

SEX EQUALITY

Part B
theme issue

Education, social justice, and LSE Comment special 9-12

The Beaver

25th November 2008
Newspaper of the
London School of Economics
Students' Union

Too LGBT for LSE? The poster a School official didn't want you to see >>5



The Israel society removed a poster showing two kissing men from Houghton Street at the behest of a LSE security guard last week, sparking outrage from Union leaders and the president of the LGBT society

**Fears over slow rise
in LSE state school
admissions**

Michael Deas

The LSE is still failing to reach the government benchmark for the proportion of UK undergraduates which come from state schools.

Provisional figures released to The Beaver under the Freedom of Information Act show that 67 per cent of UK undergraduates beginning their studies this year attended a state school.

The benchmark set by the Higher Education Funding Council for England for the 2006 entry cycle set the LSE a target of state school students of 77 per cent. The 2007 and 2008 targets have not yet been released for public consumption, but are likely to be higher than 77 per cent as the target conventionally rises each year.

Head of Recruitment and Admissions Catherine Baldwin said that the LSE does not accept the methodology by which the benchmark is calculated and "does not regard the benchmark as a target for admission of state school students." The LSE does not set an internal alternative target.

Students' Union Education and Welfare Officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang, said, "If the LSE is serious about widening participation in higher education then it needs to take the benchmark seriously. Private school pupils have had a better chance of getting into university than those from state schools."

Last year only six of the top twenty UK universities met their benchmarks.

Also state school admissions do not tell us every thing about widening participation. The LSE has not publicised its benchmark for admissions to those from low participation neighborhoods."

However, Baldwin says she is pleased that the proportion of state school students is increasing, "We are pleased that the provisional data for 2008 indicates that the increase in state school admissions from 59 per cent in 2005 to 66 per cent in 2006 appears to have been sustained."

Baldwin also explained that each application form was marked with information on the percentage of 5 A*-C GCSEs achieved at the candidate's school. "The lower the average performance of the school, the more weight may be given to the candidate whose past examination performance significantly exceeds their school's average performance," she said.

Union General Secretary accused of 'tyrannical rampage' at UGM

>> Anger at "disregard" for meeting rules

>> Tempers rise over referendum motion

Chun Han Wong

Students' Union General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher has been accused of abusing his power at the Union General Meeting last Thursday.

In a show of "severe disregard" for protocol, Fisher contravened the Union's Codes of Practice in trying to bring forward a motion for discussion, despite objections from some students.

The motion, which proposed the creation of a referendum mechanism for decision-making on "important and controversial" issues, constituted an amendment

to the existing Codes of Practice.

Union regulations state that such amendments could only be discussed with four weeks' notice. The amendment could only have been discussed at the UGM this Thursday, since last week constituted the fourth week of the required time of notice.

The Constitution and Steering Committee (C&S), responsible for upholding the Union constitution, blocked Fisher from discussing the amendment.

Fisher then circumvented their ruling with an emergency 'change order' motion, which would bring forward his proposed amendment by a week and thus nominally comply with the Union's Codes of Practice.

His move was not permissible under Union regulations, but C&S failed to rule



The UGM earlier this term. Meetings have since suffered from a lack of attendance Photo: Erik Lang

against it.

Only two members of C&S were present, and both were unfamiliar with the Codes of Practice, which governs UGM proceedings.

Fisher then proceeded to discuss the amendment, despite objections from other students at the meeting.

Residences officer Helen Roberts, who led the objections, explained: "In the absence of clear direction from C&S, it should not be left to one person to decide the details of the Codes of Practice."

The amendment was about to be voted upon when the UGM was brought to a sudden close, after a student called for a quorum count. It had emerged that fewer than

>> Continued on page 4

Union Jack UGM sketch



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

Hulk smash! Hulk destroy! Hulk can count to four! Hulk want bizarre extralegal change order motion! General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher took a walk on the angry and exasperated side this week. As one, the Union General Meeting joined him. And boy, didn't Jack love every minute of it.

It started out well. Every UGM does. The Union great and good trundled up on stage, as usual, to field questions from the great unwashed. As usual, a feckless fresher began the long trudge to a Gen Sec '11 bid in a C&S by-election. The lovely Priscilla's headlong dive into every rhetorical cliché in the book earned a standing AU ovation, not so usual. C&S, all two of the Union's flaccid judiciary who could be bothered to show up this week, stumbled into action mere minutes after Fisher took to the stage with a dodgy referendum motion, as usual. Sort of.

You're a week too early, they bleated.

And then everything went a bit Napoleon Bonaparte. Fisher had clearly left his political reverse gear at home. Probably in the same place as his sense of constitutional propriety. He wouldn't take five weeks or the Codes of Practice that keep this Union barely legal for an answer.

Never mind the hilariously self-righteous Marvel Comics impersonator up there: genuine rage was stirring in Jack's heart. This was his UGM. It's your UGM. It's even the UGM of the alcohol athletes slathered across the Old Theatre balcony. Jack doesn't care about how "important or controversial" the issues are. Earth to Aled: student politicians have the belief hardwired in them that every small spat of their sad little lives is the most important and controversial issue in history.

This slow-motion coup just kept getting closer and closer, no matter how many grizzled Union politicians threw themselves under the sabbatical tank-

treads. Jack was starting to sweat. He saw a dark future ahead of him. Empty UGMs stripped of their good old legislative venom and electric charge of debate. Hallowed generations of LSE politicians betrayed. Well, that was the normal dark future. But Union politics was in real danger of being shunted, in a new, foul, retrograde plebiscitary form, to the sordid show-business of Lent term elections. Where was the Students' Union's saviour to deliver it from this dystopia? Where was its shining white knight?

"Quoracy!" Step forward Joe Meadway. Conscientious Beaver scribes swivelled their heads in fervent relief. They'd been running out of candidates to make the call to Save the Union and cap off the news story that - thanks to Fisher's pig-headed political judgement on stage - had just kept on giving and giving. It was all over. His credibility face down in the Union swimming pool in any case, Fisher

obviously lost the will to carry on after Meadway's exercise of the nuclear option with his resounding clarion call. Meeting not just adjourned, meeting wound up and scratched out of official existence, as if we all wanted to pretend it had never happened in the first place. It had been necessary to destroy the UGM in order to save it.

But Jack won't forget. It won't be Year Zero for him next week. We still have to ratify the minutes. Priscilla's bid for power may yet be saved. And Jack is going to treasure the memory of leonine nursery-saver Fisher mutating into the Incredible Sulk.

Having steamrolled the last hapless C&S head, the great sabbatical centralisation juggernaut collided head-on last Thursday with a couple of judicial rodents and a few mangy Union dogs of war. And the roadkill won.

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Contact The Beaver
info@thebeaveronline.co.uk
0207 955 6705

East Building
LSE Students' Union
London WC2A 2AE

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Students' Union campaigns

Nursery

Focus turns to efficiency in Union fight for nursery

Srikanth Narayamohan

The Students' Union campaign to save LSE's nursery will hold meetings this week to discuss a proposal to make the nursery more efficient by reducing its deficit and maintaining its level of quality in providing child care.

Students' Union General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher said: "We will look at possible ways of getting rid of inefficiencies, but we're against getting rid of the deficit. We might look at piecemeal changes here and there, but those would only take £50,000 off a £250,000 thousand deficit. We don't want to do anything that compromise the high level of quality offered by the nursery, if anything we want to improve it."

Over the course of last week the Students' Union operated stalls in the Quad and Houghton Street asking students for submissions to be made on postcards which were designed by children in the nursery.

The School's Academic Planning and Resources Committee (APRC) began a consultation on the nursery's future at the beginning of term. As a result, the Nurs-

ery Consultation Committee, consisting of student representatives and parents, has canvassed for student opinion as well as writing to academic departments and service divisions to lobby for support and submissions to the consultation.

Fisher pointed out that while there has been significant student support, there had also been major unexpected involvement from parents and nursery staff.

"A lot of the impetus has come from the student parents and they're fully involved in the campaign," he said. "My suspicion was that student parents would have no time, but in reality the nursery staff and parents are the forefront."

According to a paper circulated by the Students' Union and posted on the nursery's website, the School financially supports the nursery with approximately £290,000 a year, of which eight per cent comes from the Students' Union. In his termly appearance at the Students' Union General Meeting two weeks ago, LSE Director Howard Davies pointed out that this worked out to approximately five to six thousand pounds per child per year.

The campaign hopes to submit proposals on better efficiency to the LSE by the end of Michaelmas Term, along with student submissions for the consultation.

Library

Twenty-four hour library campaign revived



Ali Moussavi

The Students' Union Executive plans to re-launch last year's campaign for a 24-hour library on campus.

Last year, the campaign sought to restore 24-hour opening times at the Library which, after being trialled in the 2006-7 academic year, were reversed due to low demand.

The campaign, which was previously led by former General Secretary Fadhil Barkeer-Markar, ultimately did not achieve this aim last year.

Union General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher sent an email last Friday to last year's campaign mailing list to call an open meeting on Monday in order to restart the campaign.

Fisher has stressed the importance of more flexible opening hours for postgraduates during the examination and dissertation season.

When running for General Secretary in the last Lent Term, the 24 hour library was one of Fisher's campaign promises as

something he would continue to work towards achieving.

He acknowledged that some time was needed for reflection since last year and that campaigning had recently been more focused on the nursery than the library, since that campaign had been of greater urgency.

In campaigning for improved library opening times, Fisher plans to communicate more student opinion than before to the School.

One area of possible improvement which Fisher pointed out was that the petition from last year did not show depth of student support for a 24-hour library and that the Students' Union would use the techniques of the nursery campaign to gain a broader range of submissions. These, he said, would explain why the library should have more flexible opening hours.

"Longer opening hours are crucial to students, and have been demanded for many years," Fisher said. "There are times when 24-hour opening is necessary; at other times, longer hours will suffice. The issue of Summer opening also needs to be addressed."

LSE STUDENTS' UNION

International Food Fair

FREE ENTRY, The Quad

7-10PM, Tuesday 25th November



Allow yourself to socialise with people from different cultural backgrounds and satisfy your culinary desires!

Israel-Palestine at LSE



Photos: Cherie Leung

Houghton Street PR offensives test term of cooperation

Victoria Boggiano

Both the Israeli and Palestinian Societies set up stalls on Houghton Street last week, only a few days after LSE's One Voice event that brought the two groups together for a peaceful discussion.

The presidents of both societies claim the groups were campaigning for reasons irrespective of the other society, and that there is no tension between the two groups.

The Palestine Society was campaigning as part of its National Right to Education Week, organised by Action Palestine, a UK-wide student group that promotes the Palestinian cause on campuses across the country.

Palestine Society President Zainub Chohan said: "We're trying to raise awareness of the right to education of Palestinians and how Palestinian students are prevented from getting their education within the occupied territories."

As part of the Week, the Society hosted five students from the West Bank who studied under Israeli occupation. The students spoke to students in Connaught House on Thursday about their experiences.

The Society also conducted a blindfold protest on Monday and asked students to write on a small wall they set up as a prop on Houghton Street, in addition a checkpoint manned by members of the society dressed as Israeli troops.

Only metres away the Israeli society was promoting its People Not Politics

"Everybody's eyes are so focused towards the conflict that they forget that Israel is a forward-thinking, visionary part of the international community and should be celebrated by itself."

Sam Cohen
Israel Society President

week, which they had planned weeks prior to the One Voice event.

Israeli Society President Samuel Cohen said that the campaign was "projecting a positive Israeli presence on campus. Everybody's eyes are so focused towards the conflict that they forget that Israel is a forward-thinking, visionary part of the international community and should be celebrated by itself."

He added that the Society hopes that people gained a more "representative view" of Israel's character through last week's campaigning.

During Friday's wall display, the Israeli Society handed out pamphlets titled "Apartheid vs. Israel's Security Fence" which sought to highlight the differences between the apartheid in South Africa and Israel's security fence.

Cohen said this was the only thing the Israeli Society did in direct response to the Palestinian Society's week-long protests.

Students manning the table at the Israeli Society's booth said they hoped to emphasise that people in Israel are concerned about many things besides the conflict.

According to both Cohen and Anti Racism Officer Seph Brown, the One Voice event was successful helped reduce the tensions between the two societies.

Brown said: "This was about organising the One Voice event in tandem and agreeing to sit with each other for the first time, and that in itself is a success."

Cohen said the two groups are currently in dialogue and may begin informal working sessions to gain "personal understandings of one another." This brings the societies together, he said.



More coverage in Social Page 19

Real Ale lands in Three Tuns

Real ale finally made it to the Students' Union last week, after a hard-fought campaign by the Lager and Real Ale Appreciation Society (LARA). The Society passed a motion at the UGM mandating the Union to start selling a variety of ales. The boxed beers rapidly sold out, but more stock is expected to arrive on Friday.

Charlie Dougherty, President of the LARA Society, said, "The arrival of Real Ale in the Tuns is a step forward for our society."

"As regards the quality of the ale, the four beers provided are of a good quality, especially the golden ale. When the absurd popularity of real ale becomes apparent, then we can begin the transition to the hand-pumped ale that was agreed to in the original UGM resolution. However, in retrospect, boxed ale might be the best compromise. We already know how poor the Guinness is in the Tuns, and we can only imagine what they would do to our real ale," he added.

Words: Michael Deas
Photo: Erik Lang



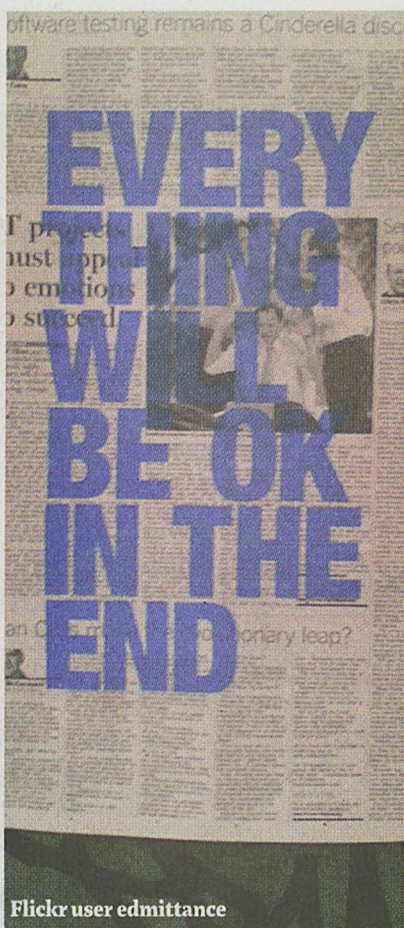
Change needed for financial journalism, says LSE academic

Ali Moussavi

Massive changes are needed to modern financial journalism, a LSE report said last week.

The report, which was written by LSE academic Dr Damian Tambini and published by the LSE-based Polis media think-tank, calls for an overhaul of existing practices of reporting on financial markets.

It identifies four key areas which affect the industry: the speed of financial news, the complexity of issues, the increased power of PR strategy and the limited resources of time and skill.



Flickr user edmittance

The report argues that it is getting harder for financial journalists to cope with the responsibility of predicting and analysing financial news, in an age when markets are increasingly affected by their reporting. It says that the industry must "open a dialogue" to improve its methods.

One of the interviewees for the report was BBC business editor Robert Peston, who came under fire for a lack of caution in his reporting of the collapse of Northern Rock.

Tambini said that it was increasingly important that journalists verified all their information, since in the current climate their reporting on markets may be manipulated by parties pushing certain interests and hoping to achieve certain results.

He said: "It is clear that understanding the processes through which rumours are reported upon, how financial news is processed and received and how investors make their decisions is crucial. Members of the public turn to the media as trusted sources of information. Interviewees agreed that financial journalists have to have a firm filter against being used."

The Director of Polis, Charlie Beckett, said that all journalism can be subject to groupthink and that in the case of financial journalism specifically, financiers have incentives to promote a "herd mentality".

The report was launched at the LSE last Monday at an open research seminar with Gillian Tett of the Financial Times and Ed Wasserman of Washington University.

Students protest DWP Living Wage at careers event

Sofia Zabolotskih

Students from the LSE Students' Union Citizens for Social Justice Society infiltrated a Department for Work and Pensions careers presentation last Tuesday in a bid to ask why cleaners working there were not paid a 'living wage' of £7.45 per hour.

After a presentation on opportunities within the Human Resources department of the DWP, the campaigners, who formed about half of the audience, questioned why the living wage was not paid. Both representatives admitted to not being up to date with DWP's progress but were "sure it's being worked on". One suggested that the fact that cleaners' jobs were often outsourced might be contributing to the delay in implementation.

When approached after the meeting, one of the presenters said that she "would be shocked if the DWP didn't pay the living wage."

Sadia Kidwai, one of the protesters who asked questions at the meeting, said: "I find it bizarre that the speakers didn't seem to be aware of this issue, despite the fact that one of them has been working in the DWP for twenty-five years. I don't see any reason why the DWP shouldn't pay their workers a living wage, especially when the London Assembly and the Department for Children, Schools and Families are part of the organisations that do."

One student who attended the presentation said of the campaigners: "I found this action random and pointless as I don't think it will make any difference to DWP policies."

Kidwai said that it would make a difference. "These speakers will have to report back to their superiors so we can make a change if we put pressure on them," she said.

Last year, LSE campaigners succeeded

"I don't see why the DWP shouldn't pay the living wage, when the London Assembly and the Department for Children, Schools and Families do"
Sadia Kidwai
Protester

in persuading Citigroup to pay their cleaners the London Living Wage after protesting and handing out leaflets at a careers event. The LSE is currently phasing in a living wage for all its employees, to be completed by May 2009.

After the meeting, campaigners sent emails to the speakers to make sure their concerns were not forgotten about. Shauna Cunningham, one of the presenters, has responded by assuring concerned students that she has passed their questions onto the DWP's pay and rewards department.

The DWP helped to create the London Child Poverty Pledge, which sets out actions that organisations can take to combat child poverty. This includes enabling London parents "to earn a decent wage".

The Department of Work and Pensions press office did not return calls for comment.

UGM referendum vote dispute to continue

>> continued from page 1

the required 150 students were present, which warranted an immediate closure of the meeting.

The validity of the amendment was discussed by C&S yesterday after the Beaver went to print.

Joe Meadway, former UGM chairperson, had called for the quorum count to frustrate Fisher's actions. He said: "I thought Aled was being incredibly arrogant and conceited in assuming such a level of self-importance that he thought he could ignore the proper procedure."

"The [amendment] is intended to increase the validity of Union policy through increasing voting participation. Passing

this through an inquorate UGM is a little ironic, and to try and bulldoze this through has a whiff of hypocrisy about it," he added.

Former returning officer James Bacon, who also voiced objections at the UGM, described Fisher's actions as "a fundamental abuse of his role as General Secretary."

"I had hoped, in the appropriate week, to challenge [Fisher's amendment] but was almost stopped by his endeavour to take the [amendment] on a tyrannical rampage up the order paper," he said.

Fisher acknowledged that his actions did contravene Union regulations, but argued that he acted according to precedent. "Many Codes of Practice amendments

in recent memory have been done that way, and it would seem strange to invalidate them now," he said. "The [amendment] should have been heard this week by this standard, as they have been done in the recent past."

Fisher also defended his use of the 'change order' motion, claiming that Union regulations did not state clearly that the motions could not be brought forward in this manner.

Bacon was not convinced by Fisher's arguments. He said: "Aled needs to reflect on his actions, which showed both poor judgement and a failure to listen to students."

Court of Governors centre of Union bid to promote student experience

Student representatives to decide strategy for top School body

Ali Moussavi

Student representatives on the Court of Governors, one of the LSE's highest decision-making bodies, held their first meeting last week to discuss their strategy for the year ahead.

Students' Union General Secretary Aled Fisher intends to highlight the "student experience" more in Court meetings.

Fisher has raised concerns that the Court of Governors has tended to focus on more strategic issues at the expense of discussing more day-to-day student issues.

Among these issues, Fisher has particularly identified LSE Residences and Estates as areas where Court could hear more from student representatives on how the strategic issues affect students.

Student governor Dan Sheldon said that one of his aims over the course of the year is to ensure that the new Students' Union building which has been approved will "actually be useful for students".

Sheldon also signaled his intent to present a paper at the first Court meeting

of Lent term in early March which would outline key 'student experience' issues.

Student governors will also continue to push last year's academic affairs agenda by focusing on following through on the recommendations of the Teaching Task Force and pushing for more student access to exam re-sits.

Sheldon acknowledged that while there was a Student Affairs Committee (SAC) which did discuss such matters, the non-student governors on Court would be more interested in hearing from students and so there is an opportunity to put student affairs on the agenda.

"I hope the Student Governors can be more proactive as a group this year," Fisher said. Without that kind of attitude, he said, "key issues for students will not appear at the top level. The issues important to students on the ground are generally not heard in great detail at the highest levels, so we must be vocal and bold in our approach."

According to its terms of reference the Court of Governors "has influence in the School through pre-decision discussions on key policy issues," while traditionally the LSE Council is where ultimate decisions are taken.



Students outside the Old Building entrance on Houghton Street last month. Students' Union leaders plan to use Court to press student concerns
Erik Lang

"The issues important to students on the ground are generally not heard in great detail at the highest levels, so we must be vocal and bold in our approach"
Aled Dilwyn Fisher
Students' Union
General Secretary

Former student governors have voiced concerns about the increasing centralisation of School governance. This included reforms which have moved power away from the much larger Court of Governors, with approximately one hundred members, and given more power to the smaller Council - with approximately thirty members.

Student representatives form six of the Court's hundred members.

However, a student governor who wished to remain anonymous pointed out that most governors are dissatisfied with the shift of power away from Court and towards Council, saying that the reforms weakened Court and that they had turned the body into a "training ground for getting on to Council."

Anger at 'inappropriate' LGBT poster removal



Houghton Street Beaver Archive

Ali Moussavi

An LSE security guard demanded that a Israeli Society poster depicting two homosexual men kissing be taken off Houghton Street last week.

The poster was put up by the Israeli Society as a part of their 'People not Politics' campaign, which sought to highlight positive social aspects of Israel. The point of the poster in question was to stress the diversity and openness of Israel as a country where homosexuality is permitted.

The unnamed security guard asked that the poster be removed because he felt that the image was not appropriate. The student to whom the security guard spoke did as she was told by the security guard.

Students' Union General Secretary Aled Fisher said: "If it turns out that an LSE staff member found a picture of two

men kissing inappropriate or offensive, then this is extremely serious and worrying. There is no place for homophobia on campus among students or staff. LSE is beginning to take LGBT issues seriously but there is much work to do to improve the culture of tolerance within this institution."

Several weeks ago, the Students' Union General Meeting passed the motion 'LSE is LGBT too' which underlined that at present, LGBT issues are dealt with directly and explicitly within the Students' Union and that there is no direct LGBT representation on the School's Equality and Diversity Committee (EDC).

Students' Union Education and Welfare Officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang has highlighted the narrow scope of the EDC and has said that he will push for increased student representation on the EDC, particularly by the LGBT Officer.

At present, other than Education and Welfare Officer, the only other student rep-

resentative on the EDC is the Anti-Racism Officer.

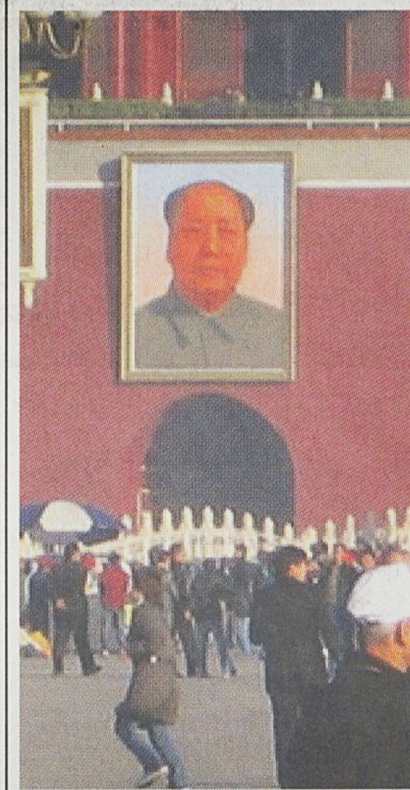
The motion at the UGM also highlighted the lack of briefings or training for LSE staff on LGBT issues.

LGBT Society President Sean Whittington Roy said: "This case illustrates how important it is that the School listens to the demands being made by the Students' Union. Had this member of staff been aware of the School's position on LGBT issues they would not have caused this offence."

It was not good enough for the School to simply have a position on LGBT students and staff, Whittington Roy said.

"They also need to make sure that it is consistently implemented and that appropriate support is available," he said. "The School regularly makes a point of the diversity of the staff and student body, but it is clear they still have some way to go in terms of diversity awareness with regards to sexual orientation."

Patten lecture looks to world future



Phyllis Lui

Lord Chris Patten delivered a public lecture at the LSE last Wednesday, in which he expressed optimism about the 21st Century, and voiced his approval of US President-elect, Barack Obama.

Patten, the Chancellor of Oxford and Newcastle universities and until recently, the European Commissioner of External Relations, promoted his new book "What Next? Surviving the Twenty-first Century". He spoke about his views on the "new world" of which the new US administration would be the "principal architect".

He further commented on the generational shift in politics, as Obama is "unencumbered by baggage", which he hopes would bring "fresh thinking in solving world's problems". Patten believes that America will still remain one of the superpowers of the world in terms of moral authority and that the European Union will need to "stand up to the plate" as it faces the problems of an ageing population.

Patten also spoke of the social equality problems that China could face in the century. Patten did not view the transforma-



Flickr users (clockwise) closelyobserved.com, Yukon White Light, Burns!



tions of China and India as "rises", rather than "phenomenal" adventures.

