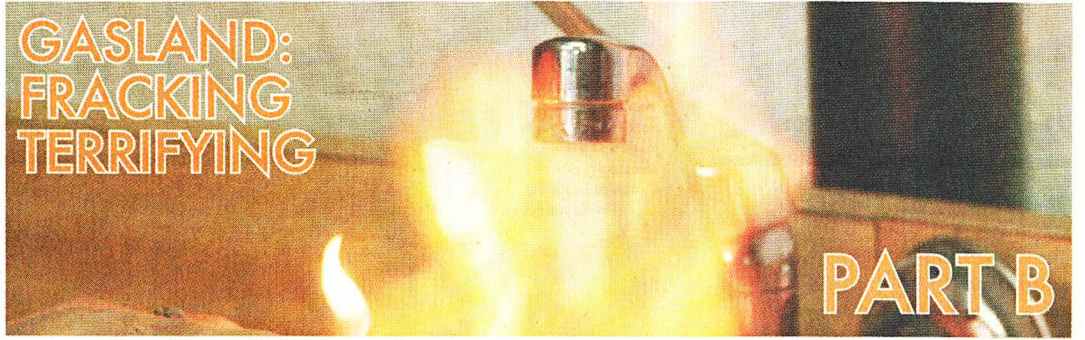




On eating animals

Features Page 13

GASLAND: FRACKING TERRIFYING



PART B

The Beaver

25 January 2011
Newspaper of the
LSE Students' Union
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Overrunning bathroom refurbishment riles Rosebery residents

Sachin Patel

Residents at Rosebery Hall have branded bathroom refurbishments "completely unacceptable" after it emerged that the work remains incomplete five months after the start date.

Reconstruction work at the residence in Finsbury began on 2nd August 2010 but the first sets of showers, which were signed off in November, were deemed unsatisfactory by students and several complaints were lodged with management.

Director of Finance and Facilities Andy Farrell assured residents in November that the replacement of the remaining showers would only begin once the first sets had been repaired, but the Beaver has learned that this has not been the case. Work began on the other sets of showers on 17th January, and students are claiming that the first sets "have not been touched at all".

Among the complaints registered by students are concerns about privacy and hygiene, as well as regular disruptions to running water, which first-year resident John Peart described as "outrageous". Peart, who sits on the National Executive Council of the National Union of Students, highlighted the deficiencies in the design of the shower cubicles, which have gaps between door and frame, and are not full-length.

Peart worries that "people are feeling uncomfortable using facilities in their own homes", a sentiment echoed by third-year undergraduate Aimée Grieve, who also lives at the residence. Grieve said, "Yes, the new bathrooms look nice, but they have minimal privacy, with no locks on the shower doors."

An open meeting between the student committee at Rosebery and the halls' Services Manager Richard Anderson took place on Wednesday, 19th January. Anderson apologised for the disruption but said the first batch of new showers would not

be fitted with locks and privacy strips until 4th February. He added the second batch would not be signed off before 1st April.

Anderson promised to investigate the possibility of compensating students, though he was unable to give a specific figure. "I would argue you do have usable facilities," he said, "they just might not be up to the standard you were expecting."

One student at the meeting said Anderson's tone "wasn't particularly apologetic".

Hero Austin, the Community and Welfare Officer of the LSE Students' Union, said she and the other Sabbatical Officers had attended the meeting. Additionally, she said they were providing advice to residents as to registering a formal complaint with the School.

"I'm glad the School have taken these concerns on board," Austin said, "but students shouldn't have had to go through this for it to be resolved."

Austin met with director of residential services Ian Spencer, head of Residential Life Rachael Elliott, and Rosebery Hall president Rafie Faruq on Monday, to discuss completion dates, specific levels of compensation, and how to avoid similar delays and communication breakdowns in the future. It is essential, she said, to understand why these oversights occurred.

Regarding the faltering progress of the refurbishment, which has left each floor reliant upon three showers, Grieve said, "The whole thing is a mess. The residents have not been thought of much during the much needed changes to the building's infrastructure."

Peart concurred, adding many of the new showers still in operation are faulty, and turn off without warning after three to four seconds.

The refurbishment at Rosebery Hall is well publicised on the residence's website, but the details do have not been updated to reflect actual developments. According to the site, "It is planned that by mid October up to half of the new showers will be available for you to use", and the work "is aimed to be completed by the end of

January 2011".

The overhaul of bathrooms is not the first protracted refurbishment of the residence's Rosebery wing. In March 2010 the replacement of windows was said to be "suspended indefinitely" following a problem with the supplier; they were ultimately installed early in Michaelmas Term, breaking the 5th March deadline. One student described the building works as having "made our lives a living hell", while General Course student Nicholas Oliver said, "Not only are the facilities inadequate and filthy, but the noise levels are absolutely unfathomable".

The predominantly postgraduate population residing in the residence's modern Myddelton Wing has been unaffected by both sets of work.

At the open meeting, at least forty students agreed in principle to refuse to pay their rent, although the threat was not carried out because it was discovered that only twenty of the students were still to pay their rent. Hall President Rafie Faruq said, "As such, a Lent Term rent strike was simply not feasible."

Faruq told the Beaver the possibility of a rent strike in Summer Term remains, if construction work is not completed by new specified dates, or if negotiated financial compensation is not received.

Peart said compensation "is going to need to be some serious amount to offset the cost of living here", while Grieve said the situation left her "extremely frustrated and disappointed".

The student committee at the residence issued a statement calling the situation "a breach of basic living standards and promises from management".

"Residents are furious", they said, "but we are working in close contact with LSE's Residential Services department to ensure speedy solutions to issues. In particular, our recent meeting with Rachael Elliott and Ian Spencer was very productive - we accept their apology and promise of financial compensation."

A spokesperson for the School told the Beaver the event has "certainly not been cancelled" but "cannot go ahead at this stage because the organisers have not followed the procedures required to hold an event on LSE premises".

"These procedures, agreed with the Students' Union, include the need to assess any possible risks from an event", the spokesperson said.

Sammour told the Beaver the Palestine Society re-submitted its application, with the necessary risk assessment, on Friday, 21st January. A spokesperson for the School said Conferences and Events had received the Palestine Society's second submission, and will review the materials before making a decision about allocating a venue for the event.

"[Conferences and Events] will also have to discuss and consider arrangements for ticketing, stewarding and security, chairing of the event and whether it can be open to the general public", the spokesperson added. "In a few cases, it is also necessary to refer possible events to LSE's Free Speech Group, which decides whether they should go ahead, working to a publicly available code of practice".

Indeed, the Free Speech Group has heard from concerned students regarding the possibility of an event with Cohen, the spokesperson said, and is currently considering the implications of inviting

demonstrations or occupations, please forward it onto me."

The LSE has chosen to not respond to the email, according to a spokesperson for the School.

The spokesperson added that though the LSE generally aims for cooperation with the Met, the School remains committed to protecting students' interests.

"The LSE engages fruitfully with the Metropolitan Police to help make sure the School is a safe environment for all students, staff and visitors", the spokesperson said, "while, at the same time, ensuring that freedom of speech and expression are appropriately protected".

LSE Students' Union Education Officer Ashok Kumar told the Beaver the Students' Union strongly opposes the officer's message.

"The LSE Students' Union has consistently stood in full opposition to the Metropolitan Police's attempts at intimi-



Before and after: refurbished bathrooms at Rosebery Hall have "basic design errors" Photos: Duncan McKenna

Palestine Society error indefinitely postpones anti-Zionist rabbi event

Lauren Fedor

An LSE Students' Union Palestine Society event with Ahron Cohen, an Orthodox Jewish leader of the controversial anti-Zionist Neturei Karta movement, originally planned for Tuesday, 1st February, has been suspended indefinitely after the Palestine Society failed to file a risk assessment with the Conferences and Events office and Jewish students raised concerns with the School's Free Speech Group.

Zac Sammour, president of the Palestine Society, told the Beaver that while the event with Cohen has not been cancelled, due to mistakes on the part of the Palestine Society in the application process, the society needed to re-submit its room booking application.

A spokesperson for the School told the Beaver the event has "certainly not been cancelled" but "cannot go ahead at this stage because the organisers have not followed the procedures required to hold an event on LSE premises".

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Indeed, the Free Speech Group has heard from concerned students regarding the possibility of an event with Cohen, the spokesperson said, and is currently considering the implications of inviting

Cohen to speak at the School.

Two postgraduate students, Ethan Chernofsky and David Benmayer, wrote to the School's Free Speech group on behalf of concerned Jewish students.

"While there can be no objection to bringing in a speaker with anti-Israel or anti-Zionist views, this event has clearly crossed the line in seeking to exploit, manipulate and misrepresent Judaism on campus", Chernofsky and Benmayer said.

The students said Cohen, who "for all intents and purposes looks the part of a religious Jew" would represent an ideology that has been "rejected by the near entirety of the Jewish world".

"We understand fully the importance and role of a strong pro-Palestinian voice on campus", the students said. "However, there is a difference between promoting an agenda to support the Palestinian cause and the exploitation and misrepresentation of Judaism".

Cohen's controversial views have attracted attention in the past. On the Holocaust, he is reported to have said "our approach is that when one suffers, the one who perpetrates the suffering is obviously guilty but he will never succeed if the victim did not deserve it in one way or another".

Sammour said the decision to invite Cohen to speak at the School was "motivated by a desire to raise awareness of the suffering of the Palestinian people, which, as a corollary, requires us to challenge the current misconceptions that legitimise or excuse the continuation of that suffering".

But Gabi Kobrin, president of the Students' Union Israel Society, said she received dozens of complaints from "furious" Jewish and Israeli students voicing their opposition to the possibility of an event with Cohen. Kobrin said at least 20 students unaffiliated with the Israel Society also called her with concerns.

Sammour told the Beaver he was approached by one student who complained the event was offensive, but the only other complaints he had seen had been on Facebook. He said he has not been directly asked to change or cancel the event.

A decision will be made by the end of the week as to whether the Cohen event can proceed, a spokesperson for the School told the Beaver.

Police call on School to monitor student activists

Alexander Young
Lauren Fedor

The LSE has decided not to respond to an email received this month from a Metropolitan Police officer, working at Counter Terrorism Command, asking the School to share intelligence about future student protests.

The email, sent on Thursday, 13th January, to over twenty London universities and colleges, including the LSE, Imperial College and King's College, said police expect "renewed vigour" in protests against cuts this term, and advised universities and colleges to anticipate student occupations and other forms of direct action.

In the message, the officer said: "I would be grateful if in your capacity at your various colleges that should you pick up any relevant information that would be helpful to all of us to anticipate possible

demonstrations or occupations, please forward it onto me."

The LSE has chosen to not respond to the email, according to a spokesperson for the School.

The spokesperson added that though the LSE generally aims for cooperation with the Met, the School remains committed to protecting students' interests.

"The LSE engages fruitfully with the Metropolitan Police to help make sure the School is a safe environment for all students, staff and visitors", the spokesperson said, "while, at the same time, ensuring that freedom of speech and expression are appropriately protected".

LSE Students' Union Education Officer Ashok Kumar told the Beaver the Students' Union strongly opposes the officer's message.

"The LSE Students' Union has consistently stood in full opposition to the Metropolitan Police's attempts at intimi-

dation", Kumar said. "We stood up against the inhumane kettling tactics at previous protests, and we have always refused to give out names of student activists".

"It is truly scary that the Metropolitan police believe it is their role to police our peaceful and non-violent occupations" Kumar said. "This is about protecting the status quo and has absolutely nothing to do with keeping the peace or the laughable 'counter-terrorism'".

A Met spokesperson told the Beaver that as a Prevent engagement officer, the email's author works with a "number of different communities and groups, including university staff and students".

The Met's counter extremism programme, Prevent, has been criticised by the civil liberties pressure group Liberty for stigmatising British Muslims. Shami Chakrabarti, director of Liberty, described the scheme as the "biggest spying programme in Britain in modern times."

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The Beaver

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Issue No. 741

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Working together for kettled students

It has been noted that, on previous occasions, this newspaper has not been forthcoming in providing vocal support for student protesters. Whether because we were sceptical of their reasoning and substantive content, or because we are miserable pessimists, we have been unable to add our voice to what were often frustratingly middle class campaigns against government policy.

None of this takes away from our unqualified belief in the right to protest. This is an important principle of any liberal democracy, which even the Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP took pains to heap praise upon when his recent appearance at the LSE was disrupted by a group of boisterous students.

Lately, however, it appears that the Metropolitan Police have been behaving in a somewhat boisterous manner themselves (see page 1). Just as how a UCL student's attempt to blow up a transatlantic airliner in December 2009 precipitated a wave of over-zealous inquiries from the police, so this year's preponderance to protest has brought a climate of suspicion and fear to campuses. While this newspaper does not relish describing an

overwhelmingly bad state of affairs, the uneasiness we feel about recent police actions cannot be understated. Kettling and accusations of unjustified brutality had already left an unpleasant taste in the mouth; now, this is intensified by evidence that suggests the police would have universities snoop on their own students.

This newspaper is relieved to learn that the School has refused to cooperate with the Met Police's initial demands, but we will only be reassured when it is made clear that grassing-up 'conspirators' is not on the cards. We recognise that police forces face an uphill struggle when attempting to identify perpetrators of actual criminal acts, and bring them to justice – witness the diversity of opinion that surrounded the actions of Edward Woollard, who threw a fire extinguisher from the roof of 30 Millbank, narrowly missing a Territorial Support Group officer. However, it is no crime to theorise, in this newspaper's opinion, and the linking of the email sent to universities such as the LSE, back to a counter-terrorism squad, is sure to provoke fervent debate.

Perhaps, given the bewildering and perplexing chain of events that is

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Cued up in E204
Dead Funny
– Archie Bronson Outfit
Do The Astral Plane
– Flying Lotus

Union Bashō

Apathy

The irony of plans to scrap the online vote: caught in their own web.

Bashō goes to the Union General Meeting so you don't have to. Somewhat predictably, he couldn't be bothered to vote either.

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Voting motion trips at first hurdle

- UGM motion that addresses poor voter turnout put to online vote
- 23 votes short of reaching quorum
- "Nobody feels excited about motions"

Union Jack

It was an odd UGM, as it seemed for once everyone was trying to get along, contrary to what it seems usually to be, which is one big verbal scrap – fight fight fight, Toryscumherewelcome (even if that has moved on to pastures new now) etc. – in the Old Theatre for an hour. Well, that was before this year's changes in voting procedure, anyway. Now people are actually nice to each other. Daniel Kroop, before announcing his opposition to dumping electronic voting for the UGM, said the motion was brought about by "his friends". Ah, how sweet.

The debate – which was a huge waste of everyone's time quite frankly, since it, like other votes, did not reach quorum for the umpteenth time this year – descended to such a love-in that the managing editor of this newspaper, after so many broadsides against the Students' Union Education Officer's stance on things ranging from tuition fees to media policy, supported Ashok Kumar's impassioned and very loud opinion that we should all hang in there, guys, dump the electronic stuff and go back to how it was in the olden days when people were aware of what happened on Thursdays at 4PM.

Likewise, there was a nice quote from a second-year – at least she looked like a second year (too knowledgeable for a first-year, but didn't look pained enough to be a postgraduate or a third-year) – saying, "I've been to assemblies where there have been two people, and they've been crap. I went to UGMs last year and they were sick. We had motions like why can't I eat my kebab in the NAB". Your correspondent was on her side originally, particularly with the brazen use of crap (bit John Prescott-y, nice) but then felt less compelled to support her cause when the word "sick" was mentioned. Crap is fine – lovely, even – but sick is not: it is vulgar.

Meanwhile, the General Secretary announced there would be, or there are – I'm not going to check – Sabbatical

Officer blogs to emphasise the "less visual things you don't really know about, committees, the less visual campaigns", using "videos and written reports". Good luck with that, Charl – this writer has been blogging for about a year nearly and I have generated most of the hits myself, admiring my own work since no-one else wants to.

Hero Austin described her appearance on BBC2's Newsnight as "scary". But, it was Matt Frei you were interviewed by, Hero, not Jeremy "Paxo, The Paxman" Paxman. Frei is a pussycat, an Anglo-German pussycat. Paxo is a bulldog.

That being said, the BBC might have made sitting in a television studio talking to a kind man like Matt Frei scary if they had caught wind of Polly McKinlay, disabilities officer extraordinaire, planning to send a letter of complaint to them about Ben Brown's interview with the wheelchair-bound, cerebral palsy-suffering protester Jody McIntyre. McIntyre was dragged from his chair by police while campaigning against the rise in tuition fees just before the Christmas break, and Brown asked him if he was "wheeling" toward the police, among other things.

Meanwhile, Aaron Porter is at the UGM next week, and was apparently pelted with eggs and custard when he talked to Oxford University students last Friday. (Well, that information was gleaned from Laurie Penny, the crazy radical feminist revolutionary privately-educated New Statesman writer's @PennyRed Twitter feed, so take it with about a pinch, nay, a rock of salt.) And that was at Oxford! Imagine what us, the LSE, could do after the impact of our Students' Union's protest against Jeremy Hunt will obviously have on future media policy, the protest protesting against the scrapping of EMA and the tuition fees' malarkey. Will it be Bird's? Will it be Sainsbury's own brand? I can't wait!!!

Beth Clarke

The second Union General Meeting (UGM) of the Lent Term was marked by relatively high attendance, as students gathered to discuss a motion intended to change the way such meetings operate.

In spite of the vociferous debate at the meeting, the subsequent online vote on the motion failed to attract sufficient numbers to be quorate.

The meeting largely focused its attention on a motion entitled "UGM: Centre of Our Union", which was proposed by the UGM's vice-chair, Lukas Slothus, and called for reform in the way motions are passed at the UGM.

Under the current UGM system, motions are not passed during meetings, but are instead subject to an online vote. Supporters of the "Centre of Our Union" motion argued the online voting system, which was enacted following extensive constitutional reform to the Students' Union in Lent Term of last year, has not significantly increased the number of votes.

"Nobody feels excited about any motions anymore", Slothus said, "because Internet voting detaches them from the debate."

Oliver Wiseman, Managing Editor of the Beaver, agreed, saying at Thursday's meeting, "Surely a system where people sit in their rooms and never talk to each other is inferior to one where people debate important issues".

On the contrary, LSE Students' Union Postgraduate Officer Daniel Kroop and John Peart, a first-year government student, spoke out against the motion.

Kroop said while he agreed with some components of the motion, such as a proposal encouraging the Beaver to print a list of upcoming motions in the UGM, he believes students' union meetings at universities nationwide are changing.

"UGM has become something different, where students can question Sabbs and hold them accountable", Kroop said.

Peart argued the reforms need to be "wider than just changing the voting".

When students were invited to ask questions, one audience member blamed the online voting system for a decrease in UGM participation, asking, "Who wants to sit in a UGM like this? People don't want to because it's boring".

Following audience questions, the UGM came to an anticlimactic ending, as the meeting's chair, Jack Tindale, announced voting on the "Centre of our

Union" motion would begin online at 5PM, eliciting laughter throughout room.

Results of the vote on the motion, released on Friday evening, suggested its proposers had been vindicated – though support for it totalled 82.4 per cent, only 227 votes were cast, meaning that it was just short of the 250 votes needed to make a motion quorate.

Consequently, the resolutions of the motion will not be adopted by the Students' Union, though supporters of it said they would attempt to resubmit the motion in two weeks' time.

The UGM also included reports from the Sabbatical Officers, as well as the Media Group.

During the Sabbatical Officer reports, General Secretary Charlotte Gerada told Thursday's audience the Sabbatical Officers will now maintain blogs that will allow students to better understand some of the less-visible aspects of the officers' work.

Education Officer Ashok Kumar announced the next national demonstration against rises in tuition fees would take place on Saturday, 29th January, in both London and Manchester.

In his report, Kumar also suggested the possibility of an internal investigation into LSE100, a compulsory module for first-year undergraduates, after receiving many complaints regarding the course's curriculum.

Meanwhile, Community and Welfare Officer Hero Austin discussed construction concerns at Roseberry Hall, suggesting students hold a rent strike until a dispute over the hall's shower and toilet facilities is resolved.

After the Sabbatical Officers' reports, students attending the UGM questioned the officers on whether the Students' Union should support the campaign against the use of water from the company Eden Springs, which operates in the Golan Heights.

Austin said the Eden Springs boycott, as organised by the Students' Union Palestine Society, was mandated by the Students' Union, adding the Students' Union has passed policy concerning the issue for the past three years.

During Media Group reports, Stuart McColl, station manager of Pulse Radio, heightened enthusiasm for the station's Disney-themed week by announcing a Disney-themed Crush for Friday, 28th January.

Next week's UGM will include a visit from Aaron Porter, president of the National Union of Students.

News in brief

LSE UNDER SCRUTINY

The spotlight on LSE as an forum for Israel-Palestine relations was further intensified last Thursday as Parliament met to debate Antisemitism. An event hosted by the LSE Palestinian society last term that saw Abdel Bar-Atwan, the controversial editor of a pan-Arab newspaper, talk about the influence of the Zionist Lobby over US and UK foreign policy, was directly referenced by John Mann, chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group against Antisemitism. On the subject of campus events such as those hosted at the LSE, Mann said; "That is not tolerance, and it is not free speech."

KEYBOARDS AT DAWN

LSE Professor Peter Sommer, has co-authored a report published by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) that states that cyber-attacks could be the next shock to shake the world. Professor Sommer has said that international governments weaken their coping strategy by using garish language such as 'cyber-wars' to identify hacks. Interestingly, Sommer identified that governments should prepare for cyber-attacks to be the latest weapon "in nearly all future wars as well as the skirmishes that precede them".

ETHICAL ENTREPRENEUR

Park Won Soon, a South Korean student who studied at the LSE, was so inspired by the charity shops that line the streets of London that he exported the idea to his home country. Soon was intrigued by the fact that Londoners voluntarily recycle their clothes, books, DVDs and furniture for charity, a concept that had not yet been introduced to South Korea. The charity chain, which proudly sports fair trade products, draws together over 5000 volunteers in 105 shops across the country to generate \$20 million annually.

MSC RAPPER

LSE alumni Myriam Bouchentouf who completed an MSc in Political Economy of Late Development in 2010 has recently launched her career as a rapper. Whilst at LSE, Myriam enjoyed going to a hip hop karaoke bar called "The Social" in Cavendish Square, where she was able to foster her passion for rapping and was eventually scouted by a producer. With a series of free-styling gigs under her belt, Myriam is set to launch her debut single on February 17th, which will be available on iTunes. Until then she will be releasing free music every week from her facebook page <http://facebook.com/mastermimz>.

UN-BELIEVABLE

The LSESU UN Society proudly hosted the annual UN week last week. As part of the packed schedule, students were able to participate in a Mini Model UN Conference held on Wednesday. As part of the Mini MUN, students represented countries and had to debate core issues similar to those that would be under consideration at the real UN. The week came to a successful close with the annual Careers and Networking Night where students mingled with alumni who working at the United Nations and related organisations whilst enjoying wine and canapés.

Barking mad for Hodge

Chris Rogers

More than 50 students and faculty members attended a special screening of the documentary film "The Battle for Barking", held on Wednesday, 19th January, at the LSE.

Jointly hosted by the Beaver newspaper and the LSE's Department of Government, Wednesday evening's screening was followed by a question-and-answer session with the film's director Laura Fairrie, and Margaret Hodge MP, who represents the Barking constituency.

"The Battle for Barking", which was aired on Channel 4 in November 2010, details the months leading up to last year's general election in the East London constituency of Barking. The film pays particular attention to the campaign efforts of the British National Party (BNP) and the Labour party, as Nick Griffin, chairman of the BNP, stood as his party's candidate against Labour's Hodge, who has been MP for Barking since 1994.

Fairrie followed BNP activists and constituents who felt disillusioned with the Labour party in an area that had long been considered a Labour stronghold. The documentary pointed to white, working class voters who said they had been "abandoned" by Labour and were concerned about increasing immigrant populations in their constituency. The film also paid particular attention to the BNP "family" that developed among many of the party's supporters.

In spite of the BNP's strong presence on the campaign trail, Hodge subsequently retained the seat in the election, with an increased vote share of 54.3 per cent. In a chastening turn of events, Griffin

received 2.1 per cent less of the vote than the candidate his party put forward in the 2005 election.

Speaking to the Beaver, Hodge said it was "an important film people should see if they want to know about fascism in modern Britain".

Hodge was unable to attend the start of the screening due to a vote in Parliament on the Educational Maintenance Allowance.

The film, with a running time of 87 minutes, froze several times during the screening, but otherwise proceeded uninterrupted.

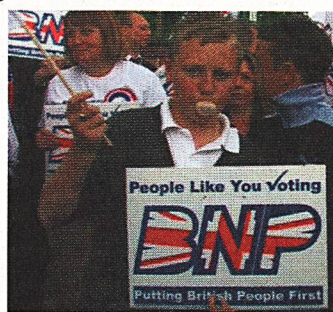
One student asked Hodge how she addressed the concerns of constituents who claimed immigrants were coming to places like Barking and "taking our jobs". Hodge said she supported a controversial policy in which non-universal benefits, such as housing, should be prioritised for those who have lived and worked in a country for years, rather than giving universal and equal treatment to everyone.

Asked if the election of an all-Labour council in Barking was a positive outcome for the community, the director Laura Fairrie said it was not. She added the BNP opposition had actually "done Labour a favour" during the election by holding Labour accountable, making its members "take notice and work hard".

Hodge, however, disagreed, arguing although the BNP had made Labour "wake up", it was in no way unfortunate that Labour candidates had smashed the BNP at the polls.

Later in the question-and-answer session, Hodge and Fairrie disagreed over whether it was fair to liken the BNP to Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party.

Fairrie told Wednesday's audience some BNP supporters are not racist, but



are rather lost. To call them fascists and Nazis, she said, underlies the sense they feel they can operate outside the law.

Hodge, on the contrary, said she thought the BNP was a Nazi party and she had never faced anti-Semitism until she had fought the BNP. She added said there was political capital gained by referring to them as Nazis, arguing her most successful campaign message involved associating associating the BNP with the Nazi Party.

Professor Paul Kelly, head of the LSE's Department of Government, told the Beaver he thought Wednesday's event was a success.

