a digitally compressed music file; it sounds like garbage usually, and just exists as it is with no accompanying art." Dean then explains his two differing and possibly conflicting perspectives on listening to music in and out of context. "A full album with art and expression will always win. Like, the reason I love bands like **Crass**, **Man is the Bastard** and **Disco Inferno** is the obvious attention to detail that a true fan can notice... An mp3 is just like a song on a mixtape; you get no info, and it sounds like shit. Sometimes you don't know who it is, but you like it... I enjoy that too though!"

Ever prolific, last year No Age released a new EP entitled *Losing Feeling*. It essentially plays like a truncated No Age album, but the feel is slightly different so I ask Dean how and why the EP was made. What were the band's influences and inspirations at the time? "We made the *Losing Feeling* EP because we were writing songs for our new record, and knew that these songs were a bit morose for the LP we wanted to make, so we decided to make a 12" in that vein. We have been making a lot more samples and figuring out how to make the sound quality better, so we sort of based the EP around those sounds. We were making a lot of photocopy art, working on a 'zine, and that became the cover of the EP."

What about playing with one of their heroes **Bob Mould** from 80s punk legends **Hüsker Dü**? Did that influence the EP in any way? "Playing with Bob has been amazing, but no real influence on the EP. We actually finished it before we played with him the first time... but hanging out with him talking about music has really been great for us as far as thinking about song writing in different directions."

As well as being in a signed band, No Age also participate in the wider LA arts scene, reminiscent, as their press release states, of "the DIY art-as-life aesthetic" of the English **Crass** collective (now known as **Last Amendment**). I ask Dean why, when lots of other bands don't bother, No Age are involved in so many different projects. "Again, we do stuff we feel is fun and we like to collaborate with people. To us it's all art - music, design, photography and clothing design - that we're doing, and getting to work with other talented humans. Some may view it as odd, but we think it's fun and adds to our original vision of No Age."

The burning question for me though; one which I've been bursting to ask a contemporary indie musician like Dean, whose music is lauded

with praise by fickle bloggers and magazines, especially the infamous and influential Pitchfork webzine, is whether this press has had an effect on the way the music is perceived and ultimately its success? Dean responds humbly, "I'm sure it has, a lot of people that read that site would've probably never listened to us if the fine folks at Pitchfork weren't fans. Randy and I work extremely hard; you can ask anyone that knows us, so I know we would've found success... I think Pitchfork gave us a bit of a head start in the more mainstream world. We started running out the gates though, we made five EPs that all got released on one day... we knew we were going big!"

It's interesting for me to speculate on how much influence the press hold over our musical tastes and preferences, but Dean's take on it, as someone who has experienced it first-hand, is that in No Age's case the press simply broadcast them to a wider audience than simply the niche US indie scene.

To wrap the interview up I ask what the future holds for No Age, hoping for news of new material and maybe even another UK tour. Dean answers and makes thousands of hip fans work hard to hide their excitement in the process. "At this moment we are recording a ton of songs and a lot of those will make up our next LP... it's about half done. It's sounding insane; so great. We've recorded a bunch of stuff, but not all of it will end up on the LP, just like the *Losing Feeling* EP; half of it was meant for the LP, but it just wasn't the right vibe. We record a bunch of stuff; some are things that take a lot of time, some we write in one afternoon and record it. We just keep moving. I'm really excited for this new record... and then we're going to tour and see where we're at... and also we want to release the recordings of the live score 'The Bear' we did!"

As waves of feedback wash against coruscating cymbal swells, then topple into upbeat bursts of incorrigible, wide-eyed noise, No Age's music evokes many things; youth, Saturdays, joy, frustration, sun, sea, boredom and art. The coolest thing about the persistent dualism of No Age's music though, is that it manages to perfectly channel the i-generation's confused zeitgeist of "life's a bitch"; or rather "life's a beach".

Whichever one is correct is for you to decide.



The *Losing Feeling* EP is out now on Sub Pop Records

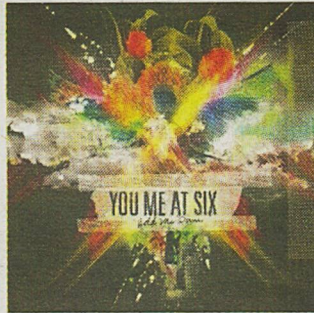
# NEW RELEASES IN THE CHARTS THIS WEEK.

