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# The Beaver

12 October 2010  
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London School of Economics  
Students' Union  
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## LSE students could face fee cap abolition

- **Browne expected to recommend 'soft cap'**
- **Radical overhaul looks to include social mobility guarantees**
- **Prospects of £7,000+ fees for home undergraduates**

**Oliver Wiseman**

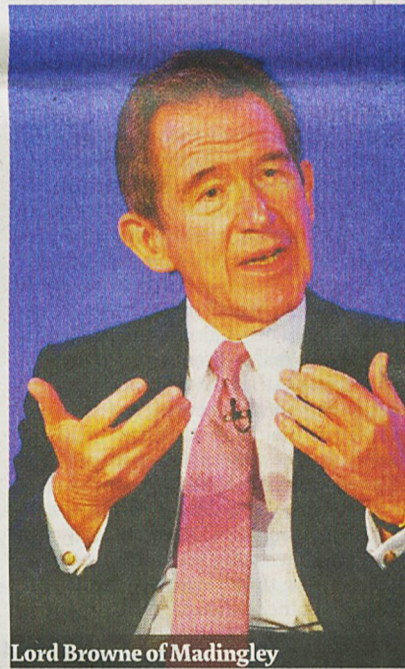
The Browne Review is expected to propose an abolition of the current cap of £3,290 on tuition fees for domestic and EU students, when it is published this Tuesday. The previous government commissioned Lord Browne's 'Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance' in November 2009, asking the former BP Chief Executive to investigate "participation rates, the quality of Higher Education, and affordability to the state and student."

At the time of writing, some uncertainty surrounds the detail of what Browne will propose, but it is thought that having considered caps at £7,000 and £10,000, the review will suggest a system where universities are free to set their fees at any level, but beyond a certain threshold - thought to be £7,000 - Higher Education institutions will begin to lose state support. Fees in excess of this level would, under these predicted suggestions, see universities obliged to pay a portion of the fees back to the government. The greater the rise in fees over the level decided on, the more a university would have to pay back to the government. It is speculated that these 'penalties' on high fees would be used to fund grants and scholarships that seek to prevent high fees from deterring students from low-income backgrounds.

To some, such a system would amount to a 'soft cap' on tuition fees with most Russell Group universities (the organisation comprising the twenty leading research-led institutions) choosing to raise fees to the threshold level but only a few likely to go beyond that.

The current student loan system is set to be applied to higher fee levels with a number of changes instigated in an effort to leave social mobility unaffected. It is thought the Coalition government will attempt to raise the current £15,000 salary

level at which graduates must begin repaying and ask all but the poorest to pay an interest rate on their loan, a move away from the current system where repayment is, in real terms, interest-free. This model shares crucial characteristics with the ideas of the LSE's eminent Professor of Public Economics, Nicholas Barr.



**Lord Browne of Madingley**

These innovations would in part be an attempt to mollify Liberal Democrat discontent over fee hikes. The party pledged to oppose all increases in fees at the general election and Browne's proposals will be unpopular with many party members. "I am against a market in fees and a market where you choose your course at 17. That will have an adverse impact on social mobility," said Stephen Williams, a former Liberal Democrat Higher Education spokesman and now backbench MP. In a letter sent over the weekend, Vince

Cable told MPs and party members that after close inspection, the graduate tax was "not the answer."

The National Union of Students (NUS) has described any claim that a rise in fees can be progressive as "an insult to intelligence". "There can be nothing progressive about £7,000 fees. If the Liberal Democrats seek to betray students, frankly having deceived them at the time of the general election, we will take action against every MP," said NUS president Aaron Porter. By contrast the Russell Group sees a rise in the cap on tuition fees as "crucial" to keeping British universities "world-class".

The background to the debate on university funding is a drop in government contributions to Higher Education, beginning in the final year of the Labour government where spending for 2010-11 dropped by £445 billion. It is expected that the Coalition government will cut teaching funding by up to 70 per cent in the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review. A rise in fees to £7,000 would essentially fill the gap left by these cuts.

The exact terms of the Browne Review will not only play a crucial part in defining nation-wide reforms to university funding, but also frame the campus debate over LSE fee levels. The Sabbatical Officers' flagship 'Freeze the Fees' campaign aims to lobby the School to leave fees unchanged in real terms until 2015-16 - three years in addition to universities' mandatory eighteen month budgetary cycle. The outcome of the Browne Review and the anticipated Coalition negotiations will give LSE students a full view of the realistic possibilities for Higher Education funding in this country. Fees for international and postgraduate students will be unaffected by any reforms presently being considered, though another of the objectives of the 'Freeze the Fees' campaign is to halt increases in fees of any kind at the School.

## Four words: We love Steve Ballmer!



**Charismatic Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer addresses the audience at an LSE public lecture**  
Photo credit: Nigel Stead/LSE

## General Course students warned of terror attacks

**Lauren Fedor**

Growing global anxiety about the possibility of terror attacks in London, Paris, Berlin and other major European cities has left LSE students concerned. Some top US universities have sent out specific warnings, via e-mail, to General Course students at the LSE. Institutions such as Brown University, Northwestern University, George Washington University, University of North Carolina and University of Notre Dame have e-mailed their students at the LSE to encourage them to avoid taking public transport due to possible terrorist attacks.

In September, various media outlets, including the Times, reported that European and American intelligence and counter-terrorism officials had detected threats from Pakistani and North-African terrorist groups targeting European capi-

ties. Since then, a flurry of government alerts and advisories have warned about the potential dangers of travel in London, Paris and Berlin.

These university warnings follow memos sent out by the US State Department, British Foreign Office and the US embassy. On 3rd October, the US State Department released a "travel alert" warning US citizens about the possibility of terrorist attacks in Europe. According to the statement, which can be found on the State Department's website, the US government recently received intelligence suggesting that members of the militant Islamist group al-Qaida could be planning terrorist attacks in or near major European cities.

**>> continues on page 5**

## Education Officer counters Browne Review findings

**Neeraj Mashru**

The LSE Students' Union's Education Officer has come out strongly against both the recommendations and the justifications expected to be made in the Browne Review on Higher Education funding, released on Tuesday. According to the Education Officer, the Students' Union awaits the publication of the review's findings with bated breath but low expectations. The Browne Review itself stands against some of the main principles of the Students' Union's own 'Freeze the Fees' campaign, launched this term.

The Browne Review is expected to recommend a radical change from the current cap of £3,225 per annum. A joint report by the NUS & HSBC suggests that even

fees of £5,000 would deter 53 per cent of current students.

While the Browne Review may point to no significant change in enrolment when fees were last increased, it seems that a further increase - especially if fees are raised as high as rumours suggest - could bring about a sharp fall in university applications. This would directly affect the ranks of domestic undergraduates, but crucially for a university like LSE, this may not be the only effect. Ashok Kumar pointed to how previous fee raises "have caused fees for postgraduates and non-UK/EU undergraduates to increase exponentially." With such fees already high (LSE charges over £16,000 for some postgraduate courses) owing to lack of regulation, future raises will be severely questioned.

Counter-intuitively, some have

argued that a fall in university numbers is mandated by our economy, pointing to how recent years have seen too few high-paying jobs for the high number of new graduates. Kumar replies that this argument is a consequence of the "commodifying of university education", arguing that university teaches much more than just career skills. He says that the LSE has shown that it isn't merely "a factory for investment bankers" by its introduction of the LSE100 module.

Kumar is keen to dispel the argument that the dire state of government finances necessitates cuts to Higher Education at all: "the idea that the holes in finances need to be plugged by a hike in fees needs to be turned on its head". The cost of paying all student fees would be only a relatively insignificant £2.8bn, he says, less than 3% of the cost of replacing Trident.

"So it's not an economic issue! I think it's a larger ideological fight, making more space for the private sector". He sees the Browne Review as merely a way of both the previous government and the current Coalition "passing the buck", using it as justification for decisions already made.

Kumar said that giving universities complete freedom over fees could be "the first step in the LSE's privatisation", which would allow it to set any level of fees. The Students' Union claims that the LSE is in no financial need whatsoever, its website detailing the prosperous state of the university's finances: a healthy surplus would still be made even with funding cuts and fees frozen for ten years. Kumar asks why fees must be raised at the LSE "when we have the money to buy buildings all around the neighbourhood!"

The 'Freeze the Fees' campaign will

be kicking off next week with a demonstration in front of the Garrick Café - right under the office of LSE Director Howard Davies. The NUS has praised the movement, saying they have never seen anything like it. Managing to secure over 2,000 signatures in two weeks, Kumar says it really has the capacity to "put a wrench in the machine of this university". He defended the campaign against those who have said that it is overbearing and out of touch with students by saying that they are merely giving students the chance to show their opposition to the direction that Higher Education in this country is taking. With Kumar hosting a recent seminar on activism, it can be said with some certainty that however severe Browne's recommendations are, Kumar and the other Sabbatical Officers will remain steadfast in their beliefs.



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# The Beaver

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## Freeze the fees?

Today sees the publication of the Browne Review, an independent inquiry into Higher Education and student finance in England. Hyperbole aside, the recommendations of the former BP Chief Executive will probably prove to be the most significant revamp of Higher Education since top-up fees were first introduced under the Labour government in 1997. Lord Browne is likely to propose a system without a formal cap, in which institutions would lose government support beyond a certain fee level. The leap in fees will bring what undergraduates pay inline with what undergraduate degrees on average cost.

In response to Lord Browne's radical proposals the Students' Union at the LSE has spearheaded a campaign to hold both undergraduate and postgraduate fees at their current levels (accounting for inflation) for the foreseeable future. The aptly titled "Freeze the Fees" campaign is no less bold than the Browne Review which it seeks to counteract. It seeks to make the LSE a byword for progression and accessibility by anchoring the cost of an education at a price which is affordable for all university aspirants. Advocates maintain that the LSE's unique funding position, which is heavily weighted towards sources other than tuition fees, means that the relative fall in the price students would pay would not hamper the teaching quality or the facilities which the school offers. In short, we can afford it.

A great deal of credit must be given to the campaign; it has received a warm reception on campus. On the day the Beaver went to press, the number of students signed up was over 2,000. Meetings have been arranged, protests have been organised, and there has even been an 'Activists' Workshop' for those who need to be taught spontaneity. Exactly which sections of the student body are particularly behind the campaigns still remains unclear - this newspaper is yet to see whether support is primarily undergraduate or postgraduate, domestic or overseas.

While it is always pleasing to see an active and engaged Students' Union, it is our contention that the "Freeze the Fees" campaign is fundamentally misguided. There are obviously no easy answers to Higher Education funding, but the solution is not to hold back the upfront cost of a university qualification. Assuming a well organised and efficient system of loans and grants is in place, there is no logical reason why higher fees would disincentivise Higher Education for the poorest young people within society. Cast your mind back to the mid-nineties when exactly the same arguments of equitability were being made against the introduction of top-up fees, a move which is now widely applauded.

This newspaper also wants to see a world-leading LSE. The fee hikes recommended by the Browne Review are certain to be carried out by all other first rate universities in the land. In a future world

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

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**COLLECTIVE**  
The Beaver's governing body will meet today to elect the following:  
**Collective Chair, PartB Editor, Photo Editor, Sport Editor, and Web Editor**  
and generally have a fun time.  
**D602, 6PM -**  
All welcome; see you there!

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# Shami slams students' immigration woes

Benjamin Butterworth

The current immigration system fails students, Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty, has claimed. The accusations were angled in an open Q&A at the LSE last Thursday.

Chakrabarti, a graduate of law from the LSE, who heads the human rights pressure group, says current methods of monitoring who can gain British citizenship based on a system of desirable points is bad for civil liberties: "The points based system has the potential to ruin academic institutions, and even the Murdoch papers are now recognising this," adding, "Howard Davies should be worried."

The long-standing Director of Liberty used the on-campus event to market a different attitude towards migration. "Some people, like me, believe in human rights simply because you're human - that goes across any borders. The argument to be won is in convincing Daily Mail readers that we all benefit from immigration."

More than 50 students turned out to witness the former Question Time panelist speak, with a notable majority sharing her views. "She made some very good points. Everyone has a right to education

and that should be irrespective of origin nation", noted one audience member. Another added: "We need to tackle this. Students give a lot, and immigration rules should recognise that. Universities shouldn't become border control".

However not all were left convinced. "I felt annoyed when she said bad things about Tony Blair. That's not right," argued Rebecca Bailey, of Bankside residence.

The 60-minute Q&A was designed to coincide with the Students' Union's new 'Students Not Suspects' campaign.

Spearheaded by Charlotte Gerada, the campaign aims to raise awareness of how points-based immigration affects students. "Students are made to feel under suspicion. We're all human beings with a right to education, and that mustn't be forgotten," explained Gerada.

New proposals, as part of the government's 'big society', could see lecturers, teachers and even fellow students expected to unearth the visa status of international colleagues.

"I have a real problem with contracting out immigration control to teachers and academics" commented Shakrabarti. "What you say and what you do should be sacred, and not reportable to border police."

It is hoped 'Students Not Suspects' will become part of a wider national

campaign highlighting the problems for overseas students, and Ms. Chakrabarti gave her full backing to the SU. "The LSE should be the flagship. It's in the DNA of this institution to fight injustice. Previous generations here did something about it. Now let's stand in solidarity."

But her comments come just days after Immigration Minister, Damian Green, claimed the number of foreign students admitted to Britain to be 'unsustainable'. He told BBC Radio 4's Today programme, "I don't want to interfere with the success

stories of our universities" but, "we [the new government] have inherited a system largely out of control".

After the talk, Shami told the Beaver, "One of the proudest things I can say is that I'm a part of the LSE. It's always great to come back, and I've no doubt-ing students will really get behind this campaign."

If you would like to get involved with 'Students Not Suspects', visit the Students' Union website, or e-mail [su.gensec@lse.ac.uk](mailto:su.gensec@lse.ac.uk).



Flickr user: Ashden Awards

## News in brief

### FERGIE ON DEMAND

Professor Niall Ferguson is unable to deliver a scheduled LSE100 lecture next Monday due to a timetable clash. To resolve the issue, the one-hour lecture entitled; 'Financial crises in the long run and prospects going forward' has been pre-recorded and will be video broadcast to the LSE100 students during the lecture period. LSE100 students who were hoping to be lectured by Ferguson in person are disappointed by the video substitute. Ferguson's lecture is the last in Module 4; 'Who caused the Financial Crisis', a module that has included lectures by Professor Danny Quah and Howard Davies.

### DR SHAPIRO WINS AWARD

Dr Judith Shapiro, the Economics Department Undergraduate Tutor, has won a 2010 teaching award from the Economics Network, a higher education academy which provides resources to support university teachers of economics. The student nominated national teaching award allows economics students to honour the most inspiring and dedicating teaching staff within their department. The candidates are judged for their possession of certain qualities such as inspiring student interest in economics and for having an enthusiasm for economics is evident to students.

### FREEZE THE FEES UPDATE

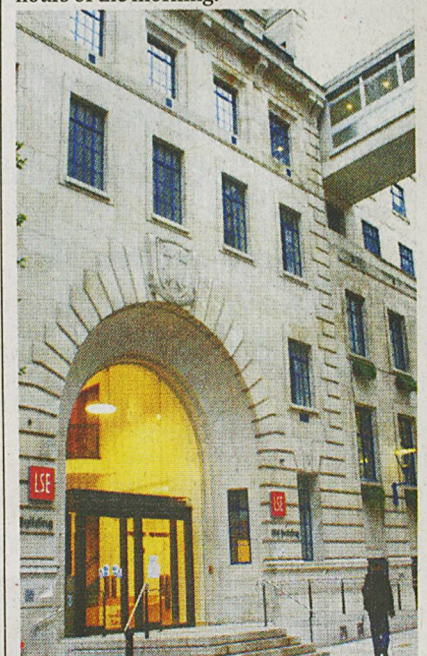
Over 2,400 signatories have now signed up to the campaign. The SU will present a paper with their proposals on freezing the fees to the LSE's Finance Committee this Wednesday. The paper will outline the financial position of the LSE and argue that freezing the fees should be one of the financial priorities of the LSE. Its submission will start the proposal's journey through the School to decide whether the LSE will adopt the proposals of the SU. On Thursday online voting for the Freeze The Fees motion will open for 24 hours and if the motion is passed then it will become a legitimate campaign of the LSESU.

### LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS SPRAWL

Information has emerged suggesting the LSE is set to purchase the Land Registry Office building on Lincoln's Inn Fields, for £37.5m. Details about the acquisition are not complete, but reports suggest that minimal refurbishment will be required to transform the Grade II-listed building into an academic and administrative workplace. The School already has a significant presence around the Fields, following the November 2008 launch of the New Academic Building. The Students' Union Education Officer commented: "This is yet more evidence that the school does not need to raise fees."

### OLD BUILDING COMING SOON

A deadline has been set for the Old Building refurbishment, still in progress three weeks into the start of term. The numerous delays, as result of indecision on the part of the main architect, have put the project almost a month behind schedule. However, according to notices up in the Old Building, all building work will be completed by Friday 15th October. This term events scheduled to take place in the Old Building, such as the weekly UGM, have gone ahead, despite the construction. Students around the LSE have reported that construction work has been going on throughout the week, even during the early hours of the morning.



# "This year is going to be a fight" – Kumar

SU hosts Activist Academy to encourage budding campaign organisers

Mark Heffernan & Jess Austin

This week the LSE Students' Union attempted to return to its halcyon protest days of the 1960s with an 'Activist Academy'. The Academy aimed to inspire a new wave of student involvement in issues, in addition to the prominent 'Freeze the Fees' campaign.

The meeting involved both a theoretical discussion of power and talks about direct action itself, with an acceptance from the Students' Union that the LSE needs to move towards such grassroots measures for the campaign this year, and beyond, to be successful.