"There were very good questions, and the film showed the personality side of the political debate, which is quite important in explaining the rise of the BNP", Kelly said.

Ahmed Peerbux, a third-year government and history undergraduate who organised the screening, said he was pleased by the turnout.

"It was great to see so many students and senior government department figures present", Peerbux said, adding, "the Q&A was hugely rewarding, too".

Howie Decides

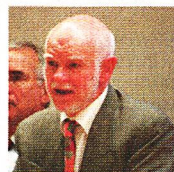
Sachin Patel

LSE Director Howard Davies has withdrawn from the race to become the next chairman of the BBC Trust.

A fortnight ago the Beaver reported on Davies's inclusion on a shortlist of candidates; the Director said at the time his role was "unaffected by this media speculation."

Davies was thought to be the preferred candidate if stringent reforms were desirable at Broadcasting House, although he was not seen as the frontrunner.

Now, a source close to Davies has said that publicity surrounding his candidacy had made his presence on the shortlist



Sir Howard Davies, Director of the LSE

untenable. Interviews for the position are scheduled to take place at the end of this week.

The shortlist also includes the former Governor of Hong Kong Lord Patten, and Richard Lambert, who heads the Confederation of British Industry. Lord Patten emerged as the clear favourite early in the process, though the final decision will lie with Jeremy Hunt, the Culture Secretary.

Hunt will be able to choose between the two candidates the interview panel feel are strongest, but will also have the option to reject both aspirants and select an entirely different person.



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Ferguson: "Obama is no Kissinger"

Luke Smolinski

Niall Ferguson damned the Obama administration's foreign policy as "all just speeches" on Tuesday, 18th January, in a public lecture held at the LSE.

In the lecture, entitled "The Grand Strategy of Détente", the academic contrasted former United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's pragmatic foreign policies with the current US government's lack of strategy. Said Ferguson: "It's just improvisation".

Ferguson, who holds the Philippe Roman Chair at the LSE and recently started teaching a ten-week, unexamined course for postgraduates, is currently writing a biography of Kissinger. In last week's public lecture, he "set the scene" for the biography by discussing the political dilemmas of the US government in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Ferguson catalogued five major problems Kissinger faced as Secretary of State, including conflict in Vietnam, US relations with the Soviet Union, stagflation, and political unrest, both stateside and in the Third World. Ferguson argued the US government faces similar problems today, such as interminable, seemingly pointless wars and the challenge of how to end them, the rise of China, a new superpower more powerful than the last, economic crisis, the polarisation of American politics and the challenges presented by "emerging markets".

Yet, in the face of such colossal problems, Ferguson asked, "Isn't it strange that there is no foreign strategy?"

Ferguson then answered his own question: "Trust me, I've been there and there isn't".

Kissinger, by contrast, Ferguson said, had a nuanced, interconnected vision of the world and a solid grasp of America's national interests in the 1960s and 1970s. These were the foundations, Ferguson argued, for Kissinger's deft foreign policy.

In his lecture, Ferguson noted, though, that other academics and public figures are not nearly as congratulatory of Kissinger's approach. Ferguson cited Christopher Hitchens's *The Trial of Henry Kissinger*, a book that argues Kissinger should be censured for his actions as Secretary of State, as an example of the level of critics' distaste.

Noting that Hitchens's bibliography only contained twelve primary sources – "which for most historians would be considered a relatively small number of documents" – Ferguson went on to question why the attacks on Kissinger were so strong.

US intervention in the Third World under Kissinger continued in just the same way as it had in the 1950s and 1960s, Ferguson said, yet Kissinger's predecessors as Secretary of State, Dean Rusk and John Foster Dulles, have not attracted such strong criticisms. Ferguson also said that when the United States intervened in other nation's conflicts during the 1970s, far fewer individuals were killed than in similar, earlier incidents. Comparing the

200,000 dead in the 1954 Guatemalan intervention with the 2,000-person death toll when Pinochet took power in Chile in 1973, Ferguson argued such numbers were significant.

Ferguson went on to condemn previous biographies of Kissinger as mere "critiques of method". Biographers take one of two stances of Kissinger's methods, he said, either criticising Kissinger's realpolitik or portraying Kissinger as a supporter of a corrupt Nixon presidency. Ferguson argued a biography should be more nuanced.

Ferguson said he could not think of any other figure in modern US history that has been the object of so much violent criticism.

In ending his lecture, Ferguson argued that when studying history, we must not forget "counter-factuals". In other words, we must always consider what could have happened. As such, Ferguson argued that if the US had stood back from world affairs, it is unlikely the Soviet Union would have done the same. Furthermore, both liberal and conservative policies would have proved inadequate, and neither isolationism nor staunch militarism would have helped. What was needed, Ferguson said, was neither an idealistic vision nor short-sighted tactics, but rather a strategy that was broad in design and nuanced in detail. This, Ferguson concluded, is what Kissinger provided with détente.

Costa Rican Foreign Minister suggests eco-diplomacy

Marion Koob

Costa Rican Foreign Minister René Castro discussed his country's environmental diplomacy in a public lecture on Monday, 17th January, at the LSE.

Castro's talk focused on Costa Rica's extensive environmental program and the country's efforts to export the model abroad, most notably through its participation in multilateral negotiations, such as those held Cancún and Copenhagen last year.

The minister spoke of the success of the country's reforestation measures, explaining that one of Costa Rica's aims is to lead by example in encouraging other nations to turn green. By creating incentives for preservation, the government succeeded in increasing the surface area of its rain forest from 21 to 51 per cent of the country's territory.

"We introduced a tax on fuels and took that money and paid for environmental services for the owners", Castro explained. "The agreements in Cancún may provide opportunities for the whole tropical forests of the world to replicate this".

The minister also commented on the need for firms to adapt to means of sustainable production. "From my perspective, companies and countries will have two options", he said. "One is do nothing. In my mind, they will crash. The other is to self-impose a discipline, go through the narrower path, and later on become a dominant player in a new market, with new conditions".

Castro also discussed the dilemmas that come with Costa Rica's decision to no maintain a standing army. Despite the country's ongoing border dispute with Nicaragua, which is currently under trial at the International Court of Justice, Castro noted that an overwhelming majority of

Costa Ricans approve of demilitarisation.

In the lecture, the minister also highlighted the importance of Costa Rica's aerospace engineering programs, as well as the country's cooperation projects with India in this respect.

"We are launching a transport engine in 2013 to refuel satellites in outer space" he said, adding the Costa Rican government invited Indian officials to see the construction of the plasma engine.

"There is an interesting new set of opportunities between Central America and India", he added.

Subsequent to his speech, the Foreign Minister received a wide variety of question from the audience, and explained, with the contributions of the Costa Rican ambassador to the UK, the country's ambition to make the production of pineapples and bananas carbon neutral.

The audience overall seemed to engage with Castro's arguments.

Sebastian Casas, a Costa Rican LLM student commented: "Translating the whole idea of environmental activism to a coherent and solid diplomatic policy seems difficult in the real world. If there is just one case of abuse or mismanagement of natural resources, then its discourse suffers in relation to the other countries it is trying to convince".

Filipe Martin, a third-year undergraduate, added, "Costa Rica's environmental policy, focused on carbon offsetting, together with its close links to India regarding spacial exploration, opened my eyes up to the extent of the country's links – it is definitely more than just a country to go gap-yearing!"

"It says a lot, I think, that no one left his talk before it ended", said Professor Stuart Corbridge of the LSE's Department of International Development, who chaired the lecture, adding that this was "not something I have observed very often when chairing at LSE".

Just say NO to meat, sometimes

Kareem Elsawi

Jonathan Safran Foer, author of such novels as *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *Everything is Illuminated*, spoke on a number of issues associated with vegetarianism in a public lecture held on Wednesday, 19th January at the LSE. Safran Foer explores vegetarianism in his most-recent nonfiction work, *Eating Animals*.

To highlight the growing popularity of vegetarianism, Safran Foer began Wednesday's talk by mentioning that a greater number of vegetarians than Catholics now attend university in the United States. He also said he views young adults as an important audience for his book, as their eating habits have been shown to be more malleable than those of older adults.

Even so, Safran Foer did not encourage audience members to embark on an ardent campaign to recruit students to the vegetarian cause, saying, "The most successful way to proselytise is not to proselytise".

Safran Foer said he preferred other methods of persuasion.

Safran Foer said most people are aware of the general arguments in favour of vegetarianism and the problems associated with intense food farming, citing environmental problems caused by pollution from factory farming and the potential medical problems related to the regular use of antibiotics in livestock as examples.

Safran Foer went on to discuss the ethical side of modern livestock rearing. "We're committing unspeakable acts

of violence to animals that you don't have to be an animal lover to abhor", he said, citing examples of non-anaesthetised amputations, cramped living conditions of factory farmed animals, conscious deaths of chickens and the unnatural growth rates of various livestock.

Safran Foer described himself as an "incrementalist" primarily concerned with the goal of reducing meat consumption rather than promoting vegetarianism. He said vegetarians are partly to blame for creating a perception that people have two choices when it comes to diet: being a vegetarian or being a meat eater. He went on to say that while most people cannot envision giving up meat, they can probably be persuaded by the environmental impact of reducing their meat intake. He argued if Americans ate one less serving of meat per week, the environmental impact would be the equivalent of taking five million cars off the roads.

Safran Foer went on to question whether people's current pattern of meat consumption was natural, saying Americans today eat 180 times the amount of chicken that Americans did 100 years ago. He also said some nutritionists suspect factory-farmed meat may be the case behind the lowering age at which girls enter puberty and the rising rate of food allergies in children.

The writer was confident that a consensus could be reached on these issues. In an interview with the Beaver prior to the lecture, he commented: "We can't have a farm system that is producing more green house gases than anything else, and we can't keep pregnant pigs in cages so small that they can't turn around. Actually,

it's surprisingly easy to come up with a list of things that everybody would just about agree on".

Sirin Kamalvand, studying International Relations, said she found the talk "honest and engaging", adding, "Reducing the amount of meat I eat seems a lot more attainable than stopping".

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Photo: Duncan McKenna

Economist spills the Beans

Aimee Riese

The LSE Students' Union Economics Society hosted Deputy Governor of the Bank of England Charlie Bean on Tuesday, 18th January, in an afternoon tea at the LSE.

At the small event, Bean spoke to members of the Economic Society about the Bank of England's monetary policy forecasts, as well as its analysis of British economy fundamentals.

Bean is no stranger to the LSE, having joined the School as a lecturer in 1982. He became a professor in 1990 and head of the School's Department of Economics in 1999.

At the event, Bean gave a presentation on the UK economy, focusing on projections of recovery, GDP growth, inflation, and trade. He looking specifically at

contributions to British growth, consumption and savings, as well as the effects of a more competitive exchange rate.

Shifting his focus to Europe, Bean then discussed sovereign debt and euro-zone growth. In one slide, he indicated further financial intervention in Europe might be necessary in the future. The slide showed the soaring prices of European sovereign credit default swaps, in which prices for insurance on Portuguese sovereign debt were nearing Greek levels.

Students at Tuesday's event were keen to ask Bean questions about his opinions on sovereign debt. Bean said he was concerned about countries such as Portugal and Greece, suggesting debt may require restructuring in the future.

He likewise emphasised the difficulties associated with reconciling the different philosophies and perspectives within Europe, despite how inherently connected

their economies are.

Economics Society members, as well as faculty from the economics department, said they welcomed the society's approach in hosting such an important policy maker at a small event.

Leo Wang, president of the Economics Society, said it was "incredible" to see the "patient manner in which [Bean] interacts with students and audience".

Judith Shapiro, an undergraduate tutor in the economics department, said she was similarly pleased with the event.

"A career with the Bank of England – all the way to the top, perhaps – is an attractive and real possibility for our best students, so I think getting to learn about Charlie Bean's thinking and experiences in an informal environment is a wonderful chance", Shapiro said.

Aman Sahni

Latvian Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis detailed Latvia's strategies in tackling the 2008 financial crisis in a public lecture held on Wednesday, 19th January, at the LSE.

Dombrovskis was in London to participate in the UK Nordic-Baltic Summit hosted by David Cameron on Thursday. Wednesday's lecture at the LSE was organized by the LSE European Institute, and chaired by Professor Janet Hartley, pro director of teaching and learning.

When Dombrovskis took office in 2009, he warned that Latvia was on the verge of bankruptcy. On Wednesday night at the LSE, he outlined how constraining the country's budget and increasing taxes saved Latvia from falling further into debt and suffering a fate similar to that of Iceland.

Latvia had experienced phenomenal economic growth since joining the European Union in 2004, with double-digit growth rates, Dombrovskis said. This period of growth was interrupted, however, by the 2008 financial crisis, with Latvia among the hardest-hit of all EU member states. By 2009, economists were reporting a substantial recession in Latvia, with high levels of unemployment and a downgrading of the country's credit ratings.

On Wednesday, however, Dombrovskis – who previously served as Latvia's Minister of Finance from 2002 to 2004 – said GDP change in 2010 was estimated at 0 per cent and in 2011, Latvia expects a growth rate of 3.3 per cent. He blamed the severity of country's initial shock of 2008 and 2009 on "unreasonable policies" during the boom years that saw high inflation rates and current account deficits rise to over 20 per cent.

Dombrovskis said recovery can be credited principally to strategic changes made by the government. While taking reasonable loans from such organisations as the European Commission, International Monetary Fund and various Nordic countries, Latvia also moved to reduced imports in 2009 in an effort to cut down its trade deficit. Dombrovskis also said Latvia increased tax rates in order to meet budget constraints.

The Latvian government's stimulus plan for recovery was three-pronged,

Dombrovskis told the audience.

First, the government used the newly-received loans to support industrial production. It also sold emission-allocation units, under the Kyoto Protocol, to reduce the budget deficit. A Council for Cooperation for large investments was also formed to ensure major investment plans were seen in action.

Second, Dombrovskis's plan provided for a social safety network, with long-term initiatives focusing on the expansion of temporary work programmes and improved accessibility to health care and education.

Third, the plan imposed functional audits on public administrative organisations. This strategy, along and wage reduction in the public sector, further reduced Latvia's budget constraints and improved efficiency, Dombrovskis said.

The Prime Minister concluded his lecture by summarising his country's current financial situation and outlining plans for the future. Dombrovskis said these include establishing more sophisticated competitiveness assessments, facilitating more value-addition industries, and introducing e-governance with central support systems.

The Prime Minister then took questions from the audience, most of which focused on economic matters.

Questioned on Latvia's engagement with emerging economies, Dombrovskis said Latvia desires to improve both diplomatic and trade relations with China, India and Brazil. He said efforts are being made on these fronts, stressing Latvia's strong trade relations with Russia.

When asked about perceived threats over China's remarkable growth, Dombrovskis refrained from judgement, saying only that how China is perceived "is in China's hands".

One student asked Dombrovskis about Latvia's long-term strategic perspective on the EU. The Prime Minister responded by reiterating Latvia's commitment to the EU and calling for "deeper integration" in the Eurozone.

When a Latvian LSE student asked Dombrovskis whether Latvian students abroad should look to return to Latvia for employment or work elsewhere, Dombrovskis responded by saying impending economic growth would be accompanied by increased job opportunities and create a rewarding economy to which students can return.

Holy water for Crush revellers

Chris Rogers

The LSE Students' Union Christian Union handed out free bottles of water to students leaving Crush in the early hours of Saturday morning, in order to highlight the society's ongoing "mission week".

Just after midnight on Friday, the Christian Union began handing out water bottles, at no cost to students. Nearly 300 bottles were given out over the course of the night.

Friday night's initiative was one of a series of schemes designed to publicise the

Christian Union's "mission week", which continues through Friday. As part of the week's activities, the Christian Union is hosting several events around the LSE, including an acoustic night, lunch-bars and evening events. Christian Union members handed out fliers advertising these activities, along with the bottles of water, after Crush.

Most of the revellers leaving Crush appeared appreciative for the bottled

water, and many told Christian Union volunteers they were surprised the bottles were being offered for free. Some students donated money in thanks, and Lucy Brackley, chair of the Christian Union, was kissed more than once in appreciation by some tipsy Crush-goers.

She said: "It was a clear crisp night, but as students emerged from the SU in the early hours, it was a pleasure to be able to give them a bottle of water to take on their way home."

But not everyone was grateful for the free water, and one student, shortly after taking a bottle of water, hurled it back at the members of the Christian Union before walking away.

Catherine Capone, president of the LSE Students' Union Atheist and Humanist Society, said, "Although this was a kind act of charity, it would have been much more worthwhile for members of the CU to spend their Friday evening giving out meals to the homeless instead of distributing water to drunken students who probably wouldn't have been able to remember the night, let alone the fact that they received water from a Christian!"

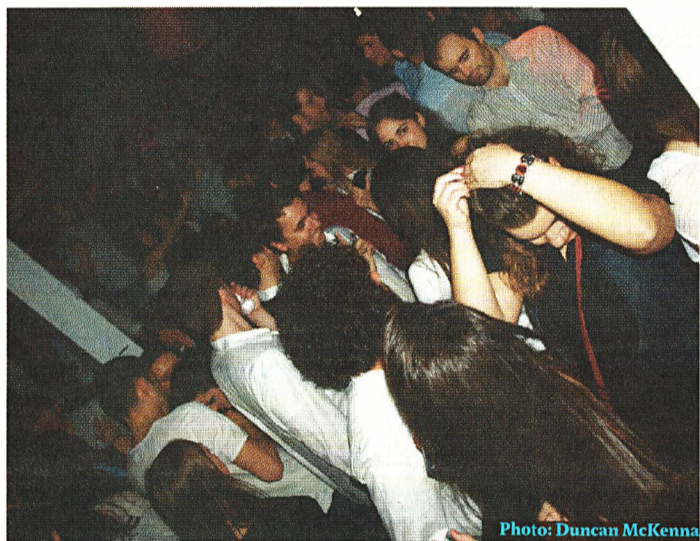


Photo: Duncan McKenna

Postgrads ponder the big questions

Dana Andreicut

Sixteen students discussed social events, immigration issues and mentoring schemes at the third meeting of the LSE Students' Union Postgraduate Assembly, held on 17th January, and chaired by Postgraduate Sabbatical Officer Daniel Kroop.

The first discussion revolved around the Social Events Team, which is working to organise a variety of social events for postgraduates, including including dance classes, on-campus parties, a potential Postgraduate Ball and a picnic for students and their families.

"The idea is to create a diverse set of events that have at least something appealing for everyone," Kroop told the Beaver.

Also discussed at the meeting was "Third-years Intermingling with Postgraduate Students" (TIPS), the collaborative mentoring programme for third-year

undergraduates and postgraduates launched this month. An initiative of the Students' Union that aims to link third-year undergraduates with postgraduate students to share information, experience and advice, the programme was designed by Kroop and the Postgraduate Assembly.

"Our pilot mentoring scheme, TIPS, is off to an excellent start", Kroop told the Beaver. "Almost equal numbers of third-years and master's students are expressing interest, and we've already surpassed our baseline participation target with several days of registration to go".

Other topics on the Assembly's agenda included increasing the diversity of career paths available via the Careers Services through a forum and networking event, printing issues on campus and an open discussion on the topic, "Your Master's Degree: What's It Worth?"

Postgraduates who attended last Monday's assembly said they were pleased by the discussion.

Birgitte Witt, head of academic initia-

tives, told the Beaver she was "particularly happy with the new deal the events team has made in regards to revenue-sharing as it will allow the team greater financial freedom in putting on events".

Elizaveta Strygina, the assembly's secretary, shared Witt's enthusiasm: "It is impressive how much has been achieved thus far and all the initiatives in discussion now are those that the Postgraduate Assembly should be focusing on".

Assembly attendees then turned their attention toward the "Defending Global Education Campaign." LSE students have a keen interest in limiting the restrictions on international students' ability to study, work and live in the UK. To address this issue, a meeting was held on Tuesday, which was attended by fifty people. The initiative is supported by Kroop and several other members of the Assembly, including defeated Postgraduate Officer candidate Griffin Carpenter.

China Development Forum a sell out

Alexander Young

Last Saturday saw the third China Development Forum to be held by the LSE China Development Society.

The event - featuring over forty speakers from such diverse bodies as the LSE itself, the Financial Times, Oxford University and China Daily - was held across the LSE in association with the LSE Asia Research Centre; 48 Group Club, an independent business network promoting positive relations with China; and the Confucius Institute for Business London, a provider of business Chinese language courses.

Swire Pacific, HSBC and Prudential were three other sponsors of the event. The event sold out and saw an attendance of 450.

Wensi Lao, President of the Students'

Union China Development Society, said the core aim of the Forum was "to bring a lively discussion by the best international experts on China's most topical issues to the students and professionals of London."

Lao also said one of the aims of the Forum was "promoting the LSE as a university that is spearheading the active engagement of China." This is pertinent, given the 704 (6.94 per cent of the total student population) Chinese students educated by the School.

The keynote speech of the event was given by China's Ambassador to the UK, Liu Xiaoming. Xiaoming argued for the potential for mutual benefit from collaboration between China and the West. His speech centred on the slow and incremental nature in which collaboration has come and emphasised China's will to work with others, placing a focus on the necessity of finding common grounds and building trust between societies.

Professor Barry Buzan, Montague Burton Professor of the LSE Department of International Relations, chaired a discussion on Sino-Indian relations which he said was "a very good discussion with a very high quality of speakers and questions asked."

Professor Buzan said the event was "meticulously organised and well thought-out". Lao said the Forum was "better in many ways" to previous incarnations. He cited a greater number of speakers - double that of last year's Forum - and a more professional effort in branding and publicity materials as factors. This professional effort on branding led to the society making a loss on the event, which was priced at a minimum of £25 per ticket for a member of the China Development Society and a maximum of £100 for professionals.

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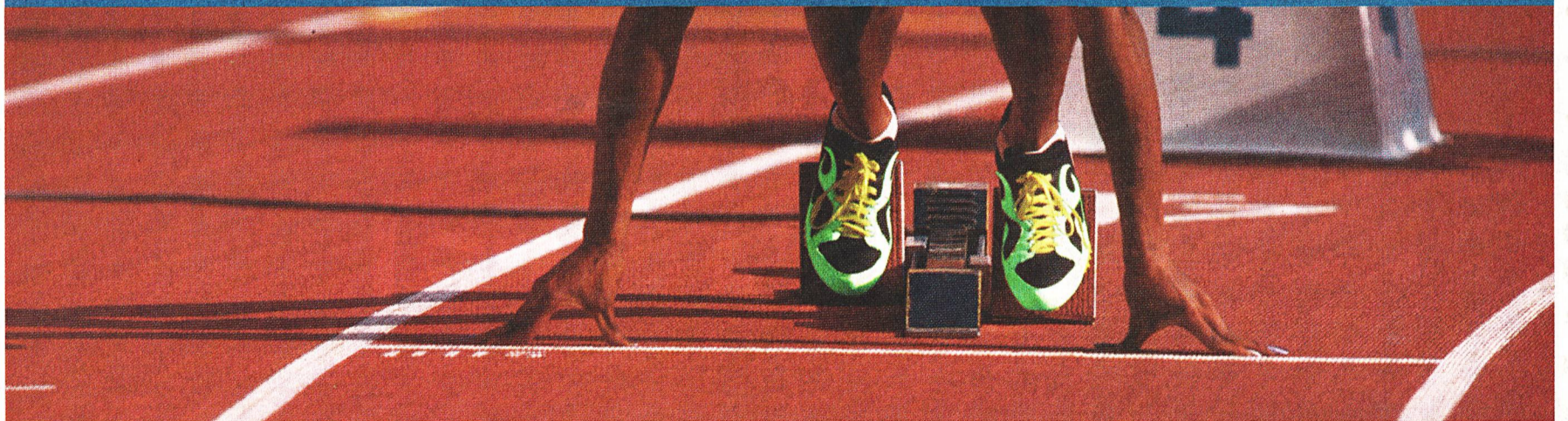
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Comment

New balls, please?

How Labour is well on the road to self-destruction

Nathan Briant



As the tabloids' attention probably turns to whom RoboCop of the year Paul Rice wasn't or isn't actually having an affair with, the Labour Party has been plunged into a Brown-ite gloom - and what makes it worse is the unfortunate and unexpected way in which it's happened

First, the new Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls is combative, but there is a very fine line between being combative and righteous and being hostile, aggressive and self-righteous in Balls's case. In hustings

for the Labour Party leadership this summer Balls

launched a stinging criticism at Ed Miliband for 'telling us, like you always do' about his personal preference for policy and direction. Even on the Daily Politics programme a few weeks ago Balls was sneering about how he was helping Alan Johnson with his economics work, obviously incensed that he hadn't been given the job. For someone who seems to be as placid as Miliband does, it is difficult to see any outcome other than Balls trampling all over him and becoming the party's de facto leader - even if at constituency level his majority is far more modest than most of his shadow cabinet colleagues.

Second, for people like me who like to think that Labour needs to be electorally successful as well as being social democrats and the rest of it, there are simply no powerful, long-standing Blairites left in any position of influence; it might be an anachronistic turn of phrase but let's use it principally for want of a better term. They've either been culled and/or resigned off their own backs. Indeed, the only one

in any position of influence, and in a pretty redundant one as Shadow Foreign Secretary, is Douglas Alexander, a Brownite spinner who had to flee the HMS Brown

after being flogged and held responsible for the on-off election debacle nearly four years ago. Alan Johnson's departure was profoundly the end of an era in that sense. People who might have continued the tradition, if that's what it is, like Liam Byrne, buried themselves and potentially any high-flying career over the next few years

The Labour Party has lost its best communicator in Johnson, and in David Miliband their best potential leader

after admitting there's no money left. Others, like Tessa Jowell, seem to be there for one last hurrah until they're packed off to the Lords or something with prestige.

And people aren't going to be happy about it - and they need not be like me, a menial. A few months ago, the Managing Editor of this newspaper and I talked to Jonathan Powell, Tony Blair's former Chief of Staff; his views towards Ed Miliband

weren't particularly favourable, but notably warmer than towards 'the Balls family', one half of whom had played a part in trying to openly destroy and then remove Powell's boss for nearly ten years. Indeed, Powell counted "stopping the Balls family running economic policy" as a "very sensible" move from Ed Miliband, one of his top three achievements in the few months since he'd become leader. Any progress that had been made on that score has now been truly wiped out. Balls is now unsackable - and even if his wife Yvette Cooper, now third-in-command behind Balls and Miliband as the new Shadow Home Secretary, or indeed he himself, has been meeting Paul Rice behind closed doors surely one half of the Balls family will still find themselves in charge of the tiller and general direction of the Labour Party somehow.

