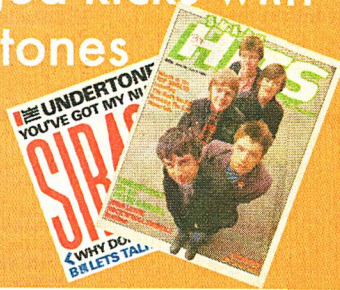


Middle-aged kicks with
The Undertones

PART B



AGONY UNCLE

In your campus, confronting your taboos



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The Beaver

1 February 2011
Newspaper of the
LSE Students' Union
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NUS President shellacked at tense UGM

Vincent Wong

At last Thursday's Union General Meeting (UGM), the President of the National Union of Students (NUS), Aaron Porter, spoke about education cuts, recent protests and reforms to student visa applications.

Porter said the British government has launched a "series of attacks on young people". He highlighted both the planned 80 per cent cut in universities' teaching budgets – which includes a 100 per cent cut to undergraduate teaching of the arts, humanities and social sciences – and the abolition of Education Maintenance Allowance, a targeted grant to keep people in schools after the age of sixteen.

Porter said he was concerned that many institutions would be put in a "precarious" position by a "triple whammy" of funding cuts, an inability of some universities to charge more than £7,000 for undergraduate tuition and a "sizable loss" of undergraduate teaching.

On reforms to student visa applications, Porter said talks with the Home Office had been "pretty depressing", and urged students to respond to the UK Border Agency consultation.

The NUS President went on to outline a "two-pronged" approach for the future. He said the NUS needed to support direct action, but only if organisers took steps to ensure the safety of protesters and distanced themselves from violence. Porter also stressed the importance of the protests themselves having clear objectives.

In addition to retaining a "principled opposition" to what the government has done, Porter advocated for trying to win concessions for students through lobbying and "eyeballing politicians".

He said the NUS did not officially support the students' demonstration in London on Saturday because the organis-

ers had been unwilling to criticise any violence during it. He added that the demonstration in Manchester on Saturday, which the NUS did officially support, had met the union's conditions.

Porter's stances on direct action and the London demonstration were met by criticisms from the crowd at Thursday's UGM. One student accused him of "spineless dithering" and pretending to be fighting for fees, prompting a reprimand from UGM Chair Jack Tindale.

Other students in attendance agreed, urging Porter to "get involved" in the London march.

"What is the point of Aaron Porter if he does not back student action?" asked postgraduate Robin Burrett, who called the NUS glow-stick vigil last December a "flop". The student also asked Porter to contribute to the Trades Union Congress's demonstration, planned for 26th March.

Students' Union Education Officer Ashok Kumar also criticised the NUS President.

"The only reason you have influence when lobbying is because people are putting themselves on the line", Kumar said. "The NUS should grow the spine to back [the London demonstration]".

In response, Porter reiterated his position on direct action and the marches planned for Saturday. Protests on the days of votes, he said, would not reach politicians. He also said that mobilising for the TUC march was a priority for the NUS: "I think it's an important opportunity".

One student asked the NUS President why he backed a graduate tax. Porter said it was fairer than other proposed arrangements.

The Sabbatical Officers also reported during the UGM.

General Secretary Charlotte Gerada and Kumar reported to the audience about their recent trip to Canada, where they talked with university counterparts there about student activism.

Demonstration divides student alliances

Aimee Riese

Nearly 200 LSE students joined an anti-education cuts demonstration in London on Saturday, 29th January. After meeting on Houghton Street, LSE students joined thousands of other marchers on a route through Whitehall and Westminster.

LSE Students' Union General Secretary Charlotte Gerada said of the scenes on Saturday, "Members of the public cheered us on from balconies and windows, beeped car horns and generally were very supportive of our protesting". Students displayed a strong sense of solidarity with recent protests in Egypt through some of their signs, banners and flags. As the day wore on, students moved outside of the Egyptian embassy.

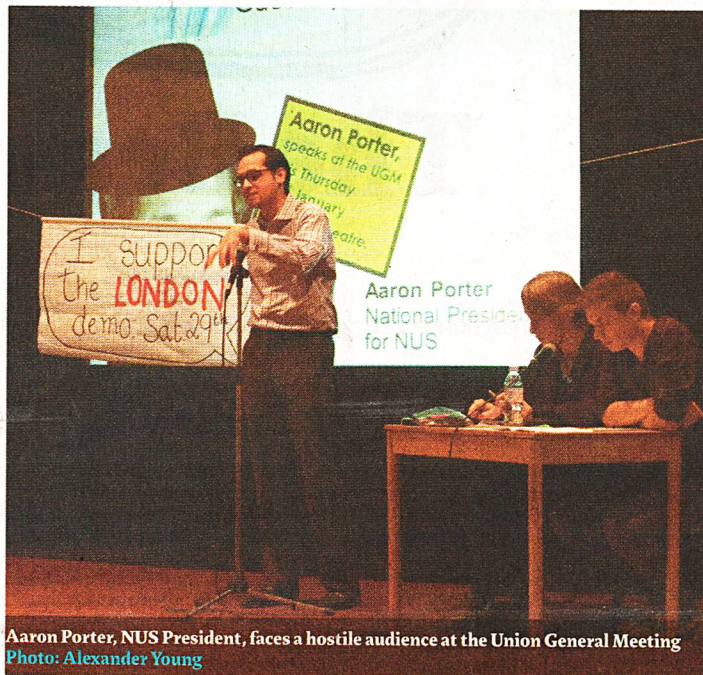
The London protest was called for by the Education Activist Network and the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts. It was not backed by the National Union of Students (NUS), which held a separate protest, also on Saturday, in Manchester.

Aaron Porter, president of the NUS, said he remained "unconvinced organisers in London would take sufficient steps to ensure safety of protesters and our cause at large".

Gerada defended the Students' Union's decision to join the London demonstration, rather than the NUS-backed Manchester march. She said not only did it make greater logistical sense, but also there was a "strong sentiment that we should have a London-based protest to encourage as many students and workers to march as possible".

Education Officer Ashok Kumar told the Beaver the Students' Union felt the "central role that London plays politically and our resources as a Union meant that we felt it would be most effective if we supported both demos".

While the London demonstration was relatively peaceful, the Manchester protest provoked some incidents of violence. Aaron Porter was escorted away from an angry crowd by police, having been pelted with eggs and subjected to anti-Semitic abuse.



Aaron Porter, NUS President, faces a hostile audience at the Union General Meeting
Photo: Alexander Young

Kumar told attendees it was telling that he and Gerada had been invited and not the NUS, saying the Canadians "recognised the difference between the movement and bureaucracy".

Austin updated students on maintenance issues at Rosebery Hall, saying dates had been set for completion of construction, and residents had received a formal apology and promise of compensation.

Next week, a motion to celebrate Jack Tindale's role as UGM Chair will be debated.

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Aaron Porter

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Hendry wows "bigger and better" Alternative Investments Conference



AIC attendees watch a keynote address from fund manager Hugh Hendry
Photo: LSE Students' Union Alternative Investments Society

Nicola Alexander

The fifth annual LSE Alternative Investments Conference (AIC) welcomed 375 students and dozens of industry leaders to the Marriott London Grosvenor Square last week.

The two-day conference, focusing on hedge funds and private equities, proved equally popular among both LSE students and participants from more than 100 global universities.

The conference – first organised during the 2006–07 academic year by a group of LSE students seeking to offer an

alternative to London's more mainstream economic conferences – has consistently aimed to provide insight into alternative investments for students looking to pursue these careers, according to its organisers.

Michael Sidgmore, president of the LSE Students' Union Alternative Investments Society, which organises the conference, told the Beaver this year's conference was organised to offer an "overall experience that was a combination of being educational and networking with the people you are going to break into the industry with".

The world's largest student conference on alternative investments, the Alterna-

tive Investments Conference attracted a record-setting 3,800 applicants, from over 100 universities, this year. Event organisers from both the Alternative Investments Society and the LSE's Financial Markets Group said they received ten applications for each available seat at the conference.

The conference has proved so popular that organisers sub-contracted a recruitment firm to allocate the 375 available seats, based on written applications submitted by each potential attendee. And, while in an effort to stay loyal to the LSE 30 per cent of all seats were reserved for students from the School, event organisers said the criteria for all applicants was the same: the AIC aimed to draw together "the

brightest students, from undergraduates to PhD students".

This year, the conference brought together students representing 122 nations. Jaymal Nathwani, the conference's chairman, said participants flew into London from as far away as China and the West Coast of the United States for the two-day event.

But despite the impressive nature of the event's diverse audience, conference organisers told the Beaver the event's greatest achievement was its line-up of speakers, which included industry leaders from such institutions as Goldman Sachs, an investment bank; Toscafund, an asset management firm; and UBS, a financial services company. With a mixed agenda of panel discussions, workshops and keynote speakers, the conference proved to be both comprehensive and interactive.

Nathwani cited hedge fund manager Hugh Hendry, a keynote speaker, as the "main highlight" of the conference.

In his speech, Hendry suggested the imminent downfall of China. Offering a rare insight into the mindset of notoriously media-shy hedge managers, Hendry was described by attendees as forthcoming and candid.

"Hendry gave a very candid talk and I think that the audience enjoyed it the most", Sidgmore said. "We got a rare

insight into the personality of such a controversial hedge fund manager. Hendry peeled the lid on the industry."

Vivek Dasani, a second-year economics student who attended the conference, agreed.

"Hendry really bucks the trend. He had interesting opinions and was one of the best speakers of the whole day", Dasani said.

Dasani added he thought the conference offered students an edge when applying for internships or jobs.

"It was fantastic preparation for entering the business world", he said, adding another second-year student who attended the conference called the event the "best training" he could have for an internship interview.

And after one full year of preparation, the twenty-seven members of the AIC committee concluded the conference was a great success.

"The conference has gotten bigger and better, and this year was no exception", Nathwani said. "This was definitely the most successful year in terms of number and quality of attendees, money raised for the society and value to delegates".

Editorial Board

Executive Editor

Sachin Patel
editor@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Managing Editor

Oliver Wiseman
managing@thebeaveronline.co.uk

News Editors

Nicola Alexander
Lauren Fedor
news@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Comment Editor

Rimmel Mohyidin
comment@thebeaveronline.co.uk

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features@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Social Editor

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sports@thebeaveronline.co.uk

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Duncan McKenna
photo@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Design Editor

Ahmed Alani
design@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Web Editor

Alexander Young
web@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Collective Chair

Luke Smolinski
collective@thebeaveronline.co.uk

The Beaver would like to thank the LSE students who contributed to this issue.

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NUS a royal mess

This newspaper did not expect to be offering a partial defence of a union bigwig; however, we feel that recent events have obliged us to re-evaluate our beliefs and speak on behalf of the moderates.

In a somewhat glossed-over part of NUS President Aaron Porter's visit to the UGM last Thursday, he was quizzed as to whether he felt a degree of attachment to the idea that students are, today, consumers. The obvious inference to be drawn had he affirmed that this was the case would be that the National Union of Students wished to officially disengage from politics, and become a kind of Which? magazine for students.

Unhappily for observers on both sides of the fence, Porter gave the kind of listless response that has led him to be slated as a "spineless ditherer" in certain quarters. He argued that the NUS must continue to exist as a vehicle for activism and politicking, but that it also needed to tailor its offering to provide a kind of consumer rights package for students in further and higher education. While this newspaper would firmly concur with Porter that eyeballing politicians remains the best method of conveying the maturity of one's arguments, we can also see why his vacillating points of view are unpopular.

The structure and manifold functions of the NUS attest to this royal mess, of which Porter can hardly be culpable. Here

is an organisation that berates government for making corporate deals, all the while peddling more useless junk (in the view of this newspaper) to students under the guise of a purchasing consortium which serves the commercial needs of all its constituent institutions. Unbeknown to most students at the LSE, our General Secretary sits at the heart of NUS Services, serving as the Chair of this commercial body's Ethical and Environmental Committee. Her role is to steer the accreditation process by which the hoodies, mugs and other merchandise students' union shops offer are ethically sourced; this newspaper sees such cartels as unhealthy.

In this context, it is easy to get the wrong impression of the NUS. But we also recognise that it has a place in upholding the majority views of students, and also to bargain and lobby on behalf of them, which is why we feel more than a pang of injustice about the way Aaron Porter has been launched upon in recent months. Pelted with eggs at a demonstration his union supported and mobilised, shellacked and berated by the fringe group of socialists who inhabit the UGM – this is hardly the best way for student politics to move forward. As for the verbal abuse levelled at him, there can surely be no defence, which is why we are troubled to learn that our Education Officer essentially believes Porter has it coming, politically speaking, if he con-

tinues to perpetuate the narratives that have won him power. Yes, the way NUS elections are conducted are of dubious democratic standards; yes, Porter is not the most gifted student politician to have graced the Old Theatre stage; but aiming meaningless and partisan insults, not to mention groceries from the supermarket, is surely going too far.

It is always disheartening to hear of institutional failures. What a refreshing joy, then, to learn of the success of this year's Alternative Investments Conference, which has once again broken records and surpassed expectations in the quality of its line-up. Fund manager Hugh Hendry may not have received universal acclaim for his performance on Question Time, but his ability to win over a crowd of aspiring capitalists, baying for money, is unquestionable. The dedication and perseverance of students involved in the organisation of the conference cannot be underestimated, no matter how uneasy the substantive content of the keynote addresses may make sceptics of the free market feel. ☛

Breath

Dulcet tones rising in tribute to the silenced; remembering them.

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Get involved in The Beaver
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Luke Smolinski
Collective Chair

collective@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Cued up in E204

Triangle Walks
– Fever Ray
Rabbit Will Run
– Iron & Wine

Union Bashō

Principled Opposition

Though firmly resolved,
some around him disappear;
a hostile current.

Bashō goes to the Union General Meeting so you don't have to. Last week, the audience was making so much noise, he wondered if he was in the wrong room.

COLLECTIVE MEETING!

Friday 4th February

in – KSW.G1

at – 5:10 PM

Manifestos to

collective@thebeaveronline.co.uk

PHOTO EDITOR
WEB EDITOR
GENERAL MANAGER

Enthusiasm for Freeze the Fees “remains high”

Alexander Young

Despite a high-profile launch last term, the Students' Union's Freeze the Fees campaign appears to have shrunk from view in the first few weeks of Lent Term. Following questioning by the Beaver, the Sabbatical Officers are keen to emphasise that the campaign is still in motion.

The Sabbatical Officers, who initially launched the campaign in response to the government's proposed removal of the fee cap in mid-2010, said “enthusiasm for escalating the campaign remains high”, with weekly meetings attracting, on average, thirty to forty students.

The Freeze the Fees campaign gathered force during the Michaelmas Term, attracting wide attention from both LSE students and national student movements.

The Michaelmas campaign featured a banner drop, in which a six-storey high banner bearing the campaign name, was unfurled from the top of St Clement's Building. Later in the term, the Sabbatical Officers released 100 helium balloons beneath Howard Davies' office in an effort to draw attention to the campaign. Other initiatives included a YouTube video outlining the objectives of the campaign.

Such activities sought to raise students' awareness of the campaign. The campaign subsequently attracted national attention when more than 700 LSE students attended the national student protest, held on 10th November.

Even so, the campaign's campus presence has ebbed during the Lent Term, with the arrangement of few, widely-publicised Freeze the Fees events. The calendar of activities has been limited to three, small-scale protests.

Sabbatical Officers joined protesters who interrupted a public lecture with Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt. Such action was criticised by some students, who said the message of the campaign was not clear, as the Freeze the Fees activists were joined by campaigners protesting Rupert

Murdoch's proposed takeover of BSKyB.

LSE students also participated in a protest, held on 19th January, against the scrapping of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), as well as the anti-cuts demonstration held in London on 29th January. Both the EMA protest and the anti-cuts demonstration were national events; however, far fewer LSE students attended these events, as compared with those held during the Michaelmas Term.

But the Sabbatical Officers told the Beaver last week the Freeze the Fees campaign will continue to pursue its objectives this term. The Students' Union plans to release a manifesto to the Director's Management Team, which will contribute to the School's “ideas” stage.

It is hoped the ideas presented in the report will influence the setting of future fee-levels. The report is constructed from consultation with students, conducted both online and in-person. The Sabbatical Officers believe that this paper “can influence the decision making at this crucial stage, where the university are considering all options and potential impacts” in combination with further protest.

The Sabbatical Officers said the Freeze the Fees campaign has been a “success”. In a statement released by the Students' Union, the Sabbatical Officers cited “signing up 2,500 students in the first two weeks of the campaign, having weekly organising meetings of between forty and seventy students since week zero, getting Howard Davies to unequivocally reject privatisation, having an action almost every week since week zero, garnering international media for our occupation and demonstrations, and being named the ‘most engaging campaign on any campus in the last two decades’ by the NUS” as key achievements.

Even so, students have raised concerns regarding campaign funding. The Sabbatical Officers remain tight-lipped about the cost of the campaign. They have said it would be “impossible to isolate the variables” on how much has been spent on the campaign.

LSE100 exam-ined

Bethany Clarke

The LSE Academic Board has launched an investigation into the possibility of changing the official start date of the School's Lent Term in 2012 in order to accommodate the LSE100 examination.

This January, students from last year's LSE100 pilot course sat their final exam on the Friday before the official start of Lent Term.

The examination was held at this time due to “the logistical impossibility of holding a two-hour unseen examination with normal exam conditions for 1,270 students at the School during term time”, said Dr Jonathan Leape, the course director and initiator of the investigation.

However, the current exam scheduling caused problems for some students.

At least fifteen of the 183 students scheduled to sit the exam this winter had yet to return to London by the exam date, having booked their travel plans on the basis of official term dates. In addition, students staying in residence halls with 31-week contracts faced additional fees.

Dr Leape said such issues motivated him to investigate the possibility of changing the term dates to accommodate the examination.

He said it is “an investigation into the School regulations regarding term dates” and “not an investigation into any aspect of the course”.

LSE100 has been designed to run on a calendar-year basis, beginning in Lent Term of a student's first year, and culminating with an exam the following

January.

“The idea was that not only would that spread the work of the course over two years, but students would already be settled into the School and the other four courses by the time the course started in January,” Dr Leape told the Beaver.

Last week, Ashok Kumar, the LSE Students' Union's Education Officer, met with Leape to discuss the scheduling of the LSE100 examination.

Kumar told the Beaver the two “meet often to discuss the progress of the LSE100 programme”.

Regarding the possibility of a change in term dates, Kumar said, “I think that this may be a better solution than what currently exists”.

Bernadette Chan Roy, a first-year maths and economics student said, “Obviously the scheduling of the exam caused problems for some students. It seems like changing the term dates would be a reasonable solution”.

First-year government and economics student Neha Jain was less confident that a simple change in term dates was the best solution to the problem.

“Because there are so many international students, it would be more practical if they had it during current term time, even if it fell on a weekend,” Jain said.

“There should be a clear distinction between term time and holidays”, she added.

Second-year international relations student Rimmel Mohyidin, who completed the module last month, said the proposed change would not be a solution. “It will only create more resentment towards the LSE”.



Photo: Jaynesh Patel

Political activist McIntyre addresses education assembly

Benjamin Butterworth

Student activist and blogger Jody McIntyre encouraged an assembly of education activists to step up their protesting efforts in the year ahead at an event held last weekend at the LSE.

On Sunday, 30th January, at a meeting of the National Education Assembly in The Quad, McIntyre told an audience of about fifty activists from various British universities, “We are at a point of crossroads in this movement. There's been a huge media reaction to our demonstrations, which brought a lot of publicity to our cause and raised a lot of awareness. But this year protests must get bigger.”

The speech was part of a broader event, attended by Students' Union representatives from around the country. Aiming to map out plans for the anti-cuts campaigns of 2011, McIntyre told attendees, “I think one of the most important things to recognise is that the state is clearly intent on crushing this movement.”

“They're intent on attacking all sections of society, especially the vulnerable”, he added. “This cannot remain just a student movement. We are all fighting against the government, and have to recognise our unified goal”.

McIntyre, who has cerebral palsy, gained public recognition last year, when video footage of him being dragged from his wheelchair at a student protest was posted on YouTube. He has since used the

publicity to attack government changes to tuition fees and public sector cuts.

“We need to take action anywhere a government minister is due to speak”, he said. “We need resistance on a scale this ConDem government never even could have dreamed of”.

The twenty-one-year old went on to compare recent fees-related protests to violent uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia.

“We've seen it everywhere, across the world people rising up”, McIntyre said. “It is vital we take our inspiration from those uprisings”.

Criticising police action, the blogger went on to suggest that government is attempting to dismantle student protests from behind the scenes.

“They're trying to stop us”, he said.

“Several of my close friends have been arrested from their homes as a result of these demonstrations. But we won't stop. If you're going to arrest our activists, then we're going to be on the streets in even bigger numbers”.

Alluding to planned protests for the coming year – which are thought to include a protest on Eton College, former school of Prime Minister David Cameron – McIntyre urged activists to step up their campaign efforts.

“When it comes to the summer, we'll be on the streets not for hours, but for days”, he said. “Demanding our voice is heard and our action effective”.

Union Jack

First, let this Union Jack apologise for the complete abandonment of any formerly-respected protocol in last week's issue. Though it is likely only one person noticed, this column is not usually written in the first person. The writer has been suitably punished.

It is the second time Jack has seen Potty Aaron at the UGM, and, well, he is a wet fish. He is going nowhere once his term finishes, and he will surely lose if he stands for a second term – so expect to see him in the Commons in a few years.

He waves his hands around like David Byrne on acid, and plunges his head back about a metre away from the microphone he is quietly speaking into. At one point, he was stretching up and down, round and about, left hip to right hip – and that is not normal speaking procedure in the Commons. Jack has never seen Michael Gove working to loosen his calves in Education Questions, so why is Porter doing it in the UGM? A “You've Been Framed” entry,

perhaps.

Questions were critical – as they would always be. A surplus of glowsticks from a failed campaign day in December was criticised, some UCL weasel turned up and called him a spineless ditherer, that sort of thing. Unfortunately for his case, Porter turned up with a fact at his fingertips that was quite clearly wrong. Porter said there is one higher education college and three further education colleges in Manchester, after the weasel complained about comrades, as he probably calls them, not knowing of the demo oop North. Since Jack's father works at a further education college in Manchester, he knows there is not as few as that – there are actually fifteen. And there is definitely more than one higher education college.

Meanwhile, A-Shock-n-awe Kumar explained that “students demand things from their elected leadership”, something of course which he would know all about, crusading Millbank and the rest for the benefit of students at the

LSE, rather than for some sort of vanity project, of course not. But Team Kumar and Guardianista were jet-setting last week in Canada.

Apparently, because there are imminent cuts and funding crises in Canada, they turned to two of our Sabbs to “inspire” them – Gerada actually used that word. Jack remembers that in The Office, David Brent did go to the event where people talked of their aspiration, so there is proof that there is room for anyone to sing the Internationale or whatever at one of those expensive get-togethers if people want you to.

Meanwhile, to not much hurrah – at least it was not audible – Charlie Glyn paid a visit to the UGM for the first time in a while. It was good to have her back, although Jack had forgotten how much she spoke in long, clumped sentences. If you want something to do over the next couple of days was a particular highlight. And another was her announcement that aerobics was “obviously” going to be on Thursday evening. When else was

it going to be, duh? Aerobics: obviously Thursday, obviously.

Also, the Bernard Levin Award is coming up soon – and Alice Pelton will be on hand to give advice. Glyn said Pelton was “highly commended” last year. Jack wasn't sure whether she was talking about the Bernard Levin Award, or something else Pelton did last year. The spirit of the “Carry On” film is clearly alive and well, unfortunately.

And although Glyn was back, one thing absent was Daniel “I come from an Ivy League liberal arts college in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which shall remain nameless” Kroop's mentioning of the “snacks” he is so fond of. That will be back next week – at least it better be. Hero Austin's language was still pretty informal, as it always seems to be. This time it was that Rosebery Hall was getting “screwed around”. Jack points to the “Carry On” film legacy above.

News in brief

PLAYING TO THE CROWD

The Beaver is investigating lecture attendance at the LSE after several reports that some lectures have attendance of under 10 per cent of students who are registered to take the course. At last week Thursday's Public International Law lecture, a module taken by second and third year LLB students, there was such low attendance that the course administrators took a register of lecture attendance. Some courses, such as Philosophy of Economics, do not post lecture slides on Moodle. The policy at LSE stands that lecture attendance is not mandatory or monitored.

DAVOS DAVIES

At this year's World Economic Forum in Davos, held last week, several central banks rallied to prevent floods of money from drowning their economies. Howard Davies, who attended the conference along with leaders in business, finance and politics, stated: “Five years ago, [these capital controls] would have been a non-Davos subject.” Davies later said that he reluctantly supported the capital controls: “sometimes they may be a regrettable necessity”.

SCHOLARLY ENDEAVOUR

Postdoctoral Fellowships by Marshall Scholarships Organisation has launched the latest scholarship for “talented, independent and wide-ranging” individuals. Students who are successfully awarded the Marshall Scholarship can be given extensions when pursuing their degrees. The LSE has agreed that they will allow for two third-year extensions as part of the Marshall Scholarship. One postgraduate student commented, “This is quite an important move, I think it will become a much more appealing prospect for bright students. It could add to the quality of research at the LSE.”

BY GEORGE

The Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET) has just launched an academic partnership with the LSE to further improve the nature of economic policy. INET was first launched in 2009 with a \$50 million sponsorship by George Soros, LSE alumni, as a direct response to the financial crisis that has hit world economies in 2008. It is hoped that the programme will use ideas from complex social sciences to improve the design and effectiveness of policy; LSE is recognised as a leader in this field.

KUWAIT PROFESSOR HONOURED

Professor Tim Besley has recently been awarded a CBE for services to social sciences by the Prince of Wales in London. Prior to taking up the position of Kuwait Professor, Besley was a member of the Monetary Policy Committee, which is responsible for setting national interest rates. Professor Besley is interested in public economics, development economics and the political economy.



GOT A SCOOP?

If you've got a story that you think we should be printing, send us an e-mail: news@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Kumar and co speak out on spending cuts

Chris Rogers

Student activists, including LSE Students' Union Education Officer Ashok Kumar, held a press conference on Wednesday morning in the Quad to discuss government spending cuts.

The press conference, held on 26th January, featured representatives from the National Union of Students (NUS), the Communication Workers Union and the Student Activist Network, among other organisations.

Journalists from national media outlets, such as the Sunday Times and the Guardian, as well as a television network funded by the state of Iran, attended, along with a handful of students.

Kumar told attendees that nearby London South Bank University, ranked 114th in the Guardian's university league table, expected annual fees of around £7,000 for its new students in the coming years. He added he feared for what LSE administrators intended to do to potentially raise students' fees at the School. Kumar went on to say he worried senior management would try to force through

a fees increase during the holidays, when there would be no students around campus to protest.

Reports within the School suggest the proposed fee levels would be finalised before the end of Lent Term, in time for the 2011 entry prospectus.

Kumar also said student protesters are continuing to building up their anti-cuts movement.

Billy Hayes, chair of Birkbeck Students' Union, said he was concerned British society was being rolled back by a "cabinet of millionaires, stuffed with millionaires".

"If we simply sit by, if we don't protest, we will get trampled over", Hayes said.

Sean Reillo Raizka, an executive committee member of the National Union of Students, characterised the coalition government as divided, weak and illegitimate, with no mandate for the cuts. He said the poll tax was repealed after protests, and so, too, could government policies related to education. He added we will see continued demonstrations against the government's actions.

Students petition to save favourite Drury Lane pizzeria

Sachin Patel

For seven years Ecco Café on Drury Lane has served the needs of LSE students in pursuit of £4 pizzas. For the 448 students who live at the High Holborn residence close by, it has been a fixture of the student lifestyle.

