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The Beaver

5 October 2010
Newspaper of the
London School of Economics
Students' Union
thebeaveronline.co.uk

Patchy timetables leave students in the lurch

Nicola Alexander

Delays on LSE for You have left several hundred students still uncertain of the modules they will be taking this academic year.

According to reports, LSE for You, the tool used to personalise administrative information for students, has not been tracking profile updates over the course of the summer. The result is that some students are beginning the new academic year without a personal timetable, and are unsure of the courses they will be taking. The problems that arose last week are mainly a result of timetabling clashes between core modules and optional modules listed for some degrees.

Lists of possible modules for students who can take an outside option as part of their degree are available through the 'Course Selection' section in LSE for You. However, these lists have not been updated in time with timetabling and so at least some of the options are no longer valid. Several second-year students reading Government and Economics had selected optional courses such as 'Elements of Accounting and Finance' (AC100) or 'Logic' (PH101) in August. However, on 1st October, when personal timetables became available, they were notified that this selection was not possible as a result of a timetable clash with core modules. Students in the Department of Mathematics have been affected by similar difficulties; third-year undergraduate Alex Christou, reading Mathematics and Economics, provisionally selected an outside option run by the Language Centre. However, due to the course clashing with another of his courses, his timetable simply did not include any classes for the optional course. Christou said: "I was surprised that the course did not appear in my timetable at all, and that LSE For You did not notify me of the clash until I questioned the incomplete timetable."

Students have been left wondering why these potential outside modules were listed in the first place. Pepita Barlow,

reading Economics, said: "The fact that these modules were made available to us at the beginning of the summer and now, months later, we are told we can't take them, just shows how inefficient the system is."

The main cause for complaint is the lateness in notifying students for whom these clashes were a problem. Students were only informed that they would have to change their options when checking 'Student Timetable' on LSE for You on Friday. Furthermore, students are concerned that the clash issues were not picked up earlier by Heads of Department and Academic Advisers. In the run-up to the first week of Michaelmas Term, students confirmed their course choices with their Academic Advisers only to find out that these would have to be changed. One student affected said, "I had my courses checked and confirmed by my Academic Adviser on Thursday afternoon only to find out that I would have to change them on Friday. I really feel this is something the department or my Adviser should have picked up on." It would appear that the problem is rooted in a lack of co-ordination between Student Services and departments.

For the students affected by these timetabling clashes, there are concerns that they will begin Michaelmas Term without being assigned class groups and so miss introductory work for their modules. Since Student Services are unavailable over the weekend and only pledge to respond within five working days, students with these problems will essentially spend the first week unaware of what lectures and classes they should attend. In addition, several students have expressed frustration at the fact that they had already purchased textbooks for their modules only to find that they no longer have need of them.

In response to the situation, the Timetabling Manager Linda Taylor sent an apology email to all undergraduates on Friday afternoon. However, as Michaelmas Term begins, the issue remains unresolved.



Photo: Duncan McKenna

Surge in society sign-ups at Freshers' Fair

Calum Young

The LSE Students' Union reported a record sign-up rate for societies at last week's Freshers' Fair.

The number of students enrolled in sports clubs and societies reached 47,800 as of Friday 1st October, compared to 27,544 at the same time last year - a rise of over 70%.

However, the increase in sign-up rates was not uniform. Small and new societies have seen the biggest increases, while some traditionally more prominent societies have recorded falls in their membership this year. The Students' Union's Atheist and Humanist Society, established last year, recorded 120 new members while the membership of the Economics Society fell from 1,400 to 600. Catherine Capone, President of the Atheist and Humanist Society stated: "Our growth is no surprise to me; we have many speakers already booked covering a wide range of topics from science and religion, medical research, fundamentalism, a faith schools debate and many more."

The dramatic increase was attributed to changes in the Freshers' Fair layout and payment mechanism. The Students' Union developed a quicker and more efficient enrolment system which centralised payment, rather than leaving individual societies responsible for their own sign-up charges. Aiden Hewitt, a first year Economics student, said, "I have been surprised by how well the Freshers' Fair has been run".

>> continues on page 4

Homophobic taunts mar LGBT Society stall

Chu Ting Ng
Sachin Patel

The President of the Students' Union's LGBT Society has claimed to have been the target of homophobic comments during last week's Freshers' Fair.

Reagan Persaud, who is also the Students' Union's elected LGBT Officer, expressed regret following the incident, which took place on the Tuesday of Freshers' Fair. Persaud alleged that four students approached him while he was manning the society's stall, and provoked him with a series of taunts, goading him

to retaliate.

When Persaud attempted to deflect the group's insults by joking with them, his actions prompted further verbal aggression, though fortunately no violence ensued.

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The Beaver

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Issue No. 729

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Sign-ups, cock-ups, and liberty

Walking round campus this week during Freshers' Fair, it was difficult not to feel a sense of collective solidarity among the community at the LSE. This year's record sports clubs and society sign-up rates (see cover story) are testament to the vibrant social life that we enjoy. Detractors suggest that societies reinforce national distinctions among LSE students, but the majority are grouped around common interests or beliefs rather than ethnicity. With that in mind we are particularly pleased with the increase in membership recorded by the Atheist Society and the Hummus Society. The majority of LSE societies bind people from different backgrounds together rather than emphasising their differences - this newspaper welcomes such inclusive values.

Naturally, in a community as large and diverse as the LSE, the question of how individuals should coexist together with vastly different and often opposing viewpoints, looms large. Unfortunately

this week saw at least one serious violation of the spirit of toleration and the liberal values which usually preside over Houghton Street (see page 4). Exactly where freedom of expression ends and personal security begins is a dilemma which resonates as much within the school's Philosophy classrooms as it does in its restaurants and social spaces. There are no easy answers, but there is also an obvious code of conduct which governs mature behaviour. When it comes to personal decisions, the individual is sovereign, which isn't a bad guiding sentiment for your time at university.

This week's issue also deals with far less weighty matters than freedom of speech. The LSE for You cock-up has left hundreds of students without a timetable for their first week back at university (see cover story). Others still haven't been able to choose their courses for this academic year and class registers in many cases still have not been activated. As the LSE fights to improve its international reputation as a centre of excellence and improved levels of student satisfaction, this basic

administrative failing doesn't make for a great start to the year.

In a week when a new year of bright undergraduates have been welcomed to the School, now also seems an appropriate time to reflect on the quality of the LSE's product. Students starting their first year this week will have heard a great deal about 'self-guided learning at university'. In the LSE's case this all too often means a complete lack of teaching support. Being self-reliant is an important part of the transition to higher-education, but it's no substitute for proper encouragement and help from academics. Too often, the relationship between undergraduates and LSE staff is limited to a 20 minute conversation with a tutor at the end of each term. This at a time when Oxbridge students enjoy tiny tutorial groups and lots of individual attention. In contrast, personal relationships between students and staff are the exception rather than the rule within the LSE model. This newspaper would welcome more one-to-one teaching time between staff and students.

Get involved in **The Beaver!**

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COLLECTIVE

The Beaver's governing body will meet on **Tuesday 12 October 2010**, to elect the following:

**Collective Chair,
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and Web Editor**

and generally have a fun time.

D602, 6PM -

All welcome; see you there!

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CLARE MARKET REVIEW

The journal of the LSE Students' Union

su.claremarketreview@lse.ac.uk

AGM on Wednesday 6th of October
18:00 in D202

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Overseas students banking on early enrolment

Vivek Kotecha

Many international students at the LSE have been unable to open a UK bank account in the weeks following their arrival in London.

Some students have resorted to spending on credit cards, incurring exorbitant charges; furthermore, many have been left with no access to a contract phone.

The problems has stemmed from the requirement stipulated by many UK banks that international students provide proof of university registration. With registration only taking place last week, many of those who arrived earlier have faced, at worst, a few weeks living off cash reserves or spending on foreign credit cards thus paying commission on currency exchanges. In addition, without a UK bank account it can be difficult to obtain a contract

phone, which has left many students without their daily blackberry fix.

Students have complained about the lack of information they have received on this issue, and some have called for a more flexible registration process so that they can register earlier if they need to. Furthermore, many students are finding UK banks to be inconsistent with their application rules, with individual bank staff asking for different requirements for opening the same account.

The LSE Students' Union last week ran an event explaining how to open a bank account, to increase students' awareness of the often-exacting requirements. Speaking on the issue Charlotte Gerada, the Students' Union's General Secretary, said: "International students make up the largest section of LSE's demographic, pay some of the highest fees and yet seem to consistently get the rawest deal. Coming to the UK – sometimes for the first time – is a daunting, complicated and challeng-

ing enough time as it is."

Referring to the current enrolment process, Gerada continued: "Having to live out of the change in your pockets until you register through LSE's outdated, slow and bureaucratic enrolment system is too rigid and simply unacceptable. LSE's system should be changed to either allow students to enrol earlier if necessary." She added that the logical advance would be to "allow online enrolment".

The General Secretary cited the School's previous policy enactment regarding the Rent Guarantor Scheme as evidence of their willingness to act in instances posing "potential financial risk for the School". By comparison, a change to online enrolment would represent "a practical solution, tailored to the majority of the student body", adding that it "seems like a reasonable ask."

In response to the concerns raised the School stated: "LSE is keen to ensure all new students have access to clear and

timely information about how to open a bank account. This is why we send students a guide to opening a UK account before they arrive at the LSE and hold 'How to Open a Bank Account' days during registration, where students can meet representatives from different UK banks. LSE is also in close contact with banks to clarify, in advance, what is needed from international students. Different banks require different forms of documentation and normally require proof of being registered at LSE. This is why we recommend international students bring enough funds to cover expenses if moving to London before registration week."

The statement continued: "The School is considering the timing of registration and looking at a number of options. Bringing registration forward would be dependent on other factors, such as the availability of suitable accommodation."

News in brief

TUNS UNTIL THREE

The Three Tuns has applied to the City of Westminster to extend their opening hours to 3am on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Previously, The Three Tuns is open to LSE students and the public until 11pm on weekdays under a standard Pub license. The application has been approved, and so The Three Tuns will be able to provide entertainment, sell refreshments and supply alcohol for an additional 12 hours a week. The application was submitted on 23rd August, and has since been processed by the Council.

LOW INCOME? LOW INTAKE

Only 18% of LSE students are from 'manual occupational/routine backgrounds' according to a recent report from the Higher Education Statistics Authority. This compares to an average of 32% across all UK universities. This has been attributed to various factors such as low aspiration, a lack of support and guidance, the possibility of fee increases, admission selection and the choice of courses. This compares to 21% at UCL and 11.5% at the University of Oxford, which is the lowest proportion in the country.

I CANNOT ROAM YET

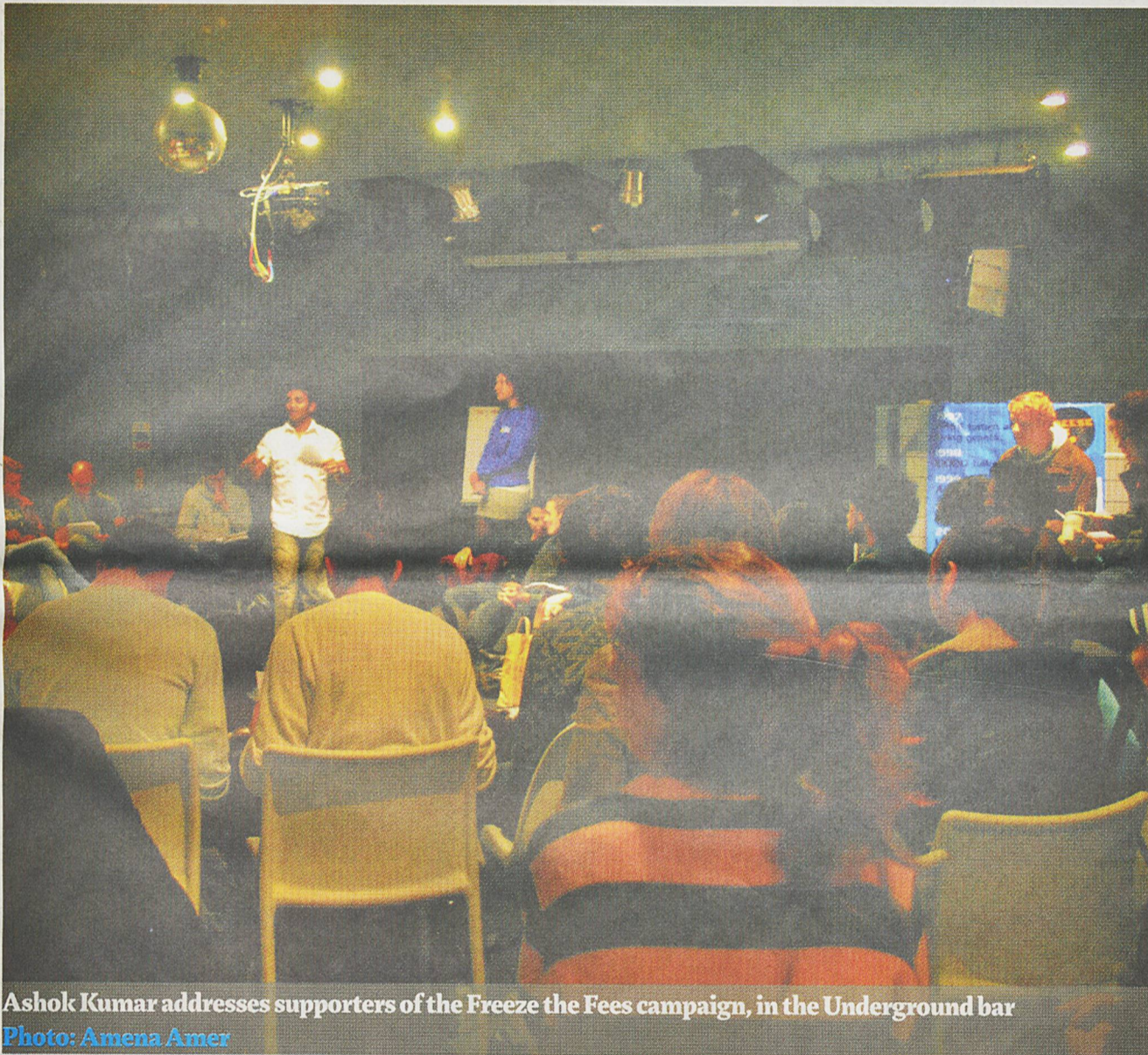
I-Roam, the Library laptop lending initiative scheduled to launch last week, has been delayed again. According to Library staff the 60 laptops have now been delivered to LSE and are being secured by LSE staff so that they will be ready to use. Although no new launch date has been specified, it is hoped that the laptops will be in use by the end of the week or next week at the very latest. The blue laptop safes, where all the laptops will be stored to recharge, are empty but in place on the first, second and third floors of the library.

SQUID SUCCESS

LSE has successfully launched sQuid, a scheme that will enable students to load money onto their LSE ID cards as a payment method on campus. All new LSE cards are fitted with the sQuid functionality, and students can check their balance at digital points around campus. Students can top up their balance online. So far the system can be used to purchase food from the Garrick and 4th Floor Restaurant, among others. The sQuid system can also be accessed in the Library when paying for printing and also in some LSE halls.

STUDENTS SHOW A LOT OF RELOVE

From frivolous fancies to student stalwarts, all sorts of items were up for grabs at last week's LSE Students' Union Relove Sale. The sale, held in the Quad's versatile surroundings, gave students the chance to purchase second-hand goods that their peers kindly donated. Wednesday was the Students' Union Environment and Ethics day with a bike sale and a cheap food coop also taking place.



Ashok Kumar addresses supporters of the Freeze the Fees campaign, in the Underground bar

Photo: Amena Amer

KUMAR GRILLED BY FREEZE THE FEES HOPEFULS

Around 40 students attended a meeting for the "Freeze the Fees" campaign last Friday, which took place in the Underground bar.

In among some familiar faces were many freshers, who took the opportunity to direct their questions about the campaign at the Students' Union's Sabbatical Officers. In addition, students were able to opt in to various organising committees where they felt they could best contribute to the cause.

The LSE Students' Union's Education Officer, Ashok Kumar, expressed his satisfaction with the event, stating that "crucial developments" were made.

Several possible events were also discussed, to take place during the Freeze Festival, due to commence on 4th November. Among these, those present at the meeting considered running a Phone Bank, setting up an ice bath on Houghton Street, and showing ice-themed films around campus.

Adding to the sentiment of positivity enveloping the campaign, the National Union of Students' Vice President for Development, Ed Marsh, has described "Freeze the Fees" as "the most successful organising drive on any campus in recent decades".

LSE Research magazine "expands horizons" of students

Poorna Harjani

The second issue of LSE Research magazine has been released, covering the major social and economic policy challenges of today.

Edited by Stryker McGuire, a contributing editor of Newsweek, the magazine sends a reminder of the LSE's motto, 'rerum cognoscere causas' – to know the causes of things. Contributors to this issue include an IMF economist, a former analyst at the United Nations, a Harvard fellow, the historian Niall Ferguson, and Nicholas Stern, previously chief economist at the World Bank.

The magazine focuses on summaries of research currently taking place at the LSE. Dr. Wendy Sigle-Rushton, a senior lecturer in Social Policy, has found that divorce rates are lower in families where husbands help more with housework, shopping and childcare. In another recent paper, LSE's Department of Management argues that powerful leaders make worse decisions as a result of a domineering

mindset.

Another interesting finding comes from Dr. Catherine Hakim, a senior research fellow in the Department of Sociology, who has coined the term 'erotic capital'. This encompasses the idea that beauty and sex appeal now hold as much importance as educational qualifications in the labour market, as well as the arenas of politics, art and the media.

The previous Spring issue debated Barack Obama's efforts to reform the United States health insurance system. It featured a cover story by Social Policy guru Julian Le Grand and Zack Cooper, both of whom have worked with policy makers on both sides of the Atlantic.

An important academic study in this season's issue found that some people have a genetic bias towards running up credit card debts. Those with "an inefficient version of a gene previously linked to impulsive and addictive behaviour are significantly more likely to have overspent on credit cards."

The magazine also features sections on special reports, climate change, policy and technology, all from a solely academic

perspective.

In this autumn issue, Michael Cox and Odd Arne Westad, the co-directors of LSE IDEAS centre discuss the power shift from the West to the East from very different angles. Cox, on the one hand, argues that the West should not be written off as yet, while Westad shows the need to look beyond the power shift to its consequences. He draws specific attention to how China's rise will affect its neighbours.

Readers are invited to share 'out of the box' views and learn from outside their own curriculum. Unlike listening to lectures, such articles can help students master the structuring of their own arguments and can even be used as reference points for their own dissertations and postgraduate studies.

Dhiraj Nainani, studying Law, says, "To a Masters student, a publication like LSE Research is invaluable. They offer an opportunity to witness multi-departmental views on myriad current issues, and give students fresh viewpoints to engage with. But more importantly, they also expand horizons while keeping LSE students engaged with the faculty around them."

In 2008 LSE's outstanding success in the Research Assessment Exercise confirmed it as a world-leading research university. The School had the highest percentage of world leading research of any university in the UK, topping or coming close to the top of numerous rankings for research excellence. Two-thirds of LSE staff work in departments ranked in the top five in the country, and 26 per cent work in departments ranked first in the country.

This is one portal out of many which tap into the School's excellence in peer-reviewed work, pre-publication research and excerpts of findings, with the unique strength of being able to give an overview of LSE's sheer breadth of research facilities and advancements to real world policies. LSE Research magazine is a collection of intellectuals' work, enriched by the School's international student body, faculty and other partnerships with world-class institutions.



Relove Sale in the Quad

Photo: Duncan McKenna

Homophobic taunts mar LGBT Society stall

“surprised at how well the Fair has been run”

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Stalls were mapped throughout Clement House making individual societies easier to find. Students' Union staff were on-hand to direct Freshers around the building and to give out accompanying literature.

However, concerns were raised by loopholes within the new enrolment system. Students have complained that the distinction between registration with a society and payment allowed some individuals to abuse the system. Promotional giveaways such as mugs, t-shirts and bags were taken prior to any payment

being made, leaving some societies out of pocket.

Encouragingly, over 1,500 students joined societies through the Students' Union's new website, a fact attributed to the site's clearer layout and the new payment system developed over the summer. Charlotte Gerada, General Secretary of the LSE Students' Union, said the high rate of online sign-ups “speaks volumes” about the work that the Sabbatical Officers have put into the new website.