Admittedly, that Alan Johnson would remain Shadow Chancellor beyond the first reshuffle Ed Miliband would have made as Labour leader was unlikely - his start wasn't the best one he could have had to say the least: saying he needed an economics primer could never have been a good thing, and continued blunderings - only last week on Sky News he got the National Insurance rate wrong - couldn't have improved his confidence, however much the problems were influence by personal issues.

Instead, the problem was the lack of other activity behind him: Balls

or Cooper were always going to replace him; who else would or indeed credibly could? Harriet Harman as Shadow Chancellor? No, thought not. That would have the coalition dancing. The wreckage of what might have been is now, not even a year after the general election, there for all to see: the Labour Party has lost its best communicator in Johnson, and in David Miliband their best potential leader, especially as he seems so resigned to the impact he could have in his job as an MP now that he's off to Sunderland Football Club and teaching at Haverstock Comprehensive in Chalk Farm for a couple of days a week.

Although I'm naturally a pessimist, I think I'm right to be worried about how the Labour Party's leadership is kept in check over the next few months and years if this is the formation of it: backbiting and plots could well be the norm all over again. Fingers crossed, I'm very wrong



Putting the 'con' back in Conservative

Laying out why David Cameron's Big Society is little more than a vanity project

Benjamin Butterworth



Since his election as Conservative party leader in 2005, David Cameron has employed widely his rhetoric of the 'Big Society'. Haunted by the idea that the Conservatives were, in the words of Theresa May, "the nasty party", Cameron tried to create clear water between himself and Margaret Thatcher. Where the iron lady had once said there was no such thing as society, Cameron claimed: "There is such thing as society. It's just not the same thing as the state". He laid down a gauntlet for his vision of fairness in the twenty-first century; a vision for which he claimed words like 'equality' and 'justice' had now been admitted to the Conservative vocabulary.

The devil, however, is in the details. And Prime Minister Cameron has offered little more than lip-service since coming into government. Failing to put bones on the speeches he made in opposition, he's offered little more than a policy agenda set within the narrow perimeters of the ideologically small state.

The Big Society does, in essence, play on inherent worries by individuals that an over-powering, bureaucratic state could restrict their liberation to pursue social and economic freedoms. Legitimate concerns, all of them. But Cameron's Big Society has, to date, lacked any sense of definition or - more importantly - politics. He's managed to talk about the need for a better democracy, and yet opposed

any serious constitutional reform. He argues for greater social equality and reduced economic disparity, whilst turning shy of tackling the core macroeconomic causes and pursuing a free-market agenda. The entire Big Society philosophy is unravelling to be little more than a series of populist soundbites created to disguise a stagnant Conservative agenda.

Much of the announcement given essentially falls under the umbrella of an ideologically driven desire to increase the role of charities within society. "Charities will be the bedrock," he tells Conservative conference. What he doesn't tell them, however, is that charities rely upon government for 40% of their funding, and will be among the earliest casualties of the coalition's rapid cuts project. A tenth of all UK charities have already been forced to slash workers' pay or, in increasing numbers of situations, lay employees off. Combine this with swelling financial pressures on the individual, and you have a resoundingly bad situation for third sector organisations, seemingly nurturing but actually worryingly destructive.

Global studies have shown that in times of economic downturn people's willingness to make charitable donations decreases. With less income and diminished personal wealth, people have less money to afford charitable causes. For Cameron to argue that in times of austerity - when VAT on everyday goods has been increased, wages are being squeezed and pension programmes curtailed - that people should 'give more' simply illustrates a lack of understanding for ordinary people's lives.

However, it's at the mercy of the left that the principle of a more active, engaged and gregarious society is ignored. It was a failing of the outgoing Labour gov-

ernment to outline only why we need the state to support and help individuals, but not to explain the roles community plays in a unified model of citizenship. Tony Blair began his leadership of the Labour party, in 1994, by outlining a vision of 'socialism'; viewing community activism and mutual, co-operative endeavor as the substratum to a fairer society. However this wasn't an agenda sufficiently publicised in government, and so grew a disconnect between the increasing standards in public services, and the role for which communities and individuals had to play in them. The human relationship was lost.

David Cameron has attempted to exploit this void by re-characterising the centre-ground, branding Labour as technocratic and managerial in a backdoor bid to shrink the size of the state to be as small and limited as possible. By neglecting to emphasise the role of the public in public services, people are, as a result, less likely to recognise the destructive effects in their dismantling.

The challenge faced now is to reveal the Big Society for the ideological smoke-screen it is. Labour must ensure the wheels on this Boris bike well and truly come off, exposing the spin as nothing more than a Cameronite vanity project. To do so, progressives must set out their own agenda; an agenda based on fact, history, and vision: the vision of a co-operative 'good society'.

Ed Miliband has spoken of this vision since taking the leadership. He told Andrew Marr, a political commentator, "It's about the good society. The local institutions like post offices and corner shops which hold up communities and their values." If the Big Society myth is to be dismantled with credibility, Labour must show commitment from the top to

The challenge faced now is to reveal the Big Society for the ideological smoke-screen it is.

community institutions, illustrating that it recognises the flaws to a market fundamentalist agenda on local high-streets.

But if the left is to properly retake the terrain of a society-driven political agenda, it must begin rediscovering its traditional foundations in community-based activism.

David Miliband's 'Movement For Change' has set a key mantle for achieving this goal. Through the endeavour to forge ourselves in local organisations, campaigning groups and charities, Labour can win back the trust of communities and begin to affirm our guiding principles in a way people can engage with. It was the very concept of a good society for which Keir Hardie founded the Labour party, believing that people not markets are the bedrocks to fairness. Radically reforming the democratic wing of democratic socialism, to be a bottom-up party, based on reciprocity and mutualism not punitive managerialism, can enable the Labour movement to regain this sliding political ground.

Labour is the natural home to what the electorate believes David Cameron's Big Society to be. But if the party fails to make clear its position on the role of the third sector and charity in building a good society, it risks looking statist and out-of-touch. In fact, if Labour fails to combatively overcome the Big Society smoke-screen, the centre-ground will have been redefined on a Conservative agenda, and Labour could face a generation out of power.

It's time for help in the community to be re-earthed, and for Labour to once more become the people's party

Apple without a core

Investors in the dark; Steve Jobs missing – should the board take a bite and tell us what the hell is going on?

Elizabeth

Lowell



You see them everywhere: MacBooks in lectures, iPads in the Garrick, iPhones in the library. Apple products are ubiquitous on campus. But how many of these digital toys are the direct result of Apple CEO Steve Jobs's vision and innovative skill? Exactly how dependent is Apple's success on the presence of its long-time leader? Speculation on the future of Apple has been rampant after the company's announcement last Monday that Jobs would be taking a second medical leave of absence. Considering the high stakes, does Jobs, as an integral member of a publicly traded corporation, owe it to investors to forfeit his privacy and disclose the particulars of his prognosis?

With few details and no specified date of return, Jobs' statement indicated no intention of further disclosure, emphasising, "my family and I would deeply appreciate respect for our privacy." The timing of the announcement appears highly deliberate, coming on a US public holiday when the markets were closed, and the day before Apple reported exceptional quarter earnings. Although this is not Jobs's first medical leave, the vagueness of its announcement, along with its seemingly strategic release, has left many investors unsettled and angry.

Undoubtedly, the Apple board is aware that it is in their best interest to incite investor optimism. Thus, with so much information veiled in secrecy, it would seem that Jobs' condition cannot be good. If this speculation is in fact true, vagueness appears to be the company's best option. There is no way to quantify how essential Jobs actually is to Apple's success. Yet, what matters most isn't whether or not Jobs is actually vital to Apple's day-to-day operations, but rather whether or not he is perceived to be. The market reality does not always coincide with practical truth and, in investors' minds, Jobs seems to be considered indispensable. The Financial Times observes that "more than any other group of its size, Apple is seen as the embodiment of one man's vision." With such high value, justified or not, attributed to their CEO,

Apple is understandably reluctant to release more negative news than absolutely necessary. Their best course of action may in fact be to sweep the facts under the rug and attempt to combat the company's perceived dependence on Jobs through a consistently positive performance in his absence. This plan provides little comfort for investors and, as expected, they want to know more.

The push and pull between the Apple board and investors throws into light a deeper issue of proper corporate gover-

tor makes a decision of whether or not to invest there are a whole range of factors that go into that decision making and the key is to have the information in front of you and if the board is aware of the situation I think the board needs to be a bit more forthcoming to the investors." But

Apple investors sleep at night to know that Steve Jobs is going to return shortly and continue the company's dominance in the technology sector. Perhaps they'd even settle for a confirmation that Tim Cook, Apple's COO and Jobs' temporary replacement, will further Apple's success

that may just mean keeping them in the dark. The release of negative information about Jobs' condition will only serve to ignite fear, reinforce the conception of Apple's dependence on Jobs, and damage the company's value. None of these outcomes benefit investors. Apple posted

Is respect for Jobs's privacy a valid explanation for elusiveness, or a convenient excuse for keeping company vulnerability close to the vest?

nance. Exactly how much information does the board owe its investors? Is respect for Jobs' privacy a valid explanation for elusiveness, or a convenient excuse for keeping company vulnerability close to the vest? In an interview with Bloomberg, Charles Elson, director of the John L. Weinberg Center for Corporate Governance at the University of Delaware, called for more disclosure from Apple as to the nature of Jobs' medical leave. Elson was focused particularly on Apple's lack of transparency in addressing the details of Jobs' participation in company operations while absent. It is Elson's position that the investors are entitled to all of the information available to the board. He further argues that by nature of his public role, Jobs cannot expect the same degree of privacy of an average employee and more specifics on his condition are necessary. He explains, "when an inves-

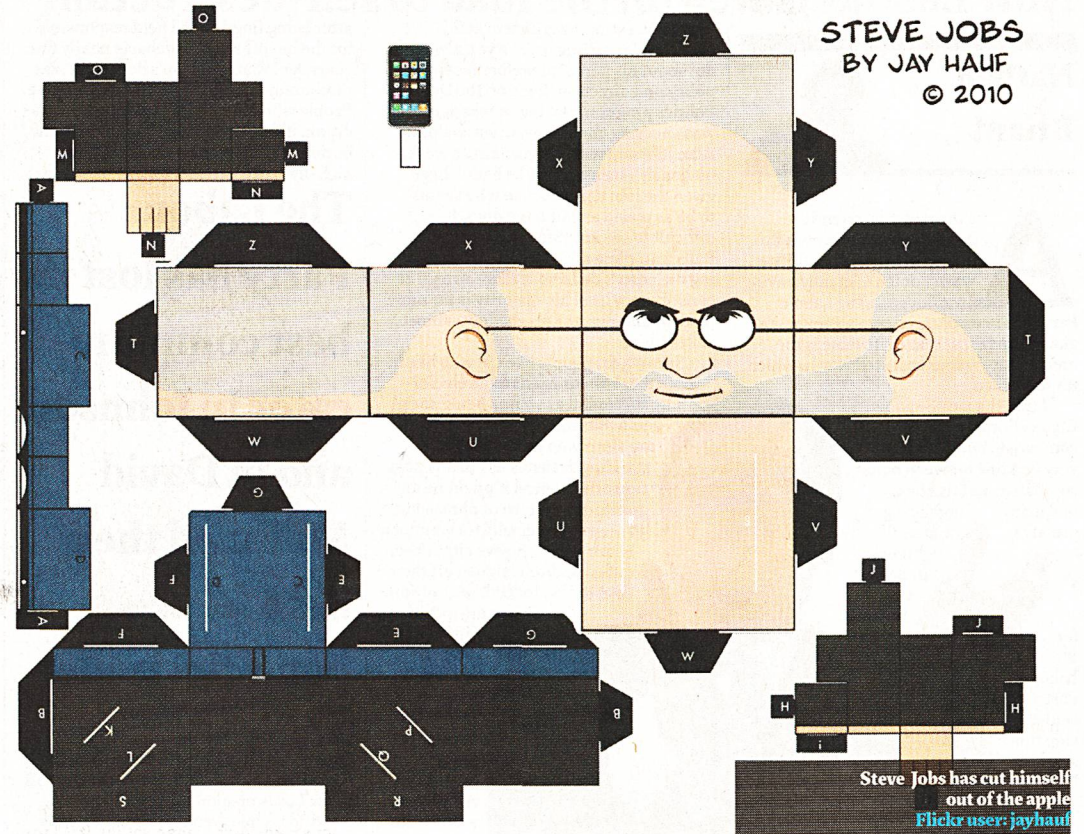
tor makes a decision of whether or not to invest there are a whole range of factors that go into that decision making and the key is to have the information in front of you and if the board is aware of the situation I think the board needs to be a bit more forthcoming to the investors." But

with or without the "indispensable" CEO's return. Alas, when it comes to investing, there are no such guarantees. On the subject of Jobs' privacy, Elson's argument does hold some weight. However, determination of how much information the board can be expected to disclose involves much more than defining the parameters of Jobs' right to privacy. Apple's duty to investors is to run the company as efficiently and successfully as possible, and in this case

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a net income increase of 78% on Tuesday. This massive achievement should, and briefly did, overshadow Jobs' departure. Apple's success most certainly is not all attributable to one man. Investors would serve their own best interests by stepping back and allowing Apple to do what is necessary to ensure that its triumphs continue. At the moment investors' fear and uncertainty are more of a threat to Apple's future than Jobs's absence could ever be.



The Middle Ground

Sometimes you don't really have to decide where you stand

Rachel

Holmes



I have spent the last year of my student career wondering when I would stumble onto a question compelling enough to move me to my laptop with an opinion whose sincerity could stand up to the scrutiny of our campus. I have discovered it. I have an opinion about 'including the middle ground'.

This idea of 'inclusion' seems to permeate from ideological martyrs and Machiavellian magicians of the LSE Students Union alike. Even the stout-hearted socialist finds herself at some point appealing to nondescript masses with leaflets and a badly disguised demand. Where she meets the upright patriot, sustained by his inexhaustible sense of duty. It's all beginning to resemble something too close to a cliché; the pair of them hunting

Houghton Street for a parallel dimension known as 'the middle ground'.

Recently I have found myself evaporating into this dimension, from the universe of political agitation to evenings spent procrastinating in my hole. I even nobly despair sometimes that the substance of my soul has slowly corroded from Guardian gold into the iron of mediocrity and high-heels and sedation. Maybe I would really rather have a summary of the weekly UGM in sensationalist headlines bullet-pointed down my screen, so that I can click a convenient preference – Facebook only a tab away – all from within the comfort of my middle ground. Without having to actually venture into the warzone of the UGM, where polarisation and confrontation lurk where I may be expected to formulate an opinion. Fortunately of course, one can borrow one's peers' opinion. One can follow them to the left or right, depending on how suffocating this week's propaganda has been, or reflective of your neutrality, or how strict your social hierarchy is, while still surrounded by acres of secure, impenetrable middle ground.

Adherents of online voting will argue that this rhetoric is not relevant to the discussion. If a student has a sincerely personal opinion it's immaterial whether they voice it in the Old Theatre or online. The challenge is to make SU politics accessible, politicising our campus and combating peer-pressure. I agree. Problems of including people are distinct from the UGM, thus they should not be used to adjust its essential nature, especially when the validity of this 'inclusivity' has yet to be shown.

I would argue no, it's not. The 'inclusivity' implied by 'neutrality' is strictly stereotypical. It connotes an LSE Students' Union where below ground conspirators conspire, above ground athletes play sport, and inside buildings bankers-to-be get tipsy at networking events. And in the middle of it all, a few masterminds conduct meetings discussing the technicalities of non-offensive bridge-building from these worlds to lsesu.com/vote. The balance of inclusivity is retained because no one is made uncomfortable. No one is exposed or confronted. No longer are we addressing individuals from whom

independence and accountability should be expected, suddenly we are addressing groups among whom internal dependence and exclusivity is assumed. Who are frankly uninterested in personal engagement because their individuality has been assassinated by the middle ground.

As long as 'including the middle ground' implies 'check-mate', debate becomes somewhat of a loud dress rehearsal, in which any position can be justified on the basis of its assumed inclusivity. But the notion that online voting can foster inclusivity for individuals and avoid polarisation among groups is misleading. Effectively it denies the merits of open deliberation on the grounds that voters should not be encouraged to defend a position because they are too 'moderate' to have one. If Bob takes up a position because it is moderate, Bob hasn't taken up any position except one of moderation.

The 'UGM: centre of our union' motion has failed. However, I am not addressing this defeat in isolation, but with it the misleading claims of moderation and inclusivity which seem to wield an inexplicable power at the UGM. There

is nothing middle ground about having an opinion. When one discovers one's opinion she will not only turn up at the UGM, she may even write an article for the Beaver. ☘

WHAT'S TICKED YOU OFF THIS WEEK?

send your submissions to comment@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Undercover sex

Should Mark Kennedy be sued for seducing women to get the job done?

Zoe Leung



It is just NOT what you think it is. In case you haven't been aware of this, over the past few weeks, a trial of six environmental protesters collapsed because one of the members of the organisation turned out to be an undercover policeman named Mark Kennedy. Various controversies about the case followed. But one of the latest ones is the discovery of his sexual relationships with several of the female activists.

Instinct tells us there is something wrong. But what is wrong, if you have to charge him or the Met Police in court? The case could be quite slippery. Can you charge someone for "duping you into sex", as the Guardian put it? The court would probably be very busy if there was a law precisely stating this. To start with, the complaint against a conduct as such of an undercover policeman is unprecedented in court. It would be difficult to predict the verdict and therefore what he should be sued for. Amateurs like you and me are thinking along the lines of deception-therefore-rape. But we are probably wrong. Many with slightly more professional knowledge would know that a rape lawsuit rests crucially on consent. There are more details to the definition of meaningful consent. But it is very likely that the female activist, who reported the relationships (now married to someone else with two kids) had produced meaningful consent back then and would not file a case of rape if it had not been the exposure. She herself also stresses that the feeling of violation comes from the speculation of being used in the relationship. So the fact that it was an intimate relationship serves mostly to aggravate rather than trigger that sense of betrayal.

Neither is it a common case of tort, which refers to "a breach of a civil duty owed to someone else". If that's still too much jargon for you, tort basically involves an act that injures someone, and for which the injured person can sue the other for the wrongdoings. These acts include, and are not limited to, physical injuries, defamation, and copyright infringement. However, to be held responsible for the injury, the injuring party must have had a duty of care towards the injured one. Previous cases tell us that the police do not have this responsibility to the general

public. However, if these relationships were aimed to collect information, meaning the relationships "are part of work", then the women can file for negligence. The case can be stronger if they can prove "recognised psychiatric conditions", or other obvious sufferings, due to the discovery of his real identity.

The job of an undercover officer, by definition, involves deceiving his targets in order to infiltrate the given organisation, and betraying any companions made



Mark Kennedy - the new 007?

Anyhow, intuitively, we would agree that the undercover cop had misjudged the circumstances. On a moral level, few would agree that it was appropriate for him to start intimate relationships with his target. The job of an undercover officer, by definition, involves deceiving his targets in order to infiltrate the given organisation, and betraying any companions made in the organisation. It is hurtful for anyone to discover the falsity of the friendship and the eventual betrayal. But it is particularly hurtful in an intimate relationship, which trust is usually more needed than in any other relationships. Even if the affections were sincere, it could not be excused as an irresponsible act. Moreover, it is extremely selfish to use these relationships for work, to acquire what you need. How different is this from using visiting a prostitute to fulfil one's desire, only that the women had not consented to being treated this way?

Furthermore, according to reports, many agents, including Kennedy, are typically supported with £250,000 to carry out covert operations. Every penny of that lump sum is expected to be spent in a worthwhile way. It is, therefore, questionable whether sexual relationships, instead

of normal friendship, was a necessity to win trust and collect information, if that was what they were aimed at achieving. If they were not, it is still doubtful whether taxpayers should invest so much money into Kennedy for his own pleasure, instead of doing his job.

Currently, there are only very vague guidelines on the aspect of agent conducts. I would agree with the Home Office that it would be difficult to establish very specific code of conduct regarding how intimate relationships can be between the agent and the targets. But if the lawsuit were to go ahead, I hope it would give some justice to the women involved and set a precedent to close the loophole. On the other, every agent should probably learn from Kennedy's story to act wiser in their operations.

Quick COMMENT

Does Facebook make us selfish?

I don't know about selfish, but it can definitely make us obsessed about things which aren't really that important.

- Priyan Patel, 2nd year BSc. Mathematics and Economics

Its nice to know how awesome you really are in relation to other people.

- Aritra Banerjee, 2nd year, BSc. Economics

Yes, certainly! It makes us self-centred and self-conscious. For example, if I put up a status and no one likes it, I would delete it! Maybe I'm a bit extreme but I have a fear of rejection.

- Kima Otung, 2nd year LLB. Laws

I think your profile page is basically an advertisement for your own person.

- Marion Koob, former Features Editor, The Beaver

Obsession with our appearance, number of friends, pictures, looking like we're having the best time, it's all about me and how I look to my peers.

- Zena El-Farra 1st year, BSc. Management

Yes.

- Mehek Zafar, former Social Editor

Facebook exposed our undying and eternal affairs with ourselves. Whatever.

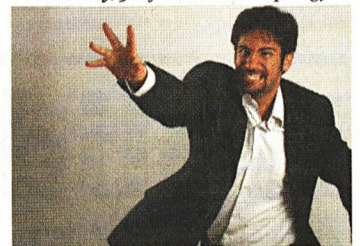
- Vicky Hudson, General Course

It has expanded yet further the love I hold for myself.

- Benjamin Butterworth, Social Editor, The Beaver

We want others to see us in the best light. In reality it is harder to disguise things we don't want others to see, unlike on Facebook. Therefore I don't think it makes us any more selfish than we already are in real life.

- Rose Kelly, 3rd year BA Anthropology



NEXT WEEK...
Would we die without internships?

Letters to the Editor

Sir - Following the front page report of last week's Beaver, it appears that the senior management of the Student's Union have taken things too far. What the Union, and the Sabbatical Officers, have a mandate to do on behalf of students is not always clear. Campaigning for fees to be frozen, and placing the LSE at the heart of the national anti-fees movement were poorly-judged projects—and now, fortunately, failed ones. But at least one can see how they might have been inferred to have been democratically mandated, and as having been viewed to be in the best interests of LSE students. The recent disruption of Jeremy Hunt's lecture represents, however, a crossing of the line. The impartiality of Hunt as an arbitrator of the BSKyB deal was not an issue on the back of which any of the Sabbatical officers who facilitated the disruption was elected; however one might try to dress it up. For that reason, the student body deserves an apology from those executive elements of the SU who abused our trust and faith in order to 'legitimate' their own private vendettas, guided more by a desire to shout than a desire to accurately reflect and act upon student sentiments.

Yours sincerely,

Samuel Williams

Sir - We are writing further to hearing about the Beaver's support for the Palestine Society's campaign to boycott water from Eden Springs UK.

We understand fully the importance and role of a strong pro-Palestinian voice on campus. Of course, it is legitimate to disagree with the policies of the Israeli government.

However, we object to the method of protest. On Thursday outside St. Clement's members of the Palestine Society were standing dressed in army outfits holding oversized guns. They had placed around them bottles of Eden water with red liquid inside. Perhaps this was supposed to represent Palestinian blood? This "stunt" was offensive and childish. Furthermore, such crude campaigning does nothing to further good campus relations and dialogue between the Israel Society and the Palestine Society. It is divisive and creates a hostile atmosphere. Please could the Beaver explain its support for such a method of campaigning, which is clearly highly offensive and divisive?

It is interesting to note that the water in question here originates from West Hyde, Hertfordshire, not the Golan Heights. In addition, since the Palestine Society's aim is to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people, the Golan Heights does not even fall within this remit. The only explanation the Israel Society

can draw from this is that the Palestine Society are more anti-Israel than they are pro-Palestine.

Yours sincerely,

LSE Students' Union Israel Society

Israel Society - Thank you for your letter regarding the stance expressed in our editorial ("This is the only way we can participate", 18th January 2011).

We should preface our justification of support by saying that at time of going to press last week, the Palestine Society had yet to protest in the manner that they did outside St. Clement's. That said, we continue to support their actions.

Because the cause they are campaigning against concerns an allegedly illegal occupation which has displaced a large number of civilians, we believe the comparatively tame nature of their protest is fully justified. Whether those harmed by Israel's actions are Syrian or Palestinian, the society is right to highlight the methods that Israel deems acceptable.

As for the revelation that the water originates from Hertfordshire, we are confident this is immaterial to the discussion. We remain concerned with the parent company's actions, viz. profiteering from an unjust state of affairs.

Please be assured this does not correspond with any uneasiness about the actions of the Israel Society, which we appreciate is committed to constructive dialogue.

The Beaver Editorial Board

Can't be bothered to write 700 words? Send us just a few for Quick Comment

Features

Economy versus ideology

Tatum Summers discusses warming U.S.-China relations

Chinese President Hu Jintao's arrival in the United States last week was met with mixed responses. Met off the plane by exaggerated fanfare and U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, the highly anticipated trip was darkened somewhat by the protesters gathered outside the White House voicing their opposition to China's controversial policies towards Tibet. President Hu's American trip was the first of its kind in 13 years, and is being hailed as a clear sign of the world's changing power structure. The presidents of arguably the two most powerful states in the world met to discuss trade issues and currency controls, as well as to create a "China-US Joint Statement", which was released last Wednesday. This statement emphasised the desire of both leaders to strengthen the ties, cooperation and mutual trust between their two nations. It drew particular attention to "security, economic, social, energy and environment issues", that they believe require some form of bilateral agreement to effectively address. Does this signify a new period of international relations, dominated by the foreboding combination of the world's biggest military force with the world's biggest economic one?