If you buy a new charting release this week, it had better not be the one that's full of wankery emo shit.

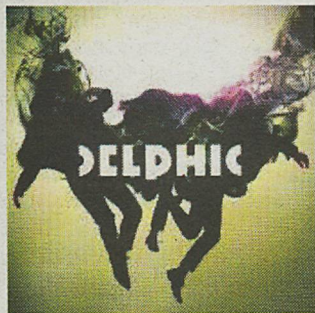
YOU ME AT SIX // HOLD ME DOWN - NO. 5 (HOW?) . . .

Having successfully and courageously battled your way over the troubling obstacles of an angst ridden adolescence, whinging about (admit it) most things and seeking solace only in the equally grating howling of fistfuls of emo punk bands, I advise you to go here only if you want to go back there. Or if you like **Fallout Boy**. Which you shouldn't.

You hold them down, I'll kick them.



DELPHIC // ACOLYTE - NO. 8 . . .



**Delphic** have clearly made a very respectable effort in making you an album of easy, danceable, electronic pop; it's easy to believe they've been hailed as Manchester's shiniest new rising stars. Problem is, their respectable effort sounds synthy note for synthy note like about four other decent electronic pop albums you own already. With comparisons to **New Order** being thrown around, no doubt it's a good album, one the **Klaxons** might've made have made had neon not proved indescribably unflattering.

# THESE NEW PURITANS

HIDDEN

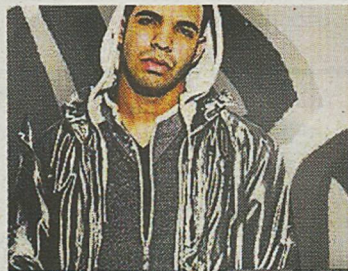
Liat Tuv

From the moment "We Want War", an infectious seven-minute track that samples the sound of a blade half-way through it, raised curiosity in early December there was talk about **These New Puritans'** new album, *Hidden*; what exactly had this Southend group created? An album which includes a children's choir, orchestra, bassoon solos, Taiko drums and just generally a lot of drumming. How, even, would this record work live? In a way these questions are quite inseparable and, to correspond with the album's release on Monday, These New Puritans played an in-store at Rough Trade last Tuesday.

The album, like the track, is a beautiful, slightly baffling, mix of orchestral pieces, like opener "Time Xone", and heavier battle-cry-esque pieces, like "Fire-Power" or "Attack Music". Said to be influenced by modern composers like **Steve Reich**, the use of bassoon and the evident importance of rhythm in this album are actually, to me, a bit reminiscent of **Stravinsky's** "The Rite of Spring". Not particularly in the sound or the fact that both place heavy emphasis on bassoon but just the feel of it; violence and nature. War and preparation, are quite recurrent images on this album but so too is childishness. Not just in the use of a children's choir in tracks like "Attack Music" but in the simplicity of the singing parts in general. All in all it feels more like a child marching with a toy drum leading imaginary creatures, in true where-the-wild-things-are style, through "labyrinth" paths, "dead trees" and "bracken".

*Hidden* is not an experimental album in the sense that you get the feeling everything has been painfully thought out, much as with their first album. This becomes even more evident in the live setting where you see the band manoeuvre themselves between an intimidating number of electrical devices, wires and sheet music to recreate every intricate detail of the record, and quite successfully so. Tonight they play the more battle-esque, drum-heavy songs off the new album - "We Want War", "Three Thousand", and "Orion".

With many bands vowing their albums will not contain another "INSERT-NAME-OF-THEIR-MOST-POPULAR-SONG-HERE" in 2010, it's nice to know that, although a great step forward from their first album, These New Puritans still have some pretty good pop type songs on this record. That, along with its critical success, makes *Hidden* a pretty good contender for one of the best albums of the year, and it's only January.