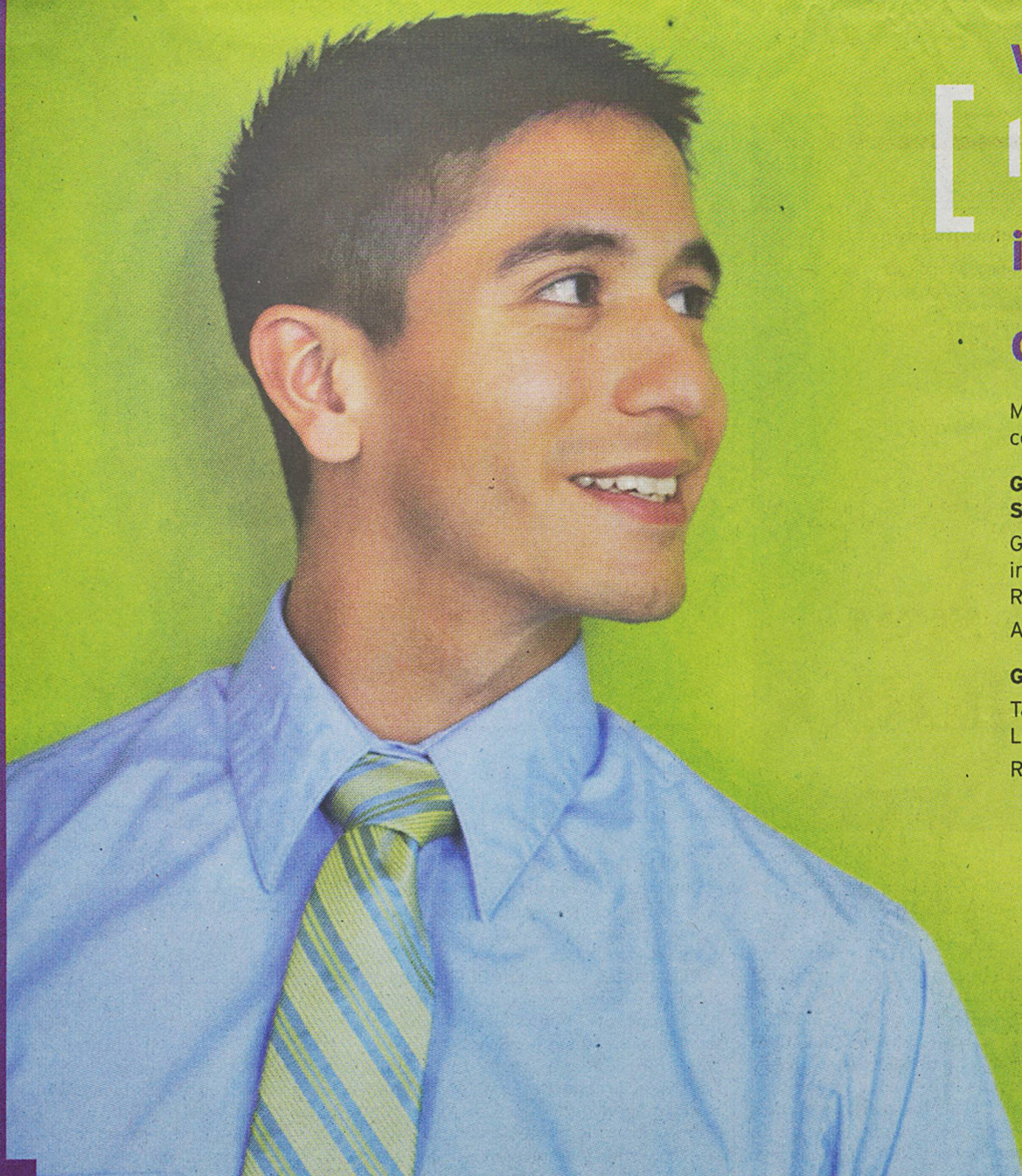
Similarly, the domestic policies in the West, Patten said, produce international problems. In the context of drugs, he pointed out the "Daily Mail sense of blame on Afghans and Colombians."

Identifying global warming and climate change as key challenges of the century, Patten said that it would take "more than Versailles" to solve it, but that the prospects for progress were less worrying with the incoming Obama Administration.

LSE Director Howard Davies, who chaired the event, asked Patten how he perceived Russia and whether it is "storm in a teacup". Patten responded by pointing out Russia's present health demographic statistics, arguing that he did not think that it would be a major player.

However, in the context of Eastern European security, Patten did raise concerns over NATO being treated as a "tennis club", saying that it should not have offered membership to Ukraine. Instead it should have offered membership to the European Union states.

Lord Patten addressed the question of the United Nation's relevance by saying that it while its influence would be limited, major reforms are needed in Security Council.

PULSE RADIO TAKEOVER**ALL THIS WEEK FROM 12****MON: OTHER UNIS****TUE: THE BEAVER****WED: ACADEMICS****THU: STAFF MEMBERS****FRI: ATHLETICS UNION****SUPER-SPECIAL SHOW:****HOWARD DAVIES THU @ 3****GET****WWW.PULSE.DJ****ADDICTED****world-class training****[limitless potential]****inspiring colleagues****global reach**

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Inns of Court society falls foul of Union law



Chair resigns after election complaint freezes funds

Marie Dunaway

Inns of Court Society Chair Kevin Holder has resigned after a complaint made to the Students' Union Executive resulted in the freezing of the society's funds.

Holder, who sent his letter of resignation to society members last Tuesday night claimed that the society's work has "been against a background of political wrangling".

The complaint to the Students' Union Executive was made by a member of the society over the length of Holder's presidency. The society was suspended pending an investigation by the Students' Union Executive into the complaint.

Students' Union Societies Officer Zoe Cooke said: "The Inns of Court Society was told that they would not be registered as a society until they had legitimate elections for the position of Chair."

The society aims to help law students and others to understand the Inns system and how to become barristers. A member of the society said that Holder "set about building strong relations with the other Inns" and had helped to arrange mock trials for members to familiarise themselves with court proceedings.

Holder was elected in a mid-year election last academic year. However, under Students' Union rules, societies require new elections at the start of Michaelmas term when freshers and new members join societies.

New elections were not held. The Students' Union did not recognise the society and withdrew its funding.

In his resignation letter, Holder claimed that the problem had "hampered progress and has transformed the nature

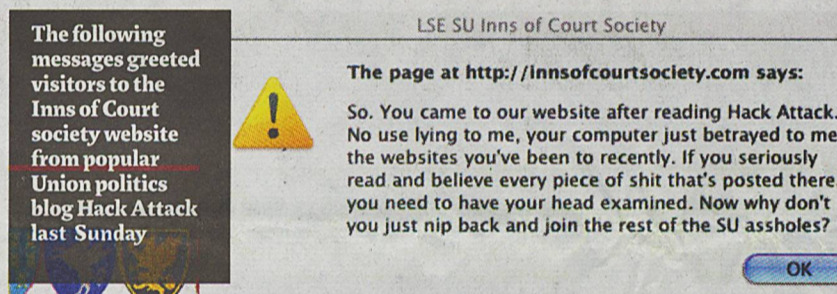
of working for the society, from rewarding endeavour to stressful confrontation."

The Inns of Court Society Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday and it elected Azan Marwah as the new Chair. Marwah commented on Holder as a "dedicated president and friend to the committee" and that "the committee is

saddened by his departure."

Marwah said that the problems were down to the Societies' Constitution. "The meaning of by-elections and AGMs and their associated procedures is undefined in the existing constitution. This is the reason we asked the UGM to pass a resolution aiming to solve this problem."

Society breakdown



LSE lawyer elevated to UK seat on International Court of Justice

Ali Moussavi

LSE Professor of International Law Christopher Greenwood QC has been elected to be the new British judge to sit on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague.

Greenwood was elected by the United Nations in New York by securing 15 votes in the Security Council and 157 in the General Assembly. This was well ahead of the eight Security Council votes and 97 in the General Assembly needed to secure an absolute majority.

The professor will replace Dame Rosalyn Higgins as the British judge on the ICJ when she retires in February 2009. Higgins was also a former international law professor at the LSE.

Greenwood succeeded her at the LSE when she was appointed to the ICJ in 1995. Higgins is the current president of the court.

Professor Greenwood will sit on the ICJ for an initial nine-year term as one of the



The Peace Palace in the Netherlands where the International Court of Justice is based. Flickr user Ferdi's World

court's 15 judges and may be re-elected as Higgins was.

The ICJ hears cases which range from territorial disputes to issues of genocide and environmental protection.

As well as teaching at the LSE, Greenwood is also a practising barrister who has appeared before the ICJ as an advocate on several occasions.

Greenwood is particularly well known for his November 2002 legal advice to the British government entitled "The Legality of Using Force Against Iraq", which argued that the British and American invasion of Iraq was sanctioned by the United Na-

tions Security Council. Greenwood is also known for challenging the immunity of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet.

UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband said: "I very much welcome Professor Greenwood's election as a judge of the International Court of Justice... Professor Greenwood is highly respected within the international legal community as an outstanding academic and practitioner of international law. I am certain that he will make a significant contribution to the promotion of the rule of law in international affairs."

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LSE STUDENTS'
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Comment

Equality in
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University shouldn't be a house of many mansions

A lack of information leaves many state school students unable to apply to top universities

David
Whitaker

Every summer, the British media whips up a storm over several recurring issues: whether a Briton will ever win Wimbledon again, the possibility of another hottest day of the year, and the enduring elitist nature of Oxbridge and other top British universities. A recent study has shown that LSE currently recruits 33 per cent of its new students from private schools, and 67 per cent from state schools; this is in comparison to the 12:88 ratio seen nationwide. Is LSE's position good enough? Should more be done to encourage state-educated pupils to apply to top universities?

The good news from a national point of view is that the proportion of recent school leavers from state schools starting degrees has risen from 86.9 per cent in 2005-06 to 87.2 per cent in 2006-07. Based on the percentage of privately schooled students at LSE, you might well judge LSE to be an elitist place of education, with state-educated pupils considerably unrepresented in comparison with the rest of the country. However, when LSE is compared to other universities of the elite Russell Group, the LSE is not alone in contrasting with the national trend. Only six of the 20 member universities met their targets for recruiting state school pupils last year; when recruiting students from deprived backgrounds, only four members (Manchester, Glasgow, Imperial College and King's College London) reached their targets. Looking at students from disadvantaged areas, Oxford University and Nottingham University were both several percentage points behind their targets. So in comparison with Oxbridge and other top universities, LSE is hardly the worst offender when it comes to under-recruiting state school students.

Of course, LSE retains considerable differences with other universities which may go a long way to explaining why its intake of privately schooled students is comparatively high nationally, and comparatively low when compared with the Russell Group. A crucial factor lies in the absence of interviews. It is well known that some private schools provide coaching for university interviews, particularly



Harrow School, one of the most prestigious private schools in the UK
Flickr user Kaustav Bhattacharya

for Oxbridge-bound applicants - but as LSE determines its undergraduate intake through applications and exam results, a UK state school student is on a more equal footing with his or her privately-schooled counterpart when applying. However, the high numbers of international students at LSE may account for the larger numbers of privately schooled undergraduates; if international students are able to afford to study in London and pay higher tuition fees, it is quite likely their families could afford for them to be educated privately at home.

The media, characteristically, does not help in the row over state school representation in Britain's universities. Each year, at least one tabloid newspaper puts forward the case of a state-schooled student

who, despite achieving several straight A Grade results, is nevertheless rejected by the 'still-elitist' Oxbridge. Naturally, the newspaper in question avoids the issue of the interview of the victim, or the quality of their personal statement. By regularly printing such stories, the newspapers conjure up an image of Oxbridge and other top universities as impenetrable fortresses that can only be accessed by those from private schools. Instead of encouraging disadvantaged students to overcome the final educational barrier and apply to top universities, newspapers actually deter state schooled students from applying in the first place for risk of failure. Consequently, as the Head of Admissions at Cambridge rightly points out, 'we cannot accept those who do not apply'.

The Government is in a difficult position as it continues to try to encourage more young people to go into higher education and apply to our best universities. On the one hand, the Government should act to stamp out university elitism and support the efforts of those state-schooled students attempting to reach the best universities. Quite how the government expects the introduction of the new A* grade at A Level to help is anyone's guess - private schools, with higher standards of teaching, will simply churn out more pupils with A*s, which will surely tempt elite universities to accept more of these candidates. On the other hand, the Government certainly wants to avoid accusations of social engineering and positive discrimination against

The government certainly wants to avoid accusations of social engineering and positive discrimination

students who are simply fortunate to receive private secondary education. The Government has tasked all universities to encourage more entrants from the state sector to apply; Martin Stephen, a master at fee-paying St Paul's School in London, immediately denounced this policy 'immensely dangerous and hugely unfair'. Both the introduction of the A* and the bias in favour of state-schooled students are misguided and disadvantage students from both educational sectors - so what's the solution?

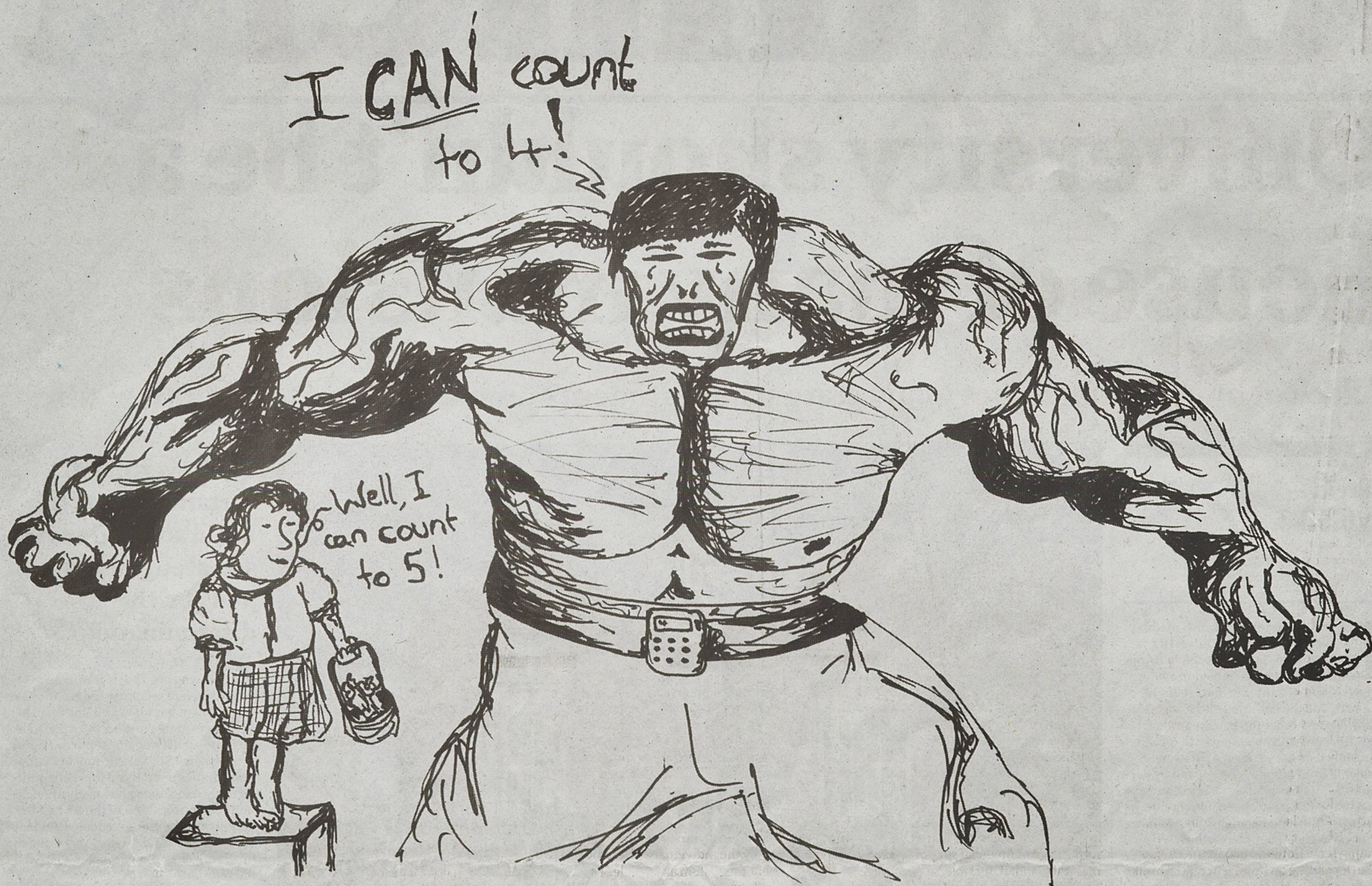
The answer lies in the information provided to state schooled students. Sandra McNally, of the LSE's Centre of Economic Performance, wrote in a study that state school higher education and career guidance schemes had 'not improved'. In the study, it was found that only half of 16- and 17-year-olds said the support they had received regarding university choices had been helpful; 58% said they would have liked more. Separate studies carried out through the Sutton Trust found that two-thirds of staff giving careers advice had no formal qualifications to perform the role, highlighting the significantly low status of higher education guidance in the nation's secondary state schools. An aspect of information failure is thus introduced into the dispute over state school representation; without adequate advice on university choices being disseminated at secondary level, how can pupils be expected to apply for top universities when they know little of the application process and its expectations?

Perhaps the question should not be whether there are too few state school students at LSE and other top universities, but rather - is enough being done in state schools to highlight the benefits of studying at a top university? Unless students are provided with adequate advice and guidance on applying to top universities, LSE and other members of the Russell Group will surely lose some of its best potential students - not from elitism, but from a failure of information.

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Incredulous Hulk

It's said that a week is a long time in politics. As far as the Students' Union's General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher is concerned, clearly five weeks are an unbearable eternity.

It's still a little hard to make head or tail of what actually happened last Thursday, even for the students who were there. The Constitution and Steering committee said the motion to institute referendums at the Union needed one more week on the order paper; Fisher stuck to his guns and said the time was now. Then the whole meeting was thrown into complete disarray by Fisher's bid to circumvent this through a change order motion he now acknowledges to have been wrong.

But one thing is clear. Fisher's conduct was stupid, and all the more stupid because the stakes were so small and the costs of making a concession to Union protocol so minor. He should move on from this episode as fast as possible and get back to doing what he

does best, campaigning for students. An apology at this Thursday's UGM would be welcome.

That still leaves the debate to be joined once again at this Thursday's meeting. Assuming pandemonium does not ensue a second time - and none of us can ever be too sure with the UGM - by the meeting's end we will either have referendums or we won't. Well, we shouldn't.

Just because trades unions and other students' organisations have referendum facilities does not mean that our Union must have them. Indeed, the LSE Students' Union has the proudest political traditions in the country and the strongest record in democratic participation of any students' union. This heritage will survive long after this year's sabbatical officers are gone from East Building. But it will face cumulative damage in the future if their distant successors use the referendum to pass whatever policies they want in the face of a weakened Union.

Nor can we allow the UGM to recede ever further into the political backwaters. It is a little grand to call it the sovereign legislative body of the Union. But that is what it is. This function will be undercut by a referendum option.

There are even more arguments against leaving Union policies to a last-minute mass vote in Lent term. Unfortunately, we did not hear them at the previous UGM. There have been various dark mutterings in the Union lately that the sabbatical officers are aiming to centralise all decision-making power. This referendum motion was interpreted as part of that. It's very doubtful they're that politically intelligent. The sabbatical officers' influence is only expanding because no one else of any talent is stepping up to the plate in the Union.

We saw that last Thursday. Principled opposition to the motion only began to materialise once Fisher became bogged down in the mud of Union protocol and became vulnerable.

This is no way to win an argument.

Now Fisher and other sabbatical officers are saying that our current confused Codes of Practice are exactly the kind of thing that can only be changed by a sweeping referendum on Union governance in the Lent term. The rules are "archaic and unnecessarily complex," the Union's Communications Officer, Dan Sheldon, says. Politicians' excuses. Rules are rules as long as they remain in force. Fisher broke them; he broke them in utterly brazen fashion, and he ended up looking like an absolute idiot in the process.

But the sabbatical officers have a point. Neither the UGM nor our Union deserve the debacle we all saw last Thursday. For one thing, it makes no real sense to have C&S pre-approve every motion when surely it is more efficient for judicial bodies to strike down laws that have been passed. On the other hand, that's the sort of idea that should be debated at the UGM, not in a referendum.

I wouldn't be here but for an LSE bursary. Why aren't there more?

Bursaries are the only way through university for some, but remain as inaccessible as ever

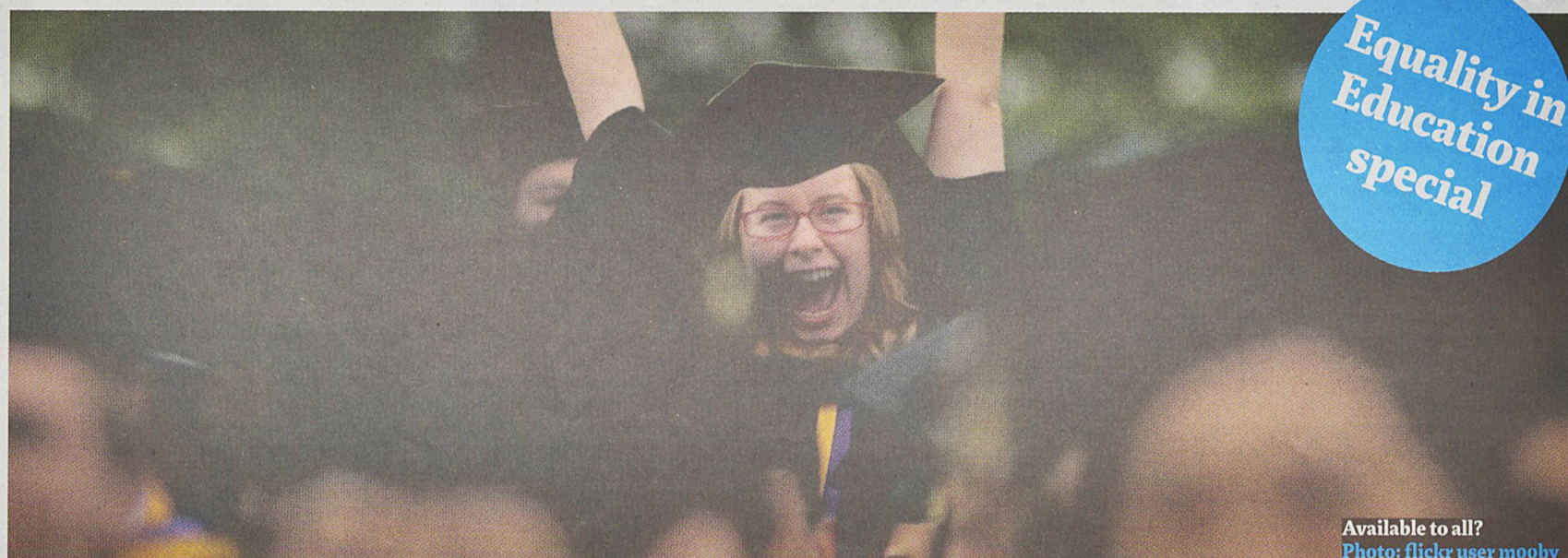
Megan Jones



I am one of the students at the LSE who is poor enough to receive almost the full bursary amount offered. I was therefore concerned to read the research by Professor Claire Callender, presented at an Association of University Administrators conference, which claimed that bursaries are used to help universities themselves, rather than needy students. Her findings suggest that one third of all bursaries are allocated on merit, rather than need. These bursaries are aimed at attracting and being of benefit to middle-income students who do not truly need the money, rather than students from low-income families who do often need the money to take up their place at university.

I must therefore applaud the LSE for allocating their bursaries on the basis of a student's financial need, ensuring that the money does go to those that truly need it. Furthermore, I am the first to admit that the LSE bursary is generous, being on a sliding scale from the maximum £2,500 - £0 depending on family income. This is far from the case at many other universities even within London; the maximum bursary offered at King's College is £1,250, while at SOAS it is £720.

However, I do question the reason why the LSE can offer bursaries that are so much larger than other universities. I am sure that the official answer would cite the fact that one third of the additional income generated by variable fees is spent on student support. But is it not the case that the reason why the LSE can offer such generous bursaries is because of the small number of students from low-income families we have here? I believe that this is not only true at the LSE, but throughout the Russell Group of universities. The average bursary offered by a Russell Group university is £1,791 a year, whilst the average offered by the twenty lowest ranked universities is £642 a year. This was confirmed by a Higher Education Policy Institute review which claimed "with the same amount of money, less socially inclusive



Equality in Education special

Available to all? Photo: flickr user mooby

universities have fewer poor students to distribute money to, which means bigger bursaries." Regardless of LSE's Access Agreement, which cites an increase from 14 per cent to 18 per cent in the number of students from low income families at the LSE, it is a less socially inclusive institute than many others.

The LSE has stated that the "School's overwhelming objective when designing its package of financial support was to maintain, and, if possible, to encourage an increase in, the number of applications from good candidates from poorer backgrounds." I do not believe that an increase in students from low-income families at the LSE should be seen as an option to be fulfilled if possible; this is simply something that must be done. Furthermore, I do not understand what is stopping the LSE from encouraging more applications from students from low-income families. It would only benefit the LSE, since it sells itself on the basis of its diverse student population; does this diversity not also cover a diversity of social backgrounds?

I resent that the LSE underlines that it "will not increase the intake of students from such groups unless the applicants meet our highly competitive entry criteria." I do not believe that anyone is demanding that students from low-income backgrounds be allowed into any university to study any subject based solely on their income status, rather than their individual merit. The argument is

rather that each student should be judged on his or her merit, and that the student's ability to go to university should depend not on the money (or lack of it) in their parents' bank account, but rather on the student's hard work and talent. I am not demanding positive discrimination, but rather an equality of opportunity.

The issue of bursaries involves not only the individual universities, but the system as a whole. The system by which bursaries can be claimed is highly complex and confusing, although steps have been taken recently to try and streamline and simplify it. I personally feel that the system makes it as hard as possible for students not only to claim bursaries, but to get financial assistance in general. This is particularly the case if, as with my case, your parents are self-employed. In order to obtain the financial assistance to which you are entitled, you must prove time and time again that you are not attempting to defraud the government, but merely claiming the financial support you desperately need.

The countless forms to be completed are complicated enough when a sibling has already been through the process, and you have some grasp of the system and its idiosyncrasies. However, if you are the first from your family to apply for university, the complexity of the system can and does deter many from applying for bursaries. According to Professor Callender's

The LSE offers such generous bursaries because of the small number of students from low-income families here

research, twelve thousand students from low-income families did not collect the bursaries to which they were entitled. The main factor that stopped these students from accessing the funds was the "highly complex" and confusing nature of the student finance system. Action must be taken to facilitate the process of applying for bursaries - after all, it is worthless to have a fund to support students if many of the neediest are discouraged from applying for it in the first place.

Some people may question the importance of bursaries, seeing them as a source of income which makes life easier at university. While this is undoubtedly true, I would personally be unable to study at the LSE without receiving my bursary. Without the prospect of a bursary I would have been unable to study in London due to the higher living costs entailed with studying in the city. In my financial situation, a bursary is a necessity rather than an optional extra. My ability to pay for accommodation, food, transport and the other necessities of an independent life would be irrevocably damaged without the financial help I receive. I believe it is therefore fair to ask if there is a social stigma attached to receiving bursaries similar to that associated with receiving free school meals. After all, I was offered a place at the LSE on my own merits just like everyone else. However, it is only a hand-out from the School that has allowed me to take up my place.

New subjects on the block

Students are being discouraged from studying useful subjects

Brett Noble



In an attempt to place blame amidst an increasingly broken educational system, Conservative politicians have recently pointed fingers at certain academic disciplines for widening the gap in social inequality at the university level.

In a speech last week, Shadow Schools Secretary Michael Gove launched an attack against the high number of British secondary students who choose to study "soft subjects" - such as media studies, dance and sport - for GCSEs and

A level exams. The number of examinees in these areas rose almost 50% in 2007, primarily among students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in schools with poor guidance counselling.

Gove claims that these "easy subjects" - which he paradoxically refers to as both "harmful" and "practical" - are making it more difficult for students to gain acceptance to top universities by raising the average mark and making applicants indistinguishable from one another, putting those who study maths, for example, at a disadvantage.

"This flight from quality is a concern for all of us - the scientific breakthroughs which will combat global warming, the mathematical models which will reduce financial risk and the medical innovations which will lengthen and enrich our lives are unlikely to be generated by close application to the GCSE media studies syllabus," Gove said. "The cost is greatest for those students nudged or led towards

this course at the expense of others."