Certainly, it would seem that in recent years the US and China have been getting unusually (or perhaps inevitably) close for a duo without the smoothest of track records. Following the end of World War II, the fundamentally different political entities never really saw eye-to-eye, and it was only with the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations ratified on January 1st 1979 that relations became 'normalised'. In the subsequent thirty years, the couple have

had their fair share of ups and downs, with sources of tension never straying far from issues of human rights, the independence of Taiwan, support for North Korea, and of course, economics.

The question of China's human rights infringements remain a sensitive topic – as a country that is still officially communist, its people are subject to various limitations, from severe censorship in the media to the slightly more trivial (or perhaps unimaginably harsh, unfair, and downright evil, from the viewpoint of the average teenager in the developed world) restrictions on sites such as Facebook and Twitter. The Chinese government's reactions to dissidents is unforgiving, to say the least, and sometimes verging on humorous due to sheer absurdity. For example, the recent controversy over imprisoned Nobel Peace Laureate Liu Xiaobo has been a source of tension in international relations. Liu was awarded the prestigious prize for his peaceful attempts to pursue basic human rights for the people of China. This gesture greatly angered Chinese officials, causing them to retaliate and introduce their own "Confucius Peace Prize" (although it was denied that the creation had any relation to the case of Liu Xiaobo), which was promptly awarded to a seemingly confused and bewildered six-year-old girl, much to international amusement. Instances such as these that truly highlight how different the U.S. and China are in terms of their governance and standards. Is the U.S. now simply willing to avert its eyes when the chance to benefit economically from relations with China arises?

It would seem that this is a situation where American domestic concern regarding technically very un-American

human rights violations in a country a whole ocean away, has taken a backseat to issues closer to home, particularly high unemployment rates and slow economic recovery. Following the summit, Obama announced the creation of export deals to China worth an estimated \$45 billion, as well as the potential 235,000 jobs that they could create for Americans. Furthermore, it has not gone unnoticed that China does appear to be making some concessions to U.S. concerns. China's stance in North Korea has become harsher following U.S. warnings about the threat posed by the latter's nuclear development scheme. This follows from the notion that if nothing is done by China, then the U.S. may take a more aggressive role in the region, an undesirable prospect for the Chinese. Also, the People's Bank in China raised the exchange rate of the Yuan prior to Hu's trip, as currency control issues provoked significant concern in the U.S. for trade implications, another sign that the country is willing to reduce the causes of strain in their transpacific relationship.

What does this mean for the future? As these are the world's two largest economies, are we now faced with a shift in international politics from the unipolarity that has been the case since the end of the Cold War, to bipolarity? Has China seduced the US with its economic prowess and promises of mutual benefits to such an extent that the traditional transatlantic relationship between the US and Europe will become markedly less relevant? Only time will tell how interconnected the two become, and what this will mean for the rest of the world.



Flickr user: TalkMediaNews

Holiday in Havana?

Gurdeep Chhina remains sceptical of a cultural détente

Barack Obama's recent decision to loosen travel restrictions on U.S. citizens travelling to Cuba indicates a small step towards easing the long standing enmity between the two countries. Marginally positive changes in the tone of diplomacy are indicative of Obama's attitude and of changes happening within Cuba itself. The question is, do these moves go far enough? They certainly do not end the decade-long trade embargo placed on the Caribbean island.

The easing of restrictions on Ameri-

cans wishing to travel to this communist nation are said to be aimed to support Cuban society and improve contact between the two nations. Under some of these changes, religious groups and higher education institutions will be permitted to sponsor visits to the island. They may appear to be minimal and even slightly trivial; but it is the diplomatic significance of these changes that are of importance.

Since Castro's revolution and implementation of a centrally planned economy, America has enforced a trade embargo and broken diplomatic ties with

Cuba. Tension and hostility between these two Cold War enemies clearly has a historic significance, so why are small, 'soft-power' attempts to improve relations being made now?

This subtle change in America's tone reveals Obama's personal aim to see an improvement in U.S.-Cuban relations. Not only will this improve America's global standing and influence in the Caribbean, but also will be regarded in a favourable manner by the left of the American Democratic Party. Yet, to view these changes purely through the prism of American domestic politics would be overlooking the bigger picture and the changes that have taken place within Cuba recently.

America's attitude towards Cuba has been more optimistic ever since Fidel Castro stepped down as President in 2008 making way for his brother Raul. One of the most vocal criticisms that the West has made of Cuba has been in regards to its human rights record. The state of civil liberties in the Caribbean island was forced in to the limelight once again in 2010, as a number of high profile hunger strikers died in prison. Perhaps a sign of reform amongst Cuba's administration was indicated when in July last year, after much negotiation and deliberation, it was agreed that 52 of Cuba's most high profile 'prisoners of conscience' would be released by Raul Castro. Progress proved to be limited, as a significant number of these prisoners are refusing to be exiled; only one of them has actually been released. Despite the lack of continued success, a subtle difference in policy under the second Castro brother is conveyed. However, it seems that this alteration in Cuban policy has more to do with a wider realisation in the Cuban regime, than the personal role played by Raul Castro.

There seems to be a general acknowl-

edgement among the ruling members of the Communist party that the era of the next generation of rulers is close at hand. Raul Castro has publicly acknowledged that the current ruling elite are the last of the original revolutionaries to be in power. Perhaps this realisation is what has sparked some of Cuba's small but telling economic reforms.

On a small scale, Cuba's centralized and state run economy has seen the birth of a slow but emerging private sector. The economic crisis has forced Raul Castro to implement spending reductions, leading to the cutting of around 500,000 state worker jobs. To compensate for the loss in employment, the Cuban administration has allowed licences to be issued which allow Cubans to set up businesses and become self-employed. Although the scope of these licences is small; only 250,000 are allowed to be issued, and new businesses are faced with much red tape and heavy taxation, this is a big step for Cuba. It is perhaps these indications of change that have sparked Barack Obama to permit U.S. citizens to send limited amounts of money to support non-family members in Cuba as part of his recent reforms. The U.S. clearly has taken notice of these economic changes and wishes to support this embryonic private sector.

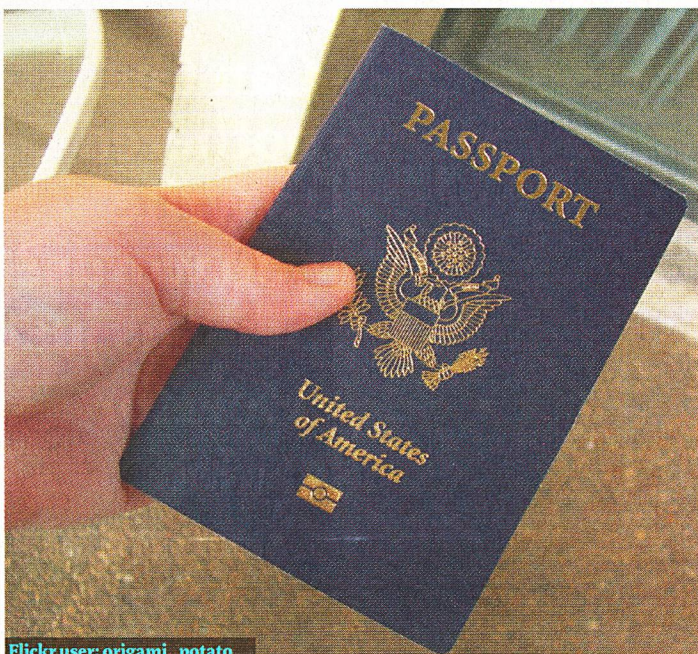
It is not just on an economic front that reforms in Cuba are occurring, there are also signs, albeit subtle ones, that political change may be on the discussion agenda at last. It has already been announced by the Communist party that a special party conference will be held to deal with the issue of leadership alone.

It cannot be denied that a change in attitude on both the American and Cuban side has been shown, but normalised relations seem to be a long way away at this point. The decades-long trade embargo is still very much in place and shows no sure

sign of being ended any time soon. The Cuban government has given a luke-warm response to the easing of travel restrictions that Obama is planning on implementing. They appear to have interpreted it as a small gesture amounting to little practical progress. The much advocated 'people to people' contact that the U.S. currently wishes to promote translates in to cultural visits and exchanges, including plans for the New York Symphony Orchestra to perform in Havana.

There are many issues acting as bulwarks to cooperation. The U.S. State Department wishes to see Alan Gross released; a U.S. contractor working to improve democracy on the island, who has been imprisoned without charge for over a year. The Cubans also have their own grievances; they wish to see the U.S. release five Cubans who are currently convicted for spying. It seems any discourse between the two nations is mired with complications.

It is hard to be hugely optimistic about the future prospects of relations between Cuba and the U.S. Initial changes sparked hope, but with the Republican Party now controlling the House of Representatives, it seems unlikely that more pro-Cuban legislation will be passed. Each new hint of improved ties is met with much anticipation, but the path to smooth relations is a difficult one.



Flickr user: origami_potato

In rude health

Leonora Rumsey sees the NHS reform as essential

The new NHS reform bill promises 3 simple yet potentially miraculous things: to increase efficiency, to boost patient care and to save around £1.7 billion a year. David Cameron's Health and Social Care Bill certainly represents a challenge, but challenge is not necessarily something to shy away from. Ultimately, it promises to hand greater control to local GPs: up to 80% of the NHS budget could be handed to those GPs responsible for commissioning associations to plan and purchase patient services. Additionally, the bill entails greater accountability for patients and the public in their country's future through the

creation of HealthWatch and health and well-being boards within local councils. Patients will also be given the right to choose a GP out of the area they live in.

Given the ambitious nature of the bill, naturally the stakes are high. Particularly vulnerable to its approach are the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and Strategic Health Authorities, whose roles in commissioning services will be taken over by GPs. An independent NHS Commissioning Board will oversee all spending: this step aims to slash bureaucracy and management costs and bring decisions closer to the front line by allowing GPs a say in the services they require. The speed at which the Bill

has been presented has had implications for how it has been received, with rising concerns for the future of the expertise employed at PCTs. There are also doubts about whether GPs will have the time, energy and inclination to take up such an important role: the role of NHS commissioners. Busy enough as it is, many fear that much of the commissioning work will fall back to specialists recruited from PCTs, making the bill a waste of time, or the private sector. The timing of the bill has also been debated: reviews are mixed about whether the financially strained current climate is the right one in which to introduce a brand new NHS.

Despite all of these qualms, there is promise in what Cameron's reforms offer. Health Secretary Andrew Lansley spoke out to stress, "Modernizing the NHS is a necessity, not an option". Surely healthcare is one thing for which we cannot settle for second best? In his defence of the proposals Cameron reminded us that despite receiving spending on a par with Europe's healthcare, the NHS's quality falls significantly short in comparison to those institutions. A report by the Taxpayer's Alliance claimed that in 2004 amenable mortality rates (constituting those deaths which could have realistically been prevented by a robust healthcare system) in the UK were 26.9% higher than in many European countries, and 48.6% higher than France alone. The UK's NHS is falling short, and this is something that needs to be addressed, no matter the economic climate or the political repercussions. The Taxpayer's Alliance report concludes that since increased spending over time has given no discernible impact on amenable

mortality the NHS needs to reform in order to match its European counterparts. It advocates three improvements: decentralization (more room for local NHS organizations in decision making), less political management (some independent healthcare providers), and loosening the NHS's monopoly on taxpayers' money (to allow them to receive potentially better treatment from the private sector). Interestingly enough, all these proposals seem valid in their criticisms of the NHS; even more interestingly, they are all featured in the new reform bill.

The Health and Social Care Bill certainly represents a challenge, but challenge is not necessarily something to shy away from.

Firstly, giving GPs' control over commissioning services will mean that the NHS is utilized by local directives, and is not simply flexible to Westminster's needs. The GP's new role will require increased involvement from local councils, who will need to be consulted by GPs to make use of their commissioning experience and to understand the local population. Such collaboration is an efficient means to pool resources and gear the local services and infrastructure towards pro-

viding better quality healthcare. Secondly, the new reforms slightly loosen the political dominance of the NHS. By opening it to independent service providers, people more qualified in healthcare than politicians, the NHS may well provide a better quality of care, or at any rate become less fodder for political slanging matches. Thirdly, the Bill has the potential to open the door of private sector treatment to patients, which again may in some cases be of better quality. Competition between private and public sector for approval of GP commissioners could result in the improvement of the services both those institutions offer – at the benefit of the patient.

There is validity to the criticisms of those who claim that, with this reappraisal of the NHS, Cameron has backtracked on his election campaign promises not to shake up the healthcare system. However, the NHS deserves to be considered in a bigger picture than that. There are some who are concerned that the reshuffle could damage a system that already works decently enough. Here I disagree: improvement is something we should all strive for. Cameron has said that those who believe that sticking to the status quo whilst throwing the NHS a little extra cash will be enough to tide us over are hopelessly misinformed. Increased spending has not worked. If we want a better health service we must take some risks at the expense of the one we already have. It would be foolish to think that the current NHS contains no room for improvement, or that genuinely comprehensive healthcare is not worth the trouble and expense reform will entail. ☛



Flickr user: Trojan361

Labourite lamentations

Jack Tindale decries the loss of Alan Johnson

It takes a very frantic political diary to relegate Tony Blair to the fifth page of the newspapers. The resignation of the Labour Shadow Chancellor Alan Johnson on Thursday afternoon, however, managed to do so. As the former Prime Minister sweat under the media spotlight, Westminster was abuzz over the shock reshuffle. Indeed, Blair may well have been tempted to repent for all of his sins, safe in the knowledge that, short of confessing to war crimes in Basra, any statements he made would probably not be registered on the next day's newspapers.

Rumours about Alan Johnson's performance as the Opposition's economic spokesperson have been circulating almost since his appointment to the role in October. Many correspondents, this writer amongst them, felt that felt he was a canny appointment to the role. Alan Johnson has always been a respected and likable figure in the Commons. The usual clichés about his working-class background and self-made nature will not be regurgitated here like a third-term government White Paper, but it is fair to say that the former Union leader was still adjusting to a position that he seemed as surprised as anyone to occupy. With little economic experience, many felt him to be a lightweight choice for the role, especially in comparison to Oxford and Harvard alumnus Ed Balls. Yet despite some obvious gaffs such as failing to know the rate of VAT and elements of his own party's record on spending, Johnson nevertheless represented a natural voice against the Coalition's approach to the deficit that seemed to resonate with the typical floating voter and, just as importantly for a party with a disintegrating native support base, working-class families.

It is sad to see the departure of a talented figure such as Alan Johnson. Despite the aforementioned fiscal foibles

In contrast to the amicable Alan Johnson, Ed Balls is the nearest thing the Labour team has to an attack dog

and economic errors, the former Home Secretary was capable of shrugging off the criticisms and helping to formulate a credible alternative economic plan for a Labour Party still fighting to regain the former record it had for financial prudence. Many left-wing activists may have critiqued Johnson's emulation of Alistair Darling's plan to reduce the government deficit by half over a four year period, but his commitment to the plan was a sane

one: especially as the first of the current government's cuts begin to hit the most vulnerable in society. Even his most vocal detractors will be sad to see the loss of such a genuine man from the Labour front bench, especially given that they were prompted by circumstances surrounding his personal life.

In contrast to the amicable Alan Johnson, Ed Balls is the nearest thing the Labour team has to an attack dog. A vicious and savvy political operator, whose repeated demolition of Michael Gove at the despatch box provided one of the few bright spots for the Red Team's first months in opposition, Ed Balls, the man who did more than anyone aside Gordon Brown himself in formulating the New Labour economic framework, now finds himself in a position he clearly converted after his strong performance in the leadership election last Autumn. Despite having an ocean of economic knowledge at his disposal, he found himself passed over for the position in Ed Miliband's first front bench team, in all likelihood because of his ardent opposition he then expressed with regards to budget cuts.

Given this original conflict of interests, to have appointed Mr. Balls to the position less than four months after an obvious rejection of his economic views during the formation of the original Shadow Cabinet will look like desperation to many of Ed Miliband's opponents. This is unfair, Ed Balls understands the nuances of the Exchequer better than anyone within the current Treasury team and George Osborne will not have shared his colleagues' mirth at the appointment, given the barrage of bluster that the Chancellor will have to face from his new appointment. Indeed, aside the tabloid headline writers who will relishing the inevitable puns come Budget Day, the only other person who will be happy at Ed Balls's appointment as Shadow Chancellor

is his former jousting partner at the Home Office, Theresa May. However, her new opponent, Balls's wife Yvette Cooper, will be no less of a challenge.

This is clearly now a Shadow Cabinet that Gordon Brown must have dreamed of forming. The former Prime Minister now sees his favourite Miliband as Leader of the Opposition, his favourite Ed as the economic heart of the party, the latter's wife as Shadow Home Secretary, and the third member of the youthful Brownite triumvirate, Douglas Alexander, facing William Hague as Shadow Foreign Secretary. Despite all criticisms, the Labour front bench actually seems far more combative and effective than it did last week. With David Cameron stating that the budget will be within the next nine weeks, George Osborne will clearly be looking for a good assertiveness trainer, although any oratory he gives will have to exceed even Colin Firth's masterful performance to avoid anything other than a clear defeat at the despatch box. Osborne may actually have to resurrect the old tradition of having an alcoholic beverage at his disposal on Budget Day, he may need it.

However, for Ed Miliband, there are potential problems. Balls, despite all his claims that he now accepts the original deficit reduction plan, now occupies the second most important role in the Shadow Cabinet. As the face of the alternative national economic policy during what will clearly be a very difficult year for the Coalition government. The Leader of the Opposition will have to improve his own performances in order to avoid being sidelined by his new deputy. For the Labour Party's sake, given previous Shadow Chancellor-Leader relations, one can only hope that the decision to appoint Mr. Balls was not made over a one-to-one Italian dinner at an Islington restaurant. ☛



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Cancún feels the heat

Kieran Nelson tests the water at Cancún

We stepped out onto the baking pavement of one of the highways of the Yucatan peninsula. "This area is sterile - you're not really supposed to be here," the guard said, which we knew well beforehand. We were journalists without journals: independents, hangers-on, and we never expected to get anywhere near the Moon Palace where the climate negotiations were actually going on. An army of police had descended on Cancún and long lines of black-and-blue clad men and women lined the baking highway, holding M-16 American-made weapons and looking as bored as hell. We flagged down buses with our thumbs and the drivers passed us without looking twice. The policemen didn't even so much as notify us that they were the reason no one would ever stop there. We strolled hundreds of metres down the sweltering road before we found a ride. It was the penalty for getting turned away from security at the Cancún Conferences of the Parties (COP) 16 2010 conference.

Cancún was different from Copenhagen in that it was understood well beforehand that there would be no agreement this time: two years into the Great Recession, governments have sufficiently muzzled their own diplomats that no one expected any accord to be found. Instead, the climate diplomats pursued a different strategy: produce a declaration or statement of good intentions, and pretend that things are going alright so that the governments involved even agree to pay for the 2011 conference. It reminded me of that joke about the Soviet Union, where Brezhnev orders that we pull down the window-shades and pretend that the train is moving.

Sean and I had come to see it, or more precisely, to be there when it all happened. From the streets of Mexico, a country gripped in a war with rebellious drug gangs running narcotics to the American market, COP 16 looked different than from the distant television sets of North America. The Mexican news showed Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change (UNFCCC), Mexican Christiana Figueres, weeping openly in front of a microphone at the hopelessness of finding a climate deal and declaiming that she was crying for the world her sixteen- and fourteen-year old sons would come to inherit. Beyond the pale, where Sean and I had been banished, we filmed protests of American hippies and Canadian students as they snaked through the streets and began crying for the downfall of capitalism in front of the Cancún Walmart. A massive tent city of peasants that had traversed across Mexico now occupied a corner of town, with the ensuing circus of Che Guevara t-shirts and film documentaries for sale, and long-haired shirtless American outcasts who were there to enjoy the protest ambience.

Copenhagen had a parallel conference, Klimaforum, which was attended by thousands of European students and civil society representatives. The Klimaforum 10, as Sean and I found it, was a football pitch that had been set up with about a dozen shade tents under which sat many unused chairs and tables. There were vegetarian-only tacos, petitions to sign for a movement to make the world a single democracy, and the usual suspects hanging around to participate. We listened to a lecture given by a Korean delegation for a project to grow food from the rooftops of a city, and another by a man who insisted that all our economy had to be made 'local, local, local' in order for climate change to be solved.

Sean and I left as the lecture was coming to a close. He shook his head.

"I don't know, man. You can't feed Cairo from its rooftops."

"There's a basic principle of economics that is being missed here," I said, referring to the other speaker. "Trade and regional specialization is the essence of growth. It's the classic example of what growth is. What he's suggesting would destroy a good portion of the economy as we know it."

Sean and I were constantly annoyed at the lack of practical examples offered from any party at all as to how to fix the planet's climate change problem. The delegates inside the Moon Palace were

based on market-type solutions: companies in Europe or California, for example, would buy up forested areas in Latin America to offset the carbon they burned in the course of their business. Offset markets, in theory, would create incentives to reduce oil consumption - but it is obvious to everyone involved that even if we could get every nation to sign onto a trading scheme (which we can't), it would still be far too little, far too late. On the other hand, in the streets of Cancún were marching indigenous peasants who did not want corporations to buy up the right for them to use their land, and American socialist vigilantes who gravitated around my camera for a desperate chance to have their voices heard.

Cancún was different from Copenhagen in that it was understood well beforehand that there would be no agreement this time

I looked at the card he gave me. It listed the things the cause was for: rights-based community solutions for climate change, no involvement of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in climate change solutions, and immediate moratorium on the exploration of oil and gas. It was an orange and red protest card, with struggling proletariat and raised fists on the front. So typical.

"You know," I said to Sean, "it's a dangerous logic that says 'I am the only legitimate solution to climate change.' It's dangerous when the right-wing does it; it's dangerous when the left-wing does.

It's dangerous because it means that everyone wants to use this thing to push their own petty political cause, rather than coming together at a moment and fixing this sort of crisis."

Meanwhile, little was going on inside the Moon Palace, and few international news websites were even running articles on COP 16. Julian Assange's face instead was plastered across the front page. The Mexican news showed that the discussions going on generally involved discomfited African delegates declaiming that not the same old money, but new money, must be given to the third world to fix climate change, arguing with all the passionate indignation of respectable public figures who promised their wives new diamonds and their children new cars and now found themselves unable to deliver. At the end of the fruitless, two-week seminar the BBC finally ran a single article on COP 16, stating that it had very optimistic results and quoting an optimistic thing Figueres said a week before she cried in public. On the final day, the only world leader to come to that summit arrived - Evo Morales, President of Bolivia - and after a day of touring the conference itself, he made his way to the smelly hippie and Mexican tent city to address deliver the bread and circus.

"We must create a Bank of the South!" he said, in rolling Spanish, to a cheering crowd who had waited three and a half full hours past the time he claimed he would arrive. "We will meet at Cochabamba this year in April, and declare at that time, a new doctrine of socialism for the twenty-first century!"

Cheers rang from the assembled mob. From the Mexican National Liberation Movement, from the Bolivian peasants, from the Mexican caravans and the peyote-munching Durango tribesmen with feathers all over their hats; from the shirtless hippies, from the greying female activists, from the five-foot high Mexican indigenous women; from the motley bunch of Haitians, Europeans, Americans, Canadians and other national groups that had packed into the stadium for that event.

A Bank of the South and a new

doctrine of socialism: oh great, really. So the Left, once again, is leaning on its opponent. Well, at least it acknowledges that it doesn't really have a doctrine.

On my way to the airport, I saw a massive line of bulky men in jeans and casual shirts carrying large plastic riot shields and square bags of police armour. It was the final day of the conference and the police were packing up for home: or worse - for the northern border towns, to face the drug gangs. It was not easy to be a Mexican policeman.

It is equally not easy to be a citizen concerned with solving the problem of climate change. The COP 16 Conference was a joke and there is no leadership or ingenuity for solving the problem on either side of the political spectrum. The media, as well as the world leaders, ignored COP 16 to avoid the embarrassing scenario of what happened at COP 15. And while our politicians are being co-opted in the Moon Palaces of the world, hippies outside are beating drums on the tops of protest buses, and protests which are years in the making and thousands of dollars in cost assemble for the reward of ten measly seconds of protest footage displayed on the Mexican national news.

When the talks wrapped up, the BBC quoted a World Wide Fund for Nature organizer who said of the Cancún statements that: "there's enough in it that we can work towards next year's meeting in South Africa to get a legally binding agreement there." This is how the world was left thinking of the Cancún conference. With optimism, with apathy, and with a lot of other concerns on the mind. ☘



Safran Foer's beef with meat



Marion Koob interviews Jonathan Safran Foer

For Jonathan Safran Foer, everything starts with love. A hesitant vegetarian throughout his life, it took the announcement of his wife's pregnancy to stir a desire to unravel the origins of meat products. The quest led him to three years of research, and the result, *Eating Animals*, is a terror-inspiring account of the production chain.

After half an hour of nervous pacing around the Old Building entrance, I suddenly recognized Safran Foer's face through the glass entrance doors. There was something eerie about meeting in flesh someone whom I had watched on YouTube until the late hours of the previous night; a sense that really he belonged to the world of glossy discussions and lectures. Taking him to the Vera Antsey suite, I apologized for the state of the room, grabbed last minute after an sudden change in the location of the lecture theatre in which he is scheduled to talk. He comments on the funny smell, which I (jokingly) explain by last term's student occupation. He seems surprised by the idea.

Eating Animals is not simply a call for the reduction of meat consumption, or the improvement of animal welfare. Like all of Safran Foer's works - notably his novels *Everything is Illuminated* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* - it is part of a familial history, intertwining his grandmother's anxieties about food and the new-found sense of responsibility which comes with fatherhood.

On this, Safran Foer commented: "There is a different sense of responsibility, a different obligation to things. I don't know that it is something that I anticipated or could have understood before I had a kid. There is a line that comes up in two of my stories, and I think both of my novels,

and maybe even this book, I can't even remember. Somebody pointed it out to me. A grandmother says, or a character says; I hope you never love anyone as much as I love you - and that's what it is with a kid. There is a kind of overwhelmingness or quality of love that is not purely good. It can become neurotic, anxious or forbearing. Life seems to matter more."