Previously the Students' Union has been one of the most high profile student organisations in Britain, with sit-ins common through to the 1980s; the 60s were in particular notable for strident student action. Protests against the Vietnam War and the appointment to director of Walter Adams, complicit in pro-white action in Rhodesia, attracted thousands to the streets and the buildings of the LSE. In

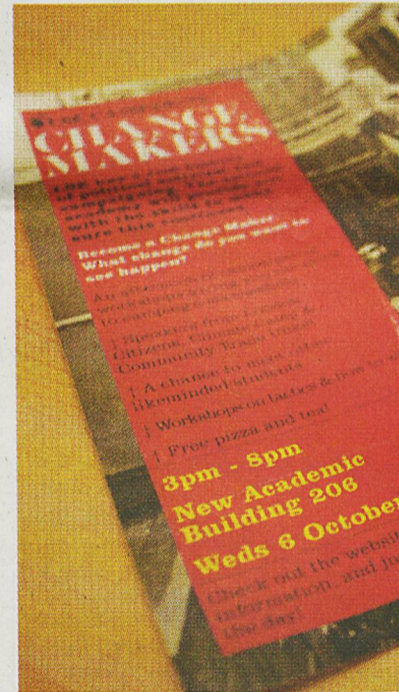
contrast, recent poor student uptake in the campaign fighting for resits show a dwindling of support for the activism LSE was once so famed for.

Ashok Kumar, the Education Officer, said, "It remains fundamental to our re-imagining of the Union as a rank-and-file, fighting, and ultimately winning Union that the SU put on alternative education". This idea was evident from the very start of the assembly, with Ryan Slaughter, organising manager at the Community Trade Union, beginning the debate. Mr. Slaughter began by damning policy as "corrupting" and stating his own left wing credentials, stating that through "building movements, strategising, education and collective action" success could be achieved. Those assembled, however, seemed somewhat unimpressed by Mr. Slaughter's idea that social networking was irrelevant, with one attendee suggesting he was "out of touch".

Following Mr. Slaughter was Stefan Baskerville, a former head of the Oxford Union now working for London Citizens, who spoke of power analysis and how to manipulate the system towards a

certain end, clearly a pertinent topic with the 'Freeze the Fees' campaign. During Baskerville's talk Kumar took offence at the notion that students were "drowning in a sea of irrelevance", retorting that he was "an elected representative of a democratic union", and damning the notion that high-ranking officials had a softer side, saying "greed is integral to these people". Mr. Baskerville, however, did gain consensus on the need for action in the face of corporations and, indeed, the Browne Review on higher education fees.

A class on direct action followed, with the idea that students need to take to the streets and subvert the normal order still apparently alive and well based on videos shown of previous activist events. By this point, however, the numbers in attendance had fallen significantly, although the few that remained were vocal in ideas and support. Union officials admitted that advertising for the event had taken a backseat in the hectic Freshers' Fair but if, as Kumar suggests, "This year is going to be a fight" then they may need significantly more than the thirty who attended the Activist Academy.



# A cold reception to the UGM

Sachin Patel

The Sabbatical Officers used the first Union General Meeting (UGM) of Michaelmas Term to provide a further update and presentation on their 'Freeze the Fees' campaign.

A motion that resolves to make the Students' Union "support and continue the 'Freeze the Fees Campaign'" is not expected to be debated until next week's UGM; nonetheless, the Sabbatical Officers chose to extend their reports to include an in-depth presentation about it.

A question as to whether it was in order to "essentially propose the motion before it's on the table", was fielded by the UGM Chair, Jack Tindale, who replied: "The Democracy Committee debated it at some length, and decided that it was acceptable to include the presentation as part of the Sabbs' reports." At several points during the reports, a number of students walked out of the Old Theatre.

The UGM began in uncharacteristic fashion, with a performance by the Athletics Union's Dance Society, set to Nelly Furtado's popular hit, "Maneater". Following this, Tindale conducted brief administrative elections to appoint a UGM Vice Chair and Keeper, remarking on the "slightly underwhelming turnout". Both positions were contested by one candidate each, with Scott MacDonald being elected to Vice Chair.

Before the Sabbatical Officers were able to give their reports, a member of

the audience asked a question about the impending election of a Postgraduate Sabbatical Officer. The student inquired as to how the role would operate, given its designation as a "part-time" role. Tindale replied: "It's part-time in that they'll only work two days a week ... so they won't get the full salary." With regard to their role, Tindale added: "It's a really great way of boosting their representation on campus", in that in previous years there had been an unpaid Postgraduate Officer on the Part-Time Executive Committee.

The Sabbatical Officers began their reports by commenting on their other intended campaigns for the year. Education Officer Ashok Kumar stated that he would "fight for the rights of Graduate Teaching Assistants to not earn poverty-line wages", and Activities and Development Officer Charlie Glyn discussed the possibility of greater provision for societies intending to hold pre-departure events.

The 'Freeze the Fees' update took the form of a PowerPoint presentation, involving all four Sabbatical Officers. Having stated the update would just be "about we've already done", Community and Welfare Officer Hero Austin proceeded to provide a background history of university tuition fees in the United Kingdom. The Education Officer added that the financial picture at the LSE was "slightly different" to that of most other institutions, in that the School "is completely loaded". According to Kumar, this financial position allows the LSE to pursue a fees policy that would have a "monumental impact" and would "influence how other universities

react [to the Browne Review's findings]". Moreover, Charlie Glyn suggested that an additional aim of the campaign would be to ensure that one of the criteria in the search for the next Director is support for "what the SU is fighting for".

Following a question from a third-year Law student, Oliver Wiseman, regarding the exact timings of the proposed policy, Kumar clarified the campaign's position, stating that the three-year freezing of fees would come into effect in autumn 2012. At present, tuition fees are set eighteen months in advance, meaning that any changes to the system would not be felt by students applying to university during this academic year. If the LSE were to agree to the campaign's demands, fees would then be frozen until 2015, resulting in a total period of four-and-a-half years in which fees would rise only in line with inflation.

The motion on 'Freeze the Fees' will be debated in this week's UGM, on the advice of the Democracy Committee. After the meeting closes, there will be an online vote on the motion, which will close on Friday afternoon.

**Union Jack** is the Beaver's mole at the UGM, providing a weekly dose of satire and (informed) comment.

### UNION JACK

Your correspondent has spent his summer nestled between pint-glasses, trying his best to stall the inevitable moment when his student loan bounces into his bank account, ready to be spent in a single night of unbridled hedonism. Jack's Sabbs, meanwhile, have spent the estival intermission planning an "escalation campaign", slaving away over a hot photocopier, and doing some fag-packet arithmetic. Famous Five? Secret Seven? Eat your heart out. Our fresh-faced Frivolous Four are primed for swashbuckling adventures. In the indefatigable penguin on Houghton Street, they even have a serviceable pet.

And, like Enid Blyton on crack (hypothetically), boy can they talk. Jack walked into the Old Theatre thinking he was attending UGM, but before long it more closely resembled the kind of mid-term Economics lecture whose orotundity sends him to sleep. Luckily, Jack was well-rested enough on this occasion to stay awake and come away with a blow-by-blow account which, owing to spacial constraints, won't be relayed here. Though, if you're interested, I believe there is a podcast of the meeting whose listening figures currently rest at 17.

Basically, Freeze the Fees is here to stay, regardless of if and when students are able to vote on it. Jack tried his best to follow the hit-parade of A-Shok-n-Awe, Smiler, honestly-my-name-is-Hero and the Glynger, as they rattled through the kind of PowerPoint slides beloved of Jack's favourite strategy consultants. Ginger beer was in short supply, as much as Politburo Subcommandante Tindale tried to make amends with his locks. Jack looks forward to Blyton delivering better source material next time round.





# Anti-racism Day kicks off at the LSE

Calum Young

Ray Hill, a world-renowned activist, spoke of the ever-pressing need to combat extremism, as part of the LSE's anti-racism day.

Commitment to anti-racism has long been a fundamental principle of the LSE Students' Union; however, it has come under criticism in the past. Indeed, last year the Students' Union successfully campaigned to revoke the rights for the British National Party, the right-wing UK party, to have a platform at the LSE. Ray Hill defended this move of the Students' Union by saying that he believes that the racist policies of the BNP should not be tolerated.

Hill spoke to an assembled crowd of sixty students and staff in the Underground Bar, attacking the modern far-right in Britain. In his hour-long talk, Hill recalled his own experiences and spoke of the information he passed to the British state from the Racial Preservation Society and the South African National Front during the Sixties. His talk ranged across a number of issues from, how to combat the far-right at a local level to the underlying social problems which cause extremism. Hill is an outspoken critic of the current tolerance extended to Nick Griffin, leader of the BNP party, and he favours a hard line against what he termed 'populist right-wingers'. This is particularly relevant to the LSE audience, given

that the BNP is not allowed a platform on campus.

Ashok Kumar, the Students' Union Education Officer, agreed with Ray Hill, saying: "This union is proud of its no platform policy. LSE has an incredibly diverse student body and it is in the interest of that safety of our students that individuals and organisations that have reputations for attacking ethnic, religious and sexual groups and minorities are not invited to speak on campus. Ray Hill gave an insight that very few have on what it will take to stop fascists."

The speech was well received by those in attendance and there was lively period of questioning following the talk. Andrea Gallimore, a third-year Philosophy and Economics student said; "I thought the talk was great. I loved his accent, but I was less convinced by the arguments Ray put forward at the end of the talk".

Hill said: "Stopping extremism in this country is fundamentally about winning the arguments. Although, of course, in some cases that is not always possible. Some of these nut cases are beyond contempt and their position doesn't have any pretense of being logical. Where you cannot win the arguments, its a question of winning the fight. If that means violence, that means violence". In response to this argument, one member of the audience commented: "I think that Hill's message was too radical. Violence should never be the solution to extremist behaviour - what kind of militant world would that create for us." However, Kumar agreed partially

with Hill, arguing that when the extremist groups use violence themselves, it is important for those who are vulnerable to defend themselves. "People have the right to defend themselves against violence. If the English Defence League or any other fascist organisation attempted to apply their violent ideology on any community, the right of that community to defend itself is enshrined in law.

Hill also set out the case against the current government's 'neglect' of northern constituencies in Britain. Born in Lancashire, Hill's voice on the issue of racism in Britain carries added gravitas as though his experience of it first-hand while growing up. After spending three years in the Army before taking his first steps in the far right by joining the Racial Preservation Society in Leicester in the late 1960s. He emigrated to South Africa in 1969 where he eventually rose to Chairmanship of the South African National Front. It was only in 1984, in a documentary for Channel 4 which focused on the links between the far-right and international terrorism, that Hill was revealed as a mole. Following the revelation that he had been feeding information to the left-wing press, Hill went on to write for the left-wing publication SearchLight.

Ben Grabiner, the Students' Union Anti-Racism Officer, praised the talk saying that it was; "inspirational and gave a lot for people to think about. It really gave us great motivation for the year ahead."

# Students unite to mark Taiwan Double Ten

Heather Wang

London students this Sunday marked Taiwanese National Day (Double Ten Day) with a celebratory dinner at one of London's top Chinese restaurants.

"Over one hundred people attended this year's event, which was far more than the original plan," said Acacia Hsieh, one of the organisers of the event, which took place at the Imperial China restaurant. The number of attendants had been increasing each year; two years ago the turnout was just over forty. Although the event was intended to be an LSE and UCL joint celebration, students from many other London institutions gathered together for this special occasion, including



Taiwanese students pose with the specially designed cake

Imperial College London, University of the Arts London, and King's College London. Taiwanese National Day celebration not only attracted people from Taiwan, but also students from mainland China, Hong Kong and a diverse range of other nationalities, united in their interest in Taiwanese culture.

Long before the start of the event many students began arriving at the venue. "Such enthusiasm was not expected," said another organiser. A large white cloth

was signed by every attendant upon their arrival, which will eventually be made into a Taiwanese flag with other signatures from around the UK, before being sent to the Presidential Office in Taiwan.

Double Ten Day is much valued by many Taiwanese. On the same day in 1911, the Wuchang Uprising took place, which started the Xinhai Revolution and led to the establishment of the Republic of China (Taiwan). In Taiwan, the national day is typically celebrated by watching fireworks and a military parade. One Taiwanese first-year commented: "I'm so surprised that I could meet so many countrymen in England; it felt like home again". A third-year student also expressed her happiness and said: "Eat, drink, meet new friends, that makes me happy." Many students who have been studying in England for a few years said they had been to events like this on the national day, but never an event this large.

Many traditional Taiwanese dishes were served at the restaurant. During the meal, students chatted to one another, with many remarking on the unique opportunity to forge new friendships from different universities. Many subjects related to Taiwanese culture were discussed at the table, such as the national anthem and the class system. "I really have learnt a lot about Taiwan today," said a student from Beijing.

After the meal, a cake specially designed with the shape of two tens written in traditional Chinese characters was cut and enjoyed by students.

While celebrating the 99th anniversary of Taiwan's founding, many students said they already looked forward to gathering with other countrymen again next year for the 100th anniversary.

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# US universities issue terror warnings

» continued from page 1

The State Department advised US citizens to be "aware of their surroundings" while traveling in Europe, as to protect themselves from possible attacks. Public transportation systems and popular tourist attractions could be the targets of such terrorism, according to the statement. Also on 3rd October, the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office changed its travel guidelines for Britons visiting France and Germany. The FCO raised the terrorism threat level for citizens traveling to these two countries from "general" to "high." (According to its Web site, the FCO utilises four labels to classify

terrorist threats in other countries – high, general, underlying and low – with "high" indicating a "high level of known terrorist activity" in a country, and "low" indicating "no or limited known terrorist activity.")

Meanwhile, the UK Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre continues to assess the current threat level from international terrorism for Great Britain as "severe," meaning a terrorist attack is "highly likely." (According to the JTAC's Web site, there are five threat levels, ranging from "low" – "an attack is unlikely" – to "critical" – "an attack is expected imminently.") "Severe" is the second most-critical level, after "critical.")

Other governments have since followed suit: on 5th October, the French government issued its own alert, warning French citizens about potential dangers when traveling to the United Kingdom.

Swedish and Japanese government agencies have also recently advised their citizens about the potential dangers of traveling in Europe, according to published reports from the American Foreign Press.

Many American universities are taking additional steps to ensure that their students studying "abroad" remain safe. On 4th October, Northwestern University sent an e-mail to its students currently studying or travelling in Europe. The letter, signed by William Anthony, Director of the Illinois university's study abroad office, urged students to avoid "crowded tourist areas" and venues that host US-based enterprises such as McDonald's, Starbucks or the Hard Rock Café. Students were also encouraged to keep their mobile phones charged and in their possession at all times. Schools such as Brown Univer-

sity, Wheaton College, University of Notre Dame and University of North Carolina all sent similar messages to their students abroad.

In an e-mail also dated 4th October, Ned Quigley, Associate Director of Brown's Office of International Programs, told students to avoid tourism landmarks; he also discouraged students from wearing baseball caps, university t-shirts or other apparel that may otherwise identify them as American.

Wheaton College's message, signed by Alfredo Varela, Dean of the Massachusetts college's Center for Global Education, urged American students to register with the US consulate or embassy nearest to their study site. Varela also suggested students check-in with their "on-site advisors and follow their recommendations."

A representative from the LSE Press Office stated: "There have been no specific warnings from the UK government or security services about travelling on public transport and we have not advised students to avoid it. Of course it is always sensible to remain vigilant but life in London goes on as normal."

The threat of an attack on public transport is not without precedent: in July 2005, al-Qaida-linked attacks on the Underground and city buses left 52 dead. However, the level of the warnings that are being issued to students in Europe has raised new levels of concern.

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Flickr user: Eirene99

## Steve Ballmer on 'Cloud' nine at LSE

Shrina Poojara

Last Tuesday, the LSE's Department of Management hosted Steve Ballmer, CEO of Microsoft. Ballmer delivered a talk entitled "Seizing the Opportunity of the Cloud: the Next Wave of Business Growth" to a 400-strong audience of press, students, staff and alumni. His lecture discussed the future of cloud computing, its implications for consumers and businesses and Microsoft's strategy for keeping up with the fast-paced information technology industry.

Cloud computing is Internet-based computing, whereby users can access shared resources, software, and information on computers, and other devices, on demand, as opposed to storing software and data on computer disk drives or servers. Mr. Ballmer summarized the Cloud as "just an industry codeword for talking about using the Internet and smart devices in new and different ways." Though Google and most e-mail and social networking sites already use cloud technology (such as Facebook photos, which are saved in "the Cloud"), The Microsoft head insisted that the technology could still be further developed: "There's no end in sight to the incredible things that will be done, the incredible innovations that will come to market."

Much of Mr. Ballmer's talk focused on how cloud technology will change the way individuals and firms will operate in the future. He emphasized how applications written in "the world of the Cloud" will be very different, with vast improvements in software that "understands you and what you want", as well as a forum through which social and professional interaction can advance. Furthermore, he discussed the physical advantages of cloud computing as a move away from computer rooms full of "fancy floors and big racked hardware".

He also stressed the importance of the "new set of responsibilities" that comes with cloud technology, in terms of "security, privacy and data availability", due to the increased importance of being able to define who owns what data and how it can be controlled and used. He commented that China has the potential to become the largest market in the world for PCs, smartphones and other such technology within the next year, despite the fact that piracy in the country is twenty times that in the UK: "As we all move to the Cloud, there will be a set of regulatory restrictions that come from government... I'm a little nervous about that, particularly in the Chinese case, that that could slow market development inside China." This comment mirrors similar concerns regarding protection of intellectual property in China made by Kevin Turner, Microsoft Chief Operating Officer, who presented a public lecture to the LSE last year.

The Q&A session after the lecture meant that Mr. Ballmer was able to answer questions on a multitude of topics, ranging from patent law to the likelihood of Microsoft's demise. The many press pieces covering the event thus ranged in their take on the lecture, with Channel 4 further discussing the implications of cloud technology to the consumer, Sky covering the issue of piracy in China and several publications discussing the impact of the Cloud on IT budgets within the UK government and institutions, such as the NHS.

Mr. Ballmer outlined the fact that, as up to 70% of most IT budgets consist of labour costs, "the modern datacentres" that he described could save governments and institutions money as they "have a lot fewer people in them than today's datacentres do." Though about 10 to 15 per cent of the 20 to 25 million people who work within the global IT business are estimated to have their jobs automated as a consequence of moving to the Cloud, Microsoft's CEO highlighted the fact that

"you will decrease the percentage of IT spend that is spent across the world on maintenance, and you will increase the percentage of IT spend that's spent on new development."