While Gove and educational pundits should be legitimately concerned about providing ample access and preparation to a diverse array of students, singling out certain academic disciplines such as media studies and the students who choose to study them is not only misguided, but also incredibly supercilious.

Media studies has received criticism in a similar fashion as sociology did decades ago. As a new and expanding field, it is not as clearly defined as such social science disciplines as economics or psychology. Yet the media - one of the most increasingly influential and prevalent entities in modern human life - should be a legitimate area of interest for students of all ages.

While Gove and similar critics cite numbers showing how the number of A level exams in media studies have doubled in recent years - evidence for "dumbing

down" - they neglect to understand that this may be due to a genuine increase in interest in the subject matter.

This notion is reflected in empirical data beyond the A-levels' grasp around the world. In India, for example, the number of students studying media has nearly quadrupled since 1980, partially due to a booming demand for jobs in communications fields. Prestigious universities in the U.S. such as Columbia, Stanford and MIT now all offer competitive and well-regarded programmes in media studies.

Professor Robin Mansell, Head of the LSE's Department of Media and Communications, defended the field's wide scope for its ability to educate broadly on critical issues. "Our programmes challenge students to think critically about a wide range of issues from globalisation to local politics and from Internet-based activism to reform of policy and regulatory institutions and the way the media influences citizens and consumers in a

growing number of ways, both positive and negative."

In attacking such disciplines, Gove not only discourages students from taking classes they are interested in, but also dissuades them from seeking a measure of balance in their education. Other educational systems recognize the importance of academic diversity amongst students: in the U.S., for example, undergraduate applicants to the University of California system - one of the most prestigious in the country - are actually required to complete a year-long course in a visual or performing art in order to be admitted. Future doctors, lawyers and other valuable professionals who studied "hard subjects" will benefit from a more well-rounded education.

Rather than attack the disciplines that students find increasingly interesting and relevant to the lives that they live, the government should explore alternatives, such as incentive programmes to attract students to traditional "hard subjects."

When I graduate from LSE, I will hold two university degrees in media-related subjects. Although I may not be able to perform heart surgery or save the environment single-handedly, I'm confident that I've been challenged academically in a way that will benefit me in future pursuits.

I only hope that politicians and academic leaders will think more carefully about how to interpret changes in educational patterns.

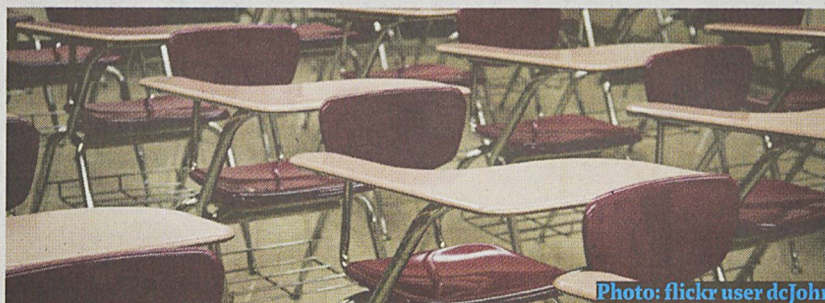


Photo: flickr user dcJohn

The price of (being) a woman

Students should be judged on the basis of their academic success, not their looks

Anna Krausova

Treasurer, LSESU
Feminist Society

Despite a common notion of equality, women continue to be discriminated against in our society. The pressures on women to conform to a Western patriarchal model are enormous. Despite legal equality, the patriarchal heritage of our society still means that our society imposes on women many expectations, often contradictory, that they seek to fulfil in vain.

The inclusion of a large number of photos of the beauty pageant Miss LSE contestants in the last week's Beaver further testifies to this trend. The coverage of the Miss LSE protest in the Beaver showed the divided attitude towards the pageant amongst LSE students. Yet much still remains to be said about the impact on women of the often unattainable Western ideal of beauty and the importance we give to it.

Our society too often either idealises or demonises women. On the one hand, there is great pressure to be first the attractive, yet understanding girlfriend and later the super-mother, who manages a successful career and a family with ease. On the other hand, women who do not fit into this stereotype are rejected and dismissed as not unsuccessful members of our society. While male affairs outside of a relationship are seen as dodgy but inevitable, a woman that cheats is conducting a moral wrong.

The media is full of judgements on how a woman should look, which is hardly matched by the frequency that men are so depicted. This leads to the acceptance of turning women into objects for sale, judged on their looks and the potential revenue their looks can bring, rather than their value as human beings. This can take shape in the form of a beauty pageant that offers a prize of feeling accepted, let alone a material award, or prostitution, where the body-profit link is much clearer.

Very little consideration is given to this problem in our society, even among university students. The Miss LSE beauty pageant organised and staged by LSE students on 11 November is a clear example of this. That is why the Feminist Society and the Women's Officer organised a protest in front of the venue to object to the



Protesters outside this year's Miss LSE contest
Photo: Erik Lang

negative and sexist nature of the competition and to what they perceived to be the objectification of women.

The protest was also organised to draw attention to the fact that students at an academic institution should not stage competitions where the contestants are judged on looks rather than merit. Allowing the pageant to take the name of the LSE contradicts the importance an academic institution should give to academic achievement and merit. It should have nothing to say about the attractiveness of its students and the direct association of the contest with the LSE is damaging to the School's reputation.

The variety of attitudes towards the beauty pageant shows the diversity within the feminist movement both at the LSE and in wider society. The movement's clear message is to promote equality of women and men and to challenge patriarchy in order to achieve the full emancipation of women.

The patriarchal nature of our society places a value on the women's bodies that have nothing to do with their worth as human beings. It presents women as little more than sex objects. As Judith Butler, a well known feminist and philosopher wrote, "One is not simply a body, but in some very key sense, one does one's body." This draws attention to two crucial phenomena in our modern society that condition and influence, more often than not negatively, the way in which women are likely to conceive of themselves. The

example to the Miss LSE pageant illustrates this double effect. Clearly discernible in the media, our society makes a particular judgement on what women should look like, and this in turn leads women - from the desire to be accepted or through simple unconscious acceptance - to conform to this often unhealthy ideal.

This does not deny their subjective rationality in making their own decisions. Rather, it draws attention to the extent to which such societal pressures influence women. All of us as individual human beings respond in one way or another to the way we think those around us conceive of us. None of us live in a bubble where what others think of us has no impact upon our mentality. What Aristotle wrote more than two millennia ago still holds. Any meaningful judgement we make about ourselves we create through the interactions with others in our society.

Although the women entering the competition might be willing for others to 'objectify them', we as a society shouldn't allow ourselves to make value judgements on the importance of looks. Not only is this unfair and sexist, it also has a far-reaching effect on the way we conceive of ourselves. Furthermore, suggesting that choosing to enter a beauty pageant is a decision free of societal pressures leads us to ignore the fact that it is our society's judgement on the importance of beauty that propels some of us to enter

None of us live in a bubble where what others think of us has no impact on our mentality

such humiliating competitions.

It was suggested to some of us who organised the protest against Miss LSE that if we object to the protest on the grounds that it objectifies the contestants, it will make them feel bad about themselves. However, the perceived verdict of the society on the girls who fail to become Miss LSE is clearly far more damaging to their perception of themselves as worthy human beings, than my protesting outside the venue. A just and equal society true to its name should not accept the judging of its members in reference to their looks. For we have limited influence over our looks, yet we have a great capacity to improve ourselves intellectually. We should be judged on our actions and the strength of our arguments, not on the way we look.

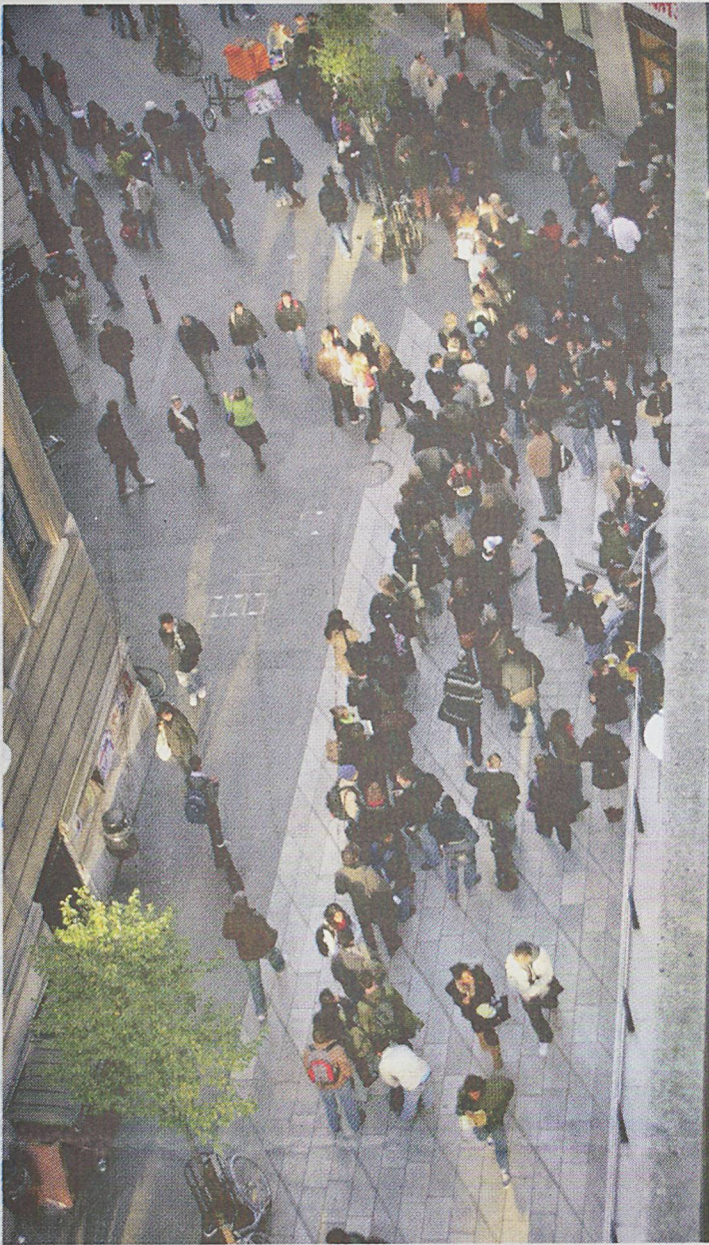
The issue, however, transcends the simple debate about whether or not students at an academic institution should stage beauty contests. The argument that a free society should allow women to objectify themselves should they choose to justifies not only the staging of beauty pageants, but also the acceptance of lap-dancing or prostitution as not only inevitable, but also not necessarily wrong.

The issues of beauty pageants, lap-dancing or prostitution, though clearly to a very different extent, are a just different demonstrations of the same problem. A problem of a society that places material value on humans instead of judging them through their worth as members of a human society.

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Features



Photos: Erik Lang

No strings attached

Loren Davy-Green takes an in-depth look into the Hare Krishna food distribution

Is there any such thing as a free lunch?

This is a question I've often asked myself as I stood in line with about three hundred other students who wait daily for the free vegetable curry and rice given out by Hare Krishna. Maybe I've been at the LSE for too long, but I am instantly cynical of anyone that claims to be giving away something for nothing. There must be a catch, right? What on earth could motivate these people to stand outside regardless of the weather, doling out food to students who, let's be honest, don't exactly look like they are starving?

To get the answers to these questions, I went to meet Para, the director of the Hare Krishna Food For All programme. The first response I got is, nothing. Nothing on earth that is. Their motivation, it seems, comes from a more divine place. An ex-social worker from Dublin, Para turned to this spiritual practice after realising that his colleagues were often only one or two steps away from the people they were helping in terms of their own drink and drug problems. He decided that in order to truly help others it was necessary for him to work on himself first.

Food for All is his brainchild. It only became a fully registered charity in 1999, but it was over twenty years ago when he, with help from other followers, started providing free food for homeless people in London. They would go around supermarkets to collect food that would otherwise have been sent to landfill sites, and prepare the food for distribution.

The food collected is of a very high quality. Supermarkets regulations decree that foodstuff with less than five days to go before their 'Best Before' dates cannot be put on the shelves. This meant that perfectly fresh vegetables were being thrown away in vast quantities. So vast in fact that after just a few years of cook-

ing for the homeless, Para realised that they had more food than was being eaten. Sainsbury's used to be the only supermarket chain to donate, but now with the Food for All programme collects food from an impressive list of donors, including Marks and Spencer and Marigold's Dairy.

How then did this food come to students at the LSE? When his daughter began studying at School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), Para became aware of the huge financial burdens that many students in London shoulder. Her battle with huge debts and rising living costs in the capital led him to expand his project to include university students. SOAS and LSE are currently the only two universities they are able to supply, but there are plans to expand the distribution to include ten more London universities.

The food they serve are vegetarian, halal and kosher. Their faith decrees that every living thing has a soul and therefore should not be killed. They also have practical reasons for promoting vegetarianism; it can be healthier, sustainable and efficient (you can produce ten times more vegetables than meat on the same piece of land).

The food is prepared freshly every morning. Five or six volunteers, normally practitioners of the faith, take the 6am train to the Temple in Watford, where the food preparation is done. The scraps go to feed animals in organic farms or are left to make compost. The volunteers then proceed to prepare and cook the fresh vegetables and rice, which usually goes to the value of £400 or more. The food is then loaded into a van, to be distributed to the homeless in Kentish Town, Camden and King's Cross. And of course, some of it comes in rickshaws to the LSE and SOAS.

The distributors have faced a good share of officious resistance at the two universities. SOAS security staff had

He and his colleagues had all taken a vow of absolute poverty, "hadn't had a Guinness in twenty years" and gave up on all material wants on joining the practice

repeatedly thrown them off campus when they first started distributing there, and the owners of Wright's Bar on Houghton Street have expressed displeasure for the commercial damage the food distribution presents to them. Nonetheless, they have persisted with their programme – founded upon their conviction that what they are doing is worthwhile and that students (even the next generation of investment bankers, millionaires and world leaders) deserve to benefit from it.

I thought back to the conversations I had in and around the food queue on campus. There were those who felt that this apparently charitable giving could not be truly unconditional, that they must surely be aiming to convert, brainwash, and turn the students who eat the food into faithful followers of Krishna.

I asked Para what he would say to those doubters. He laughed out loud at the notion of recruiting new followers from the LSE. I was missing the point, he said. He and his colleagues had all taken a vow of absolute poverty, "hadn't had a Guinness in twenty years" and gave up on all material wants on joining the practice. Such asceticism, he realises, appeals to very few students – especially those studying at the LSE (which reportedly values its students only when they are profit-making).

They shy away from "preaching". Instead, they hope to bring about change in people's consciousness or spiritual development without being intrusive or decreeing that their God and their faith is the only way to do so. This real-world practicality, desire to be proactive about changing things, and exceptional sense of humour of all of the followers I met that day left a deep impression on me.

I asked Para about his version of God or Krishna. "People have the idea that God is this old man in the sky with lots of books, actually he's probably got a

laptop now and loads of gigabytes, and he's checking on everybody and punishing people and sending thunderbolts wearing Birkenstocks and sending people to hell for eternity," he said. In contrast, their god is more playful, more forgiving and they don't believe in hell.

For me, their spiritual beliefs, whilst interesting, are almost irrelevant. What they are doing, besides helping us perfect our oh-so-British queuing abilities on a daily basis, is giving good food to a vast cross-section of students, postgraduates, undergraduates of all descriptions. They do admit that food quality can suffer when cooking for 800, although it is something they are working on. Nonetheless, for over three hundred students who patiently join the line every weekend, it is something worth queuing twenty minutes, or even more, for. Instead of being cynical, it might be better to be grateful in accepting that this charity comes with no strings attached – smile a little more, talk to the guy who serves the food, ask him how his day has been. They are not getting paid, have been up since the early hours, and have not had a pint for a long, long time.

And it is not difficult to discover more about their beliefs and activities. The Hare Krishna Centre can be found on Caledonia Road at King's Cross and visitors are welcome at any time. Free internet, counselling, computer classes and cookery for the homeless are on offer there, amongst other things. Charitable programmes abroad in India are also on their do-list; distributing food, and educational supplies, plus volunteering as teachers to children and young people.

For more information, have a word with them when you see them on campus or go to: www.matchlessgifts.org.uk/gallery/UniProject.html



Protest at the American Embassy in London. Flickr user casmaron

Goodbye Guantanamo

Oliver Courtney believes that Obama's Gitmo promise matters greatly in an age of symbolism

Now that America has endorsed Barack Obama as the catalyst for the change it needs, common wisdom has it that he faces a daunting task in translating a campaign based on symbolism into concrete political realities. But Obama's glossy, suggestive politics may serve him well in selling his foreign policy, specifically towards the Middle East, at home. His approach suits the way America has engaged with and visualises its 'War on Terror', and therefore also how any downsizing of this 'war' would be represented.

The market-led and heavily politicised American media system makes a spectacle of world news, and is strongly reliant on emotive and often euphemistic snapshot images that will capture audiences. In this spirit, Obama will have few better opportunities to make his mark than in making good on his campaign promise to close Guantanamo Bay, as he confirmed last week.

After years of bingeing on war and credit, America is suffering a terrible hangover; penniless, insecure and slightly ashamed, she's looking to right herself quicker than seems feasible. Guantanamo offers one of the clearest and visible steps on the path Obama has spoken of - a suitably newsworthy emblem of change. As Duke University law professor Scott Silliman put it: "Guantanamo Bay, for most people is a lightning rod for everything that's wrong with the United States. I'm not sure Obama would be able to back away from his campaign pledge."

Of course, the symbolism masks a more modest and complex shift in the realities on the ground. Always a critic of the Iraq war, Obama's stance on Iran has so far been tough, and he is committed to ploughing more troops into Afghanistan in an effort "to stamp out al-Qaeda once and for all". But post-

Vietnam America's engagement with foreign affairs has long operated on a mythic level, severely disjointed from the realities of war. Since September 11 this trend has increased. An American friend told me some time back: "I think most people are tired of seeing and hearing the same stuff about Iraq in the media. They feel it's time to move on." It seems an amazing statement - is it image fatigue that has determined the consensus on Iraq? Not really, but there is a kernel of truth there. War is incomprehensible unless you have experienced it, but for many Americans the situation in the Middle East is less a living reality than a backdrop of familiar images against which the tide of opinion has turned. These images aren't meaningless; in terms of the war, they are what it means. Likewise, it would be ludicrous to say that America 'doesn't care' - that's not the point. But it seems hard for people to relate to the war, because of the structures within a highly politicised media system. To understand why that is, we need to go back to 12 September 2001.

The collapse of the Twin Towers is probably the most powerful image in media history, with a cinematic quality that didn't belong in reality. Instead, it temporarily redrew reality, as Slavoj Žižek wrote days afterwards: 'it is not that reality entered our image; the image entered and shattered our reality.' Like everything else, journalism lost its bearings, but in a very particular way.

News divisions, long starved of funding and airtime by ratings-focused network controllers, were suddenly reinvigorated by news events that could outscore entertainment on its own terms. But they were pushed into the spotlight with a new and very tight remit. David Westin, president of ABC News, discovered as much when he was asked to comment on the legitimacy of terrorists

targeting political buildings, as opposed to civilian ones. Westin refused to be drawn in, saying: "I'm supposed to figure out what is and what is not, not what ought to be." Pilloried for his detachment, Westin was forced to issue an apology for his "moment of madness". September 11 rendered standard journalistic integrity insane, and temporarily redefined the profession as the unanimous (and hence fiercely anti-democratic) voice of 'what ought to be' - Americans first, journalists second.

Other journalists at the time describe inclusion in a new sense of solidarity, uniting behind a 'we' that necessarily involves a 'them'. This of course dissipated with time, but the opposition of terrorism and blind, unquestioning patriotism forged at this point would be commonplace in the years to come. As Thomas Friedman, a hawkish presence amongst heavyweight American commentators and initially an ardent supporter of the invasion, commented last year: 'Since 9/11, we've become the United States of Fighting Terrorism... 9/11 has made us stupid.'

The influence of modern broadcast media on politics, especially on foreign policy, has been noted well before September 11. As the 'CNN effect' theory stipulates, the end of the Cold War meant the loss of a coherent organising structure to US foreign policy, which coincided with the development of the 24-hour broadcast news cycle. Media influence on policy therefore increased, as an omnipresent news media rolled flashpoint images and discussion in front of its audience, demanding an equally 'newsworthy' response from governments, thereby accelerating decision-making processes.

This does not make for cool-headed and informed judgement. Not that the Bush administration isn't very fond of that anyway. The 'CNN effect' and its

demand for swift, decisive action invited ill-judged and poorly substantiated initiatives, facilitated by a media whose critical functions had been suspended in the name of patriotism, and the swift marginalisation of dissenting voices. Before anyone had time to stop, think, and hunt for weapons of mass destruction, Rumsfeld and Bush had hammered through the invasion of Iraq, and their popularity soared.

The curious cross-pollination of the media and military during this time went all the way to the front line when the invasion finally began. 'Embedded' journalists were demonstrably affiliated with one side, their activities restricted by military in the interests of security - a telling microcosm of similar measures taken at home.

And as journalists joined the troops, so did military figures increasingly populate the newsrooms. A New York Times investigation earlier this year detailed how top military figures were smuggled into the media coverage of Iraq to provide seemingly authoritative expert analysis that was in fact heavily slanted to favour the Bush administration.

In 2005, in response to Amnesty International's description of Guantanamo as the 'gulag of our times', a group of retired officers was flown to the camp on Dick Cheney's private jet. Recognised as authoritative 'military analysts' frequently seen on news programmes, the former generals were shown around Guantanamo in a choreographed parade designed to assure viewers that the camp was a necessary evil in the interest of national security.

The Times investigation claimed that they were cherry-picked from a pool of generals called on endlessly by American networks for expert analysis of developments in the Middle East. The same pool also represent in various guises

over 150 military contractors that are warring over Pentagon defence contracts.

Enabled by a climate of fear both within and without the media, this convergent media, military and political axis of power, created an artificial dialogue between the ideologues, their allies and their puppets, and so the war on terror was rationalised.

Today, despite a proliferation of news sites, the Internet has streamlined the sourcing of news material. Foreign correspondents are becoming expensive luxuries whose livelihoods are threatened by the rise of citizen journalism - only the BBC, AFP and Reuters still maintain permanent worldwide news-gathering networks. Such concentration of media further stifles the challenging, discursive nature of the media, reducing it to singular perspectives across various formats.

The Obama years should make for fascinating viewing. American dominance appears to be waning, and its ability to euphemise its foreign policy through symbolism will lessen. The Bush administration could afford to mythologise the 'War on Terror' because American might was sufficiently strong to ride on dubious pretexts and not need legitimate and proven bases. But the National Intelligence Council's annual global trends review warns of the end of such preponderance. President-elect Obama will know that both US military supremacy and Western liberal democracy face real challenges in today's fragmented, resource hungry geopolitics. The objects of American aggression may soon start countering with credible force. As September 11 showed, when America feels threatened, its people renew their interest in world affairs. But this time, America may not be able to illustrate its perceptions onto the world in quite the same way.



From Right to Left: the political columns

Hayek

Alex Blance



One Nation, universal healthcare

So, as the right-wing columnist, presumably I'm going to call for the selling off of the National Health Service? Not a bit of it. In Britain our health service, although laden with problems, is widely regarded as one of our greatest achievements, and rightly so. Created sixty years ago, the NHS offers treatment 'free at the point of use' to the UK population, and still appears to be revolutionary from some perspectives. If we look to our closest allies in the United States, the richest country on earth still does not feel able to provide such an essential amenity to its population on any basis other than the ability to pay. Nearly 47 million Americans do not have health insurance and thus effectively do not have any options in this matter of literal 'life and death'. President-elect Barack Obama ran on a promise to reform health care, but we will see how far he gets with this political hot potato. Thankfully, this is not the situation in Britain. At times the Conservative Party has

seemed to be at odds with the NHS, and was seen to run the service down during the Thatcher and Major governments. But the post-war consensus on the welfare state, brought through the Conservative conviction in the 'One Nation' ideology, is back. Today, the Conservatives run on a platform of 'NHYes' and promise to match Labour's funding plans up to 2010-11. However, this does not mean to say that there are no differences between the two main parties. It is widely understood that the problem with the health service is no longer a lack of funds, but rather an inability to make effective use of the money. Poor cancer survival rates and hospital superbugs have been created by Labour's inefficiency in running the service. The Conservative Party is promising to cut Labour's bureaucracy, and to create an independent, non-politicised service to deal with just that problem, so that health professionals can do the jobs patients demand. This shows us where the modern right-wing view of the NHS is; it has to

be a public service, given how important health is, but needs to be run in a corporate fashion, getting rid of red tape and regulation, and beyond that offering choices to patients. The next Conservative government would remove top-down management and devolve the power to direct the service down to patients and professionals, who can shape it as they want it. The government will be further removed from the running of the NHS through the establishment of a constitution and a board of trustees who will oversee an autonomous public service, much like the BBC. The task of the Right is getting the government out of the day-to-day running of the NHS, not getting health care out of the public sector. So it is for David Cameron and his party is to continue to set their stall out as the party of health care provision and to show that Labour have not been the guardians of the NHS, but rather have been the antagonist in many of its contemporary concerns.

Laski

Vlad Unkovski-Korica



A tale of privatised public health

The Government's decision several weeks ago to allow cancer patients to pay for additional medication without opting out of treatment with the National Health Service highlights the fact that patients are worth only what they can afford. This is just another step towards the dismantling of the British welfare state that was set up after the Second World War. The NHS came into being as part of the Labour reform programme which sought to ensure, as the election slogan put it, that there would be 'No return to the 1930s'. So strong was the desire for change, that the British people actually voted out Winston Churchill, who had led them through the war with Nazi Germany. Tory MP Quintin Hogg had warned in 1943: 'If you don't give the people social reform, they will give you social revolution.' Labour under Clement Attlee duly delivered in the form of state services designed to provide care for those most in need 'from the cradle to the grave'. Treatment in the NHS, the flagship of the new dispensation, was open to all and free at the point of need and was funded by a progressive tax rising with income.

No government, Labour or Conservative, dared openly challenge these social gains for three decades. Only when the post-war consensus began to break down in the 1970s did the ruling circles start looking for radical solutions to restore their power in the face of a mass working class revolt. They turned to crackpot ideologues like Friedrich von Hayek for assistance. Henceforth, market fundamentalism would dominate all aspects of life. As in Pinochet's Chile, the first phase of the neoliberal transformation was all-out frontal attack, backed by force if necessary. British miners learned that lesson in 1984-1985. In fact, it took mass civil disobedience against the Poll Tax in 1990 to drive the wooden stake into the heart of Lady Thatcher's government. But it was not sufficient for the ruling class to merely become more cautious. They had to be sure that they regained the consent of a tired and angry population. So they opted for three basic schemes: to keep down the trade unions; to restructure corporate governance in an essentially managerial direction; and to co-opt the Labour Party and make it the human face of capitalism.