Beyond this, the work means more than a simple exposé meant to shock, or a narrative written to convince. It is these two things, but Safran Foer also captures the human dimension of the process. Met by silence from all factory farms he has contacted, he instead includes the testimonies of anonymous employees, struggling independent farmers, and slaughter-house owners. Rather than simply expressing unmitigated indignation, he lets the actors of the game speak for themselves. It is a testament to his talent that by appearing to open his work to varied perspectives, his power of persuasion is all the more enhanced. Counter-arguments are foreshadowed, and swept aside by his rhetoric.

His final position is as tellingly intelligent; while first describing the efforts of many to raise animals in improved life conditions, he explains that the distinction between what is necessary and what is dispensable pain falls into a grey area. For instance, branding and castration of the stock are considered by many farmers as a tradition. He admits that despite admiring these efforts, these practices make him uncomfortable. He prefers to avoid compromises. From this stems his commitment to vegetarianism.

Sourcing meat from small farms, while solving to a large extent the issue of welfare, raises further questions about the accessibility of the food. The proponents of the current means of meat production's

strongest argument is that it has enabled to make the good affordable to all.

"One of the reasons I am not so excited about these small farms is because not everybody can afford them. One thing that everybody can afford is to eat vegetarian. It is the cheapest way to eat and it is also the healthiest way to eat."

Despite this, Safran Foer recognizes that vegetarianism is unlikely to spread to the majority of the population. According to him the urgency, above all, is to move away from factory farming, and overall reduce the consumption of meat. In addition to the dire conditions in which the animals are born and bred, the environmental costs of the industry, he claims, are greater than all transport put together.

He explains individuals' unwillingness to educate themselves about the issue with a fear of living out double standards: "I can think of a lot of solutions that actually lie in the willingness to be hypocritical. It's funny, people are so afraid to be hypocritical that they would rather be consistently ignorant. I think of myself as someone who cares about the environment, but I flew on the plane to come here. That suddenly didn't undermine my convictions, rather it underlined how complicated choices are."

In the same way, he underlined that many are discouraged in their efforts to eat less meat because of the occasions in which they would transgress the rule. It's good enough to strive to eat less of it, argues Safran Foer. There doesn't need to be a clear-cut rule if you feel you aren't able to commit completely.

"The fact of the matter is that 96 per cent of Americans think that some animals deserve some legal protection from cruelty. Ninety-six per cent of Americans. Not Berkeley, not New York. It's a phenomenal statistic. I think that the fundamental

values that move us away from factory farming are almost universally shared."

I then angled the discussion towards his life as a writer. Whereas in previous questions he was quick to respond, punctuating his arguments with figures and specific examples, he grew thoughtful when giving responses of his work in fiction. His answers were interspersed with silences, sentences half begun. His tone made it clear that this is where his passion lies.

He quickly commented: "I used to think of myself as a writer of fiction until I wrote this book. I wouldn't be surprised if I never went to non-fiction again. A side effect of this process is that it made me hunger for fiction. I'm excited to get back to that."

One of Safran Foer's particularities, whether in his novels or in *Eating Animals* is the use of graphics and visual elements within the text. His latest work, *Tree of Codes*, takes the concept a step further by using sentences from another novel, *Street of Crocodiles*, into half poetry, half aesthetic. I ask him how the idea developed.

"I know it's the result of not having a reverential relationship with the novel. I didn't grow up wanting to be a novelist. I did at a certain point fall in love with the idea of making things that felt authentic to me. As it's turned out, the things I have made are books because maybe these are the only things I can make. The arts sometimes become far too protected of their boundaries."

Annoyingly, Safran Foer is aware of the uniqueness of his talent. Remarkably for a novelist in his early thirties, his first novel, *Everything is Illuminated*, was chosen by students for study in Yale's course "The American Novel: post 1945", the lectures of which can viewed online. I

wondered whether he thought the selection was premature, or if being studied felt strange.

"It would be premature if they were saying 'this is what is going to be important in the future'. We're almost always wrong about what is going to be important in the future. I don't even think about it. It makes me feel wonderful that people would be reading my books or talking about my books. It's not the reason I write, but it does feel very special on a number of different levels. A book stays alive with readers, gets better with readers. A reader doesn't uncover meaning, but applies it."

On the other hand, he admitted to having forgotten parts of his books, finding himself at loss when Stephen Daldry, the director of the film based on his second book, calls to ask for clarifications. "There are certain moments in the writing process that I remember because I was at a crossroads - but I can't remember my choice."

At the close of the interview, I still haven't made up my mind. Safran Foer is undoubtedly a poet at heart (despite, to my knowledge, not having written poetry, he has their sensitivity and lyricism), but lives with the self-consciousness of his talent. Throughout the lecture, he is jauntily confident, easily inviting the audience to laugh along with his replies. Yet, I give way to admiration when, in response to readers' compliments, he appears genuinely touched. ☺

Lest we forget

Reverend Dr James Walters remembers the Holocaust

I have always been a very heavy sleeper, and not someone who regularly remembers dreams. So it is testimony to the power of Elie Wiesel's book "Night" that it disrupted my sleep. For the two nights after I read it I had vivid nightmares in which I experienced Wiesel's powerlessness in the face of his father's slow murder in the Buchenwald death camp as if it were my own powerlessness to protect a loved one. These dreams were a sign of how deeply a personal account of the Holocaust can penetrate the psyche. But after a couple of nights, the nightmares were forgotten and my sleep returned to normal. On Thursday we will be marking Holocaust Memorial Day at the LSE precisely because the Holocaust is not a nightmare to be forgotten. Since this supremely evil event, humanity has not been able to return to normal.

But the Holocaust was also a collective genocidal assault on a particular religious-ethnic group. Anti-Semitism, fuelled by the church and misreadings of the New Testament, had poisoned European history for nearly two millennia. The Holocaust was the nadir (but regrettably not the end) of this shameful prejudice. Its victims also included other long-marginalised groups who the Nazis considered undesirable or dangerous: the disabled, Romani people, Poles and Slavs, religious dissidents, transsexuals and homosexuals - of whom survivors remained criminalised in Germany until the late 60s.

Once these things have been said it is also possible to reflect on how the Holocaust is of enduring significance for

all people, including 21st century students at the LSE. The historical undeniability of the Holocaust is borne out in how it has shaped our institutions in concrete ways that we may take for granted. This includes the LSE, which played an extraordinary role of hospitality to refugees from the Holocaust (at a time when antisemitism was common in England too) and benefited immensely from their expertise, including that of the great Austrian Jewish philosopher Karl Popper. This need not have been so and former Director Ralf Dahrendorf remarked: "It is a comment on the LSE that those who came were made to feel at home, and that those who received them on the whole felt at ease with the newcomers."

But more than this practical historical impact, the Holocaust is an event of profound relevance to the work of this and all universities as a major turning point in the history of Western civilisation. The gas chambers of Auschwitz evoked what Theodor Adorno termed the "Western legacy of positivity" in ways that many disciplines are still processing. The very fact that all the forces of modern European culture - science, religion, bureaucracy, production - became complicit in the Nazi death machine challenged the prevailing tide of optimistic humanism that had driven European society since the Enlightenment. All of us at LSE learn and research in the shadow of this event and the knowledge that we ignore the dark side of human history at our peril.

In this way, remembrance of the Holocaust should also shape the way we live together as a learning community.

The LSE's 10,000 students and staff come from over 140 countries and reflect a global diversity. All the major religions are represented here and many different ethnic and cultural groups. In short, many of us are quite naturally strangers to one another. Primo Levi believed that Auschwitz was borne out of the all too widely shared conviction "that every stranger is an enemy" and that impulse is sure to rear its head among us too, particularly as we engage in the contentious and intractable issues of our own day. But the Holocaust tells us where that leads and how easily animosity can turn into a rage that threatens to destroy.

In the 1930s, the LSE campus exemplified hospitality and openness, in an increasingly frightening and hostile Europe, in a way that enabled the School to hear new perspectives and receive the experience of others. I see that tradition continuing every day at the LSE but we can never be complacent about our continual need to recommit to that: welcoming others, listening to others, honouring the dignity of others. The alternative is worse than a nightmare.

The Holocaust Memorial Interfaith Commemoration takes place at 5.30pm in the Shaw Library on Thursday 27th January. The LSE Choir will be performing.

The Revd Dr James Walters is the LSE Chaplain and Faith Advisor

feature story

noun

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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WHAT IF...

...Lin Biao's Coup Succeeded?

Jack Tindale

Dear Mr. Tindale,

The People's Republic of China thanks you for your enquiry of October last. As you will be aware, the strict preservation of Mao Zedong Thought and Lin Biao Continuation Theory is of paramount importance to the stability and prosperity of the PLC and all risks to national security must be given a full and frank appraisal before any comment can be made by the Ministry for External Affairs.

Your son, as you will be aware, was arrested soon after crossing the border with the Revisionist-Bourgeois-Soviet Union with the alleged attempt to by-pass a section of the Moscow-Vladivostok railway. Any incursion by someone lacking relevant papers and theoretical commitment is naturally a risk to the ideological purity of the Peoples Republic, your son was therefore detained at Holding Camp 32, approximately three hours away from the city of Manzhouli where he remains to this day. He is fully content and healthy after his sixteen month imprisonment and will be deported to the United Kingdom when the relevant Commissar for State Security deems it advisable.

As you will be aware, the PRC is committed to the preservation of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism by any means. The successful preservation of this ideological salvation from rightist elements during the aborted coup of 1971, in which Capitalist elements led by the wastrel Zhang Chungqiao assassinated the Never Setting Sun, Chairman Mao, has ensured the continued development of the proletariat under the leadership of Eternal General Lin Biao and his successor, the Dear Marshal Lin Ligu.

Owing to the slander and lies propagated by the western capitalist media, the Ministry of Information has agreed to enlighten you as to the current status of the PRC. Owing to the infiltration by Fascist-Capitalist-Elements within the Communist Party, General Biao's return to Beijing upon the assassination of Chairman Mao was fraught with danger. The resulting purification of the Communist Party took many years, as did the continuation of the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution, which was necessary to remove the final elements of feudal society from China. The final elements of rightist thought were eliminated with the execution of the Crypto-Revisionist Deng Xiaoping and his supporters in 1977. Upon which General Biao was finally able to return to true collectivisation of agriculture, this proved a great success despite the attempts of the Brezhnev-Gromyko wastrels to impart famine upon the rice harvest.

Despite this great personal hardship, General Biao was also able to expand Mao Zedong to the less fortunate nations of Asia, achieving the greatest success in Indonesia, with the unsustainable neo-Colonialist nation mercifully split into constituent People's Republics, of which the Democratic Javanese Socialist Union is the most populated. With the Soviet Union in terminal decline, thanks to the pathetically reactionary capitalist economic movements made by the Kremlin leadership under the Gorbachev-Ryzhkov intransigents. With the Soviet Union in such inexorable decline, it is obvious that only the China-Korea-Kampuchea-Java-Albania Axis is sufficiently able to maintain the correct revolutionary zeal around the world.

According to regulatory diplomacy, copies of this letter will be circulated to the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Corbyn and the Prime Minister, Mr. McDonnell.

Regards,
Hu Chunhua
Deputy Vice-Minister for the
Preservation of State Principles



Flickr user: bisgovuk

Measured musings

This week has seen claims that Islamophobia is the 'moral blind spot' of modern Britain from Baroness Warsi. Claims of 'slippage' during 'dinner table conversation' from legitimate topics of conversation such as religion and human rights into what would be considered, elsewhere, to be tantamount to racism don't just apply to issues of religion, but

are rather indicative of a general contrariness inherent within the British populace. Any Islington dinner party will invariably result in the expression of opinions on the issues of class, the horror of the situation in the Middle East and whatever other political issue is considered to be salient at the time. Similar slippages from acceptability into the unacceptable occur here, too: her isolation of one religion is somewhat arbitrary and self-regarding.

The conversations Warsi models are most likely of the ilk of typical confused

liberal dialogue: affirmations that 'of course, people should follow their own beliefs', soon to be contrasted with 'but what they do to their women is barbaric'. On class, one would no doubt hear of the plight of the poorer of society: the 'poor dears' who need every bit of help that they can possibly get, so long as they stop drinking, smoking and procreating and actually 'get on their bike', in the words of Norman Tebbit, and find work. I'm sure such contrarian rhetoric would even be found in a debate over Israel in such com-

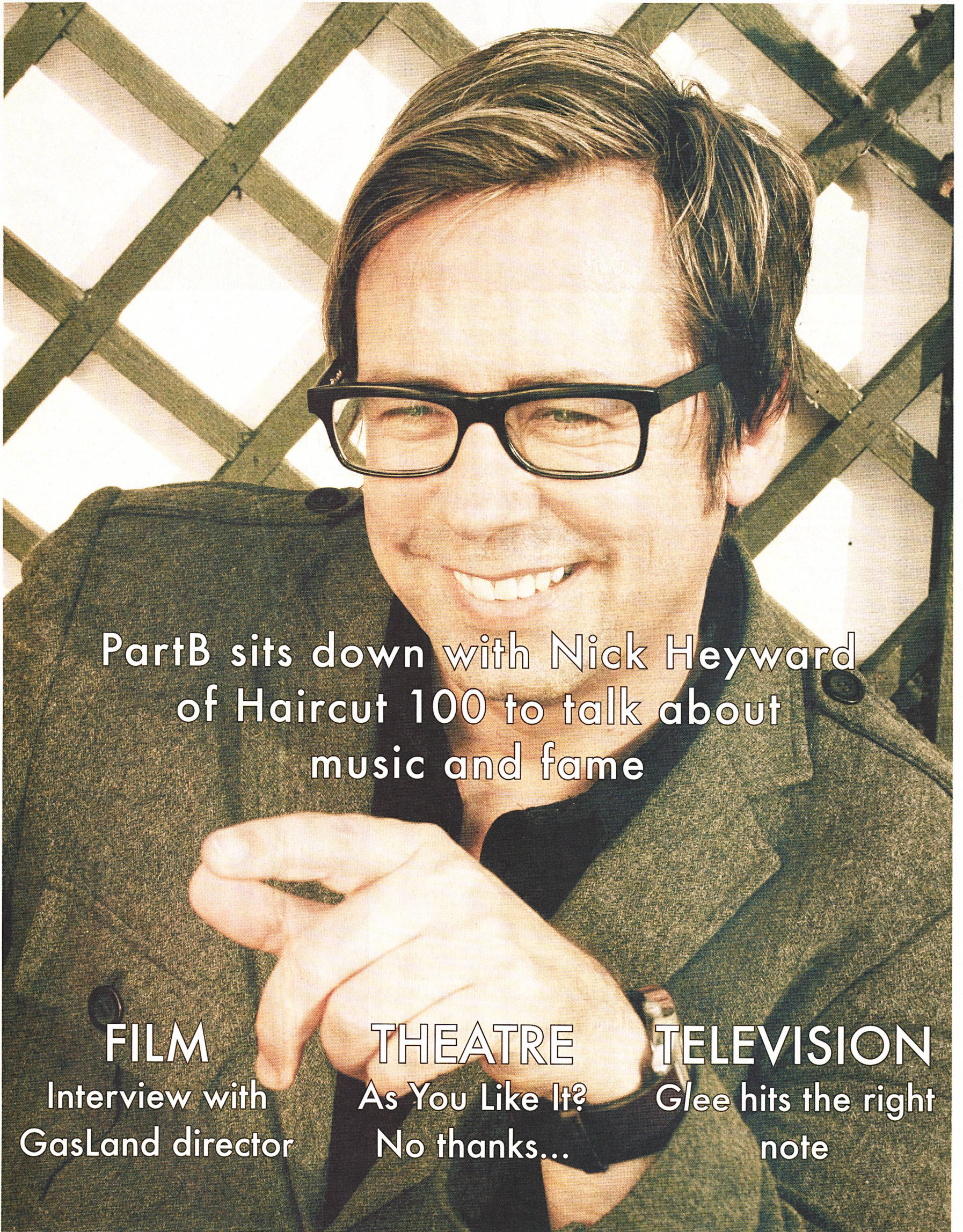
panies: Zionist sentiments juxtaposed with an affirmation of the Palestinian right to self-determination - both sides at risk of slipping from the appropriate to the borderline discriminatory.

There is, of course, a problem here - though not the one that Warsi identifies. What we seem to have here is far more ignorance than genuine malice: that which she attributes to politeness in not espousing prejudiced views directly could far more realistically be said to be a result of one wading too deep into a subject matter

with which one is not completely familiar and committing a faux pas which is not to be corrected by others. It just goes to show that one cannot spell 'discriminatory' without 'Tory'.

Alexander Young

PART B



PartB sits down with Nick Heyward of Haircut 100 to talk about music and fame

FILM

Interview with GasLand director

THEATRE

As You Like It?
No thanks...

TELEVISION

Glee hits the right note

Nick Heyward and the kick of fame

The Haircut 100 star talks to Masaya Tanikawa about his joys, fears and when it (all) started to begin..



Photos: Paul Ashby

You may have heard of **Nick Heyward** at some point in your life. You probably have a favourite phase. Perhaps when he was a youthful British schoolboy during the Haircut 100 days; or when he went solo, churning out underrated rock gems like 'Postcards From Home'. Maybe you love his accomplished pop sensibilities packed into 'Kite' that launched his career from 'that British bloke who can sing' onto a trajectory of global renown, and caught your breath when he announced a reunion concert with Haircut 100. Whether it be on the West Coast of the US or in a pub somewhere in Camberwell, Nick's melodic tunes have likely accompanied the happier moments of your life.

Older fans will recall his time with Haircut 100, the disco-meets-rocky-pop band that stole the crown from Orange Juice. These British lads churned out chart-topping hits embellished with their trademark sound: jangly guitar rakes, euphoric brass swells and intensely hummable melodies. Shimmering with studio-polished gloss thanks to production helmed by Bob Sargeant (XTC, Joy Division), Heyward sang sunny suburban tales of Toblerones, baked beans and building mountains out of snow.

"That album meant so much to us at that time. We were just turning into our twenties, and it was a very profound time. We never realised what we were doing would become so popular," recalls Heyward. "It seemed to have resonated with people at a time when all manner of strange things were kicking off, so it was really magical."

For Nick and bandmates Les Nemes, Graham Jones and Blair Cunningham, Pelican West was overwhelming and an all-encompassing experience. "It really was like being on a compass. One minute we're going South, then North, and before you know it we're going East and asking yourself 'where are we?'" He says. "Looking back now, it's amazing how it all turned out. Sure we were all twenty, but mentally I was seven, and we still don't know how old Blair is. Even now, Mark's still the same age as far as I'm concerned."

We couldn't even get any gigs at first. I mean, we didn't even have any songs...

With a hearty laugh, he reminisces over how it all began. "Initially, we were mates, all of us. Strangely, one day all of our girlfriends wanted to move on, at the same time. Thankfully that meant we had time to focus on being mates. Sure, we could've just dated others and done things teenagers did, but we ended up being a band," he explains. "We were all musicians that were in different bands before, so we just came together and started playing. All our different influences made it work out so well. I mean I was into that sort of indie stuff and The Jam and Les loved jazzy funk."

Haircut 100 was born into a music scene where punk had left its angry political scars, so their fresh disco pop sound took time to build up a following. "We couldn't get any gigs at first. I mean, we didn't even have any songs. We used

to have an imaginary audience and just jam around until Blair Cunningham, our drummer, came along and we suddenly gelled together," he says. "We became this formidable live band. His musicianship was incredible. I remember we used to sit and watch Blair sound-checking all the time. I was pinching myself and saying 'do we really have a drummer this great with us?'"

Nick was just as instrumental in the band's song-writing process, having written all of the songs on Pelican West. "Things would just come out of my mouth and I'd be playing things all of a sudden. It's a bit like I'm the source, and the guys are the water-bearers. It just comes through me somehow. I remember Mark once said that we're the 'colourists', since everyone had their role in the band. With all our influences, sometimes we'd make this landscape or sometimes a portrait. Sometimes it's surreal, and a tiny bit sensible. Which is rare with 100, but it was getting there."

Fame...is bizarre. It totally mucked everything up...

Although the band's sound is mainly pop, Nick grew up listening to all kinds of music. "My dad was in the toy business and used to make toys. Then the Conservative government made cuts, looking after all kinds of people apart from ourselves," he laughs. "Then he started spraying things and painting, spraying things white. Then they wanted green, then dark brown, and all manner of colours in-between. Dad couldn't keep up, he only had white. So he went into the pub game, which meant living above dodgy pubs."

Having spent most of his years in Beckenham, Nick's background was actually not from the suburbia his songs may suggest. "I could see these big railways out the back of my bedroom window, where packs of giant rats used to scuttle about. I loved the music playing though, at a time when punk was really happening. I didn't embrace too much of the fashion, which I thought was awful, but the music from the likes of The Jam and The Sex Pistols was fantastic."

While many see Haircut 100's hit single 'Favourite Shirt (Boy Meets Girl)' as a love song, Nick says differently. "It's actually about the exuberance of being youthful. I mean there's this guy called Terry who falls on the floor and his favourite t-shirt is hanging on the bed. Youth is full of ups and downs. One minute we're excited, then we're down," he says. "I remember walking past a gaggle of teenagers kissing each other and shouting 'Oh my god' when they've probably only seen each other just twelve hours ago. It's that whole 'Oh my god, oh my god' exuberance, you know."

His memories of having success at the young age of 20 were exuberant in a different way. "Fame is a bizarre thing to experience. It totally mucked everything up and everything went weird. Back then things were a bit more naïve, there was no sponsorship and such. We didn't have a manager, though many tried to be. Fame wasn't like the way it is today. I was just glad to be there. My parents were an example of what fame can do to people," muses Nick.

"Before I was famous they would say to do your own washing, you, but then they would suddenly start doing

my clothes and doing things they never did before. That's the thing with fame. If people aren't having a go at you then they're trying to ruin you. And as a young man, I couldn't understand it at all, so it was very confusing. At one point I was crying, and I didn't know why."

Unbeknownst to Nick, he was suffering from clinical depression at the time. "I was the happiest man in the world, and also the saddest. That's what the single 'Fantastic Day' was all about. You're really up, then really down again. Happy one day, crying the next. I felt terribly ill, and I kept trying to be on my own but I couldn't do that. I saw a doctor, but after that I became suicidal. I was working too hard and not sleeping, so I started suffering in a bad way."

After an American tour, the group decided to reduce the group to a four-piece by letting Mark go to 'make things less confusing'. While Nick was away in hospital, Mark came back and took over. "They were writing the songs without me. I went into a rehearsal studio to listen, and I discovered they'd done a whole new album and told me I wasn't needed. I just walked out right there. I was so depressed and sensitive that I didn't fight for it. I didn't say, hold on a minute, let's talk about this. No, I just walked out, and that was the end. I didn't want to go into music again, but management wouldn't let me go and told me to go solo."

"At that point I just wanted to feel like not committing suicide, to just be able to smile genuinely and be happy again. You know, to not be completely confused and want to jump ship." Was being back in the studio a therapeutic experience, then? "It felt awful. That's why my solo debut North of a Miracle was so melancholy. Geoff Emerick produced that one, and he told me he was also depressed at some point. It was like great, now I've got another depressed person to talk to," jokes Nick.

His early solo work lacks the cheery happiness resonating throughout Pelican West. "It was just the way I felt. I was so unbalanced, and I was really melancholy. I couldn't see anything else, which is why I was writing songs like 'The Day It Rained Forever'."

It was when 'Kite' hit #4 on the US Singles Charts that Nick found himself again. "That happened in '93 off my album From Sunday to Monday, and it was totally natural the way it happened. The record was getting played by people who liked it, through independent radio stations and such. I was just about to be dropped by Sony at the time, and they were like 'Oh, you've got a hit happening in the States!' But because I wasn't signed in America, I think it was difficult to really take things further."

I was the happiest man in the world, and also the saddest... Smiling one day, crying the next

In hindsight, Nick feels he was ill-prepared at the time. "Now that I can look back with x-ray vision, I really wasn't equipped. Label people were saying 'Oh bless that young Nicky, he doesn't have a clue, bless him he could write songs,

but he has no idea about business at all'. It makes me laugh now when they were saying things like that, even so far as 'he was good at sleeve-designing and songwriting, but don't get involved with other stuff, just get on with the playing', that sort of thing."

'Kite'...was a symbol of freedom, of your dreams...

'Kite' was born out of pure frustration and creative struggle, however. "I'd be sat there in a 16-track studio, having completed most of the record. The A&R guy was pushing me to do another world-hit, and it was driving me crazy. For me, songs usually just pop out, but back then I didn't realise that. So I'd be so frustrated," recalls Nick. "I told Ian Shaw, who was recording, to just do a click-track and record whatever I play. I strummed a few favourite chords and took that home."

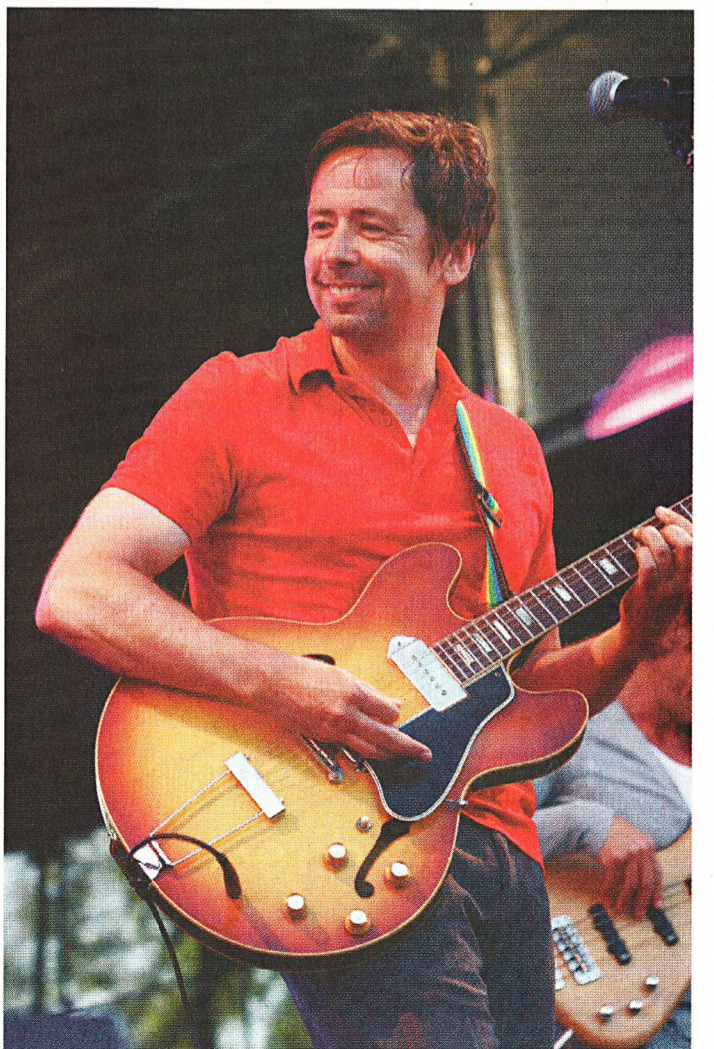
"I sat down and thought 'Oh, I like that actually', then I added in some hooks and embellishments. I opened up my book where I'd jotted down things I'd seen, and in it I'd noted a program where a kid's mum was being jailed for smug-

gling drugs and they were saying 'don't let him shoot your kite down', so I was inspired by that. I loved that the kite was a symbol of freedom, of your dreams," he explains. "I went into the studio and sang some words over the chords I recorded earlier, thinking I'd keep it to myself. Rob heard it though, and loved it. I think the song worked so well because it was just me doing what I love. It was this perfect, lovely, song about setting yourself free. It was born out of the frustration of being stuck, of being grounded."