But now, the future of this local favourite is in doubt, after it emerged that Camden councillors have gone against the recommendations of council inspectors and may seek to remove the listed status of the building it occupies, with the intention of shutting Ecco down.

A petition supporting the café's appeal against the council's decision has attracted widespread approval, including the signatures of countless residents at High Holborn.

Current High Holborn President Sean Cox told the Beaver, "Ecco is one of the best value, the closest, and the most popular pizzerias used by the residents of High Holborn Hall. They are always our first choice when supplying pizza for social events. It would be a great loss for all of us to see Ecco closed down and I fully support the petition to prevent this."

Third-year law student Nik Adhia called the council's decision "outrageous", and said, "The food is great and the prices are very reasonable for students on a bud-

get who rely on Ecco for lunch and dinner."

He added, "I would strongly recommend that Camden Council reconsiders their position."

Interest in the case has been further piqued by the revelation that the LSE's Dean of Graduate Studies, Julian Fulbrook, is one of the councillors responsible for the Holborn and Covent Garden ward in which Ecco Café is located.

Carlos Sanchez, the proprietor of the café, told the Beaver he believes the councillors have been swayed by a third party – a local resident who occupies an apartment on the corner of the block.

"We installed an extractor flue at the rear of the property for her benefit," Sanchez says, "but now she has complained about it to the councillors."

Dr. Fulbrook has sought to distance himself from claims made by the café's owners. "I have heard absolutely nothing about this matter before," he told the Beaver, "and ward councillors are not given any particular powers about opening or closing cafés." The Dean said he would "chase up" the matter with the relevant Council authorities, but said he would not ultimately have any decision-making power.

Sanchez says he tried to talk to the alleged complainant, but he now feels an official appeal is the best course of action. The appeal, which was registered with the Planning Inspectorate on 24th November

2011, comes to a head on 15th February, when independent inspectors will pay another visit to the café. If they believe the installation of the extractor flue was justified, and that the building's listed status should be retained, the concerns of the petition's signatories will hopefully be answered.

Students' Union General Secretary Charlotte Gerada, who recently signed the petition, urged the council to keep it open, commenting, "Students need cheap, good food".

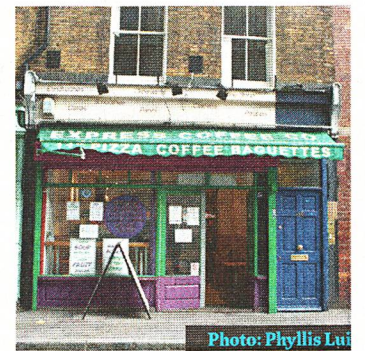


Photo: Phyllis Lui

Slow start for new widening participation scheme

Sachin Patel

An LSE Students' Union widening participation scheme, presented to students at the start of Michaelmas Term as a flagship innovation, will not be rolled out until week seven of Lent Term, according to the Sabbatical Officers.

Students' Union Community and Welfare Officer Hero Austin told the Beaver the programme's start was delayed due to the maternity leave of a staff member in the LSE's Widening Participation office.

Austin said the Students' Union approached Alison Segal, the School's widening participation coordinator, at the start of school year to facilitate communication with schools set to be involved in the scheme. Segal only recently returned to the LSE following her maternity leave, Austin said.

Austin also said the Students' Union scheme, which will implement workshops designed and led by students in inner-city secondary schools, encountered difficulties in recruiting sufficient numbers of volunteers during the Michaelmas Term. Austin told the Beaver publicity for the scheme was ill-targeted, leading to an unexpectedly low response rate.

"We advertised the scheme too generally", she said.

Austin said the Sabbatical Officers ultimately collaborated with the Students' Union Tackle Society, which solves social problems by tapping into "underemployed human capital" within the student body, to attract enough applicants for the scheme

to proceed, Austin said.

Austin told the Beaver interviews with applicants will take place next week, at which point ideas for the workshops will be collated. The exact format of the scheme has yet to be finalised, though Austin said these would depend on the specifications of each school involved in the scheme. Some schools may request weekly sessions with student volunteers, while others may ask students to run day-long workshops on a less regular basis, she explained.

And while the LSE already works with these schools in delivering a pilot scheme, LSE Connect, aimed to raise awareness of higher education, aspirations of students and overall attainment, Austin said there should be little concerns as to overlap between the Students' Union's planned scheme and the programmes currently offered by the School.

"Our workshops will be social science-specific," she said, "because we recognise these are valuable subjects in their own right".

"Opportunities in these subjects are not found in state schools at present," Austin added.

The School currently operates fourteen different widening participation programmes, which are collectively intended to encourage and inform under-represented groups. These programmes operate under a variety of guises, from student ambassadors assisting in aspiration-raising projects in the community, to summer schools focused on disciplines such as psychology, mathematics, law and finance.

According to Elly Hobson, widening participation and community engagement manager at the LSE's Student Recruitment Office, the programmes "aim to instill a love for learning and begin to raise awareness of the benefits of education".

"We also aim to break down myths and misconceptions about university, its associated costs and the application process," Hobson told the Beaver.

A report published in December 2010 by the Sutton Trust, an educational charity with an eye on social mobility, praised the LSE for accepting a higher proportion of students on free school meals than some less-selective institutions, such as University of Portsmouth and Oxford Brookes University. 4 per cent of domestic students at the LSE come from such backgrounds, compared to 1.7 per cent at Oxford Brookes, according to the report.

LSE Director Howard Davies told the Beaver last October the School remains committed to improving its widening participation offerings.

"More could be spent on widening participation programmes, or targeted programmes in particular communities, improving people's ability to get in," Davies said.

Austin told the Beaver the new programme will explore the personal interests of mentors, thus filling a gap that currently exists in the School's widening participation efforts.

Hobson said her team "supports the LSE Students' Union in this venture".

Sabbs seek more satisfaction in next year's NSS

Chris Rogers

While student satisfaction at the School has significantly improved in recent years, according to results of the 2010 National Student Survey (NSS), LSE Students' Union Sabbatical Officers say they are striving for better results in next year's survey.

Third-year undergraduates at the School are expected to complete the NSS later this term.

The 2010 survey revealed student satisfaction increased by 4 percentage points, from 76 per cent in 2009 to 80 per cent in 2010.

Despite the improvement, however, students still regard the LSE with less satisfaction than other students around the country regard their respective universities, with satisfaction at the LSE below the national average of 82 per cent.

Of all UK universities, the LSE ranks ninety-second in terms of overall student satisfaction.

The best university, according to the survey, was the University of Buckingham, with a satisfaction rating of 95 per cent. The private university charges fees topping £18,000 per course.

The university with the lowest levels of satisfaction was the University of the Arts London, with a rating of only 62 per cent.

King's College and Imperial College both achieved higher rankings than the

LSE, with ratings of 86 and 85 per cent, respectively.

Of the courses offered at the LSE, economics scored highly, with 83 per cent of its students asserting the course was satisfactory, while government received a rating of 82 per cent.

Even so, just fifty-two per cent of students felt that they received detailed comment on their work and only 52 per cent felt teachers feedback helped them to clarify problems that they didn't understand.

Education Officer Ashok Kumar told the Beaver nearly all of the Students' Union's initiatives, from campaigns to activities, are intended to improve students' satisfaction as gauged by polls, such as the NSS.

"We remain critical of the methodology and criteria used in these surveys" Kumar said, "but believe that it is an important measure for the LSE to improve on areas of feedback, personal development and other areas of teaching and learning".

Kumar said the Students' Union will be "front and centre" in encouraging LSE students to submit the surveys, when they are made available later this term.

"Our argument is about encouraging students who want to genuinely improve teaching and learning in the University", Kumar added. "The LSE administration really wants to improve their scores, so it's a perfect opportunity for students to be honest, hold the university accountable, and work towards a better student experience".

Residences misery continues

Sachin Patel

Rosebery Hall management will issue a written apology to residents for overrunning bathroom refurbishments, but details of compensation will not be finalised until next week.

Complaints about new shower fittings, as reported in the Beaver last week, are not expected to be resolved until Friday, 4th February, and the project will not be signed-off until April, when the final sets of showers are set to be installed, according to Students' Union Community and Welfare Officer Hero Austin.

Further, the Beaver has learned that some students at Anson Road, the School's residence for families, which is managed by Rosebery's administrative

team, have been forced to leave their flats because of concerns over the building's roof.

Postgraduate Regina Guzman, who is studying development at the LSE and lives at Anson Road with her husband, told the Beaver, "The roof in our flat was a risk for our security and could have collapsed at any moment".

"It just seems that people in Rosebery don't care", Guzman said, "and they only send thousands of people to 'take a look' at everything. It's impossible to have privacy".

Hero Austin, the Community and Welfare Officer of the Students' Union, said she was unaware of Guzman's complaints, but stressed that she was happy for students in halls of residence to register complaints "off their own back".

"But they can always copy me in to

their complaints," Austin added.

Guzman said she was "extremely frustrated and disappointed with this situation", adding, "We're not asking for more than we agreed; we really don't expect to live in a luxury flat, just safely and unstressed".

Concerns at Rosebery and Anson Road come after numerous other complaints at LSE residences in recent months. In the first week of Lent Term, heating systems at Bankside House were down for four days, and the Front of House Manager at High Holborn recently alerted students to potentially disturbing construction noises stemming from refurbishment work on the residence's first floor. The work at High Holborn is scheduled to finish at the end of March.



Photo: Duncan McKenna

Thoughts on the shorts

Oliver Wiseman

LSE alumnus, author and journalist Michael Lewis charmed an LSE audience last Thursday with stories of eccentric investors who profited from the recent financial crisis.

The event, held on 27th January to promote the paperback release of Lewis's latest book, *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine*, was chaired by finance academic, Professor David Webb, deputising for LSE Director Howard Davies, who was attending the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Lewis, asked by Webb how he came across the material for *The Big Short*, said "I realised someone must have profited from what had happened on Wall Street, so I looked into the funds that made the best returns in 2008. The guys I came across were all literary material."

From Michael Burry, a one-eyed investor with Asperger's, to Steve Eisman, a money manager with a keen interest in the parallels between his life and that of Spiderman's Peter Parker, Lewis described

the "many paths" these outliers took to the right conclusion about the financial system.

Now a regular contributor to *Vanity Fair* and *The New York Times Magazine*, Lewis has written about the City before, in his era-defining *Liar's Poker*, an account of the testosterone-fueled world of Soloman Brothers in the late 1980s. Lewis said he had hoped *Liar's Poker* would put people off a career in the City but instead had just showed "dumb people how to make money", lightheartedly arguing that he was therefore responsible for the problems of the current financial system.

The lecture was likewise interspersed with anecdotes about Lewis's time as an economics student at the School. "Back then, everyone was a Marxist" he said at one point, going on to ask if that remained the case today.

Towards the end of the event, one student asked Lewis if, as a writer, he had any role models. Lewis said he was less impressionable than he once was, but had been greatly influenced by Tom Wolfe, George Orwell, and Kingsley Amis, among others.



Bigger is better – Stewart

Marion Koob

Conservative MP Rory Stewart joined academics David Lewis, Frances Crook and Karl Wielding in a panel discussion on the concept of the "Big Society" last Thursday, 27th January, at the LSE.

The notion of Big Society was first introduced by the Conservative Party during the campaigns leading up to the 2010 general election. It advocates the empowerment of communities through collaborative projects, such as the creation of schools. Such projects were previously limited by law. The Big Society's critics claim that it is simply a cover for swinging cuts and the dismantling of vital state support.

Within the panel, Stewart was the sole defender of his party's platform. He spoke of numerous community projects in the county of Cumbria, which had been enabled by the Big Society, including the installation of a high-speed broadband network.

"This program has made a lot of difference to people's lives", Stewart said. "There are communities which were extremely frustrated, often at a very local level. There were many things they wanted to do, which they felt they were prevented from doing".

Meanwhile, Crook, a senior visiting fellow at the LSE, described the Big Society measures as an attempt to "smoke-screen the roll back of the state", arguing these changes would result in a decrease of accountability and scrutiny of local services.

She went on to denounce the program by comparing its effects to those of the bombing of Baghdad.

"When you bomb a city you destroy the infrastructure, and cross your fingers and hope that the people who survive will sort out their own water, electricity, and education with no planning" Crook said. "That is the equivalent of what is happening here to the NHS, to education, and to almost every other public service".

Lewis, a professor of social policy and development at the LSE, highlighted the risks of an increase in women's unpaid employment, and of leaving those most vulnerable under the social care of amateurs, as some of Big Society's shortcomings. He also said the discourse of Big Society has been used as a means to justify the reduction of state services.

Adding that the expectations of the voluntary sector in this case would be too great, Lewis said people "want to use, not run, sport centres and libraries".

Likewise speaking sceptically of the project, Wielding, head of research at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, drew upon his professional experience to argue the costs of organising volunteers remains significant. Having varied projects across different communities could also lead to a "postcode lottery", he warned.

"The discussion was passionate in

places but generated light as well as heat", said Professor Julian LeGrand of the Department of Social Policy, who chaired Thursday's event. "We came away with a better understanding of the tensions involved in defining and implementing the set of ideas that constitute the Big Society, but also of the potential of some of the key elements to do good".

After the lecture, Luke Smolinski, a third-year studying philosophy and economics, said, "The speakers showed there is a lot more to the Big Society than David Cameron's enemies like to make out." Smolinski added, "At its heart, it is the idea that a faceless state can make people just as individualistic as the crushing materialism of the Thatcher years. Citizenship demands more than simply outsourcing all moral responsibility to the government".



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 Dr Richard Wellings Institute of Economic Affairs	 Professor Peter Sinclair University of Birmingham

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Grammar schools are dated nonsense

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Comment page 7

Prominent academic Lardy offers “four baskets” to China

• *Nicholas Lardy proposes solution to low consumption*

Shrina Poojara

The LSE welcomed academic Nicholas Lardy to the Sheikh Zayed Theatre on Thursday, 27th January, to present a public lecture entitled, "China's Stimulus: path to sustainable growth or bubble machine".

Referring to a 2007 speech given by the Premier of the People's Republic of China, Wen Jiabao, in which Jiabao referred to China's economic growth as "unsteady, unbalanced, uncoordinated and unsustainable", Lardy explored why Jiabao said what he did, and the reaction of the Chinese government to the country's economic situation.

Introduced by LSE Director Howard Davies, who chaired Thursday's event, as "undoubtedly one of the most prominent and influential commentators, particularly on the financial scene in China", Lardy is the Anthony M. Solomon Senior Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, a think tank based in Washington D.C. An expert on Asia who has written numerous articles and books on the Chinese economy, Lardy's recent works include *The Future of China's Exchange Rate Policy* (2009) and *China's Rise: Challenges and Opportunities* (2008).

Lardy began his lecture by addressing significant economic indicators in the Chinese economy and how they have varied since the start of the millennium. For instance, consumption's share of gross domestic product (GDP) has dramatically

declined, to reach a low of 35 per cent, which Lardy reported to be the "lowest of any economy in recorded economic history". Also notably, capital formation is approaching 45 per cent of the People's Republic's GDP, and the country has experienced unprecedented external surpluses.

Lardy went on to discuss the four "baskets" of government policy that can be used to address the issue: fiscal policy to increase social spending, cut household taxation and increase corporation tax; policy to rectify China's "repressive financial system", in which interest rates are lower than the rate of inflation; price reforms on input commodities that are currently under priced by the government; and, lastly, a need to allow the exchange rate to appreciate.

Lardy then considered the successes of the 2008-09 Chinese economic stimulus, in terms of dealing with China's economic problems, including the positive impact on household consumption. China's "innovative approach" in dealing with property bubbles, Lardy concluded he considers the stimulus a success as it was "early, large and well designed". He described himself as "a little bit optimistic" as to whether the Chinese government will be able to make the economy more consumption driven, with less focus on investment.

Lardy also answered questions from the audience, covering such topics such as the effect of an ageing population and the potential future changes in wages.

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Comment

Why I want to thank Nick Griffin

Without crazy, racist and unpredictable leaders British politics is one big yawn

Sam Langton



If people heard me say I wanted to see more political extremists in the UK, I have a feeling it wouldn't be too well received. But, the fact is, I genuinely want to see a bit more originality and controversy in contemporary politics. The last decade or so has seen the once populated and resourceful lands of the far left and the far right drained of any vitality, with all the up-and-coming politicians of our future timidly shuffling their way towards the ever more popular centre-ground.

Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against the politics or economics of the centre ground. I was an avid fan of Tony Blair's poor excuse for a socialist party ever since he came to prominence in the mid 1990s. It was a fantastic compromise between the grumpy men in Old Labour who were still convinced the welfare state wasn't good enough, and the increasingly impatient and independent younger generations. But, I can't help feeling it's all getting a little too boring. Our parents can rant all they want about how it's such a disgrace that the 'youth of today' are no longer interested in politics, but can you really blame them? I used to despise people who confidently proclaimed: 'Politics is BORING!', but now I can't help but empathise with them.

The only thing people like Nick Griffin

should ever be thanked for, is for actually making the last General Election remotely interesting. The inevitability of the result was just as inevitable as the policies. Yes, there was going to be a hung parliament, and yes, Nick Clegg would be David Cam-

It would almost be immoral not to let extremists on television for the sake of public interest and amusement

eron's pet poodle. It was almost excruciatingly predictable.

Nick Griffin, however, played the guy in school whose antics were irritating, immature and thoughtless, but in reality made the whole experience a whole lot more interesting. Question Time had become almost as tedious as a Formula 1 race when it doesn't rain, but when the badass white supremacist came on, the whole of the United Kingdom's fine population not living under a rock was on the edge of their seat. Politics had suddenly become interesting.

And yes, Unite Against Fascism, I prioritise entertainment over morality when it comes to television. It would almost be immoral not to let extremists on televi-

sion for the sake of public interest and amusement. Eight million people watched Nick Griffin's double chin wobble about in discomfort as he legitimately got verbally raped by the audience and panel that evening. This should give people hope that interest in contemporary British politics hasn't completely died out. Please, let's have more of this, just maybe tone down the racism a tad.

Importantly, people voting for extremes actually feel as though they are fighting for something. My least favourite country in the western world, the United States of America, has a much higher interest in politics for a reason: both the main parties come from two different extremes. How could anyone expect any person, young or old, to care about voting in the UK when the best three options they have are all in the same ball park? In fact, you don't even have to have a firm and controversial political stance to get people interested and supportive, you just have to be a pervert – enter Berlusconi (if media all. As far as Britain goes – Ed, if you want to make it to the top the sordid way, you know what to do, and who to do. Having said that, I've heard he spent some of his student life at the LSE, so he probably wouldn't know where to begin.

Back to the point, it would make me one happy man to see some original policies and people enter the political scene. Be as controversial, eccentric, and provocative as you like future politicians, because it's the only way you will drag young people away from watching Cash in the Attic while hungover in bed, and into the ballot box. ☛

The gay mafia strikes back

Seriously people, homosexuals exist – get over it



Melanie Phillips - too outspoken? Photo: flickr user get down

Jennifer Izaakson-Jones



Last week, Melanie Phillips wrote that children in schools are to be "bombarded with references to homosexuality" as part of the 'gay agenda'. Are pupils about to plot Gay Pride parade locations on maps in Geography? Will screenings of L-Word episodes be provided during rainy break-times? Handed free copies of Pink News at the school gates? Probably not. School is rarely that interesting. Between History and Algebra, the Gay Times would be a welcome relief. But so what if children were exposed to more homosexual overtones than Top Gun? We live in a world where gay people exist, most children will have LGBT members in the family, whether they know it or not. A lot of children are gay so why shouldn't they be allowed to learn fancying the same sex is a very normal thing?

Research conducted by Stonewall has found that well over half of LGBT school pupils experience homophobic bullying. Most students at the LSE will be aware how popular 'gay' is as a general term of derision. The repeal of Section 28 within the last decade should be celebrated. Section 28 made it unlawful for schools to 'promote homosexuality' which essentially made acknowledging homosexuality's existence unlawful. I've met a few teachers who took this to mean that homophobic bullying in the classroom couldn't be challenged. Section 28 created a climate of fear for both pupils and teachers; LGBT staff members were often afraid to come out to colleagues.

Phillips writes, "In Geography, for example, they'll be told to consider why homosexuals move from the countryside to cities. In Mathematics, they will be taught statistics through census findings about the number of homosexuals in the population". Oh my God, they're actually teaching children about reality! Everyone take to the streets!

In English Literature it's relevant to learn that Tennessee Williams was gay. It sheds light on many of his plays and gives historical context to the themes of repression present. It's not simply an "attempt to brainwash children with propaganda under the camouflage of education". Propaganda propagating what? That Southern America was hot with denial and poverty during the 1920s? And that homosexuality existed? Heavens above, it's that indomitable reality rearing its awful head again! Melanie Phillips doesn't object to education having context; she objects to homosexuality being treated as a normal thing because she's part of a

tiny bigoted minority who still think it's abnormal and wrong.

Equality laws and the LGBT rights struggle have made homophobia less acceptable than it once was, but it's still all too present. Homophobic hate crimes increased last year, according to police. Ian Baynman's killers were sentenced to prison last month for kicking him to death in Trafalgar Square. The reality is we live in a society where people are murdered for being gay. Children in our schools should be talking about that.

Melanie Phillips is one of the most vocal right-wing commentators of the national media, of similar ilk to Daily Mail columnist Richard 'gypsy scroungers exploit NHS' Littlejohn. Phillips has called Palestinians a 'terrorist population', claimed Obama is a Marxist and written that Britain 'has capitulated to Islamic terror'. Phillips's comments are a symptom of an over-confident right-wing in Britain. With Conservatives in power (thanks to easy capitulation from the Lib Dems), colossal cuts are about to decimate the public sector, hitting the most vulnerable. The rise of racist nationalist groups like the English Defense League build up disillusionment felt by many left behind in society. In turn the reactionary views of Melanie Phillips are coveted by the whole spectrum of press apparatus, beyond the tabloids, to provide useful targets for the anger felt by so many. Right now over two million unemployed people in the UK are looking for a scapegoat. The media will give them one, a purposeful distraction from the real culprits of austerity in Britain: the government.

It is the confidence of those willing to expose Islamophobia, homophobia, sexism that we need. I welcome the sacking of two Sky football broadcasters over their sexist comments about a female assistant referee. Bigots need these examples to not only learn that discrimination isn't acceptable but to not lose faith in believing that there will be no consequences. The campaign to sack Melanie Phillips is picking up pace, but the only real way we're going to challenge a climate where scapegoating minorities is an opportunity of distraction, is by creating a society free of the ills scapegoating seeks to cover for.

Phillips claims a mysterious, unnamed "all-powerful gay rights lobby" turning into "Britain's new McCarthyites". Well, this McCarthyite is not only planning on taking on the Phillipses of this world, but encouraging others to bring down a government that upholds a system where sexism, racism, homophobia remain acceptable and are decoys to distract us. The real reason people are unemployed/poor/facing a triple increase in tuition fees, is the government, not the marginalised nor the minorities. ☛

Grammatically incorrect

BBC heats up the public vs. private education debate again

Nathan Briant



Some aspects of grammar schools were brilliant – and continue to be, where they are located around the country, in Birmingham, Kent and so on. They take children, often from a modest socio-economic background, at the age of eleven and place them in an environment that is more rigorous than other people who aren't at the school can cope with, and subsequently up to a standard which would not have been attainable had they been with the riff-raff.

Well, at least that would be the case if it wasn't dated nonsense. Every child should be given the opportunity to learn at their own pace up to a standard level – and selection should not be conducted at the age of eleven, when an arbitrarily-timed assessment is academic pot luck. If grammar schools ever became popular again – God help us – parents would dread their children becoming the chaff which comes with the wheat of a grammar school system, and being shunted off to the secondary modern, where millions of children were consigned to a world of technical skills before they'd reached adolescence. A comprehensive system is, for all its faults, a much better option; and it's a shame that Andrew Neil doesn't seem to recognise it, however well his performance at a grammar school served him.

Then comes the problem of whether anything has actually changed from the days of pre-Andrew Neil. Yes, the era of the non-privately educated – and in James Callaghan and John Major's case even the non-university educated – Prime Minis-

ters was pushing the idea of a meritocracy a little further than it had been before between the 1970s and the 1990s. But if we look a jot further than the last few Prime Ministers there lies a slightly different and more skewed story.

Over the last week or so the BBC's schedulers, specifically those working for BBC Two, seem to have taken war to private schools. On BBC Two last week Andrew Neil's Posh and Posher pushed the idea of reinventing the grammar school system to significantly boost the number of middle- and working-class people in Parliament and in cabinet, and tomorrow night the channel is showing 'Who Gets The Best Jobs?', a programme that will point to the fact that there is less social mobility across the country than people could strictly hope for. Even on the wireless, Radio 4 has been at it: Friday's Today programme had a five-minute piece on why Word Magazine said that most of those hitting the top of the pop music charts – music of which I'm fortunately blissfully ignorant – have been privately educated.

The resurgence of this public-private debate – and if there is one, Neil's programme was part of it – seems to be part of the furore of finding something against David Cameron and Nick Clegg, that terrible twosome, two of the country's most (in)famous ex-public schoolboys. Generally, Neil's conclusion that the meritocracy born in the post-war consensus which he'd risen through from modest grammar school outside Glasgow, to the city's university, and into becoming a genuinely big shark in the British political scene, was dead because Cameron and Clegg, and a large number of other privately-schooled and Oxbridge-educated cabinet ministers, are perceived to be running the country, is short-sighted – both inasmuch as that he thought that grammar schools are the prescription to keeping the meritocracy

alive and kicking, and secondly that anything had actually changed to permanently make a system anything like a meritocracy.

Alistair Darling and Norman Lamont both went to Loretto School, and nine of the previous thirteen Chancellors were educated at Oxbridge colleges; and if we look further towards cabinet ministers, as Neil found out is the case, it's likely there'll be a high proportion of those who were educated at what are perceived to be elite institutions. Indeed, Neil found that there are more graduates of Magdalen College, Oxford sitting around the cabinet table than there are women, which if not a clear indictment of Britain's social mobility, is one of an exclusionary political class.

Looking to the future, that doesn't make any less of a task of what children have to face up to now to get on and to get to Westminster if they want. But private schools aren't going to go away for the good reason there's no decent liberal way to get rid of them and they provide a valuable service to those who can afford it. Rather, the state will have to make the best of what it can and pressurise both sides of the public-private fence to shrink the quality gap between the two, perhaps with greater co-operation between the two groups, with a sharing of facilities for example. It is therefore unfortunate that the coalition's policy of free schools is frustrating at best and absurd at worse. How a gulf in quality can be reduced by dividing resources into more areas and funding yet more schools simply because a number of pushy parents wants them to replace the ailing comprehensive down the road, as Michael Gove and his band headed up by pseudos like Toby Young believe, is staggering, and if there was to be the end of a (perceived and hopeful) meritocracy and the critical damage of the state's education then this and the policy of division, if anything, could be the start of it. ☛

Obama, Obama, wherefore art thou?

He shall from time to time... forget that yes, he can



Time to change change?
Photo: flickr user PSA_CREW

Javneet Ghuman



Obama's recent speech in the wake of the Arizona shootings had given me hope that America had gotten its President back. That Barack Obama from the 2008 campaign trail had come back to claim his rightful place. The hope, however, was somewhat short lived. Last Tuesday saw President Obama take to the floor of the House of Representatives to make his second State of the Union address. The speech was good but it was not his most uplifting or inspiring. His tone was positive and forward looking; he laid out visions for the future of America but his rhetoric of 'hope' lay shimmering, somewhere beneath. However, for a President who has just seen his party lose control of the lower House, there was no real clarity in what he wanted this new bipartisanship to achieve. Certainly, he took great pains to highlight the innovative skills of Americans and drew inspiration from the 'American Dream' but in terms of Obama's comprehensive legislative agenda for the next Congressional session, it was somewhat lacking in detail.