# DRAKE

by Annika Ranga

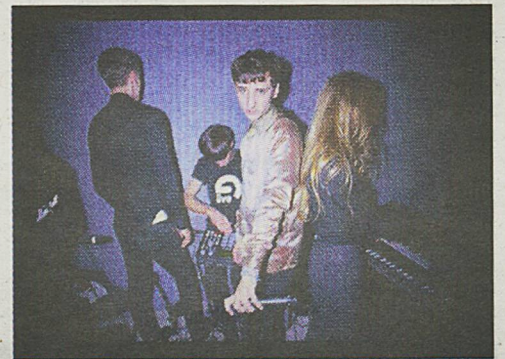


Last year was a big year for hip hop music. We saw **Jay Z** hit the charts with his new album *The Blueprint 3* and get his first ever UK number one with "Run This Town" featuring **Kanye "Jackass" West**, and **Rihanna**, (without her ex-beau/woman beater **Chris Brown**). Then we saw the world's greatest rapper (no, this is not open to debate), **Eminem**, return after a four-year hiatus, with the very controversial album *Relapse*. So, now you ask "well, how the hell is hip hop gonna top this?" The answer is in one word; **Drake**.

New rapper and singer Drake is signed to **Lil Wayne's** Cash Money Records and part of Wayne's new crew, Young Money, featuring other upcoming hip hop artists. He's an actor originally from Canada, starring in a hit TV show there called *Degrassi: The Next Generation*. It ain't gonna be a picnic for this former teen actor to break it as a baller in the States. Yet Drake hit the rap scene last year with singles "Successful" and "Best I Ever Had"

which were only part of his mixtape *So Far Gone*, and are already becoming extremely well known. So well-known in fact that the likes of Kanye West and Eminem collaborated with Drake and Lil Wayne for "Forever", which can only be described as the best collaboration since **T.I's** "Swagga Like Us". Jay Z himself has called the collaboration "the best posse cut of the year". (I guess it pays to have contacts like Lil Wayne backing and bigging you up).

Drake's already made quite a rep for himself, having not even released his album yet. The much anticipated album *Thank Me Later* will hit the music scene sometime this year. The album is expected to be like his mixtape which had only four rap singles and the rest with him singing. We can expect to see songs featuring the likes of Jay Z and **The Dream**. Expect a lot from this guy Drake, he's sure to provide.



## SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION

VICTORIA TERRY FINDS THE CON A BRILLIANT PIECE OF TRICKERY

When the play began I was not in the best of moods, our tickets were for the side of the balcony which forced me to crane round to see the stage and when we moved we had a rather long argument with the usher who assured us that although the balcony was half empty the 50 people would certainly all arrive within the allowed time (half an hour into the performance). They did not arrive, luckily, as we refused to move back.

When the play began I was initially confused by the story line, with the husband and wife directly addressing the audience about an event which we had not yet seen. Their distress was clear, as was the husband's materialism, less concerned by their potential murder by an imposter than about certain prized possessions. Then the play pro-

gressed to the telling of the story and I was gripped. The fast paced dialogue and occasional asides to the audience meant I was quickly drawn into the story. The play is based on the true life case of a con artist who pretends to be the son of the film icon Sidney Poitier in order to infiltrate the rich families of Manhattan. With certain choice name drops, going to Harvard with their children and being the son of a famous actor/director, he is invited to stay without any attempt to validate his story. It is only the next morning when the con man is found in bed with a call boy that the couple realise they may have been wrong to be so trusting. The story unravels revealing the other families he targeted, how he became a con man and another, more tragic con he pulled on an innocent couple who had just moved to New York.

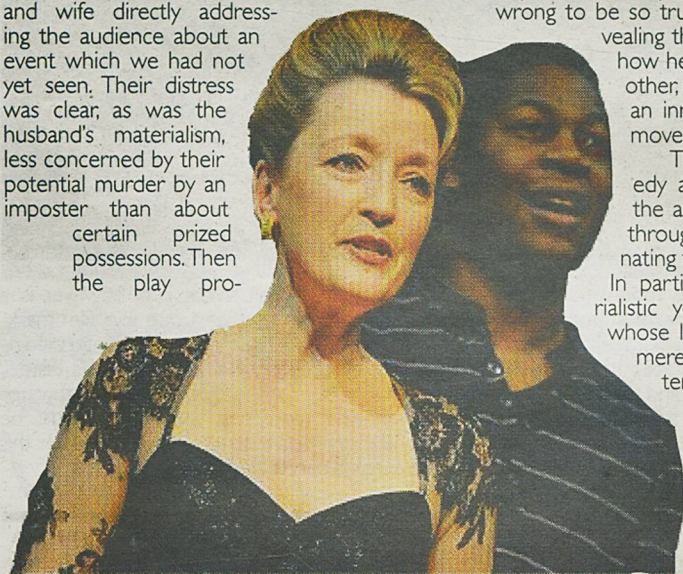
The play has comedy, tragedy and a detective feel keeping the audience engaged all the way through. The characters are fascinating to watch and well developed. In particular the husband, a materialistic yet not distasteful character whose love of art has changed into mere business, and the wife, a hysterical and lonely figure who develops an odd emotional attachment to the man who tricked his way into her house, played wonderfully by Lesley Manville. The only characters I found fault with were the teen-