The whole experience helped his kite to fly, in a way. "Life was up and down like a yo-yo at that time. I mean, the yo-yo was swinging about but my mojo wasn't, if you know what I mean. I'm not quite sure what my mojo was doing, what was it doing?" says Nick, exploding with laughter. "It was literally like having an AC Cobra firing on all cylinders without a steering wheel. My mind was everywhere, so I just let go and suddenly my kite was flying."

Nick is set to play at Haircut 100's re-union concert at IndigO2 on Friday, 28 January. "It's one for the dolphins and the whales and all the little sea creatures," he jokes. "Everyone is welcome, and it's going to be magical."

Visit www.theo2.co.uk for tickets. Keep up with Nick's daily antics at his official website, nickheyward.com.



PRIVATE B

Having welcomed our brilliant haikuist to the News section, we welcome his equally superb half-cousin,
RUBBASHŌ

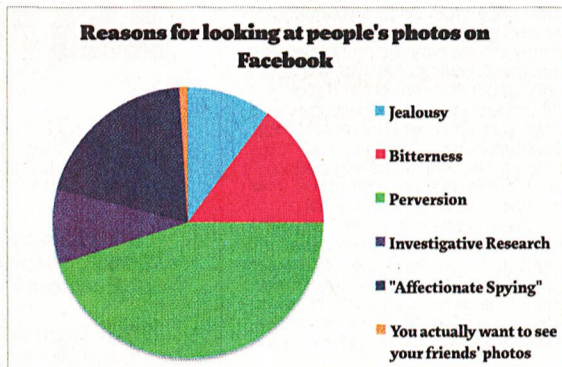
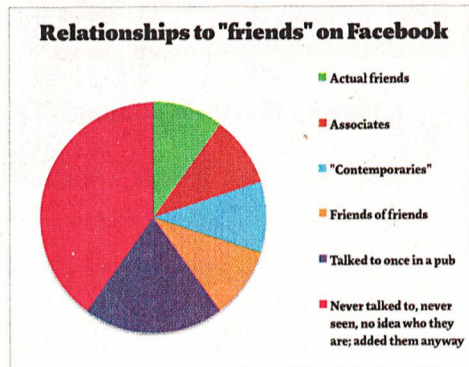
Tough. So. Tough. Writing These. Think of. Words. Not too Random. Womble-y.

LSE by numbers, endless numbers

The Beaver recently obtained the latest LSE demographic statistics, and we're leaking them week by week, baby! First week, we revealed the male-female ratios of LSE students. (We don't want to give the game away, but they were about 50-50.) The second week, we exclusively revealed there are a lot of Asians at LSE.

This week, we look at social networking sites...

NEXT WEEK:
Ever wondered how many ears LSE students have? The Beaver exclusively reveals.



Beaver 10% less sneery!

The Beaver has been cut by 10%, as printing costs mount. Sucha Petal defended the cuts, saying, "These cuts are not ideological but necessary." "We're all in this together, you know. Except the Photography and the Sports sections - they're scrapped." The cuts have fuelled student anger in some quarters. General Secretary of the

Students' Union, Charlotte Guardianista said, "These savage cuts only serve to diminish press freedom in our university. "Imagine LSE without a strong student newspaper. There would be no student voice! There would have been no ardent stand against the rise in student tuition fees! We would have let the government walk all over us! Um, wait a minute..."

TOSSER OF THE WEEK



Pal Soc Attacks Israel For you've already stopped reading this!

Israelis protested about blahdy-blah everyone stopped reading at the headline. The Palestinian Society responded by etc. etc. won't make a difference. The Israel Society then complained about blahdy-blah blah only people reading this are Societies themselves, pens at the ready, about to write 17 letters of

complaint to The Beaver [cont. p2,3,4,etc,etc, ad nauseum]
Comment, p7: "Why Pal Soc is a neo-Maoist pseudo-anarchist arch-Cubist bunch of bastards" by Ez Rail
Comment, p8: "Why Israel Soc is just Jews" by Polly Stein
Features, p9: Israel-Palestine explained, from A to ZZZ...

HOWARD DUVET'S Who is to blame?

No. 154: Er, greed, possibly?

Student riots over EMA cuts!

One student rioted over cuts to Educational Maintenance Allowance, it emerged yesterday. The number is likely to be an overestimate, as [cont. p97]

Confessions of a Blood Fetishist

Why Isabella Silver loves True Blood

Season three of **True Blood** has just started on FX. For those of you who aren't familiar with the glorious, bloody orgy that is the show, the basic plot is this: Sookie Stackhouse is a telepathic waitress who falls in love with a vampire, Bill Compton, in a small town in Louisiana. In the wider world, due to the invention of a blood substitute, TruBlood, vampires have been able to live among humans for the first time - as the show puts it, they have 'come out of the coffin'.

As the worldwide obsession with vampires seems to be continuously growing with no end in sight, the temptation would be to cast True Blood aside as just another Buffy, Vampire Diaries, or, heaven forbid, Twilight. But True Blood is, in fact, different - it's actually good. I know this seems a groundless claim to make based on the plot summary I just gave you, but bear with me here as I try to explain the reasons why I love True Blood.

In a world of financial crises and wars and student loans, True Blood offers up a slice of sumptuous escapism. There are vampires, shape-shifters, *maenads* and a whole host of other mythical creatures whose lives interweave with those of the dysfunctional humans in the show, all set against the backdrop of the sultry, dreamy Bon Temps, Louisiana. True Blood focuses on the chase of pleasure, and that's what it's like watching it, too -

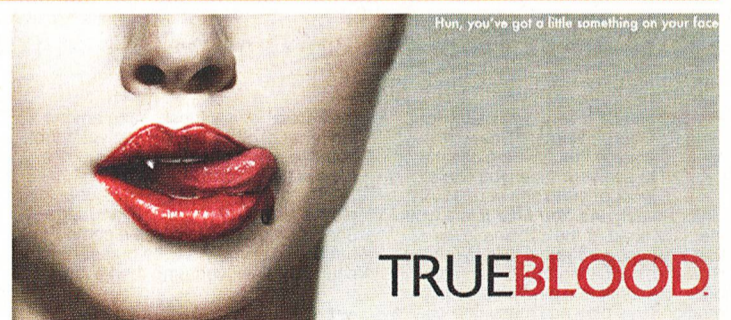
it is pure, hedonistic indulgence, like eating a piece of chocolate cake or a greasy burger - you know it will make you feel

As for the sex - well, all I can say is don't make my mistake and watch the first episode with your mother

sick but it tastes so good you don't care. But to describe True Blood as merely another vampire fantasy series would be to belittle its true value. The mythical creatures are fun and all, but they aren't the reason I love True Blood. It's the humanity of the series, the characters and their emotions that affect me the most, more than the magical goings on - although they are fun and all - ever could. This, I think, is due for the most part to the excellent script, which helps me to ignore Stephen Moyer's (the Brit who plays Bill) highly questionable Southern accent

and can have me laughing, bawling my eyes out and screaming 'no, Bill, no!' at the TV all in the space of an hour.

A huge, unavoidable part of the show - and a huge part of its appeal, if I am honest - is its ability to shock. Sex and violence on our screens fails to mildly surprise us anymore, let alone inspire any other emotion; but True Blood is different. The gore is shown with an unflinching brutality, and more than once I have had to grit my teeth and avert my gaze from particularly gruesome moments (the scene where Nordic vampire Eric rips off someone's arms and feasts on the streaming blood flashes sickeningly to mind), but there is always a tongue-in-cheek and absurd edge to it (in the scene, Eric's signature blond locks are wrapped in silver foil, in the process of being highlighted). And as for the sex - well, all I can say is don't make my mistake and watch the first episode with your mother. I love True Blood because it's magical, sexy and moving, with a surprisingly honest and accurate account of human nature for a show about vampires. OK, so it's not exactly deep, and you don't feel particularly cultured or high-brow when you are watching a man shape-shift into a dog, but who cares about high-brow when you get to see Alexander Skaarsgaard topless? I love True Blood, and if you don't agree, well, then, bite me.



Glee Series Blog

Shrina Poojara reviews 'Grilled Cheesus'

Following last week's risqué Britney Spears "tribute" episode, it seems fairly safe to say that Glee is one of the few shows able to go from wrapping one of its stars' scantily-clad body in a snake one week to tackling the topic of religion the next. Last week's episode, "Grilled Cheesus", followed McKinley High's glee club as they turn to religious faith (or lack of it) following the aftermath of Burt Hummel's heart attack. Blimey.

Without wanting to enter into religious debate, I will say that Grilled Cheesus proves to be one of the most emotional episodes of the show thus far, with the club's members treating us to a number of takes on God; from the more light-hearted approach of Finn, who prays to win a football game and to be able to touch his girlfriend's breasts, to Mercedes' unwavering faith, as portrayed beautifully in her performance of 'Bridge Over Troubled Water'.

The focus of the show was, however, on Kurt Hummel, played by Chris Colfer, who effortlessly rose to the acting challenges of his role in the show. By the end of the episode, you would expect a standard Disney-like ending, with Kurt finding his belief in God ignited and everything turning out OK, but the show produces a far more satisfying and less self-important result.

For those of you who haven't seen

the episode yet, I won't go crazy with the spoiler alerts, but I will say that the Glee producers did a phenomenal job of dealing with religion openly, yet respectfully, without becoming self-righteous.

Glee is, after all, a musical comedy TV series, so amid tear-jerking scenes, such as Kurt's overwhelming performance of 'I Wanna Hold Your Hand' and Sue's discussion about her lack of faith in religion as a result of her growing up with a disabled sister, the episode doesn't fail to deliver a fair share of humorous one-liners - though to be fair, as long as Brittany has lines, this is pretty much guaranteed.

One criticism is that Finn's storyline, to which the episode owes its title, takes things from comic to ridiculous when he sees the face of Jesus Christ in his grilled cheese and proceeds to pray to it, finally having to be convinced by Emma that God "doesn't spend a lot of time trying to speak to us through sandwiches".

However, Grilled Cheesus has reminded me why I fell in love with the series in the first place. Giving viewers a chance to laugh and cry, supported by a perfectly fitting soundtrack, Glee proves it doesn't depend on guest stars or salacious dance numbers for its success as the actors rise to the challenge of the show's emotional depth. Grilled Cheesus may be an infantile name but the episode is anything but immature. Welcome back Glee.

Simon Chaudhuri's TV tips for the week

Being Human
BBC Three, Sundays, at 21:00

The new series of the critically acclaimed drama-turned-horror turned comedy returns to our screens with the trio relocating to Wales. Annie is stuck in purgatory with Mitchell and George scratching their heads as to how to help her. Not in quite the same league as True Blood, but then again it's not trying to be. Being Human doesn't take itself too seriously and that's part of the charm. Available on BBC iPlayer.

Top Gear
BBC Two, Sundays, at 20:00

The 16th series of Top Gear returns with the requisite banter and idiocy, but the return of the Cool Wall is the most exciting prospect. The first episode sees Hammond celebrating the life of the Porsche 911 and Clarkson testing a Skoda Yeti to its limits.

10 O'Clock Live
Channel 4, Thursdays, at 22:00

Channel 4's answer to the hugely popular The Daily Show, and successor to The 11 O'Clock Show started last week with its cutting satirical take on the world's news. The 11 O'Clock Show launched the careers of Ricky Gervais and Sacha Baron Cohen but 10 O'Clock Live already has a stellar line up including David Mitchell, Jimmy Carr, Lauren Laverne and Charlie Brooker.

La Maldición de Poe, South Bank

Rory Creedon reflects on a highly original production from London's Mime Festival



La Maldición de Poe: Filled with gory corpses, spectral lighting and awful bloodthirsty characters

Something strange happened in the moments before *La Maldición de Poe* (*The Curse of Poe*) began. The audience, sensing that the show was about to start, voluntarily stopped their jibber-jabber and gazed expectantly at the stage, but instead of the usual house lights down, stage lights up, curtain, show-time, we were plunged into total darkness. I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. Gradually, a cross light was raised revealing a darkly discernable stage-within-a-stage; a new space where the reimagining of the early life of Edgar Allan Poe was to be played out by puppets manipulated by the totally invisible but omnipresent Teatro Corsario originally from Valladolid, Spain. The moment we spent in darkness was a passage, a transition, an instant in which to forget normality and jump into the world created by Corsario; a place of murderous monkeys, bumbling policemen, wicked and cruel parents, disease and death.

In the midst of this chaos young Edgar, rather an unfortunate chap in real life, just wants to kiss and fumble with his first sweetheart, Annabelle, in the graveyard where the play opens. However, their romance is foiled by Annabelle's vicious mother who disapproves of the relationship. Moreover, it is Edgar's birthday so he must visit his grandparents who, unbeknown to him, have been murdered by a deranged orangutan who escaped from his handler. A policeman hears the commotion of the murder and arrives on the scene to find Edgar hiding from the disturbed knife wielding mammal. He puts two and two together and of course makes five, so Edgar flees the scene in order to evade arrest. The chase is on.

Before the sixty minutes are up, a drunkard accidentally murders his wife, Edgar is tortured, a dog is hanged by a cat, Annabelle dies of consumption and Edgar is visited by a strange apparition. Those familiar with Poe will recognise elements from three of his works: *The*

Murders in the Rue Morgue, *Annabelle Lee* and *The Black Cat*.

If it all sounds rather implausible, think again. So complete was the construction of Edgar's world, so tight and perfect was the control of perspective, colour, and lighting that the whole universe of topsy-turvydom actually made sense. It was truly visionary theatre; hallucinatory. I was mesmerised as the stage was filled with bubbles and a huge brightly coloured manta ray swam elegantly through the air, seemingly impervious to the two dead bodies that were doing a final macabre dance of death in their watery grave.

There were huge emotional currents flowing through the piece. The sentiments are necessarily more basic, but for that they are more direct, striking instantly to the core. There was genuine tenderness when Edgar's grandparents dance together and face-hiding horror as they are slain by the orangutan. Perhaps most moving of all was the gentle, lonely death of Annabelle. A fallen Shakespearean hero's chest continues to rise and fall intensely even after the conspirators have cleaned their knives of blood. The total unmoving permanence of the death of a puppet is thus something rather more poignant.

This was one of the most original pieces of performance I have seen in a long time. In turning Edgar's characters against him, Teatro Corsario are implying that the curse of Poe was his own imagination whilst at the same time revealing their own fierce creative minds.

La Maldición de Poe is part of the London International Mime Festival, between 15-30 January 2011

The Cripple of Inishmaan

a play by Martin McDonagh

Old Theatre,
London School
of Economics

30th January
- 1st February
7.30pm

Two/Three Pounds

Tickets on
Houghton Street,
at the ARC,
and online

LSE STUDENTS'
UNION

As You Like It, The Roundhouse

Christopher Finnigan on the RSC's adaptation of one of Shakespeare comedies

The LSE's very own playwright George Bernard Shaw declared, "You use a glass mirror to see your face: you use a work of art to see your soul". Unfortunately, *As You Like It* is a work that falls short of the sublime level that Shakespeare rarely fails to reach. However, not hitting this benchmark does not result in a catastrophic production. This play has many impressive moments, interesting characters and inspiring monologues.

The play centres around an intense Orlando de Boys (Jonjo O'Neill), who has been kept in poverty by his brother since their father's death, and his illegitimate romance with the play's heroine Rosalind (Katy Stephens). Rosalind, the daughter of recently deposed Duke Senior, is viewed as a menacing threat to Duke Ferdinand, the usurper, and is forced into exile. Both Orlando and Rosalind seek refuge in the surprisingly well-populated Forest of Arden, where Rosalind amusingly adopts a fake identity and puts Orlando to the test, to see if his love is genuine. Elsewhere in

the Forest, love is blossoming among the array of other characters, yet trouble from the morose to the violent lurks around the corner.

The substance of the humour in this play is elevated by the rich language Shakespeare deploys. It is a comedy, but doesn't simply rely on humour to entertain. The overriding theme is love,

The substance of the humour in this play is elevated by the rich language Shakespeare deploys

which Shakespeare unhesitatingly pokes fun at. Most characters are in it, and it often follows them like a dark cloud, but mostly like a bright sun as they traipse around Arden, forming a backdrop as real as the forest's trees. It is the adoption of this perennial theme that allows the play to produce many sighs, giggles and reflective smiles from an audience in Camden on a cold Monday night. But, as this is Shakespeare he doesn't merely poke fun at love; instead he supplements his musings with eloquent confessions of it throughout, creating many heartwarming moments.

The notorious monologue, "All the world is a stage. And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts", is softly delivered by Shakespeare's Jacques. Jacques (Forbes Masson), nicknamed "The Melancholy Bloke", strolls around with his guitar hanging from his back. Sometimes strumming, other times teasing, Jacques resembles a drab Tim Minchin in costume. Music features heavily in this production with several

guitars being passed around the cast.

Richard Katz, interviewed last year in the Beaver, plays the sarcastic and flamboyant character Touchstone. Katz, who in *Romeo and Juliet* adopted a very serious and dominating character in Lord Capulet, faultlessly shrugs off his sternness and perfectly creates a light and endearing Touchstone. He acts as the court jester for the audience, allowing them to relax and connect with the characters on stage. At the end of the interval, with the lights still on and audience not yet seated, he helpfully brings down the tone of the play to one of a casual nature as he tumbles around onstage. This device acts to lessen the formality of Shakespeare that exists between the audience and cast setting

up comfortably for the second half.

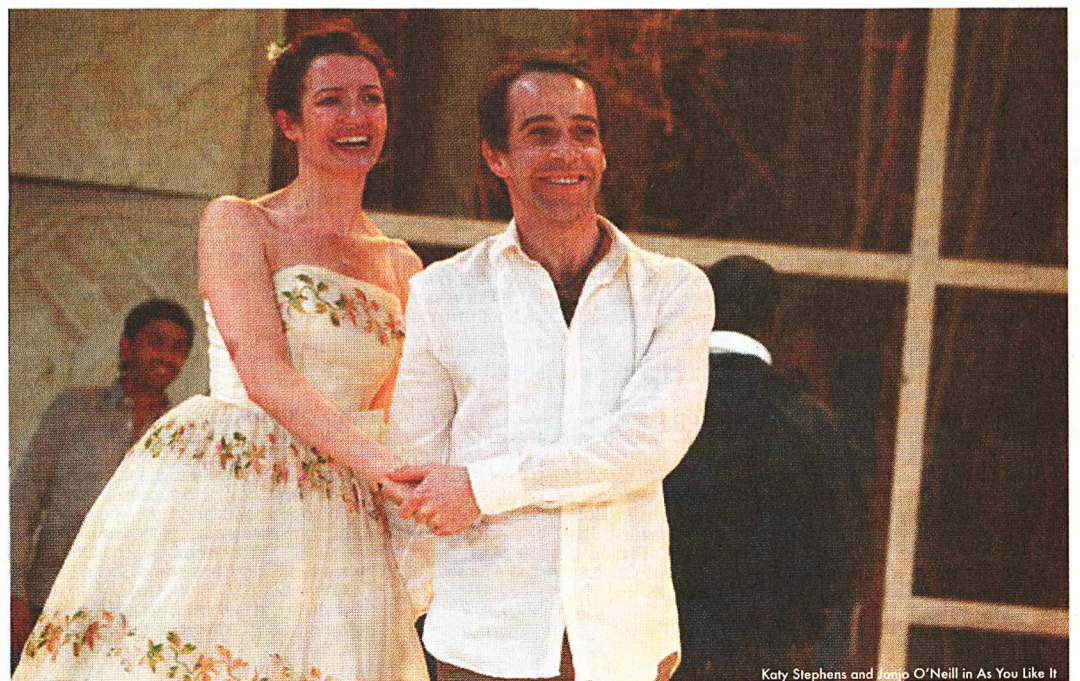
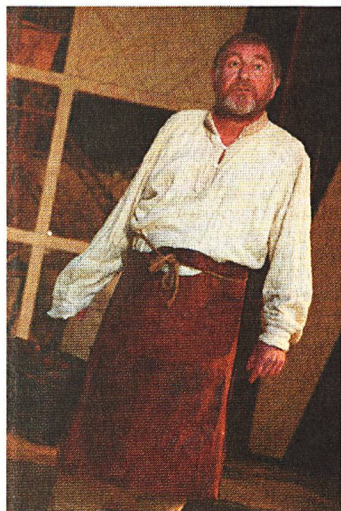
There is a strong feeling of camaraderie between the cast, which I'm sure is testament to the months of time they have spent together, with many of them having also appeared in *Romeo and Juliet*. The use of the stage is a limitation for the play. Its stark white wooden panels are the only features on display at the start, which acts to make the initial sombre scenes more intense. The desolate stage also works well for an explosive fight scene, yet its usefulness runs aground when insufficiently transformed into the Forest of Arden. Vegetarians may want to arrive late to their seats for the second half of performance as a dead rabbit is skinned live on stage, an act I found unnecessary.

Perhaps if the stage had more impact in creating a woodland atmosphere such rural acts would not be required.

This production is cheerful with several amusing characters, some sublime moments and eloquent quotes but fails to leave a lasting impression. It's a very entertaining flash in the pan, which sadly fails to burn at its usual brightness.

As You Like It is on until the 5th February at the Roundhouse

The Roundhouse hold 20 £5 tickets for 16-24 year olds for every performance.



Katy Stephens and Jonjo O'Neill in *As You Like It*

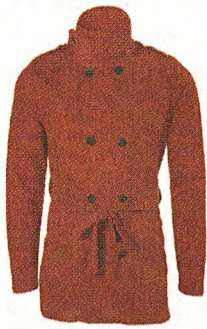
W³ = Wet Weather Wear

Annika Ranga and Alice Leah Fyfe look at the high street replicas!

With weather like ours, is there really any need for raincoats? Actually, I take that back: with the type of weather that is currently embracing London, it seems that raincoats and umbrellas need to be at the ready. And what type of raincoats should we all be wearing? The bright yellow raincoat seems to be perfect for this torrential rain: it covers your head and body without ruining your clothes and is of course very trendy to wear, with a bright colour that is sure to be noticed by everyone. Have no fear – taxis and buses will not run you over if you wear these high visibility coats! Rainwear seems to be a growing trend; even on the underground people are wearing wellies, and not in your ordinary colours – red seems to be a favourite as well as blue and I've even spotted a leopard-print pair. But the weather is not the only reason that young people are sporting the rainwear look, it's being worn as a new vogue, with top designers and high-street brands jumping on the bandwagon.

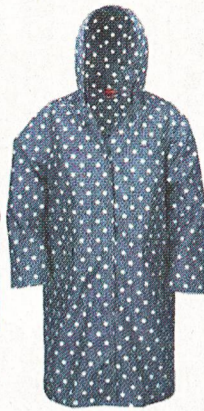
Guys can also get with the fashion this season with trench coats, which are great for combatting the typical British weather that even Brits still aren't used too and get just as frustrated with. High-street shops like Topman and Zara have some great versions. It's a look that works well on girls too and will help to shelter you from the changing weather conditions – it will look fly on a sunny-but-cold day and will be great to wear when it's drizzling.

Fred Perry and American Apparel also have some excellent Harrington and Bomber wind breaks. Of course, wherever runaway trends choose to go, ASOS will follow. There are some great replicas of the iconic quilted, waxed and trench coats, as well as some other essential additions to your Spring outerwear collection.



Camel Trench, Topman £50

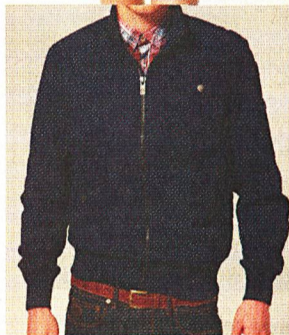
Trench Coat, Zara £39.99



Rain Mac, Cath Kidston £32



Quilted Jacket, Zara £29.99



Ben Sherman Bomber £33 ASOS

LSE Fashion Society cordially invites you to

LDN by LSE

an exclusive fashion show at 7:30, 5th Feb 2011

Tickets will be on sale on Houghton Street on Mon 24th and Tues 25th Jan at 11:00am-2:00pm Tickets are £5 each. (Seating is limited). This is the ultimate fashion event not to be missed!

Bart, Postgraduate in Politics and French

Once in a blue moon, someone or something comes along to brighten up your otherwise monotonous Monday. This week that someone was Bart; a postgraduate hailing from Paris, who with every step leaves behind an enchanting trail of purple brogue imprints, the kind of purple that you only ever get to see in an intoxicating Burton movie. Surely this is LSE's answer to Beetlejuice meets Frenchman (if ever there was one)? His rock chic man bag is somewhat at odds with his palette of beige and neutrals; yet somehow this oxymoron of an outfit

works. With this eccentric get-up, Bart would surely not look out of place in a line-up of dazzling TV personalities;

Yan Giet scouts Houghton Street's best dressed

yet, you would be sorely mistaken to believe that he exudes showmanship as he insists, "you don't have to be in show business to dress for flair". Alternatively, the inverse of that saying also rings true; you don't have to dress for flair if you are in show business! Take note, Bruce.