Understandably, President Obama had to acknowledge the fact that there was a need for bipartisanship in the wake of the 2010 midterms and the recent shootings in Arizona. He is achingly aware that his administration will have an extremely difficult time in passing any legislation which could be deemed as remotely controversial. If the facial expressions of the Speaker of the House, John Boehner, were anything to go by the Republicans' battle plan is to block anything that comes their way. It seems the GOP, and certainly the Tea Party faction, have declared war on this 'socialist' President and therefore he has little choice but to toe the bipartisan line. The State of the Union reaffirmed to many that he has moved to the centre ground. He highlighted the tax cuts which Congress had passed in the last session (a concession on the part of Democrats) and talked of how he wished to lower corporation tax by closing the tax loopholes. The good news was that corporations had seen an increase in profit! There can be no denying that President Obama has decided that it is time to take the centre ground. Despite his remarks that it was not a 2012 election victory that was at stake, Obama knew that this speech would be part of his re-election strategy. His plan for the future, for taking hold of the "Sputnik moment", was made with the hope, and perhaps the assumption, that he would still be at the helm to steer these policies exactly where he wanted them to go in two years time. His re-election team have no doubt told him that the average

American voter wants their President to take the middle ground. It was a strategy which worked for President Clinton after the 1995 Republican gains and Clinton went on to win a second term. According to them, if Obama moves enough to the centre, perhaps he can do the same.

On the other hand, I feel like I have been somewhat cheated. I miss the Obama of 2008 when he made me (and arguably a large portion of the American public) feel like anything was possible. There were hints of this Obama on Tuesday but they were far and few between. He hammered home that the elimination of 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' was here to stay; stating that no one should be prevented from serving their country on the basis of whom they had fallen in love with. He acknowledged that the deficit needed to be cut but that under no circumstances would the vulnerable groups of American society be left to suffer. His unwillingness to compromise on the fact that there needed to be more, not less, spending in research and development, education and innovation showed that he still held core Democratic principles in high esteem. He showed that the Obama of 2008 was still lurking somewhere, rather subdued, under the surface. Campaign strategists may believe that the best track would be to move to the centre ground and yes, I am not an American voter, but I cannot help feeling that it was when the President spoke of his partisan visions that I was more inclined to consider him worthy of a second term.

Obama closed his speech by saying that "The State of the Union is strong". He could not be more wrong. Partisan politics is at its height in America and whilst the logistics and practicalities suggest that there will need to be bipartisan co-operation for any legislation to be passed, the President should not feel that he needs to shed his core beliefs in order to be re-elected in 2012. The Republicans have already reassumed their partisan stance and while talk of bipartisanship allows the President to take the moral high ground, no amount of wishing for co-operation is going to persuade the Republicans that they should work with Obama. This Obama supporter says that he needs to shout that he is ready for a fight rather than just meekly hint it.

The 2012 election is wide open. Obama's move to the centre may not be enough, even if he is running against Palin. If that is the case, these next two years should be about driving home the principles which Obama holds dear and which got him elected in the first place. He proved in his speech that they are still there. If he wins a second term then this is the chance to remind the American public of the inspiring man that they elected to office. Yes, bipartisanship is needed but it should not compromise his core ideals. Otherwise he shall go down as, at best a mediocre President and at worst, a failure – a President who compromised too much for too little gain. Perhaps someone should remind Mr Obama that it is not over yet – that yes, he can. ☺

Whose right to copy?

My right to copy!

Marion

Koob



It would be an odd, but accurate statement to say that my life has been to a vague degree concerned with copyright issues. This began to be markedly obvious in my last years of high school. Like every other International Baccalaureate student, I had to write an 'Extended Essay' – a four-thousand word monster, all with footnotes and never-ending bibliographies. A younger equivalent of a (super) assessed essay, so to speak.

After some deliberation, I chose to research on the price elasticity of demand (PED) of cinema tickets. Unfortunately, when presented to others, this topic simultaneously sounded funny and incredibly dull. The choice wasn't random, however. I imagined that the flooding of pirated videos onto the internet must have led cinema tickets to be less valued by consumers. Easy economics. What's more, the very thought of my younger brother strutting around the house claiming to have seen numerous Hollywood blockbusters weeks before their Belgian date of release was sufficient to stir me to work.

After rather painful data collection around my school, I ran the numbers through (how better knowledge of Excel spreadsheet use would have helped me then!) and found that the PED was inelastic, but barely. It was a change from questions I had asked about previous habits, where the PED had been much more staunchly price insensitive. In other words, the students had become more responsive to changes in ticket prices.

This wasn't too surprising either. I figured that in Brussels, there weren't many social equivalents to going to the big screen, hence the inelasticity. Yet there were now many cheaper (free) substitutes available, hence the change. (If only things were this easy. I can think of all sorts of

faults with the way this was carried out now.)

This is perhaps a too long-winded way to argue that intellectual property rights do matter. Paying for the right to see something does too. The worst is that this is already a dull claim to make; after all, most have already taken sides on this moral dilemma, first with music, and now with film. Entertainment is expensive, and we consume it in ever greater volumes. Some countries of the world get the latest

Revenues of film companies are slowly being eaten away, to the detriment then of those who work in the industry

materials months before we do. I am sympathetic to these claims – I have sometimes even succumbed to them. However, I think there is a case in arguing that we should at least pretend that we care.

Needless to mention the usual suspects; revenues of film companies are slowly being eaten away, to the detriment then of those who work in the industry. I interned for one of these firms this summer. The DVD was still known among its employees as the 'cash cow'. Compared to its sales, revenues made from cinema entries are laughably small. Watching professionals presenting diagrams which showed overall sales with a clear downward trend was, to say the least, grim. Asking them in turn what could be done to counter piracy (whilst again and again contradicting my convictions the ensuing evening) usually led to a resigned shrug of the shoulders. There wasn't much to

do but lobby governments, they confided. Enforcing these rules in emerging market cinemas, however, was the principal problem, and overall considered as hopeless.

Some weren't so pessimistic. Talking to the tech-savvy guy at the office, responsible for all things video-on-demand (VoD), notably relations with Apple TV, brought me around to his 'insurrectionist' view. In a world of distributional utopia, he said, the consumer would be able to choose the medium by which to view the film. In other words, the movie would at the same time be available for purchase online, on DVD, and in the theatres. He added that the time lags of releases across different countries was absurd; and that there is a space of approximately three months in a film's 'life cycle', between the end of theatrical release and the issuing of DVDs, during which it is impossible to acquire a copy legally. I found myself agreeing wholeheartedly.

I like to think that there will come a day when the medium is the choice – and that this will reduce the prevalence of illegal streaming. At the very least, it will be easier for the consumer to pay if he/she wishes to do so. The 'injustice' of the US able to see the newest season of say, Mad Men, before the rest of the world shall be no more, and we'll be able to screen to our heart's content. Yet, the problem is that lines of distinction will remain fuzzy. I own the DVD, but don't have the copy with me – does that make streaming acceptable? TV programmes can be viewed again on the internet within a limited time period, then taken away from one day to the next. If this was available to watch for free yesterday, why would it be wrong to do so today?

Despite being prey to endemic hypocrisy, I still think these issues matter and ought to be discussed. We should bring the question of video streaming back to a debate and think further of consequences. There is perhaps no way to limit the phenomenon; it is indeed very likely that this move will determine the future of film. It is worth seeing the matter in a moral light, as a matter of choice – and consider the options. It's good to keep in mind that the industry has to live off, us somehow. ☺

Letters to the Editor

Sir—Following last term's piece by Nicola Alexander there has been growing interest in our society. However, as much as we appreciate the interest, we would request a degree of privacy. It is becoming increasingly difficult for us, in our hallowed hall, to practise our holy rituals and manipulate school affairs and so we humbly ask the following. Please, desist in your search for the mystical seventh floor of the library, wonder not what lies behind the frosted glass around the lift. Stay out of the catacombs beneath Wright's Bar, for what dwells there is not for you to know. Do not ask the Italians, for they do not know of us. Finally, under no circumstances and for the love of Sekhmet, do not attempt to turn the head of the penguin clockwise three times using only the second and fourth fingers of your left hand. Your fingers will be bloodied.

Yours,

The Fewbians

Got a minute?
Drop us a quick
comment at
comment@
thebeaveronline.
co.uk

Sir—I'm a chilled out guy – just ask any of my poor teachers and they'll gladly tell you of my laid-back approach to deadlines, attendance and the like. So chilled I'm not even irritated by the large section of the LSE population who hold candlelit vigils to mourn the loss of Lehman Brothers.

However, this term something about LSE has really been grinding my tur-nip. Walking around campus has been a monumental struggle. Yes, I'm sure you've noticed too – the doors are a nightmare. Stand by the entrance to the library and you'll soon notice hoards of students running up to the big doors, glimpsing a notice a second too late and slamming into a locked door regardless. Studying is hard enough without having to meander to the left, and then veer to the right to avoid oncoming traffic.

First obstacle complete, you feel on top of the world and try outsmarting the plebs by taking the short-cut to Houghton Street through St Clements'. Big mistake. The doors are stiff and swing back to inevitably flatten your nose. And then there's another set 10 metres away! OK, you've survived the short trip from the library to 'H Street' and decide to reward yourself with a bar of overpriced, Fairtrade, organic, recycled granola in the SU shop. The entrance to the merchandise store is the Econ B of doors. It is the stiffest of doors and the narrowest of entrances – an encouragement to get rid of the Christmas belly if you ever saw one. And I'm not even going to touch on the doors of the Student Services Centre because they're intentionally heavy to stop weaklings entering to nag about fees and lost library cards.

If any of you out there are as passionate about doors as I am, you need to get a life.

Kind Regards,

Coren Lass

Quick COMMENT

Would we die without internships?

We wouldn't die without one, but we'd die for one.

—Sumaiyah Khan, 2nd year LLB. Laws

Probably. Where else would we learn how to get other people coffee?

—Paul Langerberg, General Course, Economics

According to the social dictates of the LSE – in theory, no; in practice, yes

—Usha Patel, 2nd year BA History

No – Internships are overrated

—Ketan Thakkar, Post Graduate MSc Global Politics

They can be a great experience but they aren't necessary at all, and definitely not worth the stress they put some people through

—Sheena Sodha, 1st Year, BSc. Philosophy and Economics

No... but we wouldn't be LSE students then – Alexander Young Features Editor, The Beaver

If you have no achievements to gloat or boast about during university, relax, you can still get an internship

—Anser Aftab, General Course, International Relations

Normal people – no. LSE students – die? Hell, it's the end of the world.

—Mirza Shahmeer Agha, 2nd Year BSc. Management

Not me, I have one...no wait, two.

—Ahmed Alani, Design Editor, The Beaver

NEXT WEEK...

Should the library reduce the Set Text Fine?

Send in your submissions!
Email comment@thebeaveronline.co.uk

AU: Alcoholics Unanonymous

Why the Athletics Union should bond on the field and not in the pub

Poorna Harjaani



At the start of the new academic year, many members of the LSE Athletics Union (AU) are told to bring a bottle of vodka each to a captain's house on a weekend. Members gather to play drinking games with the purpose of 'team bonding' – a long-standing tradition at many universities. The non-drinkers are given instructions to buy milk and red bull. A concoction of milk, red bull and Tabasco are made for them to drink. In this way, they still have a stomach churning sensation on par with their fellow drinking team mates.

There is a growing concern amongst the student body that these initiations involve behaviour that is often unacceptable. This includes peer pressure to drink excessive alcohol, vomiting, humiliating acts and even mild bullying. Drinking at 8am on a Sunday is not only horribly vile, but it is not part of campus life, hence these take place off-Houghton Street. The Baywatch party last term had Freshers wearing Speedos, which was reminiscent

of an American fraternity culture. The Students Union code of conduct on initiations states: "All leaders and members should consider how they will maintain the positive reputation of the LSE and its Students Union when in public." Semi-nudity in public does not reflect this.

We must also remember in 2005 when AU students caused £30,000 worth of damage to the King's College campus taking its well-known rivalry too far. The Times covered the story which described students drinking at the LSE Underground Bar until 2pm for a 15-hour drinking marathon called 'The Barrel' which was organised by the LSE AU.

Bonding with teammates happens best on the field, when one player passes a ball to another who subsequently goes on to score the winning goal. However, there is a need to celebrate further, which leads to an unhealthy drinking culture that runs throughout the year – case in point, the notorious AU nights at Zoo Bar on Wednesdays.

A member of the AU says, "Club captains send emails suggesting that people attend the Tuns, Crush and Zoo Bar but there are no fines or punishment for those who do not attend."

Some argue that these initiations bring a value-added social function to the sports group. Nadir Gohar, elected into an official AU position says, "Honestly,

people have fun in the AU regardless of whether they drink or not. The fun comes from the feeling of belonging, a feeling of family. From the outside it may look very much like a drinking culture, however, if you look behind the face, a real cultured community lies within, a community who love to wake up on a Wednesday and have a great time in the name of sport."

Another student claims, "The AU allows people to make friends that they otherwise wouldn't at the LSE. The AU gives something that nothing else in the LSE can offer. For me it feels a bit like home away from home, like being back at my old club or old school."

A non-drinker within the AU stood for the position of President last year, ultimately losing by thirty votes. Popularity can still prevail, but the concern is for members being consumed into an excessive drinking culture. This is especially worrying for those Freshers who joined the AU solely for the passion of a sport on field.

One AU member I spoke to said that the drinking culture in the AU is not so much "causality". He claimed that it just so happens that many of the people who are in the AU are people who like to drink. He also claimed the Tuns and Crush often employ people in the AU to work behind the bars which can give rise to such an association.

The Students' Union Alcohol Policy states: "The encouragement of the consumption of excessive amounts of alcohol must be avoided." If these initiations demonstrated acceptable behaviour, they would be done on the LSE campus at the Tuns. They undermine the actual sport and can give a negative impression to the Freshers who come to the LSE and are faced with a culture of excessive drinking and disorderly behaviour as part of their team bonding sessions.

A rugby AU member stated, "Drinking seems like a backlash against the predictability of the monotony of the LSE. A necessary medicine to alleviate the intensity of the often seemingly fun deprived student body of the LSE."

AU sports initiations have little to do with the associated sport and are not always in line with the Students Union code of conduct. The AU undoubtedly engenders an atmosphere that encourages members to drink more than they should, boys and girls alike. This is an issue the Students Union should look further into for the next academic year. There are many alternatives to team-bonding. Sport in itself is one. It may be that the celebrations of winning should be limited to the playing field only. ☛

Hamlet's dilemma

Why you can't pick a card, any card without thinking about that other card

Priyan Patel



So we've all been there. You're at the restaurant and can't decide what to eat. You know that if you pick the chicken, you can't go wrong. But you really wish you'd ordered that goose, especially when the guy next to you seems to be really enjoying it. If you do, however, order the goose, it won't live up to your expectations. Someone else will be having the chicken then and telling you exactly just how good it is.

It's in our human nature to want what we don't have. We all know it. But we still do it in almost every aspect of our lives.

Before going on a night out recently, a friend was telling me about how her boyfriend is a hassle; she has to think about what she's wearing: is her skirt too short? Top too low-cut? When she's at the club, she has to think about who she's dancing with, how she stands with other guys in photos that will probably appear on Facebook. In short, she knows even before she's left that it's not going to be a great night. Watching her every move, he might as well be an over-protective father. She misses the freedom of being single, to be able to do whatever she wants.

Another mate of mine was moaning about the reverse. He's been single for a while now and says he feels lonely and isolated when everyone is with their partner. "And don't even get me started on third-wheeling". Wanting someone to just fill that void; he's "waiting to pluck the apple of my eye from the tree" (Is it really a wonder why he's still single?).

As people, we're greedy. We're indecisive. We're insecure. And we don't like the feeling that we're missing out on something fun, or not getting everything we can. It's the same reason you'll look twice at that hoodie in the SU shop. Yeah it's great, feels soft and warm but with that much money I could buy Starbucks coffee instead of Wright's Bar's every single day this month.

So can we never truly be happy with the decision we've made or the situation we're in? Think about it this way: that one night out you didn't go out, because of that stupid essay you left until the last minute (yes, I know we're LSE students, procrastination is standard). It's guaranteed to be the biggest night of the year, that epic night littered with howlers and "Mate, seriously, you should have been there, where the hell were you? That was the best night ever!" But if it really was, then surely nobody would go out ever again?

So why do people feel so insecure? I think it's because of our image. We want people to think we're unbelievably happy. When you're in a relationship, you tell everyone that you wouldn't want it any other way. When you're single, you tell everyone that freedom rules, and you can live life exactly how you want to without thinking about consequences.

I'm not saying that it's all a big lie. It's just not the whole truth. There's a good and bad side to everything. Either way, the easy thing to do is to forget about what we have and focus too much on what we're missing out on, and want to jump the fence at the first opportunity. It can turn into a horrible cycle where sitting on the fence isn't actually an option – even the 'casual relationships' are never truly emotionless.

They say there are plenty more fish in the sea, and it's probably true, but to be honest, is it worth messing up something that works for you to find out? If we did that every time, we'd be constantly looking and never be happy. Any economist will tell you it's to do with the value of what you have and the probability of finding something better.

I like to believe that everyone gets what they deserve in the end; it's just a case of being patient and waiting your turn. As soon as you make a decision, you'll always wonder 'what if I'd done it differently?' Well, don't. So what if the grass looks greener on the other side? How do you know that you really want grass anyway? ☛

Beef with eating beef (and other animals too)

A response to Jonathan Safran Foer, author of Eating Animals



Could you eat that? And the baby too? Photo: flickr user Iain Alexander

Tony Karimu

There is a growing popularity and discourse about vegetarianism stemming from the 1990s, when concerns about our health and the environment became more directly open for discussion, in the wake of global warming and media attention to the health complications of eating meat. These days many communities are aware about the general health and environmental argument in favour of not eating meat. These include the concerns about intense farming, like environmental

problems caused by pollution from factory farming and the potential medical problems associated with the use of antibiotics or growth medicines in livestock that can affect human beings eating meat. These may include notions such as being diagnosed with stomach cancer and obesity that many medical analysts believe are directly caused by consuming meat. Socially, eating meat can lead also indirectly to aggression and distrust between fellow beings and the animal world because it is not an utmost or conscious spiritual act to present the death of a livestock as a means of consumption when eating more fruits and vegetables can easily be the best option for a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle.

On the ethical side, most humans are committing a gross injustice against animals who cannot usually defend them-

selves when they are reared for consumption. We know this issue is widespread because virtually all governments around the world do not enact proper policy to protect these creatures because most government officials are probably meat eaters too. You do not have to be an animal lover just to observe and see the pain and suffering that animals endure mainly at the hands of our fellow humans while at the same time we appear intelligent and rational. You do not have to be blind to know that eating certain foods too can make you feel better and vegetarians would claim this if they know how to balance their diet and consume healthy vegetarian meals.

We are seeing evidence of widespread slaughter and extinction of animals as well as environmental and social concerns than at any other recorded time in history

However, we can only appear intelligent and rational at the level we can see and this does not necessarily mean we have achieved our best yet. We are also seeing evidence of widespread slaughter and extinction of animals as well as environmental and social concerns than at any other recorded time in history. Is this to say that human beings are more intelligent now than ever before, or are we just living on timescale? We are certainly more technologically advanced, but we have only recently outlawed the massive onslaught of slavery against Africans, only recently stopped the first and second world wars, and we have also witnessed genocide across the globe on a massive scale that questions the basis of our civilisation. However we have also seen the triumph of people to interact more positively

and to be more creative. But the potential for humans to create major disasters still remains at large.

Unfortunately, most people are confused about what to do about not eating meat because this culture has been passed on for generations and is considered a vital aspect of kinship and community building. Animal meat seems even more tasty now than ever before because of addictive sauces added as part of the ingredients. Most humans see animals being amputated in the butchers, they see them crushed and smashed and yet feel no sympathy. Even if this evokes some kind of sentiment, the level of response is limited and extremely low in virtually all societies.

It is vital that we take care that vegetarianism not be considered idealism or a sign of weakness. Like Paul McCartney, Einstein, Michael Jackson and other great artists and intellectuals who admitted to being vegetarian we must remain vigilant against the hazards of meat-eating that reduces our quality of life on a level that most people cannot identify.

History tells me that we may live in hell and the few minds of those who try to make this heaven is far stronger than many can see. It is those who try to make this place heavenly like Angels that are keeping us alive in a world that has become quite rampant with those taking advantage of those less able to defend themselves. We should be aiming more on creating policies that best outline of the finest nature of human beings and make earth a far more fantastic place for now and future generations.

Vegetarians must continue to speak up against cruelty, intensive farming, environmental concerns and a need for healthier living. Living on earth should not all be about competition and acquiring wealth by all means possible. We should develop a concern about caring for all things around us and equally this can be a source of effective competition and wealth creation.

We can also try to limit the amount of meat consumption in our society through education because this entails changing a mindset from the grass root level. For most, reducing the amount of meat they eat might be more persuading than trying perhaps to stop them outright from eating meat. However it is proper to recall that meat eating serves to undermine the utmost intelligence of human civilisation as well as reducing our quality of life both at the spiritual and emotional level. ☛

Features

Burlesque-oni

Elizabeth Lowell explores Italian proclivities

Beautiful young women, powerful older men, lavish villa parties, sex, money, deception: to some it may sound like the backdrop of the next James Bond movie, but for Italians this scene is much more real, if equally entertaining. After the 13th January high court decision rejecting parts of a law intended to protect him from criminal prosecution while in office, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi now faces investigation in an under-age prostitution case. No strangers to political scandal, Italian voters have weathered Berlusconi's theatrical escapades for almost seventeen years. His most recent debacle however, has many wondering if he may have finally crossed the ultimate line.

Though he is also currently on trial for separate cases of corruption, tax fraud and embezzlement, it is Berlusconi's alleged involvement with 18-year-old nightclub dancer Karima el-Mahroug that is attracting international attention. According to the prosecution, Berlusconi paid the then under-aged Mahroug in exchange for sexual services at his villa in Milan. His intervention to secure Mahroug's release from police custody last year, after she was detained for theft, is also being investigated as a possible abuse of power. Although Berlusconi has dismissed the allegations as "absurd," wiretaps of Mahroug have since surfaced in which she tells a former boyfriend that the Prime Minister told her "I'll pay you, I'll cover you in gold,

but the important thing is that you hide everything; don't tell anyone anything."

Berlusconi's sexual dalliances have long been accepted as commonplace in

Unlike his previous scandals, the current investigation appears to have more serious implications due to its breadth and timing.

Italy. In 2009 his wife of 19 years, former actress Veronica Lario, filed for divorce stating she could not "stay with a man who frequents minors." Lario herself had firsthand knowledge of Berlusconi's philandering tendencies, having begun an affair with him while he was still married to his first wife Cala Dall'Oglio. However, after years of leniency, the final straw for the first lady seemed to be Berlusconi's appearance at the 18th birthday of Noemi Letizia, who admitted to calling him "daddy." While it certainly attracted attention, this divorce drama seemed to have

surprisingly little effect on Berlusconi's popularity.

Unlike his previous scandals, the current investigation appears to have more serious implications due to its breadth and timing. Aside from the allegations surrounding Mahroug, prosecutors have also alleged that Berlusconi held relations with numerous prostitutes, trading money, jewellery, and even luxury flats for sex. Also under investigation are Emilio Fede, 79, a long-time friend of Berlusconi and director of one of his news programs; Lele Mora, 55, a television talent agent; and Nicole Minetti, 25, a politician for the prime minister's centre-right party. Minetti, a former dental hygienist who treated Berlusconi after he was hit with a statue at a 2009 rally, came under scrutiny last year after she entered Italy's regional elections with no political experience and subsequently won a Lombardi region council seat. Prosecutors allege that Minetti was responsible for finding young women to attend the Prime Minister's villa gatherings, now being dubbed by the media as "bunga bunga sex parties," a reference to a sex game played after dinner.

The drama does not end at the prostitution charges, as Parliament was given evidence last week that close to 3kg of cocaine were found last year in one of the flats allegedly provided by Berlusconi to model and former TV personality Marysthell Garcia Polanco. The drugs are believed to be part of a larger stash belonging to Garcia Polanco's boyfriend,

who was arrested while driving Minetti's car. Both Minetti and Berlusconi denied involvement in the incident.

Although his past sexual indiscretions have incited little reaction from the Italian public, this particularly salacious nature of this case, and its wider implications about the Prime Minister's behavior, has elicited high profile responses. During an audience with members of Rome's police force last week, the Pope issued what some view as an indirect criticism of Berlusconi saying public officials need to "rediscover their spiritual and moral roots." In the wake of the allegations Italian President Giorgio Napolitano claimed the country was in "turmoil" and urged Berlusconi to promptly respond to prosecutors.

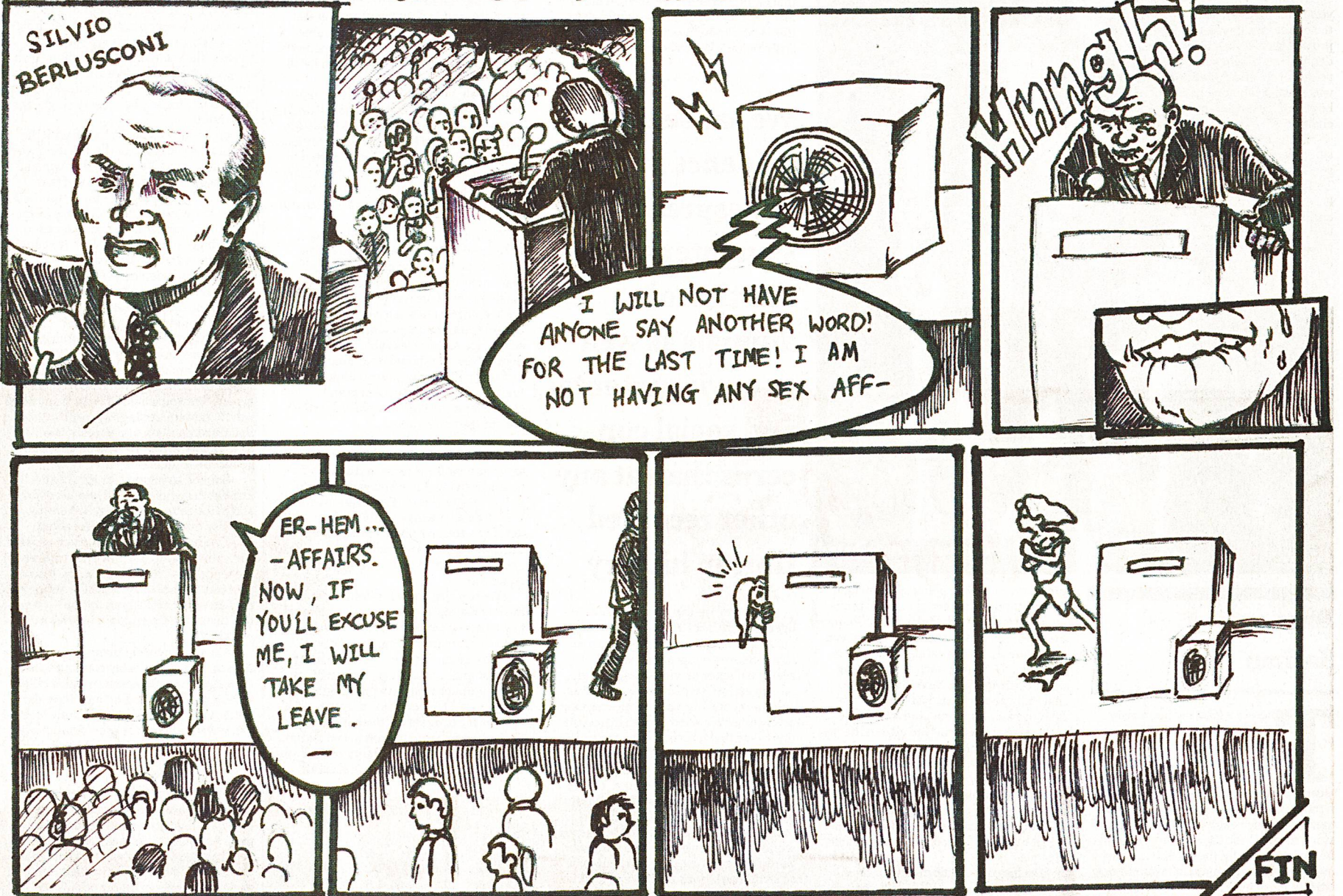
The investigation comes at a time when Berlusconi is particularly politically vulnerable. He currently holds a narrow parliamentary majority and is part of a shaky coalition government. While it would seem to the average reader that Berlusconi's fate is sealed, others still question whether the charges will actually be enough to cause the billionaire's final political demise. Nick Squires of The Telegraph narrows Berlusconi's problems to two main categories: criminal and political. If convicted, Berlusconi could face up to 3 years in prison for having sex with an under-aged prostitute and up to 12 for attempting to hide his actions from authorities. Squires reasons that Berlusconi may be able to avoid conviction if his defense can successfully argue that Milan

prosecutors lack jurisdiction to press charges as the alleged events occurred in Monza. Politically, Squires notes that Berlusconi may benefit from the weaknesses of his opponents. The internally divided Democratic opposition lacks the public backing to pose a serious threat. On the Right, his rival Gianfranco Fini, a former fascist and current moderate, is still building his support base and appears to be in no position to oust Berlusconi.