age children who were complete stereotypes with much stamping of feet and generally stropic, unreasonable behaviour.

The main character Paul, played by Obi Abili, is captivating yet curious, mainly seen through the eyes of those he conned and whilst their reactions to him are reflective of their characters we are left with the question of his motives for carrying out the cons? The only explanation seems to be a mental illness, with Paul becoming increasingly erratic and a final scene that strongly implies his instability. He seems to have worked incredibly hard to move from a rough and tough street boy to the educated, opinionated persona that invades the high society, yet he throws away all his hard work for a night with a call boy.

The idea of six degrees of separation is tenuous, the links between the characters being as victims of Paul's cons rather than a curious fact of society. However, the play does give a great insight into the lives of rich people, particularly the husband and wife, and raises questions about how far you can trust what someone tells you about themselves. The play seems to mock the seemingly exclusive lives of the rich which are so easily invaded through talk of fame, with comedy arising from the fact that Paul had offered all of them parts in his 'father's' new play *Cats*. Even without the underlying themes the plot itself will keep you captivated, aided by the minimalistic set, the fast paced dialogue and skilled actors.

SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION PLAYS AT THE OLD VIC UNTIL 3RD APRIL 2010.



## RED

JOSEPH SMITH PAINTS A PICTURE OF ROSCO'S MASTERPIECE

For an artist who once called his colours "actors" and remarked that "large pictures are like dramas in which one participates in a direct way", it is curious that forty years after his death, his words should adopt such a literal meaning. From its opening night last December, John Logan's play *Red* at the Donmar Warehouse has played to a packed house.

The paintings themselves, normally housed in the Rothko room at the Tate Modern, had gone AWOL until the summer, on one of those trips that great paintings sometimes undertake. Paintings that are, for want of a better word, "abstract", do not seem initially to lend themselves to theatre. The difficulty lies in the fact that, as the title of the play suggests, the paintings by Rothko are the subject of the play, and this involves turning pictures, that deliberately enhanced the feeling of two dimensions with canvases that 'enveloped' the viewer's peripheral vision, into three dimensions, action and dialogue. Perhaps the answer lies in another Rothko quote, one that is often suggested to be central to his conception of the Seagram murals: "I'm not an abstractionist. I'm not interested in the relationship of color or form or anything else. I'm interested only in expressing basic human emotions: tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on". A play, in other words.

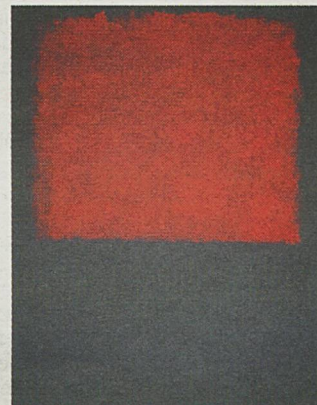
In *Red*, though, it is not the depths of his paintings that are explored, but the depths of Rothko

himself. The tagline on the Donmar Warehouse website is, "There is only one thing I fear in life, my friend... One day the black will swallow the red." There was no suicide note left next to the body on February 25, 1970, when Rothko's lifeless corpse, wrists slashed with a razor blade, was discovered in his studio in Manhattan, New York, increasing the mystery surrounding his death. Another effect was to increase the mystique of his artwork. It was noted by a reporter following the death of another American icon, Michael Jackson, partly due to a drugs overdose, that an A-list Hollywood celebrity who dies premature has their image and status sent into the "stratosphere" - think Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, or even Kurt Cobain. For some, the death of Rothko is the seal of authenticity on works that "tragedy... doom, and so on". Certainly both the 2008 exhibition at the Tate Modern of his work and this play have been sell-out successes.