Yet while the Freshers' Fair experience has improved in recent years, there remains significant room for improvement. Gerada added: “Our next step: persuading the School once and for all that we need a more workable space, or at least total dominance of Clement House. Let the battle once again commence.”

» continued from page 1

Though the LSE is known for being a relatively tolerant community, it was perhaps inevitable that an event with as broad a target audience as Freshers' Fair might cause some form of unpleasantness to arise.

Hero Austin, the Students' Union's Community & Welfare Officer, had the following to say on the matter: “We are obviously very concerned that behaviour like this is take place at the School. As a uniquely diverse learning environment, the LSE should always be mindful of different opinions, beliefs and orientations within the student community. I would welcome an opportunity to speak with Reagan personally, and we can talk about

if and how he would like to take this issue forward.”

Responding to the incident, former Students' Union LGBT Officer Scott MacDonald stated: “People need to realise that there are openly LGBT people all around them, not simply on the television or as subjects in PSHE classes.” He added that “the LGBT Society and the LGBT Assembly will be working hard to raise awareness of LGBT issues on campus” throughout the year.

» “Britain's more tolerant, but there's still a way to go”
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Orientation Week plays host to the LSE Comedy Festival, showcasing the School's finest rib-tickling talent

Students bemused by missing society stalls

Hannah Brock

Many students were left disappointed upon finding their favourite societies absent from last week's Freshers' Fair.

The Fair, which took place on Tuesday and Wednesday of the Orientation week, saw six floors of Clement House filled with stalls for the LSE Students' Union's societies. Freshers' Fair represents the main opportunity for new and continuing students to join a wide range of societies at the start of the academic year. Over 300 societies used the event as an opportunity to boost their membership and get

students involved.

Some societies failed to man their stalls for all or significant portions of the two day event. Notable societies who were not present for the entire event included the London Theatre Society, the Politics Society and the French Society, resulting in significant difficulties for students eager to sign up.

Second-year undergraduate Katharine Collard said: “I was a member of the London Theatre Society last year and the society gave such good opportunities to see West End shows, that I was disappointed I could not find the society's stall at this year's fair, to rejoin.”

The Politics Society blamed their

absence from their stall on a last minute room change: “We were asked to move from the second to the third floor and this caused some confusion for potential members.”

There are worries that lower membership, as a result of this lost opportunity to entice new members, could affect the success of these societies in the coming year without fresh blood to sit on committees.

Fortunately for both students and societies, there are still several ways to sign up – either by visiting the Activities and Resources Centre in the East Building, or by using the new online sign-up system on the Students' Union's website.



Freeze the Fees simmering nicely

Vivek Kotecha

An “escalation style campaign” has been promised by the LSE Students' Union's Education Officer at the first “Freeze the Fees” campaign meeting.

The meeting, which took place last Friday, was designed to inform students about the campaign's demands and to hear students' proposals on how to carry out the campaign.

The Students' Union's Sabbatical Of-

ficers claimed that they have been winning the support of numerous LSE Governors, in addition to the 2,100 students who signed up for the campaign during Orientation Week. The Education Officer, Ashok Kumar, stated that members of the School's Senior Management were receptive to the campaign's proposals.

Proposals for possible campaign actions were presented with suggestions such as large posters running down LSE buildings, chalking classrooms and placing banners around campus. Many of these may take place in a week-long

Freeze Festival, which will commence on 4th November.

Six committees were set up to organise and implement the campaign, with students opting into the ones in which they wished to be involved. The committees include ones for media, policy, and day-to-day administration. There will also be a committee charged with organising the proposed actions on 10th November, on which date there is to be a national demonstration convened by the National Union of Students (NUS).

This Thursday at 1PM a resolution will

be presented to the Union General Meeting (UGM) to make “Freeze the Fees” a legitimate campaign of the LSE Students' Union. While it is known that the UGM will provide a forum for further discussion about the campaign, it is believed that an actual vote on whether to adopt the campaign will take place at a later date, or through a referendum. If the campaign is in due course given legitimacy by the student electorate, then the Sabbatical Officers will present the proposals to various LSE decision-making committees such as the Academic Planning and Resources

committee, the Finance committee and the LSE Council. These committees will ultimately decide whether the LSE will adopt the proposals of the SU.

» Comment – page 9



Standard Friday night revelry at Crush concludes Orientation Week 2010
Photo credit: Hannah Dyson

Fears of queueing catastrophe Crushed

Shrina Poojara

The first Crush of the academic year has proved to be one of the biggest (and messiest) yet.

The LSE Students' Union self-described "London's Number One Friday Night Student Night", Crush succeeded in selling all 500 tickets available online, 24 hours in advance of the event, and priced at £5 each.

This did not stop over one hundred ticketless students from turning up outside the Quad throughout the night. Bouncers at the event had spoken of long queues developing from around 8:30PM, but many students who arrived after 9:30PM were surprised at the short waiting time. Nikita Gupta, a second year student, said, "My friends and I turned up to Crush at about ten thirty without tickets and thought we would probably get turned away, but we were surprised when we didn't have to queue for longer than fifteen minutes and we got into the Quad pretty easily." This early influx of revellers resulted in hour-long queues to enter the venue later on in the night. Buying a ticket only guaranteed entry to those who arrived before 11PM, meaning that many students who had bought tickets in advance found it difficult or impossible to gain admission into the Quad.

Responding to students' uncertainty over the distinction between different ticket types, Andrea Strachan, the General Manager of the LSE Students' Union,

commented: "The majority of tickets are on the door. The aim of the pre-sold tickets is to reduce general queuing time into the venue," as opposed to giving those with tickets priority access into the Quad.

Crush has maintained its reputation among LSE students as a unique experience, at which students meet up and enjoy loud music and cheap alcohol. Despite being a weekly event usually attended by a varying crowd, the first Crush of every academic year is notoriously over-attended, particularly due to first-years hoping to meet other Freshers in the inimitable surroundings of the Quad. Contrary to their expectations, Friday night instead saw many disappointed Freshers made to wait in line, despite pre-booking tickets, as security carefully monitored the flow of people into the Quad. As such, many students were irritated that their foresight had had no effect on how quickly they were admitted into Crush, as they waited in the same queues as those who hadn't bought tickets.

Vivek Dasani, a second-year Economics undergraduate, said, "LSE Crush is easily the best place for students to go on a Friday night, but sometimes the poor ticket stipulations mean some people miss out on what is a great night out," adding that Crush represented a "valuable night for first years, especially in terms of meeting new people."

In addition, many students who stepped outside of the venue found that they had to queue again for re-entry, an irregular occurrence at Crush. The crowd of people outside the Three Tuns attempting

to gain or regain entry mirrored the m el e of students on the main dancefloor, with frustrated students attempting to push and shove their way past the bouncers. One unidentifiable Fresher, who had managed to push her way past the bouncers back into the building, slipped on the floor of the Tuns and found herself carried back outside by two bouncers. Maryam Khan, a first year Accounting and Finance student, said: "The massive queue outside seems a bit unnecessary. Crush is a great student night but at the end of the day, it's not exactly one of the most exclusive nightclubs in London."

Crush takes place every Friday in the LSE Students' Union on Houghton Street, between 10PM and 2AM.

Tickets are available both on the door and online on the LSE Students' Union website at www.lse.su.com/whatson

“
There were a lot of people in Crush tonight. But that's what makes the atmosphere at every first Crush so electric... That and the cheap beer!

- Liam Singh, second-year Philosophy and Economics student

“
There was a really friendly atmosphere, and the drinks were reasonably priced. The only negatives were the sweatiness and the queues.

- Kelly Sidebottom, second-year undergraduate

”

”



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Comment

The Brothers Miliband and other stories

Neha Jain



However slowly the Labour leadership contest progressed, it managed to generate tense fascination due to the familial competition at its heart. While safely out of the cultural grasp of bloody sibling rivalries that now rest dormant in the pages of history - Elizabeth and Mary, Romulus and Remus and the Gracchus brothers come to mind - popular culture has persisted in teaching us that such a power struggle rarely has a happy ending. The Bee Gees were plagued with sibling strife and now the Gallagher brothers' consistently competitive and often violent relationship has culminated in Oasis's split.

Although the fraternal amity was undisputed through David's vigorous, verging on patronising, congratulatory pats on Ed's back, it is hard to judge the depth of the emotional wounds inflicted upon David as Ed uprooted the tacit law of the dominance of the older brother. The 'Wayne Rooney of the Cabinet' (actually intended as a compliment) and the long-standing favourite to win in the party leadership, David was armed with the most high-profile political experience after holding four Cabinet positions and formerly leading the Number 10 Policy Unit. He now finds himself further entrenched in the jaws of defeat by refusing to compete for a place in the Shadow Cabinet, ending his reign in frontline politics. Or at least for now.

It is not unreasonable to take David's word that such a decision has not only been made out of devotion to his family life but also for the sake of Ed's leadership to avoid 'distracting and destructive attempts to find division where there is none, and splits where they don't exist'. In fact, it was clear from the outset that the Milibands had no intention of having the co-existing and politically supportive relationship of the Kennedy brothers, no matter how infallible the shows of sincerity and loyalty.

Despite his father's socialist idealism and much unlike his brother, David Miliband has come to accept realpolitik as the necessary guiding factor in political rule and compromise. He was able to digress from his bookish roots upon becoming MP for South Shields which opened his eyes to the everyday concerns of the Labour constituency and he has sought to reiterate Old Labour ideals. Brother Ed, on the other hand, based his campaign on the failures of the New Labour project. This nuance of a difference, generalised by David Blunkett as Ed being person-orientated and David policy-orientated, served as the divisive factor between the two brothers. David supporters have accused Ed of playing dirty through his crowd-pleasing tactics, assuring that he would not have voted for the Iraq War had he

been an MP in 2003 and empty stating that 'reforming our benefits system is not about stereotyping everybody out of work, it's about transforming their lives'.

Perhaps David is the best leader Labour never had

David, however ambivalent at times, took a more pragmatic stance in his interview with the Guardian: 'It neither makes sense to get into an adoration of the magi stance of the New Labour project, nor a repudiationist stance'. Also, he has taken a more clear and hawkish approach on cutting the fiscal deficit.

Miliband Senior should be applauded in remaining frank about his intentions, backed by over a decade of governmental experience. Perhaps there lies some truth in the party's remorse that David is the best leader Labour never had. Yet for all of the fervency and enthusiasm displayed during his campaign, even insinuating his reawakening as a politician 'different to the one I was three months ago', David's decision to stand down from a cabinet position, a position to enforce the very changes he promised, remains inadequately justified in the short term.

Time will tell whether David's decision to back down will work in the favour of the 'Draft David' campaign, and perhaps David's casual demeanour is a sign of quiet confidence about potential leadership in years to come, but the sour air of humiliation surrounding this defeat is too strong for him to ignore.



We had Ed last week, so it's only fair to include the other one
Photo: flickr user Christian O'Brien

John Ashbourne



Coverage of last week's Labour leadership election centred on the drama of a fraternal contest between the Brothers Miliband. While the BBC, Rupert Murdoch and the 'blogosphere' writ large produced an endless stream of uninteresting and uninformed speculation on how the contest will affect the Milibands' relationship, a bigger question may have been missed.

Is it normal, or desirable, that so many politicians come from 'political families'?

Should anyone be worried that Labour voters choosing their candidate for the next Prime Minister were effectively limited to choosing between the scions of a family which has been tied to the Labour party for decades? Or that, when choosing his Shadow Chancellor, Ed Miliband's selection seems to be between Ed Balls and the third-place finisher's wife, Yvette Cooper?

There are, of course, two ways of looking at the roles that families play in democratic politics.

On the one hand, one might say that families often have similar careers. Perhaps Ralph Miliband's involvement in left-wing politics was inspiring to both of his sons; many children decide to follow in their parents' foot-steps. A large number of dentists choose to marry other dentists, and it shouldn't be surprising that Members of Parliament might choose to marry other Members of Parliament. Indeed a relationship with another MP might be easier; they understand the time commitments that the job entails. While relationships could become awkward when one partner has to put their career on hold (Ms Cooper, for instance, might have run for Labour leader had Mr Balls not been a candidate), at least the couple is guaranteed to share an interest at the breakfast table.

While some parties may be dominated by a few families or, in a few cases, by a single family, the final choice rests with the voters. If the population wants to vote for a leader with strong family connections to a former leader, who are we to say they shouldn't? And voters seem to be doing just that, especially in Asia, where the president or prime ministers of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia are all the children or spouses of former leaders.

While the new Labour leader may be part of a well-connected family, he was still elected by his party (or at least the trade unions). We aren't living in North Korea, where an ageing Kim Jong-il seems to have anointed his 27-year-old son Kim Jong-un with the unenviable job of leading the world's most surreal nuclear power. Voters still make the final choice.

On the other hand, a political class

featuring more and more political families could be an early sign that barriers are preventing those of us without connections from getting ahead.

As in any career, personal networks are important in getting ahead. It would be supremely naïve to assume that there are no advantages to being friends with the CEO's daughter or playing bridge with the minister's assistant. Unlike in other careers, though, the public has a strong interest in avoiding a system in which promotes the connected over the competent.

If a culture that emphasizes personal connections does exist, family networks are the example that is most obviously visible. Of all of the networks that help politicians move past their rivals, their family is one of the few that is both lasting and objectively verifiable. We've noticed that being raised in the Miliband household seems to provide an edge in Labour politics; we might not notice if a number of the cabinet all share the same friends.

None of this, it must be said, should be taken as an implied criticism of the Miliband brothers. There is no evidence that they have acted improperly in helping each other's careers, but the fact that they both rose to the top of the party might say something about the value of being raised in a family that was always well connected to the Labour Party.

This is an advantage that few have. Though it does not reflect badly in any way on a person that they should be born into a family that gives them a 'head-start' over other aspirant politicians, it is an unfair and worrying when such advantages become de-facto requirements for serious political careers.

It's unfair because the vast majority of people were not born into the 'right families', attend the 'right schools', and don't spend their time in the 'right circles'. It is worrying if the rest of us begin to think that politics is a game only for those who are lucky enough to have a shot at it.

In some countries political families are the overt result of nepotism. Few should doubt the corruption of ruling families in Sri Lanka or Pakistan. The worry in Britain, of course, is not that Florence Cameron will inherit the premiership in 2035, but that the advantages that she has over Alice Average will discourage the Alices of the world from bothering to try.

An open political system should attract all sorts of talents, not rise life-time politicians in what they see as their family business. The proliferation of political families could mean that politics is becoming the lifestyle of a small subset of the population, not an opportunity that welcomes all citizens.

Labour supporters have put their faith in the younger Mr Miliband as their new leader. This is their right, and supporters of democracy should wish for a strong opposition to hold the government of the day to account. We should also hope that the man's family connections to his party are a coincidence and were not a necessity to his victory.

The Course Selection at the LSE is a fiasco

Daniel Lahey



Like a lot of you, I was under the impression that I had been accepted to LSE as a postgraduate student when I received my letter of offer in the mail. But in reality that was just stage one of a long, painfully drawn-out gauntlet of a process to register for my preferred courses.

You see, just being accepted to this venerable institution is not enough. For the ubiquitous capped courses that litter many programme course lists, you are required to submit to an additional assessment, known as a supporting state-

ment, whereby you make your case to the appropriate professor in 200 words or less for why you are worthy of their tutelage.

But that's not all. You are then required to justify your course selection to the overseers of your postgraduate programme in a separate field. Then you are directed to essentially twiddle your thumbs for two weeks while school staff deliberate over the acceptability of your course choices.

This stiflingly bureaucratic feature of course selection is just one of many problems currently racking the process. In spite of its pleasant sounding name, LSE for You, the principal vehicle through which this gong show unfolds, is an incomprehensible maze of a computer system. Incessant updates and a buggy interface make dealing with it an utter nightmare, as well as a sure-fire way of raising your blood pressure beyond recommended levels.

Next up, there's the shocking inability of the School to stick to the course selection dates and times originally indicated. First, at the eleventh hour, the beginning of course selection was randomly pushed back a whole week from September 20th to September 27th. Then, on the 27th, the course selection tab in LSE For You was inaccessible for an hour and a half past the 10am planned start time. All in all, selecting courses could not be a more excruciating ordeal.

There's a better way to do this. First, the school needs to adopt a computer system that functions properly, ideally in a somewhat reliable fashion. I'm not a particularly tech-savvy individual, but I'm certain there must be at least a couple of superior systems available for sale in the international market. Maybe we can get Bill Gates to agree to do a speaking event if LSE purchases a Microsoft system

at whatever exorbitant price he's selling them for. Win-win.

Secondly, LSE needs to do away with the ridiculous capped course approach, which has essentially turned course selection into a secondary application process to the school. Instead, it should be conducted the good old fashioned way: first come, first served.

My previous university did things this way, so I speak from experience when I say that it is a considerably smoother, more pain free method. On the first day of course selection, students would clamber out of bed at ungodly hours to be the first to log onto the school system and exercise their untrammelled right to select any of the courses on offer. No supporting statements or other similarly laborious tasks were necessary, beyond complying with the broader requirements of your particular degree. Once a course filled up,

that was it, better luck next year.

Is the approach I'm proposing somewhat cut-throat and impersonal? Sure. Is it unfair to those hapless souls whose internet connection happens to cut out five minutes before show time? You bet. But at least there is no gruelling period of uncertainty over which seminars to attend and which books to read. You can just get on with the school year.

More importantly, though, is that this approach is underpinned by the fundamental notion that when you are accepted to a postgraduate programme, you should be at liberty to register for all the courses in it without having to fight your way through a veritable mountain of red tape. Given the price tag for attending this place, I don't think that's an unreasonable request.

Pakistan's a-pathetic summer

Sitting back comfortably watching the Pakistan flood unfold was only enough for a time

Rimmel
Mohydin



Pakistan is used to being in the headlines, and as is conventional with journalism it's usually bad news that makes for big news. This summer we had Mother Nature joining in the fun and literally drowning a fifth of the country into unspeakable figures worth of damage. You know how the story goes: disaster strikes, the financial giants reach into their bottomless pockets, spare some change and wait for the next tsunami, Katrina and earthquake to pay their respects.

Perhaps it was the image of a little boy hanging off of a telephone pole for dear life or the fact that it struck so close to home or Ban Ki-Moon's claim that of all the disasters he had witnessed, there was indeed 'nothing like this' but I felt these floods were slightly different. Many interpretations buzzed their way into an already depressed atmosphere. Environmentalists earnestly called it undisputable evidence for climate change. Many blamed Karma. Some went on to bluntly state that God hates Pakistan. Others just clucked their tongues in sympathy and changed the TV channel.

I too, watching from a safe distance, joined the heated debates about who was to blame and sat up straighter when Angelina Jolie came to Pakistan. However, when words gave way to action, I was silent. I hesitated to reach for my wallet because I was uncomfortable with my money just finding its way into another corrupt bureaucrat's. I used lack of access as an excuse for my laziness to take matters into my own hands. I figured that my mealy contribution would not be missed.

Bad, bad idea.

I realized that by withdrawing myself from empathising with people who simply happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, I had engaged in something much worse than anything Mother Nature's neutrality could throw at them. I had replaced the nagging thought that maybe I should do whatever I could with a smugly self-assured belief that someone else would do the job.

The reason why apathy is often missed as one of the great evils is because of the way it saunters in the background behind the bangs and fireworks of lies, deception and the other big names. It can disguise itself very well when we decide that a country's PR should determine

whether or not the faultless people of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan, Sindh, Balochistan and Southern Punjab deserve our help. But by being comfortable with turning my back on 21 million people, I had placed myself much in the same category as those who decided to use the floods as an opportunity to profit their own bank accounts. By arbitrarily placing the Pakistani people under the label the Taliban has been so kind to lend us, the global community found its own reasons to take a step back.

That's all well and good except for a slight problem. You see, human beings have never been a self-sufficient breed. We don't produce our own food, we rely on heating and layers to protect us and our instincts often lead to more problems

than provide a life guide. As a result we are designed to connect with others and is exactly why we seek relationships, commitments and unbreakable bonds. It is denying our intrinsic nature to reach out and help when we decide to befriend apathy.