Despite his antics, Berlusconi still retains some political support. Umberto Bossi of the Northern League remains a powerful ally of the Prime Minister, standing behind him and their coalition partnership and last Wednesday he scored a small victory as Culture Minister Sandro Bondi, a Berlusconi loyalist, survived a no-confidence vote in parliament. In the meantime, it seems that Berlusconi is poised for a fight. He has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing and has in turn accused Milan magistrates of violating his rights and those of his party guests.

It appears that only time will tell what lies in store for the media tycoon who seems to have an unlimited store of political lives. However, some have predicted that this most recent scandal is in fact enough to cause the current government to collapse and force elections earlier than the scheduled 2013 date. If so, the Italian public will soon get their say and we will see if the king of sensational headlines has finally outworn his political welcome.

Italy: Prime Minister's Talk on his Affairs



Cartoon: Winston Lee for the Beaver

by Winston Lee - JAN 11

Porter talks

Oliver Wiseman sits down with the NUS president

Aaron Porter is a man in the thick of it. The critical timing of his tenure as President of the National Union of Students hardly needs to be restated, and Porter's response to the government's upheaval of higher education policy is seen by those to his left as grossly negligent.

This dissatisfaction came to a head last Saturday. At the NUS's Manchester rally, where Porter would have hoped to deliver a stirring speech to a welcoming crowd of demonstrators, students instead chased him off the march with chants of "Aaron Porter, we know you, you're a fucking Tory too", confirming what was already clear—that he is on the wrong side of the "with us or against us" dichotomy that seems to pervade among the activist left.

But as I meet him to discuss a turbulent year, Porter remains, perhaps naively, self-assured.

It's hard to ignore how rose-tinted his view is of the NUS's build-up to the Parliamentary vote on tuition fees.

"It's difficult to prove a negative" he admits, before going on to assume the best.

"We won a series of concessions from the government. We first called for loans for part time students—that has now been delivered. We managed to help ensure that the repayment threshold would increase, rather than decrease, as the Russell Group were pushing for. We also, I think, managed to get tuition fees to the top of the public eye in a way that the government didn't anticipate and didn't want".

Porter appears to credit no group, beyond the NUS, with keeping tuition fees in the public eye. It was, to Porter, the NUS's protest, that "kick-started the wave of student activism" and while "Camilla getting poked with a stick" grabbed headlines, it was Porter's lobbying of MPs directly that, he claims, "changed the minds of seven or eight MPs".

Porter's strongest critics argue he stands as an obstacle to a more fervent student response to government policy. The prosecution's evidence consists of his "spineless dithering" on support for occupation, outspoken denunciation of violence at protests and refusal to lend the NUS banner to marches he deems unsafe or volatile.

Porter's response is characteristically

As I meet him to discuss a turbulent year, Porter remains, perhaps naively, self-assured.

upbeat: "I'm perfectly comfortable with the fact that the student movement has always been and will continue to be bigger than NUS. We're not there to organise every bit of action. Its responsibility is to be a campaigning organisation which galvanises public support. I will support actions that I believe will gather public support for student issues."

On the specific issue of his refusal to support last Saturday's London protest, organised in part by the Student Activists Network, Porter responds by outlining the principles that guide his decisions on the subject.

"There are three principles I follow", he tells me, "Do I believe steps are being taken to ensure it is safe? If it doesn't turn out to be safe, will the organisers condemn the violence? Finally, is the action protest for for the sake of protest, or is it trying to deliver a campaign outcome? If these conditions aren't met, then I don't think its responsible for NUS to be associated with it".

The most valid criticism appears to concern Porter's views on student occupations. Porter's defunctive, career politician rhetoric fails to disguise how difficult he finds the issue. "The truth about occupations is that they are often every contentious issues on campuses" he says, later adding, "I think it was right that I went into the UCL occupation to show solidarity with their cause".

One thing Porter is clear on is the futility of the Socialist Workers' Party proposal to "unmake on the streets what was made in Parliament".

"We will retain a principled opposition to the proposal but the prospect of repeal is less than 1 per cent. Even the Labour Party have said they won't push for repeal. We might have Caroline Lucas for company if we push for repeal but I think we'd be some way short of the 325 votes required."

Judging by his increasingly dynamic gesticulations and a more attentive posture, Porter appears more excited by the substance of higher education policy than activist infighting and is keen to see the coalition deliver on promises concerning access to higher education.

"It's really important to remember at this stage that all the government has passed through the house is the fee cap. They've made a series of promises about

access and about scholarships but they're yet to convert that into legislation. So my immediate concern is making sure that the NUS pushes the government to deliver on the promises they made in order to get the bill through the house."

"Without trying to take a pot-shot at politicians, I can't trust a promise they've made based on their track record on tuition fees. What we also need is to get a continued strategy of opposition to the marketisation of higher education"

A crucial link in the push for a fair system of higher education is Simon Hughes, the government's advisor on access to higher education and, despite a "seriously jeopardised" relationship between the Liberal Democrats and students, Porter has not given up on the Member of Parliament for Bermondsey and Old Southwark.

"I do believe Hughes has honourable intentions. I think he recognises that the Liberal Democrats are vulnerable politically and in the eyes of young people and wants to deliver something positive. He has an opportunity to repair the damage he has in part caused. I want to help him in doing that and I've set out a serious of conditions which I think can help him."

The interview ends with some quips about the "countless times" he's spoken out against the police's treatment of student protesters.

"There is a responsibility to steward protests in an even handed and fair fashion as much there is a responsibility for protesters to protest within the parameters of the law. Police who have acted wrongly should be disciplined and sacked if they have contravened."

The middle ground Porter seeks to occupy here, as with other issues, is exactly why activists have not gravitated towards him for leadership. He is no exception to the rule that the NUS presidency is, nowadays, little more than a waypoint en route to the Labour back benches. In fact, what is most baffling is that anyone expected anything more from an uninspiring occupant of an uninspiring post.

LONDON
LUDDITE



...a layman's look at science

Oliver Wiseman

Never before has a problem so minuscule caused such acrimony. Unbeknown to Houghton Street, the science world is up in arms about the weight of a lump of metal.

The lump in question is, however, an important one. Kept under lock and key by the International Bureau of Weights and Measurements in France, the piece of platinum iridium alloy is the prototype kilogram: its weight (or do I mean mass?) defines the kilogram.

Since it was cast in 1879, the lump has gotten smaller by a fraction. Fifty micrograms - about the weight of a grain of sand - have been lost over the years because of the very occasional handling of the lump that displaces a tiny number of atoms. Illogical as all this sounds, it means the kilogram weighs less than it used to.

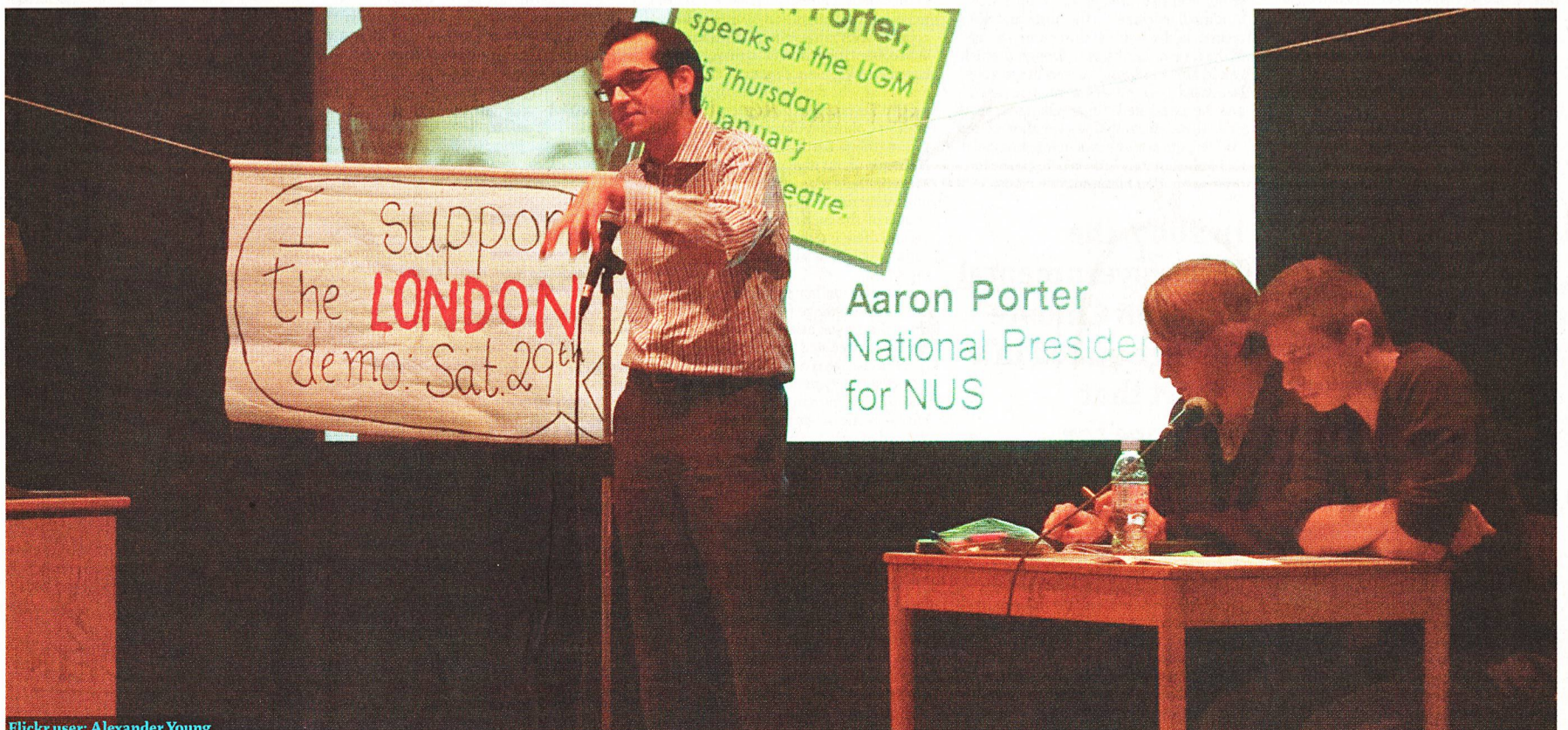
"So what?" would be a reasonable reaction. You might think, as I did, that such a minute change could never be of consequence to anyone. That, it transpires, is a false assumption. At the frontier of scientific inquiry, in particular meteorology, the microgram matters.

Thus, physicists are keen to bring artifact based measurement to an end. All other base units are derived from fundamental physical constants. For instance, the metre, though originally declared in 1781 to be a ten millionth of the distance from the equator to the North Pole, is now defined as the length travelled by light in a vacuum during the time interval of 1/299,792,458 of a second.

Yet more bizarre is the current definition of the second which is based on the duration of 9,192,631,770 cycles of radiation emitted by a particular electronic transition in an atom of caesium-133 (who chooses these numbers? and why do they spend their lives worrying about these things?).

The Royal Society addressed the problem of the kilogram at a meeting last week and an alternative to the lump of metal in Paris was mooted. The suggestion is the incredibly complicated Planck Constant. This phenomenon of quantum physics has something to do with the amount of electricity needed to make a kilogram levitate, given the pull of the earth's gravity.

Still clueless? Me too. Let's just hope the issue resolves itself so supermarkets stop charging us for five micrograms of fruit and veg that isn't there.



Sudan sings for peace

Gurdeep Chhina describes artistic movements in Sudan

As the South Sudanese people vote for independence, it seems as if a new process of nation building is about to begin. The long, difficult and bloody struggle for peace and settlement in Sudan has taken place against the backdrop of resounding musical efforts of artists attempting to encapsulate the peace effort in their art and provoke an emotive response from the Sudanese people.

The referendum in the South of Sudan, which took place last month, occurred amidst a peaceful atmosphere; this came unexpected as many had anticipated of violent outbreaks and unrest. The expected outcome of independence for the southern region of Sudan was celebrated with much colour and jubilation as scattered groups of people surrounding polling stations expressed their joy with the waving of flags and music.

This celebration comes after a history marred with conflict along a north-south divide. The dispute within Sudan is essentially around the issue of power, made more complex by religious and ethnic divides. South Sudan has long despised the autonomy enjoyed by the northern region. Past attempts by the northern Islamic government to impose Sharia law on the Christian- and Animist-dominated south have exacerbated divisions further. This conflict has inspired the attempts of many artists to appeal for peace and unity across Sudan through the medium of music.

Emmanuel Jal and Abdel Gadir Salim, two prominent Sudanese musicians, are well known leaders of the artistic peace movement which has run parallel to the ongoing conflict in Sudan. Both artists have personal experiences deeply rooted within the conflict. It was in response to the country's civil war that Jal and Salim, from opposite sides of Sudan, released an album together named *Ceasefire* in 2005.

In an effort to characterise the need for unity in Sudan, the two artists produced a collaboration of Northern and Southern music: blending the poetry of

Arabic lyrics with contemporary African percussion, mixed in with lines of Dinka and Nuer, both languages spoken in the South. The aim of *Ceasefire* was to appeal to the Sudanese people with messages of peace and hope. For Jal and Salim, the history of the conflict merges with their own personal history. Coming from southern Sudan, Jal was recruited by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army and his childhood was spent as a soldier witnessing the horrors of war first hand. Salim, from the northern part of the country, has become well established within Sudan and has received international acclaim for his peace efforts.

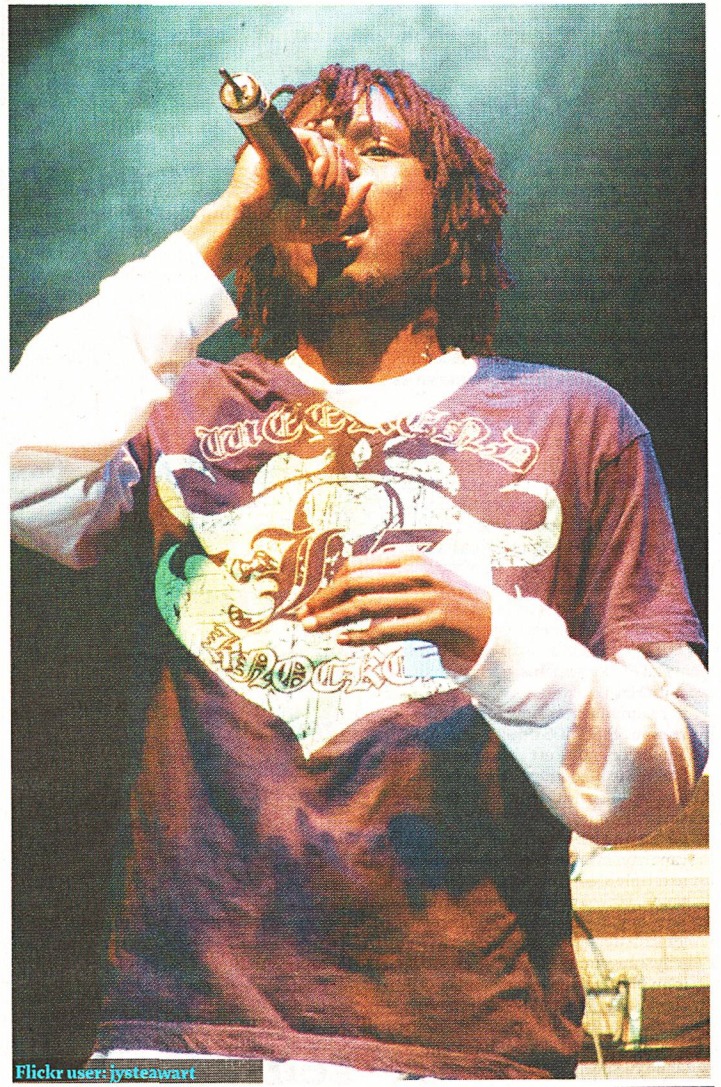
Ramzy and Ahmed wish to rediscover and preserve this identity through the common language of music.

The failure of government to instill cooperation and peace on terms fair to both divisions of the country meant that unity was an option no longer possible. Jal and Salim's music has been calling for peace in the run-up to and after the referendum deciding the fate of South Sudan. Both musicians feel music is an effective tool in highlighting the need for the political process to run smoothly. "We Want Peace" was the title of Jal's purposeful single, which launched a global campaign drawing support from such figures as Alicia Keys, Peter Gabriel, George Clooney, former UN secretary general Kofi Annan and former US President Jimmy Carter.

Salim was also active in the promotion of peace in the run up to South Sudan's momentous decision. Major southern cities like Juba, Kuajok and Aweil bore witness to Salim's concerts, trying to build hope for unity. In the wake of the outcome of the referendum the focus has moved from unity towards peace. In a region where 90 per cent of children survive on less than one dollar a day, however, nation building will not be an easy task.

The use of music in the peace process seems to be a recurring theme as artists all over Sudan are trying to unite the country and bridge ethnic and religious divides through music. Guitarist Nadir Ramzy and violinist Affi Ahmad come from the northern area of the country. They describe their music as an "international language" which can overcome divisions in a country deeply fractured along many lines. Although there is a sense of relief among these musicians that the ongoing conflict may finally be resolved, there is also a sense of loss as independence for the south would mean a reduced collective Sudanese identity. Ramzy and Ahmed wish to rediscover and preserve this identity through the common language of music.

There is a realisation across South Sudan, that a defining moment is being reached; soon it will be a chance for new beginnings. Abuk Deng Deng, a vocalist who is part of a traditional quartet, uses her music to express her hope and optimism for the future of the emerging nation. She looks forward to being treated as a "first class citizen". Despite the colossal challenges ahead for state already riddled with poverty and poor infrastructure, there is a sense of relief at the prospect of a new and peaceful beginning. Sudan's violent past has had a constant accompaniment of political art and there is a definite sense that its future will feature the more soothing tones of political reform. ☛



Flickr user: jystewart

Mired in disaster

Saffaan Qadir analyses the effects of climate change

According to the science monthly *Scientific American*, the frequency of natural disasters has risen by forty two per cent since the 1980s and the portion of these that are climate related has increased from fifty to eighty two per cent. This upsurge in the frequency of calamities associated with the climatic conditions has coincided with the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. However, this is just the tip of the (melting) iceberg because the human cost of climate change is far more alarming.

Just two weeks ago, torrid rainfall and subsequent mudslides in south eastern Brazil killed more than 700 people and left a further 21,500 homeless in the country's worst natural disaster for several decades. The calamity has been attributed to the cooling of the eastern Pacific, a periodic occurrence called La Niña. However, torrential rainfall has become more frequent all over the world and with disaster relief rather than disaster prevention on the minds of Brazilian government officials there stands little in the way of climatic unpredictability claiming more victims.

Tragic though the Brazilian catastrophe is, an even bigger climate related problem has caught the attention of climatologists all over the world. There is a consensus that humanity is entering an era in which people may be forced to leave their homes in numbers never before seen. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, an estimated twenty million people were driven from their homes and livelihoods due to climate related catastrophes in 2008 alone. In Mozambique, a country which lies on the eastern coast of Africa and shares its southern border with South Africa,

experienced devastating floods in 2000, 2001 and 2007 which displaced hundreds and thousands of people while at the same time limiting their access to medical facilities, sanitation and safe drinking water. On the other end of the climatic scale, scientists predict, as the intensity of rainfall increases in the north and decreases in the south of the country, a rise in the frequency of severe droughts which would affect millions, as they did in 2007. Increased amounts of greenhouse gases and the associated climate change is set to exacerbate Mozambique's weather related problems to scales never before imagined and unfortunately little is being done to prevent another humanitarian crisis.

In 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stated in a report that evidence for climate change is 'unequivocal'

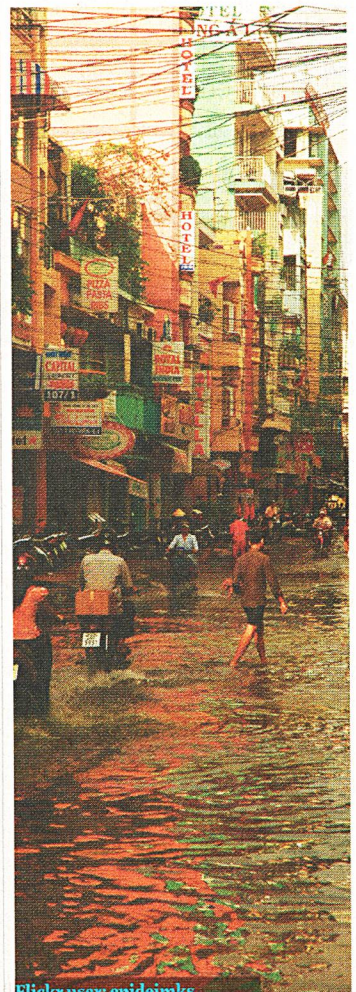
Rising sea levels are another major problem associated with the soaring levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and at the current rate of increase in average global temperature, most of the world's thirty eight small island states could disappear by the end of the century. The Mekong Delta of Vietnam is home

to twenty two per cent of the country's population and the livelihood of the delta's eighteen million inhabitants is under threat from increasing flood depths (more than the norm of four metres) over the past few decades. The frequency of threatening floods has also increased triggering mass internal migration to cities which, coupled with rapid industrialization and subsequent depletion of natural resources, has placed Vietnam's natural resources and those who depend on them in a precarious position. According to research done at Columbia University's Centre for International Earth Science Information Network, about nine million people in the Mekong Delta alone will be displaced by a one metre rise in sea levels. Vietnam, thus, stands on the cusp of a humanitarian crisis and there is a dire need for preventive action not just in Vietnam but throughout the world.

In 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a panel of more than 2,500 scientists and other experts, stated in a report that evidence for climate change is 'unequivocal', given their reported ninety per cent chance that the 'net effect of human activities since 1750 has been one of warming' the planet. By the end of year 130 nations had concurred with this report yet emissions all over the world continue to rise as a direct result of the increasing rate at which fossil fuels are being burned.

At this point, it would be pertinent to mention some of the steps that can be taken to prevent localized climate related catastrophes as well as mass migrations forced by changes in weather patterns, which could become the biggest humanitarian challenge of this century. The most obvious and the most important step to take is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to safe levels so that the cycle of greenhouse gas emission and absorp-

tion becomes more sustainable. It is also important to invest in new infrastructure, or radically upgrade existing highways and transmission lines because as the world population grows so does the demand for infrastructure and transportation. New infrastructure can be complimented by smart systems which will streamline both production and logistical processes hence making them more efficient and this in turn would help cut greenhouse gas emissions and drive economic growth in developing countries. By employing sustainable deforestation techniques to maintain the proportion of land covered by forests, the cycle of absorption and emission will be reinforced. Governments, especially those that face high risk of mass migration because of climatic disasters, need to invest in disaster management strategies and infrastructure which will decrease the human cost of such catastrophes. Moreover, countries need to recognize that some migrations will be inevitable and there, thus, exists a need to develop national and international adaptation strategies and parties of the adaptation strategies must establish binding commitments to ensure that adaptation funding reaches the people who need it most. Finally, international institutions need strengthening to ensure that they are in the best possible position to protect the rights of those displaced by climate change. ☛



Flickr user: epidemiks

The science of sleep

Marion Koob presents different studies on sleep

Sleep is often a matter of contention among those who suffer from a lack of its supply. Student and professionals alike brag about their minimum 'survival' amounts. Some will throw around numbers from as large as six to as little as four. Margaret Thatcher and Napoleon are shown as models of efficiency by functioning with agonizingly low quantities. The wiser and more experienced in these matters unavoidably turn to the question: is there a necessary requirement for us to reach an optimal amount of productivity and bodily health?

A quick google search will show a body of scientists divided on the subject. Some argue that sleeplessness causes no harmful effects but the discomfort felt throughout the day, while others advocate the necessity of the unavoidable eight-hours-a-day. This figure is sure to discourage the most industrious from among us; spending, in essence, a third of your life unconscious can seem rather a depressing a wasteful use of time. Seemingly, economic logic indicates that higher levels of sleep do not contribute to improved professional performance; if this were the case, surely investment bankers would be relieved of their long hours in a trade-off towards more productivity. With HR departments spending aplenty to recruit the best skilled, it is plausible to imagine that were sleep found to render employees more efficient, the firm would happily reduce its expectations.

By that rule then, starving yourself of sleep beyond a survival minimum would be the best way to maximize your studying capacity. However, many of those forced to all-nighter prior to an exam day might politely disagree. Perhaps beyond a certain level of task difficulty, sleepiness does affect human performance. Driving on only a few hours of rest the previous night is an undertaking most people would avoid. The excellent BBC sleep website comments that "the part of the brain that controls language, memory, planning and sense of time is severely affected, practically shutting down." Maybe investment banks and other long-hour requiring firms haven't yet converted themselves to the

benefits of improved work-life balance.

The online sleep 'pessimists' - that is to say, those who argue that sleep does matter to one's health and absolutely requires a minimum of eight hours - associate its lack with issues such as heart disease and increased chances of cancer; a study by the University of Warwick and UCL discovered that a lack of sleep can double the risk of cardiovascular problems. Anything which counters the body's Circadian rhythm - also known as our body clock - which regulates itself along with sunlight. Going against the Circadian rhythm can affect our future reckonings with illness, making matters particularly difficult for those working on night-shifts, or worse those constantly changing times. Interestingly, it has also been found that those who naturally tend

The central issue regarding sleep studies is that a consensus as regards to its purpose has never been established.

to oversleep have shorter lifespans.

Even intellectuals have pitched in their voice into the debate; Arianna Huffington argued to a room full of women at a TED conference that greater hours of sleep leads to higher productivity and ultimately, female empowerment. Meanwhile, Jennifer Gamble explained that the sleep patterns of those in an experiment depriving the subjects of sunlight. Their Circadian rhythm, completely devoid of all sunlight exposure adapted to sleeping



pattern divided into two four-hour bouts of sleep, interrupted by a two-hour break. The subjects claimed to have never felt so awake before.

The central issue regarding sleep studies is that a consensus as regards to its purpose has never been established. It is possible to make out correlations regarding lack of sleep and its effects, yet, despite the advancement of these studies, scientists remain perplexed. "As far as I know, the only reason we need to sleep that is really, really solid is because we get sleepy," once said researcher William Dement, after being asked his opinion on the matter.