If there is a criticism of the play, then it is that it too often relies on quotes from Rothko himself to form parts of the script, such as his famous quote that he hoped the Seagram Murals would put the sons of bitches at the Four Seasons restaurant (for which they had been commissioned) off their food. Whatever the flaws of the script, the performances of Alfred Molina as Rothko and Eddie Redmayne as Rothko's assistant Ken were fully realized, bursting with energy and with a weightiness and intensity worthy of Rothko him-

self. It was Rothko's hard-to-please nature and difficult and demanding personality that really came to life, with Ken not so much assistant as protagonist in some of their epic clashes. For a play that did not leave Rothko's studio and with a cast of only two, a theatre-goer could be forgiven for wondering where interest might be generated, but the lack of cast and locations was the play's strongest point, turning a studio into a sort of pressure-cooker for Ken's emerging and Rothko's disintegrating personalities.

RED PLAYS AT THE DONMAR WAREHOUSE UNTIL 6TH FEBRUARY 2010.



# 44 INCH CHEST

IT'S A PERFECT FIT, RECKONS **OLLIE LITTLE**



**Director:** Malcolm Venville. **Screenplay:** Louis Mellis & Dave Scinto. **Cast:** Ray Winstone, John Hurt, Ian McShane. **Runtime:** 95 min. **Cert:** 18. **Year:** 2010.

Take five mean blokes, one sorry Frenchman and a dilapidated flat somewhere in the east end. Add to the mixture a foxy lady and a bucket full of expletives. Leave to simmer for around an hour and a half. The result should be a brooding beast of a picture, brimming to the top with foul-mouthed suspense.

Perennial hard-man Ray Winstone's latest offering sees him as Colin Diamond, an over-the-hill Spiv just about to lose his mind. After recently discovering he's been cuckolded, Diamond sets out to seek revenge on his adulterous wife and the unfortunate man who now gamers her affection. With his mates in tow, Diamond abducts the unlucky sod and stuffs him in a wardrobe to contemplate his fate. What follows is around an hour of the best, most suspenseful drama you're ever likely to see in British cinema.

All those looking for a violent, fast paced Guy Ritchie-esque wankathon will be sorely disappointed. Instead, we're left with a provocative and deeply moving study of the male Psyche at breaking point. Winstone hands in the performance of a lifetime as a man savaged by a broken heart; teetering on the edge of a breakdown, he manages to traverse the line between insanity and clarity with phenomenal skill. Ian McShane also hands in a stellar performance as gay narcissist Meredith, while



Hurt's incredibly vile Old Man Peanut is guaranteed to stay with you for many moons to come.

While the acting may be of superb quality, this never really feels like a film. It feels more like a theatre piece, fuelled by surreptitiously unreal dialogue. Writers Louis Mellis and David Scinto really have excelled in creating a sense of foreboding throughout the piece by using unpredictable, menacing dialogue and combining it with what can only be described as a strange exploration of the

English language.

Sexy beast, it ain't. What it is, however, is a strong return from the Beast duo in a film markedly different from their crowd pleasing opening salvo. While it may not be to everybody's taste, if you can find the patience to persevere through the somewhat confusing chronology you'll be pleasantly surprised with the skill with which this tragic event is charted.

## GERVAIS AT THE GLOBES

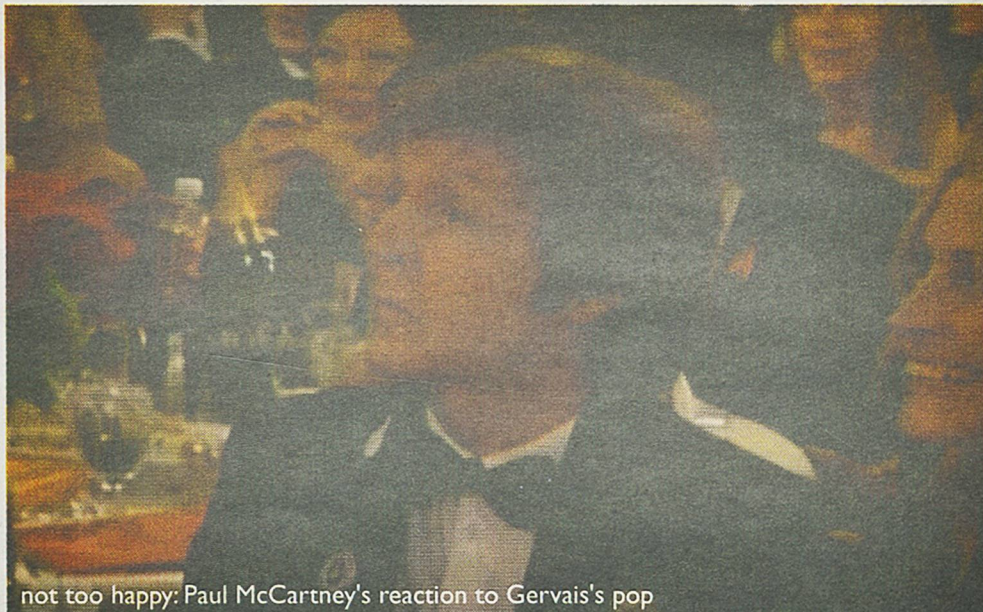
DON'T LISTEN TO THE SCOFFERS, SAYS **AHMED PEERBUX**. GERVAIS WAS ITS SAVING GRACE