Not one to be confined to gender stereotypes, Bart is also one of the rare few guys that I have seen sporting an infinity scarf which adds a touch of femininity to the overall androgynous look. Upon closer inspection of his jacket, I presume that it is made from linen – a material that usually creases like no other, yet somehow he has managed to do the undoable and keep it fold-free! He has conquered fashion's biggest enemy with this crease-free linen jacket; but my guess is that he is probably the type of guy who is an idol of ironing. Meanwhile, I will still be on my holy grail towards unlocking more fashion secrets on campus for next week...



Chu Ting Ng looks at British Heritage Brands

Aquascutum

LONDON
Aquascutum was first established as a menswear label in 1851 by John Emery, multi-talented tailor and entrepreneur. In 1853, he developed the first waterproof wool, patenting and renaming his invention "Aquascutum", which is Latin for "watershield". Now owned by Jaeger, Aquascutum resides in its primary flagship on 100 Regent Street.

True to its rain-proof nature, officers of the Crimean War were dressed in Aquascutum. Aquascutum's trench coats were also worn by soldiers of all ranks during both world wars, leading to the brand's first royal client, King Edward VII. The company was granted a royal warrant in 1897, the first of many that marks the British royal family's long patronage. Aquascutum has now expanded into womenswear and accessories, branching out into various lines for different consumer tastes. Aquascutum London is purely menswear and uses quality heritage fabrics in timeless designs. Aquascutum Limited, also for men, features refined formal wear with slim tailoring for a modern touch. For the ladies, Aquascutum Collection currently features finely tailored camel coats and floor-length gowns, integrating runway fashion and practical everyday style.

FAMOUS FANS OF AQUASCUTUM
Pierce Brosnan, Brett Anderson, Gisele Bündchen, Cary Grant, Michael Caine, Lauren Bacall, Sophia Loren, Humphrey Bogart, Sir Winston Churchill, Baroness Thatcher, Prince Rainier of Monaco, three Princes of Wales

that Barbour incorporates into modern designs are snug-fitting collars, "storm cuffs", waterproof pockets with drainage holes and wide "game" pockets. The traditional countryside range is still going strong with its quilted coats, tattersall shirts, moleskin and corduroy clothing. Modern additions have tended toward a younger image, combining a slimmer silhouette and lighter modern fabrics with the traditional Barbour waxes.

BARBOUR YAY OR NAY?
Helen Mirren, Lily Allen, Peaches Geldof, Sienna Miller, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Rufus Wainwright, Alexa Chung, Alex Turner

HUNTER

Hunter wellingtons were first manufactured by the North British Rubber Company (now Hunter Boot Ltd) for the British Army's use in World War I. 1,185,036 pairs were made in total, produced from war materials such as ground sheets, life belts and gas masks. These hardy boots were probably the reason why most of our grandfathers, despite having spent months in flooded trenches, still have feet. As improbable as it seems, World War II was when thigh-high boots appeared in their first incarnation. British forces working in Holland's flooded conditions were the foundations of Hunter Boot Ltd's legacy, and by the end of the war had become popular as laymen wet weather wear.

Today, Hunter boots come in different styles and lines ranging from the Balmoral Lady Neoprene to the equestrian-style Regent. The original Neoprene wellington still remains popular alongside a new range: the Monterosa, Twickenham and Willengon boot. A modern collaboration with Jimmy Choo produced a boot with the signature Jimmy Choo crocodile print, leopard print lining and gold buckle hardware. Depending on your taste, these boots cost anything from just under £100 to £255.



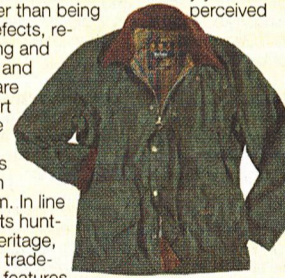
Original Aubergine Hunters £72

TRUE COLOURS
Hunter sent all 2008 British Olympians who won a Gold for Britain a set of Gold Hunter wellies, now available to the public. What colour are you?

- Lady Di – Green
- Kate Moss – Black
- Kings of Leon – WaterAid Hunters
- Angelina Jolie – Red
- Madonna – Navy
- Gwyneth Paltrow – Aubergine
- Kelly Osbourne – Pumpkin

Barbour

Founded in 1894 by Scotsman John Barbour in South Shields, J. Barbour & Sons Ltd is best known for its waterproof outdoor clothing associated with hunting and other sports. Barbour prides itself on its reputation for high quality, hardy clothing that has rightfully earned royal warrants from various members of the monarchy such as Queen Elizabeth II, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Prince of Wales. Most Barbour clothing is rough and rugged, the most famous of all being the Barbour waxed jacket. These classically designed jackets are waterproof and sturdy, fondly kept by their owners and often lasting for decades. Keeping to tradition, Barbour's repair service patches and reinforces even jackets that are more than fifty years old. Rather than being perceived as defects, re-waxing and wear and tear are all part of the Barbour's rough charm. In line with its hunting heritage, other trademark features



Classic Barfield barbour from £199

A Woman is a Woman

Ashma Kunde

Classics

Director: Jean-Luc Godard
Screenplay: Jean-Luc Godard **Cast:** Anna Karina, Jean-Claude Brialy, Jean-Paul Belmondo **Runtime:** 85 minutes **Cert:** PG **Year:** 1961

Perhaps a rather frivolous reason, but my desire to watch **A Woman is a Woman** sprang entirely from reading fashion blogs. "He a paragon of intellectual complexity and cool; she the vivid face and emotional catalyst that gave his films their lasting resonance" said Styie.com, waxing lyrical about director Jean-Luc Godard and actress Anna Karina – a pairing to be remembered, both on and off the silver screen.

A Woman is a Woman tells a tale. Or does it? The flimsy "plot" centres on a love triangle. Angela the exotic dancer desperately wants a baby, but her lover Emile refuses. They share a classic can't-live-with/can't-live-without attachment, frequently claiming their love for each other, while bickering incessantly. They trivialise their problems, which leads from one absurdity to the next, be it arguing through book titles, or over Angela's pronunciation of the letter 'R'. And then there's Alfred and his continuous pursuit of Angela, which she happily plays along with.

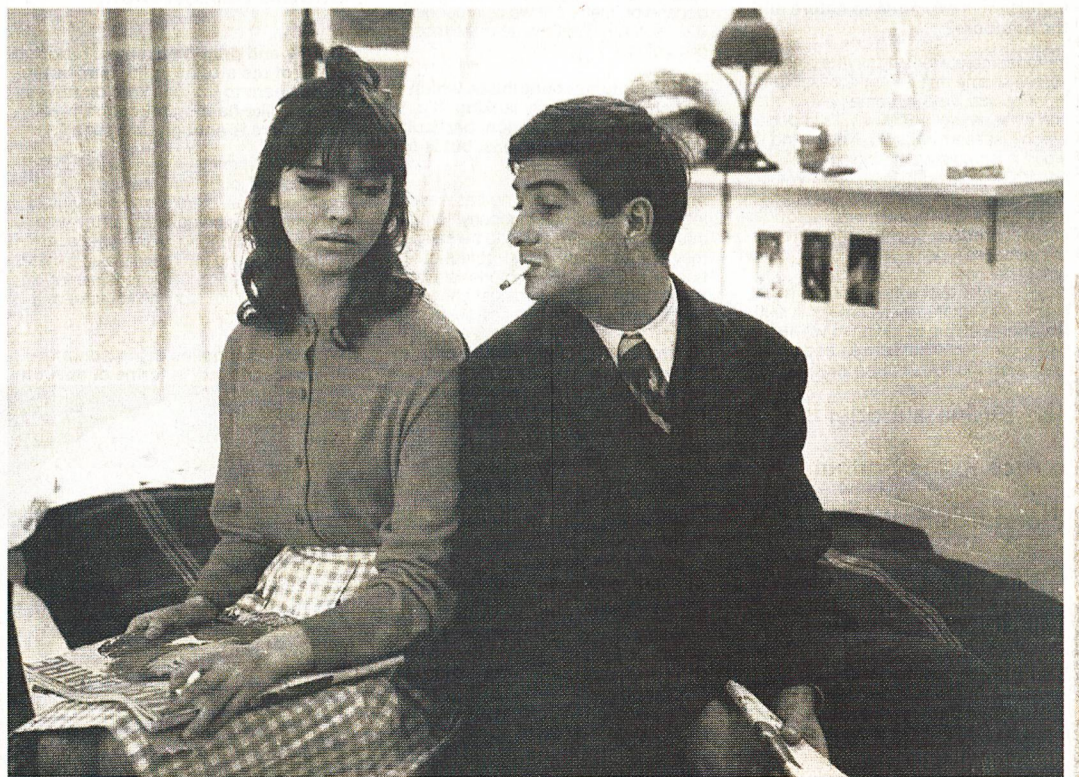
This film is a playful contribution to the French New Wave, paying tribute to the classic American musical comedy.

Although New Wave cinema is known to toy with the ridiculousness of human nature, the overriding silliness of the film is what I really enjoyed. It allows the audience to look at life's problems and inconveniences in a lighter vein, and does well at portraying life as a comic tragedy and a tragic comedy.

There's probably a lot more to be said about the filmmaking, but since I am rather obsessed with aesthetics, I must say this: the colour palette was beautiful, as were the clothes, accented entirely by bright reds and blues.

"Je suis très... belle!" sings Angela, and I couldn't help but agree. Anna Karina's charm is inescapable – it's in her gorgeous azure-lined eyes, in the nonchalant shrug of her shoulders, in the way she kicks up her heels. She captures Angela's playfulness and evanescent moods perfectly. In spite of all the smoking and stripteasing, she adds an abundance of sweetness to the character. And she sure knows how to carry off those red tights!

With its juvenile characters, Godard's experimental shot framing, and almost poetic dialogue repetition, A Woman is a Woman lends itself well to an afternoon of light entertainment. As for the film's Godard-Karina pairing, it lived up to all the rave reviews; evidently more successful than their off-set romance. Perhaps some relationships were just made for the movies, *n'est-ce pas?*



Fracking Dirty

We know oil can be a dirty business but natural gas isn't so clean either. **Aameer Patel** talks to **Josh Fox**, director of Sundance Special Jury Prize winning *GasLand*.



The subject of the film is one that directly affects you and millions more. Like many, you received an offer to lease your land. Is there a single event that inspired you make this film?

I was interested in getting to the truth of the matter. I wanted to know why they had made this offer, and there was the story the gas companies gave, which basically said everything's okay, versus the one my neighbours told. They were people I trusted and they were seriously concerned, so I intended to document what was happening.

It is obviously a personal film but over the course of the film, the problem is revealed as far more widespread. How concerned should people in cities be?

Because it's about water supply, it affects millions – it's not just a rural problem. Waterways all over America are interconnected. The source of water for New York City, the biggest metropolis, is connected to an area of pristine wildlife over three states.

You reveal the importance of nature and the outdoors when you were growing up and how this affects the way you see this problem. How important is exposure to nature and the outdoors?

It's fundamental to living on the planet. It's such a shame that it's not accessible to a lot of people, I mean, some people question what nature is and why it's important, which just seems absurd. Nature and the world is incredibly, astoundingly beautiful and it's something to learn from. Without sounding like too much of a hippy, I really see it as the soul of the earth. It provides a real connection to our history, through the centuries – not a scientific link, but an emotional one. Technology is everywhere and we might become integrated with some of it, but we'll never evolve to the point where we're immune to the harmful and toxic chemicals that we're being exposed to.

The business model is a race to the bottom.

Standards get cheaper, faster and sloppier. It's a self-destructive system.

This industry seems to have really taken off in the last few years. Besides technological advancements, what do you think are the reasons?

Deregulation. These problems wouldn't

occur if these companies weren't allowed to break the law. That is what they're doing – they've been allowed by a bill passed through under the Bush administration to break the Clean Water Act. They don't have to regulate themselves and take precautions – in effect, they're externalising cost. As an American, I have to pay for their damage, and that is a scam.

I think we're seeing a lot of slogans now, both from politicians and the companies. Things like "natural gas is clean" aren't true. Gas burns cleaner than coal but it's not clean overall.

The gas companies claim that the process is safe and does not affect water supply, but it seemed that all they offered you was a wall of bureaucracy. Was this the case?

The companies didn't want to speak to me at all. Maybe that's just because they didn't know who I was – we'll see after this film. There was huge secrecy on the part of the companies and also the government agencies, but the opposition are completely open. The secrecy was really disturbing – this is something that really affects us but we're being kept in the dark. Corporations are not going to tell us the truth – it's not in their interest. Our relationship is one of servitude and we depend on them. That's what is the most disturbing.

This links to accountability, which evidently is seriously lacking. It's becoming more common, particularly due to economic reasons, but is self-regulation naive?

Absolutely, yes. There is no base level of regulation, and if one company comes out and says we're going to be safer, they'll be alone and they'll go out of business. The business model is a race to the bottom. Standards get cheaper, faster and sloppier. It's a self-destructive system. It's also a very complex system of different companies working together – there's the frackers, pipeline companies, lawyers, PR companies and so on. They're interconnected and profit is the motive that drives them all. That is completely inadequate for something with the consequences of what they're doing.

Regulation seems to quickly become a political notion. Whether a question of autonomy or distrust of big government, how significant is this?

We have a lot of political memes now, like calling Obama a "socialist" and "Hitler" whenever something like this comes. We don't actually know what his administration's position on this matter is yet. I think it is a fringe element, not a majority, and by and large they're not educated. But they are funded by insidious corporate wealth, because they think this will cre-

ate a political climate in line with their interests.

The election of President Obama has drawn out a disturbing, ugly, essentially racist element. The very idea that regulation is socialism is disturbing, but it's there. I think it's a trend in politics, where people are whipped up into a frenzy, a little bit like a freak show, and it's destructive.

From the people I spoke to, this is very much a cross-party concern, it's just ordinary people from both ends of the political spectrum, with Democrats, Republicans and Tea Party people alike. Having said that, in Washington DC, only the Democrats seem to be interested in the issue – they're the only ones interested in reform.

Corporations are not

going to tell us the truth...

Our relationship is one of servitude and we depend

on them, but we as a people distrust them.

The TV and print media have reported some of the stories in the film, but reports seem to concentrate on novelty stories, like flaming faucets. Do you think there is enough coverage?

I think documentaries are making up for the failure of journalism, and I'm not talking about mine, there are so many great documentaries being made all the time. But it's not surprising, with newspaper budget cuts and all. There is also a trend of news becoming just entertainment, so in that sense, the story needs to have a certain appeal.

With water supplies being contaminated and risked, in terms of environ-

mental laws, have we gone backwards since the 1970s and things like the Clean Water Act?

Of course. We've definitely moved backwards in terms of our culture – we don't value the environment as we should, both at a social and government level. It's a trend that started with Reagan in the 1980s and it's been continued by the Bush administration and Cheney.

Dick Cheney has been accused of having a conflict of interest before. With numerous supposedly independent studies being cited and looking at all parties involved, how significant are questions like these?

Yes, they are very significant – with some of these studies it's just corporations reviewing themselves and that's a big problem. It's an urgent problem.

The companies prefer to solve problems later rather than prevent them. Their solution is payoffs. Do you agree that money always wins out?

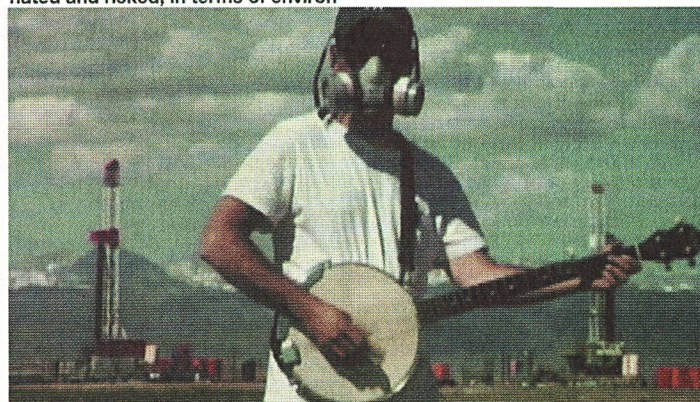
No. I'm a great believer in people and it's people who change the world, always.

So, are you still an optimistic person – you were at the beginning of the film, did that change?

No, I met wonderful people and my view hasn't changed. Decisions are made by people in far removed places and they don't see the effects. If you have a store, you don't dirty up the front, because that's what people see when they come in. But there is also a feeling that people aren't valued and are being exploited in their own country. We've done that to people in poorer countries and we're getting a taste of that.

The credits roll over a wind farm. Besides being a cleaner, renewable energy source, do they have particular significance?

It's a sort of cliffhanger. That's what we're going to be looking at next.



What is 'fracking'?

Hydraulic fracturing, commonly referred to as fracking, is a process by which natural gas is extracted from shale rock formations.

Regions of the USA, northern Europe and Russia are especially rich in natural gas reserves.

The process involves injecting a cocktail of water, chemicals and other substances into the ground in order to create fissures. A large part of these do not return to the surface.

GasLand
Aameer Patel



New Release

Director: Josh Fox
Runtime: 122 minutes Year: 2010
Cert: PG Year: 2010

An infallible argument for an energy source: "[without it] how much more would we be dependent on foreign oil and terrorism?" The energy source in question is natural gas and the logic is that of US Rep. Dan Boren, but it also demonstrates one of the prevailing views that have led to a reckless pursuit of energy resources located at home.

GasLand is a personal, investigative journey into hydraulic fracturing and the effect it has on surrounding areas and beyond. Prompted by a seemingly generous offer to lease his land, **Josh Fox** investigates the effects doing so might have.

His findings are alarming, but the journey through twenty-four states is a pleasant one, with captivatingly simple and rough camerawork uniquely accompanied by bluegrass banjo strings. The result is arresting.

All of the affected people are concerned and disappointed. The value of their lifestyles and health; of traditional farming and nature, weigh nothing against the money and influence of energy companies. In fairness to these companies, they serve a much deeper hunger and crucially, provide many jobs.

The effects on people are wide and far-reaching. Water supplies are contaminated to the extent that tap water can be set alight. Entire families suffer the consequences of a host of known harmful and completely unknown chemicals. Some are provided with an alternative water supply, others must haul their own.

Fox reflects on their strategy – the companies are able to operate carelessly because a deterrent against them doing so does not exist. Some of their processes are unregulated and dangerous, like an old car without safety features, but they are exempted from environmental protection laws, such as the Clean Water Act, through legislation passed under the Bush administration. His VP happened to be Dick Cheney, who was previously CEO and chairman of Halliburton, one of the principal beneficiaries of the legislation.

The offending companies maintain that this process does not pose a risk to water supplies. At the same time, they vehemently oppose legislation to close the above loophole – to make the process subject to safeguards against this. It is worrying that the onus seems to be on people to prove that contamination was caused by these companies, when they are the only people working in the area and also the fact that some of the substances they use in the process are secret.

Fox does not purport to be a scientist, but that is far from necessary and they're not in short supply to support his concerns. His film is important on both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere, chiefly because it is a warning. Energy resources have pros and cons, and depending on the person, the convenient location of shale gas reserves has proven either gift or curse. Our hunger for energy is insatiable and that is understandable, but we must not forsake all else in its pursuit.

GasLand is in cinemas now.

Kensington Palace a princess's dream

Ashma Kunde delves into the magical world of a royal home



Whilst the main body of Kensington Palace is under renovation, the artistic minds of Wild-works theatre group, and several renowned British fashion designers and artists, have weaved magic in the State Apartments. 'The Enchanted Palace' is less like an exhibition, and more like a theatrical production: an opportunity to immerse yourself in an evocation of the life and times of the princesses who once walked those corridors. Although, be ready to cast aside all clichéd thoughts of pretty tiaras, pink tulle, and happily-ever-afters' a la Disney, because this exhibition uncovers some unsettling truths about royal lives.

When my friend and I arrived and were told of our "quest" to find the seven princesses, we did feel like little kids out on an adventure, all gasps and giggles. Each princess had a room dedicated to her, and her far-from-fairytale.

The first room, 'the Room of Sorrow', was haunting. It had this incredibly fluid

air to it, and the melange of blue hues and tear-catcher jars made me feel as if I'd walked into a crystal ball. One which told the past – and not a very happy one either. For the princess in question, Queen Mary, failed to produce an heir to the throne. To pay tribute to her lifelong sorrows, we wrote down the last time we cried on tiny tags, and tied them alongside hundreds of others. Bruce Oldfield's white 'Dress for Reflection' stood in front of the mirror, contributing to the eerie opulence of the bedchamber.

The Room of Flight took my breath away – it was probably my favourite place. The piece de résistance was Dame Vivienne Westwood's pink and gold wispy corseted creation, deemed "the Dress for Running into the Arms of Love and Death". It was literally suspended mid-flight, as if running down the grand King's Staircase. You see romance; and then death dawns upon you. The scattered rose petals, the name etched on the floor, the black lace draped over cages of candles, all the elements conjure up a funeral-esque atmosphere for Princess Charlotte, who married for love but was "dancing with death all her life".

I could go on about each room, one stunning spectacle after another, but some things just need to be seen firsthand. All the gimmicks brought the rooms to life, and were tied together so well, so innovatively. Amongst many other things, I loved the forest-on-a-full-moon atmosphere in the Room of Dancing Princesses, Mercedes Kemp's poetry, and the 'Seat of Power'. The 'Rooms of Lost Childhood' very much sent shivers down my spine, as did the massive puppets which stared at me in Queen Victoria's bedroom.

Overall, I found the Enchanted Palace to be a wonderful amalgamation of history, fantasy, contemporary fashion and art. Apart from the obvious aesthetic appeal, it also truly highlighted the sinister, stifling existences that the English royalty led, how very often beauty and melancholy walk hand in hand. At £11 for Concession tickets, this is one spell well worth falling under.

“
The pièce de résistance was Dame Vivienne Westwood's pink and gold wispy corseted creation
”

Got a problem? Need some advice?
Write to Social's all new Agony Uncle column.
Email social@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Striking the work life balance: an LSE fail

Allie Fonarev gets to grips with the difficulties of the student's balanced schedule

The elusive work-life balance. It's one of those things that we begin to realise lies at the heart of not only success, but also of our sanity. And yet, as it is so regrettably untaught in our classrooms, we students often come to this realisation at the crux of our frustrations. Especially here at the LSE, I too often arrive at a point where, pulling desperately at my hair, a million confusing (and often needless) thoughts come rushing into my head at once. "The issue with macroeconomic cycles is... Ooh, Twiglets have a Wiki page!". That sort of thing.

When essay deadlines are hitting, work pressures growing and time slimming, this can be a real sticking point. There's always a whole new mix of ways to distract oneself, however. I get home from a long day dripping over the LSE Library (which, may I add, I far from 'heart') thinking that, because I was sat in there for several hours, I must have done a whole raft of work. The reality is rarely so nice. In fact I've spent the day staring at my Facebook, staring at the person next to me's Facebook and the sum total of work isn't nearly what it ought to be. The smallest of things can become the largest of distractions.

The number of exotic plans thought up in long, heavily distracted days in the library beggars belief. Exotic trips to Cornwall, Parisian weekends, volunteering months in Africa that morally, I must be obliged to do. Of course, none of these ever transpire, but they did fill a few hours thinking. I do sometimes ponder how I managed to start out having mental debates over economic policy, and yet always end up on something meaningless. Something meaningless that, somehow, contently fills hours.

This oscillating routine defines the student lifestyle, it seems, but after a few years of this you begin to come to the creeping conclusion that something has got to give. Too often people respond like

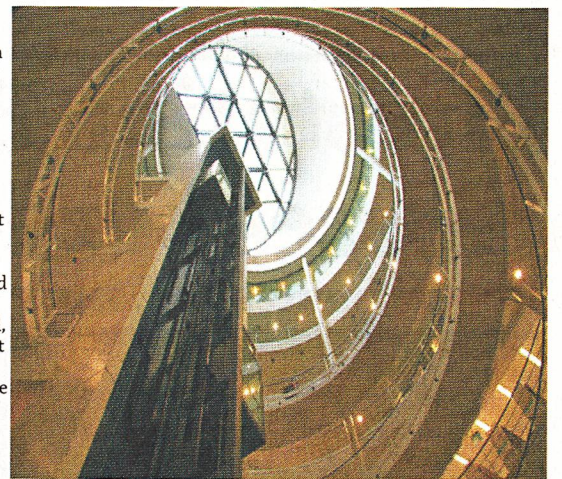
the choice between work and life is mutually exclusive. I see two friends: one tightly hugging a stack of books, wincing at the natural sunlight and looking longingly in the direction of their library enclave they scoped out for themselves. And the other, coffee clutched in hand, red-eyed, unshaven and struggling to walk straight, wishing their boxy non-prescription glasses were day-night conversions. Is this really the only scenario, this black-or-white trajectory for your life? Both these individuals look around with crazed twitching eyes and respond in half-grunts to the concerned inquiries of others, and neither seems incredibly emulating to me.

You seem unable to make it all fit in, the work-life balance. This was my resolution for this year. Find this illusive balance in my life. Go to class. Go for a coffee with classmates. Read an article. Try not to Facebook stalk as much as usual. Finish my presentations. Go for a run to re-energize. Work on application. Skype home to catch up. Go clubbing. It would all be so easy. Whoever it is that claimed there are 24 hours in the day - I'm sceptical. And even if there is, it clearly isn't time enough.

So far my resolution to fit all this in has been harder than I thought to follow. But fellow sympathisers, don't get discouraged. This is expected when you're so used to the binge and purge of 'work hard, play hard'; the habit is hard to break. While I am nowhere near expert in the matter, some years of trial and error have allowed me to

develop some tips to help you get on the way to the middle path. In your calendar, schedule in time for social, exercise, eating, and most importantly, time to do nothing. Have at least one meaningful conversation about your personal life, and one meaningful conversation about your academic life, with someone in each week, too. Walk outside at least half an hour a day. Draw the line at 5 hours internet clicking. Stop yourself after 5 hours of drinking. Take a 10 minute break for every hour of work.