The best documented record of sleeplessness is held by Randy Garner, a 17-year-old teenager who tempted the experiment in 1964. Garner stayed awake for 11 days (264 hours). This case is often upheld as proof that an extreme lack of

sleep leads to no serious side-effects. Garner was indeed conscious and well in the last days of the experiment, however having bouts of hallucination on the fourth day, imagining that he in fact was a much famed baseball player. Many later claimed to have beaten Garner's feat; the Guinness World Records is rumoured to have recorded a length of 18 days, but no longer keeps track of the claim for fear of its ill-side effects.

For the student anxious to optimize sleeping amounts and work hours, there seems to be little scientific consensus which can be of help. Best, perhaps, to carry your own experiments and monitor your body's responses - having a moratory open overnight should be of help.

feature story
1 a newspaper or magazine article or report of a person, event, an aspect of a major event, or the like, often having a personal slant and written in an individual style.

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Lords on the guillotine

Alexander Young predicts a new era in British politics

With the Electoral Commission's decree that the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill must clear Parliament by 16th February if the referendum on the adoption of Alternative Vote (AV) in Parliamentary elections in the UK is to occur on the planned date of 5th May, the obstinacy of the Lords in refusing to pass the Bill is becoming problematic for the Government. This is not the first roadblock the Bill has come up against, but is the first with any real potential to be fatal: indeed, the Government's proposal of a 'guillotine' motion to end debate in the House of Lords is indicative of a growing worry of the derailing of the well-laid plans of the Coalition.

The Bill has found opposition from its inception, with it being passed through the House of Commons with a majority of a mere fifty-nine Members of Parliament: a cross-party Labour-Conservative effort was made to defeat the Bill - testing party loyalties on both sides. Indeed, even those Conservative MPs who did not deviate from party lines on the issue were not happy to do so: Eleanor Laing, Conservative MP for Epping Forest, stated that she voted with the Government as a "matter of honour" and added that she believed that the concession made to the Liberal Democrats over electoral reform was a "high price" to pay for stable government.

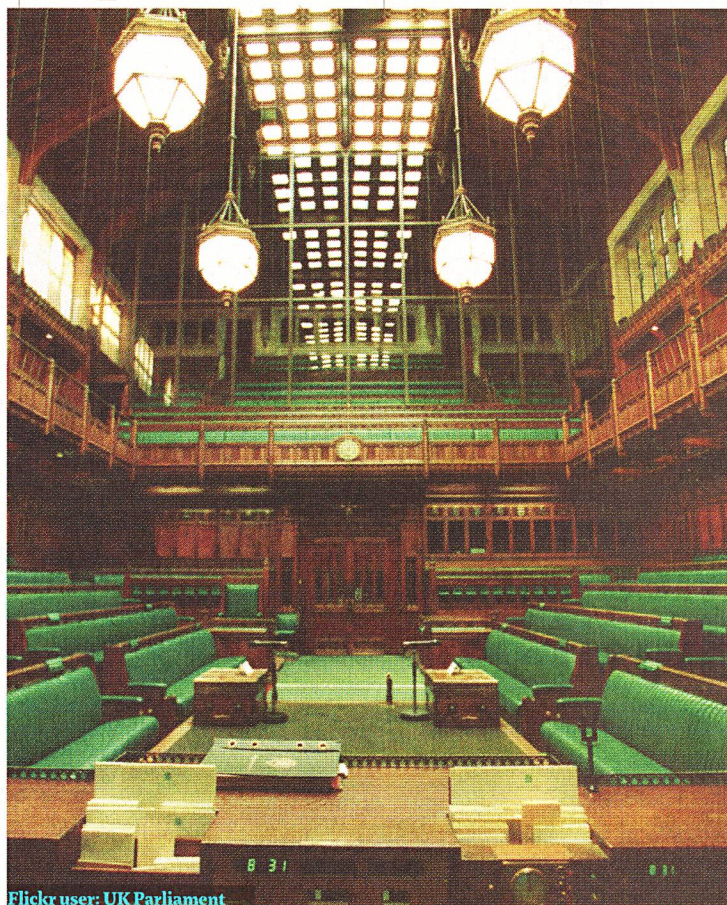
Having survived its first trial, the challenge in the House of Lords remains to be resolved. While the twenty-one hour plus sittings of the Lords could be said to be indicative of long-term reasoned debate on an issue which will serve to alter the primary political institution of British democracy in the electoral system and will

have knock-on effects into virtually every other political institution, accusations abound as to the intentions of Labour peers within the Lords engaged in these lengthy debates. Nick Clegg interrogated Ed Miliband on the issue of the activities of his party's peers, accusing him of displaying "weak political leadership" for not checking their behaviour in delaying the passage of the Bill. There is a strong case, however, for the arguments of Labour peers to be derived from either autonomous or party-driven self-interest. The Bill proposes to reduce the number of MPs from 650 to 600 and equalise the sizes of constituencies. This reduction of seat numbers and redrawing of boundaries based upon population has been decried by some within the Labour party as being disproportionately favouring of the Conservatives: the constituencies to be altered or axed partially consist of sparsely populated Welsh and Scottish constituencies which are traditionally carried by Labour with a comfortable majority. In the light of such a fact, claims of gerrymandering on the part of peers involved with the delays are incredibly plausible given the their interests in seeing Labour succeed electorally.

With the deadline for the passage of the Bill rapidly approaching, the Government is contemplating passing a motion to curtail the length of the debate by setting a definite end date for discussion; while such measures have been used to full effect in the Commons on several occasions, this would be the first instance of such a measure being used against the House of Lords. It would end the privilege of filibustering reserved for the Lords throughout the history of the House and set a precedent which could

potentially limit the power of the Lords to even lower levels than those established by the Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949. If the House of Commons has the power to both end debate in the Lords and pass through legislation against the will of the Lords (as established in the Parliament Acts), the advantage and, indeed, purpose of a bicameral system of governance seem to be somewhat negated. If the check on the legislative agenda of the Government can just be ignored, the dangers of an even more privileged executive are inevitably going to be a concern.

Whether or not this Bill is passed in time for the referendum to occur on 5th May, the implications for the British political system are manifold. If the Bill passes through the exercise of a guillotine motion, the power of the Lords will be diminished by a new precedent for Government involvement in the Lords. If the Bill passes before the deadline without a guillotine motion, there are certain inferences that can be made as to the influence of the Commons over the Lords which may serve to make peers less likely to challenge the Government on policy for fear of guillotining of debate and thus weaken the Lords as an institution in a differing way. If the Bill is passed and the referendum held on time, the result will no doubt bring about a new era in British politics: either the current systems of governance will be replaced and the shockwaves of this change will ripple through British party competition or the status quo will be reinforced for another generation. These are indeed interesting times for Britain's politics.



Flickr user: UK Parliament

Fact off

Teddy Groves bemoans redundant facts

They are ugly, stupid and dangerous, and they need to be wiped out: 'they' are irrelevant facts. You may have seen or heard one. You can recognise them by their distinguishing feature: you can't write them down without using italics - "we have the biggest budget deficit in Europe".

Irrelevant facts are ugly because they are both too much and not enough. Like atrophied extra limbs or protruding bits of snout, they interrupt smooth elegant trains of ideas with unwanted garbage. For instance: "In Singapore primary school children learn scientific theories which aren't even in the curriculum here". Like unbuttered toast or meals of gravy, they are incomplete excuses for the genuine arguments they pretend to be. The ability to express a fully articulated argument which connects facts to an interesting conclusion is pleasant to witness and can enhance your aesthetic appeal. The habit of uttering isolated irrelevances like "there are 50,000 administrators in primary care trusts", on the other hand, make you uglier than the person who makes their point by raising their eyebrows and saying the first limb of a lame cliché like "a stitch in time...". Irrelevant facts are unnecessary eyesores and inadequate half-measures. In short, they are ugly.

Irrelevant facts also make their ugly users stupid. The properly spelled-out argument "not many people say they would

The ability to express a fully articulated argument which connects facts to an interesting conclusion is pleasant to witness and can enhance your aesthetic appeal

have quit school without EMA, therefore it is a bad policy" is so obviously wrong that no one would ever make it. Nonetheless, the section of the argument before the conclusion - "half of young people receive the EMA, but only 12% said that they needed financial support to stay in learning" - has been parroted in the House of Commons, among other places. Part of the reason for this is cowardice: it's less risky to present a suggestive talking point lacking a conclusion than an explicit argu-

ment that can easily be challenged. Another is the stupefying effect of irrelevant facts. When you don't bother to mention your conclusion, it is easy to forget when your facts don't warrant it. After enough exposure to your irrelevant lotus, you lose sight of the whole business of using facts to draw conclusions and turn into a stupid zombie. Don't do it: if you want to avoid being stupid, say no to irrelevant facts. If you want to spot someone stupid, keep an eye out: stupidity and irrelevance are like cuts and plasters.

Stupidity and ugliness are irritating, but perhaps not things to get especially worked up over. Certainly hounding irrelevant facts into extinction might not be worth the effort if these were their only faults. It might even be useful to have them obviously signposted. Sadly, though, there is another even worse way in which irrelevant facts are despicable: they are deceptive and dangerous. When someone authoritative reels off a list of facts followed by a conclusion, it is natural to assume that there is some logical connection between the two, even when the facts are totally irrelevant. Take these facts from a recent article about the national curriculum: "in the geography curriculum the only country we mention is the UK", "In the last 10 years we have slipped from 8th in the world for maths to 28th". These are meant to support the conclusion that the national curriculum "has failed a generation by not preparing them for the modern

world." The argument is obviously wrong when clearly written down and thought about, but in its murkier original context it actually sounds quite impressive. There is a good reason for this phenomenon: in the distant past, when our intuitions about whom to trust evolved, if someone knew how lots of facts about something, there was a good chance they knew how it worked. Unfortunately the development of the Internet and desperate interns has caused this no longer to be the case. Politicians and journalists, who generally know little to nothing about what we hear them talking about, can now disguise this awkward deficiency simply by persuading other people to look facts up on Wikipedia for them, all thanks to our defective brains and the intellectual camouflage of irrelevant facts. The consequences of this situation in unnecessary wars and misguided policies are obvious, enormous and bad, and they are down to dangerous irrelevant facts.

Nothing as ugly, stupid and dangerous as an irrelevant fact should be allowed to survive. From "we are paying £120 million every day", to "750,000 people are set to become higher-rate taxpayers", to "650 jobs to be axed" they must all be hunted down and destroyed. ☛

WHAT IF...

...the Seven Years' War went the other way?

Jack Tindale

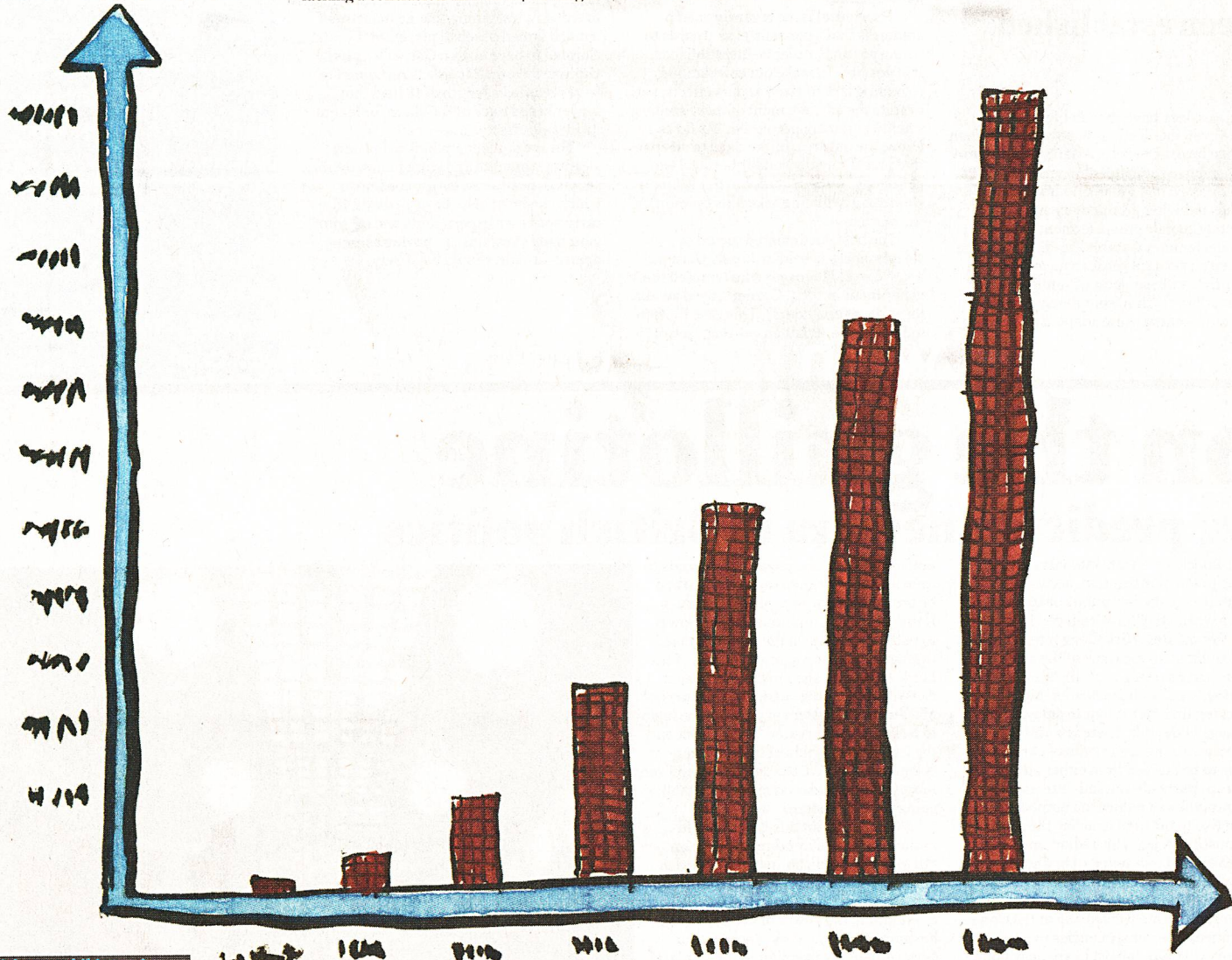
The Treaty of Westminster of 1763, signed to mark the end of hostilities between France and Britain, and the Peace of Konigsberg, which brought to a close the conflict between the Habsburgs, Russia and Prussia, established a long-standing peace in Europe which would be maintained for over sixty years before the outbreak of the Latinist Wars. Prussia returned to her pre-Great Power status with the return of Silesia to the Holy Roman Empire, whilst London ceded the entirety of her Canadian and Indian holdings to Paris.

The humiliating defeat to her ancient enemy in the New World and India forced William Pitt's beleaguered government to give the increasingly rebellious Thirteen Colonies full representation in Parliament. The impracticalities of such an arrangement prompted Charles Townshend's administration to establish the Kingdom of North America in 1767. The region was given notional autonomy and an effective monarch in the shape of George the Third's second son, Prince Frederick. The creation of Imperial Parliament alongside the declaration of the Empire of Great Britain followed during the Premiership of Lord Dashwood two years later.

Dashwood, an ardent Imperialist and Russophile who cherished the concept of establishing a British version of Peter the Third's "Enlightened Absolutism" failed in this endeavour, although the coronation of George III as "Emperor of the British" in 1778 marked the zenith of Dashwood's drive towards eroding the power of the liberal faction surrounding the young Radical, Charles James Fox, with whom he enjoyed a great personal rivalry. The death of "Flashy Francis" the following year marked a return to pro-Parliamentary forces in the House of Commons and Fox would be the driving force in drafting the Imperial Constitution of 1784, which remains in force to this day.

The French King, Louis XV died soon after the ratification of the Treaty of Westminster in 1765. His son, recovering from a bout of consumption, was less enamoured by the principles of autocratic rule than his father, summoning the Estates-General less than a month after assuming the throne. Taking heart from the stability that the parliamentary system seemed to offer during times of crisis, the first National Parliament was elected the following summer and a universal taxation system eventually created to replace the hated *taille*. The establishment of a formal Sénat, modelled on the British House of Lords, was also created to counteract the grumbings from the Second Estate, now taxed at the same level as their counterparts across la Manche.

The 1780 Treaty of Calais, signed by representatives of Emperor George I and King Louis XVI, cemented the increasingly cordial relationships between France and Britain and normalised diplomatic relations between the two great powers for the first time in generations. Carlo Buonaparte, a bankrupt minor noble from Corsica, was one of the first to take advantage of the increasingly clement diplomatic situation, emigrating to London the next year. Charles Boney, as his newly Anglicised name became, was able to return the family fortune by shrewd investment in the new Anglo-Russian Trading Company. His brazen but brilliant son, Nigel, would go on to become Prime Minister in 1811, where his clashes with Tory leader Arthur Wesley would become legendary examples of early 19th Century political rhetoric. ☛



Flickr user: hikingartist

Measured musings

The wave of political dissatisfaction in the Middle East has hit Egypt, where citizens are demanding the removal of president Hosni Mubarak from his 30-year rule and of the curfew imposed by his government. The protests in Egypt have been inspired by the overthrow of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, and precedents include Iran and Lebanon. At

Egypt and Twitter

least 100 people have died in the manifestations of anti-government sentiment so far and the West is concerned with instability in the area.

The Egyptian governments have expressed concern with the dissemination of information, fearing its impact on rebellious movements. Egyptian minister of information Anas El Feki prohibited the Al-Jazeera television network from operating in the country. Al-Jazeera - the largest television network in Qatar - was transmitting in real time the street protests against the Hosni Mubarak in the

streets of Cairo, Alexandria and Suez.

Ironically, the use of the Internet has made it possible to coordinate manifestations against regimes that limit freedom of speech and access to information. The use of the Internet and social networks in easing communication between protesters and the promotion of a negative sentiment towards the government has led to the Internet being shut down in Egypt (although the government claims it wasn't involved). How big of a role does the Internet play in political movements?

The author Malcom Gladwell is a sup-

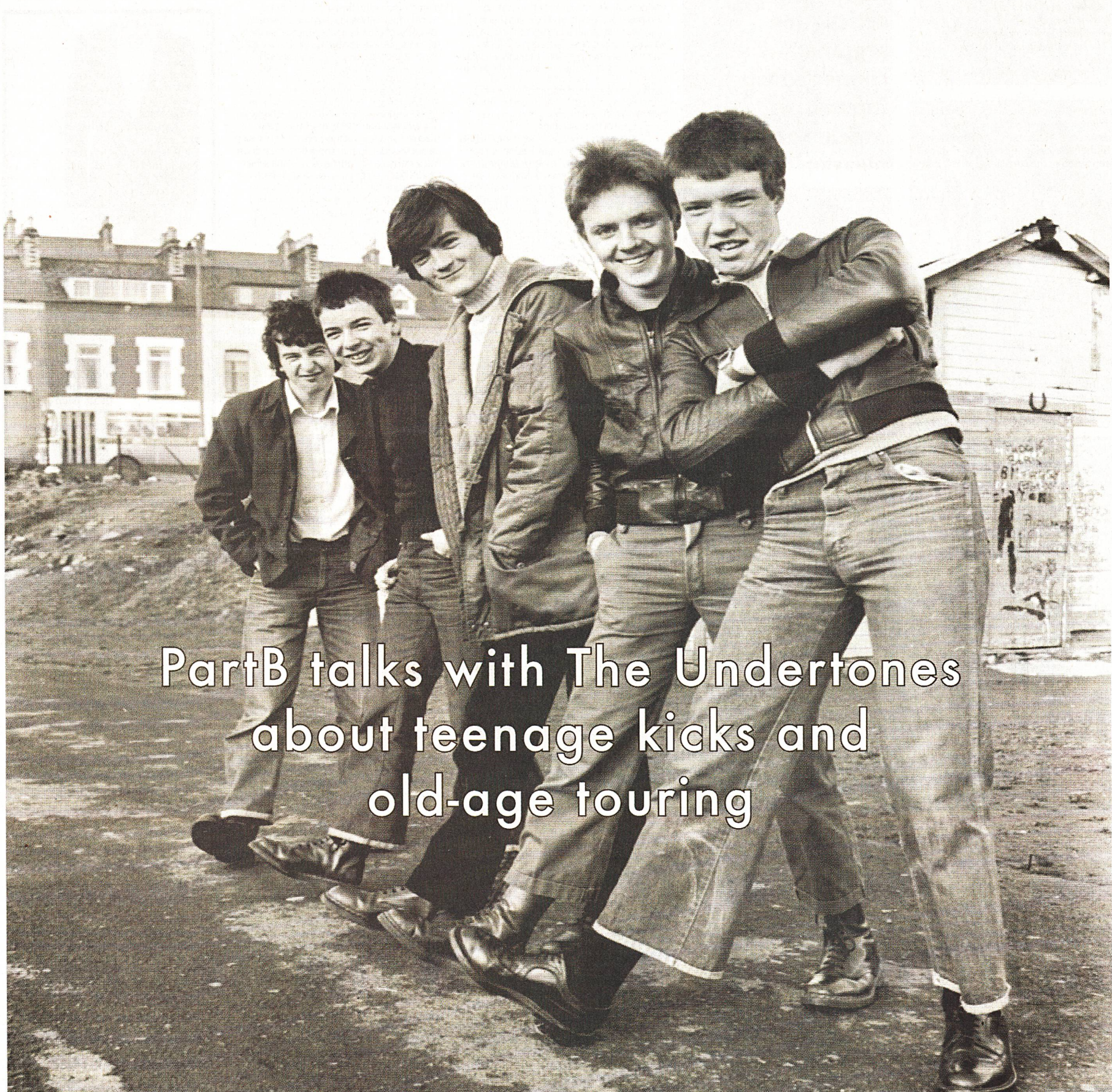
porter of cyber-skepticism, and attacks the role of Twitter in the protests, such as in Iran last year. He argues that activism is based on strong first hand experience and ties - not on the shallow associations created through Facebook and Twitter. Gladwell recognizes that the Internet aids in communications between like-minded individuals, it does not promote strong enough ties, as there isn't a risk involved in taking part in online 'recruiting' or propaganda. It takes commitment to risk imprisonment or even death in fighting for a cause in the real world: online activists just don't have that sort of enthusiasm.

How many times have you clicked 'attending' on some Facebook event

that you didn't go to; or argued passionately on a forum when you would never physically get up and fight for whatever subject you were so fiercely defending? Although Twitter and Facebook do help with spreading political awareness and information - do they really play a significant role in gathering followers for anti-government movements? It is difficult to believe that the eloquent political rallying in Town Halls and streets has been replaced with 140 characters on a Twitter page. Still, dictators want the Twitter bird to be put in its cage. ☛

Bianca Nardi
Features Editor

PART B



PartB talks with The Undertones
about teenage kicks and
old-age touring

LITERATURE

Non-Required
Reading is back

FASHION

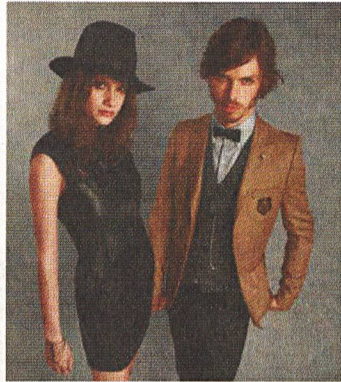
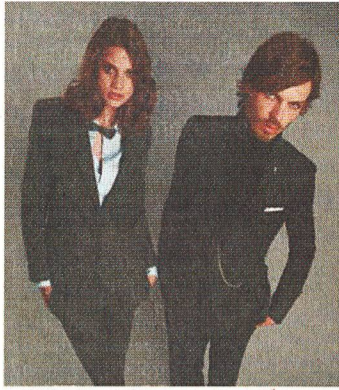
Mystery of the
Kooples: solved

VISUAL ARTS

Orozco comes to
the Tate Modern

Pour Homme, Pour Femme

Alice Leah Fyfe steps into the freshest French fashion



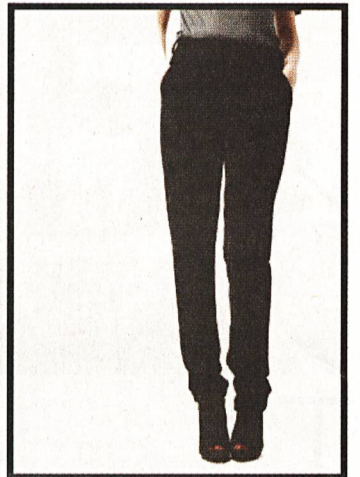
Have you seen these people? They are everywhere, emblazoned on the sides of buses, peering at you in bus shelters. At first I thought it was a band; stick a "the" in front of any plural noun and you immediately have a quasi-indie one hit wonder. But these suave and sharply-clad are not musicians. Inspired by decades of iconic "it" couples, "Kooples" is Parisian slang for couples and describes the fun and contemporary marketing ploy used by this fashion brand to face the newest French descent on London. The pairs of models you see are real life couples working in all types of media from various world cities. Chicago to Stockholm; these models wear the clothes with flair, exuding a lifestyle wearers will want to aspire to. Donning matching he-and-she outfits, the aesthetic coordination of the couples seems natural and lived in, while reflecting the underlying androgyny running through the collection.

The French brand was started in 2008 by Laurent, Alexander and Raphael, brothers who were inspired by their father, Tony Elicha, the founder of Comptoir des Cocooniers (CdC). This brand has been widely known for its simple feminine designs, and elegant basics which are coveted by a wide audience of fashionable women. The Kooples reworks this romantic simplicity, creating edgy but timeless pieces, drawing primary inspiration from Savile Row and vintage rock 'n' roll. Both also use similar ideas for their marketing campaigns (CdC use mother and daughter pairings). The Kooples' equivalent, matching its namesake, brings the brand's campaign in sync with metropolitan lifestyle and sexuality. Videos on the website show the couples in a short interview, explaining how they met, how long they've been together, what they love about each other, etc. Contrived? Perhaps, but I think it works so well with what these designers are trying to do; to engage with the consumer and portray a

lifestyle of real people, however beautiful. It makes the brand that much more accessible. Fashion should not be just about appearance, it is about feeling comfortable in the identity you choose for yourself and your interaction and influence with others. For me, they have encapsulated this brilliantly.

Initially appealing to a niche online clientele, the Parisian brand quickly grew, opening shops in Paris, the rest of France and now in London. They opened three stores here at the end of last year and already they have taken the capital by storm. Their ethos is to create timeless remakes of classic items; the sorts which turn into all-time favourites and you wish you had bought two of. They base their designs around simple, classic tailoring, using quality fabrics and elegant silhouettes to create a comfortable kind of chic. On first glance, you might not think that each item belongs to the same collection, but that is what is so clever about the designs of these daringly dapper brothers. I think the idea is that the whole season is like a capsule wardrobe. Key items which match each other to a tee and, in fact, will go with anything you dare to pair it with. It reminds me of a paper doll collection. You know, when you get a themed doll with a certain number of matching clothes which are readily interchangeable for any occasion. I would be more than ecstatic to have my whole wardrobe sourced from here. Mind you, I am a lover of the monochrome. Be warned, the closest you will find to a colour in here is camel. And I think that's only because it happens to be in vogue this season. You can certainly see the rock 'n' roll influence; when asked to pick a British "koople" to epitomise the label, the brothers chose Mick Jagger and Marianne Faithfull. Perhaps today they might suggest Russell and Katy.