Press reporters were also excited to hear details about Microsoft's plans to contend with its competitors. Mr. Ballmer discussed the importance of the UK market as an "innovation leader on a global scale" due to its "early adaptation of new technology", one key reason why the new Windows 7 smartphone had its global launch here yesterday. Mr. Ballmer also expressed his excitement over Kinect, the new motion controller for Xbox that is set to drastically alter the gaming industry after its launch in the Christmas season this year. It allows the body and voice to "control everything that's going on on your TV screen". He also touched upon Microsoft's work on tablet computing and the upcoming Christmastime release of Windows slates in response to products such as Apple's iPad.

The talk was received well by the audience with one member commenting: "I was so impressed by the talk. Mr. Ballmer management and passion have become hallmarks of his time at Microsoft. By using his energetic leadership, vision and spirit, he has presided over and guided the company through one of the most difficult decades of its history when faced with growing competition, such as Apple and Google." During his lecture, his trade-mark ebullient presentation style kept the spectators both fascinated and entertained. Furthermore, his ability to not take himself too seriously was refreshingly apparent when an LSE student's inquiry into Mr. Ballmer's favourite Xbox game was met with the response, "Beach volleyball, baby!"

## Seldon chooses Gordon over Blair

David de Jong & Luke Smolinski

Dr. Anthony Seldon, chronicler of British Prime Ministers and LSE graduate, gave a public lecture last Thursday night on his forthcoming book about Gordon Brown. Seldon defended Brown's tenure as Prime Minister after three years of hostile media scrutiny and an unfavourable public.

Having written "200,000 words in 3 weeks" on Brown, Seldon depicts Brown as a more complex character than other biographers. But despite his personal complexities and leadership deficiencies, Seldon openly ranked Brown higher than Tony Blair.

Before going into more detail on Brown, Seldon discusses Brown and his two predecessors, John Major and Tony Blair, in comparison to one another. Seldon's point in this comparison is that, when judging Prime Ministers, it is essential to consider circumstance. He argues that Brown's reaction to the 2008 financial crisis "wasn't substantially wrong"; whereas Major and Blair were politically destroyed by the handling of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism crisis in 1992 and the Iraq invasion. He concluded that all three men were essentially "troubled" in their leadership.

After comparing the three former PM's, Seldon states that Brown is similar to James Callaghan, British PM at the end of the '70s, an unpopular Prime Minister, but nevertheless blessed with "dexterity and competence". Brown succeeded in being a forceful presence on the international stage. Firstly, for his role in the financial crisis. Secondly, for his efforts in climate change, and thirdly for his handling of the British withdrawal from Iraq. On a domestic level, he had very few successes. Brown managed to implement a new health policy, improve ASBOs, and proposed constitutional change.

Seldon then gives three reasons on why Brown did not achieve more during his tenure: the inheritance of Blair, his dominating character flaws, and above all, a complete lack of political vision.

As for the inheritance of Blair, Seldon argues that the prospects in 2007, when Brown took office, were rather bleak.

Blair left Brown with two wars, and a crumbling British economy. Therefore, Brown was "exhausted" on all fronts from the beginning, since there was little to fund a policy revival, implement public service reform and reunite the Labour party.

In describing Brown's personality, it turns out that the former Prime Minister's biggest enemy was himself. His personal insecurities led him to rely on a group of people who were "unsavoury"; those included Labour prominents such as Peter Mandelson, and Damian McBride. Furthermore, Brown's screaming tantrums gained notoriety. Seldon cites him as "sulking like a child, prone to anger, often throwing things, but never at people." After these frequent incidents, Brown would grovel to people and be overtly apologetic.

But more than anything Seldon condemns Brown on his complete lack of clarity in his political vision. His constitutional reform plans failed, and he never succeeded in getting his political message of "a clear social justice motivation" across to the British public. In reference to his decision-making abilities Seldon concludes: "If Gordon Brown was running a corner shop, it wouldn't last."

Nevertheless, when comparing Brown to his predecessor and nemesis, Tony Blair, Seldon judges the former far more admirably. Seldon slams Blair for his "complete contempt of history", failure to deal with power and powerful men such as George Bush and Alistair Campbell, and for his lack of intellectual capacities.

Seldon left some of the audience members somewhat confused with his talk. Julie, an overseas LSE student said: "In Australia, he [Brown] was built up as such a big figure on the international stage, but I didn't realise he was so unpopular at home!" Others were more positive. Esteemed documentary maker Michael Cockerell found the lecture to be "an incisive and nuanced critique of the Brown years."

Oliver Wiseman, another attendee, commented that; "Seldon had significant insight which he shared in an engaging fashion with the audience. He had real pizzazz as a speaker and finished with many a stylish flourish."



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# Comment

## On your bike, Barclays

Why Barclays' contribution to London's cycle hire scheme is questionable

Jess Austin



The introduction of 'Boris' bikes' throughout London represent a positive pedal forward with their social, financial, health and environmental benefits.

Urban bike-sharing in Paris is the obvious example of how successful the scheme can, and no doubt will, be. Yet while the Parisian bicycles remain free from commercial intrusion the London models are a distinctly recognizable sky blue. In what must be one of the biggest pieces of corporate branding ever, Barclays have managed to get their logo on not only six thousand bikes, but also on docking stations and posters. It is virtually impossible to open your eyes in London without the Barclays logo smugly staring back.

It is more than likely that those clever boys at Barclays realised that paying £25 million to sponsor the bike scheme would reap serious marketing benefits as every person who signs up (so far over 40,000) to cycle around London is also ferrying a billboard around with them, inadvertently selling a fraction of their soul to the corporation.

While people have defended Barclays by suggesting the scheme would have been implausible without their financial clout, the bikes were ordered and costs approved before Barclays were involved. Moreover, Barclays' £25 million is a small contribution to the overall cost. Last October the cost of the cycle hire scheme was estimated to be £114.3 million between 2008/09 and 2012/13. Hopefully, savvy Londoners will see through their sky blue dream and realise that Barclays' money is merely a small fraction of what their advertising is worth.

No doubt Barclays also considered that their 'donation' would rebrand them as a progressive, environmentally-friendly bank. Bob Diamond, Barclays' new Chief Executive, is expected to earn a lavish £60 million through bonuses and share-incentive packages during his time there, emphasising that Barclays' contribution is a small fraction of what they could contribute, and indicating where its 'ethical' priorities really lie.

It is not merely an abject dislike of advertising that makes the interminable penetration of the Barclays' logo ruling London's streets disagreeable. Although Barclays was not one of the financial institutions bailed out by the government during the credit crisis a couple of years ago it has still, like many of the banks, being subject to heavy criticism due to its huge investment banking division and the inflated wages enjoyed by many of the top executives. Barclays has also financed major corporations responsible for envi-

ronmental degradation, militarism and the oppression of immigrants.

Additionally, despite coal being recognised as one of the least efficient fuel sources with emission levels worse than petroleum and twice as high as those for natural gas, this has not stopped Barclays loaning almost \$6 billion to industries related to coal - a somewhat heavier investment than their commitment to 'green' London bicycles.

If at this stage you are still doubting Barclays' blunders, evidence has also revealed their investments in companies selling weapons to Israel, which killed 1,400 people, including 400 children, in January 2009 and also their loaning to companies producing cluster munitions and depleted uranium. Oh, and if a

gagging order hadn't been placed on the Guardian, there would be significantly more information than is available on the rumoured tax Barclays tried to evade in 2009.

Fortunately Barclays' marketing dream has perhaps not gone exactly as they intended. The launch of Boris' and Barclays' brilliant bike scheme was undermined by nearly a hundred of the bikes being labelled with stickers in Barclays' sky blue with slogans such as '£20m invested in bikes. £7,300m invested in bombs' and 'funding depleted uranium - birth defects in Iraq'. In early September an estimated three thousand bikes were targeted in a more widespread campaign. While the campaign was maybe not as eloquent, it certainly conveyed a clear strong mes-

## Londoners are selling a fraction of their soul to Barclays

sage to 'fuck Barclays'. I am not sure if it was intended as activism, vandalism or art, but if these campaigns and the press surrounding the sponsorship continue

Londoners are hopefully going to view the Barclays symbol as a reminder the aching hypocrisy of the whole scheme.

Although I am aware corporate branding is not new - Transport for London's Oyster cards are often IKEA yellow and blue - these are relatively unobtrusive, unlike the six thousand Barclays sandwich boards whizzing through our streets.

The dark irony of a multi-billion pound arms funder and coal investor putting petty cash into one "good will" project and thus casting itself as a virtuous, rather than villainous, corporation is somewhat uncomfortable. Walking past a billboard of a corporate company is a much smaller commitment and certainly less of a violation than straddling one.



Bikes on St Giles' Circus  
Photo: flickr user James Cridland

## A portrait of nationalism

Calum Young



In a History lesson one wet Friday afternoon, our peerless teaching assistant abandoned her notes and chose to devote the last sixty minutes of the week to 'Audio-Visual' learning (she put on a video). On screen, the words of knowing Professors were spliced with a collage of twentieth-century images. Tanks rolled into Hungary in 1956, Charles de Gaulle broadcasting from the BBC to Vichy France, Richard Nixon's jaw

line warbling 'I am not a criminal'. The class drifted to sleep as the 30 minute programme attempted to fashion a narrative out of the last hundred years. Then things took a turn for the more resonant when one of the tweedy talking heads stopped talking, and started crying. Great salty beads dropped past half-moon spectacles onto aged corduroy. The onscreen figure was visibly moved, the class was awake.

The man on the television crying was called Ryszard Kapuscinski. Prior to his death in 2007, he was a leading Polish academic and journalist whose work combined the best of historical analysis with an accessible prose style. Just before he burst into tears, Kapuscinski had been addressing the camera on the subject of Polish history, specifically on the re-creation

of the Polish state in 1918 and what it meant to the Polish people. Born in 1923, he was too young to have experienced Polish independence first-hand. Instead he had gleaned his knowledge of events from the same textbooks and teachers which my then GCSE class got their information from. So, why did Kapuscinski's facts make him cry, whilst our facts made us sleepy? Why was our drudgery his passion?

Evidently history matters far more to a Pole born in the Twenties, than a Briton born in the Eighties. There are endless misanthropes who lament the lack of respect modern Britons show for their past, ours is a generation which lives permanently in the present. But that's only half the story. History, especially the history of

other people, doesn't get anyone upset. To be emotionally crippled by the past in the way that Kapuscinski was, it needs to be more than something which happened to other people in another age. Whilst most humans are sentimental about events which have occurred in our own lives, even the empathetic amongst us seldom get upset about the lives of others. There is no word for collective nostalgia.

So the tears weren't rational. Through artfully blending the strife of his forebears with his modern self, Kapuscinski had annexed a little part of their cultural history and made it his own. But was his life actually twinned with those on whose part he was crying? Illiterate, innumerate Polish peasants who have never travelled more than a few miles beyond where they were

born share little with the knowledgeable, urbane and cosmopolitan intellectual bawling his eyes-out. Benedict Anderson famously labelled this syndrome the 'imagined community' for those who claim to share an emotive bond with others whom they know nothing of and share few values with.

Behind the sullen stares of my History class lurked a great deal of casual wisdom. A dispassionate detachment from the past may well be the a grown-up position to take. The past is not ours, it's the business of the dead. For all his wisdom, Kapuscinski's tears may have been trumped by our insolence.



# Why taxing the people more would make them happier

## Why Luke Smolinski could never be a politician

**Luke Smolinski**



Imagine that I am the Business Secretary of the UK. It's absurd, I know, but stay with me, please. What I am about to write might be considered heresy. My transgression will be to question the fairness of an unfettered free market, to say that the market grants us neither perfect efficiency nor true happiness. Rich men would flee the country; businesses would scarp; the Tory press would destroy me. It would be an act of political suicide. But hey, that's the kind of Business Secretary I am.

First, the market is wasteful. The idea that by pursuing our own interests, we can achieve what is best for society is fiction. Bankers may take excessive risks; oil companies may devalue the possibility of catastrophe. And by being purely driven by profits, firms can lose sight of what is best for society. This is understandable. If you are in cut-throat competition, why bother worrying about a potential oil spill? Why bother caring about the mugs that are being sold dodgy securities?

Competition makes taking risks seem desirable. From collateralised debt obligations to deep-sea drilling, market forces provide an incentive to take more risks. This is not necessarily in the interests of society. Furthermore, competition between firms doesn't always produce things of value. Advertisements, sharper suits, bigger watches: a considerable amount of money is spent on convincing the customer that you are a credible businessman or that your product is a credible product. These have no real value to customers; they are only of any value relative to competitors.

However, it is competition between individuals, not firms, which is the most wasteful. The more money you have, the more prone you will be to spend it on useless things. Faster cars, bigger houses, larger yachts: it cannot be denied that much is spent by the rich to impress others, to help differentiate themselves from those less well-off. We are not talking about a few bob either; we are talking silly money. Again, these have no absolute value; the value from these is derived relative to what others have.

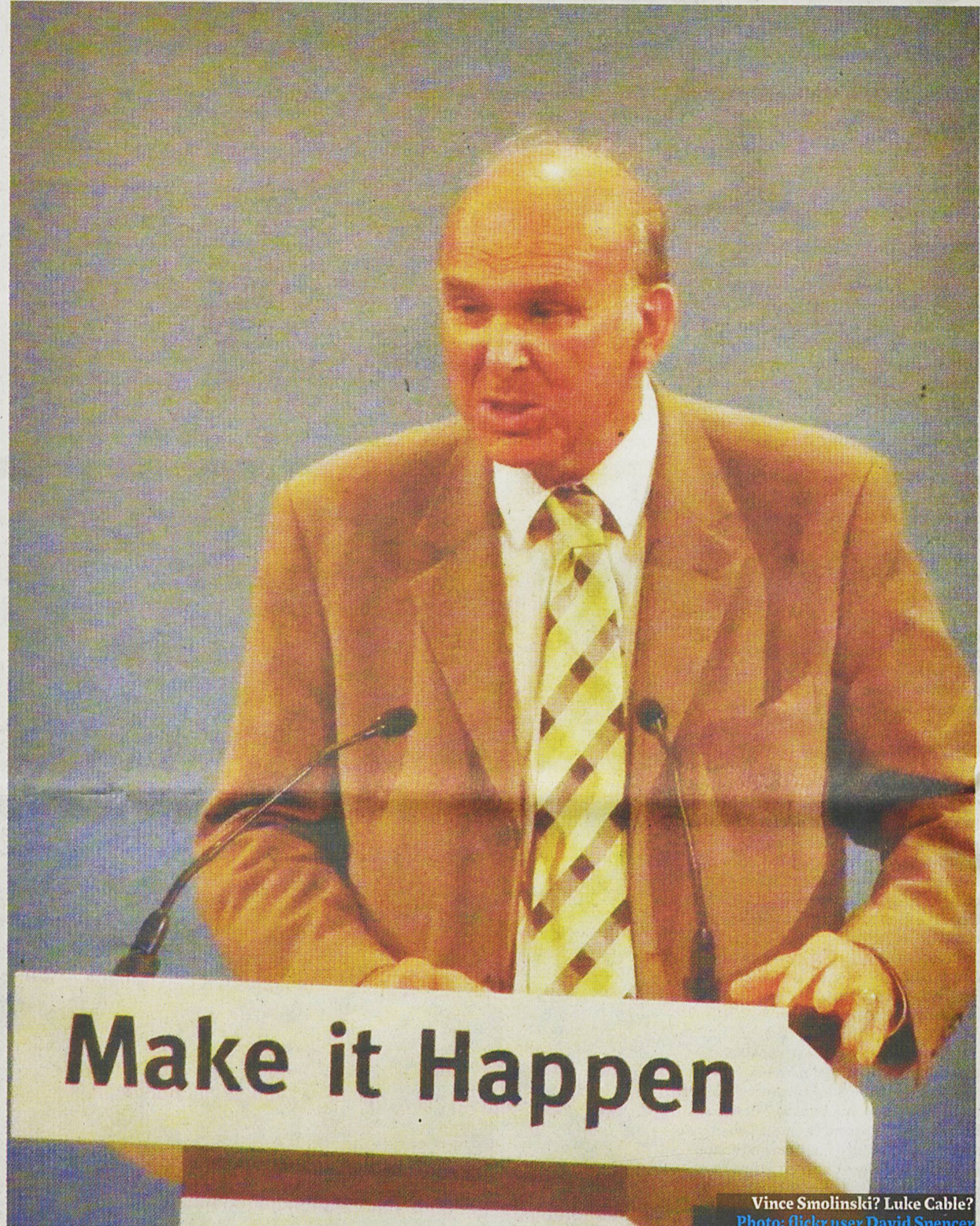
Conspicuous consumption: the spending on goods and services for the purpose of displaying wealth. Is it wrong?

Perhaps not. Does it happen? Undoubtedly. Does it make us happy? No. Or rather, it could, but only relative to the poorer Mrs Jones next door, who will be made unhappier with the goods that she has. The question is: if we restrict the money of the well-off, do we necessarily bring a lot of people great misery? Or do we just act to redefine what is considered 'normal'? Sure, I will have a smaller house, a lowlier watch and one less Hirst in the kitchen, but so will everybody else. I will still be richer than Mrs Jones. My social status in the world will not have changed.

As Bo Derek put it, "Whoever said money can't buy happiness simply didn't know where to go shopping." This sums up our attitude today. The most bizarre thing is, as all empirical studies show, we were happier in the 1950s. Think about this for a bit. For all our material wealth (living standards have quadrupled since 1950) - for all our medical advances, technological progress and social change; for all our glut of information and ease of communication, for all our Equality Laws, Human Rights, broken bigotries and cracked class distinctions; for all our dizzying supply of entertainment, its breadth, bounty and betterment - we were happier then.

Harold Macmillan, the then Conservative Prime Minister, announced in 1957, "We have never had it so good." Ironically, it may still be true. He was lambasted for stating this truth; politicians nowadays have another truth that they dare not mention, namely, that the consumer isn't always right. Provide a critique of the unfettered free market, and you are shouted down as 'anti-business'. No matter how much you praise the free market, you will always be condemned for questioning its fairness.

What is the solution? Socialism? Controlling prices and wages? Returning to the 1950s by destroying 75 per cent of wealth? No. The free market works. But it is not a Utopia. The solution is a mechanism which restricts riches of the well-off so that the vast bulk of it isn't spent on conspicuous consumption, and which channels it into better education, health-care, arts, public parks and cleaner streets. I call this mechanism 'tax'. It will not grossly dent the happiness of the well-off, as less will be spent on goods which have no worth other than to impress Mrs Jones. Moreover, you never know, better public services and a more vibrant community might just make them happier.