As Simon & Garfunkel so poignantly put it: "slow down, don't move too fast, make the moments last." So far - I shan't lie to you - my road towards balance has been bumpy, and there's a lot more to learn. For me, mind, the degree is rapidly nearing an end. My dear message to freshers, though: be warned, the workaholic route has swallowed many before you. Don't be an LSE victim.



LSE Travel Diary

Angelina Castellini 'Czecks' Prague out

Prague is a breathtaking city. You may have heard that before - but it's true. Fortunately, too, a weekend there is all you need to get a good and lasting impression of the city.

Not because there are only enough activities to fill two days, but because Prague has the power to make you fall in love with it. As soon as you set foot on one of its connecting bridges, the overwhelming power of the city's historic beauty takes you. And, whilst Prague is not one of those cities which obliges you to visit as many museums as possible, or devour endless realms of its adventures, it does allow you to go on a trip of pure hedonism with cheap alcohol and pounding music.

Unlike in Amsterdam, however, hostels in the city centre are invitingly affordable. Spend a few minutes on 'Hostelworld.com' and you can snap up a bed and breakfast amongst the city-centre lights for barely a tenner. The hostel I mustered was a welcoming and equipped abode, complete with everything a young gallivanting student could desire: guidebooks, party information, couches, a kitchen and (crucially) a Foosball table. It wasn't until night, however, that I noticed a few differences to other hostels I'd stayed in. For some reason I'd been convinced the hostel had a "no-smoking" as well as "no pets" policy - though on my first night it became evident neither of these were the case.

Barely an hour of sleep had passed before being woken up to what - as far as my panicked, bleary-eyed head could figure - was a house fire. Fortunately this hadn't happened, but more nearly the girl occupying another bed in the room had been chain-smoking for some time. Relieved that I didn't have to go out on the streets of Prague at 4am in my nightgown, I

dozed back off. This wasn't to be the end to my nightmare though; in fact it'd barely begun. A short while later I was woken again: this time to the feeling of something heavy and scratching on my chest. After the initial shock - jolting me into the straight and upright position - I gently removed the cat which had, in an equal state of shock, climbed onto my chest.

The pussy wasn't climbing off me in any rush, however. It swiftly jumped along my bed, resting its head by my feet, curling its furry body around and beginning to purr into a night's sleep. Although slightly perturbed, I comforted myself with the thought that - to find the silver lining - at least no rodents would be attacking me this night. It later transpired (and when I say later, I mean the morning following night of it sleeping on me) that a fellow traveller had brought the animal with him. He apologised profusely for the mix-up and, with hindsight, I did laugh.

The beauty of Prague unfolds as you explore its cobblestone streets. Few cities surprise you quite like Prague: with its unpredictable, gothic architecture, quirky local stores and their crafty little tradition of puppeteering. Had it not been Easter weekend - when the city finds itself overrun with giddy tourists, armed with mega Nikons and not afraid to use them - I would have acquired a ticket to one of its many black light theatres. However sadly these were all too busy, and pricey. Indeed, while accommodation and supermarkets easily fit into a travel budget, the kind of touristy experiences can cost quite a bit more - especially when demand is high.

It wasn't easy to escape the ubiquitous crowds, but I did manage to route a lovely walk over one of Prague's plumpiest hills onto a stunning view of the city sights. The sea of red tiled roofs gives the

city a red glow in the sun, whilst the river with its bridges and punters radiates an inviting air of mystery. Prague is a city of many faces: beautiful, eerie and, when you look below the surface, brimming with revolution. It maintains a deep sense of political and cultural history, managing to embrace modern tourism, whilst retaining the sense of a thousand stories lived within the city walls before. And so, within a day it is possible to inhale the story of the Jewish quarter, the magnificence of the age of empires, the austerity of the Cold War and the strangeness of the stories and life of Franz Kafka. The stature of the place didn't quite fully take me in, mind.

The moving statue of two men peeing in front of the museum pulled my immature side back into gear.

At the end of the two days walking down cobblestone streets, my feet had begun to hurt and my eyes sore from the sight of reading museum placards. Prague had used up all my senses. This was my first visit to a UNESCO world heritage sight, and boy did it leave up to expectations. I can safely say that, cat incident aside, Prague well-and-truly deserves its place on the 'must visit before I die' list.



Firestation Book Swap crosses borders

Robert invites LSE students to quiz the authors



Is the above headline a nonsensical arrangement of words designed to test the editorial credibility of the Beaver staff (in the wonderful traditions of Professor Sokal or the great poet Ernest Lalor 'Ern' Malley)? Perhaps it is a silly effort to nonsensically use the word nonsense? Actually, it's a poor attempt to describe the LSE book swap, meet-the-author event where we expect to see a bit of nonsense.

LSE Read International and LSE's Space for Thought Literary Festival are working with the organisers of Firestation Book Swap to stage one of their book swaps at the LSE on Thursday.

'Great, I like books, I like charity, I love the LSE - I'm practically there' I hear you say. Then you turn your inquisitive eyes towards me and add "but what am I doing there?"

Well, what you do has got nothing to do with me, nevertheless I wouldn't be

surprised to see you there enjoying yourself. You see, Firestation have been taking the barns by storm with its innovative and quirky meet-the-author and book swapping events.

Essentially the book-swap breaks down as follows: it starts of course with everyone bringing along a book to swap. But a Firestation book swap is no ordinary book swap. All attendees are invited to write questions to the author at the event, following which there is an informal discussion and interview with the author. And between questions to the author, people are invited to give the hard sell on a book they want to give away, which typically turns into a comical bidding war with others. Finally, books are donated to the worthy cause of READ International, and then everyone enjoys tea and cake.

The informal evening will be hosted by author of *Gods Behaving Badly*, Marie Phillips and a publisher at Scott Pack, the

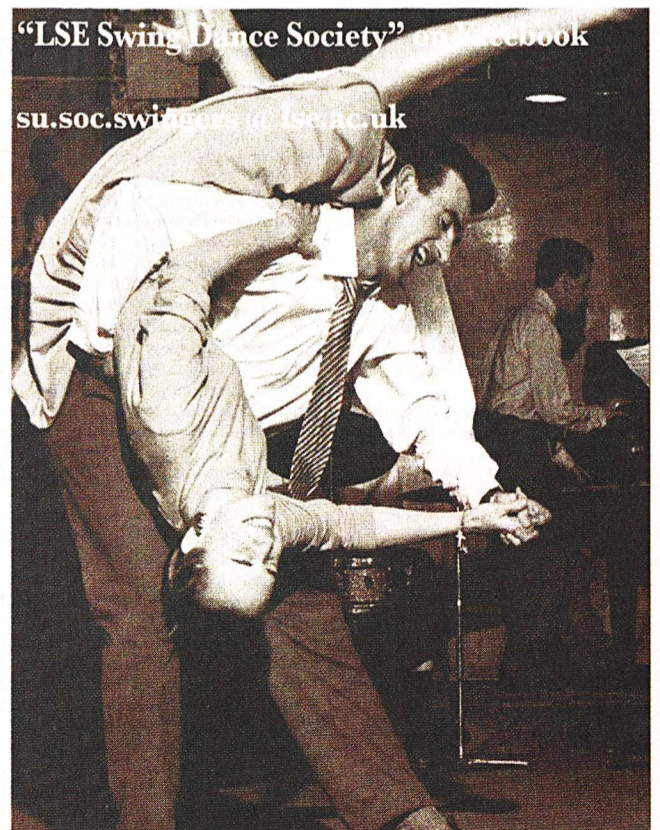
interviewees will be LSE author in residence, Sarah Salway, whose books include *Something Beginning With*, *Tell Me Everything* and *Getting the Picture*, and Matt Beaumont, the author of *E and E Squared*, and *The Novel of Liars, Lunch and Lost Nickers*. This event will be free and open to all, with entry on a first come, first served basis.

This event is just one part of LSE's third Space for Thought Literary Festival, with the theme 'Crossing Borders', which will be taking place from Wednesday 16 - Saturday 19 February 2011, speakers including Andrew Motion, Professor John Gray, Elif Shafak, Professor Timothy Garton Ash and Lionel Shriver.

LSE Read International are also involved because they are also all about books (especially your books). Read International collect books so that they can be sent to severely under-resourced schools in Uganda and Tanzania where curriculum's are in part taught in English. Any books that are collected that cannot be sent to East Africa are used to raise money to cover the cost of transport. You can donate books at anytime on the LSE campus at the Career Centre on floor 3 of Tower 3 where there is a book bin. There will also be a book bin at the book swap

The book swap will take place on Thursday 10 February at 6PM in the Fourth Floor Cafe (Old Building). You can get full details online at www.lse.ac.uk/spaceforthought.

LSE READ are always on the lookout for volunteers so if you are interested contact Rob and Ashna on lse@read-bookproject.org.uk. Alternatively you can make a donation at www.justgiving.com/readbookprojectLSE2010. You can find out more about READ at www.readinternational.org.uk



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“And I... will always love you”



This week GG witnessed unprecedented levels of infidelity within the AU. Those who are supposedly loved up at home and in long-term relationships seem to be living up to the old wives' saying of "whilst the cat's away the mice will play." And play they did.

LOVE YOU LONG TIME

Perhaps in a desperate bid to prove his heterosexuality, Little Paddy has been spreading his love to more than just his girlfriend (of two years). Accompanied by the biggest Welshman in LSE, they rode the nightbus to Liverpool Street and entered The House of Fun. GG has heard that perhaps Mr Big Forearms deserves

some credit, because apparently Little Pad stayed in his pants this week. Whether it was the memories of his girlfriend playing on his mind or Brewer's Droop, GG cannot specify, but GG can confirm that his Welsh Wingman had more luck with a Brazilian beauty.

COPPIN'S LOVE

On the general theme of infidelity, GG has been recently informed of an ongoing tryst that went under the radar. Word on the street is that Coppin's life partner has been playing away with a female, (not Libby Jones, the other one) who, coincidentally, is also playing away from her boyfriend. GG's email hacking skills can reveal that "no matter how hard she tries on a Wednesday night she just can't resist his charms." Yes, that's right, GG couldn't believe it either, but Zoo bar can do strange things to a girl.

LOVE SQUARE

Yet another item that slipped under GG's frankly faulty radar is the love-quadrangle that consists of a Scouse footballer, a fu-

ture Hollyoaks starlet, a Tank and a White Girl lost in Beijing. In a nutshell, GG can report that Scouse and Tank are living up to the maxim that "sharing IS caring", as GG's sources have revealed that they've each had their fun with both girls. The kids on the streets are saying that that the two ladies may have shared a passionate liaison on Wednesday, meaning that it is down the two gentleman to do the deed and finally complete the quadrangle.

LOVE WEDNESDAYS

Hopefully GG's eyes will be somewhat more peeled by this Wednesday as Old Girls and Boys alike return to their stomping ground to sing even worse karaoke than the Tuns has heard so far this term, and realise that they simply don't have the AU levels of tolerance for snakebite and vodka redbulls anymore, no matter how boozy they think they've been at their corporate drinks parties. All GG wants to know is, will we finally be able to hear the FC sing?

POVEY LOVES SPOURSEY. AND SEX.

Can you hear the 4th team sing?

Anonymous 5th Team footballer

Having been destroyed 3-0 by 'RUMs' (bottom of the league), El Classico was a must win game for the 4s in order to keep their title hopes alive. Unfortunately for the self proclaimed 'lady 4s' things did not go according to plan. Theoretically LSE 4s v. LSE 5s should be a routine victory for the higher team, however due to the politics and corruption in the FC the 5th team were widely regarded as the favourites going into Wednesdays game, particularly after their 2-0 drubbing of the 4s back in November.

With two of their supposed BNOc's in Ginger Chris and Noz missing, the 4s were even weaker than usual.

A beautiful game this was not. The pitch and the long ball tactics of the 4s ruined the match as a spectacle for the neutral, indeed the few spectators there were left at half time in disgust having expected to see the free flowing 5th team in all their glory. Nevertheless the 5th team were able to grind out a scrappy 1-0 win

courtesy of a tidy finish from Guy Murray and as a result are now sitting pretty at the top of ULU division one.

To be fair to the 4s they did create a few chances, which lead to claims from their side in Walkabout that Will Riley had pulled off '7 or 8 world class saves'. This is somewhat debatable but granted the concussed Demola did cause havoc down the right hand side making Lawro seem even slower than we knew he already was. Despite the service from Demola, Josh 'the fox in the box' Stacey once against crumbled in front of goal when he came up against superior opposition. It is yet to be confirmed whether he shed a tear after yet another defeat for his side.

The fact the 5th team were able to pull off a win, despite not playing to their full potential, bodes well for their quest to win successive league titles and once again reach the cup final. Viva la revolution.

AU SOCIAL CALENDAR

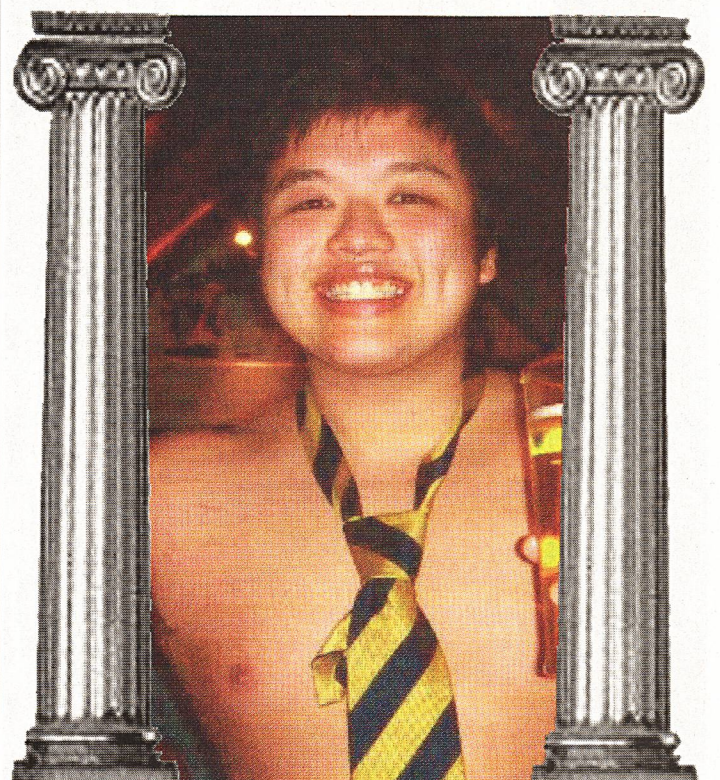
All you need to know to get you through the next few weeks of Lent Term

| Week 3 | Week 4 |
|--|--|
| <p>Re-AUnion: old boys and girls coming back to their roots, the Tuns and Zoo won't know what's hit them.</p> | <p>Take me out: King of the bozza Brendan is LSE's very own Paddy McGuinness. Let the sausage see the roll!</p> |
| Week 5 | Week 6 |
| <p>Pub Olympics: The annual rugby event goes AU-wide. Which Club has the best Olympians?</p> | <p>No AU-wide events scheduled Why not take the opportunity to catch up with your team in Chinatown or Brick Lane?</p> |
| Week 7 | Week 8 |
| <p>AU Elections hustings: Start preparing your manifestos now and fancy dress now. Do you think you have what it takes to be the next AU President?</p> | <p>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.</p> |



The 5s mixing with A-Listers. Apparently its Amira from Eastenders

OLD BOY TORSO OF THE WEEK



Sport



GG's radar has been on the blink, see inside to find out what's been missed

The return of the *real* 'Sex and Gender'

Alice Pelton

Tomorrow night you will find me in the Tuns with my old women's football team. I will be downing a pint of snakebite and screaming at somebody to 'get their rat out'. I haven't changed since I left the LSE and many of the alumni at the ReAU union won't have either. But that won't stop them from trying to convince you they're, like, far too cool for student nights.

Wearing a suit, talking loudly about their job in 'sales', imagining that they're years ahead of you in grace, intellect and drinking capacity. Don't be offended by the old-AUer's arrogance tomorrow, I urge you to just smile and wait. Wait for a few hours to pass and for Zoo bar to take its toll, for the shirt to become ripped and the chunder to emerge from within. They'll be spewing all over their degree certificates before you know it. Those triple vodka red bulls take no prisoners. We're all victims.

Unlike others, I'm not coming to ReAU-union to name-drop and talk about private equity. I'm coming back with a much grander purpose. There's a girl I need to 'sort out'. For those of you who don't know, I'm currently the girlfriend of RFC's Club Captain Tom Lennon, the scouse one. And it seems that there is another girl in the AU who would like a taste of Liverpool as well, the whore...

Perhaps it's best to start off with a recap. In my last ever Sex and Gender column last year I wrote how I'd never shagged anyone at the LSE. Well I did, the week after that column went to print, and although the condom got lost inside me for 10 minutes and Tom had to become my gynecologist and locate it in some dark corner of my anatomy (rugby players = big hands = no trip to A&E necessary = he's a keeper!) the sex was pretty good. 'Pretty good for a fresher' I believe, were my exact words at the time.

So I shagged Tom for a few months meaning I had to end it with Chad the American, who (as some of you may remember) was the one who accidentally

shat himself on a mirror whilst attempting to see what his own asshole looked like when he farted.

"I swiftly came to the conclusion that American boys are not all like the one's I'd seen in porn. They think that life is one big rom-com-esque metaphor waiting to happen."

Things with Chad were over anyway, although surprisingly not straight after the aforementioned shitting incident. It was a long distance, not-very-serious thing, and the final straw came in February last year when he decided to send me envelopes every week containing pieces of half a jigsaw puzzle along with a note that read 'when we're together at last, the puzzle will be complete'. Yes, I am not joking. I swiftly came to the conclusion that American boys are not all like the one's I'd seen in porn. They think that life is one big rom-com-esque metaphor waiting to happen.

Sadly, even though our relationship had broken up, I had to spend the upcoming summer with Chad in America, working at the summer camp that we had both met each other at the year before. But, without a lot of effort I managed to stay faithful to Tom and returned to England in September un-penetrated by any Americans.

Which brings me back to my issue tomorrow. It emerged last week that an anonymous girl had texted into the 'London Loves' section of the London Student

newspaper - the paper for which I write my new column, titled 'The Graduate'. The message read; 'For the Liverpool Rugby Club Captain, you danced close in Zoo bar on Wednesday night, I know you're taken, but I'm taken with you.'

You can bloody well take yourself back to school sweetheart if you think that's happening. I quite like Tom, and, as my old column readers will know, liking someone for this long is like, a big deal. Whilst initially he took my A-Z of fending advice column a little too literally (I was joking when I said I liked the crossed fingers 'G') and he does spend his life in Adidas track-

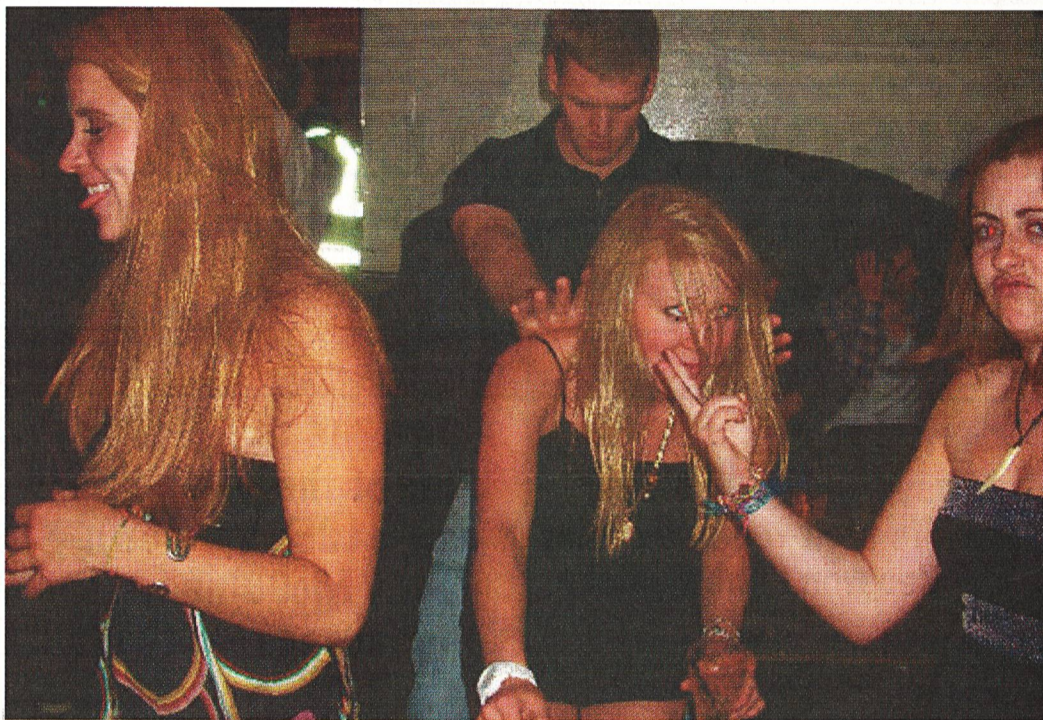
suit bottoms talking about protein and going to the gym, I like him. So whoever you are, I. Will. Find. You.

On a much lighter note, I've managed to find myself a job. Unfortunately LSE Careers Service didn't have any hand-outs or internship fairs for 'How to Become a Sex columnist', so I spent a few months after America working at some serious papers writing serious journalism, and I also spent time at the Daily Mail. But then I realized that it's very hard to get paid at newspapers and that I couldn't afford to live and work in London unpaid for 2 years (and unlike most people my 'Daddy'

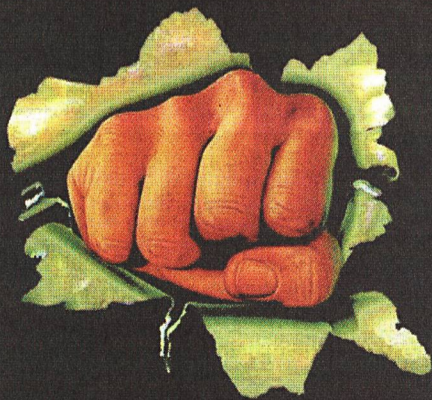
doesn't have 'a second flat in Kensington').

So I got a job to save up in order to be able to self-fund these forthcoming unpaid years of journalism ahead of me. I work for a millionaire entrepreneur who's launching a new luxury brand for dogs called Bob & Lush. My boss told me I got the job because he could imagine I'd be confident enough to 'go up and talk to dog walkers in parks.' I wasn't sure if that was a reference to dogging, but it's a marvelous job and we launch the brand in April.

That's my shameless plug over with. See you all tomorrow, and remember, whoever you are, I'm watching you.



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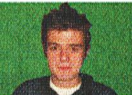
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Smedley's Corner



Hero, villain or just a product of cycling's system?

Stuart Smedley

That's the conundrum surrounding what Lance Armstrong's legacy should be, following a week in which yet more 'evidence' surfaced accusing the record-holding seven times Tour de France winner of wide-scale doping throughout his remarkable career.

Initially the accusations that the testicular cancer survivor cheated his way to victory from 1999 to 2005 in his sport's most prestigious race were put down to jealousy on behalf of the French - in particular its media, who were devastated that - gasp - an American had come to dominate their race. The Tour hadn't, and still hasn't, been won by a home rider since Bernard Hinault rode to glory for the fifth time way back in 1985.

Now though, even Armstrong's fellow Americans have rounded on him, fuelled by a cross-sport war on the dopers that began in 2003 following the unearthing of the BALCO steroid-ring, which amongst others implicated British sprinter Dwain Chambers.

This battle's victims already include a number of high profile stars, from baseball legend Barry Bonds to Olympic gold medalists Tim Montgomery and Marion Jones; the latter even spent six months in jail for lying to investigators about her performance enhancing drug use.

The apparently new allegations that emerged this week include former teammates of Armstrong stating that he used PEDs - most notably the blood-booster EPO - and encouraged others to follow his lead; that drugs and syringes were discovered in a bag of his by Swiss customs officials; and that he gained access

to a brand new 'wonder drug' unavailable to others.

Combined with the endless amount of allegations that have been thrown about before - three books collating these have even been written - it begs the question: how can Armstrong have been clean? Surely if so many sources, some of whom - former teammates and masseurs - have been extremely close to the rider, have come forward with such details, there is no way he can be innocent?

Yet, there is one important thing missing that leads many, including me, to believe otherwise: a positive test. Without that, all the circumstantial evidence that has been aired is purely hearsay.

As a seven time Tour winner and one of the highest profile athletes on the planet, Armstrong will have been tested endlessly. How then - if the accusations are true - did he throw up clean test after clean test?

Around him, a huge swathe of fellow competitors - including some of his biggest rivals such as Jan Ullrich, Ivan Basso, Alexandre Vinokourov and, the most recent Tour winner, Alberto Con-

tador - were caught in the act. Former teammates too, Tyler Hamilton and Floyd Landis being just two, were also found out.

Therefore, either Armstrong was clean or way, way ahead of the game when it came to evading detection. (If the latter, then he's just another name on a long list of cycling's cheaters.)

The claim that cycling's authorities needed a great champion with a Disney-esque life story following its 1998 annus horribilis, when the Tour de France became the Tour de Farce as a whole team was disqualified after a team car was found to be stocked full of doping products, is ridiculous too. No one athlete is bigger than his sport.

You would also think, if he did dope, that Armstrong would hold up his hands and confess given the punishment meted out to Jones; he'd be stupid not to put his pride before a prison sentence.

Whatever the answer is, it is certain that suspicion will continue to dog the now retired Armstrong. Even if the smoking gun still evades those out to bring him down.

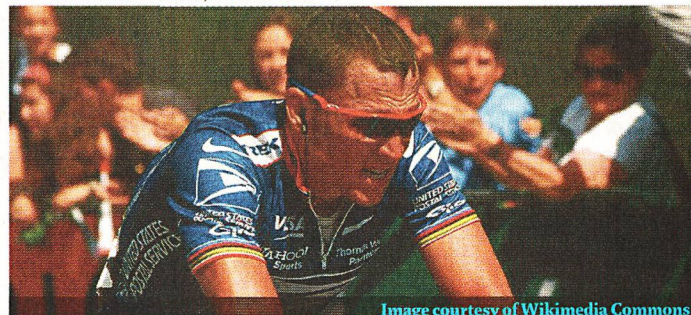


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