I visited the Carnaby Street store and saw what I had expected from the advertising campaign: neatness and order. A simple layout and an industrial charm, which offsets the heritage and modesty associated with some of the designs. I was particularly charmed by the coats, with tarnished buttons and a comfortable fit, less rigid and more contemporary than some of the military and pea coat styles out there. Understated details like piping and embroidery show the quality and the vision which transcends centuries; romantic, vintage fixtures in a contemporary context. I guess the main question is that of price. It is pricey. You will not find anything full price under £60. Coats and jackets are around the £300 mark, jeans about £100. But this is what I'm about: investment in the staples. Remember, you wear 20 per cent of your wardrobe 80 per cent of the time. The quality and money spent on these favourites is rarely in proportion. I am interested to see what their summer line looks like, because at the moment the clothes are dark and structured. I hope to see some flowing silk and linen ousting the wool and felt. Will they stick to whites and neutrals or will they dare to introduce a splash of pastel colour? All will be revealed, but regardless, these are the sorts of items we should be spending our money on. Yes, the prices are more than Topshop, but the sophistication and wearability of these clothes is so refreshing



The Kooples

1) Military coat £330 **£165**, 2) Wool Blazer £290, 3) Velvet "Carrot" Trousers £140 **£70**

and the timeless style will last you for years to come.

Did I already say I love it?

Kings Road, SW3 4UD
Carnaby Street, W1F 7DB
St Christopher's Place, W1U 1NG
Contemporary department, Selfridges
www.thekooples.co.uk

Lucy, second year, LLB Laws

Lucy defines her style mostly in terms of music: 90s indie-pop and Tracyanne Campbell (singer from Camera Obscura) provide her with plenty of inspiration, and her transfer of music into her clothing does not end there. "I used to always buy a t-shirt at a gig, but more and more bands seem to be selling tote bags now, which I think is great." You can't see it in the picture but indeed, she caught my eye with the numerous tote bags she was carrying around campus. Like most people, Lucy does not shy away from a vintage twist: she recommends charity shops outside of London to "find the real gems". Today, she accessorises with a scarf from her grandfather (finally something different than "I found it in my mum's closet!") and a coat from Marks and Spencer! She has a penchant for boys' clothing ("more than is probably normal for a girl!"), namely baggy knitwear

and oversized t-shirts, but, as she puts it, "I never wear trousers, so maybe that balances it out!" Trying too hard, which is a mistake many Londoners make according to Lucy, is not her thing. I seem to be hearing the word "comfort" a lot these days when talking about clothing. Lucy also emphasises the importance of being confident in your clothes as well as them being practical. Still, she stresses the need for a certain balance: "I'm very grateful to be at a uni where people aren't draped head to toe in Jack Wills and Abercrombie and Fitch." I think student style is all about dressing well without it being the main concern; after all, you need to be able to run to your classes if you're late and take into account the fact that the library staircase really does provide students on bean bags with an excellent view up your skirt. In the same spirit, Lucy recommends fingerless gloves as a must-have this winter. "I can't be the only person who has resorted to using my nose to answer a call on my iPhone's touch screen when stuck in a pair of gloves in winter. Fingerless is the way to go."



Maaïke Mossel scouts Houghton Street's best dressed

Glee Series Blog

Shrina Poojara previews "The Rocky Horror Glee Show"

Following this week's girl-on-girl scene between "besties with benefits" Brittany and Santana (talk about risqué - did anyone catch that scissoring reference?), next week's instalment of Glee sees the producers step up the show's boundary-pushing as the cast take on The Rocky Horror Show.

Will decides to have the glee club perform the show after learning about Emma's newfound love for the cult classic. The episode focuses on the calamity that follows, with Will landing himself in hot water with Carl, while Finn finds himself confronting his body issues as he tries to measure up to new kid on the block, super-confident and ab-tastic Sam. Following her absence last night, Sue is back and out to cause even more mayhem as she tries to win a local Emmy by taking down Will and the gang.

Now onto "The Rocky Horror...". I must admit I haven't actually seen the film, and my high school drama teacher never felt compelled to put on a performance of the horror comedy stage musical. As a result, I must have missed a fair few references but, on the whole, the episode is very accessible to Rocky Horror newbies and fanatics alike.

The Glee tribute episodes have in the past had a tendency to focus on the musical numbers; plotlines have suffered as a result (case in point: the Britney/Brittany episode) but "The Rocky Horror Glee Show" is very story-driven while featur-

ing fantastic performances, allowing the episode to further the show's overarching plot rather than acting as a standalone instalment.

Those of you familiar with Rocky Horror will have already guessed that the producers had to water down some of the more X-rated content and skirt humorously around the issues of transsexuality. Fair play - it is a family show after all - but then again it seems kind of pointless for the show to have bothered taking on Rocky Horror at all, when its plot revolves around transsexuality as one of the major themes.

One of the major setbacks of the episode is that I still find myself hating Will Schuster. Gone is the show's moral compass who we met in the pilot episode; he has been replaced by a pretty selfish a-hole, who puts the reputation of the glee club at risk as he continues to pursue Emma in a way which is no longer romantic but just plain creepy. Sorry Mr. Schue - you have a lot of making up to do since you hooked up with the Vocal Adrenaline coach.

On the plus side, be prepared for the boys baring a LOT of skin (with ab-ulous results), hugely catchy musical numbers, cameos by Barry Bostwick and Meat Loaf and insanely awesome production. I just wish we'd gotten to see Brittany's peanut-allergy Halloween costume.

Episodes, the new BBC sitcom produced by David Crane (of Friends fame), takes great delight in the oh-so-peculiar relationship we have with Americans. Stephen Mangan and Tamsin Greig (*Green Wing*) play the Lincolns, a pair of talented British writers who have enjoyed considerable success on British TV with their sitcom, *Lyman's Boys*. Merc Lapidus, an insufferable US network executive, decides to pluck the pair out of London and transplant them to L.A. to make an American version of the show.

Yes, in reality the show probably would have been supremely better, with more attractive actors, whiter teeth and

deeper tans, but where's the comedy in that? Episodes draws its comedy from the tendency among some American networks to completely miss the point when remaking British shows for an American audience. It happened with *Top Gear* - the popularity of the show, which is watched worldwide, is based not on the format, with its idiotic challenges, but on the dynamic of the presenters' relationships. This is what the Americans failed to grasp. Similarly with the US version of *Skins*: yes, the American version may also follow a group of teenagers who would be a psychologist's wet dream, but *Skins* is so quintessentially British in its humour that I fail to see how this transplants well.

Simon Chaudhuri's TV Tips for the week

The Promise
Channel 4, Sundays, at 21:00

A project in the making for eleven years, **The Promise** is Peter Kosminsky's latest in a long line of controversial dramas - of which *The Project*, *Britz* and *The Government Inspector* are just a handful on the topics of New Labour, homegrown suicide bombers and Dr. David Kelly respectively. The Promise focuses on post-war Palestine and Israeli independence, with the story told through the eyes of a British soldier. Fantastically authentic, Kosminsky allowed no cross-casting of Israelis and Palestinians. A scene which sees an

Israeli soldier using a Palestinian girl as a human shield caused one Israeli actor to quit, such is Kosminsky's fastidiousness. The Observer calls this "the best thing you are likely to see on television this year, if not this decade".

The Big C
More4, Thursdays, at 23:00

A new series starring Laura Linney, co-starring Gabourey Sidibe (*Precious*), following a staid suburban teacher's battle with cancer. It's a wake-up call for Linney who decides to live a little, while she still can. Depressing subject matter which

Episodes

Simon Chaudhuri reviews Episodes

Episodes is by no means an indictment of Americans. However, what the show does indict is the vapid and shallow Hollywood culture that strikes such a contrast with our own television industry. Meritocracy has no place in the world that Episodes portrays - Matt LeBlanc is cast for a role merely because of who he is. Honesty is not a valuable trait - the executive who wants a US version of *Lyman's Boys* has never even seen an episode. Greed is good - a fast car and a big house are more important than artistic achievement. But hey, at least the teeth are white.

looks set to focus on the brighter side, à la *The Bucket List*.

Skins
E4, Thursdays, at 22:00

The new series of the quintessentially patronising Brit teen drama returns with an all-new line up of characters. The US version of the show has been called "the most dangerous programme ever for children". So far, **Skins** is keeping things tame, focusing on introducing the new personalities. There's no doubt that British writers will soon be looking to shock in the UK as well.

A band on the run: The Undertones Story

Derry's fabled pop-punk band talks to Masaya Tanikawa about their bittersweet teenage kicks



They are loved by many as one of Northern Ireland's finest. In the late 1970s, there were few others that softened the abrasive nature of punk with catchy melodic hooks. Set to embark on a UK-wide tour on 31st March, the iconic power-pop punk outfit started out with no name. **The Undertones** once existed only in the minds of four young schoolboys.

On a camping trip in August 1974, Michael Bradley would be approached by Vinny O'Neill, John O'Neill and Billy Doherty to join 'the group'. Michael was only 15 at the time. "We all just wanted to be in a band. We didn't even have instruments until a year later, towards the end of '75," he says. "I didn't know what instrument I'd be playing. I was just happy to be there. One day I'd be told I was on rhythm guitar so I'd say great, okay, then the next I'd be on lead."

He was eventually settled into plucking bass guitar. Feargal Sharkey was brought in as lead vocalist. The group took out a loan and finally acquired some music equipment. They were looking more and more like a proper band – until a few months later, when Vinny abruptly announced he was leaving. Fortunately, his younger brother Damian would take his place. He even had an electric guitar and a working amp.

"Why wasn't I considered before? I have no idea. I think it's because of the age gap. When you're as young as fifteen, eighteen months can make a big difference," muses Damian. "I only joined because I was the little brother, basically. That, and I had the equipment. Though, mind you, I was actually a better guitarist than John at the time."

Our first gig was to a crowd of Irish Catholic Cub Scouts...

He started playing electric guitar when he was 12, inspired by his older brothers Jim, Vinny and John. "Jim was into folk-kind of stuff, so there was always an acoustic guitar in the house. John and Vinny were always taking guitar lessons too," recalls Damian. "I guess I followed in their footsteps, but I taught myself. I even had an extra handicap since I'm naturally left-handed. I had to force myself to learn right-handed guitar. I can't remember now, but my mum tells me I used to lock myself in the bedroom and practice for weeks," he says with a laugh. With all roles filled, the group took to the stage for the first time as entertainment for a rowdy crowd of Catholic Cub Scouts.

The next few months were full of similarly amusing memories. After cycling

through a number of (embarrassing) names including The Hot Rods and Little Feat, the group finally came across one they could call their own. "It was thanks to Billy, the drummer. He was flipping through some old history book from school and suddenly said we should be The Undertones. We thought it was great, it even rhymed with The Ramones," says Michael. "They were one of our biggest influences. The songs were short, the chords were simple and we liked the lyrics."

Without John Peel, the band probably wouldn't have continued on

Derry was, according to the band, a bleak scene for music at the time. The records largely defined their sound. "It was quite awful. No one did their own songs, they would just do covers of chart hits. Sure we started out doing rhythm and blues sort of music, kind of like The Rolling Stones, but when we heard stuff from Dr. Feelgood and Iggy and The Stooges it changed us forever," says Damian.

"We started speeding up our songs, making them shorter and more lively. There was a whole new punk rock movement thanks to the likes of The Damned and The Ramones, so it was perfect timing. A seminal moment in the band's history for sure, I mean we never looked back after that."

Michael has similar feelings about the importance of hearing such classics. "We were very much on our own. We had no one else to draw influences from local-wise. Very rarely would anyone have written their own material," he says. "We were very heavily influenced by the likes of The Ramones, Iggy and The Stooges and The Damned. I think it was our adoration for that classic punk-rock stuff that set us apart from everyone else. It was just us and a record player. I think that worked out well."

The same could not be said for the stability of the band. After some demo tapes were made, Feargal wanted to quit the band. "It might've been because none of the labels in England liked our rough tapes. Who knows, but it didn't take much persuading to get him to stay on for one record," recalls Michael.

By the fall of 1978, the seminal 'Teenage Kicks' was released under Good Vibrations and the great John Peel had picked up the single.

"Billy had called him up off-air to tell him about us. I guess we were a bit jealous that there were other bands from Ireland being played when we were the first, that sort of thing," says Damian. "We

sent him a demo tape and he wrote back with very positive, encouraging words. A few months later he even arranged a session for us." The Undertones were also doing music press interviews and had a proposal from Sire Records, which had signed on their heroes The Ramones, for a record deal. Four years and at last, the Derry boys had embarked on their shaky trajectory towards super-stardom.

"Without John Peel, the band probably wouldn't have continued on. When we heard our song on his show, we were pinching ourselves. He not only played it, but fell in love with it," beams Damian. "We couldn't believe how lucky we were. I mean it was a great song, sure, but all bands need a sort of break, and he was ours. It's funny because we thought 'Teenage Kicks' would be a sort of last testament to us that we existed, since we just knew there would be no longevity for the band."

'Teenage Kicks' would come to define the band around the world. "I'm not quite sure why it was such a big hit. I think it over-shadowed a lot of our other songs, which were just as good," notes Damian. "I'm not going to complain though, I honestly never get bored of playing it. I love seeing the reaction it gets from the audience. It's just a great song to play with guitar with its major-minor keys that really ring out."

Even after the band appeared on Top Of The Pops, the O'Neills' residence would continue to be their base. "I've had nothing but good memories there. It was great," reminisces Damian. "The band would come up and congregate in the living room every night. It was our hub. No one else had a telephone around, so we'd call up people, get people to come to our gigs. We also religiously listened to John Peel's radio show, which was the only way to hear new music since we couldn't afford to buy records all the time."

John was the de facto leader of the band, having written most of the songs. "He would spend a lot of time at home just working and working on his own. Then he'd come back and show us what he's come up with. I think he has a natural talent for coming up with amazing stuff," says Damian. "I think the band had this great chemistry. I know it's a clichéd term, but we all just worked together so well. I'd often write songs with Michael, since I wasn't very good with the lyrics. Him being a very funny person with a wit about him, he'd twist the songs into these cynical, funny tunes." Michael concurs, noting they had a "very good partnership".

Feargal was not as involved with the song-writing process. "He was always an outsider, even before the Undertones days. He never even showed interest in getting involved with the song-writing. Maybe he was intimidated, I never really asked," says Damian. "What was great about him though was that he was an

extrovert. He never cared what people thought about him, which is good and bad in a way.

"I mean, in the early days we weren't very liked in the hometown. Derry was quite narrow-minded back then, and we really were different from everyone else. Long hair and bellbottoms were in, but we had short cuts and wore jeans. Punk was treated like a joke, like it wasn't real music," he says with a sigh.

Since Feargal was the singer, he naturally became the face of the band. Much of the press and the fans focused on him over the rest. He had written none of the songs, and Michael felt the band "resented" the undeserved attention.

"A lot of people didn't like Feargal for years and years. Even when we had hits, people would shout at us in the streets that we were shite," says Damian. That's one of the reasons why I wanted to leave Derry – I didn't want to live in a town where you'd get abuse in the streets."

The tense undertones within the band manifested itself in subtle ways. "We supported The Clash during 1979 in America. It was amazing. It was only for two weeks, but we loved it. We hardly tipped our toes in the States though. I wish we had, everything there was so new and shiny," says Damian with regret. "Circumstances weren't that great by that time though. By the end of the third LP, things weren't selling well and America didn't want us over anymore."

We went into a downward spiral... That great band spirit had gone...

"Our later stuff was influenced more by 60s sort of music. We were maturing, but that didn't go down well with the hardcore fans who just wanted Teenage Kicks stuff. We alienated the fan base and more importantly, we didn't win over any new ones," recalls Damian. "Our career went into a downward spiral and we just

stopped touring for a year, which was a mistake since we were better live. We all hid in our retrospective houses and met up every now and again, but that great band spirit had gone."

Michael recalls Feargal's personal ambitions and how he was not satisfied staying with The Undertones. "I think he was ambitious and wanted to make more money. He went on to do a solo career, which was fair enough. When he wanted to leave after the fourth LP, which didn't do well, he honestly wanted to leave and I think that came as a godsend."

Damian agrees. "That was the downpoint. It was the worst ever period of the band. I had nothing but really bad memories then, so I think it was a relief to break up."

The Undertones decided to reform again in 1999, replacing Feargal with fellow Derry musician Paul McLoone. "There was a bit of trepidation at first over whether people would accept us," recalls Damian. "We knew it would work because Paul has such great presence live. He's funny and he's got the Derry accent, it's not like he was pretending to be Irish."

"We were originally going to reform for just two shows, but ten years have passed and we're still going. It's been great. I never would have imagined I'd still be playing our hits in my fifties. If you had asked me twenty years ago, I would have thought it would be corny and kind of sad, like you're trying to relive or youth," muses Damian. "I think you kind of mellow out more, which is definitely what happened with us over the last fifteen years or so. When you reach a certain age you realise these songs still stand the test of time."

The Undertones will be playing their debut album in its entirety, alongside material from their newer recordings. Michael, Damian and the rest of the band are very excited about the upcoming 'True Confessions' UK tour. "We're actually working on a new album right now. We've only just started, but we'll see how it goes," says Damian. "They've got a great feel about them, and we hope everyone will enjoy the songs as much as we do."

Visit www.thegarage.co.uk for tickets to see their London gig on April 16.



iPod, iPhone... iDone?

Eden Dwek asks whether Apple can continue its winning streak without its CEO, Steve Jobs

On 23rd October 2001, a new industry was created. Steve Jobs stood up on stage at the front of a small theatre full of software developers and introduced a product that could hold 'your entire music collection'; the first of its kind. This product was to be called "iPod."

In the wake of the burst of the dot-com bubble, investors had placed less importance on the technology industry and China had started to be recognised as an important power in global trade, reflected in its admission to the World Trade Organization. Apple, meanwhile, had spent the previous ten years going through a financial roller coaster of successes and failures in computing. The company's funding was running low, and they were about to take a massive gamble.

Almost ten years later, Apple has revolutionised the music industry with its iPod, iPhone, iPad, and iTunes. Meanwhile, this has gone hand in hand with a social and fashion hype surrounding it; Steve Jobs not only resurrected Apple, but impacted both youth culture and adults alike with a small metal and plastic device. Apple is now the second most valuable American stock to invest in, after ExxonMobil, the oil giant. However,

after Jobs's announcement of immediate medical leave two weeks ago, the company's shares dropped 5% over the following five days, wiping \$15bn off its stock market value.

Pundits and investors are more than aware of Jobs's integral involvement in new Apple products. Many would strongly argue that popular Apple products would not have existed, let alone been so sought after so much, had it not been for Jobs's command over the company. With uncertainty over the return of Apple's

Could this be the end of an era?

CEO, could this be the end of an era? Has the company been so reliant on the work of its leader, that there was no contingency in place should something happen to him? Surely this cannot have been the case. No matter how much attention Apple had been giving to their success, the medical history of Steve Jobs was no doubt in the forefront of most of the directors' minds.

In 2004, Jobs announced to employees that he had been diagnosed with a cancerous tumour in his pancreas.

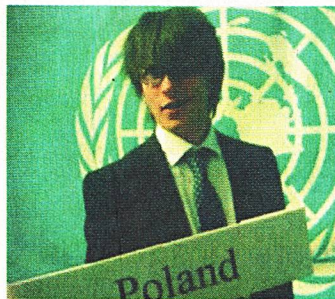
After initially fighting the proposal of conventional treatment he finally underwent a procedure to remove the tumour. Between 2006 and 2009, investor and media chatter was concerned with the abnormally frail appearance of Mr Jobs and this led to speculation and rumours regarding the return of his cancer. In January 2009, Jobs eventually announced a six-month medical leave of absence. Only a year later, he has announced another medical leave.

So what next? Apple no doubt has a flurry of products for 2011; new iPods, iPhones, iPads and iMacs, as well as undoubtedly some revolutionary new product, which none of us thought we needed, but will soon be essential to our everyday life. The company's valuation will still rise following its recent record-breaking quarter of \$6bn net profits. So Apple's 2011 seems tied up, but beyond 2011, then what? Can Apple's Englishman, Jonathan Ive, live up to Steve Jobs's prestige? Or is it now the opportunity for the rest of the technology industry to play catch up and show us what they can do? Apple's consumer loyalty has thus far stayed secure, however the lure of new innovative and cutting edge devices may cause this support to wane.

Non-Required Reading

Here's a peek at what The Beaver's newest editors are reading for fun:

BENJAMIN BUTTERWORTH
BSc Government and Social Policy
Social Editor at the Beaver



Favourite Non-Required Books:
The Third Man: Life at the Heart of New Labour by Peter Mandelson; *Popcorn* by Ben Elton; *Cirque du Freak* by Darren Shan

Currently Reading:
A Journey by Tony Blair-- I have a signed copy, it's beautiful.

Favourite Fictional Character:
Gandalf, for I like power.

BIANCA GINELLI NARDI
BSc International Relations
Features Editor at the Beaver



Favourite Non-Required Books:
The House of the Spirits by Isabel Allende; *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez; *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini; *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen

Favourite Fictional Character:
God... or Jay Gatsby.

Currently Reading (and do you recommend it?):
Invictus by John Carlin. Yes!

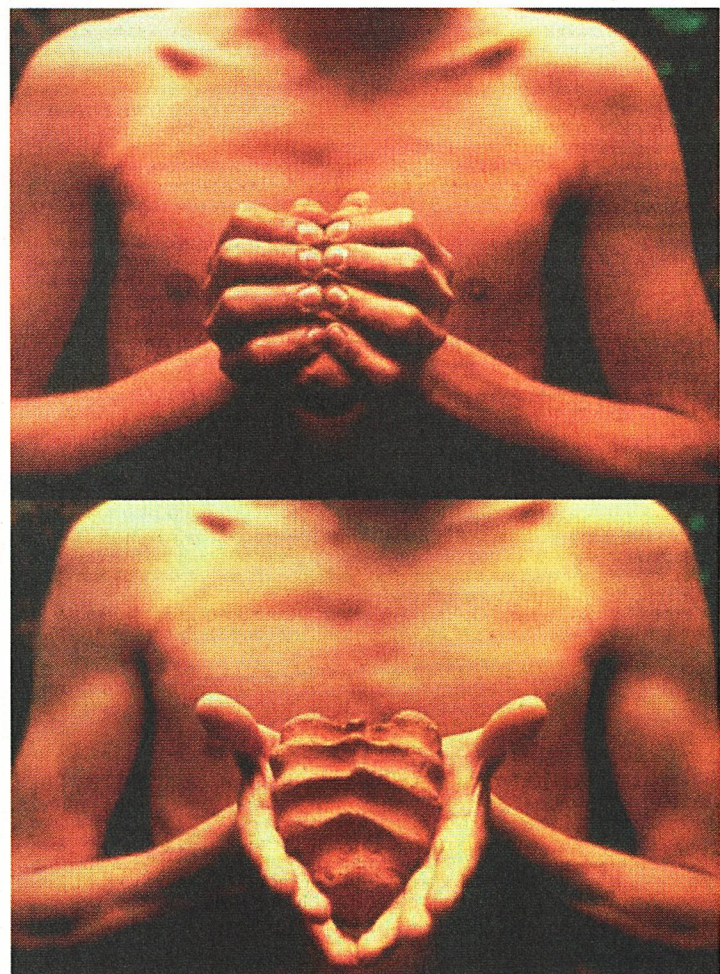
The man who paints on a skull

Zoe Leung examines the work of one of Mexico's most influential artists

If I have to confess, sometimes I don't like modern art that much. For many pieces, I found the excess emphasis on abstractness self-serving rather than communicating. However, I had nothing better to do for one afternoon and took a stroll down to Tate Modern, intending to catch a glimpse of Ai Weiwei's sunflower seed installation in the turbine hall. When I got there, I saw the banner for the Orozco exhibition. At a moment of confusion (after half a day of studying), I thought this Orozco was that Orozco (José Clemente Orozco, Mexican Socialist muralist). So I bought my ticket and went in.

Of course soon I realized it was actually Gabriel Orozco, who is still alive. He

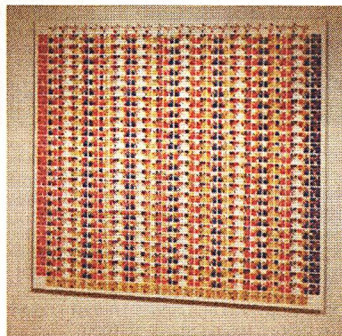
Orozco's passion for life could originate from his Latin American roots



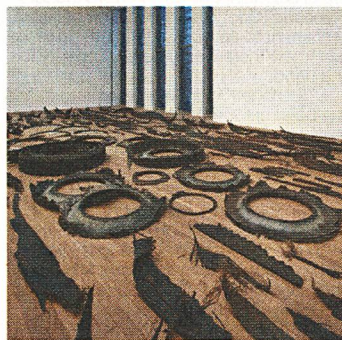
is also from Mexico, although he now has homes in New York and Paris too. I later discovered that he is dubbed "one of the most influential artists of this decade, and probably the next one too" by the Spanish-English bilingual magazine, *Literal*.

What marks his work is his spontaneity and wit in linking up entirely unrelated concepts. He seems like an alchemist who can pick up anything and turn it into something completely different, as we shall see in all of the works included here. For example, the entrance piece, called 'My Hands Are My Heart', was never intended to be in the collection. As explained by Orozco in the audio guide, the idea came about one day as he was sitting in his workshop. He took up a small piece of clay and pressed his ten fingers in it. The marks of his fingers made the clay look like a heart instead.

But the true spark is the human touch, in his works both physically, like 'My Hands Are My Heart', and metaphorically. Indeed, he has repeatedly stressed that he is fascinated by life. So his works highlight his observations of the "reality" and the interesting chemistry in human interactions. Some may be disgusted by his 'Lintel' installation, but, again, his abil-



ity to catch details often missed shines through. To create this installation, he has gone to local laundry shops to pluck out pieces of hair, dirt and fibres from washing machines and weaved them into sheets. These sheets, which only look like your usual laundry, are hung on strings pulled across the exhibition room,



mirroring the source of the materials. By collecting intimate belongings of anonymous people, Orozco has turned them into other intimate belongings of fictional people, whose back garden the audience seems to have walked into. A canny metaphor of real human interaction is set up as the audience fills the space, both

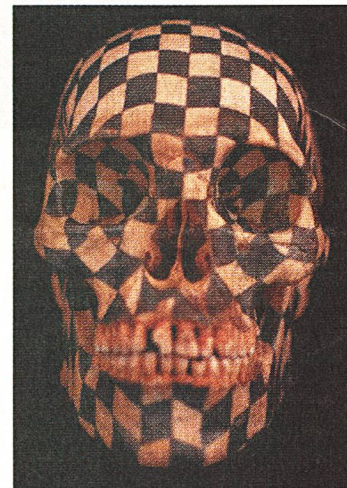
of the room and in their own head, with imagination of these fictional characters.

This passion for life could be from Orozco's Latin American roots. And another trait of Latin American life visible in his art is probably his concept of people as integral parts of a group, instead of individual entities, yet non-identical. His other installation, 'Chicotes', which means whips in Spanish, involves a group of abandoned motor tyres Orozco found on highways. The tyres are of all different sorts, big, small, thick, thin. Orozco had cut them open. So on the floor, the audience sees strips of rubber of various

What marks Orozco's work is his spontaneity and wit in linking up entirely unrelated concepts

sizes, frayed at the sides and curled up at the end, all pointing towards one direction as if a school of fish fiercely wiggling against the stream. Despite having a common direction, the distinct shapes of the tyres underline the theme of distinct identity under unity.

Motion, such as that in 'Chicotes', is a recurring theme in Orozco's works. And as he admits, he is a big fan of sports and motions, and above all, cars. Apart from Chicotes, major motion-related exhibits include 'La DS'. It is Orozco's childhood dream model of a Citroën DS, which could not actually be driven. Orozco's fascination with speed made him cut out the middle section of a real DS and merge the remaining two sides together.