Vince Smolinski? Luke Cable?  
Photo: flickr user David Spencer

# Looking forward to the Shadow Cabinet's prospects

## How Ed Miliband, the new Leader of the Opposition, has played a poor hand very well

**Jack Tindale**



The main feature of the recent Shadow Cabinet elections, beyond their sheer novelty, is a sense of a Parliamentary Labour Party that has yet to properly decide on a course of action for the wilderness years of opposition. Despite many of the New Labour Old Guard standing down - such as Jack Straw, Bob Ainsworth and Alistair Darling - the current front bench has many familiar faces from the last government, something that the new Labour Leader Ed Miliband has been forced to approach with a curious mixture of assertiveness - such as the sacking of Chief Whip Nick Brown - and conciliation towards his still rather shell-shocked party, the majority of which supported his elder brother for the job of Leader of the Opposition.

Within the context of Shadow Cabinet elections to a nominally socialist party, the sense of dynastic politicians is also rather peculiar, especially within a movement that has traditionally prided itself

on meritocracy. The spectre of a fraternal schism has diminished with David Miliband's regrettable, if understandable, retreat to the backbenches, but this is countered with the continuing spousal double act of Ed Balls and Yvette Cooper as well as the somewhat ludicrous situation in having two members of the Shadow Cabinet, Angela and Maria Eagle, who are identical twin sisters.

In terms of the portfolios allocated, the most surprising is the choice of Alan Johnson as Shadow Chancellor. Although some have dismissed the former Home Secretary as an economic lightweight, especially in contrast to the oft-touted team of Balls and Cooper, Johnson's genuine working-class background and affable personality make him a suitable figure to take on the coalition's tough round of spending cuts due to be announced on the 20th October. Johnson may lack Balls' economic expertise, but unlike the former Brown aide, who creates very divisive feelings amongst the general public, the former postman will be able to better articulate the view of the government being out of touch with normal families. This is in positive contrast to the unrealistic and unelectable notion that cuts can be postponed in the short and medium term, a notion that has been the cornerstone of Balls' neo-Keynesian approach to the budget deficit.

Indeed, Balls is perhaps better suited to take on the Home Secretary, Theresa May. Cuts to police numbers will allow him to portray the new government as being 'soft on crime' and while his pursuit of the Daily Mail vote may not ender him to the soft-left of the Party, Balls knows the fears of the working-class Labour voter better than many of his contemporaries. Balls will also be able to exploit the government's ineffective immigration cap, which is opposed by several Liberal Democrat ministers.

But since Balls came very close to losing his Morley and Outwood seat at the last general election, he will not wish to be thrown out of Parliament at the next opportunity by not appearing to understand their concerns regarding immigration.

The Home Secretary will also have to contend with Yvette Cooper attacking her in Cooper's other role as Minister for Women and Equalities. It is true that being appointed Shadow Foreign Secretary is somewhat of a waste of Cooper's considerable economic talent, but it does reward her top place finish in the Shadow Cabinet elections as well as ensuring that the Brownite husband and wife team do not challenge the pragmatic deficit-busting ideas of the Miliband-Johnson duo. While she may perhaps have been better placed as Shadow Business Secretary, Cooper will be a major player in opposition and if

she adapts to her new role well, it is likely that William Hague may have some worries over facing her at the dispatch box.

The same is also true for the increasingly pompous Eric Pickles, who will have a difficult job facing the acid-tongued Caroline Flint as his Shadow at Communities and Local Government.

Other positions are somewhat harder to comment upon given their banality. Sadiq Khan and Hilary Benn are rewarded for their backing of the new leader with Shadow Justice Secretary and Leader of the House respectively. However, talented former ministers have been overlooked by the new establishment, most notably Tom Harris and Chris Bryant, with tired figures such as Shaun Woodward and Peter Hain retaining their old jobs when they really should have been left on the political scrapheap alongside Ben Bradshaw.

Despite the anti-climax of a reshuffle that could have been far more radical, there are many positives to take into account as the Labour Party finally settles down into the role of the Official Opposition. Barring a major falling-out by the coalition parties, it seems highly unlikely that an election will be held before at least 2012, by which time another Shadow Cabinet election will have been held, if indeed the farcical system hasn't been abolished by then.

The new intake of MPs is rich with

Young Turks, many of which will have the experience to be selected next time around. Of these, two stand out as being major figures to watch for the future. Rachel Reeves, a first-rate economist, will no doubt have a major economic portfolio in the years to come. The second, Chuka Umunna, MP for Streatham, is equally as talented and already being touted as future leadership material.

The new Shadow Cabinet is a curious one, it has well over a hundred years of collective ministerial experience and has many of the same faces that were seen in the Brown government. The idea of this being representative of Labour's 'New Generation' may seem somewhat contrived. However, it does show that Ed Miliband is sensible to be ruthless enough to downplay his lightweight image whilst also acknowledging his vulnerable position within the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The consensus seems to be that the new Leader of the Opposition has played a poor hand very well. It is highly unlikely that the next Labour government will bear much resemblance to the current front bench team, but Ed Miliband now has the backing to create a powerful and popular antithesis to the coalition government in the turbulent years ahead.



# Comment

## Reforming to face change

Looking forward to the imminent Strategic Defence and Security Review, David Cameron is right to push for change

**Sam Williams**



It perhaps comes as a surprise that the first major intra-coalition bust up has been an all-Tory affair. The potentially incendiary relationship between George Osborne and Vince Cable has so far remained civilised; David Cameron and Nick Clegg have reportedly formed a solid personal friendship; and key policy areas where Liberal Democrats and Conservatives disagree, such as Free Schools, have been dealt with diplomatically by both parties. The smoothness of the government's operations have defied even the most pessimistic expectations.

Yet a leaked letter provided the first unequivocal evidence of a major disagreement between senior members of the Cabinet. In this letter, departmental budget cuts were criticised as 'draconian' and 'indefensible', and the Prime Minister was accused of defaulting on several of his party's key principles.

The irony, of course, is that the author of this letter was a Tory. In what some commentators have marked as the biggest challenge to the David Cameron's authority so far, Liam Fox, the Defence Secretary, argued that cutting the budget of the Armed Forces is irresponsible, and that they, along with the NHS and the International Development budget, should be exempt from budget cuts. Cameron has dismissed Fox's claims, standing firm on his commitment to scale back military spending.

He was right to do so. Given the scale of the inherited budget deficit, the difficulty of justifying exemptions from cuts for some departments but not for others, and Fox's own strategic outlook for the Armed Forces acquiescing to the demands voiced in the letter would have been less defensible than the choice of non-compliance that the Prime Minister has made.

With the results of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) to be presented in a few weeks, Fox's priority at this stage should not be to attempt to negotiate down the 10-20 per cent budget cut that his department faces, but instead to incite his senior defence and security staff to accept the figure and quickly come up with fair and effective solutions.

Currently, bickering amongst defence chiefs and heads of the different Armed Forces is rendering it increasingly unlikely that the SDSR will yield effective,

equitable and broadly-supported solutions. Different chiefs place differing weights of importance on their respective forces and in the build up to the SDSR, the discussions of reform have turned into a self-interested battle for funds. The SDSR is different to previous defence reviews in that it is taking place at a unique political, military and economic juncture.

## Bickering is rendering it unlikely that the SDSR will yield anything effective

The combination of necessary and inevitable domestic budget cuts, with a rapidly changing face of global armed conflict puts the SDSR negotiators onto a treacherous tightrope. The balancing act of physical downsizing and strategic adaptation is one that must be achieved correctly. Fox would do better to expend his energy on ensuring that this happens than on penning angry letters.

The nature of the British deployment in Afghanistan and the type of war that is being fought there typifies how warfare is likely to look in the medium- to long-term future. Just as the First World War saw the shift from the Napoleonic-style war of marching armies and discrete battlefields to the total war of the 20th century,

Afghanistan has ushered in a new stage in the evolution of warfare, as extensive total-war gives way to localised and pernicious insurgencies. This, and that the broad outlook for 21st century warfare makes it clear that this SDSR gives the UK Armed Forces a good opportunity to adapt to the new type of war that they will be fighting.

Fox's condemnation of spending cuts may arise from his almost neo-conservative military philosophy. He has been a vociferous advocate for the importance of new aircraft carriers and the purchase of a large fleet of Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) aircraft. Sir David Richards, Chief of Defence Staff, has suggested that Fox's determination to invest in heavy-duty planes and boats is only useful if 'Britain is preparing for World War III'. In Richards' view, Britain's actual military commitments render a focus on strengthening counter-insurgency forces and the development of hi-tech weaponry such as drones far more useful than a focus on traditional - and particularly naval - hardware.

The changing nature of warfare makes it imperative that the UK military adapts - and quickly. However, Dr Fox seems to hold slightly outdated notions of what a modern military that is operating under financial constraints should look like, and thus may well be becoming an obstacle to the adaptation that is required.

David Cameron takes a more realistic position. He understands that it is in no-one's interests to arbitrarily cut the size of the Armed Forces, particularly when at war; yet he also understands that budget cuts and adaptation are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It is perfectly conceivable that the UK military can be reformed to suit its current and future commitments whilst spending significantly less.

The ideal outcome of the SDSR would be for defence staff to harmonise their conceptions of the future of modern warfare, and to make the sacrifices that will cause the least damage. Sadly, it looks like the Navy will have to bear a large brunt of these costs. The Royal Air Force may have to be swallowed, or at least partly consumed by other services. Orders for aircraft carriers and fighter jets may have to be put on hold. But ultimately less will be spent on a military that is more flexible and better suited to its current and future commitments. It is time that Liam Fox bites the bullet and makes this happen.

## Commenting on the cuts

How budgetary restraints is likely to effect to the younger generation more than anyone else

**Hannah Payne**



With the announcement of the cuts to be made to the child benefit system followed by David Cameron's assurance that this will be partially balanced out by upcoming tax breaks for married couples, is it only me that thinks singles are getting a raw deal?

It is not that the government is reducing spending that is the issue here - we have of course been warned that the cuts must be deep and downright painful. But when it comes to this particular cut to child benefit the method of means testing leaves single and stay-at-home parent families high and dry.

With this system, a two-parent family with each parent earning just below the threshold of £44,000 - and therefore a household income of up to about £88,000 - will receive benefit whilst any family with one earner on about £44,000 or more will not.

Now, following Cameron's speech at the Conservative Party Conference, we can also expect there to be tax cuts for married couples. Somehow, this is supposed to soften the blow. There is, in my opinion, a serious issue with this: married couples have already got a lot from society. They are showered with gifts, a very large cake and an extravagant party traditionally paid for by somebody else on their wedding day.

Further, surely the married ought to be one up on everyone else already as they have indeed found 'the one' and whatever troubles they may be experiencing there should be someone going through it beside them. So do they really deserve tax breaks?

Obviously, keeping families together has been an important point for the Conservatives for some time and I wouldn't argue that it's a bad thing but something like this has the potential to keep people together for the wrong reasons. Ultimately, what is generally agreed to be of utmost importance is the welfare of any children involved - and this is, of course, paramount. But surely it would be better for a child to have two happy homes than

to be living with both parents persisting with an unhappy relationship for the sake of money.

It's fair enough to say that under Labour, it was single parents that did comparatively better than couples but an almost vengeful swing in the opposite direction does not constitute the fairness in cuts that was suggested by the Conservatives during the election campaign.

The cut to universal child benefits is just one of several that was not considered in the Conservative manifesto. Education is another important sector for which promises were made in the election campaign; equally, there were promises to protect benefits for the elderly. The problem here is that whilst education is already experiencing more severe cuts than could have been expected, Cameron refuses to break his promises to the elderly who will do surprisingly well despite the fact that savings could be made easily through means testing for the Winter Fuel Allowance, free bus passes and the television license without affecting the most vulnerable.

It would, of course, be irrational and unpleasant to allow the elderly to suffer but it is no better to put this burden upon the youth however broad their shoulders may be perceived to be.

The cut to child benefits will of course affect children, the cuts to education will affect children and the upcoming rise in tuition fees will affect students. Add to this that the majority of the youth population are also single and it seems that the youth of Britain are in for a relatively tough time of it in the coming years. This seems an odd state of affairs when we live in a society that venerates youth rather than age and beauty rather than wisdom.

Whilst this position is not ideal, it is clear that in order to protect our future we must protect our youth. Indeed, it is them (and indeed us as readers) who will be paying for the older generations for years to come - and not just during the recession.

We already have a history of boom and bust, inequality and climate change for which they must take responsibility and it is us who will be paying for their care when they are living longer than any who have gone before them. When we get there, we have an awful lot to fix. In the meantime though, maybe we should all just grow up, avoid having kids and get into the soon-to-be even more lucrative business of wedding planning.

### Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

The LSE IT services appear to have a taste for the absurd; not content with posters advertising that the location of available computers can be found on a given website (?!), it has now decided to pursue this artistic ideal in the realm of printers. Or perhaps, one could interpret it is an attempt to extend the team's artistic foray into minimalism. The amount of content which these darned machines produce is indeed absolutely minimal.

When the paper has not run out, or jammed - two classical, and frankly rather boring obstacles to the luxury of possessing a copy of an article on print - the system has devised an ingenious way of ignoring orders at random. And really, it's all in good fun - like a casino game perhaps; the gamble of CTRL + P drawing regularly on your printing money, whilst expectantly, you crowd around the beast wondering whether it will finally resolve to spit it out.

This situation has reduced many a student to simpers of despair they scuttle back and forth between printer and desktop. In addition, waiting time approximates the 10 to 15 minutes per article as the printer, having finally been stirred to action, takes its a page at a time.

Will the Kafkaesque nightmare ever end?

Marion Koob

# 8,000 students and 1,300 members of staff.

## 1 letter in 3 weeks.

## We can do better than that, guys.

## To get your views printed:

# briant.thebeaver@gmail.com

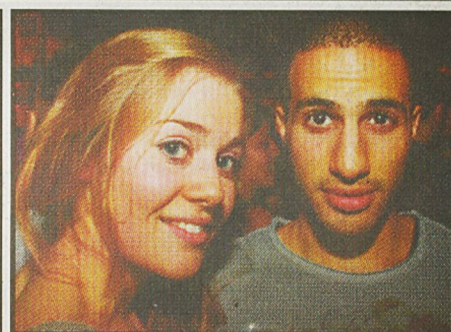


# Photo

12 October 2010 | The Beaver

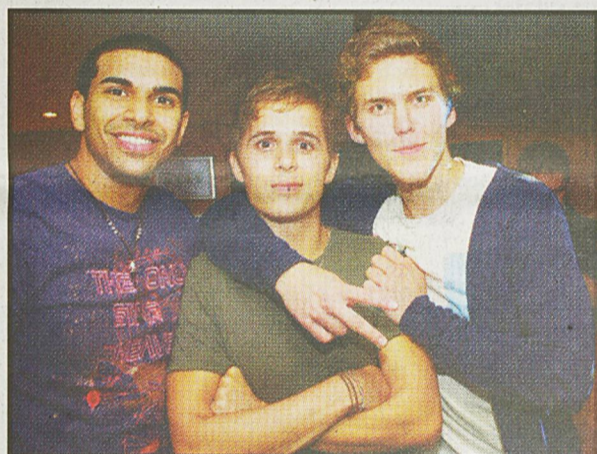
Photos by Benjamin Phillips

## Respectable...



And so it begins. When Strivens organises the pre-drinks and Dyso books the boat, you know you are in for an eventful evening. The boat trip went a very, VERY long way in allowing L.S.Skiers to bond over copious amounts of alcohol and a tour of the Thames not exactly appropriate for your Grandmother's trip to London. The evening was certainly a taste of things to come when we arrive in Val Thorens.

## Questionable?



... A couple of hours in and those three, four, five drinks from the Tuns work their magic and combine with the "gentle" swaying of the boat to produce what can only be described as "self appointed, learn as we go along, amateur DJ's" (See below) ...



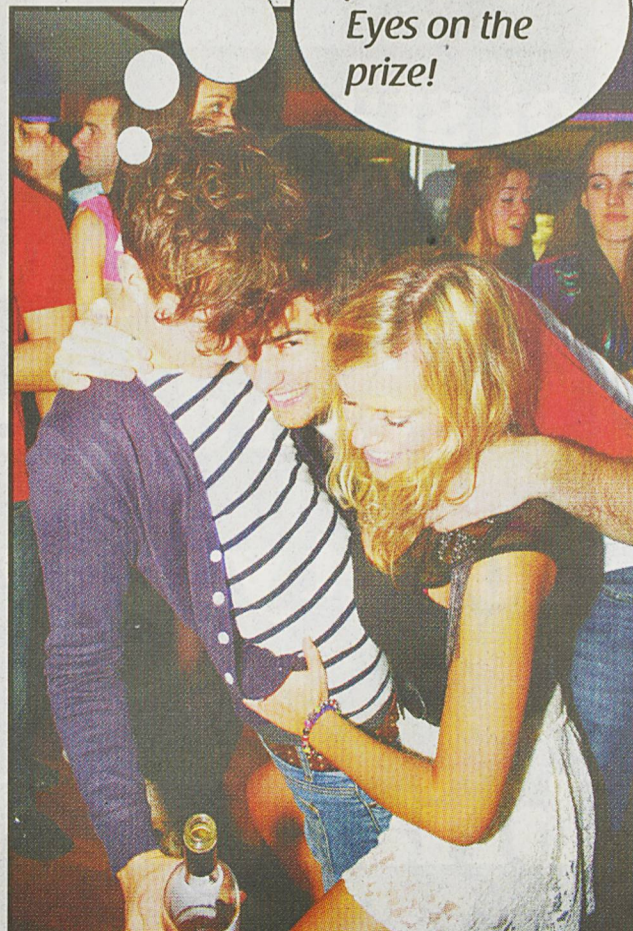
I love you Kate!  
I love you too,  
Boca! x



## Uh oh!



... After four hours of not a lot else to do but dancing, drinking, regaining your balance, socialising and drinking some more, the darker sides of what are usually perfectly respectable members of the L\*S\*SKI society come out to play. Sumner the sex pest, thrusts away and Strivens strikes her prime seductive pose. With few recollections the morning after, it's safe to say L\*S\*SKI has started as it means to go on.