It was an overall disappointing night for us Brits. But among the self-congratulatory congregation of red-carpeteers, a fat bloke off an estate from Reading flew the flag in one hand, and pointed a critical finger at Hollywood with the other. Barely two minutes in, Gervais surveyed his subjects with an awed expression; "looking at all the faces here reminds me of the great work that's been done this year... by cosmetic surgeons. You all look great."

Admittedly Gervais did get off to a slow start. There were penis jokes, followed by stilted, uncomfortable laughs: "I've had a little bit of work done. I've had a penis reduction. Just got the one now... and it is very tiny."

The all-too familiar Gervaisian self-promotion also managed to rear its obnoxious head. The first go of it was tickling enough. Referring to the American Office, Gervais quipped "if you think that particular version of the show has jumped the shark a bit... watch the original, Fridays on Adult Swim". Though after that, the shameless flogging tinkered on the point of tedium in tinseltown, with a mention of The Ricky Gervais Show coming soon on HBO, the Invention of Lying coming out on DVD, and his "blog at rickygervais.com!"

I took him up on that last one. A recent entry reads: "I should take this opportunity to say what a good sport everyone was, by the way. I know some of the reports have said they were upset, but it's not true..." Paul McCartney's face said otherwise that evening. Homing in on the former Beatle and his costly divorce from Heather Mills, a drunk Gervais ventured into hitherto untouchable territory -- "we came over on the same flight.



not too happy: Paul McCartney's reaction to Gervais's pop

I didn't get to speak to him because I was up the front in first-class. He was behind me in coach. Saving money. He spent an awful lot last year."

Macca wasn't the only one. Perhaps the funniest joke of the evening was directed at Jennifer Aniston and Gerard Butler. Describing actors as "chameleons" and "ever changing", he went on to welcome "Rachel off Friends and that bloke in 300", to which both were visibly peeved. The use of thoroughly English colloquialisms was a nice little nod from Ricky across the pond, though the joke garnered no laughs whatsoever from the au-

dience. Credit to Gibson though, who was a good sport. Characteristic Fosters in hand, Gervais said "I like a drink as much as the next man... unless the next man is Mel Gibson." Gibson (pretending, we hope) proceeded to come on stage slurring and stumbling to hand James Cameron best director.

Ricky probably won't be back though, owing to a potent combinations of jibes at the ceremony itself ("one thing that can't be bought is a Golden Globe...officially") and poor reviews (the Hollywood Reporter described him as 'toothless'). It's a shame, really. I thought he was on good form.



Mariah Carey:  
Herve Lege by Max Azaria

Sandra Bullock:  
Bottega Veneta

Toni Collette: Elle Saab

Ricky Gervais: Sergio Georgini.

## sandra bollocks

IMO OTORO DRAWS BLOOD ON THE RED CARPET

**W**ho wore what? Who is doing who? Who wore what whilst doing who? These were a few of the questions raised amongst the bodacious babes and cool dudes of 'La La Land', at this year's Golden Globe Awards.

Among the winners and the losers this year, I witnessed some glorious moments of fashion and some diabolic examples of what not to wear on a night out, or EVER in the presence of other human folk.

So here are my winners and losers.

My love of all things lacy and sheer literally

drew me towards Ms Barrymore's fabulous floor length Versace gown. She rocked the red carpet, leaving a trail of broken hearts behind her.