Essentially, the streamlined car now looks more like an arrow, adding to the notion of motion. Orozco boyishly underscores in the audio guide that he initially planned to have all the doors on the car open, as he thinks the banging sound of the doors adds to the sense of motion of the car. In the end, he scrapped the idea due to the increasingly busy flow of museum visitors nowadays and the fear that the visitors would destroy the piece.

However, Orozco is far from being merely a restless artist. He is unhinged by the beauty of mechanics and geometry, as seen from 'La DS', and no less so by philosophy, yet another trait of many Latin Americans. 'Black Kites' has both in one. It is a skull, bought by Orozco from Soho, New York, with a checkerboard of black squares painted on it. It could possibly be a symbol borrowed from the existential scene in Hamlet. And, contrary to the liveliness some of his other works, Orozco professes that this piece of work, and some other, is a meditation on mortality. The paradoxes carried by the piece are many, geometry versus the "organic", thinking versus mortality, intricacy versus emptiness. The rich content demands the audience to stop and to contemplate, which in a way also completes the theme of philosophy of the piece itself.

As I said at the beginning, many modern artists fail to communicate with the audience. Conversely, Orozco's exhibition introduces the artist himself. Especially with modern technology, the audio guide, introductory clips all recorded by Orozco himself, one could almost walk into the mind of the artist. If Orozco is all for human interactions and life, then the virtual conversation between him and the audience in the audience's mind is probably the unintended, yet overarching theme of his exhibition.

The exhibition runs at the Tate Modern until 25th April.

King Lear, The Roundhouse

Luke Smolinski dissects the RSC's last production of their winter season

There are those who would have us believe that Shakespeare is (though no-one dare admit it) overrated twaddle. It's good, they aver, but it's no better than The OC. The only reason it remains so popular is because it is passed down through generations of actors and academics, and no-one would dare to challenge it. As if there is some sort of tacit agreement between the upper classes to keep this stuff going. Of course, we would never get the bourgeoisie to own up to it, the snotty-nosed berks, but that doesn't mean it's not true. Elitist, pompous and secretly rubbish: so goes the accusation.

Tolstoy certainly thought so. *King Lear* is supposed to be the worst example of it. The plot is trite, the characters are incredible, and the Fool is an irritating nuisance who makes no sense. Actions come primarily out of situation, not out of thoughts and desires of the character. The play is nothing but a glorified fairy tale.

The RSC's production of *Lear* kicked Tolstoy's theory in the balls. The play throughout was a nihilistic hellhole. The stage is pretty much bare, with nothing but a large wooden wall as a backdrop. The wall is shattered and broken down through the play as Lear's (Greg Hicks) madness grows.

There is nihilism, utter nihilism: Fate strips everything of purpose in this play. "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods / They kill us for their sport." So

The RSC's production of *Lear* kicks Tolstoy's theory in the balls

says Gloucester (Geoffrey Freshwater) after his eyes are gouged out onstage. Such cruel meaninglessness is best expressed in the storm in Act Three, which Lear must walk through, cursing. Lamps high above our heads flash, thunder booms, walls break, lighting rigs fall and rain descends on Lear, lit by a solitary spotlight. It is clear this is all happening inside Lear's head, too.

The renunciation of power is the play's central theme. It's why Lear acts and feels as he does. There are two main emotions that result from this. The first is an impotent fury: the rage Lear feels

Poetic, tragic and a story worth telling

when he finds himself completely without power. Far from feeling forced, Hicks makes this distress seem natural.

The second is a sort of disgusted dismay at the injustice of it all, when his two daughters Regan and Goneril cast him out. Hicks delivers these lines as the poetry that they are. Scowling at Goneril, he says, "Detested kite, thou liest!" When Regan hears what she has done, he says, "With her nails she'll flay thy wolfish visage." Who has not wanted to say that in an argument?

Who too has not wanted to call someone a "lily-livered, action-taking knave, a whoreson, glass-gazing, super-serviceable, finical rogue; [...] nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pander and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch"?

Having felt such rage, at both injustice and impotence, Lear slowly goes mad. Yet with this madness, Lear's philosophy

Kelly Hunter in *King Lear*



becomes strangely more sane. He gives up his fury and accepts things as they are. The realisation dawns on him that power, vengeance and ultimately victory don't matter. Yet, just as he realises this, his youngest daughter – whom he has cast out for speaking her mind, the only daughter who really loves him – dies in his arms.

To Tolstoy, this is too contrived. Cordelia is written to be some stock heroic character, with Regan, Goneril and Edmund playing the pantomime villains.

The RSC paints them differently. All are persons in their own right, acting from real motivations: Edmund (Tunji Kasim) acts out of resentment, having been cast as an illegitimate child his whole life; Goneril (Kelly Hunter) acts out of a hypocritical puritanism, and Regan (Katy Stephens) is driven too much by whims and lusts. Both the drumbeat of war and power corrupts them further.

Though Tolstoy sees the play as clichéd, silly and pointless, I beg to differ. The play tells the tragedy of an old man

who loses everything. It is a story which happens time and again, in politics, in business and in human affairs. Shakespeare captures it beautifully and invites us to watch. It's poetic, it's tragic and it's a story worth telling.

King Lear is on at the Roundhouse in Camden until the 2nd of April.

The Roundhouse holds 20 £5 tickets for 16-25 year olds for every performance.

A Flea In Her Ear, The Old Vic

Chris Finnigan reflects on a tremendous farce

Like a pop song increases the volume of its guitars, making their solos and chord progressions steadily go higher and higher, teasing their listener, making them wait until enough tension exists for the song to finally erupt into the long-awaited and much anticipated chorus, so to does *A Flea In Her Ear*, just with its comedy instead.

This eccentric farce is an entire crescendo of comedy that leaves the audience howling with laughter at the end of each of its three acts. The Old Vic, under the continued guidance of Kevin Spacey, has once again selected a play of great quality to adorn its stage. The theatre last played host to George

This eccentric farce: a crescendo of comedy

Feydeau's play in 1966, and has taken it down from a dusty shelf and flawlessly recreated it.

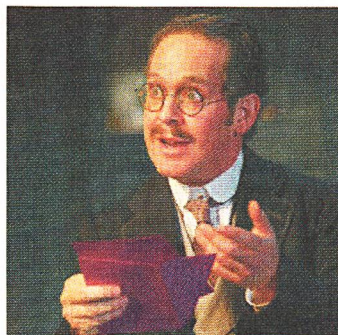
Now directed by Richard Eyre, *A Flea In Her Ear* is intricately developed and explosively delivered. Feydeau, a French playwright who died in 1921, created in this play many distinct characters, who all, with mathematical precision, become entangled with one another. Feydeau's ability to blend all their stories together, to tie them in such calamitous ways is outstanding. Tom Hollander - from *The Thick Of It* - who plays the lead role of two characters, aristocratic Victor Chandebise and porter Pocque, was unfortunately absent on the night, but his understudy Greg Baldock, seamlessly stepped into his shoes. Mistaken identities are built into the play by Feydeau with (depending on what night you go) either Hollander or Baldock playing both these characters.

The plot revolves around Chandebise's untrusting wife (Lisa Dillon) who enlists the help of her friend Lucienne (Fiona Glascott) after she suspects Chandebise of having an affair. Lucienne writes an enticing letter to Chandebise inviting him to the elaborately named Hotel Coq d'Or, which is accidentally read by Lucienne's hilariously jealous Spanish husband Don Carlos (John Marquez). Upon reading the letter he instantly

recognises his wife's handwriting and goes charging after Chandebise to hunt him down and set him straight. Romance elsewhere is secretly flourishing, with Chandebise's house staff and extended family privately rendez-vousing when the coast is clear and the others' backs are turned.

All of the characters move around from house, to hotel, and back to house again together, and all struggle to understand Lucienne's husband's thick Spanish accent and Chandebise's nephew, Camille's heavy speech impediment. In Act Two the indecipherable pair meet, which provides for a rousing spectacle, where by Don Carlos employs other parts of his body to communicate, and which Camille's impediment is momentarily cured with a little help from a doctor.

The reason why this production makes for such an exhilarating farce is that when fires erupt - as hatched plans go horribly wrong - the characters find the perfectly incorrect solution to put them out. They lie, stall and ignore, creating further confusion and layers to an already thickly layered plot. It is Don Carlos who steals the show on the night. Every time he appears on stage his outrageous adaptation of a proud,



distrustful, protective and very eccentric Spanish husband provokes mountains of laughter from the audience.

A neat recipe of confusion explodes at the end of the play as the characters come finally to realise what has been going on, leaving the audience warmly amused as they depart from their seats.

A Flea In Her Ear is on at the Old Vic until the 5th March.

The Old Vic holds 100 £12 tickets for under 25s for every performance.



Tom Hollander gets caught in the thick of it, with a flea in his ear

Improvation, Hoxton Hall

Angelina Castellini on this year's 50-hour, non-stop, theatrical spectacular

While I am writing this, the fifty-hour *Improvation* is well under way. It has been running for eighteen hours so far. From 7pm on Friday 21st January to 9pm on Sunday 23rd January, twenty-five actors and musicians, including award-winning comedians from BBC radio as well as improv-stars from countries far, far away, perform an improvised story for fifty hours non-stop.

Of course, while you are reading this, this is in the past, but I believe that only an on-the-spot article can do this on-the-spot theatre spectacle justice. Each year, since 2008, the audience has been invited to support the actors with a fifty hour ticket and a sleeping bag or simply by dropping in for any of the twenty-five two-hour long sessions. Each of them begins with a short summary of the story so far and then lets the plot continue. For those of you who don't know what improvisation theatre is: every single word and note performed on stage is made up on the spot - there is no script, no director, no lighting queues - only costumes and props at the ready. The little help that the actors get is a theme, setting or name for every scene. But the key ingredient is provided by the actors themselves: imagination.

This year the *Improvation* story is set in the age of disco, in Studio 50 (as opposed to 54!), an exclusive New York night club which is hosting the disco dancing championship. So far a murder has been committed and four young club-goers have dedicated themselves to investigate it. They have become increasingly entangled in a web of mystery and all the police is concerned with is speed-dating every lady on the scene.

Meanwhile, Woody Allen is desperately in love with his fictional character Annie Hall whom he is trying to incorporate in his musical remake of *Spiderman*, starring Andy Warhol. A handful of Russians have found their way into New York. They are confronted with cultural differences during the Cold War and it seems as though everyone, including Carol Channing, is trying to find sex in this city. To complicate things even more, the disco dancing championship is fuelling competition as well as suspicion amongst the participants who seek advice from the reverend in his chapel of suggestive statues. Confused? Rightly so! While making fun of absolutely everything and ever one, this utterly bewildering performance is not for the light hearted or the politically correct.

As time drags on the actors become increasingly sleep deprived and less and

less concerned about censoring their acts. Although I am very familiar with improvisation theatre I am surprised how well the actors manage to perform short scenes that all fit into a big picture. No one has an inkling of an idea of what the picture will look like at the end but slowly the twenty five individual characters come together and add bits of plot to the story. I am even more taken aback that sleep deprivation has not taken their sense of humour, though some of the characters appear to be a bit more grumpy at times.

During the short intervals not only the actors but also members of the audience rush towards the bar to tank coffee. The informal atmosphere of Hoxton Hall ensures that I immediately feel part of the event, talking to the actors and clutching a Coke. There's not much time for deep conversation though because the next session is about to begin. I take my place on the lower balcony (there are two - Hoxton Hall is small, old fashioned, made of wood and authentic) and lean over the banister to get a good view of the stage and the actors sitting on chairs next to the audience waiting for their turn on stage.

The theatre is decorated with lots of glitter and disco lights, and the afros, bare chests and super-tight polyester trousers make me doubt whether I am really living in the twenty-first century. The host of the show plays the keyboard, making all background sounds as well as the music when the actors break into song. Except for a few odd words here and there the songs are catchy and could be mistaken for written music. Improvising songs is even harder than improvising theatre and the actors deliberately challenge each other to cross the border of their imagination and plunge into sketches which make the audience roar with laughter.

The *Improvation* is a truly unique experience and I recommend it to anyone who enjoys a good laugh about a whole load of nonsense. Sadly, it only takes place once a year, but for those of you who can't wait to experience an improvisation show: London is the place to be! Many of the actors who take part in the *Improvation* can be seen on other stages, some even weekly.

And if by now you can't sit still in your seat anymore, your brain is flooded with silly thoughts or you simply have an urge to try improvisation theatre yourself, join the LSE Drama Society and give it a shot during the weekly improvisation workshops! All are welcome!

PRIVATE B

It's funny cos we make up silly names for people!

LSE considers privatising Neall F***erson!

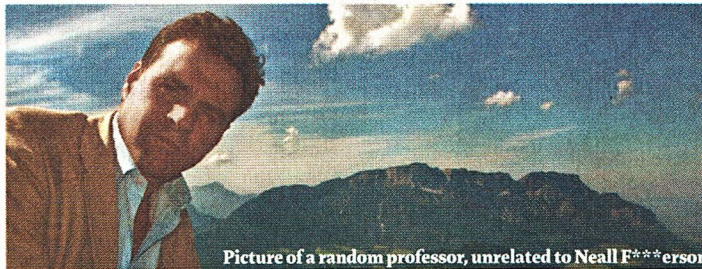
LSE Council considered selling off highly-respected historian Neall F***erson, it was revealed yesterday. The news comes after allegations that the esteemed academic isn't worth the money.

Sir Howard Duvets responded to the allegations, saying, "LSE is privileged to have Neall in the Pointless Celeb chair. While it remains true that we were trying to pawn him off, eBay does not take bids of more than £100,000.

"Er, hang on - where's that old script? Ah! It is right that we consider all options in light of the Browne Report, even if that includes whoring out an international historian. As it was, the costs outweighed the benefits."

Neall and worship!

Sir Howard continued, "What Neall brings to LSE is priceless. I mean, obviously, we had to pay less-than-£100,000 to get him, but he's worth it."



Picture of a random professor, unrelated to Neall F***erson

"These attacks are completely unfounded. Neall is a modest, extremely hard-working teacher. Why ask him yourself! Not this week obviously, because he's at Davos talking with highly-powerful CEOs..."

"Most importantly, he is FAMOUS. You have to go all out to buy that kind of fame. Next year, we can only afford Adam Hart-Davis."

"But like I was saying, Neall is very busy at the moment. He's writing a book! He can't be wasting away his hours doing trivial things like teaching lessons or being on campus!"

"Plus, he's on campus at least one hour a week! How much more do you want him here?"

Neall was unavailable for comment (or teaching).

HOWARD DUVETS Who is to blame?

No. 32: The snow.



LSE Israel-Pal Soc Dispute brings peace to Middle East!

The actions of the Israel and Palestinian Societies has solved the Middle East peace process, it emerged yesterday.

The bitter conflict, which some commentators believed would never end, has raged for over a hundred years between the two Societies. Despite being denounced by some LSE students as petty and futile, the petty, futile protests actually made a difference.

To cheers of delight, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas stated, "The long struggle is finally over. Thank goodness I finally listened to students in a country 35 degrees of longitude away."

"If I had not read that letter to the Beaver about the perpetuation of anti-Semitic

stereotypes, we wouldn't be standing here today."

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu marked the end to the historic conflict, saying, "At long last, peace has come to these lands. I'm glad I finally listened to the Beaver's stance on bottled water."

Barack Obama proclaimed this was a "momentous day in our history. Let no-one say the letters criticising an Aldwych student paper's perpetuation of narratives went to waste!"

Commentators question whether the peace can last, however, as there are continued hostilities between the LSE Israel-Palestine Socs [cont. p97]

Letters to Private B

Cher le Beaver,

Le weekend dernière, je was reading la très hilarieuse section, le 'Private B', n'est-ce pas? Quand j'ai regardé l'advertisement de Restaurant de Wrights!

Et j'ai pensé, "Sacré bleu! Le font est trop petit et je ne peux pas read les jokques très hilarieuses!" Qui-ever was responsable pour ça (par exemple, le silly editeur Jean-à-Thon Storé mais je ne sais pas) devrais etre sackué!!!

Ce n'est pas acceptable! (Aussi, je

comprends vous êtes courts de materielle ce semaine.) Donc est-ce que vous reprintez le colonne immédiatement?!

Votre,
Jean-Eric Frenchman.

Dear Mr Frenchman,

Of course we can re-print the column! I'm so glad you wrote in!

Yours!
Executive Satirist-in-Chief!

ADVERTISEMENT

Overdone it recently? Looking for a healthier option?
Why not dine at the newly renovated, cool et 'cbic'...

Restaurant de Wrights

All your favourite early-death-inducing meals - now written in French!

Maintenant serving:

- le pain chaud avec le delicatessen de fromage (cheese on toast)
- deux pains avec le jambon mais ce n'est pas le jambon, c'est le boeuf! (hamburger)
- les monches de montrosité (Monster Munch)
- les qu'est-ce c'est? (Wotsits)
- les frites de Jacques Tindale (cheesy chips)
- le salade du jour (one lettuce leaf)
- oeuf (the noise you make when you finish)

You may die early but at least you'll have saved some money!

*All food may or may not be bought from the Sainsburys down the road.

The Long Hot Summer



Classics

Director: Martin Ritt Screenplay: Irving Ravetch Cast: Paul Newman, Orson Welles, Joanne Woodward, Anthony Franciosa Runtime: 115 minutes Year: 1958

The title has connotations of fear - either the race riots of '67 or the season of the Son of Sam a decade later. Martin Ritt's loose adaptation of several William Faulkner stories preceded both by almost a decade and perhaps this is one of the reasons it isn't as widely known as some of Paul Newman's other films. Although it is a tale of fears, they are of a very different kind.

Ben Quick (Paul Newman), with his reputation as a barnburner, is feared as someone who threatens the scorched fabric of rural society. If a barn burns, he is the prime suspect and is inevitably cast out. He arrives upon yet another of these nowhere towns, but this time his forthrightness impresses its effec-

It feels like a succession of hot afternoons cooling only slightly for the events of the evening

tive ruler. Landowner Will Varner (Orson Welles) dominates his community but his spineless son shows no sign of bearing him the lineage he desires, despite spending most of his time practising.

Varner identifies himself in Quick and sees the outsider initially as a rival for his son, Jody (Anthony Franciosa), to cure him of his despicable weakness. Varner dominates Jody to the point of idle per-

spiration, but his power does not extend as far over his daughter, Clara (Joanne Woodward), who, at 23, is an old maid. She is an intelligent, independent and proud woman, yet the entire sum of their communication pertains to rectifying this unnatural state of affairs. As Quick excels, he appears a good match for Clara, albeit only in Varner's eyes, because seeds from a strong tree tend also to be strong.

Welles is a monumental presence and delightful as a commanding, stubborn and strong father. His bulk

overshadows all around him, as does his performance, which although some may call exaggerated, none can accuse of being unentertaining. Newman's performance would befit that of his ideal son - he is forceful and not overawed, his character shows much swagger and never lacks bite.

Quick makes for a long, hot summer in the town and the heat it is well transmitted by Ritt. The film feels like a succession of hot afternoons cooling only slightly for the events of the evening. Tension between Quick and

Aameer Patel

Varner and equally between the pair and Woodward's Clara, who more than holds her own with both men, is one of the highlights.

Varner's worldly ambitions extend beyond death. Domination requires strength, making it a pre-requisite for a successor. It follows then, that he is reconciled with his son only after he turns from the brink of patricide. He unleashes the "hellfire and damnation" inside him to become his father's son, and becomes a beloved son after his loving act of turning back.

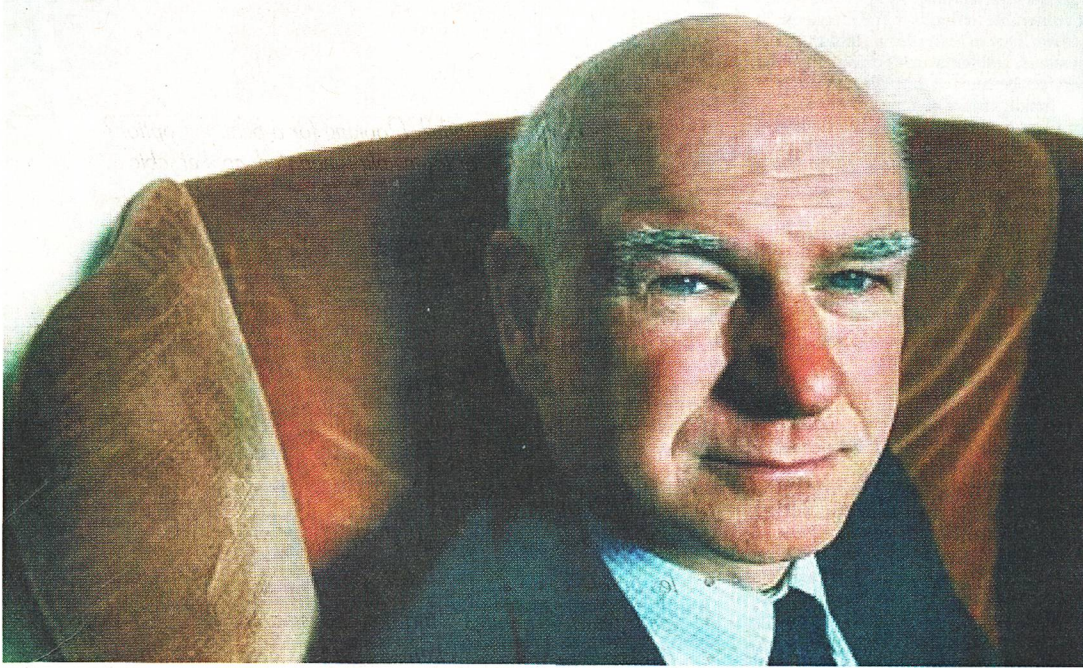
As Quick reveals himself more scrupulous and sensitive than his reputation and manner would betray, like many such stories, abomination becomes love. It ends as a slightly unconventional (given that it does not reveal itself for quite a time), but very entertaining love story. As with many love stories, resolutions come unusually easily. Naturally, the result is as Varner had desired, but it comes about on different terms.

The Long Hot Summer is available on DVD now.



The LSE Bullingdon club?

Poorna Harjani reveals all on Howard Davies' little-known canapé carousals



Usually the invitees of a party can be reflected in the host or hostess. Indeed, the names of a few of the guests can give clues as to what kind of people are invited - business associates, social peripheries, close friends and so forth.

However, the most exclusive invite to receive at the LSE has a guest list selection that provides a guessing game year-on-year. And this party's host? Howard Davies himself.

Every year Howard hosts at least one invite-only reception at his home for students. Those select mingle with other 'chosen ones', picking on nibbles and wine with Howard and his wife. The guest list selection is nondescript, and students annually wonder why these receptions are only known among a chosen minority.

These student receptions have no advertisements. Howard's assistant sends direct emails to all invitees, with the party's presence becoming known only through Chinese whispers around campus.

Thankfully, I received one of these invites for the most recent reception. The carousal lasted for two hours with around thirty students invited. Having managed to get hold of this e-invite, I could not understand why these students - why I - in particular had been selected. There are many people achieving inside and outside the LSE - in setting up business, writing

“ Howard hosts at least one invite-only reception at his home for students ”

in national publications or performing highly in academics.

There was no sense of purpose other than sheer, unadulterated networking. Maybe these meetings are an opportunity for Howard himself to 'get in touch' with students, to mingle with those he thinks will one day give back to the LSE or be the leaders of tomorrow.

I attempted dutifully to find out more. The LSE press office told me: "The Director hosts a number of receptions during the year, in the School and elsewhere, including at his house. There is no fixed schedule for these receptions. A range of students are invited, based on a range of criteria." Understand? Me neither.

It's all too vague. The press office continued its statement: "Some receptions include Students' Union officers, others scholarship recipients, and others include students whom Howard has met during the course of his work."

This press office didn't make much clearer. Stronger criteria and advertisement should be publicised about these events - it could even motivate students in their respective courses. Who wouldn't want a glass of '86 Château Margaux with Howie D?

But alas, every Michaelmas Term many students remain in the dark, oblivious that these formal social events even take place. The rest of us wait until the next year to play the guessing game of who will be cherry-picked.

Are you a part-time Carnivore?

Helen Craig sets you a meaty challenge

As part of Go Green Week, the LSE Students' Union has launched a new campaign to turn meat loving students into part-time carnivores.

It is well known that reducing meat consumption is one of the most effective personal changes we can make to reduce both our carbon footprints and our demand on the Earth's resources. However, most of us are meat lovers and it is particularly easy for students to get into the habit of eating a lot of cheap meat, which is good for neither ourselves nor the rest of the world.

The livestock industry is responsible for 18 per cent of man-made greenhouse gas emissions. A large part of that is due

to the clearing of forests to grow animal feed. Even if you stick to British meat, animals here are often raised on soy, grown on land that used to be rainforest. It also takes at least 10kg of grain to intensively produce 1kg of beef, making it a very wasteful way to produce food. Rather unfair given that a billion humans go hungry every day.

So, LSE Students' Union is challenging the meat-loving majority to become part-time carnivores. There are five options to choose from, depending on how far you're prepared to go - Meat-Free Mondays, Vegging-Out, Meat-On/Meat-Off, Meating-Out or Meaty Sundays (and if you're not a meat lover, look out for option six).

Visit www.lse.parttimecarnivore.org to find out more and sign up to your favourite option. We will be keeping track of how much CO2 and land we all save. The more of us that sign up, the more difference we will make. You can also sign up during Go Green Week* (7th -14th Feb) at the Houghton Street Stall. For more information about sustainability at LSE, please visit www.lse.ac.uk/sustainablelse or contact h.e.craig@lse.ac.uk.

AGONY UNCLE

Q I am a 22 year old male and I really like my aunt. I can't help thanking about her. We joke around a lot and when we sit close to each other will stare deeply into each other's eyes. When we hug we run our hands up and down each other's backs and sometimes slide past to the butt. I really just want to kiss her the next time it happens but I don't know - Brandon

A This is interesting. Incest is quite unique as a sexual activity - unique, because it's socially unacceptable in every culture in the world. From Baghdad to Barry, the suggestion of sexually entering one's relative fills people with horror, disgust and sometimes a feeling of vomit in the mouth. And yet the realities of sexual intercourse within your own family resonate throughout mankind's history.

When tribes in sub-Saharan Africa needed to reproduce, it wouldn't be so surprising for the process to be completed with a relative. Indeed, it's legal to marry your cousin in a great number of US states. Though not someone of the same sex, more notably.

There are some real psychological issues surrounding incestuous thoughts, though. They aren't as rare as you might think either - experts have estimated as many as 1 in 20 people have had sexual

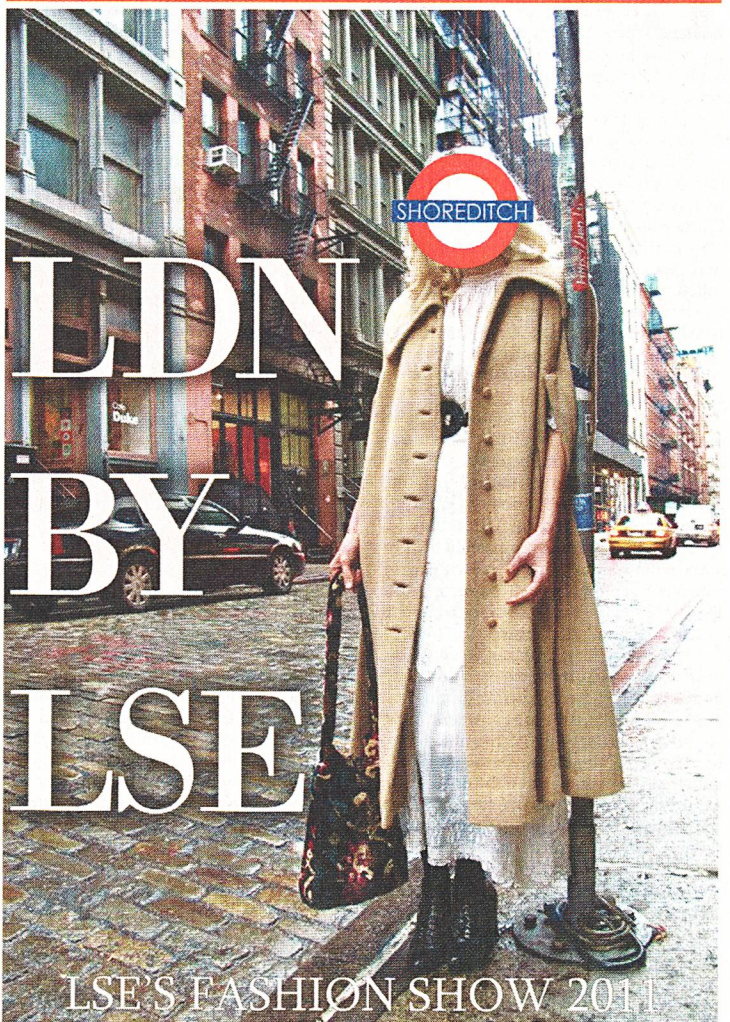
thoughts about someone in their family. That means about 50 fellow students in any one Econ B lecture.