Hence social liberalism and the 'Third Way'. The situation could not be allowed to turn into one where people, out of despair, looked away from Labour. The plan worked. Yet it was up to New Labour, as it came to be known, to continue the drive for profitability of British capitalism on the world market when it took power in 1997. New Labour retained Thatcher's anti-union laws but went further still. It deregulated the banks, re-located industry where no previous unionisation existed, or even overseas, and - crucially - opened up huge, hitherto untouched sections of the economy to the vagaries of the market. Hence variable top-up fees, city academies, and the internal market in the NHS - not to mention innumerable Public Private Partnerships and Private Finance Initiatives schemes. Yet, after the multi-trillion dollar/pound/euro bailout of the world banking system, it can no longer be argued that the markets work best. It is surely time to put an end to a system in which the poor suffer and die despite there being resources to treat them.

Viridian Growing green in developing cities

Katharine Ripullone

Cities - historically, these human creations were seen as the apex of civilization, from the Catal Huyuk to the gem of the Ancient World, Rome. Humans have struggled towards and marked their success by laying claim to the creation of this complex form. Recently, the United Nations published its "State of the World's Cities" report, hailing the start of a modern urban era, where the majority of humanity are living in urban areas. Unlike the past century, which belonged to the cities of industrialised countries - Paris, Berlin, London, New York, Tokyo - the new urban period is ushered in cities in the developing world. The conception of how humans can live in cities has changed drastically. Green urban living is the new buzzword, and spurring movements like Breeding Gotham and Greenopia across the industrialised world. While this new lifestyle movement is sustainable in industrialised cities where the consciousness needed for such societal changes already exist, forcing developing cities to adhere to the same standards has been called unfair and unethical. Nevertheless, cities in industrialised countries are being asked to live up to these higher standards. The UN report paints quite a bleak picture of this new era. Populations in developing cities are growing by three million per week. As these cities grow, so too does the proportion of people living in slums. On average, one out of three people in the developing world lives in urban slums. Cities in the developing world are also those most likely to be adversely affected by global climate change. Over half of the cities at high risk of sea level changes are located in Asia (18 of the 20 largest cities are located near a body of water). Cities with a high concentration of people and economic assets, like Mumbai and Shanghai, would be most severely affected by any change in sea levels. The number of exposed cities is increasing as climate change continues to go unchecked. Decreasing carbon emissions and other more drastic steps has become a necessity, not only to minimise the risk for these new cities, but also to help offset the increasing environmental costs of their growth. The key question remains, why should the developed world take responsibility for the welfare of these new cities? Emissions from developed countries still account for around 50 per cent of the world's carbon emissions, down from over 60 per cent in 1992. Furthermore, cities in developed countries are better equipped to take action. They have access to better technology, and can utilise them at lower costs. Industrialising countries should be held responsible to a certain extent, but what fundamentally must be acknowledged is that these cities of the new urban era are now at risk of being the worst affected by climate change - a problem which they are not most culpable for. Green urban living is not just a catch phrase - it is a necessity and responsibility for those living in industrialised cities.

Measured musings



The police have gone through it. The prison service has. Employers have. Unions have. I have. Why, even you probably have too. I am referring, of course, to the list. Allegedly made public courtesy of a disgruntled ex-member of the British National Party in a vengeful outing of his former comrades. Having been put out there for a week, the list is easy game for anyone with slightest sense of curiosity and the remotest of interest. They would have been subconsciously obsessed with the unasked questions: who are these people? Do I know any of them? They probably spent several minutes, if not hours, studying its contents, hoping for (or against) finding a familiar name, a familiar postcode. Yet whether or not they've hit the jackpot, they would have been struck by the fact that details of most of the 12,000 or so names on the list seem rather ordinary. People with innocuous sounding names, holding jobs of all descriptions, from cities and towns just about everywhere.

See, hear, speak and fight evil

Hardly matching the imagery of bigoted skinhead thugs in the public imagination, bequeath to them by the antics of Blood and Honour-type neo-Nazis and stylised depictions in *American History X*. But then again, not all on the list are actually members. Many might just be on it for the most benign of reasons. Being invited to a BNP social event, if Windsor Castle storeman Paul Murray is to be believed, is enough to get one on the list, even when one does not actually attend. Regardless, self-righteous 'crusaders' have taken it upon themselves to pillory and vilify the fascist enemy - now individuals with names and faces, instead of a collective political front. Yet this inadvertent demystification of the party's membership is not all bad for them, insofar as Nick Griffin and his spinmeisters are concerned. The BNP leader told the BBC Today show: "...in terms of repositioning [the BNP] as a party genuinely made up of ordinary British people from all walks of life, [the leak] will actually do us good." Perhaps he would have been more

accurate if he was referring to the rest of us. This leak, regrettable as it is for those whose right to privacy have been breached, came rather timely for London. A London that voted in a BNP candidate, Richard Barnbrook, to the London Assembly for the first time in May. Intriguingly, our new mayor Boris Johnson would rather us not remember this fact. Instead of facing up to the signs of Londoners' growing disillusionment with mainstream politics, Johnson chooses to pretend that the problem isn't there. When Barnbrook attends meetings, the mayor develops visual impairment. When Barnbrook speaks, Boris hears no evil. To Johnson, Barnbrook is but an annoying apparition that haunts the corridors of City Hall. Ignoring is bliss. The media is playing dumb on Barnbrook as well. As journalist and blogger Adam Bienkov observed, Barnbrook has become virtually anonymous - nowhere to be found in the mainstream media coverage since his election. The tacit City Hall and media

"conspiracy" to disappear Mr Brownsuit extends even to the London Assembly meeting room. There, Barnbrook is sat at the very end of a horseshoe table arrangement, with an empty seat space between him and the nearest member. Fortunately, the blaze of publicity showered upon this list means that we won't have to stick our collective heads in the ground like the holders of London public office. The spectre of Far Right politics looms large once more, and being "suckers for the truth" we can't keep our hands off the prize placed gratuitously at our feet. The list, and the truths it reveals, has cast light upon the BNP unlike ever before. Enough to make it easier for us to reach across the political divide to those who have lost faith in their leaders. If we truly celebrate and desire an inclusive society, then we ought not to instinctively repulse those who reside on the fringe. Chun Han Wong Features Editor

THE RIGHT TO LEARN

**ALEX RODIN
AND JOE SAMMUT
DISCUSS THE POLITICS
OF EDUCATION IN THE
ISRAEL-PALESTINE
CONFLICT**



Flickr user delayed gratification

Unwelcome blocks to education

Schooling is even more of a struggle in Gaza than the West Bank, says **Joe Sammut**

Israel should be commended for ratifying international legislation which recognises the fundamental human right of education. In 1991, Israel ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states "Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights".

For many students this no doubt seems a reasonable precept; without education the knowledge required to improve the world must be limited. However, this is a human right that the Israeli government and military systematically deny the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza.

In An-Najah National University in the West Bank, nine thousand students have to pass at least one checkpoint in order to get to school. The process is that people queue and show their identification papers, which are checked to see whether they have been arrested before, or are considered a threat to security.

To an impartial person this would seem to indicate that the purpose of these checkpoints is, as the Israeli government states, to monitor and prevent an increase in the "innocent victims" killed by "terrorists" from the West Bank. However, Amnesty International explains that "virtually all the checkpoints, gates, blocked roads and most of the fence/wall are located inside the West Bank – not between Israel and the West Bank." As such, these checkpoints may not be about stopping terrorism within the borders of Israel.

Beesan Ramadan, a first year economics student at An-Najah university who spoke at LSE last week, explained the problems that these checkpoints cause. She stated that the situation was worse for

male students as they would frequently have to spend several hours waiting to see whether they would be allowed through or not. Semma Qulan, a student from Birzeit University gave an example of the capricious nature of the guards that monitor the crossings. On one occasion the men were made to form two lines: one with men with gel in their hair and one without. They were then told that only the men with gel in their hair could pass that day to go to university.

Another block to education within the West Bank is the physical barrier of the 700km fence. This is described by the Israeli Government as an "anti-terrorist fence" designed as a "purely defensive measure" to stop terrorist attacks. This barrier is double the length of the Green Line, the border between Israel and the West Bank pre-1967, and it tracks a meandering path deep into the West Bank. This wall often encircles and traps entire villages and neighbourhoods, consequently severely restricting the ability of students, amongst others, to exercise their freedom of movement. In a 2003 advisory opinion, the International Court of Justice opined it illegal as it is inside occupied territory.

These two issues would be unexplainable and irrational along with being, as Amnesty International described, "discriminatory and disproportionate" if they were understood without knowledge of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank. The restrictions on the freedom of movement and the following restrictions on the right to education are principally caused by the protection of these settlements by the Israeli forces.

The gravest threat to education in the West Bank is the killings and detentions of students and teachers. Rawan Darweesh, a business student at Birzeit university

The solution that both sides offered to this is that through solidarity, these problems can be overcome

who had his dorms raided by the Israeli forces on the same day as a fellow student was killed. They entered and forced everyone into handcuffs as they searched the dorms, smashing everything they could in the process.

These raids in schools are justified by the Israeli government's official position that "incitement to hatred and violence is pervasive in Palestinian society" especially in "nursery schools and kindergartens, youth movements, schools and universities." If this is true, the right to education campaign that the LSE Students' Union has affiliated itself to is an affiliation to the indoctrination of hatred.

This is not a universal view in Israel. The Israeli lawyer Noem Peleg argued last week that the policy of denying the Palestinians the ability to realise their right to education will "cause a backlash on Israeli society" and as such was "not only immoral but stupid." By denying the right to education to Palestinians, the Israeli government incites resentment and by denying the tools to criticise injustice from an academic route it encourages the use of an armed road to resolve the problems Palestinians face.

The Palestinians that live in the West Bank are almost lucky compared to the ones in Gaza, for Gaza has been transformed by an Egyptian and Israeli blockade into a giant prison.

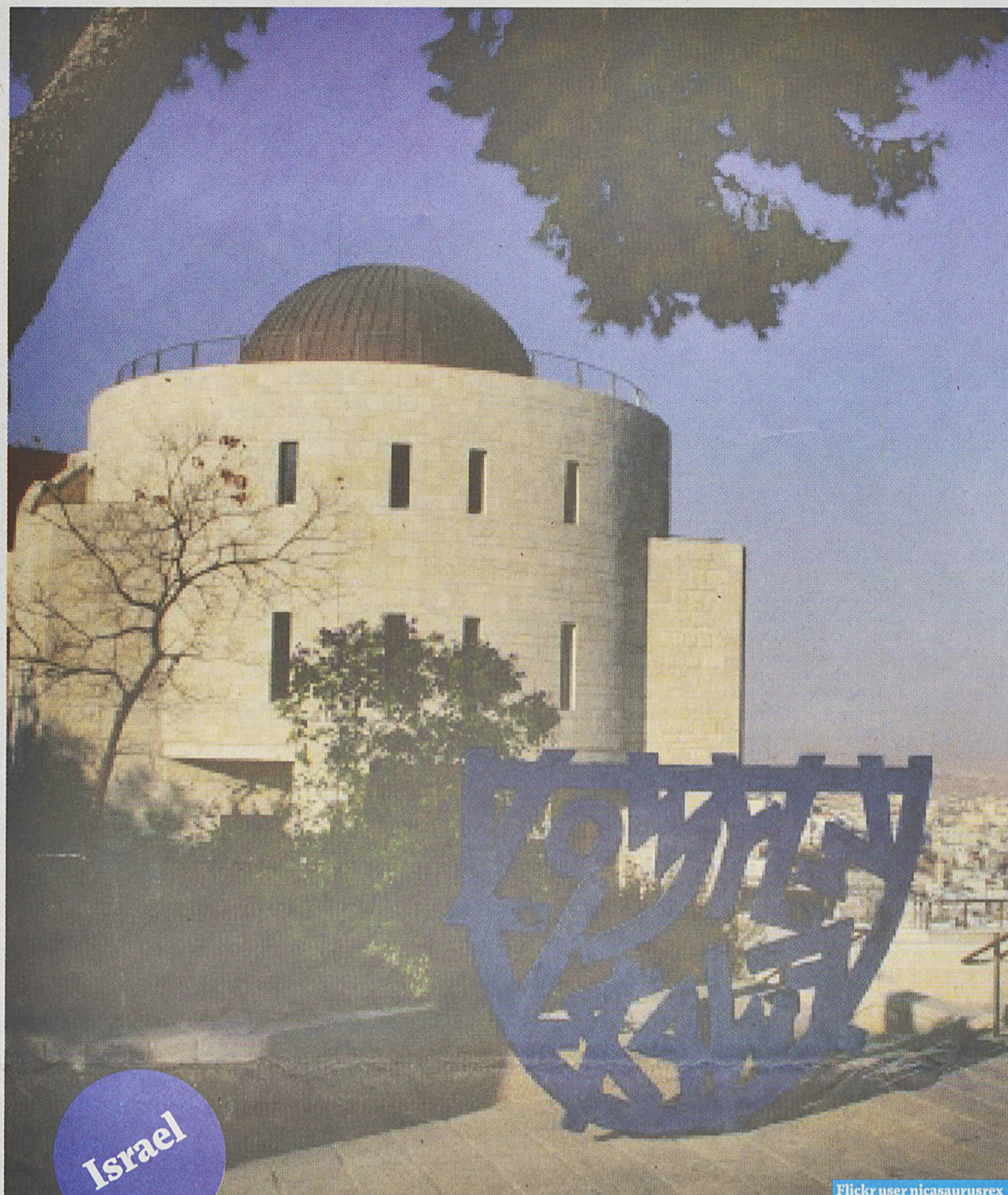
The impact of this siege has vast humanitarian consequences for the people, including those in Gaza. This involves infrastructural problems such as a lack of resources vital for the realisation of education, electricity, books and food. Over 80% of the Gazan population now depend on the limited amount of international aid the Israeli army permits. The Israeli government justifies the blockade by pointing to the need to protect

its borders from the repeated rocket attacks from Gaza, and that the terrorist infrastructure there which has grown at an alarming rate.

This blockade not only prohibits the entry of all but a minimal level of vital goods but restricts the exit of almost everyone. Last academic year the LSE Students' Union voted Khaled al-Mudallal the honorary vice president of the union. At that time he was one of 670 students who were not allowed to leave to continue their studies at universities abroad. However due to a campaign by human rights organisations and students, he was released.

Noem, who argued al-Mudallal's case in the Israeli Supreme Court, explained the situation of the release. Several hundred of the students were told that they had twelve hours to get ready to leave before the checkpoint would shut again. This meant that many could not go as it is difficult to get ready to leave in such a short space of time. A small reminder of the siege that Khaled described was that it was almost impossible to find a petrol station that had petrol so he could drive to the crossing.

The effect of these restrictions combined with the collective punishment of the siege has meant that Noem described the situation for Gazans as even worse this year. The number of applications to foreign universities has dropped due to the hopelessness of the situation for potential students. This is symmetrical to the situation in the West Bank; the resounding theme from the students of the three West Bank universities who spoke last week is that the Israeli government and armed forces are attempting to "take away our hope and our ability to enjoy our lives." The solution that both sides offered to this is that through solidarity, this can be overcome.



Israel

University continues despite terror

Israeli academic institutions are open to all, says **Alex Rodin**

The grass was coarser than the English lawns I was familiar with, but the weather incomparably better. The rest of the scene may have at first glance been any British university campus, with students relaxing between classes in the May sunshine.

A group of young men and women sat on the grass, smoothies in hand, two of the girls in Islamic headscarves, one guy sporting a Jewish skull-cap. As students bustle past, you hear conversations in Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, Spanish, occasionally even some English. It could have been LSE, but for the grass and weather.

Last year, I was a student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. While rockets from Gaza were destroying lives and houses in Israeli towns and cities, while the Israeli Defence Forces were urged to respond with caution by some and with vigour by others, while an Israeli-Arab gunman armed with an AK-47 ran rampage in a Jewish school in West Jerusalem, murdering many students - while all this went on, Palestinian-Arabs and Israeli-Jews at the Hebrew University studied together, lived together, and thrived together in an oasis of coexistence.

The Hebrew University was founded in 1925 on Har Hatzofim in East Jerusalem, at its conception, the university was envisaged by governors such as Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Chaim Weizmann and Martin Buber, as a place of coexistence between Arabs and Jews. 'The founding fathers of the university had this liberal outlook. This is the tradition that they brought with them and we try to keep it,' explains Professor Esther Shohami, the

dean of students at the Hebrew University. More than 24,000 students are enrolled at the Hebrew University, including some 12,000 undergraduates. It is against Israeli law to ask about ethnicity on application for university and the admissions criteria are the same for Arabs and Jews alike. What this means is that access to higher education in Israel is based on the merit of each individual, and so university admissions offices can be seen as one of the few institutions that measure and survey everyone by their minds and individual talents, rather than on what part of the population the applicant might be from.

The result is an extraordinary melting pot of young intelligent people, who exude a communal sense of magnanimity in not allowing the instability of the news headlines to detract from a peaceful coexistence on campus. This is coupled with a sustained effort at creating further links between two fractious sections of the greater Israeli society.

Notable Palestinian alumni of Hebrew University include lawyers, politicians and academics amongst others. Some of these names include Rami Nasralla, head of the International Peace and Cooperation Centre in Jerusalem; Khaled Abu Toameh, documentary film maker and successful journalist, writing for the Jerusalem Post, The Sunday Times, Daily Express and the New Republic; Ahmed Tibi, politician in the Israeli parliament and head of the Arab Nationalist Party; Elias Khoury, a top lawyer who has appeared before the Israeli Supreme Court several times, successfully representing Palestinian clients and politicians. The list goes on.

While I was at the Hebrew University, I too saw Muslim and Jewish, Arab and Israeli learning together and otherwise interacting together meaningfully.

Notable Palestinian alumni of Hebrew University include lawyers, politicians and academics, amongst others

There were endless opportunities to join interfaith forums, discussion groups and football teams all in the name of encouraging an ongoing dialogue between students of differing religious and political backgrounds.

To give some examples, law school students created study and discussion groups called kiruv levavot, or 'bringing hearts together,' to bring Jewish and Arab students together. 'Without Borders' is a university-initiated program to nudge the two sides together, engages the students in community, while another initiative called 'Coffee Break' provides the opportunity for Jewish and Arab students to sit between classes and socialize over coffee. Another enlightening programme was that of the university Law Departments Minerva Center for Human Rights, which ran talks and conferences with brilliant speakers from every sector of the academic world. Students and lecturers, Israeli and Palestinian teachers, Jewish and Arab NGOs' staff and activists, as well as the legal community of judges, Civil Service attorneys and legal advisers take part in their programmes, providing a serious platform for consideration and debate of critical issues from every angle.

During my time at the Hebrew University I often found myself wading to class through swaths of protestors: feminism, gay pride, Likud, Balad. The only rally that really shocked me, disgusted me, and then made me entirely proud was the week of parades in support of Hamas on campus. Hamas - the same Hamas that claimed responsibility for bombing the university cafe in 2002 that killed 9 students, an organization sworn to the destruction of the State of Israel, the Jewish people and all their institutions - were being lauded and encouraged on a campus that

was the product of Zionist visionaries. What this showed me, in a way that I only fully appreciated some time after the demonstrators folded away their flags and switched off the megaphone, was how sincerely free speech is cherished in Israel and in particular at the university. Furthermore, while the Hamas demonstrations raised tensions perhaps, and while student politics became frighteningly important, Israeli Arabs and Jews were still preparing presentations for class together, still sharing flats and bathrooms, still cooking and eating together around the same tables.

The Hebrew University could be praised for many things - the excellent teaching, the beautiful campus, the successful alumni, the falafel stand in its quad - but what it might do for us as students is to serve as a comprehensive model for tolerance and coexistence on campus. If students at the heart of a fairly weathered struggle can recognise the importance of putting some effort into understanding each other a little better, in order to achieve an environment of coexistence instead of heated aggression and confrontation, we at LSE should perhaps follow suit.

While there is always potential for tension between different groups with different aspirations, we should perhaps also realize there is a lot to be learnt from the people who don't necessarily share the same ideas as us. JS Mill once wrote 'he who knows only his side of the case knows little of that.' He might be right.



Flickr user Frequency

Top up, or drop out

Daniel Jason discusses politics and higher education funding with Conservative politician Lord Chris Patten

Lord Chris Patten, a prominent Conservative politician, perhaps most famous for being the 28th and last Governor of Hong Kong, dropped by the LSE last Wednesday. Before he went to speak to an eager audience in the Sheikh Zayed theatre, I managed to get a 15-minute audience with the self-confessed last British "imperial oppressor".

Patten is everything and more of what many would think the quintessential Conservative politician is - armed with a public school education and diploma from Oxford, with an accent to match. After the Hong Kong handover and abolition of the governorship, Patten was appointed the European Commissioner for External Relations, before being given a peerage in 2005. In 1999, he was appointed Chancellor of Newcastle University and in 2003, appointed Chancellor of the University of Oxford.

The orchestrator of the 1992 Tory electoral victory is confident of a return to power in the near future. For Patten, David Cameron is the man to lead the Conservative Party through to electoral victory.

"I think he's quite cleverly moved the Conservative Party back into the middle ground of politics," he said. "He's thoughtful, intelligent and likeable. I think he's made the Conservative Party credible and removed that factor of dislike which dragged the Conservative Party down."

But is this sufficiently appealing to the wider British public? Patten seemed to think it was more of a case of appealing to people by Labour's faults rather than by the Conservatives' merits. "I think [the British electorate] will conclude that the Labour Party have screwed up the economy, which is indeed true."

In the case of students, Patten is not going to be a vote-winner; top-up fees will come if he had his way. "If you look me up on the web, I've been in favour of tuition fees since before the debate started, both on the grounds of social equity and on grounds of providing adequate funding for higher education, which is abysmally funded in this country," he said.

It is true that higher education funding isn't what it used to be, especially given the government's conscious funding reduction in a bid to wean off the financial strain. Yet this is a fiscal hole which needs to be plugged. But why target the students?

Especially when Patten believes there should be no limit to what universities should be able to charge their undergraduates, which for Oxford he claims would be up to £10,000 - the same amount being charged for some masters degrees and most professional exams.

He argued: "If you're concerned about the health of higher education in this country, you have to face up to the fact that there's only three ways you can pay for it.

"You can pay for it through tax payers and higher public spending - I'd love to see that happen, but since it hasn't happened in the past 20, 25 years in any significant extent, I'm not sure its going to happen now. If governments have to choose between hospitals and schools and higher education, I'm afraid they choose more populist causes."

This in itself is a shocking admission, but one we don't need Patten to point out to us. Even though university students represent the future backbone of any economy, this and other governments in the future would prefer to cut back on the financial backing of this sector.

"Secondly," Patten continued, "you can raise money through benefactions, through private philanthropy. LSE is much better than it used to be, as are many universities, but there are only three universities in this country which would get in the top 150 in the US in terms of their private endowments. Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh - which is 147th.

"Three, you can get students to pay more."

At the moment, these means of funding are balanced precariously. Universities typically receive some financial backing from the government, but not enough to cover all their expenses, so they use donations and tuition fees to plug the gap. If the government chooses to make further funding cuts, those gaps will increase, which is why Patten places emphasis on alumni donations and having no limit to the amount of fees chargeable.

But is treating the higher education sector like any other commercial industry wise, given the major importance it has to the future of this country's economy? This may lead to top universities may price out intellectual gems from working class backgrounds, in addition to decreasing social mobility.

But Patten disagreed. "There's no

"If you're saying should universities be entirely private, I wouldn't agree with that."

evidence from anywhere in the world that tuition fees actually inhibits social mobility, [and] I think it's already the case where students make choices about courses which reflect their own estimate of their abilities and interests," he said.

Clearly, in Patten's world, there are no cases where people from blue collar backgrounds would like to and are capable of studying law at Oxbridge - or the LSE - but wouldn't actually be able to afford it if tuition fees alone cost up to £10,000 a year. For the rest of us in the real world, especially those of us who are currently priced out by full-price postgraduate degrees, Patten's response remains extremely unsatisfactory.

But Patten has some statistics to back his claims. "In this country we've seen an expansion of, since I was in university in the 1960s, from 6, 7 per cent of the age group going to university, to 42 per cent today. Even though the number of children from working class backgrounds has increased, the balance between people from blue collar and people from white collar backgrounds, is exactly the same as it was in the 1960's. So with largely free higher education until the last few years, there still hasn't been any change in the proportion of young people from blue collar backgrounds in universities."

The proportion of blue-white collar workers may remain the same, but due to free education a massive 42 per cent of school-leavers can expect to be university educated. In addition, would the proportion of people from more financially modest backgrounds still be the same as people from white-collar backgrounds if it weren't free? History has taught us not. So surely this is a victory, not a defeat, for those championing free education? Patten's response is therefore puzzling.

The three solutions offered up by Patten, and indeed mainstream politics, aren't very imaginative. Some British universities are establishing social enterprises and businesses in order to attain partial financial independence from the government, a policy being mimicked by certain hospitals in Britain.

I proposed this to him. "But there is a fourth option," I said, at which point he frowns deeply. "Social enterprises and business ventures." I then explained to him what this would entail.

"It's a good idea, but it's not going to

fund higher education," he replied. But why doesn't he think private funding will fill the financial gap, at least partially? After all, this is the same idea being implemented by hospitals to help with funding, and already in place by several universities for the same reasons.

"Certainly in Oxford at the moment," he says, looking thoughtful "it costs us £6,000 more to fund an undergraduate than we get from the government. So that we would need to raise £10 to 15 million if we were to do without any support from the government."

"If you're saying, should universities be encouraged to do more for themselves when raising funds, the answer is yes. If you're saying should universities be entirely private, I wouldn't agree with that."

That's fair enough, but what of his view on tuition fees in regards to the ongoing recession? Almost grudgingly, he responded: "it may be that if we are confronting, as we now are, a pretty tough recession, that you would need to take account of that with top-up fees."

Bizarrely, when pressed for details on how the recession should be taken into account, his answers didn't seem to reflect such considerations. "In the face of the recession, do you think top up fees should be suspended?" I asked, to which he replied with a solitary "no." I pressed further. "So should any rise in top-up fees be suspended?" Again, a solitary "no."

"So any rises should continue as planned?" I asked.

"The rises you are talking about haven't been agreed," Patten said. "The government are due to review the decision in 2009, but since it would come before an election, will put [the government] off making any decision about tuition fees." For once, both of us could agree on something.

Having returned to the topic of elections, I asked him if he would like a cabinet job if the Conservatives triumph. After all, he may very well have become Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1992, if not for the inconvenient loss of his own parliamentary seat. "No thanks, I have that T-shirt already," he replies drolly.

Many thanks to the LSE IDEAS forum for arranging this interview. LSE IDEAS is the centre for the study of international affairs, diplomacy and grand strategy.

Social

Society report



Photo: Zeeshan Malik

Israel and Palestine on Campus

The Israel Society looks back on their People not Politics campaign

Israel society ran a highly successful campaign called, 'Israel: People, Not Politics' last week. The purpose of the campaign was to inform others that Israel is a country that offers much beyond the realm of political conflict.

Israel is comprised of 7.1 million inhabitants with varied ethnic backgrounds, lifestyles, religions cultures and traditions. As a result, life in Israel is wide-ranging, exciting and buzzing with energy – this is the picture, so often ignored by Western media, that our campaign sought to represent.