Whether it's my own indifference, yours or the international community's, the point remains that there are many people waiting in the hope that the world is not unconcerned about the fact that they live under tents with no sustenance in the hub of disease. Every day, they lose part of that optimism just as the floods lose their space on the front page of newspapers. I will not call it our duty because that implies doing something that is not natural to us. However, this is appealing

to our base core, the part that wants to do something, the part that reminds us that we are human.

No one is asking for magic. We all possess our own share of being part of the miracle that is our inner humanity. When we connect with a person, thought or an idea we make a promise to hold our end of the link. Today, make yours to get involved and recognise apathy for the evil that it is. Decide to not let the 'Hey, what the hell I tried' mentality take over in light of a half-hearted attempt that meets failure. Do little but do what you can. Find a way to strip yourselves off of religion, caste and creed remember that at the end of the day you wouldn't want someone to feel that your surname determines how much help you 'deserve'.

So whether you're the environmentalist that will file the floods away as proof of your theories or the guy in front of the news who'd rather watch The X Factor or even the one who dismisses the Act of God as a fulfilment of 'what goes around comes around', understand this: bad things happen and your lending a hand won't stop that. But it would be much nicer to go through life knowing that should a hurricane find its way to your hometown, the world would have your back.



An American soldier surveys the damage caused by the summer floods in Pakistan Photo: flickr user The US Army

Britain's more tolerant - but there's still a way to go

Though Britons respect diversity more than ever, it's not always the case with LGBT issues

Catherine
Capone



As an LGBT person, I am thankful that I am not only living in Britain, but in London too - one of the most accepting and liberal places to be in the world. There is no doubt that LGBT people face much less prejudice here in Britain than they do elsewhere in the world, and I am proud of the fact that British people in general are very tolerant towards all minorities. However, there is still serious room for improvement. In the year 2010, forty-three years after the decriminalisation of homosexuality, homophobia unfortunately still permeates many areas of our society.

Imagine walking down the street and having a man or a group of men heckle you. Why? Because you're holding hands with someone of the same sex. Harmless comments such as "Alright ladies?" can normally be batted away with a disgusted look. They seem to have a vague hope that we will turn around and fulfil their weird lesbian sexual fantasies by saying "We're fine thanks! Would you like to come round

to our place for a blow job?" Other men feel the need to point out exactly what they observe: "Lesbians!" Correct. Our observation: "Wanker!" On a couple occasions my girlfriend and I have received some very nasty responses to our existence. I have never encountered any of these comments from a woman, and thankfully it is only a minority of men who choose to heckle. Although these incidents are ludicrous, they are also tedious, highly exhausting and what it simply boils down to is harassment. Although racial and religious minorities do face prejudice, any harassment they face is taken very seriously and is viewed as absolutely unacceptable in our society. But jibes about gay people seem pretty acceptable and just a bit of a laugh.

Let's take BBC Radio One's Chris Moyles as an example. Last year he famously used the word 'gay' as a derogative term. As most people know, 'gay' is the most popular playground insult, and also a widely-used term to mean something that is a bit crap. Imagine if Moyles had used the word 'Jew' instead. Or 'Asian'. I think he would have been reprimanded pretty seriously, or even forced to quit. But a slap on the wrist and a hasty apology was all that was needed to get him off the hook for his crass use of language.

Let's take another example. If the BBC had created an online poll titled "Should

Muslims be executed?" I think we can all imagine the outrage that it would engender, and quite rightly so. Well, last year the BBC did exactly that - but it replaced the word Muslims with 'gays'. Or The Sun's poll asking readers, 'Should gay people be cabinet ministers?' Replace the word 'gay' for any other minority and you would get quite a different reaction from the public. Although there was considerable outrage towards both polls, the fact that the BBC and The Sun even created them in the first place betrays a large amount of bigotry and a clear disregard for LGBT people.

The most insulting of all comments made by a person in the public profile was made earlier this year by the Conservative MP Chris Grayling who stated that Christian owners of Bed and Breakfasts should have the right to turn away a gay couple if they chose to. In fact, legally they do not have the right to turn away any couple. Once you open up a business, even if it is in your own home, you are not allowed to discriminate against anybody based on sexuality, race or religion. Would Grayling have defended a couple that turned away a black couple at their B&B? Probably not.

These examples all illustrate the fact that homophobia is not viewed in the same light as racism, Islamophobia or any other prejudice. It is seen as a less serious issue, even one to be discarded as LGBT people expecting special privileges.

When Clare Balding complained against AA Gill's description of her as a "dyke on a bike", The Sunday Times' editor, John Witherow, defended his columnist, saying, "A person's sexuality should not give them a protected status." The reference to Balding's sexuality was not only irrelevant, it was also offensive too. Although words such as fag, queer and dyke have been reclaimed by the LGBT community, (much like the N-word in the black community) it does not give those outside the sphere the right to use it. I'm sure if Gill had used a pejorative term for another minority, Witherow would not have been so quick to defend him.

However, there have been many heartening instances of the public standing up for gay rights. This year the BBC estimated that one million people took part in Gay Pride in London this July. And no one can dismiss the enormous disgust towards the Daily Mail columnist Jan Moir's poisonous and homophobic article after the death of Boyzone's Stephen Gately, engendering 25,000 complaints. Furthermore, 89 per cent of Sun readers actively supported or were accepting of gay MPs, 5 per cent had no opinion and only 5 per cent thought it was a bad thing.

The British public in general are very tolerant towards LGBT people, and research by the gay rights charity Stonewall supports this theory. But

there is still a minority who believe that homophobic actions and comments are acceptable. Do public personalities make these comments because they think it's funny, in order to gain some appreciative chuckles? Does The Sun and all the other tabloids publish homophobic articles in order to gain readers? And do politicians vote against gay rights because they think that's what their constituents want them to vote for? If so, these people need to sit up and come to the realisation that Britain is not a homophobic country and homophobia will certainly not gain them any respect. The people in the upper echelons of parliament and the media seem to think that Britain has not moved on, when in fact it has made huge progress in the equality for LGBT people.

Homophobia from above has the tendency to filter down into society, and just as politicians and the media have the ability to demonise asylum seekers, so do they have the ability to turn the public against LGBT people too. Until they start to take homophobia seriously, Britain will remain a country where LGBT people can be heckled, harassed, ridiculed and even have their rights taken away from them. It's time for the people in power to start taking homophobia seriously and to press for zero tolerance.

The USA's love affair with The Beautiful Game

Though it might not be suited to US TV schedules, soccer (or football) could become the next big thing over the pond

Andreas Kuersten



For decades the United States has failed to accept soccer in the way that much of the rest of the world has, and a near-constant dialogue has formed questioning why. Numerous reasons have been brought forth and tested, including the two most popular: a lack of star-power in American leagues and an already crowded sports market. Yet one important one stands above them all but has been neglected: corporate acceptance.

The argument that Americans don't pay attention to soccer because there are no superstars of the sport in their leagues has been a popular one for years, but it has failed to hold up under real-world circumstances. Major League Soccer (MLS) now boasts two of the biggest stars in the world: Thierry Henry of the New York Red Bulls and David Beckham of the Los Angeles Galaxy.

I lived in LA when Becks came to town. There was an enormous amount of attention at the beginning and those who adhered to the 'Lack of Star-Power' theory hailed it as the 'coming of soccer to America'. This, however, subsided. Don't get me wrong, LA has fully embraced its new star, despite his loans to AC Milan after the Galaxy spent so much money on him. Beckham's LA jerseys are bestsellers right next to homegrown star Landon Donovan's and tickets to Galaxy games are more in demand now than ever, but there hasn't been the sweeping national turn to soccer which was foreseen. The same thing has occurred with Henry's recent move to New York. Over time perhaps the gradual movement of stars to the US will have a substantial impact on the national appetite for the sport, but as of now these moves have had largely only regional effects.

As far as the sports market in the US goes, these increases in popularity in some regions show that there is indeed room for soccer next to baseball, American football, NASCAR, basketball and hockey. Attendances at MLS games have steadily increased, new teams have been added in new cities with great acceptance from rabid fans and record crowds have shown up to see powerhouses from around the world play in the states. I remember the 100,000 (and more) scream-

ing fans who filled the Rose Bowl to watch Chelsea play Inter Milan and standing with the giant crowd at UCLA trying to catch a glimpse of Barcelona training for their match against the LA Galaxy.

These gains are quite heartening for those wishing to see the Yanks finally come around to the world sport, but they will continue to be regional, agonizingly slow and semi-inconsequential nationally until the two key communities which can have the ultimate impact on soccer's acceptance come around: corporate America and US television networks. Compared to the other popular American sports soccer offers comparatively fewer advertising and marketing opportunities with regards to television, the most important medium for the national spread and acceptance of a sport. This has caused a lack of excitement for the sport from the two actors mentioned above.

In the US sports are somewhat built around commercials. American football and basketball have four quarters with pauses in between each, halftime, and timeouts (even specific 'TV timeouts'). Hockey has three periods and timeouts. Baseball pauses between each of its nine innings, when teams switch from batting to fielding, and when pitchers are changed. NASCAR is just cars driving in a circle for hours on end so one can really

cut to commercials whenever. Soccer, on the other hand, has two halves with only one comparatively miniscule halftime during which networks can sell advertising space and companies can hock their products to fans. This means that viewing audiences have to be larger for soccer in order for it to be shown over other sports because networks will want the same amount of money from less ad time by reaching more people.

There are, however, solutions to this problem which do not involve fundamentally changing the structure of the game. Networks could instead run ad-streams on the bottom of the screen in much the same way CNN does with headlines and ESPN does with sports scores and news. The entire game would become marketable time. Space on the fields could also be for rent to companies wishing to show off their logos during games. I'm not saying that the entire pitch should be covered in ads, but certain corners or areas could have prices attached to them. This would lead companies who purchase space to put more pressure on networks to show the games so that they can get even more exposure for their brands.

This can make a significant difference and I have seen firsthand the results television exposure can have on soccer. During the World Cup earlier this year

networks decided to show all of the games because the time difference between South Africa and the United States caused them not to conflict with anything else. From coast to coast people tuned in at home and piled into bars at ungodly hours in the morning. This was multiplied ten-fold when the United States played. I remember packing myself into random, crowded and noisy bars full of screaming and impassioned USA fans. If not for all of the red, white and blue and English I would have sworn I was in Germany watching die deutsche Fußballnationalmannschaft play some Fußball. The nation also fell in love with its stars. Heck, when Landon Donovan hit the winning goal against Algeria I swear I would have bedded him.

Give the MLS, other world competitions and perhaps even other leagues this kind of exposure in America and these same fans will provide the same results and bring new ones. If television and corporations are brought on-board and are able to see how much they have to gain from making soccer infinitely more accessible Americans will finally come around to what the rest of the world has known for quite some time and will see the greatness of this sport.

'Bean' Counter Pits Borrowers Against Savers

Alex Mather



Some people just never learn. Monday's comments by Bank of England Deputy Governor Charles Bean illustrate the frustrating ignorance that some in the banking industry seem to possess with regard to the turbulent year that was. In an attempt to justify the bank's low interest rates, Bean discouraged Brits from building up cash savings and implored them to spend, spend, spend.

Quite aside from the fact that many simply do not have the cash to embark on a bank-friendly spending spree, Bean's comments fly in the face of the lessons learned since the global economy took its precipitous nosedive. One need look no further than our friends in the good ol' USA to see the ruinous consequences of spending and leveraging beyond one's means as it impacts not only families, but indeed on entire economies.

As Americans bought houses for which they had no collateral and paid off credit card debts with other credit cards – thus sewing the seeds for their impending economic defeat – where in the world was Charles Bean?

While the world waded through the wreckage of the financial crisis and sought the reasons for the widespread economic downfall, it became increasingly clear that innumerable individuals, families and businesses had bought too much too quickly with too much of other people's money. As Britain eagerly awaits the announcement of the government's much-ballyhooed austerity package, protestors march across the globe against similar cuts and banks continue to be the beneficiaries of taxpayer-financed bailouts, does spending beyond our means appear to anyone – apart from Mr Bean – to be sound financial planning?

While it is painfully and abundantly clear to all that the economy needs a substantial kick in the pants, encouraging the same sort of behaviour that sent us here in the first place is, quite simply, obtuse. With the next interest rate decision due next week, here's hoping an epiphany is had in the halls of the Bank of England. Until then, keep your money in the piggy bank.



David Beckham, Home Depot Centre, LA
Photo: flickr user mastermag

Howard Davies' false dilemma

The whole ethos of the LSE will be challenged if a hike in tuition fees goes ahead

Lukas Slothuus



In times of crisis institutions' principles are tested the most. When LSE was founded over a century ago, its founders envisaged a progressive university that would not let socio-economic background hinder the intellectual development of young people. This year, university education is under the most serious attack ever. The current cap on tuition fees for foreign students is likely to be raised to more than double present levels or even removed altogether. Had this been in order to improve teaching quality and student satisfaction, the policy might have some credibility. The truth is the exact opposite: after tuition fees were introduced in 1998, no such improvement

was measured. LSE's student satisfaction ratings and positions in university rankings have plummeted.

The good news, however, is that there actually is no need for LSE to increase tuition fees. Even with projected government cuts of 35 per cent in real terms, 30 per cent cuts in government research funding, and a 4 per cent annual wage increase for all university staff, LSE is still expecting surpluses for the next 10 years and beyond. The reason is that LSE makes only 8 per cent of its income from Home/EU tuition fees – the real cash cows are the "non-core" programmes, which include executive education, the Summer School, and the extension programme bringing in over £10 million every year. On top of that LSE charges astronomical international and postgraduate tuition fees. In other words, LSE can operate as business-as-usual and still make a profit.

Howard Davies must choose between one of two paths in what is really a false dilemma. He can choose to soil the graves of Sidney and Beatrice Webb and George

Bernard Shaw, discard the founding principles of the university he is supposed to represent and disregard the struggles of students and staff throughout LSE's history of fighting for a better society.

This path is comfortable for Howard Davies, because he is sitting in a gold-plated chariot well above the pools of mud in which thousands of bright prospective students will be destined to wallow because they cannot afford an LSE education. Davies is on his way out – by 2012 his term will be finished, and his legacy will be one of unpopularity and discontent.

The other path is incomparably more attractive. LSE can freeze tuition fees at the current level in real terms and continue being a world-class social science institution, while staying loyal to its roots and principles of social progression and equity. LSE will still be run as an economically responsible university with continuous surpluses and power to invest in new and better facilities and staff. The choice looks easy. Will Howard Davies choose stagnation or progression?

Still no letters or emails to print.

And this time I can't blame the Royal Mail.

To get your letters or articles in the newspaper email:

briant.thebeaver@gmail.com

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FRESHERS' FAIR
PHOTOS BY
DUNCAN MCKENNA



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Social



We're champs, mate!

Raising young people's aspirations and teaching them to talk back to their teachers, **Sachin Patel** relays his Debate Mate adventures

However much Moodle may disagree, I don't buy for one second the idea that we LSE students have a scarcity of free time. Having chunky reading lists and a hefty borrowing record from the Library are both well and good, but it's another thing entirely to define oneself as a studious specimen of the LSE ecosystem. Furthermore, as a result of the considerable pinch many feel as students in London, it's easy to forget that, in coming to the LSE, we have been dealt a tasty hand, and a wonderful opportunity for self-enrichment and self-betterment.

Consequently, it's easy to overlook the equally enriching opportunities presented to LSE students to engage in something more socially responsible; say, mentoring. For me, what began as an offshoot of a naïve interest in competitive debating (since expired, briefly exhumed, then put to rest for the foreseeable future) has since become one of the most belief-affirming components in my life as a student.

The charity that I work for, Debate Mate, has several ties with the LSE. For one, two of the current Programme Directors are recent alumni, which makes my occasional visits to the organisation's office quickly descend into evenings spent at the Union Jack in Southwark - a reputable establishment in which to discuss the role of the third sector in improving the educational and vocational prospects of young people less fortunate than ourselves. On a more earnest note, many of Debate Mate's mentors are current LSE students, and any of this substantial cohort would quickly testify to the valuable two-relationships we have fostered through our work with the organisation.

So what does this involvement entail? Superficially, I spend an hour of each week during term-time at a school in an un-

derprivileged area, running a debate club through which students can improve their verbal intelligence, gain a well-formulated understanding of logical reasoning, and strengthen their knowledge of the world outside their neighbourhood.

Come and visit a session, however, and you'll see many more factors at play. The young people I engage with are often short on serious role-models; some of them will have disciplinary problems (the two are not unrelated); others will have learning difficulties that prevent them from playing an active part in the traditional classroom. Crucially, they all come to debate club of their own volition - even at the expense of basketball practice (I shall assume the readymade excuse to delay one's homework requires less persuasion). The teachers at the schools I work in are no geriatrics - some of them are former Debate Mate mentors, in fact - but there remains a sizeable age gap between them and the kids in their classes.

Against this backdrop, you can begin to see why having mentors around is such a tremendous lagniappe for schools. The students, often not much younger (and, in my case, usually noticeably taller) than their mentors, can receive advice about higher education over biscuits and orange juice, and then get taught how to win structured arguments against their friends. Predictably, what started as a London-specific programme in thirty inner-city schools has since expanded to one hundred-and-ten schools throughout London, Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol. Every week, the scheme reaches over 1,500 young people at zero cost to either the schools or the participants.

In addition to the core after-school sessions, I've also been able to see my students compete in a couple of tournaments run by the charity; the regional final

of one of them, the Richard Koch Cup, was held at the LSE. When you consider that the national final was held at the House of Lords, and that the grand final of another tournament, the Urban Debate League, was held at the headquarters of Deloitte, it's also relatively easy to see what's in it for potential mentors. Debate Mate has significant media coverage (the Richard Koch Cup was reported on for the Today programme, and Sky News filmed a series of debates themed around the Prime Ministerial debates) and its sponsors are among the top graduate recruiters in the UK - think Teach First, Clifford Chance, Shell. Attending events co-hosted by such organisations has put me in contact with high-ranking individuals in a number of fields, which has in turn broadened my perspective on post-university life. Oh, and to cap it all, Debate Mate pays its mentors £30 per session, plus travel expenses.

But in the end, the real reason I continue mentoring is neither the income nor the possibilities for networking, but rather the undeniable opportunity it presents to give something back, and to improve the chances of those who would otherwise go without during a crucial part of their lives. An hour a week is no huge commitment, particularly when it can be spent engaged in relatively selfless activity that is socially beneficial and which helps to strengthen communities where such ties are most needed. David Cameron talks of the Big Society less and less nowadays, but it's worth remembering that there are some lessons a schoolteacher cannot give, and that those with time enough on their hands and a willingness to impart knowledge should "roll up their sleeves" at the first chance.

Curbing crime

Mehk Zafar walks you through Streetlaw

In a secondary school, in a small classroom, two teenage boys commit a knife crime and slip back into their seats. 'Joint enterprise' is a term they are still struggling to understand.

'I didn't even have a knife,' says one, 'why would I get prison for manslaughter?' 'You knew your friend had a knife, and meant to use it. You knew the crime you were jointly committing could lead to someone's death.'

And all of it, the role-play and the foreign legal terms, begin to make a little sense.

This is Streetlaw, a program that began in the UK 9 years ago, and has since caught on; it was introduced at the LSE last year by two law students.

An informative session, where law students are able to share their legal knowledge with primary and secondary school students, LSE Streetlaw operates in schools inside Greater London. It is centred around Lewisham, Southwark and Greenwich.

The topics covered discuss the little known legal implications of relevant youth issues that include ASBO's (Anti Social Behaviour Orders), stop and search, knife and gun crimes, domestic violence, conflict resolution and the rights and duties of citizens, including discussions of the Human Rights Act (1998). They are presented in creative and original ways, including role-play, debates, slide shows and movie clips, and group work sessions with 3 to 4 students in each class. This allows the students to interact and to ask questions that they think are relevant.

It takes much more than just a smattering of legal knowledge, and showing up at some local secondary school to be a part of LSE Streetlaw, but the rewards are well worth the time and effort put into the program. The manner in which LSE Streetlaw operates is rigidly structured,

in order to avoid any mistakes. Members first contact schools and hold a discussion with the appropriate staff to decide the topics the school wants covered, and any security concerns the school may have. Once this is done, members of Streetlaw conduct in depth research on the current law surrounding the topic they will be discussing, and make a proposal of how they will be presenting the issues. This proposal is overseen by a staff liaison officer in the LSE's Law Department, who must give approval before the members rehearse and then present their research to the student body. It is very necessary to point out over here, that the law students presenting at these schools cannot give any actual legal advice. They can only give information on what the law is.