The realities of sex with your auntie, Brandon, may be difficult. You don't mention whether your auntie is blood related or not, but even if you aren't there are deep family issues which could arise. When entering into a relationship with someone of another generation in your family, often people end up feeling trapped and powerless. Whereas you may be able to cut off all ties when things disintegrate with a friend you've dated, this is a lot more difficult if you're related. The only way out is to confide in your parents or a family friend, who may be able to contemplate the situation. Chances are, however, you'll end up ostracised from the family unit, and even ostracised by the local community if it's leaked.

These are grave consequences. And yet, at the time, sexual feelings can be overwhelming. If you spend time around your aunt it's likely these feelings will rear their head, and you could end up caving in to the sexual desires. Innate, sexual instinct could lead you to do something you'll probably regret afterwards. Therefore, the healthiest advice I could give is this: avoid her. It's the best way.

'Aunt I'd Like to Fuck' (AILF) isn't likely to catch on. Needless to say - whilst we're on the topic - MILF and DILF aren't abbreviations to be taken too literally. For the record.

Fancy your aunt? Partner having an affair? Got erectile dysfunction? Email LSE's Agony Uncle! social@thebeaveronline.co.uk



LSE'S FASHION SHOW 2011

LSE Travel Diary

Poorna Harjani contemplates the wealth paradox of Mumbai

Last December my travels took me to visit Dharavi with an organisation called 'Reality tours'. Dharavi slums, featured as the background of the eight-Oscar winning Slumdog Millionaire, is a former fishing town, and one of the biggest slums in Asia with billion-dollar redevelopment plans in the pipeline.

Reality Tours was co-founded in January 2006 by British-born Chris Way, who relocated to Mumbai after backpacking around the globe. The profits of the touring company go to a computer facility and school set up in Dharavi. They even publish accounts on their website. The aim of the tour is to give further insight into the challenges residents in the slums face.

The size of approximately Hyde Park and situated in the heart of Mumbai on prime real estate, modern Dharavi's population is estimated to be over one million inhabitants. It is a city within a city with a turnover of £350million a year from its thriving industry.

Enmeshed with Manhattan-like skyscrapers, the mud-filled huts of dilapidated housing epitomises a Mumbai scenery. This is where the rich and the poor live side by side. Dharavi is a cheap alternative where rents start at four dollars a month compared to the spiralling real estate prices in Mumbai, which are predicted to be the highest globally within the next ten years.

There are narrow dirty lanes, open sewers, and metal-roofed huts with single-room factories. They primarily produce embroidered garments, leather goods, pottery and plastic.

I first visited the plastic recycling factories where containers are crushed into plastic pebbles, and melted into strips of plastic. These help make children's toys,

buttons and even washing machines. The residents are self-taught mechanics, and even export their machines to China. I climbed hay stacks to go on to the metal roof of a factory where I saw an endless view of Dharavi's huts.

Companies such as Armani and Dolce and Gabbana manufacture leather goods in Dharavi. The leather experts are the best in the country. Just from the feel of a leather experts can give insight into how an animal was killed and even facts as whether the animal was pregnant at the time.

The government's sudden deep-sighted interest in the slums has raised suspicions among residents who feel they built this land themselves. Bids to redevelop Dharavi have come from the former Lehman Brothers, and companies from Dubai, Singapore and Canada.

The latest redevelopment plan is proposed by an American-trained architect Mukesh Mehta to construct the area into housing, schools, business parks along with residential and commercial space for sale. Even a university is proposed to be built.

However, the plan would only re-house the 57,000 families officially registered in the slums, therefore local opposition is great and will continue to delay such development plans. Usually 60 per cent of Dharavi's residents need to approve the redevelopment plans, but as this will be a government-sponsored project, residents can get as little as thirty days' notice to relocate.

According to the tour operators, 85 per cent of households own a television; 75 per cent, a pressure cooker; 56 per cent, a gas stove; and 21 per cent, a telephone. Dharavi's buildings are also used for commercial purposes such as banks and restaurants. Dharavi is designed so resi-

dents have everything they need within a one-mile radius.

However, Dharavi has sanitation issues which means no food-related products are produced in its factories. They have a water supply of only three hours a day. They stand in the doorways of their homes to brush their teeth, and women have old-fashioned bucket baths.

The poor drainage system also makes it vulnerable to floods in the monsoon season. Due to their illegal status as slum dwellers, residents are deprived of public services because of their illegal status.

Inside a maze of lanes, rooms for families are approximately 300 square feet and there is one lavatory for every 1,500 residents. Schools are one room in size as well, with age groups having a specified time slot for an hour a day.

We also visited the Dhobi Ghat, a 136-year old open air laundry old washing area in Mumbai where thousands of men beat damp clothes in stone cubicles which hotels send their laundry to.

Many people believe that the existence of the slums is due to the government's inability to provide housing for the middle-class. If this is true, Mumbai will find it difficult to race against the rising Middle Kingdom with such housing inequalities, which is the basis for economic progression. Almost 60 per cent of Mumbai's population live in slum pockets around the city, having huge economic significance.

The backdrop really is what Slumdog Millionaire depicts. The stench was close to unbearable at times, but we were told by the operators not to cover our mouths and noses. This was people's homes after all and could be taken to be disrespectful.

The New York Times wrote in regards to Dharavi, "People have learned to respond in creative ways to the indif-

ference of the state."

The residents I met were not engrossed in self-pity. They were proud of their homes, their families and their way of life. Right in the middle of the slums I even heard David Guetta and Akon's latest song blasting. Dharavi is a raw testament to Mumbai's enterprising spirit. There are second-generation families residing here.

The government will find it difficult to take away these homes for their redevelopment plans. I have no doubt that the Dharavi residents will fight for their stay.



An incorrect version of last week's Prague Travel Diary was published. To view the original copy, please visit www.thebeaveronline.co.uk

Africa's not a country!

Jackline O. Amaguru lambasts LSE students' ignorance about that small island called Africa

Ever since I joined the LSE, I have been unpleasantly astounded at how little many LSE students know about Africa. I know that the politically correct thing to say is that there are no silly questions but really, I don't expect a student at the prestigious LSE to be ignorant of certain world facts. Some of our students still think that Africa is one big country.

Just last week, I had to do a one-hour impromptu damage control/PR session with two postgraduate LSE students from China who asked me about Africa. They were particularly interested in information about, in their words, "a country called sub-Saharan Africa". They said they had heard a lot about the poverty in that country and since I come from Africa, they wanted me to explain to them how life is there. Wow! I took a deep breath and sighed before responding.

That reminded me of another scenario during International Week last term. I was at the African and Caribbean society's stall, and an LSE student walked up to me and asked, out of pure curiosity, "What is the national language in Africa?" My opinion about that question would be censored by my editor anyway so I will do him a favour and omit it myself. Nevertheless, I am not proud of the fact that I told him it is a language called "African".

You know, I think African students need to have a short course in diplomacy and anger management before joining any university outside the continent. This would help us deal with such innocent, bordering on offensive and annoying questions - not to mention the flood of lectures/classes on how poor and hopeless the continent is painted to be. In reality, though, it's very much the new land of opportunity. If you do not believe me, look how the Chinese are falling over themselves to cash in.

One other award-winning experience was a time at the communal kitchen in my LSE hall. I was cooking rice and one of my hall mates walked in. She was surprised

and exclaimed, "You eat rice?" Someone help me here and tell me what she expects me to eat. Stones? Nothing? Well, I informed her (as politely as I could, and it took a lot of effort) my country of Uganda not only grows rice, but also exports it to Asia.

It has reached a point now that damage control efforts are draining me. I'm 'working overtime' polishing up my motherland's image abroad. Frankly, I'm

“
What is the national language in Africa?
”

getting tired of having shallow conversations in this cultural exchange experience I was so looking forward to having at the multicultural LSE. I expected to talk and share about things at a higher level, like talk about our festivals, traditional and contemporary dances, cuisines, lifestyle, business opportunities... but not struggling to justify why a person from Uganda is eating rice. Nor on the misconceptions of how scorching and unbearably hot 'Africa' must be because I am dark skinned, or where I learnt such good English from if I have lived all my life in 'Africa' prior to coming to the LSE.

That really reminds me of a Ugandan pilot who, on his maiden trip to Europe in about 1970, was asked at the airport, "Where did you get those clothes from?"

Africa Facts!

53 countries

1,000,010,000 residents

Estimated 2000 languages spoken

Largest religion
Islam

Sudan Africa's largest nation

The Seychelles smallest nation

Poorest continent

WiB LSEsu
WOMEN in BUSINESS
SOCIETY

Harvard Business School

Presentation, Q&A and networking

Thursday 3rd February

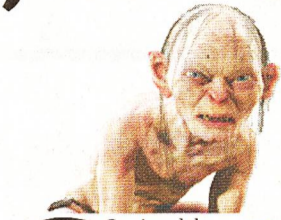
7.30pm

NAB 204

Come along to an informative presentation about MBAs and Harvard Business School run by HBS admissions. An interactive Q&A session with HBS alumni will follow the panel and afterwards there will be a chance to network. Food and drink will be provided!

LSEsu Women in Business Society are proudly sponsored by CREDIT SUISSE and
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Just like old times...



GG enjoyed the opportunity last Wednesdays AU reunion presented to catch up with many an old school AU stalwart. Even though the Tuns this term has been far from quiet, the debauchery that GG witnessed at both Zoo and the Tuns was on a different level. Current 3rd Years were trying to out-drink the old faces who initiated them two years ago, with varying degrees of success.

EMPIRES
As per normal, the Rugby club insisted on taking over the largest area of the Tuns they could possibly manage, only to be thwarted by the FC old boys, who GG heard described as "the last footballers at LSE who had any craic", who successfully managed to annex a table of the RFC's sprawling empire. Yet perhaps more upset than the RFC were the current LSE

footballers, whos fifteen-strong rabble appeared to be pining for reinforcements in the form of their Old Boys. Reinforcements that, sadly, did not come.

INCONTINENCE
GG has also heard one of the most obscure pieces of gossip, relating to an act involving a 5th team Netballer, on the way to Zoo bar. An act that would have made a 1st Year Josh Ollermulleryoghurt blush. Thats right, the anonymous netballer that pissed in a bin. GG does not know why, or how this occurred, only that it happened.

OLD MONEY
Upon arriving at Zoo bar, GG noted the Old Boys and Girls duly splashing their cash and trying to justify to themselves that their AU degrees did pay off in the end, and with this injection of surplus alcohol into the Zoo Bar environment, the pulling began.

MULTIPLIER
It seems not a week goes by without GG having to mention the antics of 6th team Netball's Hollyoaks hopeful, who, not content with her love square, upped her game and allegedly pulled everyones 67th favourite Armenian, Noz. Never wanting to be outdone, GG heard that housemate Oddity upped her game by snaring her

own FC boy. If you want a clue as to who that boy may have been, please refer to last weeks issue where GG told you he pulled Spoursey.

PATRICK SWAYZE
Though it wasn't just the Netball girls who upped their game that night. Ms Sex and Gender Pelton upped her game so much, even her boyfriend couldnt keep up. Then again, neither could her dress. GG also witnessed Uncle H pulling out some dirty dance moves not seen since he was trying to get a shooter girls number. Except this time the shooter girl was substituted by 'The Uncrackable' Miss Green.

SUCTION
Despite displaying a clear penchant for the younger gentleman, the Dyson was spied by GG embroiled in some sort of menage a trois with a Lush fresher and a Gallic RFC Old Boy. Unfortunately GG is unable to confirm which chap won over her heart, but heard that she had a go with both just to make sure she made the correct decision.

NO LIKEY
Thats all for this week you eagle-eyed gossipers, I'll be watching you desperate hopefuls at Take Me Out in the Quad this week. Then I'll see you animals at Zoo bar.

AU SOCIAL CALENDAR 2.0 (RAG-Friendly)

WEEK 4: TAKE ME OUT

King of the bozza Brendan is LSE's very own Paddy McGuinness. Let the sausage see the roll!

WEEK 6: MR LSE

Expect shit talents, the plank, and more baby oil than Boots can supply. Let's get serious guys - get down to the gym NOW.

WEEK 7: AU ELECTIONS HUSTINGS

Start preparing your manifestos and fancy dress now. Do you think you have what it takes to be the next AU President?

WEEK 8: PUB OLYMPICS

The annual rugby event goes AU-wide. Which club has the best Olympians?

Women's Hockey Defeat Queen Mary "ladies" to reach BUCS Quarter Finals

Kathryn Eastwood

Having advanced a league last year, wins for the ladies firsts hadn't exactly been coming in their droves this season...at one point it would have been fair to say there were probably more morals floating around Zoo bar than there were "W"s on our score sheet. However, with a few sweet victories under our belts and everyone determined to continue our success in BUCS, we were excited to fight for our place in the Quarter Finals. The day started as any other Wednesday with our standard congregation outside the old building- after a quick chat, round up of the highlights of "My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding" and the narrow avoidance of our goalie kit going up in flames (classic Miss Sheppard), we were on our way.

We all used the journey to get ready for the big match- apart from vice captain Sabrina who proceeded to pass out against the plexiglass on the tube, apparently she hadn't got much sleep the night before- whether this is the result of teenage insomnia or a certain Mr. Coppin, I guess we'll never know... anyway, before long we had arrived at the pitch, back in the motherland of our very own Essex girl, Meagan.

It wasn't long after push back that we realized the team we were playing was more than likely compiled from a collection of girls who didn't quite make the cut for the latest series of "Ladette to lady". I'm not sure if it was the use of expletives for punctuation or the elbow to the face I received about two minutes into the game, but either way something told me this was going to be an interesting match. LSE got off to a good start, Sunday's suicides training had seemingly paid off and fitness levels were high; although it was clear we were going to have our work cut out for us.

Caroline's early goal from a penalty corner helped give us a much needed confidence boost but a quick equalizer from Queen Mary and a few penalty corners awarded against us, reminded us that it was all still to play for. Halfway through the first half things took a sudden turn for the worse. Rianne, our secret weapon from Loughborough, took

a nasty hit to the hand- her finger swelled to twice its normal size and glowed a fluorescent kind of blue... with no subs and now no centre defender, something told us they were beginning to have an upper hand.

For a team that now had an obvious advantage, Queen Mary seemed to become rather lairy, if you will. We can't deny that it is pretty standard behaviour on a hockey pitch to have the goalkeeper shout encouragement from their position where they can see everything, but QM's aforementioned "encouragement" was unlike any we'd heard before, "PASS THE BALL YOU F**KING LAZY BITCHES!" Okay... Perhaps a tad over-enthusiastic?

With one player down and an increasingly aggravated Queen Mary's, we managed to secure one more goal before half time. Captain Haugh's reassuring team talk was just what we needed and with a few more words of wisdom from player-coach Zaza we were ready for the hounds to be released upon us once more.

The second half began like a scene from Belfast city centre at closing time on a Friday night- punches were thrown, tears were shed and friends became enemies- and yes, I am still referring to relations between the Queen Mary First XI. They continued to give us mild abuse whilst tearing each other apart, leaving the way for a somewhat epic comeback from the LSE ladies. Zaza ran circles around QM defence to secure a hatrick and Sabrina ensured her lack of sleep didn't affect her skill, as she popped in two more goals to make LSE's victory even more convincing.

It was 6-1 to LSE with only a few minutes to go. Most other teams would pretty much wind down at this stage, realizing there was little to play for. Oh no, not Queen Mary's. It seemed their adventure wouldn't be complete until their captain (read: psychopathic bitch) got sent off by the umpire (who was in fact her boyfriend... word has it their Jeremy Kyle appearance is imminent). Rather than sulk off with her tail between her legs she proceeded to throw her hockey stick across the pitch for effect.

With her mental issues duly noted, and our ticket to the Quarter Finals secured, we rounded up what was a delightful trip to Essex and headed back to civilisation.

Poly, Poly, Poly, Champagne, Champagne!

Megan Protheroe
Keelin Cavaghan

Contrary to popular belief, the 6th team do play netball. And whilst the 5ths and the 7ths are fighting it out for bottom of the league, the 6ths only had The Poly standing in the way of the promotion zone.

With our dream team, we headed for The Fortress, nervous for what awaited us. The previous week Kings 5s had sent the 7s packing 25-4, and as rumours circulated that they trained twice a week, we feared we were in for a thrashing- all except Sophie Boyle that is, who was too hungover to care.

As the first centre pass was taken it took Bill Oddie's daughter a record 8 seconds to score, leaving the polys thinking not only can they not do a proper degree they can't defend either! Admittedly there were a few dodgy moments, Mona Naqvi had been out for some time with both her "injury" and a tropical disease, she was to say the least, slightly rusty, and when she wasn't running away from the ball she was dribbling it. Despite this

we finished the quarter 6-2.

Proving we all have our poly moments, the second quarter didn't start as well. The 6th team's tallest defender RoBo managed to find herself in the shooting circle, a good ten metres offside, proving maybe Andy Gray was justified in his comments. Elsewhere the textbook netball continued, while Maz "Darwich/Djerrahian" Fletcher fired flawless centre passes into the tangoed hands of Captain Gavs who quickly got past the polys to Rachael in the shooting circle, for her to prove she's not called 2-in-a-minute Ody for nothing. As the half time whistle blew, it's safe to say the Polys... were shitting themselves.

As the 3rd quarter began, Kings questioned whether we had subbed on the 1st team's defence. The lethal combination of Tasha Smith's leaning tower of Pisa impression and Spours' ladylike interceptions, meant the polys were too scared to shoot. Megan caught the attention of Spoursey by using her unique click-and-catch technique, rumoured to work as well in Zoobash as it does in midfield (i.e. not very well). Nonetheless the ball spent most of the time between the capable hands of pretty-in-pink Eve Robertson,

Ody and the Net. Battling through the worst hangover of her life, SuBo's only quarter was a fine one. At this point it was clear we were on for a win as the quarter ended 19-5.

As Kings begged for a longer break, the umpire took the time to be brutally honest and tell us we played "some of the best netball she had ever seen" (jealous much Rhiannon?!). We blame this revelation for what can only be described as slight complacency in the final quarter. Our defence was pushed to the limit as we conceded 6 (mainly sympathy) goals, but our subs kept spirits high inventing "banter cam" - soon to be seen at London 2012. As the final whistle sounded we erupted into celebrations of our 24-11 win! As our opponents left the courts looking glum, they hopped back over the fence into Polyland, never to be seen again.

Instead of doing a Mycock and bursting into tears, we decided to celebrate with the rest of our 50 man squad, and some past legends of the 6th team. While "AU president for a week" Megan guided us into Zoo Bar, we noticed a distinct lack of 7th team presence, probably desperately training for next week's clash.



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Sport



See inside to find out who GG saw 're-uniting' last week

The greatest show on turf

Tom Lennon

Wednesday 28th October 2008. Only four weeks into the season and a promising crop of 1st XV freshers are already facing Kings for the first time. The pre-game atmosphere was explosive. The result was infamous. Two yellow cards apiece for Bottle and the current El Presidente left LSE wounded, and the match was still decided by a score. Turned out that the referee had once manufactured a 'degree' at the Strand Poly, but the fixture stood, and the loss would precipitate a slide

“ technical penalties are to the Rugby 1st team as feminist faux pas are to Andy Gray. ”

was on the menu, not least for yours truly, who broke his leg and ankle in the same fixture in 2008. Now look at chya! The pre-game huddle shook with confidence. But soon after K.O. chinks were appearing in the armour. Despite having a protein-bound 300kg front row (though 50kg less minus Robinson) of Smedwise, MrLSE hopeful Barcock and Lennon, the scrums were a torturous affair, with the Essex pack repeatedly out-muscling the LSE forwards.

On top of this, technical penalties are to the rugby 1st team as feminist faux pas are to Andy Gray. It was no surprise that we found ourselves 0-6 down due to ill-discipline and the intimidating boot of the Essex no.10, who was around 4 seasons ago according to Reesy. That'll be a PhD in 'David Beckham' studies then. With momentum in their favour Essex battled to our line and their pikey steroid-abuser prop (they are mandatory in all poly teams under RFU regulations), Swanley, managed to bosh his way over for a try.

From the restart we responded with purpose, unconventionally, by running straight through them, which turned out easier than working the ball around them. Strong runs by Wilson and Mycock, combined with the silky support play of good ole' narcoleptic Rob O'Donovan and Comrade Teplukhin, saw us camped on their try-line. Alas, neither the pack nor the backs could find a way over, and soon their kicker had the ball cruising into touch by the half-way line. A handful of uncharacteristic mistakes, and a sloppy midfield missed tackle later, one of their second rows was galloping unchallenged to the line, scoring under the posts. After 40 minutes we found ourselves stood around sipping energy drinks at 0-18.

But in the half-time huddle we knew where the opportunities lay: having a big forward pick the ball up directly from the ruck and carry it one metre at a time. So for the next 40 minutes that's exactly what we did. Cherry ball! Blue ball! They knew exactly what was coming every time Stuart screamed the calls, but they were helpless

to slow our juggernaut down. Fuck it, we still lost every scrum and the line-outs were less than spectacular too. Despite Barcock's great effort to handle the throwing of the ball whilst El Presidente was on a high altitude sabbatical, the timing of our line-outs were hastily improvised and

“ Yet either through complacency or fatigue the Essex outfit could not capitalise on our shaky set-pieces. Instead our war of attrition came to fruition. ”

struggled against the poly jumpers.

Yet either through complacency or fatigue the Essex outfit could not capitalise on our shaky set-pieces. Instead our war of attrition came to fruition. After using such tactics to get within sight of their posts the much missed Hamdi Talib did what he knows best and forced his way over the whitewash for our first score. 7-18. The wind in the suburban trees whispered comeback. Soon the conditions became atrocious, though it didn't prevent barnstorming runs by Paddy 'Forearms' from taking us back to Essex territory.

With LSE knocking on the door once more an unlikely candidate found himself at 12 calling for the ball. Everyone's friendly neighbourhood Geordie Boca recognised the space down the left and led the attack. I took a picture of the Lunar Eclipse back in 1999, yet unfortunately no one was on hand to capture the once-in-a-lifetime event of Boca throwing a beautiful looping pass out to the wing. The fastest man in LSE that is Pornstar was on hand to collect and made some brilliant jinks back inside would-be-tacklers en route to the line. 14-18.

By this time momentum was in our hands and we were never going to lose

it. For the last time we found ourselves challenging on their line, following the yellow-carding of an Essex back-rower for cheating. After battering the Essex defence for an eternity, Barcock smashed through for the try. 21-18. Schoolboy jubilation was followed by Wilkinson-esque calls for composure. 12 seconds on the clock. Just kick it out and win. Fresher Pinnock calls to catch the restart. And drops it. Then we concede a penalty for offside. Shit. However, going cold-turkey on the Human Growth Hormone, Essex threw away the chance to draw with a kick and monumentally fucked up an attempt to score. Cue the final whistle and the beginning of celebrations that lasted the Tuns, past the rout of the fc and all the way to ZooBar.

Someone already calling it the Greatest Game Ever Played by the Rugby 1st XV. Bredan certainly had a tear in his eye in his post-match chat. Though not numerically safe in the league just yet, the mentality of this year's 1st team squad is a million miles away from that dark afternoon in 2008. And that tells me that our best rugby is yet to come.

towards relegation that season for the mighty 1sts.

Fast forward two seasons later, and following Robinson's table-topping campaign, the 1sts are back in BUCS South Eastern Conference 2 under the leadership of my cock. And Brendan. Until last Wednesday many of those with bitter memories of the 2008/9 season were worried history might repeat itself post-Christmas, especially when the same Strand Poly referee from that dark day two years ago turned up to officiate this match.

Wednesday 26th January 2011. Essex 1sts came to Berrylands having beat us last term by 1 point, and a final play missed penalty kick Willy '300' Wilson. Revenge



TAKE ME OUT AU

Wed 2nd Feb
8pm @ the Quad
Entry: £3

No likey, no lighty!

childreach
rembrandt

Smedley's Corner

Eggchasers and Pigskins

Stuart Smedley

It's common knowledge that in order to lift the Webb Ellis Cup, rugby union's greatest prize, you're going to have to defeat at least one of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa during the course of a World Cup.

Since the inaugural competition in 1987, every final bar one - that being England's memorable 2003 victory courtesy of that Jonny Wilkinson drop-goal - has been won by one of the aforementioned giants from the southern hemisphere.

It therefore begs the question why Europe's biggest rugby powers expend so much energy in their quest to become Six Nations champions every spring, when the teams they need to learn to beat most are those on the other side of the world.

They may pit themselves against the Wallabies, All Blacks and Springboks on an annual basis when that trio swap the warmer climes of home for frigid autumn time Europe in order to participate in the traditional end of year international tests. Yet these are often used as games in which to experiment, meaning that the intensity of these contests is at times subdued.

Yet, the Six Nations, which begins this weekend, is justifiably serious business on top of being thrilling drama.

By pitting the home nations against one another (as well as our Gallic and Italian cousins), national pride and bragging rights are put on the line. And this serves further to increase the competitiveness of games as players, fans and coaches alike do not fancy the prospect of having to face up to the fact that their neighbours got

one over on them.

Most importantly though the tournament serves as a perfect tune up for facing the oval ball game's heavyweights. And this year that is even more important with the World Cup to be held in New Zealand during the autumn.

In order to beat the best, you first have to learn how to beat the rest when the chips are down.

That is exactly what England did in 2003 when they swept all before them to claim the Grand Slam in the Six Nations before triumphing in the World Cup by defeating Australia in the dying seconds.

Having learned to impose their will on the sport's middleweights, they used the confidence and momentum gained from that experience to go on and write history.

It's something the English football team could learn to do, and where better to start than by going forward with the recently mooted idea of reintroducing the Home Internationals.

This Sunday's Super Bowl between the Pittsburgh Steelers and Green Bay Packers should, as ever, be a memorable one as it pits two of the NFL's best young quarterbacks - Ben Roeth-



lisberger and Aaron Rodgers - against two of the league's best, most aggressive defences.

Yet the game will be even more significant as it may be the last NFL game, let alone Super Bowl, for a long while.

League ownership and the NFL Players' Association (NFLPA) are currently embroiled in a protracted labour dispute that will probably lead to the owners of the 32 teams imposing a lockout before next season.

Ownership are intent on cutting the pool of money that goes to the players, and at the same time as focusing on improving player safety they are also looking to lengthen an already brutal season by two games to increase revenues.

It is therefore fitting that the showcase game this year will take place between two of the league's most storied small market teams in Cowboys Stadium in Dallas.

The 105,000 seat arena is a perfect example of the increasing greed of team owners: it cost a staggering \$1.3 billion to build. No wonder then that they're looking to snatch money away from the players with such expensive vanity projects to fund.