Eyes on the prize Dan...  
Eyes on the prize!





# Social

## Is this your cup of tea?

**Rasha Touqan** on the value of the Annual General Meeting



Flickr user Ikhlusal Amal

**M**y ears are ringing. My head is spinning. I rush out into the cool air to clear my head. Where have I just been, you ask? Well, the AGM *dejour* naturally!

For the misinformed, AGM stands for Annual General Meeting. It is a meeting for all society members, to get an overview of what the society involves, what it does and what it needs from its members. On the one hand, it is an opportunity for committees to do general society house-keeping, such as elect new committee members and take captive fresh blood - I mean recruit potential volunteers. On the other, it is an opportunity for new students to see what the society has to offer, whether on a social or academic level, or as an opportunity to embellish their CV.

AGMs can be somewhat overwhelming. Intensity levels can vary. Some are only an awkward half an hour, where committee members nervously introduce themselves and the society with self-deprecating humour. Biscuits and Diet Coke are usually involved. Others entail housing a hundred people, a ten people over-confident committee and go on for a good hour and a half. Either way, you have a ton of information thrust upon you in a

rather short time span, and find yourself uncertain of what to do next. Questions swirl around in your mind, most prominently the one where you ask

'Who the heck are all these people?' This may also be followed by, 'Do I really want to do this?' And, 'Is this what I want; will I have enough time to do this; how did, what you thought would be a small meet and greet, turn into a moral dilemma of mass proportions.' Eventually, you begin basing your decision to join the society upon your rather cruel appraisal of the other people there; sequined glitter tights for trousers? Hmm....

Jest and melodrama aside, AGMs can be quite good. Yes, the idea does sound tedious on paper. After all, you sit in lectures, seminars and department meetings all day, so why would you want to spend your free hour sitting in another meeting? The answer is quite simple: AGM's are an excellent opportunity to meet people. Yes, this is one of the things that is constantly drilled into you before you come to university, and you're sick of hearing it. Yet, as an aged, humbled post-graduate student, worn down from years of university life, I'll reiterate the wisdom in these statements. It's true! I've

made some of my best friends at societies. AGM's are the best place to start, especially if some societies don't hold a lot of socials. Also, it gives you a great subject to complain about, which is always the best opportunity for complete strangers to bond. On the obvious side, they are really informative. Whether you genuinely want to get involved or are just testing the waters, they will tell what you need to know.

Society committees have gotten very good at this. Gone are the days when you just sat awkwardly in an empty classroom introducing yourselves. There is an actual technique and savvy to such things now. One society introduced itself gently to its members. It had a tea party type gathering before its AGM. This was a good way to get to meet people and it provided incentive to actually go, since there was a greater chance that you might happen to know someone there! This helps. Another society actually demonstrated what they did; the Debating Society for example showed an actual debate. Another society introduced its members through song. There are boundless ways of gaining our waiving interest. Good or bad, just live with this one comforting fact: most AGM's end at the nearest pub!

## Food for thought



### Teddy Nicholson asks us to dispel our cynicism, and help feed the hungry

**T**his week on Houghton Street do not be surprised if you find yourself ambushed on the way between classes, or from the bank to the Three Tuns, by an overenthusiastic student brandishing a bright red mug. The students are volunteers from the UN Society, and the mugs are the same ones used by the World Food Programme to feed children from across the world. We are hoping you will stick a few coins in.

A year ago, the UN Society inaugurated its relationship with WFP and this has now become an annual institution. This Saturday is World Food Day, and it marks the fact that nearly one billion people in the world today are undernourished. Every year, WFP feeds around 100 million of them.

This sharply highlights what, for me, is one of the most tragic facts in the world today - that it is too easy to become disenchanted and cynical about hunger. On the one hand the argument goes that the biggest food distribution network on the planet struggles to reach even ten percent of the people who need it, and on the other hand you have the perennial chant of

'teach a man to fish...', suggesting that the exercise is not just futile, but misguided.

That particular maxim which we all grow up with has become an obstacle that has to be overcome. In the most simplistic terms, while you teach the man to fish, he is starving to death. It is often said that hungry people are angry people; and what is perhaps more important today is that hungry people are often not in a position to help themselves, their families and their communities. It is not without significance that the first on the list of the eight Millennium Development Goals is the eradication of 'extreme poverty and hunger'.

Development doesn't work unless there is a stable level of food available - it is the most basic element to life, and this is where WFP comes in.

The agency feeds around one hundred million people every year. Inevitably this leads to the criticism that the WFP is building a culture of dependency. However, they have responded to these charges through developments in the way they go about providing food - they buy much of what they distribute from the least developed countries in the world, helping

agriculture develop. Most notably, the vast majority of food is distributed to children in schools. This encourages children to stay in school, gain an education and ultimately contribute to the development of the country.

The cost of this undertaking, to give a child a nutritious meal for a day and provide a short term incentive for him to stay in education, is just 16p! And while administrative costs inevitably exist, they are at a bare minimum, and take up only 7% of the total funds.

This is where the money the UN Society is collecting will go. Last year we raised over £800 which is enough to feed around 5000 children for a day. We are not talking about solving the highly politicised issue of development across the poorest parts of the world, we are talking about making a real, tangible difference to the lives of people who need it the most.

The WFP is one of the best examples in the world of how well the UN can work when people believe in its cause, have faith in its capacity, and put their money where their mouth is.

Please give generously on Houghton Street this week!

LSE STUDENTS' UNION UNITED NATIONS SOCIETY



World Food Day 16th October

'For the first time in history, more than 1 billion people are undernourished worldwide' World Food Programme (WFP)

On the occasion of World Food Day, the UN Society will be featuring the WFP's "Fill the cup" campaign between 18<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> October on Houghton Street

1/6 of the world is hungry, give to the WFP on Houghton Street this week!



# LSE Diary

## Ahmed Alani on a view from Hong Kong

**A**s I sat waiting for the plane to leave Heathrow, and the reality of the twelve-hour flight really hit me, I thought to myself "is it really worth it? Seriously? Hong Kong?" It's safe to say it was.

From the moment the plane descended through the clouds, and I got my first glimpse of this truly unique destination, I knew it would be worth it. You see, for those who haven't been (and apologies, I know many readers may well have been), it's quite hard to describe how Hong Kong appears, in any concise words. The shortest I achieved was comparing it to the island from *Lost*, just with New York skyscrapers thrown in everywhere.

Sadly, 7 hours across the globe, the traffic situation mimics that of the UK, only with the added bonus of "lunch hour" traffic jams as well. Brilliant. Of course, this therefore meant that the only sensible way to get round was via their metro system (MTR), a painfully superior version to London's Tube. Although there are fewer seats, you get the benefit of speedy trains that actually run on time, as well as air-conditioning. The thirty pence fare is also not too shabby.

Despite going out there to visit friends, I was somewhat apprehensive of making journeys on my own. In Japan, people stared at me, an enormous Middle Eastern giant in their eyes, wherever I went. This wasn't the case in Hong Kong, with Westerners seamlessly integrated into the city with the locals; indeed, the number of mixed-race couples I saw there screamed volumes about culture, and told me to dispose of any pre-conceived prejudices I may have had.

And so I did, as I made my way through the narrow alleyways towards the MTR station. It's strange, you see, the stark contrast that exists on the streets of

Hong Kong. At the sound of the metro-nome speeding up, and the appearance of the green man, you cross the main street, not dissimilar to a New York street, into an alleyway that seems as if it were pulled straight out of a film set in the back alleys of Beijing. More startling is the sharp difference between the run-down cafe, seemingly coated in a permanent layer of grease, and the gleaming white reflective surfaces of the air-conditioned designer shoe store. This somewhat surreal integration is something I had never quite experienced before, and I'm not quite sure how I feel about it.

Any prospect of cultural experiences was quickly dashed, as I realised just how commercial a place Hong Kong is. It is similar to Dubai, in the sense that any pockets of culture are purely for tourism purposes. Aside from an amazing trip to the gargantuan Tian Tan Buddha that rests atop a mountain on the Lantau Island of Hong Kong, and a handful of small temples, there is little else to satisfy the cultural aspect of a holiday.

Instead, I was faced with a myriad of malls to visit, with each being conveniently located at an MTR station. My "local", if you wish, was the aptly named Times Square Shopping mall, but in my opinion, there was little to differentiate between the malls other than their sizes. In shopping terms, it seems that wherever I went, you were faced with the same dilemmas: D&G or Gucci? Prada or Fendi? It's clear that Hong Kong caters almost exclusively for the super-rich, with only Zara just about qualifying as an exception. The alternative to the three-hundred pound Burberry scarf from the store, was the three pound "Burberry" scarf from a market stall. In all honesty, it's hard to tell the difference in terms of quality, but regardless, neither appealed to me. If one thing was obvious, it was that Hong

Kong's shopping scene just wasn't for me.

The complete opposite is to be said for the region's gastronomical offerings. In a place where shopping seems little less than extortion, I was amazed at how reasonably priced the food was, given the often outstanding quality. I dispelled any pre-conceived ideas of general "Oriental" food, and was treated to a variety of cuisines, Shanghaiese, Cantonese, Szechuanese, Vietnamese, Thai and Korean to name a few. My highlight was a chilli chicken dish at a Szechuanese restaurant; with dried chillis making up over ninety percent of the dish, the spicy sensation never really hit. Instead, the instant numbness that flooded through my mouth made for one of my favourite dining experiences.

In short, though Hong Kong makes it onto the shortlist of places I would like to live in at some point in the future, I feel it contains little to attract you there as a tourist. In the ten short days I spent there, I covered just about as much as was on offer (including Hong Kong's very own run-down Vegas, Macau, and its spin on Newport Beach), and I've come to the conclusion that Hong Kong's claim to fame is essentially as the business Capital of the Far East.



# The Sexual Potential of the Consultancy Fair

## Calum Young gets it on with Mckinsey

**I**s it the youthful gait? Is it the dainty strides they foster? Is it the way they make a woman's bottom wiggle? Is it their lack of practicality? Nobody knows exactly what makes high-heels so sexually alluring, but it is undeniable that their presence raises the sexual tension in any room. Certainly when combined with business attire and the raw stench of competition, as they were during the LSE's consultancy fair last Wednesday, high-heels make for prurient intoxication.

It was only about 10 minutes into the Consultancy Fair that my mind drifted from the limited networking opportunities on offer to the events orgasmic potential. Accustomed to seeing women dressed-down on campus, I couldn't ignore the array of raised hem-lines, keen heels and black tights on display. Readers of the *Financial Times* no doubt will be familiar with the term 'sexual capital' and it was easy to see why those who had opted to show an ample cleavage had gained a comparative advantage over the rest of us.

The sartorial elegance of the women was also combined with the sweaty bustle of the event, which was held in the senior common room. There were 150 people crammed in, each weighed down by the branded ephemera which the firms at the event give-out. Everyone there had a couple of corporation booklets and branded mugs. This had the effect of slowing the crowd down as it progressed from stand to stand. It also provided a useful cover for the odd wandering hand, of the form, 'sorry I thought that was my Oliver Wyman stress ball not your....'

Drunk on the potent mix of libidinous business babes and a broken air-conditioning system, I lunged from one low

neck-line to the next. A clutch of phone numbers were scribbled on my 'Your career with Bain Consulting' book, and I was desperately trying to get in close with a gorgeous blond amazon who was running the Deloitte stall. Though, she was quick to foil me on the nuances of economic theory, my suggestion that she 'lower her barriers to entry' didn't go down well. Nor was she impressed when I quipped, 'being your prisoner would be no dilemma'.

Rejected, I shuffled away from her stall, consoling myself with the thought that she belonged to a face-less multinational (though her own face was rather divine).

As with all social networking career extravaganzas, that network were doing with their eyes also loomed large. One couldn't be sure whether a stolen glance with a fair young maiden was indicative of sexual interest or the mistaken belief that you were there with Mckinsey. Certainly, like some pouty high-school jock, Mckinsey was receiving a lot of attention. The line was five deep to reach their stall. Possibly as a result of the enormous size of their client base, but then again, as the man from Booze Allen Consulting said, it's not the size that matters, it is the client quality.

In fact the whole event was oddly reminiscent of a school disco in so far as there were clear designations between the corporate/sexual successes on display and the duds cowering in the corner. BCG certainly didn't want for attention, but there were smaller firms like Roland Berger and Monitor who barely received any advances all night. Of course, out of pity I did show a bit of interest in the latter's strategy unit, but I was really only humouring them.

My theory on why my thoughts ran

“  
The whole event was oddly reminiscent of a school disco... there were clear distinctions between the corporate/sexual successes on display and the duds cowering in the corner  
”

from Consultancy to Orgy so quickly goes as follows. Throughout history people have found situations in which sex is forbidden particularly arousing. The Historian of 18th Century France, Robert Darnton, has noted that the pornography produced during the period was invariably set in Churches and other places of religious significance. Here any sort of romance was strictly forbidden. The same is true of the modern work place. Most corporations discourage sexual advances between members of their staff, thus they make it all the more appealing. What churches were to the 18th century, Management Consultancies are to the 21st.

Indeed, following some internet research I can report that many modern pornographic websites online stage their work in offices, and clothe their actors in business attire. I suppose this is just another example of Lord Bolingbroke's maxim that 'history is philosophy taught by example.'

Anyway back to the fifth floor orgy; and after about 45 minutes my gentle heart simply could stand the tension no more. There are only so many fleeting PWC smiles and Accenture winks that one can stand.

I left the event feeling slightly sullied. Sure, I had got a few mugs from the event and I had gained a year long supply of post-it notes, but in exchange I feel I had lost an important part of myself. Selling oneself to capitalism isn't morally reprehensible, but attempting to pull people at a Careers Fair probably is.

## OVERHEARD AT LSE

At the Steve Ballmer (Chief Executive of Microsoft) public lecture, after he spent half an hour talking about cloud computing and the opportunities it presents, Mr Ballmer was asked the following question by an ex-LSE student:  
"What is your favourite Xbox game?"

In the 4th floor restaurant, a fresher asks a second-year:  
"So how do I get to the Old Building from here?"

Overheard in Library, Course Collection.  
Over-excited fresher, clutching textbooks: "I guess I'm gonna read these tonight!"

Friend: "You know what I saw on a kid's toy once?"  
Me: "What?"  
Friend: "Something called a pedometer."  
Me: "Hehe! Was it a misspelled pedometer?"  
Friend: "What's a pedometer?"  
Me: "You weren't joking? Oh dear..."

On houghton street:  
Woman1: "But why?"  
Woman2: "Because they are whippy academics who don't use expressions like 'don't fuck around'"

Library:  
"I got five gams, everyday of the week. Yes, get in!"



# PART B



They're back, in season 5.  
But has Michael Scott got anything  
on Blighty's very own David Brent?

**THEATRE:**  
**BIRDSONG**  
trenches and  
trapdoors

**THE SOCIAL  
NETWORK**  
status update:  
like

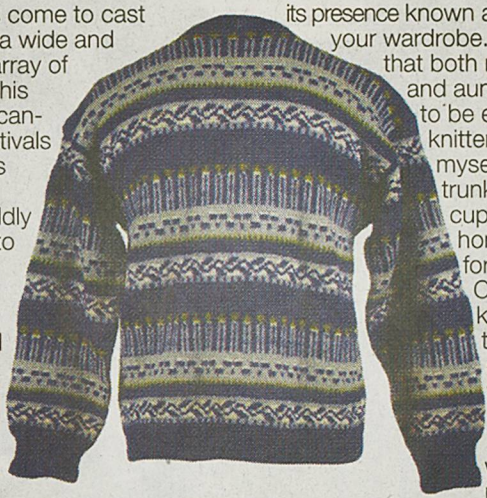
**FASHION  
AHOY!**  
nautical but  
nice



# FASHION: FISHERMAN FRENZY

Jump aboard with **Alice Leah Fyfe** as she scales the sartorial seas

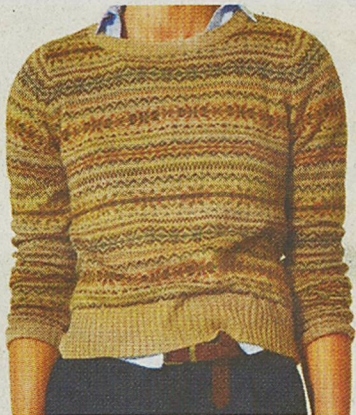
The time has come to cast your net to a wide and wonderful array of sea wear. This Summer, Scandinavia hit music festivals worldwide, offshoots from the Kings and Queens of otherworldly sounds have taken to our ears like a duck to icy water. Jonsi (Sigur ros), Junip (Jose Gonzales) and the dark Fever ray (The Knife). Now it is time for winter fashion to follow suit. This autumn sees the transition from the rustic fishing ports of Brittany to the depths of Scandinavian snowstorms. These wistful environments; dramatic cliffs, fjords and crashing waves exude a Brontë-esque romance which defies busy city streets. Having just returned from rustic French shores myself, I always find it surprising how such functional garments like the



its presence known at the front of your wardrobe. I am lucky that both my granny and aunt happen to be exceptional knitters and I find myself digging in trunks and top cupboards at home looking for the annual Christmas knit, keen to rekindle each style with the love and thought with which it was created; perhaps I will

aspire to develop such patience and skill; it is an art.

These classics are worth wading through charity shops for. I found some gems in Rokit at £40. New replicas can be found on the High Street, however. (Zara from £29.99)



Cream is always safe, but the craziest colours can be found to brighten up plain black leggings or a simple tunic dress.

The Fairisle style has seeped into accessories recently. For warm ears, there's a very cute headband from Urban Outfitters for £17.

Lads, a Fairisle knit with simple shirt, cords and broken in boat shoes will work wonders. Here's a great pair in the Office sale at £45.



## raw utility wear of fishing ports and sailing boats

finds its way on to the runways. It really is an example of how inspiration can come from absolutely anywhere; function and comfort is, at last returning to the forefront of designers' minds. This season's D&G Campaign is Alpine themed and has some spectacular monochrome Fair Isle patterns.

While London rarely has the climate for full Atlantic or Nordic getup, there is infinite opportunity to stock a few staple pieces to up shelter those strolls in Hyde Park or those windswept walks along the South Bank. In particular, the previously abhorred itchy woollen Jumper that Granny knits you every Christmas has gradually been making

For Snug and stylish legs, pick up a pair of cable knit socks from Urban Outfitters £8. These and those thick cotton tights you wore to School are a season must.