What is the point, you ask, if these presentations are merely informative, and offer no substantial legal service? In fact, Streetlaw has a vast impact in terms of raising awareness amongst young people about crime and its implications. How many of us, for example, realize that verbal abuse can count as violence? The presentations create a consciousness of one's rights and of means of conflict resolution, and are often opportunities where secondary school students can interact with university students and find out more about education and career opportunities.

Moreover, it proves useful for the university students as well, who are able to hone their presentation and research skills, as well as enhance their own understanding of the law. They are inculcated with a sense of ethical responsibility, since they must be extremely careful that their material is up to date and relevant, their presentation is sensitive to the needs of the school going children, and that they do not at any point attempt to advise any of the school children.

LSE Streetlaw is always looking for more volunteers. An information session about LSE Streetlaw will be held on Wednesday October 6th, at 2 pm. All law students are welcome to attend.

South Asia Development SOCIETY



LSE's South Asia Development Society is one of the newest SU approved societies founded with the following aims:

- To contribute to the debate on how to solve challenges such as poverty, illiteracy and inequality, religious fundamentalism and sectarian violence, political instability and endemic corruption that continue to plague our communities.
- To promote discussions and debates we hope will inspire and empower our members to make tangible contributions to South Asian development. Join the South Asia Development Society.

“
They are less keen to simply brand the police as trying to victimise them
”

OVER TO YOU...

Debate Mate Mentors receive full training, and need not have experience of debating. Mentors are paid £30 per session, and most clubs will run to 16 sessions per academic year. There are also numerous opportunities to help at tournaments and sponsor-led events.
www.debatemate.com/signup

“
There is a clear crossover between debating and their schoolwork
”

The starving kid holiday

Amber Willows on how you can get the most bang for your buck



Flickr user Ed Yourdon

It isn't the time of the year - not quite. The weather hasn't been grey long enough, students aren't itching for the summer holidays just yet.

However, come next February, the money-mongers will be on Houghton street, right as rain, ever-equipped with the glistening PowerPoint presentation.

The concept is simple, after all. The LSE's rules as regards to your summer are informal, but nonetheless socially enforced. Follow Robert Frost on the road less travelled, and you may just find yourself the living antithesis of 'no man is an island'. The break after your first year must be devoted to exotic poverty tourism, whilst the one after your second year must consist in an internship of the most profitable kind.

Thus, the February visitors, as they will hereby be named, are here to aid you through your right of passage. Give or take a few thousand pounds, these organizations will offer you the opportunity to interact with the poor masses in a suitably respectful third-world country, and give you a self-righteous excuse to gawp: teaching English, playing with kids, or something of the like. The projects will rarely be of any use. To be an effective teacher in anything requires staying at least a few months to ensure some degree of continuity (time you don't have). Building projects would have better effect by using your money to hire inhabitants to carry it out, thus creating some form of employment. As a social science student (and a first year, anyhow) your level of useful medical knowledge is at best limited (and of course these types of organizations don't do medical services).

Before dishing out your cash, it is thus best to be aware that the only person you'll be helping in this voyage of self-discovery is yourself. Not that this ought to be any reason to prevent you from embarking

onto the bandwagon. After all, if you've got the monetary opportunity to do so (or enough strength of will to fundraise) it is best to grab the chance. The following mark of social recognition - the second year internship - you will need to obtain. That one can't be bought.

Choosing the program can be tricky, but please be aware that whilst local living conditions are usually unpleasant, the moral superiority you will be able to derive from them is well worth the while. By virtue of the function of human sentiments, your own physical sufferings will find a more attentive ear than those of the people you have 'helped'. The poor, after all, are used to these things. Also, many of these organizations will allow you to travel around the country during your stay, or even offer sporting activities. Cities tend to be less dull than villages in the middle of nowhere, but have a less legitimate feel on a CV; in light of this, it is best to compromise and go for a well-populated but unheard of town. These are easiest found in India and China.

Upon your return, tales of your adventures must be accounted for with a tone of increased self-awareness and new found maturity. You've seen the real world now, gained new awareness of your privileged status in life. Others haven't. Milk it for what it's worth. Stories of team work in extreme conditions also work well for job interviews - the questions about you surmounting a thorny problem in the way of your project towards world peace.

You might also be alerted to the fact that the dispossessed also exist here in London. It is also suitable to help them, preferably during term-time.

The world is full of difficult choices. Hopefully this article will have convinced you that staying away from bullshit NGOs isn't one of them.

Inspire, Empower, now Inspower

Nik Adhia on the priceless nature of giving time



inspower.me
Fuel The Strength Within

Before I came to LSE, I ventured to America, Australia, New Zealand and, most recently, to India. I set out to inspire people, to empower communities and to make a difference, everything you read about doing when you're on a gap year, 'saving the world'. I'm not entirely sure what difference was made on a global scale during my time abroad, but what was gained was an insight, on my part, into the power of giving. Even if it was giving just a little time in your local community. I realised that although many countries and charities pour money into what are deemed pressing issues, money that in certain situations is greatly needed, the value of time is priceless.

Since the age of 16, I have been volunteering for local projects. At a certain point, however, I began to feel that I didn't always know how to go about finding opportunities that matched my interests or the time commitment I was able to make, especially with lectures, classes and a busy university schedule. I discovered that the actual search for such opportunities was

difficult in itself, as it was usually at the end of an email or an enormous database that I finally found something that matched my requirements. And even then, I would often receive no response to my email, or end up on bucket collection duty, a role where I did not feel I was making the practical difference I was hoping for. When I actually did go and give my time, I felt a little like a number, a small cog in an enormous machine. This is where I truly believe Inpower differs.

So what exactly is Inpower? It is a youth-led grassroots organisation which was launched last week and which is dedicated to supporting youth by sourcing opportunities that allow them to give time locally in their communities. Through utilising funds from LSE Dev Cropper Memorial Award, a group of LSE students as well as youth from around the UK and in Australia and America, have sparked off what has quickly become a grassroots movement that shapes the way we give time. To volunteer is to give time to something or someone. However, to Inpower is defined by 'a selfless action that

describes the support a person gives to an individual for the simple reason to recognise the human within them and work with them to develop their own ability and strength'. The Inpower team are not paid; they do this in their free time in addition to their studies, because they truly believe in the potential of young people. Inpower wants not only to make a difference but to support others in doing the same.

As Inpower is led by youth, the Inpower team understands the time and financial pressures that we all face. There is a commitment to develop opportunities to give time which are flexible and suitable to match the interests of a wide range of people and to most of all make time giving fun with regular inclusive social events from dinners, bowling, theatre trips, karaoke etc. so that those who give time also have the opportunity to meet other like minded individuals. I have always found that volunteering at my own school/college/university has meant that I tend to meet people from my own school/college/university which is why Inpower has sought a non-university specific approach

in order for people from all faiths, backgrounds and walks of life to work together. It aims to break down many common social barriers and encourage people to work together towards a common cause.

Inpower offers a mix of both one off opportunities and long term projects to match your time commitment and interests. Led by youth team leaders, who run these projects on behalf of Inpower's partner organisations, opportunities can be found in the following areas: Children and Young People, Health and Welfare, Environment and Conservation and Human Rights and Justice.

I do truly believe that giving time can be fun, flexible and a way to meet people from all different backgrounds, whilst doing something positive and productive in the surrounding community.

A social event will be held in London on Wednesday 13th Sept 2010. Find out more on the Inpower Facebook page or log onto <http://www.inspower.me>

OVERHEARD AT LSE

Person in the library:
"I've got five gam classes, everyday of the week."

In Northumberland House:
Person 1: "Whats a macaroon?"
Person 2: "Isn't it a country? ...oh wait i'm thinking of Cameroon"

In reference of a hypothetical future child attending the LSE:
"Yeah, well, unfortunately your degree doesn't pass through your sperm."

Guy in study room"
"I hate cats. Cats only care about themselves. You can tell that dogs genuinely care for you, cats only consume resources. The human equivalent of cats are investment bankers."

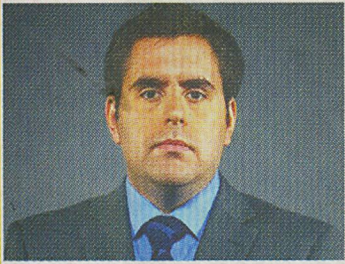
Guy: "I went home for a week to see my dad and after 5 days of eating meat for every meal I felt sick."
Girl: "Could you not just tell your dad not to cook meat, or leave it at the side of the plate or something?"
Guy: "I'm a white, Northern, rural, working class lad. There's no way I could come out to my dad about being a vegetarian!"

In the Library LG, Anons 1 and 2 work on two opposite PCs.
Anon 1: "Hey, I agree."
Anon 2: "Agree with what?"
Anon 1: "Your Facebook status."
Anon 2: (surprise) "Er... which one? The newest?"

At LSE Open open day
Girl to Dad: "Should I go to LSE or UCL?"
Dad to Girl: "Go to LSE. LSE on your CV is licence to print money."

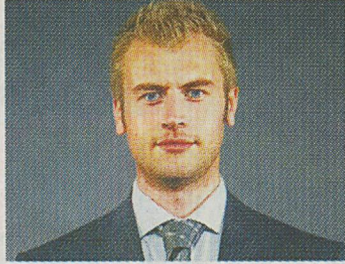
The Battle of the Apprentices: Round 6

... as seen by Nathan Briant



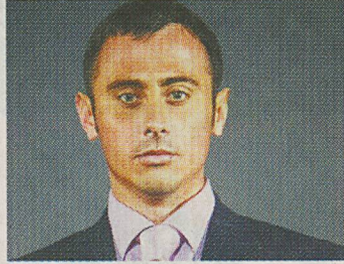
Alex Epstein

He says: 'In the workplace I'm a liked person...my talent, my ability will shine through.'
We say: He's a self-confessed maverick, but so was Robert Maxwell.



Chris Bates

He says: 'I won't show people too much respect.'
We say: May be 'a talented guy' but has the face of a footballer from FIFA '98: Road to World Cup.



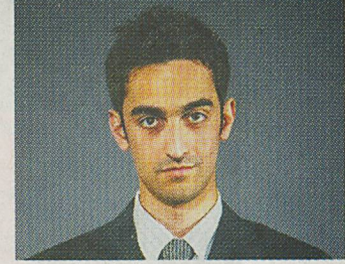
Christopher Farrell

He says: 'I wouldn't have done what I've done without being good.'
We say: Not too good at evading the law if the Sun's reporting is to be believed.



Dan Harris

He says: 'I've had two female clients and they both made me sweat...I am a pretty rounded package.'
We say: Homer Simpson minus the jaundice and hair loss.



Shibby Robati

He says: 'I want to be working with Prime Ministers and entrepreneurial giants.'
We say: He needs to help Silvio Berlusconi if he wants to work for that sort of person.



Jamie Lester

He says: 'I'm a big believer in... you get what you...you...get what you give.'
We say: Clearly a bit of an idiot.



Joanne Riley

She says: 'I'm a bit of foot and mouth.'
We say: What?



Joy Stefanicki

She says: 'I'm a bit off-the-wall'
We say: After living in Peru, New York City and now Birmingham, who wouldn't be?



Liz Locke

She says: 'I speak my opinions...I mean, I'm hungry.'
We say: Eat something then.



Stella English

She says: 'I'm really stubborn - think of the level you're thinking and multiply it by a hundred.'
We say: Sorry, we don't do mental arithmetic.



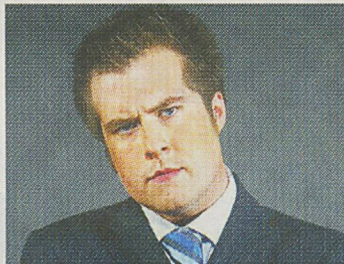
Melissa Cohen

She says: 'I've been called so many names: The Battering Ram, The Bulldozer...'
We say: How about, Gok Wan mixed with Danny Wallace?



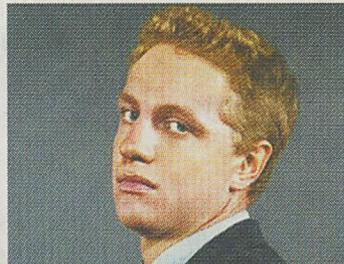
Sandesh Samra

She says: 'I'm quite challenging.'
We say: The only candidate not to say something smug - so probably fired in the first week.



Stuart Baggs

He says: 'I'm alive - and there's so many people who have died, unfortunately.'
We say: Wants to give to charity 'where appropriate'. Nice.



Raleigh Addington

He says: 'I'm often compared to Boris Johnson.'
We say: That is not a good thing.



Paloma Vivanco

She says: 'At the age of 21 I set up my own business, which had failed by the time I was 22...I'm hyper-successful.'
We say: Nothing, really.



Lauren Moore

She says: 'I can walk into a room and in 5 minutes I'd have made 3 friends.'
We say: Like every one of the candidates, not modest at all.

'Ooh... friend?'

Is The Inbetweeners really as good as everyone thinks?

This is probably going to sound controversial, but I think **The Inbetweeners** may be slipping slightly in quality. Having started as a cult comedy on a television channel normally known for Friends repeats, the show has turned into a cultural phenomenon for British teenagers and twentysomethings everywhere. In terms of viewing figures, the series couldn't be doing better: having started its run in May 2008 with a paltry 240,000 viewers, the most recent series premiered to a staggering 2.6 million viewers! Many successful shows end up growing in viewership throughout their run, but not so quickly and not by a factor of ten! However, newbies tuning in to hear vulgarity in all of its gloriousness are probably missing out on the subtleties the show became known for throughout its fun run of six episodes.

For me personally, The Inbetweeners reached its high-point in its second episode: 'Bunk Off'. The characters had already been established in the pilot episode: Will (Simon Bird) the private school geek/fish out of water, Simon (Joe Thomas) the hopeless romantic, Jay (James Cartwright) the bullshitter-extraordinaire, and Neil (Blake Harrison) the not-so-bright member of the foursome. Archetypes they may be, but they were such well acted and written that no one really seemed to mind. Already, in-jokes had been established: the attractiveness of Will's mother, Simon's infatuation with Carli D'Amato, Neil's dad being a closet homosexual.

However, the second episode manages to build upon all of these and develop a strong sense of fraternity between the members of the group when they decide to skip school for a day. Plot highlights include throwing a Frisbee at a disabled woman, buying

alcohol underage by dressing up like a Hasidic Jew, insulting Neil's dad by first calling him a 'bumder' (a 'witty' combination of 'bum' and 'bender') and then a paedophile, writing declarations of love in permanent marker on Carli D'Amato's drive, vomiting on a 7-year old child after drinking too much cheap alcohol, and committing fraud by lying to the headmaster.

While all of these could foreseeably happen in any other episode of the show, what makes this episode stand out is the sense of fun that the main characters share with one another, and how these events all seem to unfold naturally. In later episodes, these events would seem to be written in out of nowhere and with the simple task of provoking riotous laughter rather than developing emotional connections between the characters.

Take the third series premiere: the

The show has turned into a cultural phenomenon for British teenagers

highlight of the main plotline - Simon's attempt to woo Carli by appearing as a model in her charity fashion show - involves Simon and Carli going down the catwalk together in very risqué outfits. Over the course of the walk, one of Simon's testicles manages to 'misplace' itself and thus comes into full display for the majority of the school - and his parents - to see. While this on its own is very funny, it doesn't reach the hilarity ensued by

the events described in 'Bunk Off' due to a lack of real empathetic connection to the situation.

A similar idea has been noted about another teen favourite: Family Guy. The show was taken to task by another raunchy animated cartoon - South Park - over claims that without proper narrative and character arcs, the jokes wouldn't work. South Park

illustrated this by comparing the Family Guy cutaway jokes (which make up a good two thirds of the humour of the show) to a slot machine run by manatees, underlying the laziness of making humour that way.

As of now, I don't think The Inbetweeners are resorting to manatee jokes, but the writers need to find a way to tone down the smutty humour

and return to the fraternal aspects of friends hanging out. The first series DVD has a quote from Heat magazine labeling the show as 'American Pie meets Peep Show': in order to be as good as the first series, The Inbetweeners needs to be more Peep Show and less American Pie.

The Inbetweeners airs Mondays on E4 at 10pm
Jonathan Storey



Class photo: The Inbetweeners

FACTS CAPACITOR

Word play. 25 facts for 25 years

- 01** Disney originally rejected the film because they felt that the idea of Marty McFly's mother (from 1955) falling in love with her son (from 1985) was inappropriate.
- 02** Ronald Reagan made a direct reference to the film in his 1986 State of the Union address: "As they said in *Back to the Future*, 'Where we're going, we don't need roads.'"
- 03** Leonard Nimoy, aka Star Trek's Mr Spock, was the studio's first choice to direct *Back to the Future*. He was unavailable as he was busy directing another time travel film, *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*.
- 04** It was Eric Stoltz (Lance in *Pulp Fiction*) who originally won the role for Marty McFly. After five weeks of shooting, director Robert Zemeckis replaced him with Michael J Fox.
- 05** Stoltz can still be seen diving into the car when the Libyans shoot at Marty McFly, as it was too expensive to re-shoot.
- 06** Former Universal Studios president Sid Sheinberg didn't like the title *Back to the Future*, because he thought audiences would find it confusing. He suggested the film be retitled 'Spaceman from Pluto'.
- 07** Doc Brown's time machine was originally a refrigerator. Zemeckis scrapped the idea because he did not want children climbing into refrigerators and getting trapped.
- 08** The amplifier Marty plugs his guitar into is labelled 'CRM-114.' It's a tribute to one of Zemeckis' (and Spielberg's) favourite directors, Stanley Kubrick, whose message decoder in *Dr Strangelove* and Jupiter explorer in *2001: A Space Odyssey* were also designated CRM-114.
- 09** In early drafts, it was an atomic explosion, rather than a lightning bolt, that sent the DeLorean back to the future – but it proved too expensive to shoot.
- 10** Boy band McFly is named after Marty McFly. A draft of the as-yet-unproduced McFly movie loosely follows the plot of *Back to the Future*, as someone visits lead singer Tom from the year 2025, urging him to put a band together to save the future.
- 11** The actual date to which Marty travels back in time, November 5, is the same date to which HG Wells travels in Nicholas Meyer's film adaptation, *Time After Time*.
- 12** Displayed prominently at the head of Marty McFly's bed is a brightly coloured magazine named "RQ". This is "Reference Quarterly," of interest only to librarians.
- 13** Pro skater Tony Hawk was Michael J. Fox's skateboard coach.
- 14** The cinema is located on the same street recognisable from another Spielberg production, *Gremlins*. In Part II, it shows *Jaws 19* ("This time it's really really personal").
- 15** Farmer Peabody and his son Sherman are both named after a time-travelling episode of the fifties cartoon *The Bullwinkle Show*.
- 16** The Hill Valley cinema is showing a double bill of fictional films: *A Boy's Life* (the working title of Spielberg's *E.T.*) and *Watch the Skies* (the original title of Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*).
- 17** In its test screening, *Back to the Future* received the highest score the studio had ever received. As a result, the studio brought the release date forward by nearly ten weeks so it would open on the American July 4th holiday weekend.
- 18** The Academy Award for Best Picture in 1955 – the year that Marty McFly travels to – was called *Marty*.
- 19** *Back to the Future Parts II and III* were filmed back to back, not only to save money, but to avoid the risk of Michael J. Fox (by then almost 30) no longer looking 17.
- 20** Doc Brown's dog is named Einstein. This may be a vague reference to *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, where the inventor of a miracle car owns a dog named Edison.
- 21** In Part II in the year 2015, several cars from other sci-fi movies can be seen, including a Spinner from *Blade Runner*.
- 22** During the "Battle of the Bands" auditions, Huey Lewis is one of the judges who doesn't like Marty's band ("you're just too loud"). Ironic, since Marty's band auditions with a Huey Lewis song.
- 23** Crispin Glover, who plays Marty's father, is actually three years younger than Michael J. Fox.
- 24** When Doc first sends Einstein "one minute" into the future, the time elapsed between when the DeLorean disappears and reappears is 1 minute 21 seconds. When Einstein returns, it's 1.21am. Coincidentally, the flux capacitor runs on 1.21 gigawatts.
- 25** Actor Christopher 'Doc' Lloyd always wanted to make a fourth film. The closest he came was making an appearance on Michael J. Fox's hit TV show *Spin City*.