Our campaign had five main aspects. First, peace and coexistence which are concepts that Israeli citizens strive to make a living reality. To exemplify this we welcomed Dana Sender who worked with Co-existence Trust, an organisation comprised of Muslim and Jewish members of the UK House of Lords and seeks to promote and further dialogue, co-operation, and good relations between Muslim and Jewish communities. Sender spoke about her own initiatives that aim to bring together both Israeli Arabs and Jews with Palestinians and Christians in Jerusalem.

Second, we celebrated the artistic talent that Israeli artists bring to the world of music by hosting a music and wine-tasting evening in collaboration with the German Society. We also managed to present a fascinating collection of contemporary art pieces that gave a sense of life and culture in Israel. Our wine selection exemplified the geographic and cultural diversities of both nations.

Third, Israeli film is often ignored in the Western world. Therefore, we shared a viewing of 'The Band's Visit', a 2007 production. The Band, the Alexandria Ceremonial Police, visit Israel to perform at the opening of the Petah Tikva Arab Cultural Center. However, there are no dignitaries to greet them and the Egyptians find themselves stranded in a remote town. Their uptight conductor accepts a gener-

ous offer from a cafe owner to put him and his colleagues up for the night, where the band and their hosts realise that, despite their different origins, they have more in common than either imagined.

Fourth, on Thursday we celebrated the ability of Israeli musicians as well as the vibrancy and modernity of social life in Israel. Tel Aviv is the hub of life for teenagers, clubbers and those who like to relax in a bar on the beach front. In an attempt to recreate the scene of an Israeli Bar we took over the upstairs of Traffic in central London.

Israeli music is reflective of the range of cultures that come together in Israeli society. Just one famous example of 'The Idan Raichel Project' which blends the sounds and the languages of Ethiopian Israeli immigrants with Arab music.

Fifth, education and understanding through communication. Every day last week we ran a stall on Houghton St. Difficult to avoid with our large Israeli flags and the luring temptation of free Israeli food, the stall had many visitors to whom we could impart some of our knowledge and love of the Israel that exists beyond the conflict.

A five day campaign is too short to give real acknowledgement to the wide-ranging successes of Israeli society. We haven't yet mentioned that Israel has become a world leader in the fields of medicine and technology. So too, in the world of Israeli literature, authors such as S.Y Agnon, David Grossman and Amos Oz have produced distinguished works of lasting importance.

The Students' Union Israel Society wants to share music, food, films, stories and ideas with the larger LSE community. We want to move forward and create a positive atmosphere on campus that allows LSE students to rectify misconceptions, break down negative stereotypes of other cultures, and perhaps even help in solving a conflict by aspiring to peace.



Flickr user Goran Zec

The Palestine Society reports on their Right to Education week

The nineteenth century German writer and playwright Johann Von Goethe never planned, nor indeed wanted to become one of the key figures in German literature. At school he enjoyed painting and wanted until his death to make it in the art world. He was obsessed by the notion of education as a right and the only thing that would enable individuals to reach their full potential. In his last book he wrote 'Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them to become what they are capable of being'.

It is this notion that has underlined what has become one of the Palestine Society's most successful campaigning weeks in several years. The 'Right to Education' week has been part of a national campaign to highlight just one example of a broader range of injustices faced by Palestinians living under occupation.

We started our campaign this week with a silent protest with members of the society taking it in turns to be blindfolded by the Israeli flag throughout the day. The reception we got on Houghton Street was amazing and everyone said how powerful a silent sit-down protest was. Students seemed really enthusiastic to learn about the society and most importantly the campaign.

On Tuesday we erected a six-foot wall on the street and had members of the society dressed as guards. Having visited Palestinian check-points, the wall we constructed was minimal in comparison, but was a fantastic way of engaging with students about the lack of structure in Palestinian daily-life which is so dependent on whether or not checkpoints are open or closed and whether or not the refugee camp they live in is under curfew.

On Wednesday we were delighted to welcome back Khaled Al-Mudallal, last year's honorary vice-President of the Student's Union. Khaled was trapped in Gaza last summer during the year long Israeli siege. After a nationwide campaign led

by student groups he was finally allowed to return to finish his degree at Bradford University. Khaled reminded us that siege of Gaza continues and the amount of food being allowed in by the Israeli authorities has dropped substantially in recent months.

The highlight of the week for many students was the visit of three students from the West Bank. The students told moving tales of life under occupation. The idea that lecturers and students can be imprisoned overnight for no reason or that the University faces regular incursions by Israeli army tanks is something we find difficult to relate to. The visit really helped bring home the realities of life under occupation and the students stressed the real significance of awareness raising campaigns.

The 'Right to Education' week went out with a bang, as LSE students wrote messages of support on the 'wall' we had used earlier in the week. Within one hour of erecting it there was hardly room left as it was covered in 'Freedom for Palestine', 'Food, not Bombs' and even one amusing reference to Tony Blair's less successful mantra - 'Education Education Education'.

This has been one of the most successful weeks for the Palestine Society. We have been inundated with emails asking how students can join and get involved in the society. One Palestinian student thanked us for the campaign and reminded us of a slogan that is emblazoned across the walls of the refugee camps in the occupied territories: If you do not go to the struggle, the struggle will come to you.

For further information contact:

The Israel Society
su.soc.israel@lse.ac.uk

The Palestine Society
su.soc.palestine@lse.ac.uk

Ethical Business

London School of Oikonomics

Harriet Jackson explains how Oikos hopes to spread the word of sustainable economics

Like many other left-of-centre students to enter LSE in recent years, I felt slightly cheated when I first arrived last year. Posters advertising ethical events were plastered over by giant, glossy business adverts and Freshers were competing for internships before they had even finished unpacking. Ranting about this sorry state of affairs to another Fresher would more often than not result in a "oh so there's no point in networking with her" look running through their eyes before slipping away, sometimes with a polite excuse and sometimes with a defensive torrent about the City. Wonder whether they still do that now.

Quickly it became clear I would have to stop loathing everyone that was considering a money-related career if I wanted to hold a conversation for longer than five seconds. Besides, my prejudices were just as unfounded as any others. Contrary to popular belief, most bankers are not out for starving children's blood. But how could I enjoy my three years here without turning into one of them?

The light came in the form of the LSE Students' Union Oikos Society. This small society with a confusing name focuses on raising awareness about sustainable economics and management. I barely knew what economics was when I stood for Secretary but I quickly grasped the "if

you make big companies more ethical it makes a big difference" thinking behind the society. Also, it seemed like a more comfortable way to save the environment than chained to a tree in the rain.

Throughout the year I messed up many times. Including letting my mobile phone ring tone play for ages at our most important speaker event, because it was too embarrassing to confess it was mine. But Olivier, the Chair of Oikos, managed to correct most of my flaws and I am now once more Secretary of the society.

From organising a trip to the zero-energy development BedZED site in south London, to screaming wildly at an investment banker boy when he violated our carbon-trading agreement, Oikos has undoubtedly been part of why LSE life has been much better than I first expected. I should add that the latter activity was not as a hobby but was part of the Perspectivity Game, a simulation board game hosted twice this year by Oikos.

As Oikos acts as a bridge between the private sector and sustainability, anyone who is interested in either field would definitely enjoy our events, particularly as we try to focus on more specialised issues that are often neglected.

Send an email to Su.Soc.Oikoslondon@lse.ac.uk to find out more!



Flickr user: Vicintosh87

Not simply for profit: Become a Social Entrepreneur

Malvika Saraogi explains how social business can provide an exciting outlet for ethically minded LSE students



Flickr user: Carf



Photo: Erik Lang

When asked if she considered herself a successful person, Anita Roddick, founder of The Bodyshop said, "I have always found that my view of success has been iconoclastic: success to me is not about money or status or fame, it's about finding a livelihood that brings me joy and self-sufficiency and a sense of contributing to the world."

Roddick is perhaps the most well known social entrepreneur in the UK. Her quote beautifully captures the essence of social entrepreneurship, a profit-seeking business venture whose main aim is to serve society.

Another well-known figure in this field is Muhammad Yunus, the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner and founder of the Grameen Bank. Today most business plan competitions have a special social enterprise category and leading hedge fund managers are eager to set up social investment funds that invest in social businesses.

However, social entrepreneurship is not a recent phenomenon. History has witnessed famous social entrepreneurs such as Florence Nightingale, Maria Montessori and Vinoba Bhave. But with increasing focus on corporate social responsibility and the internet, it has become much easier for such entrepreneurs to showcase their work and garner support. An entire day (20th November 2008) of the Global Entrepreneurship Week was dedicated to social enterprise.

Take the case of Ashoka, an organisation set up by former McKinsey consultant Bill Drayton. Ashoka promotes the work of social entrepreneurs by awarding them fellowships and access to a network of business mentors.

The Skoll Foundation, founded by Jeffrey Skoll, eBay's first president, is another example. The foundation recognises achievers in this field via the Skoll Awards

for Social Entrepreneurship and MBA scholarships at University of Oxford's Said Business School.

The Schwab Foundation, established by Professor Klaus Schwab, the creator of the World Economic Forum, also deserves a special mention. Organiser of the Social Entrepreneur of the Year awards and the Forum of Young Global Leaders, this decade-old organisation also sponsors social entrepreneurs to attend the World Economic Forum. These examples illustrate the high level of support which social enterprise currently receives.

Social entrepreneurs have implemented various innovative initiatives such as Wiles Greenworld, a company that recycles used furniture from large offices for re-sale, to a company which offers 'blind' workshops in which corporate professionals are blind-folded and taught the value of teamwork, trust and adaptability.

As tomorrow's leaders, students and young professionals have an important role to play. From spotting issues in their local communities to preventing environmental degradation, setting-up your own venture has never been easier.

There are several competitions, forums and awards for young people to advertise and attract capital. LSE students can avail the resources and advice offered by the Careers Service which has two counsellors focusing exclusively on entrepreneurship.

The Entrepreneurs Society have recently teamed up with the Careers Service to organise a business plan competition called Pitch It. The competition features a separate social business category.

Ashoka also has a Youth Venture through which it provides seed funding, guidance and support to young entrepreneurs.

For relevant training and qualifications visit The School for Social Entrepreneurs at www.sse.org.uk

Write for The Beaver in Social

- 1) share any career or social experience and get published!
- 2) promote your society: thebeaveronline.co.uk/listings

social@thebeaveronline.co.uk



Society Report

Back with a bang: The Muse literature journal

The Muse's Editor in Chief **Cameron Paige** comments on Sir Peter Stothard's flying visit to the LSE

Democracy means different things to different people. To the Editors' Board of The Muse, the new-student-writing magazine published by the LSE Students' Union Literature Society, democracy meant almost as much as it does to the USA: without it, we were sure, we would lose our *raison d'être* and perish.

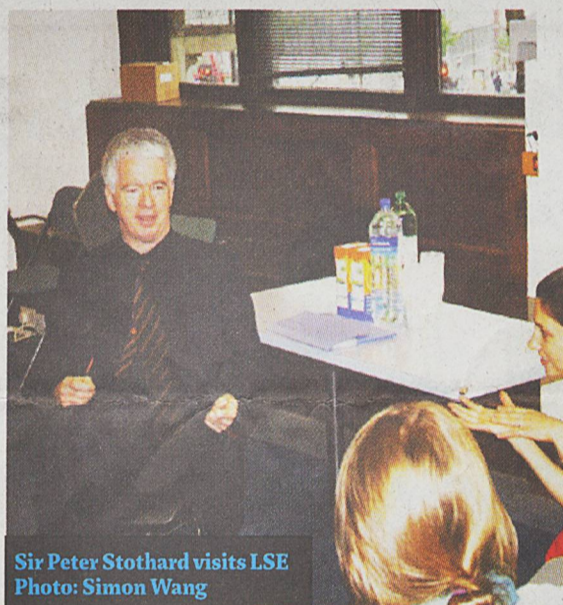
However, democratically chosen leaders tend to be allowed a certain degree of freedom when it comes to setting their agendas. Thus inviting Sir Peter Stothard, current Editor of The Times Literary Supplement and former Editor of The Times, although an executive decision, wasn't meant in any way to rock our cosy little democratic universe. The reason for the invitation was simple: To use Sir Stothard's experience to set us on a satisfactorily competent path to editing and publishing the 2008/2009 issue of The Muse.

With an impressive track record in securing high-quality contributions and increasing readership, Sir Stothard had every right to talk from a position of authority and to expect that his advice would be heeded. Which it would have been immediately, had he not started the meeting by strongly recommending that The Muse abandon the democratic process altogether. As the tempers rose, that piece of advice was followed by a quick observation: that there was an acute lack of critical debate at the LSE. As long as we allowed ourselves to be bound in the straight-jacket of political correctness taken to extremes, there was little room for constructive criticism, and hence for improvement. In so many words, we were being told we were a bunch of misguided

amateurs.

Our hour was up, and we were left at a difficult crossroads. We could either negate all that had just been said or make the leap of faith to trust the advice we'd been given and to change. The temptation to do the former was overpowering. Up to that point, The Muse's editors had always made their decisions democratically. Every year, there were plenty of good submissions, editing was done on time and in a spirit of camaraderie, and there was a celebrated hard copy launched at the end of each Lent Term. So why change?

The answer, though seemingly short, isn't simple: We chose to change because we were given a choice. "That's not how we do things" is only a valid excuse up to a point. This year, The Muse ups the ante. Yes, it's a gamble, but we're determined to win: To deliver a magazine that's sharp, captivating and truly inspired. So watch out for us in the Lent Term. And if you'd like to get involved, it's not too late. You can find out more on our website, www.lsemuse.co.uk, or by writing the Literature Society directly at su.soc.literature@lse.ac.uk.

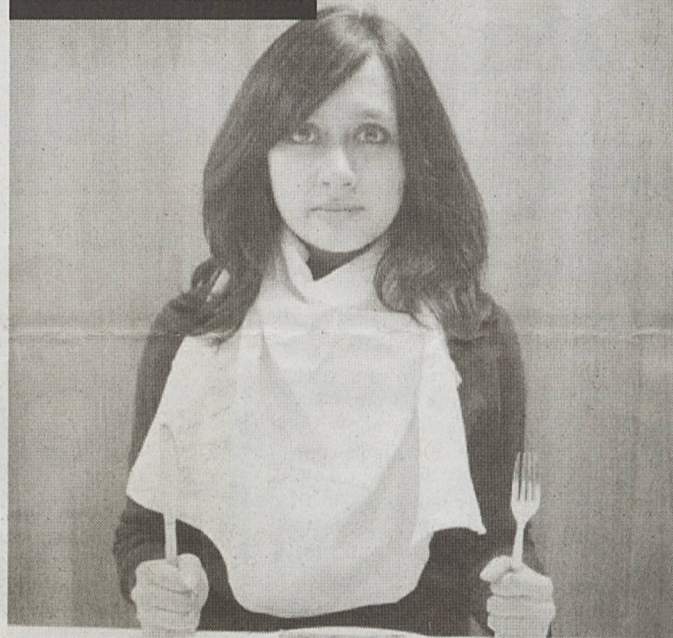


Sir Peter Stothard visits LSE
Photo: Simon Wang



Flickr user limonada

2008/2009 edition cover
Website: www.lsemuse.co.uk



The Muse

Listings: This week around campus

TUESDAY 25 NOV 2008

Event: Pub Quiz
Society: LSESU CU
When: Tuesday, November 25, 2008 7pm-10pm
Where: Penderel's Oak Pub, High Holborn
Description: Come and get dinner with us, compete in a pub quiz and hear Andy Haslam talk on "Imagine there's no heaven..." - a look at a world without God.
Extra: Penderel's Oak is located at 283 High Holborn - less than a 10 min walk from LSE's campus.

WEDNESDAY 26 NOV 2008

Event: Public Lecture with Professor Robert J. Shiller
When: Wednesday, 26 November, 2008 4pm-5:30pm
Where: Old Theatre, Old Building
Description: Bubbles in the stock market and the housing market are the cause of a financial crisis that is wreaking havoc around the world. The bubbles in turn are

caused, at their core, by popular misunderstandings
Tickets: This event is free and open to all with no ticket required. Entry is on a first come, first served basis.

Event: Social Policy in Film
Society: Social Policy Society
When: Wednesday, November 26, 2008 6:30pm-8:30pm
Where: D311
Description: LSESU's Social Policy Society would like to invite for the policy-related event. Do not hesitate to drop by and watch the movie *L'Enfant* (The Child), by Jean-Pierre Dardenne and Luc Dardenne.

Event: Baltic Movie Night
Society: Baltic Society
When: Wednesday, November 26, 2008 7pm-9:30pm
Where: D703
Description: LSESU Baltic Society invites you and your friends to the first Baltic Movie Night which will be screening *The Singing Revolution*, a film by

James Tusty and Maureen Castle Tusty.

THURSDAY 27 NOV 2008

Event: Life Drawing Session
Society: Visual Arts Society
When: Every Thursday, 7pm-9pm
Where: Z329
Description: From beginner to advanced artists, everyone is welcomed. Price £3 for members; £4 for non-members. Basic materials provided.

Event: Games Session
Society: Intellectual Games Society
When: Thursday, November 27, 2008 6pm-9pm
Where: Z225
Description: Everyone welcome to come along for another fun evening; feel free to bring friends and/or games.

FRIDAY 27 NOV 2008

Event: LSE Microfinance Fund meeting!

Society: Microfinance Society
When: Friday, November 28, 2008 5pm-6pm
Where: D106

Description: Want to find out more about microfinance? Interested in being on the committee of LSE's new student-run microfinance fund? Come to our meeting and find out how you can get involved in not just learning about microfinance, but doing it yourself!

Event: Film: *Rescue Dawn*
Society: Film Society
When: Friday, November 28, 2008 7pm-9:30pm
Where: D106
Description: Want to find out more about microfinance? Interested in being on the committee of LSE's new st

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

Event: Christmas Appeal
Society: Catholic Society
When: Monday/Tuesday/Thursday No-

vember 24/25/27 11am-3pm
Where: CathSoc Booth, Houghton Street
Description: Free cookies and cakes. Support fundraising for simple Christmas gifts (socks and gloves) for the less fortunate (elderly, homeless and unemployed migrants) in London. Donations of clean, used clothing and accessories (gloves, scarves, hats etc) also welcome.

Event: FREE Lunchtime Talk
Society: Christian Society
When: All week
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 1-2pm. Thursday 12-1
Where: Underground Bar
Description: Monday - Free to believe? Tuesday - Free to think? Wednesday - Free to choose? Thursday - Free from suffering? Friday - Free from death? Talks by Michael Ots, www.motsy.org.
Extra: Free pizza will be provided at each talk. We welcome people from all types of religious or atheist backgrounds to attend our events!

Zombie Thirds: Unbeaten At Home (Well, until Wednesday...)

Tania Barnes

The vertically challenged Netball 3rds (with an average height of about 5'4") have had a roller-coaster of a season so far, with ups and downs, twists and turns on court. But considering the ULU authorities 'forgot' to relegate us....we've done a bloody good job!

There's been a few downs - not to mention an epic journey to Uxbridge which resulted in a bit of a thrashing (and we're not talking just about the score!). To quote Miss Mok, "some troll stamped on my foot in Zoo bar and then some Brunel troll stamped on it again", so she was immobilised and forced to play standing still! While poor Wendy got shin splints and had to go off. So we were playing with five players! But hey, we never gave up and played to the end!

Umpires have been a particularly amusing feature of the season so far. With St Barts 2nds producing a crazy male Rasta who continued to tell us to 'follow me sister' - where too, we're still unsure. St George's VI team produced the laziest umpire, who would half heartedly blow her whistle five seconds after an offence had occurred and mumble something incomprehensible.

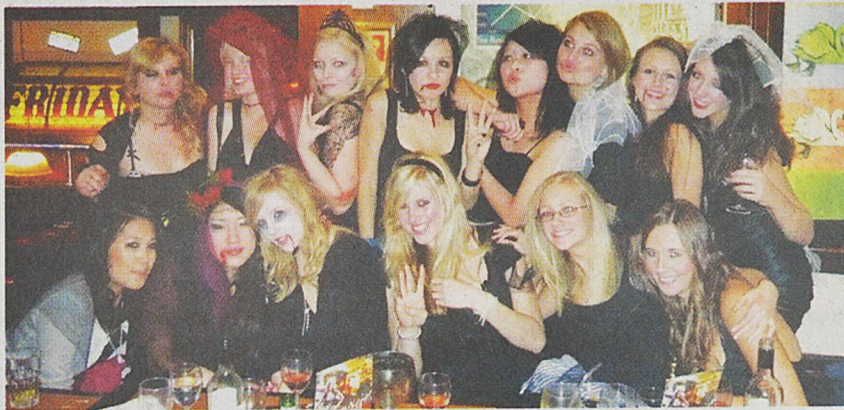
After a shaky start to the season we 3rds, led by our Geordie captain, pulled together to produce

some impressive netball, beating Gimperial, Royally Aggressive Holloway, the timid and confused St Georges and our highlight - Queen Mary 2nds.

Having just a week before lost to Queen Mary 2nds away by a devastating 35-12, not surprisingly they arrived at the fortress of Berrylands somewhat smug and victorious. But their tyrant of a captain was caught out. Despite her bullying cries of "Forward! Pause! Drive!", "Think, Charge!", "Don't apologise - Sort it out!" - we were on fire. "You're a lot better than last time," the confused goal shooter confessed.

Yes, that's right, Wendy the Machine, fuelled by Guinness and fags, with her legs mummified in bandages, dominated centre court. Little Popovic produced some fiery Serbian Wodka and proved she was a serious defender. Despite her tiny height (she really is small!) she was jumping like a salmon (if you think salmon can't jump talk to STK). Captain Hayley kicked some poly ass, grabbing the rebounds and motivating the team with some Geordie slang.

Miss Mok and Shing-a-ling-a-ling danced around court with 'Strictly' perfect feet and speedy manoeuvres, while our former goalkeeper Nat 'There's always a player free!' Phillips shot hoops like an NBA pro. Finally a yummy red round cheese proved to be the key to our success and formed the backbone of our team that day.... The FC love Babybel!! (note the cheddar alternative is not worth trying). After a battle of pivots



and passes we won 28-27 and celebrated all over Zoo while Queen Mary got a spanking from their captain.

Other members of the 3rd team also need a mention. Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No its mmmmmmmidi, Indidi, or just Didi, our graceful Wing Defence with the perplexing name. For Ultimate semi circle security, Dani's your girl. After finally seeing the light this year she left Tennis to take part in a real sport (no its not a hobby!) Ex-Captain Coker, previously a wing defence had been hiding some divine shooting talent for the last two years. But we found it and she's our top scorer! Then there's little Katy, always cheerful and de-

termined, especially when dressed as a Zombie! And hats off to our cheerleaders, Youngum and Jess though unable to play due to weak ankles and an issue with a moonboot, the girls are still fundamental to the team.

Last, but certainly not least, lets not forget our Club Captain Lauren or should we say Essex's finest mouth (ask Big Fat Jacquesy)! On court Lauren has been formally warned and threatened to be sent off twice for her attitude and chat (I didn't even know you could be sent off in netball?) and off court Lauren is wanted by the Camden Police for stealing chip & pin machines from various American Diners. What a role model she is for



Photos
Tania Barnes

this years freshers.

Its been a great season so far, and it's not over yet! The 3rds are getting better and better every game - so watch out.

Taking care of business

Robin Low
Sports Editor

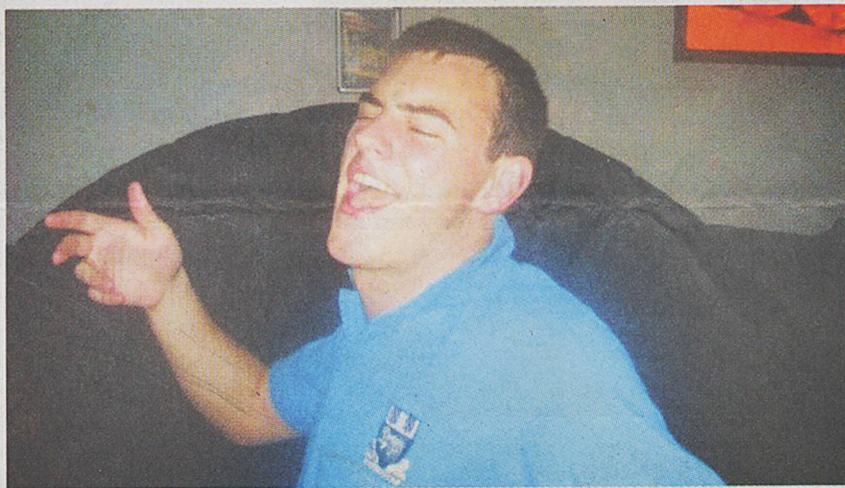
LSE 1s 5
LSE 2s 1

Saturday saw the 1st XI's first derby game of the season. These are always tricky games, particularly as the 1st team have everything to lose, and their opposition have everything to gain from the encounter. Having played in five derbies, on both sides, I understood the passions that the 2nd and 3rd teams have when playing the 1st XI, and the nervous nature with which the 1st team approach the game. These have always been close matches, where there has been only one goal between the teams.

Coming into the game the 1st XI were fully aware of what to expect, as captain Healy had called a team meeting to prepare for the match. Many would mock such a decision in university football, but perhaps this was the key to the success that followed. Indeed, it was Benjamin Franklin who said that if you 'fail to prepare, you prepare to fail'.

The preparation for the game was disrupted by former captain Michael Maynard (second longest in the showers) and Gurpreet Dhami pulling out as a result of injury. This gave Dave Hughes a chance to make his full debut, a difficult task with such a derby, but he gave a quality performance, recreating what we have seen him do in training since he came back from injury. His partner was one of the few ever-present in the team, Alex Casimo, who is increasingly becoming crucial to the team's success as he adapts his game to suit the ULU Premier Division.

The 1st XI have built their success so far on the quality of their defence, having conceded no goals from open play, just from set pieces. It was a shock to the team



Above: Ed Healy skanks out (Robin Low); Below: Mighty 1sts on the lash (Robin Low)

when the 2nd XI took the lead within the first five minutes, but it was no surprise that it came from a set piece.