On milder days, the striped Breton will remain on trend, or perhaps its thicker and warmer cousin There's one in American Apparel which I love, not bad at £42 and it's very snug.

## The key item for this look is the Duffle Coat or Cape.

There is a vast price range here, and depending how much you intend to wear it, it is worth investing in a good quality, cosy one; it will last you a lifetime. Gloverall, stocked by Urban Outfitters and ASOS are a specialist company which have high wool content classic shapes in an array of colours for guys and girls. They are pricey though, at around the £300. If, on the other hand, you are looking for a cheaper one-season purchase, look at ASOS, and Topshop. (Classic Duffle ASOS £75, Camel Duffle Cape ASOS £80. Below, Topshop Hooded Duffle Cape £75.)

Mirroring the style, but in a more versatile garment, we have cardies. With or without hoods, these are an ideal layer to add to any outfit; cords, smock dresses, jeans, leggings.

Waxed Jackets have been around for a while and the classic is still available from Barbour shops and concessions worldwide. However, Zara have caught on and are selling these coats for a fraction of the price.

Natural smocks



and tunics provide a good solid base to any of these outer garments. Linen, Cotton and even more innovative fabrics like bamboo are Muji have some great staples for this very purpose.

For those wandering feet, boots are the answer, and are perfect for the rain and snow to come. In keeping with the Nordic theme, these clog boots from Zara are excellent with ribbed tights. Guys, stick with the boat shoes.



The trick is to contrast your garments; a chunky knit would go perfectly with a delicate shirt or blouse, woollen leggings with patent shoes, intricate Fairisles with block colours.. you get the idea.

## work/wander/woo?

This is definitely a look for wandering; layered and comfortable. But of course you'll be able to use any of these garments for going out. For wooing, add a quick splash of metallic navy nail varnish (Chanel's winter secret) and these high-heeled clogs (£68) Topshop.

**Colours:** think natural nautical tones; cream, earthy stone greys, Teal, powder blues and greens, and charcoal, a splash of crustacean red will brighten up those cloudy days as well.



LOVE these Jeans from Topshop!! (£40)

And now that you've had a full week of lectures, you'll be needing somewhere to put all those notes.

## The satchel is, as ever, kingpin.



ASOS two-tone leather



satchel £65

Urban Outfitters Web Harris Tweed £185

Go check out the "B-Side" Hussein Chalayan Exhibition at Spring Projects in Kentish Town NW5 3BH [www.spring-projects.co.uk](http://www.spring-projects.co.uk)

I haven't been yet, but I can guarantee that it will be an absolutely spectacular celebration of one of CSMs most kaleidoscopic and dynamic designers. It runs until 23rd Oct, so Go Go Go!!

# B PART OF PART B

WE NEED YOUR TALENT. GET INVOLVED BY CONTACTING [J.STOREY1@LSE.AC.UK](mailto:J.STOREY1@LSE.AC.UK)

## Stage: Ghost Stories, Duke of York's Theatre

At the start of Ghost Stories, the Professor of parapsychology tauntingly asks the audience: "What is it that scares you?" during the staged lecture that opens and forms the centrepiece of Ghost Stories. "That's easy, its fear of death" he responds to his own question. The Professor (played by co-writer Andy Nyman) goes on to say that the power of the ghost stories, the reason they endure and are passed down from generation to generation, orally, photographically, and now digitally, is that they give the angst-ridden, death-fearing human mind a glimmer of hope that death is not the end.

The audience however must judge for itself, and so the Professor invites you to sit back, try to relax, and keep a critical eye out whilst three of the "percipients" he has encountered in

his long career re-tell and re-enact their experience with the paranormal. The stories are brought to life expertly by the cast of David Cardy, Ryan Gage and Nicholas Burns and the shocks, that come thick and fast, are effective at making you jump out of your seat. Despite this, there was for me a lack of that pervasive and chilling creepiness that stalks into your breast when you see something genuinely terrifying. The fright was also in part reduced by an over-reliance on props, which became unnecessary.

In between each telling, the Professor gives his analysis of what was just played out on stage. His view is that the demons the percipients face are called up by the protagonists themselves, rather than by the supernatural; an external manifestation of some internal guilt over things done, lies told, people hurt. Logic, not

There was a lack of that pervasive, chilling creepiness that stalks into your breast when you see something genuinely terrifying

the supernatural, must prevail. And despite the rollicking fun of the stories themselves, one feels that here, in the Professor, lies the main drama of Ghost Stories. His passionate atheism and frothing disgust with the human race for failing to realise that this life "is all there is" starts to feel a little forced, as though he himself may be denying something in his own past that haunts him.. Is he desperate not to believe in hell because he knows he deserves a place there right next to Sisyphus?

As the third ghost story comes to a close, the reality of the lecture is destroyed and the characters and the audience are dragged down into a hellish sequence of story that draws the whole play together and really validates the entire show as more than just ghoulish fun. A climactic crescendo brought on by technical

effects such as pumping smells into the theatre, lighting, and on stage illusion, combine wonderfully to take us down a twisted path I could never have foreseen. I should have known that the night would not end as expected given that Jeremy Dyson of the League of Gentlemen co-wrote the play.

Ghost Stories is great fun and even manages to be thought provoking. There is one cast member I have neglected to mention – you must go to see it to find out who it is, or perhaps who it isn't! One conclusion I think all students will come to having seen the play is that for our more tedious compulsory units (in my case quantitative methods) we should employ actors to present the material.

**Rory Creedon**

Ghost Stories is on at the Duke of York's Theatre until 20 February



# MUSIC: EAST LONDON CALLING

John Atterbury talks to **Masaya Tanikawa** about the journey from his native East London - in South Africa - to the grimey streets of New Cross

“What got me into music? Well, it’s been a part of my life for as long as I can remember,” says John Atterbury with a shy smile. A producer and musician of myriad talents, he hails from East London – not the one most Londoners are familiar with, but the charming port city in his native South Africa.

Now John is in another East London, working out of a sunny New Cross studio with a degree in Popular Music from Goldsmiths under his belt. His bottomless passion for music is easy to tell – a double bass leans against a wall plastered with posters near a rack lined with acoustic, electric and bass guitars. An electric keyboard rests between studio monitors; composition notes and scores are scattered all around.

Where does John, who primarily specialises in folk music, derive his influences from? “I grew up listening to a wide variety of music from different South African cultures. Juluka were possibly my earliest musical influence, long before I played music.” A multi-racial band from the 70s, they combined Zulu music styles like maskanda, storytelling by song and mbaqanga, South African jazz, with Celtic folk and Western popular music.

During his childhood, John enjoyed listening to music from around the world despite apartheid – how did the segregated nature of South African culture affect him? “I grew up in the final and most chaotic years of apartheid, so people from different races were separated until I was a teenager. Most of my friends were white, but I listened to plenty of multi-racial South African music. Just off the top of my head there’s Tananas, Zap Dragons and the very talented black singer, Vusi Mahlasela among many others.”

John’s first instrument was his voice as a child – now, nearing 30, he skilfully plays a number of instruments with bass guitar as his main choice. “My brother needed a bass player for his band when I was about ten, so like most bass guitarists in the world, that’s how I got into playing bass.”

“I had a lot of fun playing in my brother’s bands. He’s definitely a big influence on my own work. My sister played with us sometimes, too. She’s great on sax, and is a fantastic piano player as well.”

Music is a core trait of the Atterburys. “It runs in the family. My grandpa was a great musician, too. We used to have these folk nights when I was young, everyone would gather around at our home and play songs together,” says John. “I guess it was influenced by 60s music. We’d mix traditional folk songs with The Beatles, Bob Dylan... The music of my parents’ generation.”

“It was really great. Dad would play guitar, my sister would be on sax, I’d play the bass and sometimes my dad’s friends would come over and

jam with us. I also have a lot of friends passionate about music, they would sometimes join in too.”

Was the local music scene in East London an active one? “Not really, no. It is a very small city which wasn’t very rich music-wise. Culturally quite dry, I would say. We would play gigs but no one would show up, maybe because East London rests right on the shore.”

“In high school I opened up a club with some friends, and it took off for a while. We would rent out a venue every two weeks or so and play there. Even if no one turned up, it was a lot of fun,” he says. “It was so different to the music scene here, which is far more active and diverse. I guess that’s one of the main reasons I left for London.”

Leaving one East London for another, he was drawn to Goldsmiths for its creative reputation. “I basically wanted something more than an

## I grew up in the final and most chaotic years of apartheid...

academic look on music. I don’t mean being technically good at guitar, I was never interested in anything like that.”

“Listening to different music and working with different people inspires me. The community at Goldsmiths has been really good for that. I wouldn’t have been able to do this back home.”

Seizing on the creative opportunities offered by London, he has become involved with musicians from around the world. He plays bass in Embers, a mellow indie-rock band he formed with some Goldsmiths classmates.

“My time at Embers has been nothing short of amazing. There’s no frontman, so I think all of our unique personalities come through quite strongly. I think we understand each other really well. We’re in the final mixing stages of our debut EP, and we’ve started doing some gigs again after a brief hiatus.”

He is also part of the Goldsmiths Choir. In the summer, they were opening act on the Holts stage at Glastonbury: “The choir has been a really unique experience for me, being able to share the stage with a large amount of people. Performing with The Matthew Herbert Big Band at Glastonbury was an unforgettable experience. It’s kept me pretty busy over the years.”

Busy is an understatement. When he isn’t rocking his Warwick bass on-stage or singing in a choir, he gives private music lessons and composes film scores. John is currently scoring an NHS documentary for sex workers in South Africa and a 13-minute short

art film. “I would love to get into film composition and scoring – so for my final project at Goldsmiths, I decided to do a short animation film about a mythical creature from Japanese folklore called baku, who eats bad dreams.”

“I wanted to do something with video – the project came about from there really. We had to have a theme so mine was about the exploration of identity,” he says.

The score is beautifully composed with live strings recorded by his friends back home in East London; the detailed animation is equally remarkable.

“It was a lot of work,” says John, “but it was really great. It took a few weeks to pick out all the materials like the thorns and bushes, designing the sets and puppets and doing the filming.”

There was a lot of experimentation since you didn’t know what would work until you saw it on screen, but it was a lot of fun. I finished all the production first so I could freely compose to picture. The music really tells the story. I feel it really conveys the atmosphere.”

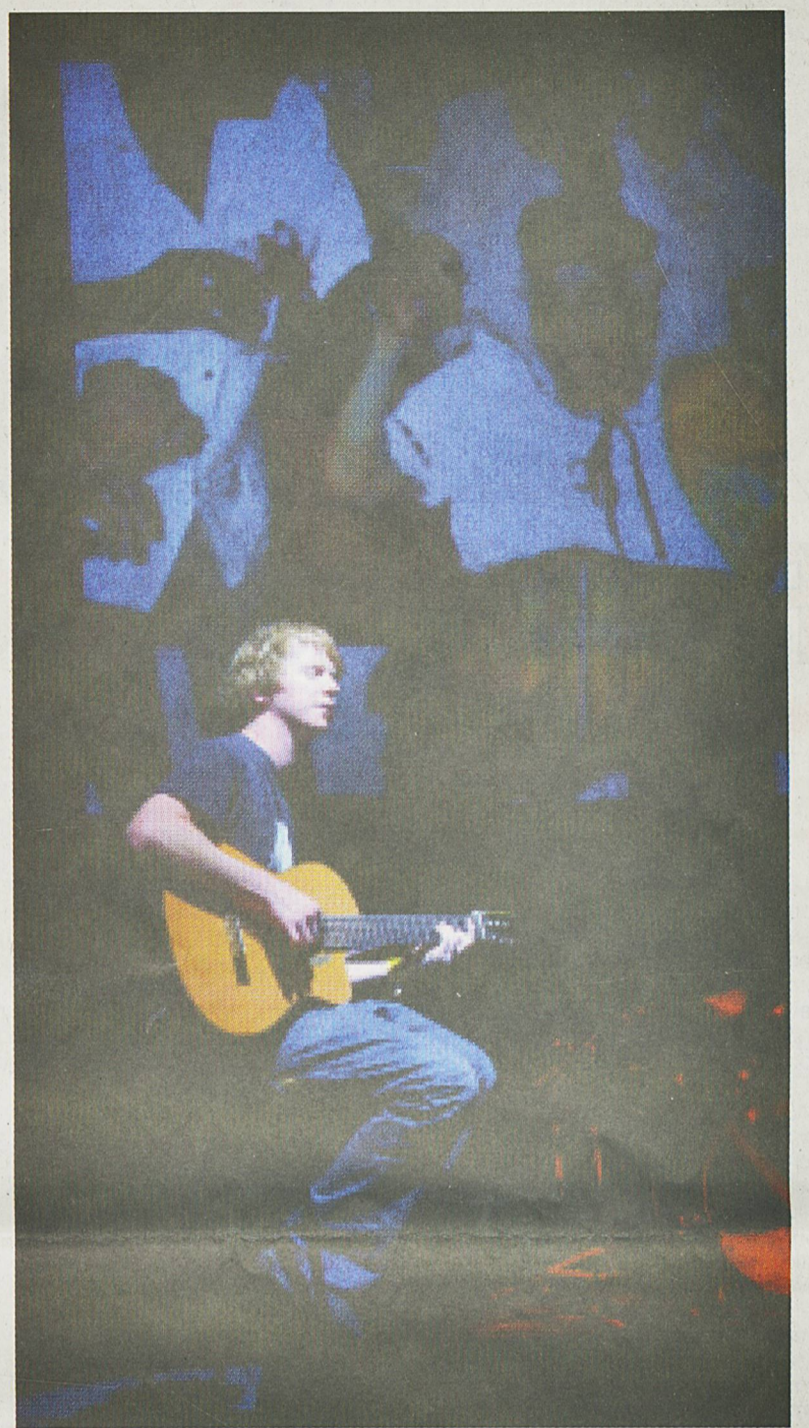
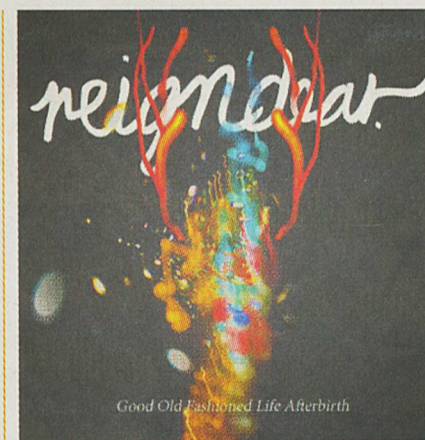
John shows great creativity with his unique approach to composition and scoring; his talents as a music producer are just as impressive, judging from his work with experimental outfit Reigndear. Consisting of brothers Kent Dylan and Wesley Jay, they are also from East London. They comfortably fall somewhere between acoustic indie and experimental folk.

“I’ve been friends with them since I was 14. I recorded them about a year and a half ago while I was visiting home in a tiny bedroom with a little microphone and a laptop. I came back to London and produced full songs with the recordings.”

John is now producing for fellow Goldsmiths graduate and cello player Jasmine Scott Neale’s first EP.

“It’s going to be experimental, cello-based music. It’s hard to frame it into a genre, but I definitely feel great about it.”

Visit his site for more info: [www.myspace.com/johnatterburymusic](http://www.myspace.com/johnatterburymusic)



With a wide-eyed view on the myriad complexities offered by life (and death), Reigndear sings expressive lyrics with ‘a nostalgic look at the present through the past & future’.

Consisting of Kent Dylan, Wesley Jay and John Atterbury, Reigndear’s multi-faceted sound is akin to the members and their many, many talents. Kent provides lead vocals, writes the songs, handles online and print design, strums guitar (alongside many other instruments), and takes beautiful photos.

Wesley handles backing vocals, filming and video editing, and does

song writing and guitar work as well. John is on bass, melodica, mandolin, glockenspiel; he is also their arranger and producer.

His influence on the band as a film composer becomes apparent from beautiful trembling strings floating over deep, cinematic moods. A subtle mix of electronic ambience and organic sounds makes for a truly original journey into Reigndear’s realm of experimental folk.

Be sure to visit their official website at <http://www.reigndear.thesadservice.com/> for a free download of their album, beautiful high-quality wallpapers of photos, taken by the band.



‘Poignant’: Lee Ross as Jack Firebrace

## Stage: Birdsong, Comedy Theatre

Adequate as a production, inadequate as a dramatization of Sebastian Faulk’s harrowing and insightful novel, Trevor Nunn’s *Birdsong* underwhelms.

Emitting other narrators, the play follows diarist Stephen Wrayford (Ben Barnes) who, whilst staying in France, has a passionate love affair with Isabelle Azaire (Genevieve O’Reilly), the beautiful wife of his unappealing host. Discovered by her jealous stepdaughter Lisette (Florence Hall) the lovers leave together, but, supposedly wracked with guilt, Isabelle deserts him. Stephen then finds himself plunged into the bloody, muddy horrors of the First World War, where we meet his comrades and commanders and witness life in the trenches. Stephen survives the battle of the Somme and, although injured and disillusioned, he hopes to find Isabelle again.

A far cry from the eye opening, intimate detail of Faulk’s novel, the play is generally unimaginative and, aside from a few memorable moments, unexceptional. The love

affair, which burns fervently in the novel and forms an eroticism which underpins the fever-pitch of the war years, is here tepid at best; at worst, cringe worthy.

This is not the fault of the acting. The script is at times melodramatic and old-fashioned, and the adaptation relies heavily on words, dialogue and description. To make up for what it lacks in terms of visual communication and imaginative staging, the play demands an extremely high-quality performance.

The most poignant moments come from the performance of Lee Ross as Jack Firebrace. In contrast to the at-times wooden Ben Barnes, Ross’s natural, empathetic performance, repeatedly captures the previously unstirred emotions of the audience. The rich, cinematically horrific details – dismembered bodies, death, claustrophobia and mania – which give Faulk’s novel impact are lost through the adaptation’s over-reliance on the spoken word. Carried by Ross’s performance, the play instead becomes a study of camaraderie and companionship amongst

soldiers.