BACK TO THE FUTURE STILL HANGING ON - AFTER ALL THIS TIME

A quarter of a century, and as **Nicola Alexander** explains, *BTTF* has lost none of its appeal.

If ever there were a decade-defining film, it would have to be *Back to the Future*. The timeless tale of boy meets girl, boy travels back in time, boy resets the future and boy returns, is so culturally significant that even 25 years down the line, Hollywood can be sure a screening will attract big audiences.

Set in 1985, the film follows typical teenager Marty McFly unwittingly travelling back to 1955 in a time travelling DeLorean. In a series of seemingly unimportant events, Marty manages to wreck the moment that his parents first meet, jeopardising his entire existence. It is then up to the ever-endearing Marty to induce his parents to fall in love, whilst trying to find a way back home. Yes, the implausibility of the film also makes for a wonderful conversation piece. Equal parts comedy and science fiction, teen flick and action.

Back to the Future is a throw-back to an age of Hollywood that was

entirely un-lazy. The dialogue is so carefully scripted that it is as witty as it is important to the plot. Even an audience almost three decades younger can be amused by the historical references and the smart comedy of the conversation. One of the most memorable moments occurs when a young Lorraine, Marty's mother, believes Marty's name to be 'Calvin' having seen his Calvin Klein boxers. Similarly comic exchanges occur when Marty's 1980s slang and dress is misunderstood out of chronological context. For any kid who has had to explain to their parents what they mean by "bare sick" or why they wear their jeans so very very low, this will still be of relevance.

The smart humour in the dialogue is matched by the energetic acting of a cast completely committed to their roles. Each character is so perfectly crafted that you connect to the world of *Back to the Future* in a way that is impossible in other science fiction

films. Between the traditionally cool yet slightly awkward Marty, played by Michael J. Fox, and the wacky scientist he befriends, played by Christopher Lloyd, is a full spectrum of traits to identify with. In contrast with the subtler acting of today's cinema, *Back to the Future* fully immerses you in characters who are charming in their eccentricities. Set this wholly mesmerising story to a retro soundtrack of **Huey Lewis** and **The Starlighters** and you see why *Back to the Future* has earned this homage.

But it is the underlying message of *Back to the Future* that makes it so timelessly applicable. Articulating our hope that we steer the destiny of our lives, through Marty we learn that fate is the outcome of our own decisions. Marty rewrites his own history just by being conscious of the fact that he can. Seldom has such a profound message had the tagline "Doc, are you trying to tell me that my mother has got the hots for me?"

Of course, the real fascination of *Back to the Future* is capturing what it would be like to see your parents as teenagers. Marty has a one-time chance to see his parents at high school, making the same errors in

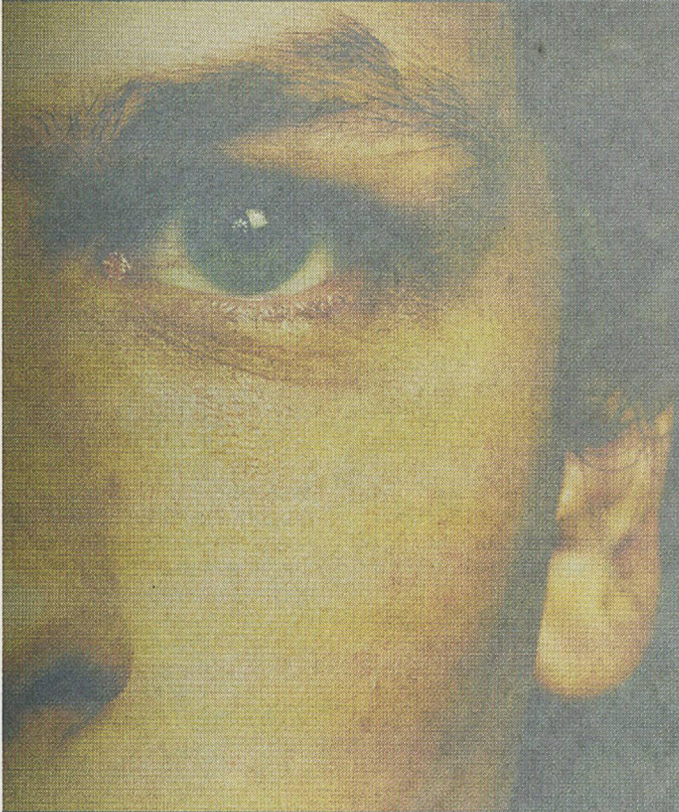
Through Marty we learn that fate is the outcome of our own decisions

judgement, sharing the same anxieties and learning the same lessons that he has. Bob Gale, the screenwriter, believes that the film is a success simply because it communicates that

wonder that every child has shared about what their parents were like when they were younger. The original idea for *Back to the Future* was inspired by Gale's discovery of his father's high school yearbook, which led him to wonder if he and his father would have been friends had they met as teenagers.

Back to the Future joins the elite ranks of *Grease* and *E.T.* as a film that has such eternal appeal that it can be re-released decades after production. The engaging combination of raw human insight, humour and heart is the secret to this classic. It is refreshing to see that though older generations often despair of "those damn kids", if one movie can bridge the gap then perhaps we still have enough in common. The genius of *Back to the Future* is that it unites all generations as much as it defines one specifically. We welcome back *Back to the Future* in all its plutonium-fuelled glory.

WE HAVE A SPECIAL PREVIEW OF THE SOCIAL NETWORK



the social network

On a fall night in 2003, Harvard undergrad and computer programming genius Mark Zuckerberg sits down at his computer and heatedly begins working on a new idea. In a fury of blogging and programming, what begins in his dorm room soon becomes a global social network and a revolution in communication.

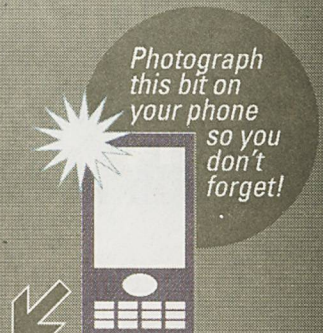
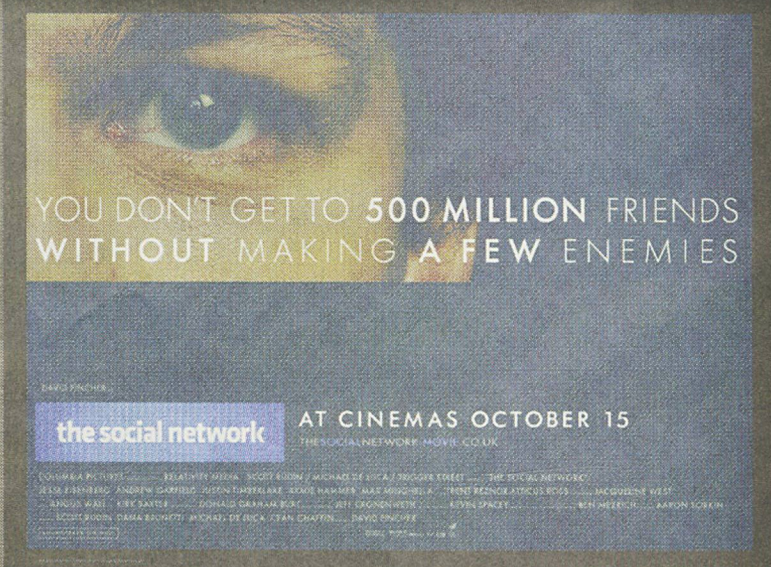
A mere six years and 500 million friends later, Mark Zuckerberg is the youngest billionaire in history... but for this entrepreneur, success leads to both personal and legal complications. From director David Fincher and screenwriter Aaron Sorkin comes *The Social Network*, a film that proves you don't get to 500 million friends without making a few enemies.

THE SOCIAL NETWORK IS RELEASED
NATIONWIDE ON OCTOBER 15

www.thesocialnetwork-movie.co.uk

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HURRY,
FIRST COME
FIRST SERVED

Stage: Departure Lounge, Waterloo East

Although I was starting to wonder whether the nearest exits were after the first song of Dougal Irvine's **Departure Lounge, Brits on Tour**, it was a misnomer for what lay ahead for the next hour and a half. After the four main characters had bragged that they drunk a lot and had a lot of sex on their post-A Level trip to the pubs and clubs of Spain, Departure Lounge gradually revealed a bit more of its soul, until the audience

The audience can't help but revel in Departure Lounge's honesty

couldn't help but revel in its honesty. The majority of their brags are utter fabrications. Instead of paying into their 'wank bank' as JB describes it, a major highlight of their holiday was one of the friends attempted to freeze his vomit caused by excessive drinking into ice cubes.

An impressive cast is headed up

by the excellent Chris Fountain as the wealthy heir but misunderstood leader of the group, JB.

Each character hides crucial secrets from each other. In Pete's case, his homosexuality, in spite of 'pulling half the girls in Spain' is playing on his mind; Ross feels he would be better moving away from the tightly-knit group when they pack their bags and move to university; or the true emotional trauma caused by being moved from one foster-parent to the next, in Jordan's case. Each character, bluntly, has their foibles and their friends know each one.

Another spanner in the works is provided superbly by Verity Rushworth's ditz Sophie, lusted after by two of the group, and who stands to break up the group once the betrayal of one of the friends is exposed. That said, if anything, Rushworth is underused in the production - she's only the lead singer in one song. With clearly the best voice of the cast, she is surely destined for the West End - unless she chooses to reprise her role as Donna Windsor - Dingle in Emmerdale any time soon.

The recently-opened Waterloo East theatre provides the perfect environment for Departure Lounge: not too big, not too small. But with only two guitars providing the backing music, it's unlikely you'll find the score



Departure Lounge: that pleased to leave Spain

overwhelming, but it complements the cast and the production well.

There was one gripe, though - as there always must be. Though my problem probably relates broadly to modern musical theatre - and probably harks back to the fact that at 20, one has the attitude of an anachronistic 90-year old war veteran on several

things - I am still bemused as to why the production had to use microphones. The actors' voices were fine - they didn't need amplification in such a small theatre, particularly when like clockwork each went a bit gospel-singer and seemed determined to not just reach the back of the theatre, but also deafen those on the back row

too.

But, overall, an excellent night out. Wonderfully smart in places, Departure Lounge made for a 90-minute emotional rollercoaster.

Nathan Briant

Departure Lounge is at the Waterloo East Theatre until 31st October

Live music: MGMT @ Brixton Academy 30.09.10



Twelve months ago, MGMT were a band in the midst of an identity crisis. Instead of a convivial if trifling rendition of their hits, the crowd at Bestival were subjected to a tiring hour of musical masturbation. Over-ambitious new material segued into proggy guitar solos that revealed a keenness to appear underground and refute any claims that they were, in any way, commercial. Founding members Goldwasser and VanWyngarden seemed too wrapped-up in the band's existential crisis to worry

about the show.

At last week's show it was soon evident that the rock brats had come to terms with themselves. Having emerged from the studio with 'Congratulations', MGMT have proven themselves as songwriters and artists with depth and ambition that we, and crucially they, were never sure they had.

But herein lies the problem. It's the music, not the band, that enrapture the audience - an audio recording of the show would be just as gratifying as being there in person. MGMT's

music - whether of the singalong or more experimental and psychedelic kind - is impressive and they are undoubtedly better at renditions of their own songs than they once were, but live music should be something more. The five men who took to the Academy's stage on Thursday were utterly bereft of the energy that makes a good band a great live experience. Matthew Asti's feet spend the evening glued to the floor. Meanwhile, VanWyngarden seems too concentrated on playing his guitar and remembering the words to enjoy himself.

When the hits come, the band play politely. 'Time to Pretend' sees the audience in carnival spirit but the band don't seem to want to join in - they just respectfully tend to their strings, skins and keys. As the instantly recognizable sounds herald the long-anticipated start of 'Kids', VanWyngarden and Goldwasser swap instruments for wireless microphones while the other band members down tools all together. What follows is a karaoke version of the four minutes that made them famous. As VanWyngarden reluctantly clammers down to the stalls for some audience participation, the guitarist stands there sipping on a beer and the bassist and drummer sit down for a gossip. Something, somewhere has gone very wrong. These songs have a well-earned ubiquity. Why aren't MGMT a bit happier about that?

Oly Wiseman

Live music: Four Tet @ Dalston Oxfam 21.09.10

This is the story of how I came to be dancing to Four Tet in a branch of Oxfam, while stood next to the falsetto-ed front-man of a popular art rock quartet from Kendal...

Folktronica is an unfortunate tag to assign to Four Tet. You could just about summon a connection with jazz, but folk - really? Are we talking about the same guy? Certainly, Kieran Hebden's music is a heady, heavenly

Four Tet is typified by propulsive percussion like the work of a superhuman being

tapestry of organic sounds, and his work as Four Tet is typified by propulsive percussion that's like the work of a superhuman being.

Live, however, the Elliott School alumnus focuses exclusively on the more dancefloor-ready aspects of his oeuvre, forgoing the slightest hint of acoustic guitar or real instruments. Taking to a makeshift stage, beneath school disco lighting, in the Dalston branch of Oxfam, Hebden immediately sets about manipulating fragments of samples, assembling them

into a song eventually recognisable as There Is Love In You standout, "Sing". Thereafter, individual songs are hard to locate; everything blends into a seamless DJ-like set, except that the main-man is busy recreating studiously produced music in predominantly real time.

Occasionally, I glimpsed traces of career highlights like "A Joy" and "Love Cry", but it would be inaccurate to call these set highlights - the performance was to be taken as a jubilant whole, punctuated by peaks and troughs much like the best Fabric mixes. At some point, I feel famous shoulders brushing past me, and, spinning round instantly, am greeted by the sight of Hayden Thorpe, who fronts a labelmate of Four Tet. Given the charitable intentions of the Oxjam festival, to which this gig belongs, it is comforting to see even a star such as Thorpe hand over three quid for a horribly stale can of Danish lager.

Oxfam 2010 has seen some more household names than Four Tet grace the Dalston store (the Charlatans, Razorlight), but I'll wager that none of those previous acts display such a level of consummate professionalism while maintaining an all-consuming atmosphere of euphoria as the man from Putney with the silly hair.

Carlsberg don't do DJ sets, but if they did, they'd probably resemble Four Tet's live performances.

Sachin Patel

The guide to museum-spotting

One of the most satisfying things to do when in a large, public art gallery or museum, particularly when the exhibit is dreadfully boring (pretentious art), is to observe the visitors. Unless one is a hyper-resilient Classics student at an ancient university, there are only so many pale, indistinguishable Greek busts one can digest in a day. The interesting part, however, is how different people act in the gallery. Three characters are commonly found throughout museums and galleries. There's the expert: the determined and serious art historian. He or she

often visits the exhibit during one of its first days, so there's little chance of meeting this species if you stumble upon the exhibition randomly on a hung-over Saturday morning. You really have to be on top of the art game to meet this kind of person. They own pieces by several of the gallery's artists and generally dislike the biggest artists for not being obscure enough.

The young, joking couple is in the completely opposite camp. Often newlyweds or newly-mets, they're deeply in love and not in the gallery for the art, but instead for having something more meaningful to do on a weekend than cuddling up with

a cup of coffee and heart-shaped chocolates. The joking couple play around and makes fun of high culture, and are probably the most annoying characters at a gallery, but also the most honest. They admit not knowing anything about art. Because they've spent all of their student loans on romantic dinners at Pizza Express, the joking couple rarely go to the fee-charging exhibits. They bring a fresh approach to art and are entertaining to watch, but you'll have to venture into the most deserted corners of the gallery to find them; often French kissing, always touching each other. The saddest person in a gallery is

the Old Age Pensioner who has too much time on their hands. They really don't know what to do in their spare time - oh wait, all the time - so they often end up going to galleries and museums, trying to kill time before time kills them. They get free entry even for the best exhibitions, although they usually have more money than a student can ever dream of. They really are devoid of any finer perception of art, but their age-authority and 'pure' command of the English language command some degree of respect even at museums and galleries. They despise Damien Hirst even more than the expert, so don't expect to see

them flocking around Tate Modern all too often.

Honourable mention must go to the language-barriered tourist nuclear family, whose children are dying to go to McDonalds, whilst the parents swear to totally immerse themselves in local culture and customs. Common for all these characters is that their divertissement brings your fun to a completely new level. You should at least thank them for that.

Lukas Slothuus

Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps



Director: Oliver Stone **Screenplay:** Allan Loeb, Stephen Schiff **Cast:** Michael Douglas, Shia LaBeouf, Josh Brolin, Carey Mulligan
Runtime: 131 min **Cert:** 12A **Year:** 2010

It's 2001, and Gordon Gekko has finally served his eight years for securities fraud, money laundering, and generally being a bastard. Unshaven and unkempt, Gekko collects his possessions from a detached correctional facility guard: a gold money-clip (with no money), a Rolex, and a very, very dated '80s brick-of-a-mobile phone.

Twenty-three years on from the original, which inspired a generation of yuppies to slick back their hair and don suspenders, Wall Street 2 takes us back to the brink of the 2008 economic meltdown, in which financial powerhouses like Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers were blown away like flimsy houses of paper money.

Our main focus is Jake Moore (Shia LaBeouf), a make-a-million-before-thirty-trader, who's interested in green energy investment (and the potential green) and marrying Winnie Gekko (Carey Mulligan), Gordon Gekko's elfin, estranged daughter. But Jake's plans are skewed by the shrewd, bloodthirsty machinations of Bretton James (Josh Brolin), who, working for a rival firm, brings about the downfall of Jake's employer and mentor Lewis Zabel (Frank Langella). Jake wants revenge, and so elicits the help of the great-minded Gekko. In return, Gekko wants Jake to help reconcile him with his daughter.

The trouble with Wall Street 2 is that it presumes a high level of audience sophistication. Oliver Stone may be well versed in FT-piffle (his father was a stockbroker), but that doesn't necessarily mean the rest of us will understand the casually banded around terms like 'derivatives', 'sub-prime' and 'credit default swaps'. But that's probably a non-point for LSE students. Either way, credit to Stone for trying to explain with crude metaphors: plummeting graphs that



Greedy is still good: Carey Mulligan and Michael Douglas in Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps

follow the New York skyline, bursting bubbles, and dominos falling.

Though LaBeouf is zealously committed to the role (even becoming a licensed broker-dealer as part of his research), he lacks meaningful presence. There are no Autobots and Decepticons to deal with here; all that summer blockbuster lark was easy. There's Frank Langella and Michael

Douglas to contend with, the former Oscar nominated (Best Actor in Frost/Nixon), the latter an Oscar winner (Best Actor in Wall Street). And having displayed her formidable on-screen credentials in An Education last year, it's disappointing that Mulligan shows little more than her tear ducts.

But the biggest problem with Oliver Stone's latest effort is that it

doesn't bare its teeth. Much like W., which glossed over real criticism of Bush, Wall Street 2 fails to excoriate the vices of its subject matter, instead deifying Wall Street excess with slick skyline shots and blissful photography.

Other than that, Douglas is a real guilty pleasure as Gekko; one of the cinema's all-time great villains, both

magnetic and mesmeric. It's a shame that he disappears for large chunks of the film, leaving us hungry for his irresistible double-bluffs and zany maxims ("a fisherman always sees another fisherman from afar"). He might just be enough to hold stock in Wall Street 2. Cheap financial pun intended.

Ahmed Peerbux
Wall Street is released in cinemas 8th October.

The Collector



Director: Marcus Dunstan **Screenplay:** Marcus Dunstan, Patrick Melton **Cast:** Juan Fernandez, Andrea Roth, Michael Reilly Burke, Josh Stewart
Runtime: 90 mins **Cert:** 18 **Year:** 2009

Marcus Dunstan's directorial debut sees a bunch of people stuck in a house at the mercy of a mad man. Not so original? What if I told you it is chock full of hyper-stylized, hyper-gruesome violence? No? He wears a mask too, if that helps. Written by the two blokes behind Saw IV, V and VI, this film has the ridiculous violence you'd expect by a couple of guys who cut their teeth on the torture porn scene. However, it only detracts from what could have been a genuinely suspenseful film. There are scenes that grip you, sure, but a lot of the time, you're just heavily ensconced in a sense of pure boredom. The title of the film is The Collector, a title based on an idea that is discussed once in the entire film

for around 10 seconds. It's full of instances like that; throwaway remarks that contribute absolutely nothing to the storytelling. Here's the rundown: Bit of exposition, boredom, little ray of hope, more boredom, peaking interest, fitting ending. Actually, that would be a rundown of all but the last 10 minutes. What actually ends the film is the most illogical, ludicrous and fucking angering dénouement I think I have ever seen in Cinema. All of the above said, there's a kitsch element in here that happened to capture my heart. It's a good old fashioned American horror, with the gore dialled up to 11 and a budget that would barely cover the craft service table on Platinum Dunes production, and there's something about that that tugs on my heartstrings. Sentimentality aside, this film is essentially Saw meets a reverse Home Alone. It never feels original in the slightest. Surprisingly though, this isn't actually to its detriment. Every good moment in this film comes from tried-and-tested formulae created by the films it so desperately tries to emulate. The end result, however, is that we're left with a pretty crass piece of cinema.