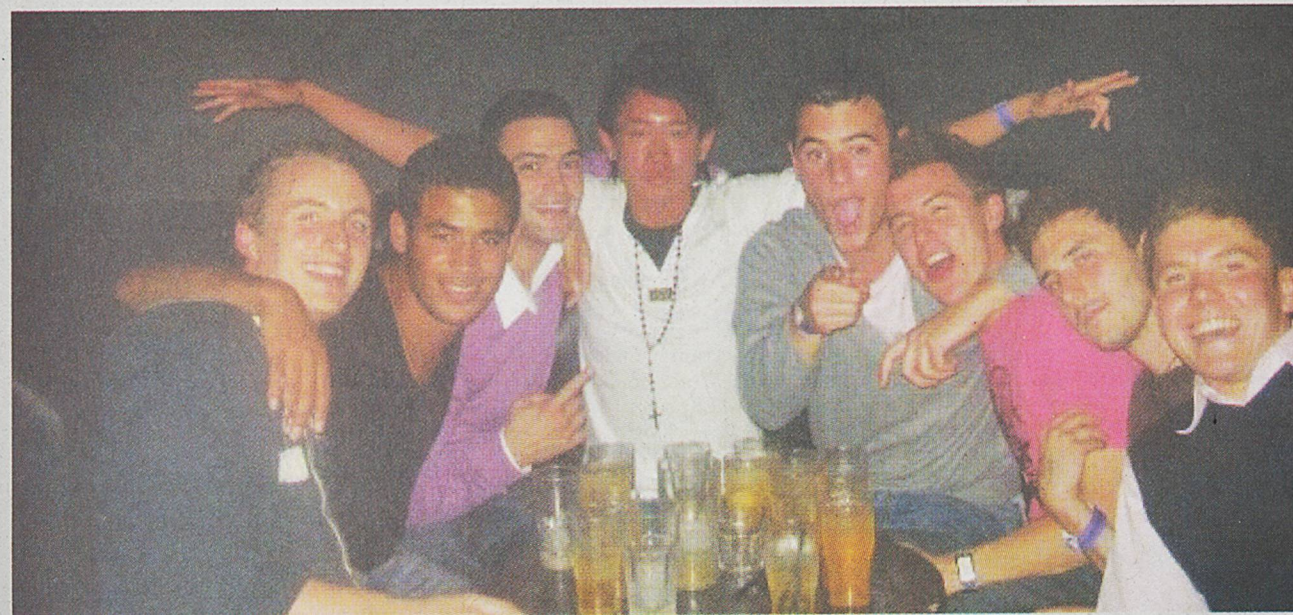
That was the kick up the arse that the 1st XI required. All of the nerves were removed from the system, and it was time to play some of the football that has left them successful in all the competitions they are competing in. In truth the two goals which gave the lead to the 1st XI were somewhat fortunate. The first was an own goal, the second scored directly from a corner by Jo Knoertzer.

It is true, however, that you create your own luck, and the quality of the next two goals was undoubted. Brazilian striker Tiago netted for the second time in consecutive games to end the move of the match. The ball was passed across the defence, down the right wing, back into the middle of the pitch, and then down the left for Big Fat Jacquesy to whip in. The fourth goal was taken calmly by Dicky Roberts, who slotted coolly past the flailing keeper with his right foot following a pin point through

ball from Knoertzer.

Half time came and went with Edward 'Methuselah' Healy calling for a victory by ten goals. This was to be unrealistic as the game was already won, although Dicky Roberts did add to his tally, which sees him top of LSE's goalscoring charts, by slotting home a goal at the end of the match after a sublime through ball from Casimo. The 2nd XI did have their chances, and on another day the game might have followed the manner of the previous derby encounters. It wasn't to be, and the 1st XI see themselves in third place in the league, one win away from the top spot.

In the past three matches the 1st XI have scored 14 goals and conceded only four. Not since the last time LSE won the league have the strikers been so prolific and the defence so watertight. There is a lot of promise for silverware to come from one or more of the competitions the 1st XI is entered in, however there are more pressing issues, such as the next derby game against the 3rd XI this coming Saturday.



Results

Netball
1s 19-23 RUMS
1s 56-11 University of Sussex
2s 35-25 St George's 2s
2s 28-21 Queen Mary 2s
4s 27-8 St Georges Medics
5s 12-6 7s

Tennis
1st 10-0 UCL 2s
2s 2-8 Imperial 1s

Hockey
2s Hockey 7-0 St Bart's

Squash
LSE 1s 4-1 UCL 2s

Women's Rugby
1s 2-7 Royal Holloway 1s
2s 5-34 Brunel 3rds

Football
LSE 1s 5-1 LSE 2s
LSE 1s 2-1 Kingston 1s
LSE 2s 2-3 Canterbury Christchurch 3s
LSE 3s 1-2 Holloway 2s
LSE 3s 0-2 Chichester 4s
LSE 4s 0-3 RUMS 2s
LSE 4s 3-1 King's Medics 3s
LSE 5s 1-0 RUMS 2s
LSE 5s 4-4 Holloway 4s
LSE 6s 2-2 KCL 4s
LSE 6s 3-1 KCL 5s
LSE 7s 0-0 Queen Mary 5s
LSE 7s 4-2 KCL 5s

Badminton
Women's 1s 8-0 Imperial Medics 1s

Table Tennis
Men's 1s 4-13 Middlesex University.
Men's 2s 17-0 Buckinghamshire New University
Women's 1s team 2-3 Middlesex University.

It's a life of two halves

Philosophical Barry



I received an e-mail this week from a very wise old lady by the name of Dotty Meads. Dear old Dotty has been a long time devotee of all things Beaver and complained that recently its taste has turned a tad sour. She blamed the negative style of reporting that some journo's have adopted in their pursuit of that juicy scoop. While it was levelled that there is no point shouting about your car when the engine is running smoothly, her retort was to point out that "you catch more wasps with honey than vinegar". Touché.

Age is usually a good indicator of what type of views an individual holds with regard to their own sport in particular, and competition in general. How often do we hear such mundane cliches as 'that's not in the spirit of the game' coming from the likes of John Motson and Brian Moore. I have to ask: what is wrong with a little bit of cheating here and there? If you need further persuasion post the this article,



Flickr user d@wn

just add Alan-from-Kings on facebook and ask him for clarification.

So there is often a schism between the views held by sporting veterans and their youthful and exuberant counterparts. Anyone who has played or watched a ULU football match will be familiar with Michael Carrigan, the referee who has witnessed an inordinate amount of LSE derbies as well as two world wars. The same man who last year denied a penalty to Rob Low and his 2nd team as they dominated the 1st team claiming that

despite it "being a spot kick under the laws of the game" he couldn't give it as it was "not the morally correct decision" Nowadays there appears to be no room for such sentiments, however I think we'll let him off seeing as he has the strength and fortitude to run for ninety minutes, twice a week, even though he was born almost a century ago.

When expert purveyors of the dark arts like Richie McCaw and Cristiano Ronaldo are hailed as the best players in their respective fields, it seems to sug-

gest that longstanding moral barriers to gamesmanship both inside and outside the game have begun thaw. Changes like this at the top have trickled down to the amateur game, recent cases in point being Kings' use of an alumni to referee a 1st team rugby clash (hats off to the poly bastards) or the almost ubiquitous use of 'ringers' in ULU and BUCS football matches, although both make for far more interesting contests with injuries and goals galore.

One of Aristotle's key ideas is that the

young must undergo a strict inculcation of moral standards by those who have attained enlightenment. This is a prerequisite for the maintenance of a society founded on just principles. When people like Chopper Harris, a name coined from his penchant for a meaty challenge, are moaning about diving one can't help but notice the scent of hypocrisy in the air. At least the top figures in this year's AU have performed a remarkable job in showing the way for our more green members; Jacko's first night backdoor antics, De-la-Hunt's club dinner performance, Lizzie Bacon, Ed and Brian Healy's Clausewitzesque approach to football and the girls from Hockey appearing pissed in every setting imaginable. The only blot on this outstanding record being the spectacular decline of the holder of the Three Tuns award for laddsy behaviour, Louis De-ste-Croix.

Returning to the issue of age, have those young pretenders, currently plying their trade on fields and in stadia across the world, taken sport irrevocably away from the path that was intended by the Olympians, Ellis-Webb and the thugs who used to use a pig's bladder as an excuse to pillage a rival village? The answer is probably yes, but this author is of the firm view that it is not such a bad thing. It is easy to confuse cheating with innovation, and who doesn't want to see guys charged to the max on steroids trying to rip each other's throats out?

In sum, it's not always the case that those above you know best, Rob Low being a perfect example. As usual please feel free to contact me if you think diving should actually be left to Tom Daley or reckon that playing the ball on the ground is the realm of wine sipping men in the south of France, at the normal e-mail.

philosophicalbarry
@thebeaveronline.co.uk

In focus

Yoga Bonito

Robin Low
Sports Editor

When my co-editor gleefully informed me that I would be taking part in a yoga session as part of our effort to highlight those AU clubs that don't quite get the same press as others, I didn't know how to take the news. In my mind yoga was a bit of stretching, pulling out a few poses, and chilling out. I turned up to an intermediate session on Thursday, deeming my exploits in LSE's premier football team as enough to allow me to skip the beginners stage.

The first thing I noticed was that every single woman there was fit. This is where they've been hiding. Yoga was already getting off to a good start, and the instructor hadn't even arrived yet! The dynamic and charismatic Jacqui did soon arrive though to take the session, and was extremely helpful as it soon transpired I was like a fish out of water.

The session started off as I had expected, with breathing and stretching. Then it started to get a bit harder. There were press ups, balancing in awkward positions, and I soon found myself in positions I wasn't sure were possible. Soon enough I was working up quite a sweat. What I thought

session I felt completely relaxed, and remarkably happy. I will definitely be going back for another session, and keeping up with it. For me personally I think it would be perfect to add to my flexibility as a footballer, and is another way to keep yourself fit without having to complete shuttle runs

Afterwards I felt completely relaxed, and remarkably happy

at my captain's behest.

Whether you play rugby, football, hockey, or basketball this will only benefit your game come Wednesday or Saturday. If you don't like playing those sports games, and the idea of monotonously running in the gym makes you cry a little, then this is the perfect way to keep yourself fit, healthy, supple, and flexible. Big thumbs up from Beaver Sports.

If you would like to take part in the yoga at LSE please contact d.shorrt@lse.ac.uk. Currently these are the sessions that take place at LSE:

Monday 5:30-7 - Beginners Hatha yoga with Meghan badminton court, Old Building

Tuesday 2:00-3 - Ashtanga yoga with Jaqui badminton court, Old Building

Tuesday 6:00 - 7:30 - Intermediate Hatha yoga with Adam Parish Hall

Thursday 5:30-7 - Dynamic yoga (improvers/intermediate) with Jaqui badminton court, Old Building

Next Week
Samurai Keeping does Capoeira!



Photos Erik Lang

Gamblers Anon.

As a service aimed to provide betting tips for you we seem to have been failing somewhat spectacularly, a point which will be further underlined when you find out how wrong our predictions were this week. We expected the Rocket to beat Stephen Hendry 4-2, yet the Scot took an early lead, forcing Ronnie to fight back to 3-3. We were only marginally wrong with our NBA bet. Sam was sure, given his knowledge of the NBA, that the LA Clippers were going to beat the San Antonio Spurs, yet they lost by 3 points. Nice one Sam!

The Lowster's mother is an avid Strictly Come Dancing fan, and she correctly predicted the withdrawal of John Sergeant from the show, to leave Austin Healy and Christine Bleakley in the dance off. We got it horrifically wrong again with Jodie Kidd and Lisa Snowdon having a very sexy dance off leaving us with a frown Len Goodman would be proud of.

Andrew Simpson sent a private email to the sports desk this week suggesting that we should switch over to ITV and watch X Factor. He's been watching every week as he endlessly waits for the elusive call up to return to Hollywood. Simpo informs us that, despite an outstanding performance last night in Take That week, Alexandra Burke will be the next contestant eliminated from the singing competition, with JLS surviving the cut once again. On the strength of this former child star's claims we will place £10 on this.

Back to football, as seemingly our knowledge outside the game is letting us down, we expect Liverpool to win 3-1 against Marseille, in a game which will put them top of their Champion's League group, and expect a good return from our £5 investment on this. Our final £5 bet is on England's 5th ODI against India, where we expect KP to be England's top batsman as he looks to resuscitate the ailing English team in preparation for the test series against the Indians, and in the longer term as preparation for the Ashes.

Fingers crossed we show some return on this weeks investment. Perhaps the best tip we could give would be to bet on the opposite of what we suggest.

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Sport

Yoga at LSE
Beaver Sports Editor
stretches his stuff

<< Page 23

A rare victory for English rugby



Photo
Tom Jackson

Tom Jackson
England rugby captain

England - 44 (Try scorers: Bocca, Will Wilson, Stig, Ben etc...)
Rest of the World - 5 (Try scorer: Piers [and he's English])

They steal and ravish our wives (Gary Slime). They steal our jobs (Slime). But on a balmy November evening at the Fortress Berrylands, Johnny Foreigner could not steal our sporting pride. Berrylands remains an English colonial stronghold - all is well.

It all started off so promising for the Rest of the World vagabonds. A massive squad was assembled: led by the indomitable Tom 'Fattest Man at LSE' Davies and bolstered by some curiously English talent,

RoW hopes were high. Indeed, thanks to a rather canny shotgun earlier in the week, the Rest of the World looked the part too; bedecked as they were in the 1XV's natty skintight apparel while England had to make do with their own marginally less fashionable rainbow of colours. With the ferocious Jackarius in the centre waiting to demolish all comers, LSERFC's very own Nigerian Ne-Yo providing the raw pace on the wing, and Felix and his piratical thirds ably filling any gaps, RoW were certain to be no pushovers.

A number of factors contrived against them. First, never underestimate an Englishman's determination to succeed for his country. After their Captain Fantastic had whipped them up into a patriotic frenzy in the changing rooms, the England boys treated the onlooking throng to a storming a cappella rendition of God Save the

Queen. Women swooned; footballers observed in awe; foreigners shook with fear and English hearts swelled with pride. From then on the result was only going one way.

But there was more. Second, never underestimate an Englishman's determination to impress in front of a cheering crowd of ladies. While Boca and Will 'Inbreeder' Wilson consistently turn in impressive performances on a Wednesday, never have we seen them quite so determined to break the line, make that speculative dart or eviscerate their opposite number in the tackle. Thus we were treated to a quite magnificent centre partnership, creating havoc in the RoW backline at will while always maintaining a perfectly styled hairdo and a cheeky grin for the admiring masses. Show-offs.

Third and finally, never underestimate

the raw power of an Englishman's thighs. We English didn't build a global empire solely down to our witty banter and repartee with the local tribeswomen - we have serious spunk. On Wednesday evening we gave those pesky foreigners a jolly good taste of it. RoW scrums retreated at a rate of knots not seen since the Frenchies at Waterloo, unable to resist the power and technique of the Murderer and the Cage at prop, nor the hooking master class from Mr Robinson.

The scrum aside, the game itself was certainly less one-sided than the scoreline suggests. Both teams approached the match clearly aiming for bragging rights and the chance to settle old scores, which was reflected in the ferocity of the early challenges and the presence of the pitch side ambulance. The latter very nearly got an early outing, with Reesy going head to

head with Ne-Yo straight into the floodlights. Only a late reprieve from the dog-kicker prevented a rather nasty accident. Other notable incidents included referee-for-the-day Matty Winter losing his whistle - which when combined with a broken jaw doesn't make for the most effective communicator - and a 90m sprint under the posts for Mr Studd. Some say his arms have their own gravitational force. Others say that he won't stop until he's set a rugby guy up with Swirski's sister. All we know is he's called The Stig.

All in all, a fantastic spectacle to echo in the floodlit era of rugby at Berrylands. A big thank you to all who came down to watch and created such a great atmosphere - even the footballers; Walker for making a rather decent fist of refereeing; and all those who made the effort to play. Roll on next year!

Saucy soccerettes get spanked

Alice Pelton

LSE 1
RUMs 5

After last week's match, the women's football team were left feeling distinctly average. Fresh from trouncing Imperial, LSE ladies faced RUMs, in what was to be a six goal thriller. Unfortunately we lost, and frankly, they embarrassed us. I don't want to sound like a sore loser, but I feel like I need to explain some of the reasons as to why we were beaten 5-1 by a semi-skilled horde of whingeing medics.

First off, the ref was shagging the captain of their team. After the match we saw the pair fraternising in what can only be described as 'a relationship manner', and this was going to inevitably alter several of the (appalling) decisions the ref made against us. Notable dubious decisions included repeatedly accusing me of fouling their left back - it's hardly my fault if she decides to spontaneously belly-flop onto the pitch.

I screamed at him so hard ('she fell over her own feet!') that the ref's little face crumpled, and he momentarily stood on the pitch looking quite scared. Luckily, before he reached for a yellow card, As-

trid calmed me down, but I couldn't resist telling him he needed to go to Specsavers. Several hand balls went mysteriously unnoticed, the off-side rule lay dormant, and the white lines bordering the pitch were open to his interpretation. Also the ref had an annoying habit of spontaneously shouting 'play on' for absolutely no bloody reason.

Our coach John 'voiced his concerns' with the aforementioned inaccuracies and got so pissed off that the ref had to come over to him at half time, to tell him he had 'crossed the line' and had to 'calm down'. John sadly fell into a stunned silence for the second half, piping up only to abuse the players on the other team. RUMs did provide us with some amusing soundbites, notably when one of them accused me of 'obstruction!' They were one of those annoying teams who shout really girly things in pathetic voices, and all scream when they score - half of them needed to get off that pitch and put their netball skirts on.

Admittedly we lost it in the first half, but came out fighting in the second. Precious scored, and there was a glimmer of hope, as we were only 3-1 down. Special mention to Abi who battled away at right back, and Laura, who although being ill, came on and made a big difference. Astrid and Luna - 'you're going down Hawaii

style' - Lopez did some sterling work on the left. By the end of the frustrating match Luna was putting slide tackles in all over the place, and Astrid had some good shots on target.

Although we lost, it must be said that the whole team put in a lot of effort and ran around loads - I'm now so stiff that I've spent this week hobbling around.

It seems we lost this match because we had what can be only be described as 'formation issues'. Two crucial players in our midfield, Anna and Alison, were sorely missed, along with our striker Ali - who actually badly broke her finger in the last match. It was one of those matches when it just didn't click, we didn't have our flow or our rhythm. Our tactics may as well have been tic-tacs; they eventually became tasteless and unsatisfactory.

After the match a few of us decided to drown our sorrows in a generic pub on Euston Road. Predictably, 'just a few' turned into 'quite a few', and we all received an email from John a next day simply saying: 'For the second night running I ended up in a bus garage.' Since being coached by John, I've learnt that he has a worrying penchant for falling asleep while drunk on the night bus home.

Furthermore I've learned that he likes to think of himself as a good dancer - if any



Miming: It's for the best (Alice Pelton)

of you witnessed our dance-off in Zoo last Wednesday, you'd agree that it's obvious that without a ball at his feet, the man is useless.

Speaking of last Wednesday, even Thursday's fitness session was cancelled, in anticipation of how battered everyone was going to get. Notable highlights of the night include chanting abuse at the male hockey players on the train and Anna falling off one of the strange grey ball-like seats in Zoo.

If a rom-com was made about the LSE Ladies football team, the last match would have been the part where the main protagonist gets heartbreakingly beaten, and our next match will be the part where 'against all odds' we come back fighting to triumph over evil, and ensue a happy ending. We're facing Strand Poly on our own turf this Sunday, and this one we've got to win. All support is very welcome.



inside

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captains

tara few tells us how to hit the spot
 partB interviews - a sex coach - 4+5

auntie shaw

Dear Auntie Shaw,

I've been at LSE for three years now and am yet to fulfill my desire to get intimate with the course collection. My tutor says I have to, otherwise I'll fail my degree! Help.

3rd year, Anthropology student

Mr. Shaw and I are members of a thriving group of people who get together to copulate in the library. You're welcome to join us. One word of caution - do be careful that you don't get anything stuck in the movable aisles of the archive.

Dear Auntie,

I don't want to have sex because I'm worried my partner won't like my pubic hair. I've had a sheltered life and have never seen anyone else's - how do I know mine is normal?

1st year, History student

I find that most men are just so grateful to be allowed to see that region that they don't care what it looks like! If you're still worried then get along to a garden centre - they have some wonderful examples of topiary.



holli eastman



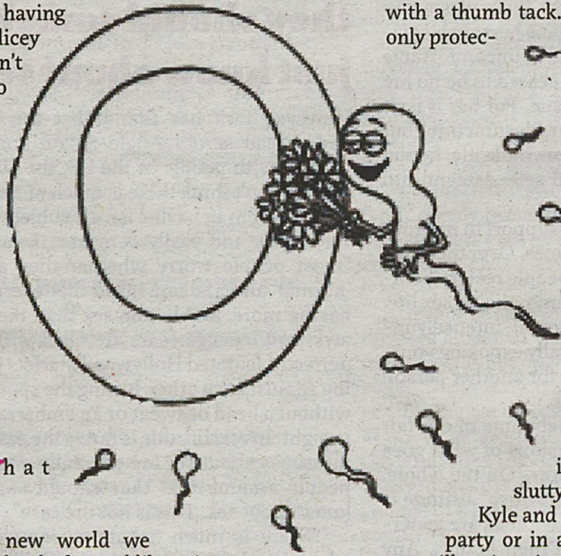
Hello my sweets. For this week's issue we ventured down a slightly less morbid route. Sex. So throughout the next sixteen pages prepared to get all hot and bothered to keep you warm on these cold winter nights. Sex and gender tries to find the location of the female orgasm, and film hassles Hollywood about its lack of contraception, ruddy irresponsible celebrities and their sperm. I enlisted the help of Auntie Shaw this week to help pass on her wealth of worldly knowledge about fornication. Thank you lots to Lois Jeary for her layout genius. Ravi Mistry, boy wonder, made jelly babies do odd things, bringing a whole new meaning to the word sugar daddy and hopefully helping LSE students to learn new ways of achieving the famed 0.6 status this year.



calling the cum shots

lauradeshpande arms herself against the evils of sperm

Sperm is evil. It has the potential to ruin your life in two fairly devastating ways. Firstly, there's unplanned pregnancies; nobody fancies giving birth in their Econ B exam, and abortion is hardly without its medical and emotional complications. Then there's STIs; having mouldy licey bits just isn't hot, not to mention that STDs can kill you.



Unfortunately, sperm is a necessary and unavoidable part of sex, so how can we arm ourselves against it? Condoms are popular; sperm just boings off it like in that Durex ad, and they are ninety-eight per cent safe as long as they don't break and your flatmates haven't been at them with a thumb tack. Not to mention they are the only protection against STIs, so if you move on to another method, both you and your partner need to be tested; gay guys, that includes you. Another popular option is the Pill,

which is ninety-nine per cent effective as long as you remember to take it daily, and you don't go to Fresh, get trashed and sick it up. Long term hormonal methods like the implant and the injection avoid this problem, and make your cervix so hostile sperm run screaming in fear, as well as making periods lighter or non-existent for most women. On top of this there's patches, coils, mini-pills... a world of opportunities. Visit the Sex Ed Stall, on Houghton Street every Wednesday lunchtime during term, for free condoms and information about STIs and contraceptives. Arm yourself against the evils of sperm!

What a brave new world we live in. A land of sexual liberation; where acts you can only dream of are available from millions of different sources, every minute of every day. From the comfort of your laptop to the thrill of another human, you can get your sex kicks from anywhere and everywhere. But there is nothing as naughty, as deeply amusing as what somebody's mate did. Everybody I spoke to today has known somebody who has been sick on a sexual partner. Not in a funny way, not in a 'cute' way - they literally hurled all over their partner halfway through fun times; and thought it would be perfectly acceptable to tell their friends about

it! Not just sick sluts, we're also slutty gossips - thank you Jeremy Kyle and Heat magazine. Be it at a house party or in a shopping centre lift, the millennium is so liberal that these stories are customary for many British teens; and never stop being really, really funny. It's not that I keep sleazy company, but next time your in the pub, turn to the person next to you and say 'Alright? Anybody ever puked on you while you were getting a blowjob?' and see what happens. Ninety-nine per cent of the time they will say no, but ninety-eight per cent of the time they will then tell you a funny story about their mate; often with a guilty, nervous twinkle in there eye. Maybe you'll get lucky and get an even better tale - somebody who shat themselves mid-magic moment, or maybe said their mum's name

as they were going for gold? The way that we share the most private of moments with the wider world is a truly modern phenomenon; it's not that people weren't doing it before, it just that they weren't writing about it on their facebook wall or posting videos on the net. At least for now most people only admit to their friends sexual disaster stories, but the truth seems to be there - everybody is getting it on, even when they have a stomach full of sambucca or an equally repulsive liquid. Maybe it's time to take your friend's lead and share some of your own dirty laundry? Welcome to the next generation of sexual liberation - a time when everybody has a slutty mate, is a slutty mate themselves, and we're not afraid to share it.

sick boy

lizchezbra keeps poor company

say what? some things you never want to hear in bed

What is the spoon for?

Can I go home now?

Oh, oh, oh mother!

Why is it bent?

Don't mind him, he's only watching

Where is it?

Do you normally do that?

It looks, and tastes, like cauliflower

You're definitely in my top 15

You are very, enthusiastic...

That will be £50 thank you

Have you ever done this before?

Well I'm done, good night!

Hello there! Sorry, I was asleep

You are itching me

My ex was way better than that

I think you have lice



sexual healing

holliestman learns about the birds and the bees

Say the words 'sex coach' and an image of an overbearing, sweaty, bald headed man blowing a whistle dangerously close to your ear while you and your partner get it on comes to mind. Tara Few, the self-proclaimed UK Sex Coach, paints a very different picture of her role.

Sex coaching isn't the career which Tara had always had her sights set upon. After gaining an English degree from Cambridge and a Psychology degree from London Guildhall University she journeyed north to Manchester to embark upon a PhD in Gender and Culture studies. It was there that she began to realise the wide range of issues which people encountered when thinking about their sexual identities. Having spent her PhD in-

"most people are convinced that everyone else is having more, and better, sex than they are."

interviewing women about their sexual desires, Tara found that almost all of them were negative and dissatisfied with their own desirability and sexuality. She discovered that many individuals never fully engaged with their sex life, that they themselves never played a role in their own sexual fantasies, and could not imagine that the man, or woman, of their dreams would find them attractive. She thought it was a rather odd situation that people appeared to have "so much self-loathing, feel-

ing not entitled to be sexual and disgust for their bodies!".

And so Tara discovered that there was a gap in the market for a service such as hers. In a society where so many people find it uncomfortable to talk about sex, there also appeared to be no life coach willing to broach the issue. For her it isn't about focusing on a particular 'dysfunction' but looking at how sex fits into their whole life, taking an individual's job, family and self-esteem into account.

Tara views those who seek support to improve the sex they have as the brave ones. Over the years she has discovered that most people resign themselves to a dissatisfying and demoralising sex life. The topic of intercourse is, after all, intensely intimate; during sex you are literally exposing yourself, putting yourself out there for another person to see, warts and all so to speak.

From an early age, the inhabitants of our fair isle are warned against discussions of what goes on behind closed bedroom doors. On the whole, a staunch 'no sex please, we're British' attitude is adopted. On the continent individuals are generally speaking more open with their bodies. Any one who has stumbled upon an Easyjet to Costa Blanca will have encountered the naked breast and banana hammock endowed antics of our continental cousins. Older French women have twice as much sex as their British counterparts.

"people assume that they should somehow just know about sex."

However Tara has found that the problem is widespread across Anglo-Saxon domains, "I've worked with people in the US, the UK and Australia, I don't think there is much of a difference".

Bedroom behavior isn't a subject over which we openly and easily converse. Tara states that "most people worry whether they are sexually 'normal' and are convinced that everyone else is having more, and better, sex than they are". Our awkward teenage years are filled with images of perfectly sculpted Hollywood starlets gently grazing against each other, hitting the spot every time, without a bead of sweat or an embarrassing grunt in sight. In real life this is rarely the case. "Cultural messages about sex are generally unrealistic and people assume that they should somehow just know about sex. This is not the case".