Visually *Birdsong* borrows from many acclaimed WWI productions – for example, the backdrop is a screen showing pictures and drawings to create the scene, reminiscent of *War Horse*. However, the most obvious visual photocopy is from the end of *Blackadder Goes Forth*; as the backdrop laboriously descends to reveal a sunny blue sky and a field of plastic poppies, accompanied by tweeting birds, it is impossible not to think more favourably of the sitcom.

*Birdsong* may be an enjoyable evening out, but shockingly for a WWI dramatization, it is entirely un-harrowing. The usual hush which follows such performances was absent – the audience, transported nowhere by the final scene, were instantly aware of when to applaud. No-one was in need of a moment to contemplate, reflect or compose themselves. The elderly veteran beside me had already put his coat on.

**Phoebe Riley**

*Birdsong* is on at the Comedy Theatre, Panton Street, until 15 January





# FIGHTING FOR OFFICE

## Nathan Briant reckons Brent is Best

**B**ack in 2001, Ricky Gervais was less successful than his partner, Jane Fallon - producer of the mid-'90s BBC drama *This Life* - let alone one of the most famous comedians in the western world. Stephen Merchant's CV was arguably more complete than Gervais's - a stint on the BBC World Service with *SMART's* Kirsten O'Brien and other experience around London's radio scene is not to be sniffed at.

But neither of their careers up to that point could predict what Gervais and Merchant were to create for BBC Two later that summer in the form of *The Office*.

I'm not at all au fait with the international versions of *The Office*, which have brought the original writers of the concept millions, though there is a reason for that. I don't feel I need to see something else for other nations' audiences when there's already something so inexorably brilliant wait-

ing in English.

It's often forgotten almost how, if not barren, then lacking the British comedy scene was at the turn of the century. *Masters of the British* sitcom like David Renwick, the writer of the superb *One Foot in the Grave*, were running low on ideas. No other sitcom from the turn of the millennium has really lived on truly like *The Office*.

The 'documentary' style of *The Office*, untested in comedy until Gervais and Merchant's masterpiece, is particularly symbolic when this is taken into account. Crucially cheap, recording people at work was popular with viewers on programmes like BBC One's *Airport*, ITV's *Airline* and other TV documentary shows set in vets and children's hospitals aired virtually nightly. Critically, this made *The Office*, gently satirising this genre and the people it made relatively famous for slightly more than 15 minutes, even more necessary.

It's often cutting as well as up-

roariously funny - just as David Brent's mannerisms are brilliant, Brent's eventual sacking as the office's manager at the end of the second series is more moving than many dramas could manage to be. Similarly, the Tim-Dawn-Lee love triangle does not tire.

## If the Americans and the French want their own, fine. But we'll keep ours, thanks

Although Gervais and Merchant (or Gervais alone) have often used relatively similar plotlines to the emotional dilemma in *The Office* far too readily in their later projects (see Extras and the relationship between

Maggie and Andy, the second-rate Gervais film, *The Invention of Lying*, and Merchant and Gervais's latest film, *Cemetery Junction*) in their later work, it's perfect for the programme.

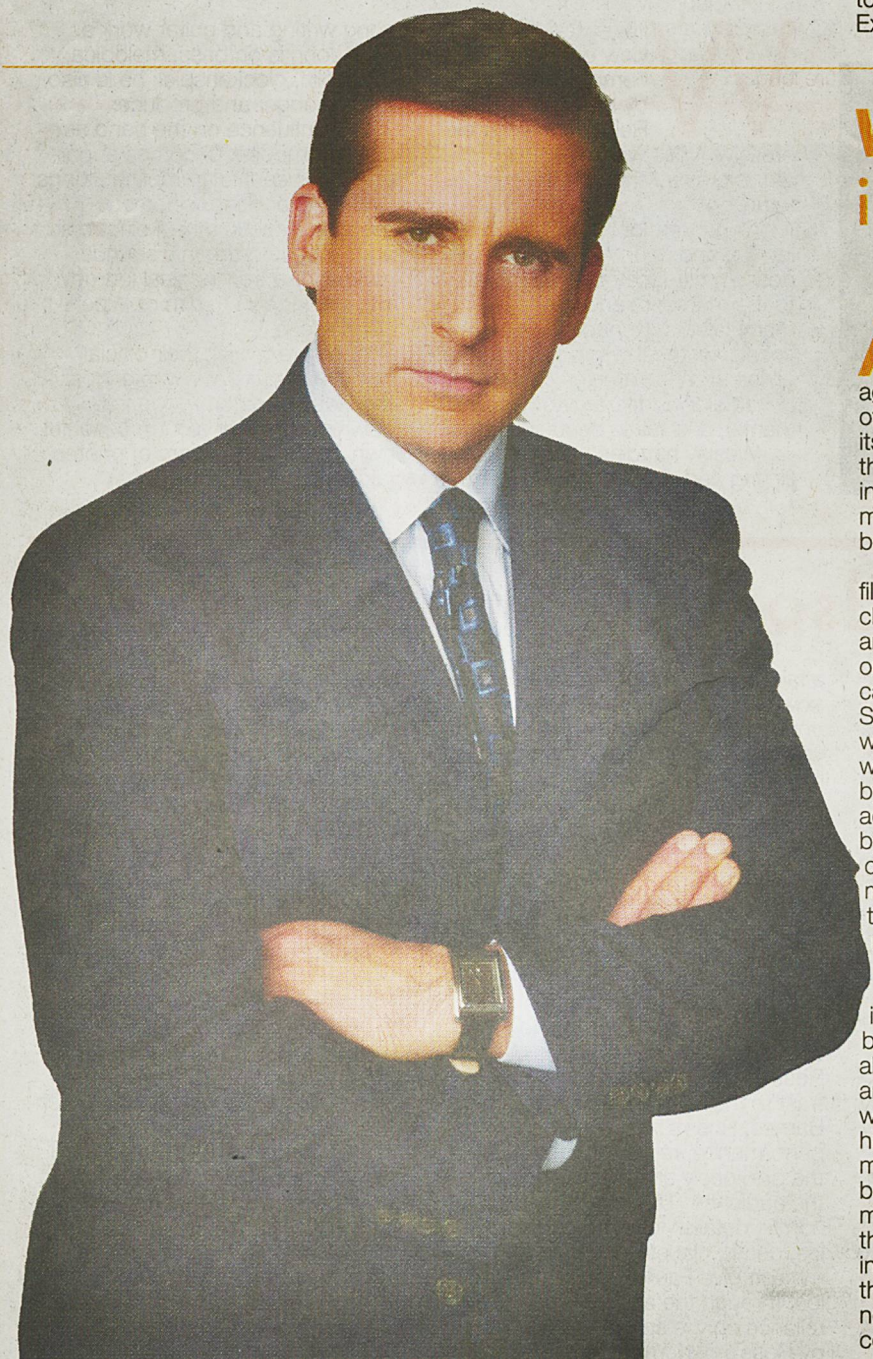
Further, on a personal level, I've often used thinking about *The Office* to carry me through boring GCSE lessons when I wrote *Office* quotes, sometimes whole scenes - (short ones like the Peak Practice scenes were often my favourite: 'It's boring, isn't it, just staying in, watching Peak Practice with your life?...Not for me, I like it.') - on my friends' then-pristine homework planners. It's lasted me through boring A-Level lessons, nights in the pub, and still now during lulls in classes.

The four main characters - Ricky Gervais, obviously, Martin Freeman as Tim, Mackenzie Crook as Gareth and Lucy Davis as Dawn - deserve credit for their performances. Ewen Macintosh, who plays the oafish 'number bod' Keith, or Ralph Ineson, the awful misogynist Chris Finch, give the performance of their careers - much

of the credit for this must go to the excellent script.

Take, say, episode four from series two where David Brent - for some inexplicable reason - is hired as a motivational speaker to speak at a seminar in a leisure centre. There is not one misplaced line in this whole 30-minute episode. From turning down a spliff from a stranger because when he smokes weed 'he goes to Munchie City'; from arriving in the room following some orthodox speakers, telling the audience to 'get out... if you don't think you can cut it' to resolving to simply guffaw in front of the audience as an exercise for £300, is simply brilliant.

Although no other sitcom of the last decade has endeared itself to me like *The Office* - and there's been several excellent ones, *Peep Show*, for one - there's a reason for that. It's because *The Office* is one of the greatest sitcoms Britain has produced. And if the US or the French want their own, fine, but we'll keep our version, thanks.



## Wei Tse Loh thinks *The Office* is an American workplace

**A**dapted from the original BBC series, the US version of *The Office* started out as a copycat. But from season two onwards, it has managed to develop a style and identity of its own, and now is currently airing its seventh season in the US. It is also the last season with Steve Carell playing the role of Michael Scott, regional manager of the office branch and the boss we all love/hate.

It is one of the rare shows that are filmed in a mockumentary style: the characters are aware of the camera and often look into it. Sometimes one pointed look from a character can make you dissolve into laughter. Some of the characters like Michael welcome the presence of the camera while others are visibly uncomfortable by the intrusiveness of it. The main action of the show is supplemented by "talking-head interviews" where the characters (usually alone) will comment on events that happened during the day. In fact, some of the funniest moments come from these talking-heads.

Much of the action in the show is supplied by Michael Scott. Though being a regional manager, he spends almost all the time doing nothing and having "conference meetings" with his employees. What makes him strangely lovable are his winning moments: all the more meaningful because they're so rare. One of these moments appears after Pam (one of the employees) wins a water colouring contest. She invites everyone at the office to her art show. Surprisingly, no one shows up besides one of her co-workers (who previously criticised

her art) and Michael. It was a really sincere moment between the two as Michael was genuinely proud of her work and Pam really needed that support.

But Michael's crazy antics

## It may've started off as a copycat, but *The US Office* has developed a style and identity of its very own

wouldn't have made the show as great if it didn't have Jim and Pam's heart-tugging moments of developing romance to balance it out. Jim has had a crush on Pam since the first day he met her but catch is, Pam was already engaged to someone else. While Pam does feel the tension between them, she isn't quite ready to sort out her feelings for Jim yet. Much of the first and second season shows Jim struggling to come to terms with his feelings for her. At one of the earliest episodes of the show, Pam falls asleep on Jim's shoulder during one of Michael's conference meetings and Jim gives the sweetest little happy smile. Really, it was adorable.

They're one of the best *The Office* is very much an ensemble show and wouldn't be what it is without relying on the comedic expertise of the sup-

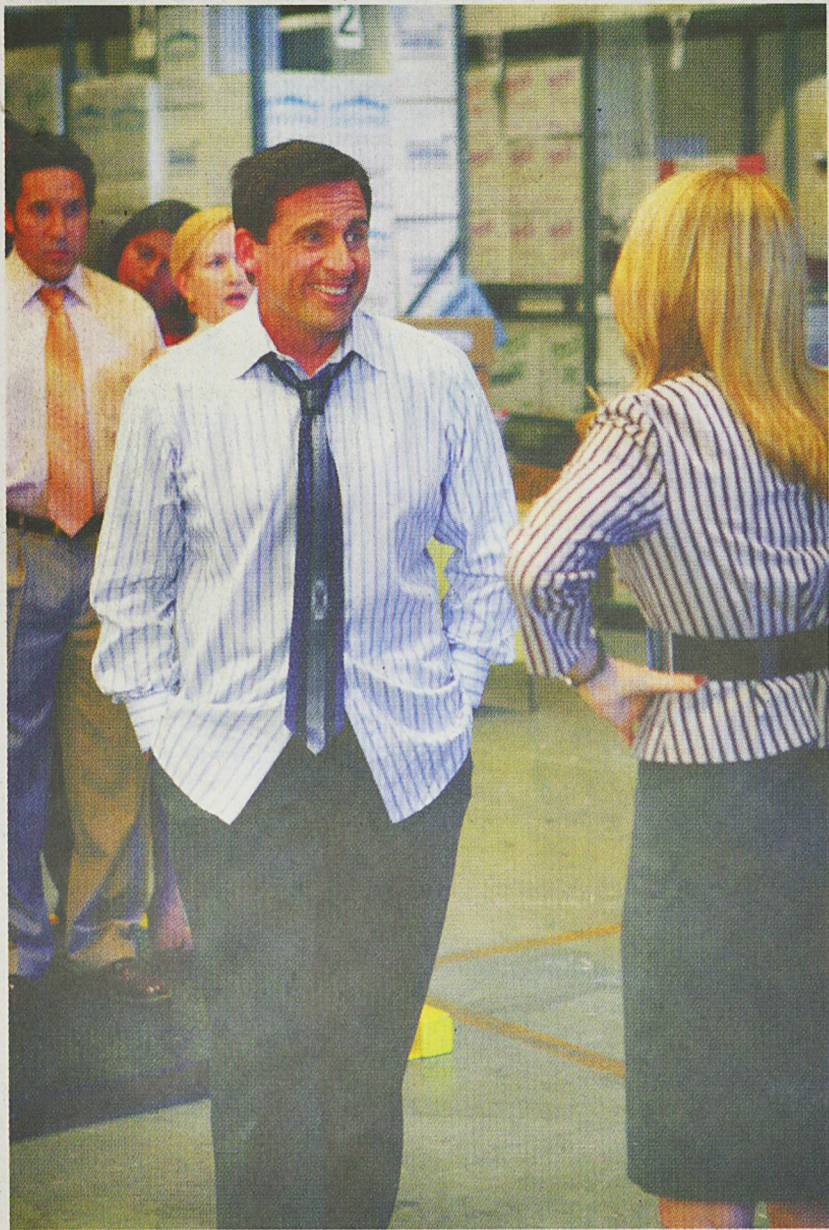
porting actors. Throughout the past six seasons, the show has managed to expand all of the background characters giving each of them their own moments to shine on screen. The more comical parts of the show often come when there are group scenes, in the conference room or out in the parking lot when everyone can give offhand remarks that leaves the viewer in stitches. Many of the writers are in fact acting as supporting characters in the office.

What makes *The Office* such good television is its deadpan humour, that one look with a lifted eyebrow, that offhand comment, the way it balances reality with absurdity, the way an episode can be full of painfully awkward situations, then end with heartwarming moments of drama and human emotion, and above all the wealth of characters and the interactions between them. They are the heart of the show and what makes it so darn watchable.

The first three seasons of *The Office* are gold, the wit at its sharpest and the chemistry between the actors at their best though the rest of the seasons also have a lot to offer. Having gone on for six seasons and now with its seventh season under way, it may be true that *The Office* has gone on longer than it should. The episodes aren't as funny as they used to be, the characters becoming too caricature-like. But none of these things can negate the fact that *The Office* was and will always be one of the best shows on television.



# TV: THE OFFICE, SEASON 5



**T**he fifth season of the US Office begins with a bang, rather than a whimper. After the occasionally entertaining but mostly haphazard fourth season, brought down by that pesky writers' strike that no one seems to remember, the fifth season starts right where we left off.

Dwight is still fooling around with his 'monkey' Angela, despite Phyllis catching them in flagrante delicto in the previous episode. Being dethroned as the head of the 'Party Planning Committee' through blackmail has had quite the effect on Angela's self-esteem. Toby has moved to Costa Rica and his replacement, Holly (Amy Ryan a.k.a. Beadie Russell from *The Wire*), is making quite the impression on Michael. Pam is off to art school in New York, leaving Jim alone in the office with no one to turn to for help when things go completely insane. Ryan is back to being a temp after his stint in prison: with a funky new goatee to boot. It's just another day in Scranton, Pennsylvania!

A promotional prize of five days' holiday to the winning Dunder Mifflin branch who collectively loses the most weight is the driving force behind the plot of this episode, and everyone takes to it with differing degrees of care. Dwight, in what has become his typical fashion, forces everyone to eat fried chicken and custard before the first weigh-in to arbitrarily increase their starting weight. Kelly, as part of a more general crusade to become more 'fabulous' in the workplace, starts off slowly - mimicking Beyonce's now infamous maple syrup/cayenne pepper/water diet - before going to drastic measures by ingesting a tapeworm given to her by Creed (who proudly brags in a talking head interview: 'Definitely not a tapeworm!')

In other plot related concerns, Holly's misplaced concern over Kevin's mental health makes a return in this episode, providing the funniest exchange of the episode when Angela berates him for getting some figures wrong.

All of these are good things, and it makes a welcome change to see the gang return in relatively fine form for the premiere. As far as hour-long episodes go, 'Weight Loss' holds up fairly well, but comes up against the same pitfalls as previous extended episodes: extremely funny in the first half, then middling towards the end. However, in comparison to season four hour-long specials ('Fun Run' and 'Dunder Mifflin Infinity' springing to

**It remains to be seen if the writers can bring the show back to its former glory**

mind), it performs admirably.

Amy Ryan's return as Holly is a gift that keeps on giving to the audience. While many people will know her from her stint in *The Wire* or her cinematic performances - for example, her Academy Award-nominated turn in *Gone Baby Gone* - Ryan acquits herself nicely to comedy. In a segment that never feels completely forced, Michael and Holly end up rapping together in the stock room seemingly randomly and it is positively hilarious! One would never think that the mousy, introverted Baltimore-raised

Port Official could turn out to be the next Lil' Kim, but this episode makes a fine case on her behalf!

While Amy Ryan may be the gift that keeps on giving, one gift that has overstayed its welcome is that of the Jim/Pam relationship. What made early US Office episodes so compelling was that the writers were given the opportunity to expand the Tim/Dawn relationship inherited from the UK to, if it is at all possible, make the audience care even more about their plight of unrequited love. When the pair finally managed to admit their burgeoning love for one another, the show took a creative leap forward; however, lacking the original British template for dealing with such a scenario (Tim only managing to just kiss Dawn in the final episode of the UK edition), the writers inevitably ended up floundering for storylines that continued throughout much of the fourth season, putting viewers off characters they usually regarded as their favourites.

While the development at the end of this episode may seem like a way of upping the ante and varying the stakes, it remains to be seen if the writers can truly capitalise on the change - which I won't reveal for people who have yet to watch the episode - and bring the show back to its former glory, or wallow in their own smugness at the sense of self-satisfaction over managing to produce so many quality episodes of television. We'll see...

So, the Dunder Mifflin gang are back and ready to work. The question is: are you ready to join them in the cubicles?