Oliver Little

The Collector is released on DVD on the 18th of October

Police, Adjective



Director: Corneliu Porumboiu **Screenplay:** Corneliu Porumboiu **Cast:** Drago Bucur, Vlad Ivanov
Runtime: 115 mins **Cert:** 12A **Year:** 2010

Corneliu Porumboiu's (12:08 East of Bucharest) Police, Adjective is not a cop film in the vein of Lethal Weapon or Point Break. It's a straight-faced exercise in Romanian ultrarealism, charting detective Cristi's (Dragos Bucur) mundane narcotics assignment, in which he must build a case against a teenager smoking

hashish and sharing it with his friends. His conscience, however, eats away at him, knowing the criminals (or are they victims?) could possibly face seven years in prison for something that people do in the rest of Europe with relative impunity.

The climax of the film is sees Cristi's superior stripping away his moral objections using the dictionary; that's right, the climax is read out of a dictionary, though this in no way detracts from its cold impact. As the captain wipes away the detectives innermost feelings with clinical definitions, and as one comes to see that most of Cristi's human encounters are belligerent and aloof, it becomes apparent that Police, Adjective offers a coarse insight into a suspicious, mildly malevolent post-communist state, throwing up uncomfortable questions of authority, conscience and the individual.

Ahmed Peerbux

Two dimensions are better than three: why 3D cinema is a gimmick

With news that George Lucas plans to re-release the Star Wars trilogy in 3D, the growing debate about the merits of technology has reached fever pitch in the film industry. Central to this debate is upgrading – or 'retrofitting' – 2D movies into the third dimension can be justified artistically. Commercial sense is a given: charging cinema patrons more money for 3D glasses, as well as studios charging individual cinema owners more to show the film, will remain good business sense as long as there is an appetite for 3D films. With the chief opponent of this – ironically, Avatar director James Cameron – now jumping on the retrofitting bandwagon to update Titanic into three glorious dimensions, is it really worth it?

For the most part, one shouldn't blame the filmmakers themselves for having their films retrofitted poorly. Many of these decisions are made by studio department heads that are paid to think about the bottom line at all cost when making such decisions. As such, in a post-Avatar film landscape where 3D is still seen by the majority of the public as novel and not novelty, if the choice is between releasing a traditional 2D movie without fanfare or a 3D movie and all the promotional hooks that brings, three dimensions beats two for most of the time. Such recent examples of films to have had this fate wrestled from them include Clash of the Titans, Alice in Wonderland and Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: no beloved franchise will seemingly be left unturned in

film studios' crusade to turn a profit.

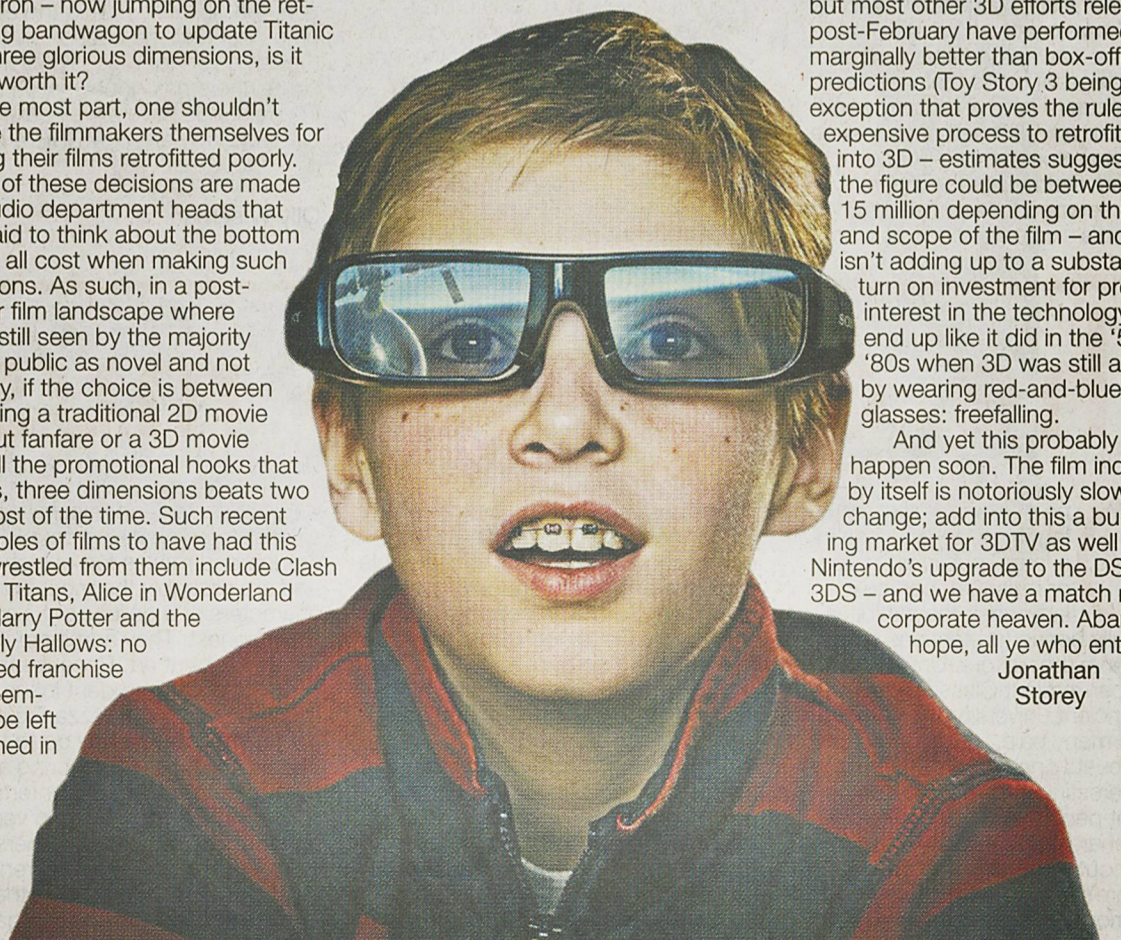
However, there are some people who are actually encouraging their films to be retrofitted for creative reasons. Perennial cinematic punching bag M. Night Shyamalan's latest directorial effort The Last Airbender was a commercial flop; while its eventual box office take was ironically bolstered by the increased ticket prices 3D tickets inevitably bring, its poor 3D transfer was held as one of the main reasons for the film's failure (as well as poor plot, acting, dialogue... this list goes on). As well as this, in preparation for the release of Toy Story 3 – which was made originally for the 3D format and not retrofitted – Pixar

converted the previous two Toy Story incarnations into 3D in order to drum up hype for the final film in the trilogy. Seeing as Toy Story 3 is on track to become the biggest film at the UK box office, and is already 4th biggest of all time, the powers that be in the House of Mouse are certainly happy with this 3D experiment.

All of this begs the question: do audiences still care? After the 3D explosion that was Avatar, it has only been the films released in the first few months of the year that have really capitalised on jumping on the 3D bandwagon. Alice in Wonderland and Clash of the Titans have had the most commercial success from retrofitting, but most other 3D efforts released post-February have performed only marginally better than box-office predictions (Toy Story 3 being the exception that proves the rule). It is an expensive process to retrofit a film into 3D – estimates suggest that the figure could be between \$10-15 million depending on the size and scope of the film – and if this isn't adding up to a substantial return on investment for producers, interest in the technology could end up like it did in the '50s and '80s when 3D was still achieved by wearing red-and-blue-tinted glasses: freefalling.

And yet this probably won't happen soon. The film industry by itself is notoriously slow to change; add into this a burgeoning market for 3DTV as well as Nintendo's upgrade to the DS – the 3DS – and we have a match made in corporate heaven. Abandon all hope, all ye who enter here!

Jonathan Storey



Features



Flickr user swarve

The mystery of Ostalgie

Craig Willy speaks of an Eastern Europe plagued by disillusion

INTRODUCTION

Ostalgie – noun
1. German term describing wistful nostalgia for the Communist era; usually accompanied by varying degrees of historical amnesia and disenchantment with the present.

When we think of the age of Soviet Communism in Eastern Europe, less than positive images usually emerge: lines for food, lack of freedom of speech or movement, omnipresent secret police, and Soviet tanks ready to crush any movement for change. Yet, over 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the liberation of Eastern Europe, the results of the transition have been mixed. Today, across many parts of the former Soviet Union, there is a pining for the past.

This development is alarming for what it says about the state of post-Communist society. Ostalgie, in the broader sense, can be a mask for Russian revanchism, imperial tendencies or minimizing of the crimes of the Communist regimes. Indeed, radical left wing German youth continue to this day in explaining that East Germany, without free elections or free speech, was nonetheless a perfectly “democratic” country. Yet, Ostalgie also expresses a legitimate frustration with the failures of both globalized capitalism and the European Union in post-communist countries.

Longing for Communism has somewhat different sources and expresses itself differently following whether one is in Russia or East Germany, for example. In both cases there is discontent over the unemployment, inequality, homelessness and other economic failures of the transition to capitalism. In Russia, this is tinged with the kind of imperial nostalgia at lost national greatness well-known in Britain and France. In Germany, Ostalgie leads to

an obsession with Stasi uniforms and the production of classic films like *Goodbye Lenin!*

ROMANIAN NOSTALGIA

It is altogether different when Central and Eastern Europeans, citizens of the European Union, express a similar yearning. For most Poles and Czechs, Communism meant nothing more than Soviet tanks and the lack of sufficient toilet paper. And yet, a recent poll has come out showing that Romanians appear to miss the days of Nicolae Ceausescu, long reputed to be the worst dictator of Eastern Europe, with a totalitarian Securitate secret police and truly miserable living standards. In an encouraging sign to the radical left, 61 per cent said that Communism was a “good idea” and some 47 per cent called it “a good idea, but badly applied”. Incredibly, 78 per cent said that neither they nor their families suffered under Communism. The population was, in assessing Ceausescu himself with a slight edge, considering the late dictator positively!

In the media, the findings have been explained with references to the apparently pathological “amnesia” of Romanians. It would indeed have to be this, for unlike those Russians who still glorify Stalin, most Romanians have direct, personal memories of what it was like to live under Communism. Given this, Romanian nostalgia cannot be dismissed as national chauvinism or a collective pathology, but rather expresses real disenchantment with the present. In explaining their appreciation of Communism, Romanians in the poll cited rather prosaic concerns including employment (62 per cent), decent living conditions (26 per cent) and guaranteed housing (19 per cent). All traditional socialist causes that the modern left, in most countries, has all but abandoned.

The catastrophic economic perfor-

A German term describing wistful nostalgia for the Communist era; usually accompanied by varying degrees of historical amnesia and disenchantment with the present

mance of Romania may also account for the poll. The global recession has been particularly cruel to the country, already the second-poorest member of the European Union, with a 7 per cent contraction and a doubling of the unemployment rate to 8 per cent (the latter figure is more impressive when one considers that 2 million Romanians, almost one in ten of the population, have left the country for work). Recent austerity measures, elaborated in collaboration with the IMF last May provoked the largest protests in the country since the fall of Communism. Prior to the crisis Romania already had the worst-funded healthcare in the EU, the government intends to further reduce its expenditure. Indeed, on 24 September the participation of 6,000 policemen in the protests (which are illegal) opposing 25 per cent cuts to their wages has already led to the fall of Vasile Blaga, the country's Interior Minister. In a strange parallel, the protests against Ceausescu in 1989 only succeeded in toppling the regime when the armed forces decided to join the opposition.

IN THE OTHER C.E.E.C.S

Romania remains something of an exception. In the rest of Eastern Europe, the yearning for Communism exists but it is not widespread. However, pessimism about the future and disenchantment with the European Union is common. A prominent Hungarian centre-right commentator recently opined that “Hungary is finished,” because most “young Hungarians do not see a future assured in their country.” One third of Hungarian youth want to live outside the country, principally because of the lack of job opportunities at home. The eviction of the Roma from France back to the Balkans has made Romanians keenly aware of their “second class status” as European citizens, one which does not entitle

them to the same freedom of movement, or respect, that big, wealthy countries enjoy. More generally, many blame the EU for any number of ills, including economic liberalisation, privatisation, an overpriced euro and the general expensive “parasitic” Soviet-like bureaucracy of “Brussels”.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

All this is rather depressing and reflects a lack of confidence in Europe's future. In addition to voting with their feet, Eastern Europeans are “voting with their placentalas” by not having children. The economic consequences of aging, low fertility, youth immigration – have all contributed to a skewed population pyramid – these have made themselves felt in Hungary and the Baltic States in the form of chronic deficits and insecure pensions.

Solutions are furtive. Free eastern European access to the western trade, investment and jobs will help. EU funds to help poorer regions, with Poland this year overtaking Greece as the biggest recipient of European aid, will also attenuate certain problems. Still, the performance of East Germany leaves one pessimistic.

The situation in Europe compares extremely unfavourably with the United States of America which, for all its national myths and social pathologies, remains a land where people have children, and come from around the world come to make their lives join a great ambition. There is no greater vote of confidence in the future of a country than this. In this sense, a change of mentality, a renewed belief in respective national projects as well as the European project, may be the beginning of an answer.

Craig Willy is an LSE graduate who currently works in the European Parliament. He writes a blog covering EU affairs at euroletters.wordpress.com.



Flickr user: Daniele Sartori

Gaming on commonhealth

Karina Vachani describes her hometown's disorganisation at the start of the games

A project once advertised as "the face of modern India" has turned into the "games of shame". Sunday 3rd October marked the opening ceremony of the world's most expensive Commonwealth Games to date. Six thousand athletes from over seventy commonwealth countries are to reside and compete in New Delhi's Commonwealth village.

Moments before the launch, there remained debate over whether the games should go forth at all. The head of the Games' organising committee attempted suicide - a hanging in one of the village's toilets - has been earmarked to represent the embarrassment and corruption the nation faces. As India adds more hungry millions to the world each year than any other country, the MPs continue the hunt for a justification for the US\$7 billion splurged on this "circus for the upper-middle class".

The right to host the 19th Commonwealth Games was won through bribes of over US\$140,000 to each of the 72 nations. Delhi was given approval in 2003, yet construction began over five years later. Since then, the games have cost 114 times the initial estimate. Anyone who looks at the balance sheet can deduce the obvious: toilet paper is not sold at US\$88 a roll, and a T-shirt does not cost US\$40 to manufacture. The question stands unanswered - where is all the money going? As governance deteriorates and top officials' family members and friends make up the construction and supply contracts, a whiff of corruption fills the air.

Having visited the site this summer, just months before the opening date, the chaos was palpable. Funnily enough, the village was calm, and among the collapsing 95 metre-high footbridges and crashing false ceilings, a wishful belief circulated that by some miracle, it would all come together. The large empty swimming pools and brightly painted concrete

The head of the Games' organising committee attempted suicide - a hanging in one of the village's toilets - has been earmarked to represent the embarrassment and corruption the nation faces

concealed the unfinished grey insides of the apartment blocks and flooded staircases. I was shocked at the sight of shattered balcony glass from gunshot attacks and the cavernous difference between the heavily advertised show-flat and the masses of poorly constructed, pre-sold apartments that athletes are to reside in.

"India is not equipped to hold such a massive event" is the common hearsay. Travel agencies have taken the games as an opportunity to promote 'get away from the games' holidays. Children jump for joy as school closures are planned based on anticipated traffic. Even if the games manage to run, what about the aftermath and the rest of the nation?

Amongst dengue fever and a heavy monsoon on the way, India is headed for disaster. Terrorist attacks just two weeks ago and threats of further violent surprises have launched politicians and athletes into frenzy. As a result, officials have had to employ thousands of security guards, and over a hundred thousand armed policemen have been stationed around the village. A recent addition to the army includes a contingent of large black-faced Langur monkeys who viciously patrol the area.

The security is expected to tighten as Prince Charles and his wife are scheduled to arrive on site. The Prince of Wales will be representing the Queen as her majesty, for the first time, will be absent from the games. He will be taking her place in the opening ceremony, but to avoid a diplomatic row, will be doing so alongside Madam President Pratibha Patil of India.

Just days before the first game, athletes are flying back home due to untenable living conditions and concerns regarding their health and safety. An Australian discus expert and English triple jump champion are two of the many who have chosen to return home. Bomb scares and human faeces in the athletes living quarters are just the beginning.

I was shocked at the sight of shattered balcony glass from gunshot attacks and the cavernous difference between the heavily advertised show-flat and the masses of poorly constructed, pre-sold apartments that athletes are to reside in

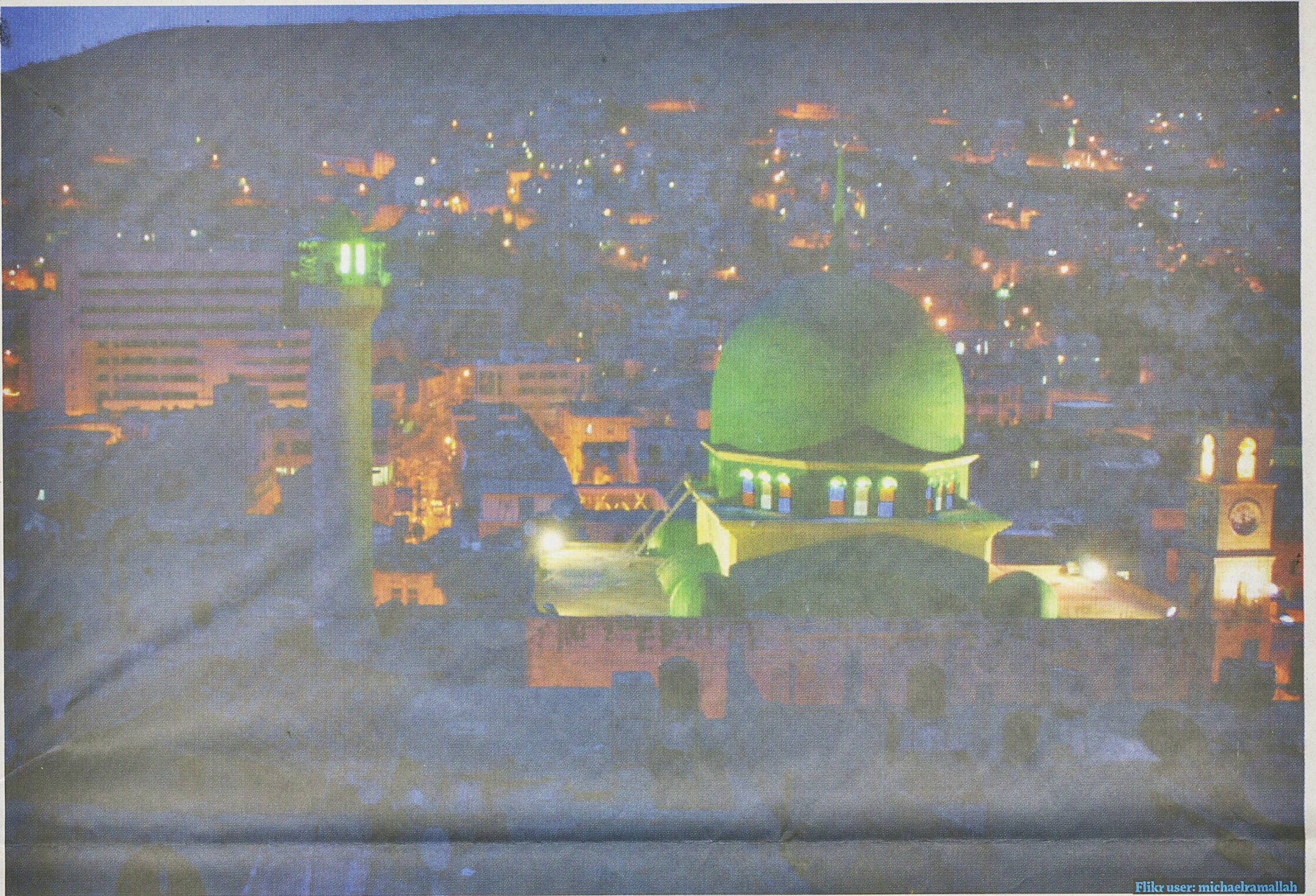
But not all is lost. Yes, compared to the London Olympics whose stadiums are all set for 2012, and the miraculous Beijing Olympic games in 2008, New Delhi has a lot to live up to. However, nationals stand proud of what they have achieved, and if they do manage to pull this off, history will not forget it. The nation is still on a learning curve and has finally woken up. As foreign commonwealth inspectors bring in professional cleaning companies to prepare the accommodation of their athletes, the politicians in charge took note and adapted the cleaning company to take over cleaning the entire village.