There is much debate surrounding the sex education launched upon the younger generations in schools. Recently the introduction of an injection to reduce the risk of cervical cancer for teenage girls was met with staunch opposition from groups who feared that it would



encourage girls to become sexually active at a younger age. The information you receive is effectively a postcode lottery, and seldom strays far from putting condoms on bananas with one eye shut (my school's attempt to recreate the effect of alcohol on your eyesight). Tara feels that sex education is rarely taught adequately. "Children and teenagers need knowledge and they need to be given the opportunity to discuss emotions, relationships, safe sex and to think about their own sexual boundaries". She disagrees that giving teenagers greater information about sex will increase their promiscuity. "We fail to trust teenagers with sexual knowledge believing that, armed with contraceptive advice, they are sexually unstoppable. Ridiculous!"

Tara feels that there is also a gender gap when

"people worry: do nice girls love sex as much as I do?"

it comes to sex education; "men are taught that they must want sex as often as they can get it and should be able to perform sexually in any situation. Women, on the other hand, are taught to find the emotional connections attributed to intercourse more important than the actual act, and that love and sex should be indistinguishable". When teenage girls are on the brink of puberty they are met with an array of magazines, from J-17 to Sugar, all filled with guidance and advice on how to engage emotionally

and physically with potential bedfellows. The only equivalent for teenage boys is stolen soft porn and Chinese whispers behind the bike shed.

It is easier for women to talk about their sexual anxieties with friends than it is for men. You only have to catch an episode of Sex and the City for thirty seconds to see how bedroom tales are openly spread over a cup of coffee or a cosmopolitan. Tara finds that "many men keep secret their worries and never get the chance to gain perspective by hearing others experiences". Locker room bragging and exaggerated tales of sexual explorations over a pint do not provide men with the same arena for discussion. Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that women are essentially any better at openly discussing sex. Tara has found that both genders conversations about the subject are commonly "characterised by bravado and ruled by fear".

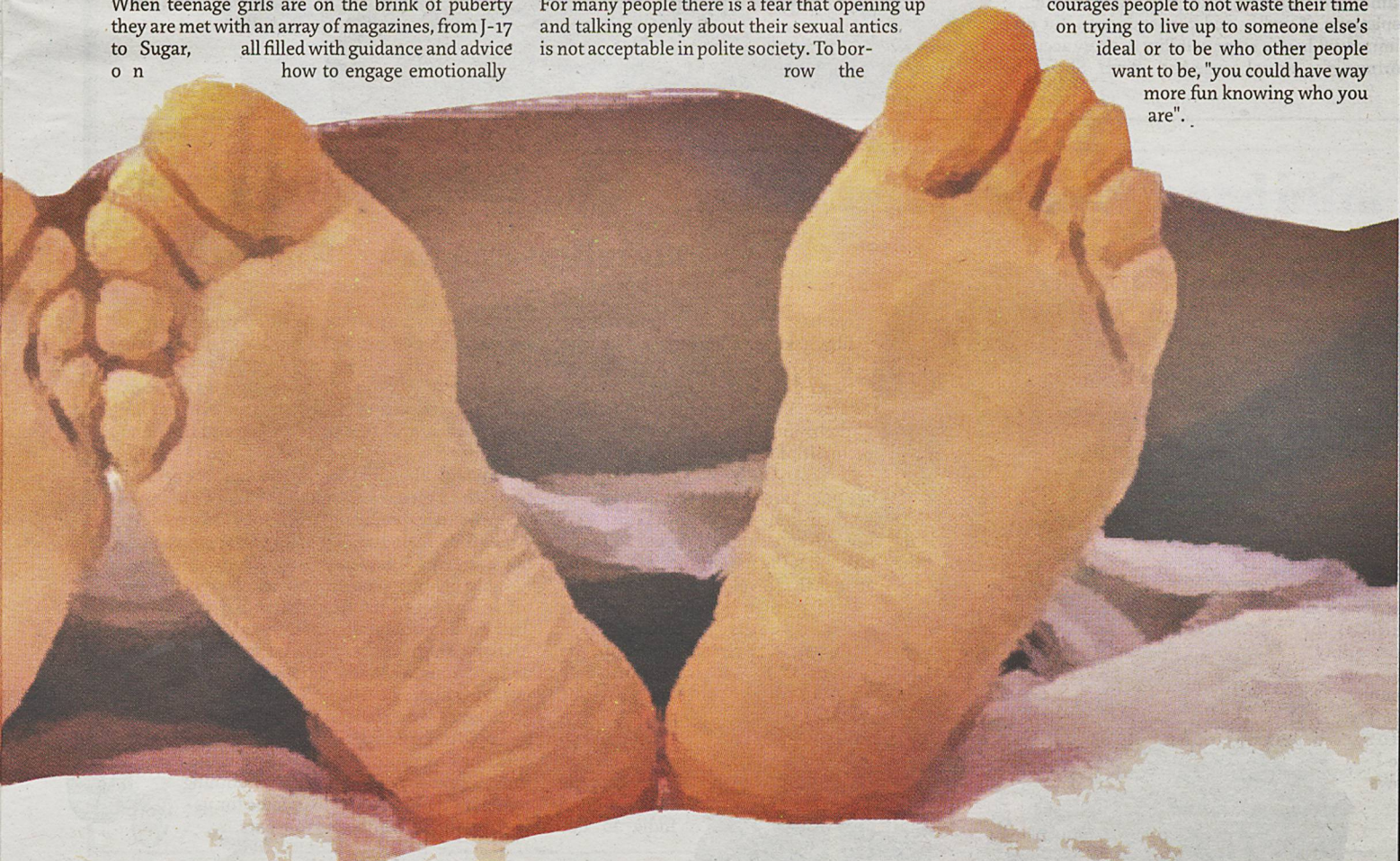
Despite sex playing a role in every individual's life - we ourselves would not be here without it - the subject is not openly discussed enough in society. "Dishonesty, triviality and sniggering about sex does not a discussion make!" exclaims Tara. Many of us are not comfortable with what our sexual desires may say about ourselves. "People worry: do nice girls love sex as much as I do? Am I enough of a man, if I don't want sex all the time?" she divulges. Sex may be plastered all over our city as an acceptable means of marketing, yet it is not an appropriate topic to rise at the breakfast table. For many people there is a fear that opening up and talking openly about their sexual antics is not acceptable in polite society. To borrow the

crude words of nineties one hit wonders The Bloodhound Gang, 'you and me baby ain't nothing but mammals so lets do it like we do on the discovery channel', sex is a natural thing - yet conversing openly about it is still viewed as uncouth.

"dishonesty, triviality and sniggering about sex does not a discussion make!"

Tara doesn't believe that all relationships should be founded upon sex. There needs to be more than bedroom spice to keep a relationship going. "Some people are perfectly happy without sex but with companionship" confesses Tara. "I think a relationship needs intimacy but this need not be sexual - it can be intellectual, physical. As long as it involves sharing and being truly known by your partner, then a relationship does not need sex". I ask her is it better with sex? "I would say yes, as sexual intimacy combines closeness, emotional connection and physical pleasure in a manner that is hard to beat".

Tara's advice is not just useful in the development of a persons sexuality, but helps them to become happy, secure individuals. She encourages people to not waste their time on trying to live up to someone else's ideal or to be who other people want to be, "you could have way more fun knowing who you are".



put a sock on it

trent maynard on why safe sex doesn't fly in Hollywood

A handsome boy walks a beautiful girl up to her front door. He leans in and gives her a kiss, and she kisses back. He brushes his fingers through her hair and she smooths the back of her hand against his bare arm. His hands move down her back and her arms wrap around his neck. She turns, mid-passion, to unlock the door and they fumble into the apartment. Jackets and shoes go flying; buttons come undone and belts are unclasped. Gentle kisses turn into animalistic slurps and chomps, and light caresses turn into writhing and thrusting as they collapse on the couch and their underwear goes flying.

And thus is the picture of sex in Hollywood: it's convenient, it's fun, it's sexy as hell, and it's really, really dangerous. Condoms and dental dams, morning-after pills, gonorrhoea and aids are all marginalised to public service announcements and uncomfortable appointments with the doctor. Hollywood sex is - in reality - sexual russian roulette: sooner or later, somebody is going to get really screwed.

Why have safe-sex practices largely been left out of the big-screen portrayal of sex? Why don't couples pause to put on a condom? Or in the least, use the application of contraception as a part of their foreplay? For the same reason, I suppose, that we see characters drinking champagne and eating venison, but nobody ever has to go to the toilet: this is fantasy we're dealing with, and what isn't sexy isn't included.

Hollywood films are popular for their glamorised visions of life, not for authentic depictions of reality and consequence. But do filmmakers have a responsibility to show accurate portrayals of sexual cause and effect? Should no

condom necessitate having to deal with issues of pregnancy and STDs? And above all, is incorporating safe-sex practices into onscreen portrayals really that undesirable?

Is it really that unsexy? Perhaps we can learn a lesson by looking at a different approach to the motion-picture portrayal of sex: pornography.

In past years, the porn industry was rocked by the spread of AIDs amongst its actors and actresses. The community - a group of individuals who in general have been ostracised and misunderstood by society - joined together to help halt the spread

of the disease. STD screenings are conducted constantly behind the scenes, and onscreen contraceptive devices are now the norm in most pornographic films. People watch porn because they find it sexy. The fact that some sixty billion US dollars are generated by pornography worldwide every year suggests that people still find it sexy, despite the fact that most actors are wearing condoms.

The avoidance of contraception, therefore, likely has less to do with what's actually sexy than it does with the fact that condoms are just too real for Hollywood. Indeed, it may be just as simple as that: they break the romance, they ruin the fantasy. Characters in the movies should be worried about love and romance and life and meaning; they don't have time to deal with our realities. Hollywood films are able to capture our imaginations because they rise above our realities (and in those fantasies we don't get genital warts on the first date).

In the meantime, however, teen pregnancy and STDs abound. Reality really is a scary place. Thank goodness we can run to the cinema and forget all about it.



Image Flickr user: strupac,eva

indian patriotism

malvika saraogi reviews heroes

Heroes (2008), a film by Bollywood director Samir Karnik, is a patriotic part-drama, part-comedy looking at the realities facing the Indian Armed Forces. Starring Salman Khan, Bollywood's notorious bad boy and son of legendary Indian writer Salim Khan, the film uses the background of the Kargil conflict to present its message on the merits of sacrifice for and duty to one's country.

The story follows



two best friends, who are studying filmmaking in university, but who in between partying and chasing after girls end up failing their exams. In response to their failure, their university degree becomes conditional upon making a film.

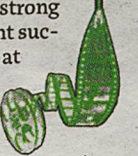
When the friends hit-up a goodbye pool party before they head out to make their film, they begin brainstorming ideas. A muscular partygoer suggests they talk about the importance of the army - an idea that invokes laughter amongst their rich-kid friends - but they create their own amusing twist on the topic: reasons why not to join the army.

They end up taking off on a motorcycle trip around India to de-

liver letters to families of deceased soldiers, filming their experiences as they go along. In learning the stories of the fallen soldiers and through their interactions with the grieving yet proud families, the two young men discover the true value of life and sacrifice, and ultimately the importance of an army life.

Though the military theme has been done to death in recent years, and the film's ending is unfortunately predictable, 'Heroes' successfully strays from melodrama. The big disappointment, however, was Sunny Deol's ridiculous and unbelievable fighting sequence, which depicts the actor as a crippled man capable of beating-up ten 'bad guys' and literally shattering the floor with his fists! This was scene was far too over-the-top and put somewhat of a damper on an otherwise engaging film.

Heroes' true redeeming factor is its strong and uplifting message. While not an outright success, the film captures your attention and - at times - grabs your heart. And, if nothing more, it's definitely a solid choice for using up your Studentbeans vouchers.



the whingers

madehaansari takes a fresh look at les mis

People laugh at 'noble causes' today. Sacrifice is seen as the mark of a doormat and idealism the mark of an idiot. However, a different reality emerges when the lights are dimmed in the Queen's Theatre, and the plush seats melt into the bleakness of life in nineteenth century France. The stage is eloquently simple and overwhelmingly dark; the transitions from prison to factory to the streets of the slums are carried almost entirely by the force of the music and the characters.

Despite the grey grittiness, there is hope. The Bishop, responsible for the protagonist's metamorphosis, is a symbol of beauty in a time of oppressive harshness. A single act of forgiveness and Jean Valjean's destiny is wholly rewritten.

Here, Drew Sarich's flexibility as an actor is incredible. His transformation from savage convict to benevolent mayor and the

epitome of gracious dignity is so complete, it is like watching two different men perform.

Les Misérables serves as a historical record of the kind of passion that made people shrug in the face of death. The fiery students plotting revolution are committed to their dream, body and soul. Their 'little lives' are swept away by something that they scarcely understand. Their critics were right: they were indeed just 'schoolboys', who knew that they would either be immortalised by history, or die in vain.

Yet, they fight on. Just like Éponine will struggle for a love that she always knew was hopeless. Beautiful in her rags, her hard exterior betrays glimpses of fragility and the loneliness in her voice is tangible. At the end of the day, each of the characters is alone, faced with the decision of what to live and die for. Valjean lives for others, and this makes him strong and brave (if a bit self-righteous). The Inspector lives for Duty and the State and this makes him even more self-righteous in a cold, cruel way. Still, there is an integrity in each of their decisions which wins the audience's respect. Then there are others who live simply for the sake of living. The greedy innkeeper and his wife are essential for the credibility of the play as there is nothing they cannot come out of, or get something out of. We all laugh because theirs is a world we can relate to. "Nothing

gets you nothing" - at LSE we would be the first to tell you that.

It's hard to say, sometimes, what is really worth living for. It is even harder to say what is worth dying for. Most individuals would agree that the time of bloody crusades is over. However, there will always be some things that are worth standing up for, whether or not that stand is appreciated. That is the very least the modern cynic can say after the watching spectacular, dramatic struggle of *Les Misérables*.



flickr user: alice dice



flickr user: Face It

voluntaries, the lesson and infra

nizarmanek reviews the royal ballet's triple bill

The Royal Ballet recently saw the world premiere of *Infra* by Wayne McGregor, who became the Royal's Resident Choreographer last year, following his tremendous success with *Chroma*.

Based upon a notion laid down in Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* - "It is important to imagine a language in which our concept 'knowledge' does not exist" - the piece demonstrates McGregor's flair in bridging the classical and modern dance traditions. *Infra* leaves the audience's mouths agape, set to the deep and evocative musical patterns of German minimalist composer Max Richter - perhaps the most haunting of which is 'On the Nature of Daylight'.

The piece is preceded by Glen Tetley's **Voluntaries**. Carefully aligned to Poulenc's dramatic organ concerto, the dancers - including the awesome Marianela Nuñez - brought out the delicate value in each of their movements. By definition, 'voluntaries' are free ranging improvisations. The Latin root of the title signifies both flight and desire, and both

definitions are reflected in the structure and choreography of the ballet.

The Lesson - the central ballet of the trilogy - is Fleming Flindt's adaptation of a play by Romanian-born dramatist Eugene Ionesco. It is unusual for a choreographer to turn the work of a contemporary playwright into a ballet, when traditional focus for well over two centuries has been on such writers as Shakespeare, Cervantes and Pushkin. Set to score by George Delerue, it is a dark portrayal of a ballet master who murders his young pupils. The first time I saw the work, there was a palpable, indeed frightening, sense of violence. In the second instance - in which the cast had been modified - it contrasted with a comedic demeanour on the part of the teacher.

The highly-anticipated *Infra* completes the bill of three conducted by Antonio Pappano - each in distinct contrast to one another. Layered together, they left me stunned by the variety in music and elegance of the dance harmonies.

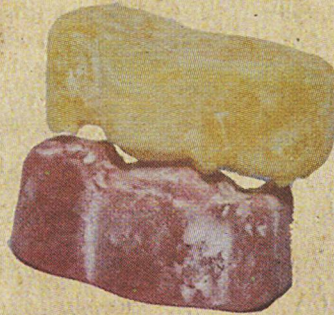
SWEET ECSTASY...

parties take you to the candyshop



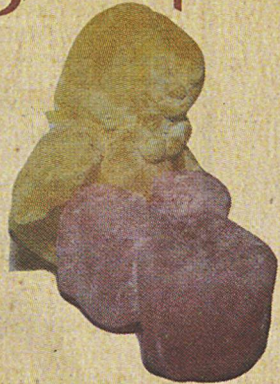
the standard

Sex Education 101, when two people love each other...



the sixty-niner

Fun for both parties.



the backdoor

Available after marriage



the faceplant

Make sure to kiss afterwards.



the chain reaction

They all picked up free condoms from Houghton Street.



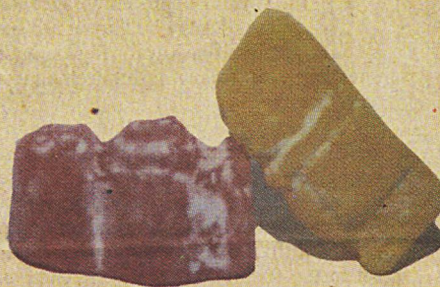
the

Is it in yet?!



the orgy

There ain't no party like a sex party.



the mouth to something

This is very explicit.



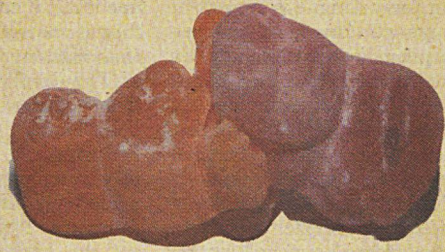
the right an

So, you got the all clear from the clinic, right??



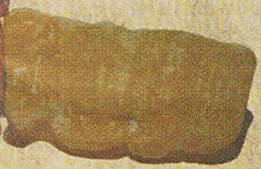
the voyeur

How can we keep it fresh?
Make it a ritual and get people to watch.



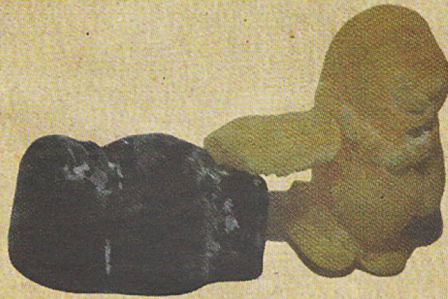
इटोइइटर इइटरइ

This is a bit sticky., probably because
we are made of jelly.



wheelbarrow

our words you never want to
hear



the hand jobby

Is that someone at the door?



इटि बैक अन्ड रिलैक्स

I love you.



the

m the



the "headache"

Not tonight darling.



the LSE

Yes, thats right LSE students don't have sex,
inc ase you didn't know.



music

genre bending

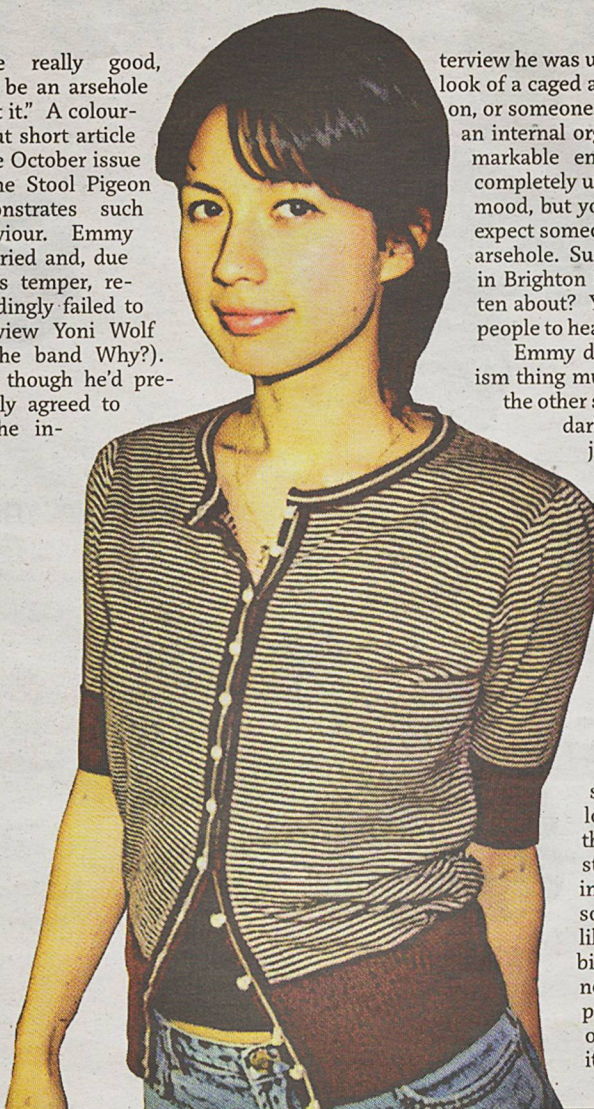
josh heller wins an emmy

Immediately I fail to ingratiate myself with **Emmy the Great**. She is smiling and more than willing to talk, but press-fatigue is evident in her voice as another ignorant journalist snatches her sound and tries to pin it down in the handy box of definitions he brought along. "Anti-Folk was in New York in the nineties, but that, again, doesn't apply anymore. When something happens that is a reaction to something, or is vital and crucial for a moment, it dies out really quickly." Suitably schooled, I avoided further talk of definitions and movements. I had tried to wrestle her music into a little box called folk, but she wrenched it from my grasp and set it free in a Narnia-sized wardrobe named "indie."

The topic of genre rarely fails to irritate musicians, so I threw the letter D in there and asked if Emmy was particularly conscious of gender when she writes music? "Well, all my songs recently have been about a break up, it's from the female perspective." Her songs range from the playfully rude to the sexually explicit. Perhaps people react differently to this frankness because she's a woman? "I have a male friend who said he heard my album and he felt defensive on behalf of men, he said we're not all that bad. No you're not all, but it was just this one person whose character I was trying to assassinate. I found it really interesting that my male friends would listen to my music and get bridled."

Readers of the award-winning music magazine *The Stool Pigeon* may know more about Emmy the Great than they think. For a year now she has been writing sporadically under the dastardly cunning pseudonym of Emmy Moss. Although she harbours no ambitions to be a journalist, "it's really helpful being on the other side. It gives you real insight; I know when not to probe, and I would never be rude to a journalist because so many artists have been rude to me. It's like, how great do you think you are? I'm interviewing you because you're in a really cool band and I think

you're really good, don't be an asshole about it." A colourful but short article in the October issue of *The Stool Pigeon* demonstrates such behaviour. Emmy had tried and, due to his temper, resoundingly failed to interview Yoni Wolf (of the band Why?). Even though he'd previously agreed to do the in-



terview he was unhappy and had, she wrote, "the look of a caged animal about to be experimented on, or someone who is being asked to hand over an internal organ." Although she displays remarkable empathy when discussing it, "I completely understand, he was in a really bad mood, but you can't then be an asshole and expect someone not to write that you were an asshole. Sure you're playing the worst venue in Brighton but surely you want to be written about? You make music surely you want people to hear about it?"

Emmy doesn't want to take the journalism thing much further, "if you go too far to the other side you will never be a Jedi." The dark side? "It's not the dark side it's just the other side. When you're a critic you're always observing and not just enjoying. When you're playing music you don't want to have to see other bands like that you want to be able to interact with them. You have to stop being a critic when you're playing music." With an album out in February, her confidence is only growing. "I started taking responsibility for my songs. I used to be like, the song will come out, I'm not gonna look at it, it's gonna come out and then I'm just gonna play it. Then I started looking at them and saying, I don't like that and putting something else in because I didn't like that that line. Taking responsibility for it." A reputation for spikiness had preceded her, but Emmy proved thoughtful and funny. I for one can't wait for her first album... it'll be great!

2008 mixtape

part 1

we round up the best songs of the year



tv killed the radio star

sachinpatel transmits from planet funk

New York five-piece **TV On The Radio** were in triumphant form at their Shepherd's Bush Empire concert last Wednesday: not even a shortened set and some slightly worn out vocals dampened what was an impressive and engaging performance.

Taking to the stage in front of a bookish yet appreciative crowd, the band immediately launched into fan-favourite *Young Liars*, taken from an early EP of the same name. It was a propulsive rendition, making best use of drummer Jaleel Bunton's considerable talent, and set the tone perfectly for the rest of the set. Most of the bands I'm drawn to in the live environment depend on some kind of sonic warfare in order to captivate the audience, but it was to TV On The Radio's great credit that, mostly, the appeal came instead from a focus on the funk elements of their oeuvre, occasionally interspersed by the howling guitars of Dave Sitek.

With a set that leaned heavily on the more upbeat new album, *Dear Science*, the band held the crowd spellbound - Golden Age was transformed into a hypnotic groove, while Red Dress replaced the brass from the album with virtuosic guitar work of Sitek and Kyp Malone. Throughout, de-facto front-man Tunde Adebimpe (the groom in the latest Anne Hathaway movie) provided much visual spectacle, whether ricocheting across the stage or clapping furiously across Gerard Smith's fluid bass and keyboards. To an extent, this drew attention away from the fact that his usually jaw-dropping vocal range and tone was somewhat lacking in volume - perhaps the rigours of touring have shot it to pieces? Nev-

ertheless, with more of an emphasis on second vocalist Malone's equal talents, the band rattled their way through a few more mellow songs such as *Dirtywhirl*, which featured melodica and beat-boxing, and *Stork & Owl*, which sounded a little sparse, bereft of the saccharine string section that nails it on the album.



Because the band avoided the more sonically dense, aggressive songs from their second album, *Return To Cookie Mountain*, along with much of the material from their debut LP, *Desperate Youth, Bloodthirsty Babes*, the end result sounded exactly like the "carnival" of *Red Dress*, and the gig

emphasised the band's newfound love of funk. At times, and this is entirely in a good way, they sounded like *Kool & The Gang*.

Having closed the main set with the blistering early favourite *Satellite*, the quintet returned for a three-song encore, presumably cut down on account of Tunde's exertions. The first, *Crying*, came across like a lost Prince masterpiece; then, *Let The Devil In* roused the crowd with its thunderous rhythm section. Finally, to end the show, they played a magnificent version of *Staring At The Sun* that saw the floor of the Empire transformed into quite a dancefloor, helped along by strobe lights and, once again, the cracking drumming of Jaleel Bunton. More than anything else, he represents their massive evolution from the early four-track EPs to their current incarnation as a proper band, willing to mess around between songs, and then just as willing to conjure up inventive arrangements of songs that, in the studio, rely on months of production by the knob-twiddling genius of Dave Sitek.

On stage, the renowned producer seems transformed - not at all surly, he bashes his Telecaster with all manner of percussive shakers, often hanging a set of wind chimes from the neck. It's a funny trick, but it's no gimmick. One of Brooklyn's undoubted gems, TV On The Radio are committed album artists, but the levity of their persona circumvents this. If you've not heard any of their material, drop *Golden Age* at a party, and then go and see them live. They only played for an hour and a half but, in that time, they proved how far they have come: from a four-track recorder in a Williamsburg loft to a sell-out carnival at the Shepherd's Bush Empire.

grâce à grace

sachinpatel reviews the diva's new album

One half expected **Grace Jones** to leave the planet at the age of fifty bound for *Venus*, strapped onto the back of a rocket. Instead, the creator of the seminal 1985 album, *Slave To The Rhythm*, has fashioned at the age of sixty an at-times groundbreaking work, though unfortunately it falls short of the high watermark expected of a Jones release. At times she appears to have lost none of her alien, robotic, hyper-sexualised charm as in the growling, snarling 'This Is', and in the worryingly futuristic single 'Corporate Cannibal'; at other moments, the listener is forced to question the point of a vapid reggae-lite aesthetic in light of her previous work.