On the very polar opposite scale, Mariah Carey with the voice of an angel and the looks of a baby bear, looked how do I say it... not so good. Not one to extensively comment on peoples state of dress, Ms Carey demonstrated what one should wear should they one day consider to wear their breasts as an outfit.

Mariah opted for a not so discreet display of cleavage in a Herve Lege by Max Azaria dress, forcing one and all to gawp in amazement at her blessed assets. Toni Collette on the other hand

looked like a picture of good health, happiness and someone who is receiving some good lovin'.

At the risk of sounding extremely cheesy, Toni took the glow away from her Golden Globe, dazzling in a gorgeous Elle Saab gown. Not only is she my Golden Globe winner in the style stakes, she also won Best Actress in a Telly series for her role in 'United States of Tara'.

So, Toni rocked, Mariah sucked and blowed at the same time and one more fashion faux pas that deserves a veritable mention, is Sandra Bullock in a Bottega Veneta chiffon gown that made her look like a carton of Ribena.

## golden balls

JONATHAN STOREY SURVEYS THE GOLDEN GLOBES

**T**he Golden Globes are a bit shit, really. As an example of how shit they really are, we need to go back to 1983. The last performance of the Broadway musical Annie was shown, Björn Borg retired from tennis and Pia Zadora was the star of the critical flop Butterfly. For her pioneering, cinematic performance, Ms. Zadora was winner of the Golden Raspberry Awards for both Worst Actress and Worst New Star; yet come Globes night, she walked away with the Best Newcomer Award. How was this possible? The legend goes that Ms. Zadora's husband, Israeli Meshulam Riklis, flew all of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association to his Las Vegas casino to watch his darling wife perform cabaret, treated them to a luxury dinner and then sent them back to Los Angeles ready to send their voting ballots back completely impartially.

Whilst that is the most egregious example, as an awards institution the Globes have pretty much no credibility, being made up of foreign tabloid

journalists whose job is not to critique films, but to critique Hollywood gossip (a job they do only occasionally well). As a precursor to eventual Oscar glory, they're not particularly prescient either: in the last twenty years, they have only accurately predicted Best Picture a grand total of seven times. Yet, strangely, they are the third most watched awards ceremony in America, after the Oscars and the Grammys. The eternal question is why? The eternal answer is because they're star-fuckers, pure and simple.

As unusual as that answer may seem, it makes sense in the grand scheme of things. As they have zero credibility, they disguise this fact by nominating the hottest celebrities that happen to have a film out that year; ply them with alcohol (the Globes is the only awards body to come with a three-course-meal and wine) and let the drunken-celebrity-speechathon commence. As awards ceremonies have morphed from quiet events genuinely honouring the best in the entertainment

industry to full scale extravaganzas, not only about entertainment, but about celebrities, fashion, who-said-what-to-whom-in-the-where-now and occasionally giving out some awards in the hoopla of it all.

The thing is that all this has done is make the Globes more and more popular. Unlike the Oscars, who still try and seem like this elitist institution actually trying to honour the best and brightest in cinema (and have subsequently lost nearly half their viewership over the last decade), the Globes have no qualms about their ability to get George Clooney, Meryl Streep and Quentin Tarantino in a room together; get them hammered and revel in the collective craziness which ensues. So, anyone overjoyed or disappointed by the results (if, indeed, anyone cares that much), then don't worry: come Oscar-time, it'll all be meaningless.

# LOVE PUFFS

## ALICE PELTON HATES FANNY FARTING

Last week I ran out of space to tell you another story about Chad, the lovely boy I met in America. After camp and his totally unsuccessful attempts to have anal sex with me, I ended up staying with him and his family at their house in New York. I found life ensconced in his humble abode slightly claustrophobic, so decided to go on a little road trip to Washington, where, to my delight, I was frequently referred to as 'shortie' and got chatted up by an extra from *The Wire*.

When I arrived back at Chad's house four days later I walked through his front door to be greeted by the smell of bleach. Observing the strange smell I wandered into his living room, where I found him sat on a chair, face-down, looking excruciatingly embarrassed, and his mother pacing nervously in the corner.

'Is there something wrong?' I tentatively asked.

'Alice...there's been an...accident.' His mum responded, pausing to look anxiously at Chad.