The warmth and hospitality of the culture alone is enough to entice visitors to the games. The beauty of India and the grand Akshardham temple at the village's doorstep highlight that the experience is not solely to do with the competition. The organizers' determination is commendable as thousands of performers rehearse throughout the night to prepare themselves for the celebrations. The nation continues to believe that at just US\$4 a ticket, "foreign guests will go back with an experience they will never forget, and will keep India forever in their hearts."

Politicians admirably turned down China's attempt to step-in has been refused to give up this alleged opportunity to host the games. Thus, Indians see the glass half full, proudly publicizing that their something will be better than nothing at all.

The debate is now over. The games will go ahead, and despite the fiery insults, they will try their best to "just get through it". Delhi is determined to show it can deliver and truly earn its classification as an advanced Asian capital. Now, I suppose, only time will tell.

Karina Vachani visited the Commonwealth village site this summer



Flickr user: michaelramallah

Stocks and statehood

Oliver Wiseman interviews Ahmad Aweidah, CEO of the Palestinian Stock Exchange

Imagine a stock market and no doubt your mind conjures up images of the hectic bustle of the New York Stock Exchange or the dealings of well-heeled London bankers. The existence of a stock exchange tends to be a symptom of an affluent society and an advanced economy. On this logic, the West Bank would seem an unlikely home for an exchange, but the Palestinian Securities Exchange (PSE) defies these preconceptions. Based in Nablus, the PSE has been trading without interruption for nearly 15 years. Founded on the wave of optimism and investment that came after the Oslo Accords, this fledgling bourse has been trading for nearly 15 years with neither occupation nor intifada interrupting business.

Despite understandable volatility (the PSE's Al Quds index peaked at 1330 points in 2005 and now trades at about 500), the exchange has emerged as a stalwart of the Palestinian economy. It lists a total of 41 companies, the total market value of which is \$2.4 billion. PalTel, the largest private sector employer in the Palestinian territories, is one of Palestine's most prominent businesses which raise capital on the PSE. Its emblematic value is also huge. The existence of a properly functioning stock market adds to the credibility of the economy generally, helping people take Palestinian business seriously.

I travelled to the troubled West Bank town of Nablus, more commonly associated with Israeli military incursions and Palestinian suicide bombings, to meet the exchange's CEO, Ahmad Aweidah. Educated in the UK, Aweidah speaks a flawless, cut glass English as he explains the challenges of running a stock market under occupation. 'Israel makes our job incredibly difficult' he tells me. 'People are so much more reluctant to invest in a place when there is no guarantee they will be able to visit. The issue of double regulation [by the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government] is also a mas-

The plan is to reach out to the Palestinian diaspora and encourage them to re-establish a commercial or financial connection with their homeland

sive problem'. Aweidah is ambitious in his plans to circumvent these issues - his schemes for growing the exchange make him an unwitting revolutionary.

The 3.5 million inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have a GDP per capita of just \$2,900. This lack of size and wealth means the exchange must look beyond the territories' troubled borders for business. 'We are the stock market of the Palestinian people, not the Palestinian Authority' proclaims Aweidah with an infectious confidence. The plan is to reach out to the Palestinian diaspora and encourage them to re-establish a commercial or financial connection with their homeland. The world's eleven million Palestinians are a comparatively successful and wealthy group with a penchant for finance. 'Wherever we are in the world, we Palestinians can do banking' Aweidah tells me. But the obstacles to this campaign's success are considerable.

'Stereotypes are a tremendous barrier for us. There are two problems with the way the world perceives Palestinians. Firstly, there is an obsession with our status as victims. Secondly, there is an idea that corruption is a big problem in the territories.' In Aweidah's eyes, these misunderstandings, just as prevalent among the diaspora as they are among everyone else, can be overcome by education. 'You have to meet people. If you talk to them they soon understand that there is more to Palestine than what you read in the newspapers.' Aweidah wages this campaign to correct misconceptions with investment roadshows and conferences. The PSE caravan travels the world, meeting Palestinians in the large expatriate communities of the Gulf, Jordan, and more bizarrely, Chile.

But the exchange has its enemies. Aweidah has regular meetings with the CEO of the Tel Aviv Exchange; a practice he sees as nothing more than business but others argue this is evidence that the PSE undermines the Palestinian cause. 'We are deconstructing stereotypes and that

Aweidah has regular meetings with the CEO of the Tel Aviv Exchange; a practice he sees as nothing more than business but others argue this is evidence that the PSE undermines the Palestinian cause

makes what we do controversial. As soon as you're not a victim, you're somehow legitimising the occupation. We recognise that as Palestinians we find ourselves in a difficult situation. What we do tries to change that. I don't see how a flourishing stock exchange damages the lives of our people.'

The Palestinians Territories are places where politics is hard to ignore. In both mundane and extraordinary senses, it dictates the lives of countless Palestinians. Both their daily lives and their longer-term prosperity are defined by the challenges of occupation. But Aweidah is a man trying his hardest to ignore these thorny issues. 'The conflict with Israel is emotional - there's huge amounts of irrationality on both sides. People want us to talk about Gaza and the occupation but we are a business. I run a public shareholding company with dividends to pay at the end of the month. Why should I be talking about politics?'

Dodging the political consequences of his business is sure to get even harder if Aweidah's current plan come to fruition. 'The PSE is looking to reach out to Palestinians living on the other side of the Green Line [in Israel]. We want them to list their businesses on our bourse and become investors in Palestinian industry.' These are bold ideas with fascinating consequences - I await news on their progress.

Criticisms of Aweidah and his stock exchange seem largely unfounded. In the strict dogma of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, the likes of Aweidah are undervalued. This CEO is a man whose dispassionate pursuit of profit is an inadvertent work of state-building. The fallout of his company's work make claims of Palestinian 'irrationality' less credible and distance terrorist stereotypes from reality.

This summer, Oliver Wiseman spent several weeks in the West Bank interviewing a number of Palestinian businessmen

It is impossible to escape the growing argument over higher education funding and tuition fees in the media over the past six months. With each corner of the HE sector fighting over funding and a fragile coalition agreement preventing the Liberal Democrats from sticking to their long term commitment of scrapping fees, it's clear that this explosive issue will be upsetting some.

The independent review into tuition fees and student finance, headed by former chief executive of BP, Lord Browne, is expected to present its report this month, after nearly a year of research.

Depending on who you listen to, you may believe that the outcome is a foregone conclusion. With only one student on a panel made up predominantly of business leaders and university chiefs, it is easy to suspect that the review is a stitch up and will result in a recommendation that fees should increase. Indeed, the review has suffered several leaks which suggest this; the latest indicating that Browne favours a total lifting of the fees cap.

The political landscape surrounding this issue has changed significantly over the past year. Twelve months ago, increases in fees seemed inevitable; now a range of different options have been put forward from across sectors and has created a new debate about universities' funding. The question is no longer "how high should fees go?" but instead, "how should students pay for their education?"

As it stands there are three serious options on the table.

The most simple is as following: the government may opt to ignore Browne's purported recommendations and maintain the status quo, opting to avoid political backlash and upset to the coalition. This presents the biggest problem for the sector in many ways because the coalition, like the previous administration, is expected to make swathing cuts to universities in the near future. Some universities will be able to cope with this comfortably - as has been made clear by the LSE Students' Union, the Russell Group and 1994 Group universities such as the LSE could still produce 4 per cent surpluses for up to ten years in this scenario - but most universities will have to stretch their resources to the limits. The class sizes in many of these institutions would likely increase, staff cutbacks would be on forefront of discussion and the position of the UK as a world class hub for education would be at risk. Whilst for the LSE, freezing fees is the best option, for the sector as a whole it is likely to do more harm than good.

Another option is to opt for what Browne is likely to suggest; an increase in fees by at least a factor of two, or perhaps even lifting the cap on UK fees entirely, bringing them in line with international student fees and creating a true market within higher education. This is the option preferred by Universities UK, the umbrella organisation for British higher education institutions, because fees have generated £1.3bn of additional investment in the sector, and many institutions are calling for an expansion of the system to allow for more during and after the forthcoming cycle of Government cutbacks. But this is probably the worst option for the end user of universities; students.

Not only does this increase the debt burden on students, up from an already staggering £24,000, but it also creates further strain on the Treasury, as currently, for every £1 that the Student Loans Company lends to pay fees and maintenance loans, it receives 67p back. This is wholly inefficient in itself, but when you consider that the Treasury also subsidises the interest on the loans as well, the system looks even more unsustainable at a time when the coalition is looking to make cuts.

It is also naïve for the sector to think that the Government won't take advantage of this situation through its austerity measures. When fees were first introduced, it was on the provision that it would be additional income to the sector, not a supplement. In a new fees regime, no such



Fees or taxes? That is the question

John Peart analyses the options facing Lord Browne and then the government

UNIVERSITY FUNDING IN NUMBERS

150,000 - the record number of prospective students who missed out on university places this year

25 per cent - the rise in spending on universities in all but the last of the New Labour years (1997-2009)

£449 million - the cut in spending on higher education for the year 2009/10

£221 million - the further cuts to the universities budget thus far delivered by the Coalition Government

29 per cent - the amount of the total spent on universities raised in tuition fees

£3,255 - the current cap on tuition fees in England and Northern Ireland

£10,000 - estimate of what Lord Browne may propose the tuition fee cap to rise to in next weeks report

gious rivals, to sustain student numbers and government funding. Again jobs will be on the line and the student experience will suffer; and the market would widen this cash gap over time making things worse.

As well as that, experience has shown that when fees increase for UK 'home' students, fees disproportionately increase for international students. In fact even with fees at their current levels, international fees have grown by an alarming rate year on year even though the National Student Survey has shown that they have contributed relatively little to improving the quality of experience for students studying here.

One of the main arguments in support of fees is that you can use higher fee income to target students from less well off backgrounds, who are generally also more debt-averse, with larger bursaries. That argument no longer stands on its own two feet however, as the Office for Fair Access, reported in September that bursaries are

alternative.

The National Union of Students, who first put forward the idea, have gained widespread support for the system which sees an end to fees and an introduction of a small levy for a fixed period on earnings with a maximum and minimum payment threshold. NUS claim that under such a system, a majority of students would

pay less than they would with fees and that there would be far less reliance on the Treasury because the system would sustain itself.

This system has been attacked on many fronts, not least because it doesn't solve the problems surrounding international student fees either, that it may lead to a brain drain as people move abroad

to avoid the tax and that it is too costly initially for the Government to support as it would require them to pump billions of pounds in to the system in the first few years - something which contrasts with the coalition's budget plans.

Coalition ministers have already reminded us that "it is the job of reviews to make recommendations and the job of Government to make decisions", but just how easy this decision will be and how much more students will be expected to pay remains to be seen until the vote in Parliament.

The question is no longer "how high should fees go?" but instead, "how should students pay for their education?"

promise would have to be kept and there is nothing to stop the coalition from making deeper than planned cuts if they feel universities can merely prop themselves up with fee income.

Poorer institutions will be affected the most as they find themselves charging lower fees than their cash-rich, presti-

totally ineffective at doing just that.

The third option would be to radically change the system by introducing a graduate tax. The strength of the argument for such a system depends on the source of your figures, but it has certainly ignited discussion amongst the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party as a viable

Fathers and Sons

Rosaline Ng on North Korea

North Korea. When most people think about the DPRK, the words, communism, dictatorship, heavy propaganda, and censorship come to mind. In simple terms, the vast majority of the Western world thinks they're insane and a representation of everything they feel is wrong in the world.

That's why as plans for a new successor, Kim Jong Un, are confirmed, many are anticipating change. Detractors have every reason to expect this as there are quite a few pronounced differences between Kim Jong Un and North Korea's current political culture. Unlike his father, Kim Jong Un was schooled outside of the DPRK, in Switzerland. Through his European education Kim Jong Un has gained foreign perspectives. He is also rumoured to be adept with technology, a brutal irony when one considers DPRK's censored internet access and limited technological development. If his past is any guide, Kim Jong Un has potential to bring about a revolution.

But perhaps this is just wishful thinking. Kim Jong Un is in his late 20s, he is a baby in the political world. Given his age, no one will really take him seriously. It is forecast that things will in fact be run by Jang Song-Taek while Kim Jong Un acts

as a public figurehead. Jang Song-Taek is Kim Jong Il's brother in law and has been his second in command for almost as long as Il has been in power. If his views and policies align with Kim Jong Il's, will things really be any different?

Moreover, we should also eliminate the hope that this shift in power will soften the DPRK's militaristic stance and emphasis on nuclear development. On Sept 28 2010, Kim Jong Un was officially appointed vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission, the country's powerful military force. The promotion indicates that the new leader will continue the DPRK's emphasis on military power.

Besides looking internally into North Korea, we must also consider the stalemate that has lasted in North Korea throughout Kim Jong Il's rule. Consider Asia's current biggest power and coincidentally, the sole protector of the DPRK - China. Throughout these years, China has continually provided financial support and political protection to the DPRK's dictatorship, poverty, and developmental platform. Why? It keeps South Korea in check, allows China to exert influence over one more part of Asia, and diverts western attention away from China's own, often questionable, tactics.



Flickr user Yeowatsup

The possibility of war between the two Koreas, and the possibility of war between the USA and North Korea creates a stalemate that undoubtedly stops any great economic competition from emerging. It is vitally important that China remains the greatest power in Asia for the next decade as their economic boom becomes more threatening to foreign superpowers. If for example, South Korea or Japan became very influential, it is likely their alliance with the United States will become threatening for China. China has always had North Korea as its ally against the United States, with whom they've always had a tense, even tumultuous relationship.

Thus, it is almost certain that China,

Asia's 'big brother', will take measures to ensure that things stay the same regardless of whether Kim Jong Un has new ideas or not. His inexperience will just be too easy to manipulate.

In light of all this, maybe we should not be too hopeful of a vast difference after Kim Jong Un succeeds. If we eliminate the controlling forces that are Jang Song-Taek and China, perhaps there would be the possibility, but it would not be in the near future. This is all assuming that Kim Jong Un is unhappy with the DPRK's current situation, which is highly unlikely because blood always runs thicker than water. So how far will the apple fall from the tree? Only time can tell.

WHAT IF...

...the Nazis reached Moscow?

Jack Tindale

"The capture of Moscow by Fedor von Bock's Army Group Centre in early December of 1941 came about due to a number of factors, but most historians now believe that Joseph Stalin's refusal to bring forward the newly arrived Siberian regiments to re-enforce the city was the primary reason for the occupation of the capital city. The Politburo was able to escape en masse on the morning of the December 12, arriving in Yekaterinburg some two days later. By this time Hitler had already made his first and only visit to the Kremlin, posing for a propaganda film outside St. Basil's Cathedral.

The triumph of one national leader mirrored the fall of another. Stalin, in a state of deep depression after his escape, failed to attend the first meeting of the civilian government, instead withdrawing to his dacha on the outskirts of the city. For the Politburo, convening in the baroque Kharitonov Palace, the non-arrival of the General-Secretary became the point at which his position as leader of the Soviet Union became untenable. It is unknown who gave the final order to remove Stalin but shortly after dawn on 17th, "the discredited comrade Joseph Vissarionovich" was arrested in the same manner as victims of the Great Purge. He was arrested, quickly brought before a kangaroo court, sentenced and shot.

Thankfully for the Soviet Union, Stalin's execution did not lead to a power struggle such as the one provoked by the death of Lenin. The Politburo elected a new General-Secretary the very same day. After rejecting Molotov (too close to the former priest) and Beria (too unpredictable), a former cobbler and Party Leader in Ukraine, Lazar Kaganovich became leader of the Soviet Union.

Kaganovich's first undertaking was to order the recapture of Moscow under the direction of Marshal Zhukov who had remained at the front. The Germans, exhausted after months of continuous advance and blighted by the booby trapped city, were unable to mount a real defence and were forced out on Christmas Eve. This occasion was received with widespread relief in the West and confirmed the Allied recognition of the new administration.

Lazar Kaganovich's long reign as General-Secretary (he would not retire until 1984) was a curious one, marked by alternate phases of terror - such as the purges that toppled Beria and Nikita Khrushchev after the end of hostilities in January 1945 - and economic reform, which consisted in moving away from heavy industry to consumer goods. Like his predecessor, Kaganovich was fundamentally an isolationist towards foreign policy. Molotov, who would remain his Foreign Minister for life, managed to reach an early rapprochement with President Dewey over the occupation of the Korean Peninsula in 1947 as well as ensuring a largely peaceful settlement of the Civil Wars in Greece, Iran and Indochina during the early 1950s. While Kaganovich's conservatism has been seen as failing to solve the inherent problems of the command economy that began to materialise in the 1970s, his successor as General-Secretary, the reformist Eduard Shevardnadze, was able to ensure a gradual dissolution of the great bloc, which allowed the successor states to continue to play a major counterpart to the Neo-liberal west."

Education, duh!

Poorna Harjani emphasises the importance of the ABC

Is education a privilege, a right or a responsibility? Last year, Barack Obama faced this very question during his campaign for health care reform. He convinced the US Congress that universal health care was a 'right'. Today, developing nations must tackle this ambiguity over the status of an education. Positive externalities arise from education, a society that is more inclined to vote, respect to codes of conduct, and individuals who gain dignity from work status. Although these benefits are well known, the variance in quality of education is wide. These barriers are present not just at the level of access to services, but also in the cultural impediments between those who are disabled and their right to learn.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 23 states that every child has the right to an education, from primary school, secondary and onwards. This law is signed by over one hundred and thirty countries. Along with the Millennium Development Goals, these international standards are the foundation for each country and provide hope for disabled children's prospects worldwide.

Learning to read in practice is more complex than initially imagined. Every child processes information differently and how each child learns is best determined by professionals. Environmental factors and other actors within this process such as parents and teachers involved in a child's early development play a critical role in allowing the child to

acquire the necessary skills to reach their full potential.

Difficulties may arise in swaying old generation mindsets to new styles of learning techniques. But there is also a multiplier effect - as one group of parents learns the benefits of a new way to educate their child, this will slowly permeate through society. The road however is not easy for parents for those who have to deal with the emotional trappings of a mentally challenged child, not to mention the hours of additional time, care and expense that is packaged too.

Professional teachings schools for the disabled are under-supplied in the developing world. Governments too, have failed to encourage families to send their children to school. Lloyd Spencer, a social researcher, found that in urban parts of Malawi, even when schools were accessible and affordable, families view education as a trade-off to current income. Additionally, the Malawi government has policies on paper of free education for all, adhering to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However as ever no facility for children with hearing and speaking challenges has been constructed.

The mind is proven to be at its most powerful and absorbent stages during childhood, so these policies matter. Different learning techniques have been proven to teach children with learning difficulties concepts that would initially be seen as far beyond their capability. It is for this initial stage of learning that developing countries need to focus their resources

on. 'Learning disabilities' also bear stigma. People who carry that label wear many others with negative connotations. These can produce low confidence and self-esteem in children. The notion that learning disabilities are not a sign of low intelligence needs to be emphasized throughout these developing societies. Picasso, Leonardo da Vinci, and Thomas Edison, some of the most influential minds in history, overcame their learning disabilities to become iconic in their respective fields.