It is not only the lyrical vacillation between pent-up fury (sample lyric from 'Corporate Cannibal': "I'll consume my consumers, with no sense of humour") and motherly, anecdotal reminiscence, as in 'I'm Crying (Mother's Tears)', which lends *Hurricane* an unfocused, rushed feel. The music too is inconsistent, ranging from the won-

derful industrial dub/trip-hop of 'Devil In My Life' and 'Corporate Cannibal', to the cast-off reggae of 'Well Well Well' and 'Love You To Life'. While



the former category displays everything that one desires from a Grace Jones album - bizarre experimentation, in this case seemingly gratuitous

squalls of industrial noise and warped guitars - the latter category has the air of pointlessness.

If you'd never heard her *Compass Point* albums - notably eighties *Warm Leatherette* - then something like 'Sunset Sunrise' would be a pleasing surprise. Set against the backdrop of her former glories, about half of *Hurricane* sounds strangely anodyne, as if the Freedom Pass-earning Jones has now settled into a semi-retirement of electric blankets and a villa in Spain. This new-found sense of motherhood and familial warmth most definitely does not suit her. As the closer, 'Devil In My Life', ends in a soaring triumph of static and strings, I wish only that the rest of the album could have so readily married a personal, haunting lyrical theme with such a daring sonic palette. An opportunity missed, then, but let's hope that Jones hasn't resigned herself to a boring retirement just yet.

MUSIC

mood food

sophiemarment becomes the food sexpert

If 'aphrodisiac' were to pop up in the word-association game I'll warrant the majority of people would say 'oyster.' Historically an aphrodisiac was a substance used in the belief that it would improve sexual desire and sexual experience, with the word itself deriving from the Greek 'Aphrodite,' the goddess of sensuality.

Medical science has found no grounds to support the theory that certain foods increase sex drive and the belief is widely assigned to the connotations associated with certain foods. Oysters and avocado (the Aztec translation means 'testicle tree') apparently gain their reputation from their shape while tiger's penis is associated with the virility and aggressive nature of the animal from which it is sourced.

Nevertheless, the power of food to influence sexual desire has been documented since the times of the Greeks and Romans, and who are they to be trifled with? Apart from the obvious oysters, caviar and truffles, you can find aphrodisiacal properties in pretty much any food. Given that, here are a few of the lesser known aphrodisiacs to watch out for next time you're going to your partner's for dinner...

Asparagus: three courses of this phallic-shaped vegetable were served to 19th century bridegrooms due to its reputed powers. Watch out though as those who eat a lot of asparagus are also said to have many lovers.

Serving suggestion: steam, cover in butter and serve with hollandaise sauce.

Almonds: one for the girls, as the aroma is said

to arouse female passion. Almonds are also a symbol of fertility.

Serving suggestion: as snacks or flaked in a lamb stew. Marzipan fruit are also a great way of getting your almond intake.

Figs: the seasonal crop was celebrated by the Ancient Greeks in a frenzied copulation ritual. An open fig is meant to reflect the female sex organs. A man eating a fig in front of his lover is meant to be a highly erotic act. Who knew?

Serving suggestion: serve fresh and use your fingers. Oooh la la.



Strawberries: described as 'fruit nipples' this berry is full of antioxidants. As a symbol of the Roman goddess of love, Venus, this is the fruit of love. **Serving suggestion:** always best eaten with your fingers.

Celery: one for the boys. Eaten raw celery is meant to strengthen the male sex organs due to its high mineral composition.

Chilli peppers: a key source of endorphins, chilli quickens the heart rate. Chilli was one of the key ingredients in Moctezuma's pre-harem morning refreshment.

Serving suggestion: any kind of curry, let's be honest.

Chocolate (cacao bean): dubbed 'nourishment of the Gods' by the Aztecs, chocolate can do no wrong. Banned from some monasteries in medieval times and the preferred payment of Aztec prostitutes.

Serving suggestion: dark chocolate dipped strawberries.

Banana: a fairly obvious contender in the phallicly shaped food competition, the banana is full of vitamins which promote the production of sex hormones. In Islamic mythology after Adam and Eve succumbed to the 'apple' they covered themselves with banana leaves rather than the traditional fig leaves.

Serving suggestion: barbecue in tin foil with a slice of Terry's chocolate orange in the middle.

Ginger: stimulates the circulatory system and has a sensual aroma. The French mistress of Louis XV, Madame du Barry served ginger to the King and her other lovers as, she claimed, it led them to a state of total submissiveness.

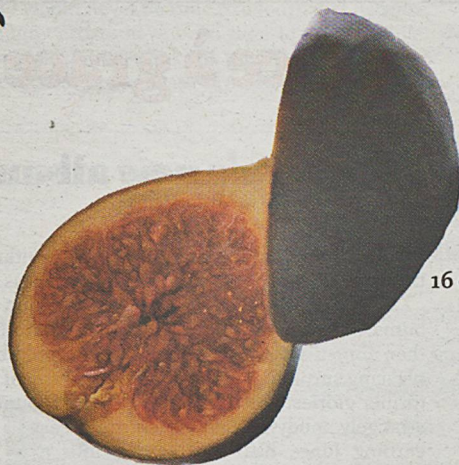
Serving suggestion: grate into a stir-fry.

Coriander: in the tale 'The Arabian nights' a merchant who has been childless for forty years is cured by coriander.

Serving suggestion: sprinkle ground coriander into mashed potato for a really wonderful flavour.

Coffee: caffeine is well known for its stamina-enhancing ability. It stimulates both the body and mind, so drink a little before partaking of an 'all-nighter'!

Wine: wine, like most alcohol, has a relaxing effect which lowers inhibitions. Do remember though that too much wine may make you too drowsy for any after-dinner action!



part B recipe

figgy pudding

easiness - 5/10
tastiness - 6/10
cheapness - 6/10

stuff that goes in it:

4 oz butter, at room temperature
2 eggs
8 fl oz golden syrup
16 oz dried figs, stems removed, chopped finely
1/2 tsp grated lemon peel
8 oz buttermilk
4 oz walnuts, chopped
20 oz all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp baking soda
2 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
1/4 tsp ground nutmeg

1. Grease a 8"x4" soufflé dish and preheat the oven to 170 degrees C, gas mark 3.
2. Cream the butter until light and fluffy.
3. Add the eggs and golden syrup and beat until smooth.
4. Add the figs, lemon peel, buttermilk, and walnuts and combine.
5. In another bowl mix the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Pour the liquid mix into this and fold until combined.
6. Pour the batter into the soufflé dish and place in the oven for 1 hour.
7. Serve with whipped cream.

hot under the collar

cherieleung minds the minors

You might have been mildly troubled (if at all) by the occasional unexpected and excessive sexual depiction on television; that is mainstream television, excluding porn channels or channels that are X-rated by nightfall. But is it possible that there is not enough sex on television? The answer in the shoes of TV producers would be an affirmative yes. The well known fact being: sex sells.

On a mission to clear my TV backlog last Saturday night; I nearly swallowed my marmite toast, unchewed. I had never seen head being given on television before, and certainly would never have expected such an act to be shown on an ITV programme (namely Secret Diary of a Call Girl). Call me old-fashioned but the manner in which the scene was shot, where the man's member was conveniently concealed by Billie Piper's bobbing head, was all a little raunchy for my taste. Admittedly, it was a programme about a high society prostitute and the scene was thrilling. However, even period dramas have been given the makeover, a sexing up. Goodbye, chaste Elizabeth Bennet; hello, virile Henry VIII. The Tudors series was nothing more than Jonathan Rhys Meyers mock copulating in Tudor costume (repeatedly), rather than portraying the life of the indulgent monarch, even with the least bit of accuracy. Perhaps some of you

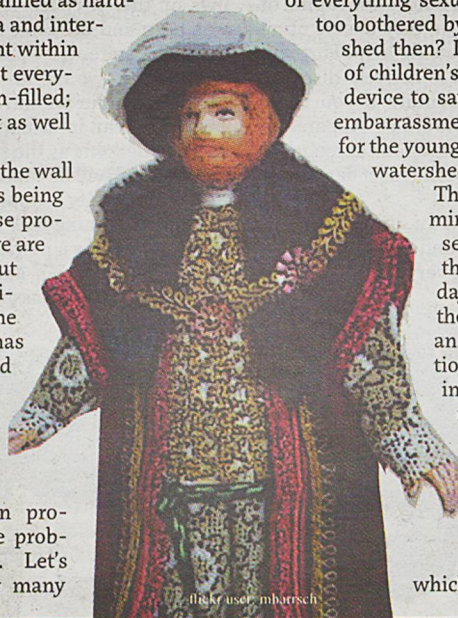
classic literature fanatics would remember the racy adaption of Fanny Hill?

All these programmes are serving up the same marketing proposition - sex. And lots of it. The content can barely be qualified as hardcore. The actual genitalia and intercourse may not be in sight within the TV screen, but almost everything else is. It's so flesh-filled; these programmes might as well be labelled soft porn.

We are all aware that the wall fencing off explicitness is being thrust inwards by these provocative storylines and we are not overly concerned about it. The effortless accessibility of the most extreme forms of pornography has made people accustomed to sexual debauchery. But check this: an Ofcom research found that viewers in general would be less offended by sexual imagery than profanities. So what is the problem then? The minors. Let's be realistic here. How many

of you, hand on heart, learned about the facts of life through sex education in school? I certainly did not because the media taught me everything. Nowadays, teenagers are hurled into this world of everything sexualised and parents are not too bothered by it. So what of the watershed then? Is it the righteous guardian of children's innocence or just merely a device to save parents from speechless embarrassment? Note: there is still hope for the younger viewers, if you substitute watershed with 'Bed Time'.

The point is that TV programming taking the approach of sex is nothing special, and that it happens casually every day, hence our indifference to the graphicness of it all. Such an approach drains the emotional significance and sacred intimacy out of sex, out of the making of love and transforms it into just another marketing device. You may like your TV shows slightly bawdy and risqué, but in the broader sense, this is an attitude which we will all regret.



belly



sex on the brain?

alizehkohari can see more

that. Humbert Humbert is a European with a dubious past and a penchant for young girls - nymphets, he calls them. Nymphet-gazing is his favourite past-time. Nymphet-catching? Even better. And so he proceeds to lay his hands on young Lolita, staying on as a boarder in her mother's home, marrying the oblivious mother, and then plotting her death so that 'ol' Lo' can be left at his disposal. Fate smiles at Humbert: the mother dies of her own accord and he dons the role of a shattered widower and oh-so-concerned step-parent. Lolita, it turns out, isn't as milky-white as you'd imagine either. But that's just Part One. Part Two contains a murder and a ramble through the heartlands of America. Read it. And, in case you're wondering, yes, those scenes with Lolita are described in painstaking, albeit gleeful, detail.

But Lolita's prose, perverse as it appears, is hauntingly beautiful, indescribably so. Again, I say: read it. Moreover, it wears a plumage of metaphors: pluck them out, one by one, and what remains is a story that has little to do with sex. There is a bit in the novel, just two lines, no more, where the barber cutting Humbert's hair admits that he continues to mourn for his long-dead son. The passage is fleeting, scarcely more than a ripple when the novel is viewed as a whole - but Nabokov claims it took him 'a month of work' to fit it in.

Why was that single sentence so important, we wonder - and why ever so difficult to write? Perhaps because (and you and I can only guess) it is in those two lines and many such others speckled throughout the book, cheerfully elusive - that the truth of Lolita lies: there is life outside the story Humbert so meticulously constructs for himself, just as there are worlds outside our own cocoons of existence - worlds with childless barbers and a host of other silently suffering people. No, Lolita is not about sex.

And so, the fact that Lolita is not really Lolita, is actually Dolores, becomes monstrously significant. She isn't merely Humbert's plaything; she is a person in her own right, with a life before Humbert and a life after - though the after is mere flotsam (she dies in childbirth). Humbert wanders tantalisingly near this realization, but veers off:

'In this wrought-iron world of criss-cross cause and effect, could it be that the hidden throbs I stole from them did not affect their future?'

Criss-cross cause and effect - an interesting concept and one that gives rise to another: how many lives do we encounter and irrevocably alter - wittingly or unwittingly - day after mundane day? It might do us well to ease a while on our fixation on all things sex and ponder over that for a bit.

Reviewed Lolita - Vladimir Nabokov

Her name isn't Lolita. It's Dolores, Dolores Haze. (But that's hardly of any consequence. Lolita is what Humbert, the protagonist and her lover, calls her and what the world knows her by. 'Lo. Lee. Ta,' he draws, slowly, sleepily, almost stealthily. And it is as if a creature is stirring from sleep, shrugging its shoulders and stretching its arms in a lazy arc above its head.

She's twelve. He's forty. Lolita is the story of their love affair, if it can be called



literature

journeys

from here to mongolia

alexboyce is genghis khar

Ten thousand miles. A one litre car. Two mechanically inept government and economics students. Yes my friends, it's the Mongol Rally. The idea is simple enough: teams must drive from Hyde Park to Ulan Bator - the capital of Mongolia - via whatever route they decide upon with no support teams or outside help. Furthermore, adequate preparation is actively discouraged. It wouldn't be an adventure if you knew what you were doing now would it? Apparently not. At least that's my reasoning for agreeing to take part in what will likely be the most dangerous expedition of my life.

It began when I received an 'urgent' answer phone message from friend and teammate Joe Conney claiming that something very important needed my attention. Naturally I thought a housemate had died.

However, upon calling him back and being greeted with a shout of "Mongol Rally!", both our fates

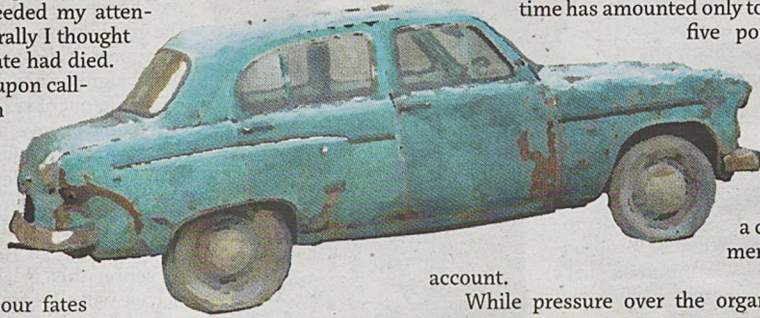
were sealed. The combination of male bravado and youthful optimism lead to the daydream of an idea spiralling completely out of control until we both bit the bullet and spent all our summer earnings on the entry fee. Thus, team Genghis Khar was born and the scale of what was ahead of us became apparent.

Its been two months since the idea was conceived. Thus far we have just about managed to get together an information pack containing such enticing delights as the route (which is incredibly indirect and will be fully explained in a future article), the charity we support, the blurb from the website explaining how incredibly dangerous the rally is as well as a pair of rather dashing pictures of myself and Joe. All this work and time has amounted only to a mighty

five pounds towards our target for charity being met, a grand achievement by any

aspect mounts up, the time to get a car becomes ever closer. Yet again we have no idea what we are doing. For some reason the Mongolian authorities have specified that the car must be ten years old or less. Even the mechanics from my backwater town in Dorset can't come up with anything suitable. And by suitable I mean cheap. Nevertheless, we are confident that come the time when everyone else is pulling their hair out at a mind numbingly boring internship, Genghis Khar will be pulling their hair out over a fire that has spontaneously combusted in the passenger seat, or fighting off a particularly malicious goat. Believe me, nothing is impossible...

We will keep you up to date on our haphazard plans and organisation throughout the course of the year. In my next article I will show you the least inspired route you have ever seen. Believe me, its terrible. If you would like to see our progress on a more regular basis or donate anything to our cause (which would be great!) you can check our website at (http://monglrally09.theadventurists.com/genghis_khar.) As time passes it will hopefully blossom into something wonderful and when the rally begins will give people the chance to keep track of the team and see if we are still alive. Until next time...



account. While pressure over the organisational



think you can do better?

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editors

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We need you. Arts at LSE isn't dead, help us lead the revival. We want to make your juices flow. Be a part of something amazing. You can write once, twice or every week, it's up to you. Come to the office, so we can embrace you into our partb bosom. You'll love it.

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gagging for it?

louisa evans asks if we get it

In case it wasn't already obvious, I'm going to be talking about sex. I spent a few very fascinating hours chatting to different people about their views on sex. Some of the questions I asked were boring, some thought-provoking, all were revealing. So, just how important is sex? The answer: very. But why?

Well, for starters, sex influences us in a whole host of ways. Just about everything in the market these days is sold with sex: half-naked men shaving with the best razor, half naked women putting on the best moisturiser, playing 'footsie' under the table to sell Uncle Ben's express rice, air-fresheners - you name it, sex can sell it. And yes I know, from a practical point men have to be half naked to sell razors, no one shaves fully clothed and you don't exactly moisturise your jeans, but rice? Really? Boy, advertising has come a long way in the last years. So, is it any wonder with sex on every billboard (how could you possibly miss that Erotica Fair poster?), TV and magazine that it has influenced the way we go about our lives? The way we dress, for example; whether to impress boyfriends/girlfriends, the competition or an attempt to snare some unwitting fool on a night out, we keep in mind that at some point that day/night we might, just might, end up naked. Our sex and sexuality can change the way we present ourselves.

A large majority of the girls I spoke to would,



at some stage use sex, the act, as a way of getting what they wanted - dare I say it at work, or even if it is just as 'punishment' for the fact that 'Barry' has yet again gone to play Pro-Evo on the one night that week you have off together. Girls too, would use their femininity as a way of drawing attention to themselves, getting help, whatever. A guy can't resist a damsel in distress, right? However, there does seem to be a blurring of sexual responsibilities. As predicted, outrage from some corners of our community reared its ugly head again at the Miss LSE pageant. It would seem that there is an all too prevalent belief that any hint of cleavage interferes with one's thought process. For a bloke maybe, but boobs don't stop girls from being intelligent, dedicated and thoughtful people. I would be the first to tell you that a girl playing dumb is tragic, in fact I have been told myself if I were a little less opinionated I might get me a man. But femininity is an awesome thing, all the people I 'interviewed' agreed with that. It is, in its own right, a very powerful tool.

Be that as it may, general consensus would have it that in this world of equality, women should be the ones to 'ask guys out'. Yet not many girls would actually be comfortable with doing that. Double standards? or the symptoms of a society that is desperately trying not to be repressed

but having difficulties letting go of its conservative origins?

Protected sex too, it was agreed, is the responsibility of both the guy and the gal. The Sex. Ed. stall on Houghton St. this week gave away free condoms, including some scary looking girl condoms. While I can't see those catching on any time soon, it shouldn't be only the guy thinking about contraceptives. Girls are the ones with the bigger problem if one of those little buggers gets past. So why did so many people scurry past looking the other way?

Despite the fact that sex sells and is consequently just about everywhere, we are still relatively reluctant to talk about sex. I am not suggesting we all share the intimate details of our relationships down the pub nor am I suggesting that religions that prohibit promiscuous sex are wrong, just that maybe we should be a bit more open about sex. Yes it's private, but we all do it at some stage. And maybe being more open about it might make people more aware and less embarrassed about prioritising their sexual health.

The only question we couldn't agree on? Sex vs. food. It's just not fair.



hot or not

katiejaneppeek dresses for herself

Sex sells. Or so the mass media has led us to believe. But is this true in the world of fashion? Are there particular outfits perfect for ensnaring the opposite sex? Leaving Ann Summers costumes out of the equation, it appears unlikely. Men and women seem to have very different perceptions of what's sexy and what's not. And these days, are women overtly dressing to impress men?

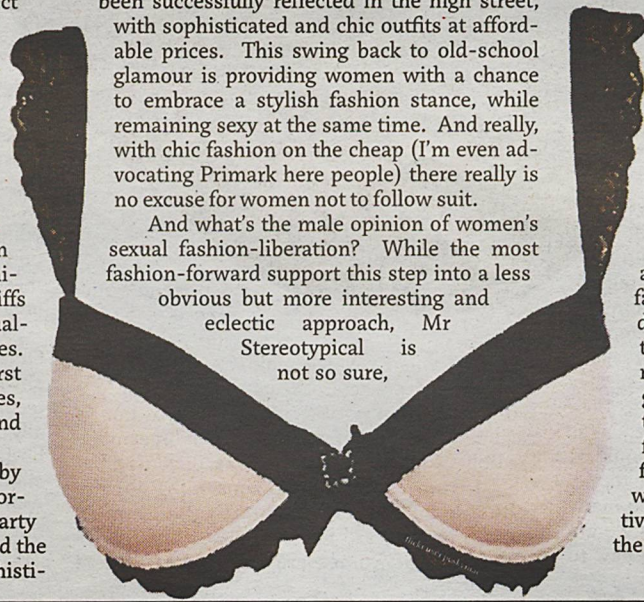
The short answer seems to be 'no', or at least I hope it is. In this day and age, fashion-forward ladies are not only focused on impressing the opposite sex. The era of mini-skirts, cleavage-baring tops and bare midriffs is being eclipsed by a new sense of individuality and personality expressed through clothes.

Women are increasingly dressing first and foremost to please themselves, secondly to impress other women and lastly with men in mind.

This trend is complemented by the Autumn/Winter focus on glamorous dressing - particularly with the party dress time of year fast approaching and the back-to-basics influence of ever-sophisti-

cated black this season. The alluring but refined image of femininity presented on the catwalks has been successfully reflected in the high street, with sophisticated and chic outfits at affordable prices. This swing back to old-school glamour is providing women with a chance to embrace a stylish fashion stance, while remaining sexy at the same time. And really, with chic fashion on the cheap (I'm even advocating Primark here people) there really is no excuse for women not to follow suit.

And what's the male opinion of women's sexual fashion-liberation? While the most fashion-forward support this step into a less obvious but more interesting and eclectic approach, Mr Stereotypical is not so sure,



with this season's trends leaving him in a state of confusion. Gothic style dresses transform a potentially sexy woman into Morticia Adams while coloured tights merely provoke a discomfiting memory of a seven year old child. And don't even mention layered thick-knit cardigans for fear of being scorned: 'You look very bulky today!' I fear that Mr. Stereotypical is adverse to change and maybe he honestly prefers a blatant approach to sex appeal.

Perhaps I am being too optimistic about the present and future of women's fashion, and its capabilities in general. Sex does sell and there will always be the girl in the tight top and short skirt catching every man's eye. But maybe that's the point: that girl is promoting temporary physical attraction whereas the female who dresses for herself is not a mere object but a confident and attractive individual. And so, while sex may sell sex, fashion sells a positive and durable image of femininity - apt for the alpha female of the twenty-first century.



learning the hard way

bethashton hops on top

In the summer there was much outrage over the new sex education video being shown in schools. It showed, heaven forbid, a ghastly, perverse and horrendously liberal sexual position - the woman was on top! I mean, this is the twenty-first century, not the twenty-fourth! Who did she think she was taking over in the bedroom? Who did the government think they were, planning to show and encourage this type of dreadful behaviour in schools?

My outrage to the situation was however, in response to their outrage. The main problem those offended seemed to encounter was that this depiction of sex suggested that it was fun and thus detoured from the essence of sex - making babies. Oh dear! Who are these outraged people and where are they hiding? Surely they have grasped by now that their darling children will at some point encounter the idea that sex should be fun, and that if it isn't, they are doing it wrong? Whether that be from accidental early exposure to Sex and the City, Friends or even the odd episode of Hollyoaks!

Maybe I am mistaken, but I am currently under the impression that the majority of teenage pregnancies are not planned and thus happen accidentally during the enjoyable art of love-making and therefore that the perception that sex is fun is

one rather widely strewn, even at a youngish age.

My own experience of sex education was somewhat rather typical of a GP's daughter. My dad brought a pack of three condoms: one for my sister, one for me and one for my brother. He took us each aside at the ripe age of twelve and taught us how to roll it onto a banana before barbecuing it for pudding. At school we watched funny videos which would send us into fits of giggles, and were shown alarming diagrams which sparked curiosity of why people would want to carry out this gruesome act.

However, this topic was brought up at the dinner table on a recent visit home by my little sister, who, living with three significantly older siblings, perhaps has a wider knowledge of sex than most eleven-year olds. Having just started secondary school, she followed "Beth, can you pass the potatoes?" with "and what position do you have sex in?" My mother choked and we all laughed, but I think this open attitude towards sex is the

healthiest and the best. At eleven, she knows that later in life she will enjoy this amazing act, which does have consequences. And, thanks to this new video, she knows it can be done in a variety of positions for varying pleasurable results! She isn't afraid of harbouring a gross curiosity; she is knowledgeable about the situation, and can make her decision from there. Surely that is the essence of sex-ed?

I guess the one thing that can be taken from the outrage to this video is that the woman being on top is assumed as depicting "funner" sex than when she is not. I sleep better knowing this fact of life is appreciated on a national scale!

faking it

colletterose wants the real deal

The first time I watched When Harry Met Sally and Meg Ryan performed her famous fake orgasm in a New York café, I had no idea what she was on about. In later years, I watched the film and started enjoying the scene because of the power dynamics; Sally proving

to Harry that women can actually 'trick' men into believing they are having an orgasm. But here's the question I ask myself today: Why should we fake orgasms? If the sex isn't up to par, then it just isn't. Aren't we just setting ourselves up for disappointment? After all, we're sending the message that a particular sexual position or practice is good and should therefore be repeated. People surely fake orgasms for many reasons - perhaps to reassure a partner, or because they feel guilty for taking too long - but the way I see it, when two people have sex, it should be just as satisfying for both. By that I mean both should be able to orgasm, which seems pretty basic to me. But that is often not the case. Why are so many women not having orgasms? And when we are not having orgasms, why do we feel like we have to

pretend otherwise? I am constantly surprised when I watch mainstream movies or TV shows with a heterosexual sex scene because more often than not the missionary position is assumed and the woman achieves an orgasm incredibly fast. There are exceptions, of course, but what I learned overall from consuming popular culture in my teens was that the most common sexual practices are missionary sex and 'blow-jobs', and that women are expected to achieve

orgasm through mere vaginal penetration. More importantly, given my own sexual experiences and those of friends, I gather that these presumptions are in fact held by many heterosexual women and men.

Many societal taboos have been broken since the so-called 'sexual revolution', even just in the past ten to fifteen years. But, in an age where sex is shown in mainstream entertainment all the time, I find it revealing that most of the sex shown is still that which is most pleasurable for men and not necessarily for women. One major exception was Sex and the City, which for all its faults was so refreshingly candid on women's experience of sex: from oral sex and masturbation to sex 'outside the box' and faking orgasms.

In her classic text "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm", Anne Koedt posits that "we must begin to demand that if a certain sexual position or technique now defined as 'standard' is not mutually conducive to orgasm, then it should no longer be desired as standard." So if we don't like missionary, let's start asking for something else. And if we're not having an orgasm, let's not fake it. It could be as easy as that.