To say that this wasn't your average 'grandmas-fallen-down-the-stairs' accident is a bit of an understatement. Whilst home-alone, with no Alice to entertain him, Chad had grown very bored and restless. Summer holidays do that to people; from the age of about ten, I spent most of mine sat around in toast-crumbridden tartan pyjamas playing *GoldenEye* on my N64. ('Stack' and Grenade launchers, enough said.)

With nothing else to do, Chad decided - as you do - that he wanted to see what his bum 'looks like' when he farts. I tell no lie. He felt a fart coming and ran to the hallway mirror, where he pulled down his trousers and let rip, turning his head so he could get full view of his posterior in the mirror.

Except, he followed through. And pooped himself on the mirror. At almost exactly the same time his mum came home, and opened the front door to find her beloved son, cleaning up the remnants of his experiment.

I can only imagine the conversation that ensued between Chad and his mum. In fact, I can imagine that it was reminiscent of the scene in *American Pie* when, with dramatic pause, Mr Levenstein looks at Jim and says 'We'll just tell your mother that...we ate it all.' Except in this situation it went something like, 'We'll just tell your girlfriend that...the mirrors were dirty.'

Anyway, for fear of this column turning into 'Shit and Gender' I think I better move away from anal-related issues. This is meant to be about sex, after all, and in the name of sex I would like to discuss the issue of fanny farting.

As that famous old wives' tale says, 'you can never be properly in love with someone until you've fanny farted and laughed about it together.' Fanny farting, 'queefing' or 'love puffs' as I prefer to call them, are hor-

**'It was Hegel meets Kegel. The more I laughed the more I farted; I just kept laughing and farting, farting and laughing, rolling around on his bedroom floor, howling in hysterics at the hideous dialectic of laughter and farting plaguing my life.'**

loses his erection. For those wondering what causes it, what goes in, must come out. Air just gets trapped in the vagina people. You heard it here first.

I once had the worst attack of fanny farts; it was so bad that if it had been audio recorded I would definitely now have a Guinness Book of Records plaque on my wall from Chris Akabusi, recognising my achievement. It happened when I was with Will, big-willy-Will, or as you now know him, Banjo. Before I broke his banjo string, we were having what I like to call 'mute sex' on his bedroom floor. This is quick, stealth-like sex that takes place when both parents are prowling the house. It's almost like a pantomime as everything is done in grand overdrawn gestures; and you become accustomed to being quiet that you carry on whispering to each other afterwards, forgetting that his parents are hardly going to care if you talk to each other in his bedroom.

So we do it on the floor; to avoid the squeaky bed. Then I let out a fanny fart, just a little baby one. His face was one of shock and puzzlement. I squeaked with laughter. Mistake. It was Hegel meets Kegel. The more I laughed the more I farted; I just kept laughing and farting, farting and laughing, rolling around on his bedroom floor, howling in hysterics at the hideous dialectic of laughter and farting plaguing my life. The problem was he had a laminate bedroom floor, which meant

the sound of my farts reverberated around the room and the house. Gone were our dreams of the silent shag. God knows what his parents thought we were up to. We were well and truly rumbled, in both senses of the word.

The worst thing is fanny farts can sometimes arrive later on, like an uninvited dinner guest. You're lying there together in a post-coital glow, when you make a move to get up to the toilet, and you spontaneously combust.

Because, apparently this column is 'educational', it's probably helpful to tell people how to stop fanny farts from happening. Don't have sex too hard, don't have sex in the doggy position, and don't penetrate too deeply. Sadly this eliminates three of, quite possibly, the greatest things about sex.

How about we look at it from a different angle? Fanny farting tends to happen when a girl is more relaxed, which probably means she's enjoying it, which probably means the sex is going well. Viewed from this perspective it's clear that it's actually a good thing

for men if the girl they're having sex with fanny farts. In fact I would take it as quite a compliment. It means your dick is a reasonable size to shove enough air in there, and that you're pleasing your girl no end. Every cloud eh?



rendously embarrassing for any self-respecting woman. The involuntary expulsion of air from the front passage in females is quite uncontrollable and can leave both parties feeling distinctly turned off.

Fanny farting was funny when you were a pre-pubescent schoolgirl playing 'who can fart the loudest' in your dormitory. By the age of 21 you reach the point that one squeak out of your vagina, and your boyfriend