The Californian government's initiative; 'the right to learn' has created an interactive web site called 'youthnoise.com', which provides means of interaction via Facebook and MySpace. Children virtually discuss their problems and the issues they face within schools and local colleges. In this way, problems are laid out and solutions slowly filter through a systematic government scheme. With developing countries latching onto the Internet phenomenon, this is something they perhaps can learn from in the Western World.

The 'Disability Review Sierra Leone 2009' produced by the charity Leonard Disability demonstrated that only 33 per cent of disabled respondents of working age are in employment and an only a slightly larger proportion of respondents believe education to be useful. This reflects not only the assumptions being made about the value of education, but a pessimistic outlook. If children were put

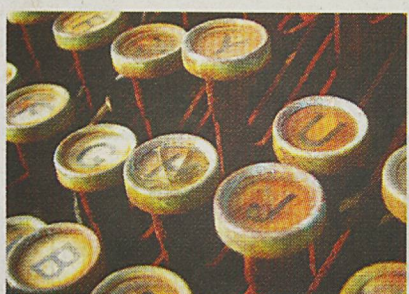
through a responsive system of education with the chance of employment, this could enliven attitudes towards this kind of participation for future generations.

Listing a universal goal such as the right to learn may not be enough. Merit goods like education are products that tend to be under-consumed as their inherent value is not truly appreciated. Hence, additional educational resources are provided by the government to fulfill citizenship's right to such goods. It is thus the government's responsibility to certify that these advantages are known, and to require that all children, irrespective of age, gender and ability are granted their human rights.

John F. Kennedy once said, "In giving rights to others which belong to them, we give rights to ourselves and our country". It is a process of reciprocity towards every democracy's goal of equality and equity. The internet has brought innovative solutions to publicize problems to a global audience where they can be modeled as a research tool. There may also be a question of governments and teachers alike, adapting new learning styles.

The barriers disabled children face in developing nations are more a product of the environment than a result of their impairment. Their abilities are overlooked, their capacities underestimated, and their potential wasted. It is not only our promise, but a worldwide responsibility to turn what was once seen as a 'privilege' into an education, into a right. There is still much to learn.

Measured musings



The bookshops of Britain are close to unrecognisable thanks to the glut of New Labour memoirs and diaries that currently line the shelves. One cannot turn a corner without the wrinkled face of a has-been apparatchik jumping out at you. The phenomenon of the political memoir seems lucky to have escaped proper scrutiny, particularly after these recent efforts. Blair, Campbell and Mandelson's ambiguously titled books ('The Third Man?' 'A Journey?' Really?) have been characterised by little more than score-settling.

It would be easy and indeed tempting, to hark back to a golden age of the

memoir - a day when great statesmen made earnest contributions to history and insight into the challenges of power. Frankly, whether such a period ever existed is doubtful. A number of features intrinsic to the notion of the memoir make any hopes of a worthwhile version of events sure to be dashed.

First, the financial dimension to the whole affair tends towards a skewed motivation for putting pen to paper. Perhaps this is a cynical view on the process, but as a man, lets call him Tony, strides out of Number 10 after a decade of slaving away for a pittance, its hard to believe he's not a little bit excited about the fortune that

awaits him. Writing for money makes the materialisation of a more intricate and technocratic approach - the approach that would add the most to our understanding of the recent past - unlikely.

Second, politicians emerging from an extended period in power are bound to be emotionally damaged by the whole affair. Perhaps it's expecting a lot for a dispassionate analysis of years gone-by but why does all this need to played out for all to see.

'What's the harm?' one might interject. All this matters. It matters because in the strange business of government, a certain level of privacy and confidence is

surely required. It would be a tragic state of affairs if those making the country's most important decisions were acting in the shadow of what would be written about them in the years to come. Politicians need to be more responsible about what they or their ghostwriters lay bare.

Oliver Wiseman
Features Editor

Messy Memoirs

Gossip Gollum tells us who Bilbo'd whose Baggins

Questions have been asked as to the identity of GG, with suggestions ranging from that stocky lad who's AU President, to Fola Fawehinmi...and yet the mystery remains. Better luck next time!



confirm that the couple staggered home together, and though I can't provide specifics as to what they may or may not have done together, there are definitely pictures flying round as evidence.

Sadly, not all were able to bear witness to this spectacle; your resident Sports Editor, Hannah Dyson, and a certain Nat Davis, didn't quite manage to make it out of the tuns to grace Zoo Bar, deciding instead to take part in FC taps. They'll be there next week, they promise.

Zoo Bar does appear to have a pretty detrimental effect on all who attend. Your very own Dance Club Captain, who spent the entirety of the Freshers' Fair dancing her cotton socks off with style, didn't fare as well when it came to Wednesday night. One individual said "she had a few and was dancing like Boca in Salou."

Vanessa Duckworth, who first created controversy amongst the AU by quitting Women's Rugby, opting instead to dedicate her talents to the Netball teams, has once again whipped up a storm. You may remember her for getting with first team rugby club captain, Brendan Mycock, but this week, she decided to make her way round the family, escorting home his brother, a Masters Student at UCL, instead. I'm pretty sure Brendan would have liked something else as a reward, after completing his half-marathon recently.

It's fine though, because "the other Mycock" wasn't the only one getting action from the LSE girls. Rhiannon Ed-

wards, who holds the coveted position of first team Netball Captain, twice bagged herself the former Mr LSE, sometimes known as the "abs" of the LSE, allegedly going for round two on Sunday night with two simple words: "booty call?"

However, this drunken debauchery turned into tension at initiations on Sunday. One first year, a Public School Boy, described by various rugby players in terms that are, unfortunately, too obscene to be published, was thrown out of initiations, having offended the majority and thrown around a plethora of smutty family insults. One fresher was apparently ready to fight the aspiring player, until the seemingly unpopular lad was ousted from the house. He is now generally hated by the first Rugby team and something tells me that his time on the AU is going to be rather short-lived.

At a similarly unholy hour of the morning, several other rugby players, including the AU President himself, were unceremoniously evacuated from Stuart Whiteford's house, where further initiations were taking place. The story goes that a disgruntled neighbour stormed up to the property, wielding a machete (seriously), and threatened the sportsmen with their lives unless they left. Needless to say, windows were smashed, screams ensued, but thankfully, no one died. Not this time, at least.

Because "the other Mycock" wasn't the only one getting action

Do you belong in the AU? Take this simple Quiz to find out.

Count up your points and work out if the AU is the 'lifestyle' for you:

1. Have you joined a Finance / Investments / Economics society? Yes (minus 6 pts) / No (plus 2 pts)
2. Do you have a habit of making sexual innuendos on a regular basis? Yes (plus 50 pts) / No (minus 14 pts)
3. Have selected your timetable based solely on the Thursday teaching arrangements of your course lecturers? Yes (plus 20 pts) / No (plus 9 pts)
4. Have you signed up to the LSE module - 'How to lose friends and alienate people'? Yes (minus 10pts) / No (plus 5pts)
5. Do you enjoy pushing boundaries of what is socially acceptable in public and generally creating controversy? Yes (LAD pts) / No (SABB pts)
6. Do you suffer from regular bouts of alcohol induced amnesia? Yes (plus 30pts) / No (minus 15pts)
7. Gangbang? Yes (Bowers pts) / No (Fenton pts)
8. Do you enjoy looking svelte and muscular? Yes (6 Robinson pts) / No (0.3 Wrights Bar pts)
9. Are you prepared to sacrifice all dignity on a Wednesday night? Yes (69 Ivanova pts) / No (24 Cooper pts)
10. Do you still have dignity to sacrifice? Yes (multiply pts by 10) / No (divide by Strivens shag count)

Taken the time to calculate your points? You don't belong in the AU...

Welcome to your weekly round-up of all the scandalous stories, regrettable hook-ups and shameful shags.

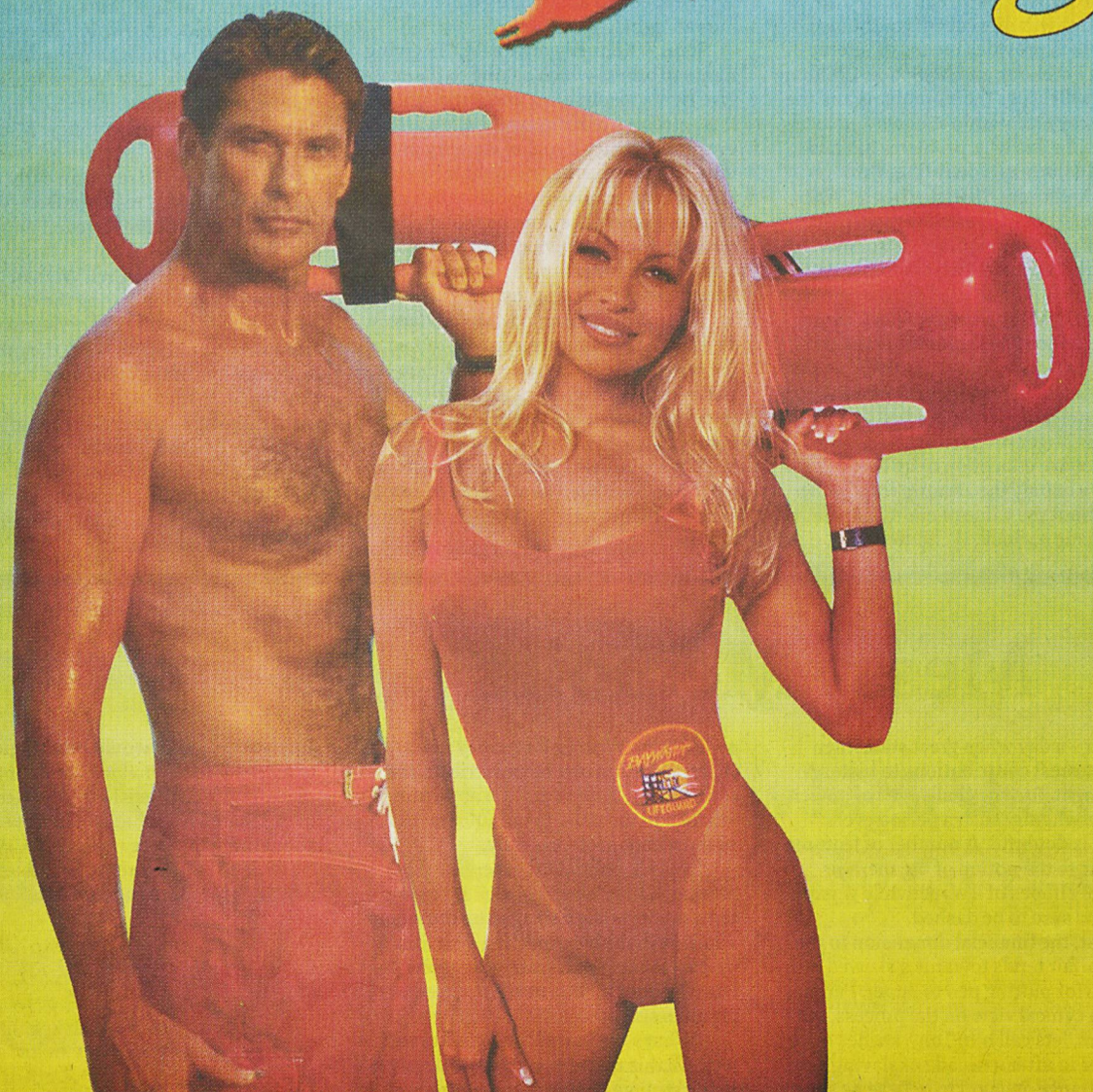
As expected, Wednesday night brought with it the usual collection of drunken rugby players, and excessively loose girls, exchanging numbers, saliva, and other bodily fluids you may not want to read about. If this sort of stuff doesn't appeal, then flick back over to Features, but if it does, read on (you perve).

Former social sec of the Netball Club was spied locking lips with this week's hunky torso of the week. We won't name names here, but your resident GG can

I'll be there...

BAYWATCH

Beach Party



13th October 2010
7.30pm - 12:00 am
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Welcome Party



Athletics
Union

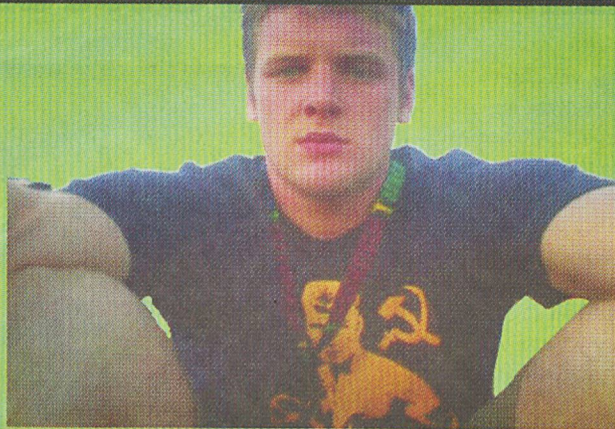
Get Your AU Wednesday Night Cards now - available at the Tuns for just £5

Play-off Profiles: This week it's Rugby vs Football

Tom Lennon

Who is he?

Rugby Club Captain, 1st Team Prop, Wigan RLFC Fan Club President



Where is he from?

Not quite Liverpool, yet he still thieves like a scouser

Natural Wednesday Night Habitat:

Once upon a time the answer would have been the dirty back corner in Zoo bar. However, since marriage, to a Ms Peltaz, it's more like bed and biscuits by 11pm.

LSE Sporting Career Highlight:

Mr LSE 2nd round contestant and had a brilliant leg-break in 1st year rugby.

Profile:

Like a phoenix from the flames, Tom Lennon arose in first year (well his second attempt at it) to set the bar for any aspiring Rugby fresher. Combining red wine beveraging skills, a love for discount protein powder and a controversial outlook on all fancy dress (as if the Carol needed any more), TFLennon has made his mark on all things AU.

Joseph Watson (BJ)

Who is he?

El lad on tour

Where is he from?

Tom Lennon's wet dreams

Natural Wednesday Night Habitat:

Your mum's house. Shit question.

LSE Sporting Career Highlight:

Calella 09, where he failed to organise a walk-over against Nottingham Trent, failed to get Deevy back to his room after she threw up and famously failed not to bum someone.

Profile:

Born in '89 the elusive BJ Crowler is a man among men. Having made his name in the Alan from King's school of chivalry he quickly established himself as Middlesborough's best export since Chris Kamara. He is currently ranked as the 2nd worst footballer in LSE's history, the crown having gone to Norayr Djerrahian.



Book Review

Shane Looney: my story so far

Calum Young

Shane Looney is known to the British public primarily through his footballing prowess, however his real genius lies in his ability as a prose stylist. Whilst it's difficult to place Looney's first oeuvre within any literary tradition, the abundant lyricism and dry-wit of his syntax grounds him snugly within the Modernist pantheon. Indeed, Rooney alludes during the books opening pages to what he considers his most influential antecedents. He references Proust, Joyce and Elliot as part of the existential cannon in which he feels himself to be working.

Of course the novel is obviously meta-textual. Its very title, *My story so far*, while dished out in a layman's argot, hints at the profound philosophical introspection which has propelled the young Shane to athletic greatness. Though partly autobiographical, the work transcends the physical construct we and the media know as 'Wayne' and delves into the author's subconscious to answer one burning question: who is Shane Looney?

To open this book is to step inside the mind of a 21st century icon, replete with the necessary hubris and humility. We experience Shane, warts and all. In fact modern scholars have found the lengthy footnote on page 89, which deals with the pimple beneath Shane's left buttock, a precocious and daring metaphor for his wife. Both are untouchable and beyond discussion.

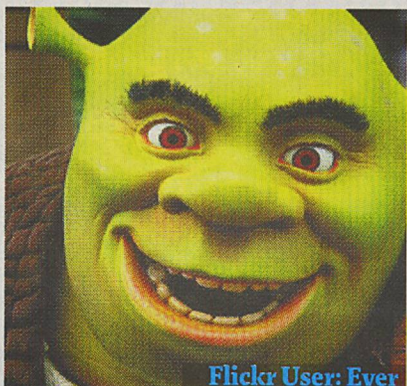
As with all Rooney's other work, there's a great deal of intellectual heavy-lifting to accomplish before one touches the inner core of the title character's 'genuine ego'. Sure, there are enjoyable vignettes about Alex Ferguson's spitting habits and the sexual preferences of Looney's dog, Boris, but all told these are mere ephemera before the book's central message. The nub of Looney's epistemo-

logical standpoint begins at the premises laid down by Immanuel Kant at the end of the 18th century. But Looney builds on Kant's transcendental idealism, but he goes further towards a comprehensive worldview than any other mainstream thinker since Schopenhauer.

The philosophical argument presented is as rigorous as it is perplexing. Looney doesn't so much delve beyond the West's common perceptions of what it is to know something, but vigorously tears them back to reveal the penetrating light of truth. At the conclusion of his opus, Looney reflects proudly "I knew it was I what could do it".

As fascinating as the book's content is, it is surpassed by the driving narrative energy of its argot. Detractors have suggested that at 28, Looney is beyond his intellectual prime, but this is patently untrue. The sentential acrobatics on display in *My story so far* are as nimble and agile as any presented by a full-time scholar. Looney's argument soars with a lyrical buoyancy unseen since Gibbon over the high-ground of his subject matter, but it is also equally adept at burrowing down into the gritty atoms of reason.

Will our times see another mind which can combine the effortless writing brilliance of Flaubert with the analytical ability of Ayer, like Looney's? This author's guess is no.



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TORSO OF THE WEEK



Sport



Inside:
Gossip Gollum reveals the week's antics

Too good for the 'Common'wealth games

Matthew Box

The emotions of sportsmen and women turning up at the athletes village in New Delhi this week will parallel those of many a fresher moving into their underwhelming halls accommodation at LSE. Poor quality beds, cramped quarters, dodgy heating and toilet sanitation that leaves a lot to be desired: these are the reports some athletes are making of the athletes village in New Delhi, yet many an LSE student has probably made such a report to their friends at other universities when comparing accommodation. Seventy-five quid a week at a Manchester Met hall got you a double bed and an ensuite. I would have had to sell a kidney to secure such a room at LSE.

But just like the majority of LSE students who make the best of a bad situation at halls, many up-and-coming athletes are putting on a brave face and thriving at the opportunity such an experience offers them. LSE degree / Commonwealth medal, same difference, right?

I wish. Being stung for more than a hundred quid a week to stay in what is essentially a hostel hurts. These 'Commonwealth Athletes' are getting a free ride, yet some of them aren't happy. "Oh the shower is a bit dirty." Shithouse. You've been selected to represent your country yet for some reason a bit of dirty linen and a dodgy bathroom has forced you to withdraw...

Bollocks. AU athletes reading this -

how many of you would give more than an arm and a leg to represent England/Wales/Malaysia? Phillips Idowu has cited "health and safety issues" as the reason for his withdrawal. Yet Phillips Idowu made his name at the 2006 Games in Melbourne, winning gold. Where would he be now if such an event had not given him the chance to shine? We didn't see any complaints from him at Manchester 2002, when he was yet to make the medal roster. He's clearly now too good to try.

I know LSE doesn't hold much in the way of sporting silverware (except maybe basketball) but we're proud of our teams and proud of our sport. We have to deal with shit away matches, shit opposition and shit venues, and pay for the travel-cards to get there. I'm proud of the fact that we have captains and members who take this on the chin, have a good game there and laugh about it afterwards.

Who are these athletes to pull out of the games citing "sub-standard accommodation"? You're doing running and jumping. You're being paid to compete in New Delhi, not New Malden, so what's your problem? That bridge collapse has got you three nights in a five-star honeymoon suite, so can everyone just take the Nathan Robertson line and describe the facilities as 'fantastic'? He plays badminton and he's happy to be there, yet somehow triple-jumpers have reached a point where they can pick and choose the competitions they compete in.

Footballers, Rugby players, Cricketers and Golfers, etc. If you're any good you've built up a fanbase on the back

of successful competitions, valuable sponsorship deals and shameless plugging of merchandise (see page 19 for some reviews).

Despite all the flak Premiership footballers come under, they play when they're bloody well told to and the fans flock to support them accordingly. Stars such as Idowu and Ennis are in danger of alienating such supporters who only want to see their idols triumph at a world class competition.

Sorry New Delhi wasn't up to your standards Mr Idowu, and I really hope London 2012 goes well for you. Though if it doesn't, you've always got the Commonwealth Games 2014 to reassert your dominance. In Glasgow.

"You're being paid to compete in New Delhi, not New Malden, so whats your problem?"



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