**Jonathan Storey**

*The Office Season 5 begins airing October 20th at 10pm on Comedy Central*

# TV: BOARDWALK EMPIRE

**R**ecently the BBC was told by the BBC Trust to produce more original drama. That's all very well, they replied, but it's pretty damned expensive and can we afford it? And right they were. *Boardwalk Empire*, which has just begun to air in America, was already a phenomenon before it even aired, due to it being the most expensive television show ever made. The pilot alone cost a whopping \$50 million dollars to make. The reason for this is the decision by the makers to build the entire Atlantic City Boardwalk from 1920: proving it wasn't always Las Vegas' uncool younger brother.

The other reason why it became mythologized before it aired is the cast of characters involved in the show. The pilot was directed by the one and only Martin Scorsese who is also one of the producers on the show, which tells you how great a show it is. If this wasn't enough the show is produced and written by Terence Winter who is the genius behind the Sopranos. Mark Wahlberg is also involved, his experience with *Entourage* which he produces adds yet another hit television show producer to the credits. And finally there is Tim Van Patten who has directed for every great American TV series of recent years, such as *The Wire*, *Deadwood* and the last ever episode of *Sex and the City*.

Oh, and then there are the actors: Steve Buscemi, Kelly Macdonald, Stephen Graham, Michael Pitt and Michael K. Williams a.k.a. Omar from the *Wire* (my brother met him once and he did actually put under his signature as Omar from the *Wire*).

Buscemi plays Enoch "Nucky" Thompson, on whom the show focuses; he is a corrupt member of government who helps to keep the alcohol flowing in the early days of prohibition. The law is passed during the first episode to the sound of corks popping. The show has such a stellar cast it is hard to imagine any pitfalls arising later in the show. Our very own Stephen Graham, a.k.a. Combo from *This is England*, pops

**Boardwalk Empire was a phenomenon before it even aired**

up mid-way through the first episode as Al Capone, another example of the British invasion of American television. He is joined in his conquest of the American airwaves by Scottish actress Macdonald, who plays a timid immigrant housewife that comes into contact with Nucky Thompson, and whose life is forever changed accordingly because of his influence.

The epic scale on which it is shot almost makes you want to watch it

twice, one time on mute so you can take in all the masterful settings. The boardwalk, which was built to exact scale, allows for astonishing vistas, in particular when Buscemi walks its entire length in just one shot. The show has already gained a loyal following, thanks to the hype, which surrounds it. It is a memorable show and is yet another example of American television putting its British counterpart to shame. America is producing so

many great television shows at the moment, from *Mad Men* to *Treme* to name but a few. It may be expensive to produce drama but the renaissance American TV is going through proves that the UK needs to start producing quality homemade drama again to revitalize our dying networks.

**Emma Kelly**

*Boardwalk Empire is currently airing on HBO on Sundays at 9pm and will air on Sky1 in January*





# The Social Network



**Director:** David Fincher **Screenplay:** Aaron Sorkin, **Cast:** Jesse Eisenberg, Andrew Garfield, Justin Timberlake. **Runtime:** 120 min **Cert:** 15. **Year:** 2010

When news of *The Social Network* was announced early last year, media responses were tepid at best. The addition of Aaron Sorkin's name as screenwriter raised a few eyebrows, but the relative failures of his last scripted efforts for film and television – Charlie Wilson's *War* and Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip respectfully – dampened any excitement. It was only with the addition of David Fincher that people really started to take notice. Anyone who is familiar with Fincher's directorial efforts (*Seven*, *Fight Club*, *Zodiac*) will know that he is a master of creating visually rich worlds, where image is paramount. Anyone who is familiar with Sorkin's oeuvre (*The West Wing*, *A Few Good Men*) will know that dialogue is the all-important concept. The result? A match made in heaven, and one of the best films of the year.

*The Social Network* will undoubtedly be referred to as 'The Facebook Movie'. However, simply reducing the film to its component plot points ignores all of the great thematic insights it manages to bring out in the process. Several reputable critics have compared the themes to that of Shakespeare and *Citizen Kane*, and while the comparisons may seem overblown, on a thematic level they can be justified.

*The Social Network* focuses on both the founding of Facebook and the lawsuits that ensued after the company became the behemoth we

all give our personal information to today. After getting dumped by his girlfriend, Erica (Rooney Mara), Zuckerberg goes on a bit of a drunken blog-ramble and creates *Facemash*: a website akin to *Hot or Not* but for female Harvard undergraduates. While the website was promptly shut down, word of its impact reaches Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss (Armie Hammer playing the dual role of identical twins), who talk Zuckerberg into programming their own website: *Harvard Connection*. Instead of doing so, Zuckerberg – along with best friend Saverin – take the general ideas behind the site and create 'thefacebook.com'. And then everything starts hitting the fan!

The creation of a website by two friends, designed to bring people closer together, ends up driving everyone around it apart. Relationships are torn asunder; sibling discomfort emerges thick and fast; friends become enemies.

Everyone is cast to perfection: Eisenberg manages to transcend his mumblecore heritage – made famous in *The Squid and the Whale* and *Zombieland* – to create an exquisite performance of Mark Zuckerberg, a socially inept antihero. Garfield brings out all of the emotional frustration in Saverin, cut loose by his best friend when he needed him most, and manages to become the most empathetic character in a sea of selfish people. Justin Timberlake, arriving midway through the film as Napster founder Sean Parker, brings out the unhinged nature of the former music mogul and creates in Parker the ultimate devil's advocate for the characters. Armie Hammer, in what is my personal favourite performance after that of Eisenberg, breathes new life into the

inherent laziness of one actor playing identical twins, and carves out distinct personalities for both of them. Even the lesser characters, such as Rashida Jones' lawyer or Brenda Song's portrayal of a 'Facebook groupie' are played as real people rather than plot contrivances.

Fincher's direction lacks none of its usual flair, even in such a dialogue-driven film. As for Aaron Sorkin, *The Social Network*, utilises his writing skills to the highest level. *West Wing*

fans may disagree, but this will probably be his *pièce de résistance*. The dialogue is brutal, moving, hilarious – often all at the same time; it's all a joy to watch, and listen, and bathe in the literary glory.

*The Social Network* is a depiction of how modern culture has become increasingly alienated, under the illusion that it is drawing closer together. You can enjoy it for the winning dialogue, the amazing performances, the bold yet understated direction,

the hereto unmentioned thrilling score (put together by Atticus Ross and Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor) and more. Hell... you can even enjoy it for watching Justin Timberlake snort cocaine off a 20-year-old. Go see *The Social Network*... you'll 'like' it. **Jonathan Storey**

*The Social Network* is released in cinemas on 15 October.



Status update: just waiting to go into a \$500,000 meeting lol

## A Town Called Panic



**Director:** Stéphane Aubier, Vincent Patar **Screenplay:** Stéphane Aubier, Vincent Patar **Cast:** Jeanne Balibar (Voice), Nicolas Buisse (Voice), Véronique Dumont (Voice) **Runtime:** 75 mins **Cert:** PG. **Year:** 2010

*A Town Called Panic* is one of the most bizarre films I've ever seen.

Perhaps I was not ready for a cowboy, a Native American, and a horse all living in a house in the middle of scenic central European countryside, chattering away about their daily routines, all of them bachelors. But I did enjoy this fulfilling, if a little short, film. 'Cowboy' and 'Indian' want to buy Horse a present for his birthday. A barbecue, says Indian, would be a great present. Rather than buying the required 50 bricks through 'Briquetnet', the online brick delivery service, Cowboy accidentally places a mug on the keyboard, many zeros are added to their order, and 50 million bricks subsequently arrive and flatten their house.

Now homeless, managing only to

scramble out from their home when huge cracks appear down the sides of their bedroom walls, they decide to rebuild it with those pesky bricks. The barbecue in itself was an ill-fated venture: when Horse arrived home he drove his rickety car straight through it, causing the engine to fall out.

Inevitably – as is normal on the continent? – after they'd worked on fashioning their walls, which are meant to be used on their new home, they are stolen by a gang of some sort of weird goblin-things. The goblin-things scuttle off with the walls and, after jumping into a pond, end up in the sea, where they live. The story's oddness seemed to rocket from here.

But all of this was genuinely enjoyable. The animation – in contrast to the sleek Pixar design which has become more typical now – is a little more rough, ready and charming.

If an hour and a quarter's pleasure this weekend is to watch something zany but amiable then consider *A Town Called Panic* recommended. Just don't expect anything normal.

**Nathan Briant**

*A Town Called Panic* is out now in cinemas.

## The Human Centipede



**Director:** Tom Six **Screenplay:** Tom Six. **Cast:** Dieter Laser, Ashley C. Williams, Ashlynn Yennie. **Runtime:** 91 mins. **Cert:** 18. **Year:** 2009

Most people react instinctively and with some kind of grimace when the premise of *The Human Centipede* is intimated to them; a demented German surgeon who kidnaps three people and sews them up, mouth to anus, crippled at the knees, creating the titular beast. Unsurprisingly, this is not the kind of concept most people's imaginations alight upon.

There is nothing particularly scary about *The Human Centipede*; it is more a case of repeatedly tragic depictions of suffering that gradually wear you down, burying the memory of the film's more comic moments. This is a shame, because there's no doubt that Dieter Laser is playing his role for at least some laughs.

At the front of the centipede,

there is quite a different performance. Akihiro Kitamura babbles away in subtitled Japanese, unable till the film's denouement to communicate with his less fortunate antecedents. The human centipede is a piteous, perverse abomination of a creature, made all the more defenceless by this language barrier.

### Essential viewing for the inebriated student masses

Being anywhere in the human centipede is bad news. But the middle has got to be the short straw. This role falls to Ashley C. Williams, in her first major screen role, who must ingest and egest all the wrong kind of things. Hers is not a balanced diet.

If one's initial reaction to the film's idea is of revulsion, the second act of the film does much to dispel this notion. There is no point dwelling on the film's USP – you simply ingest this

information, and see what director Tom Six does with it. And the answer is, quite a bit that's good. The interiors of Dr. Heiter's German forest retreat are stylistically singular and topologically befuddling, and Laser's depraved schtick is exactly as you'd hope. OK, the American girls' first half-hour of dialogue is pretty ropey, but this is basically a glorified B-movie.

When the film changes tack, it changes quite dramatically. Themes of subjugation and dependence are touched upon, albeit lightly, and the production becomes altogether bleaker and more fatalistic.

I'm not convinced this film can be classified in terms of good and bad. Its content is of no surprise to anyone who knows its title; in this sense, it is to some degree satisfying. To most tastes, however, this will be the most disgusting andretch-inducing film in some time, which will consequently make it essential viewing among four-fifths of the inebriated subset of the student population.

**Sachin Patel**

*The Human Centipede* available on DVD

## Charlie St. Cloud



**Director:** Burr Steers **Screenplay:** Craig Pearce **Cast:** Zac Efron, Kim Basinger, Ray Liotta, Amanda Crew **Runtime:** 100 mins **Cert:** 12A. **Year:** 2010

*Charlie St. Cloud* is a bold assurance that Zac Efron isn't just Troy Bolton. Me and Orson Welles also made that much clear, that Efron isn't just another teen actor consigned to typecasting and trashy cinema. He's a leading man, certainly. And that neatly sums up this adaptation of Ben Sherwood's novel *The Death and Life of Charlie St. Cloud*; a good career move, and little else.

Efron is the eponymous Charlie St. Cloud; plucky and pearly-white, Charlie is damn near perfection. With a sailing scholarship at Stanford University, it's all posies and playtime -- that is, until Charlie's younger brother is killed in a car accident. Fast forward five years, and Charlie is an undertaker, socially reclusive, and disappearing into the forest every evening to play catch with his dead brother. He's gone from winner to

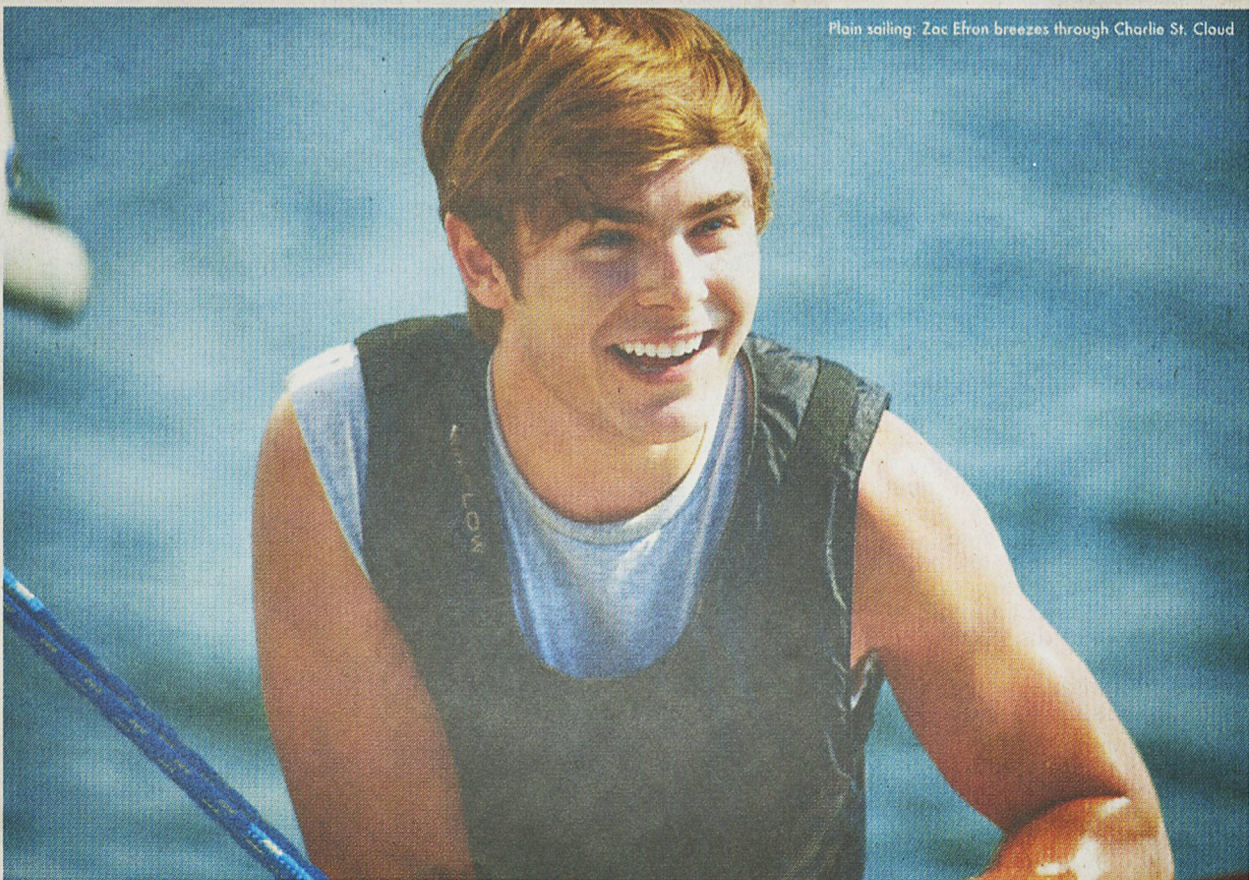
weirdo.

By the sound of it, *Charlie St. Cloud* is full of interesting, even existential questions; is Charlie really talking to dead people? How fragile is the bereaved psyche? And are dead people still alive, albeit on some ethereal plain? But instead of presenting us with profundity, *Charlie St. Cloud* offers up generic dialogue, badly judged, bizarre moments (Charlie's dead eleven year old brother boasting about "doing everything" with a magazine clipping of a woman), and worst of all, Augustus Prew's grating, cock-head-cockney drawl as Charlie's mate Alistair.

Praise has been heaped on its *Lord of the Rings*-esque scenery. True, the quaint New England landscapes that envelop Charlie's world are stunning. Otherworldly forests and dreamy waters compliment the story's flirtation with limbo and generally fantastical leanings. Sadly, however, this isn't enough to assure *Charlie St. Cloud*'s entry into the pearly-gates.

**Ahmed Peerbux**

*Charlie St. Cloud* is in cinemas now.



Plain sailing: Zac Efron breezes through *Charlie St. Cloud*



# Features

## The General strikes back

Alice Fonarev thinks alot stands between Musharraf and power

Former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf unveiled his new political party, the All Pakistan Muslim League, in London last week. At the conference, he apologized for some of the actions he took while in power that had resulted in 'negative political repercussions'. Indeed, Musharraf's 9-year reign became largely dictatorial and ended with his abdication in 2008. While Pakistan and India began dialogue and made progress in resolving peace under his rule, by 2007 a declining security provoked by increasing militant attacks and electoral reform pressures led him to further tighten his control. Under internal pressures, he allowed for elections in January 2008, but the assassination of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto in December only incited more rioting and violent protests against his rule and her death. He stepped down from power after the elections.

In his new announcement, he vowed to redeem Pakistani politics and also promised to return to the nation before the next election. He told news outlets that he would stand for a seat in the 2013 parliamentary elections and set his sights on either president or prime minister. However, critics do not believe he has the political backing or organization to win him an election. He remains one of the most unpopular figures in Pakistan and carries the blame in the eyes of the people for most of the country's problems.

Many of his enemies have powerful positions in government, and many of his supporters are among the wealthy and pro-US elite, or represent small factions of the military establishment. Furthermore, Pakistan's jihad groups will attempt to prevent him from accessing power and may go as far as assassination attempts on his life.

Still, the former president seemed determined to return to politics, as he spoke of strengthening his political environment and creating a party that would be democratic and accountable to the people. He believed that the military should be given a constitutional role, as it is the only institution that people turn to in the face of an ineffective government,

**Many of his enemies have powerful positions in government, and many of his supporters are among the wealthy and pro-US elite**

a deteriorating economy and militant threats.

Though technically a parliamentary structure, Pakistan's strongest political institution has always been its security establishment, made up of the military and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Since its inception after the partition of the British Raj in 1947, Pakistan's political structure has vacillated between electoral democracy characterized by ruling families like the Bhuttos and the Sharifs, and military authoritarianism of dictators such as Zia ul-Haq and Ayub Khan. These reigns have been nepotistic at best, and largely corrupt by democratic standards. While Pakistan's legislature, as set out by the first constitution of the Islamic Republic, is parliamentary and federal - it allows for a superior presidential role to that of the prime minister and ensures the provinces are weaker than the center.

Ironically, in one of his last speeches to the constitutional assembly before his death, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founding father and first governor-general, spoke of the need to have a secular Pakistan that emphasized equality of all citizens, of the importance of law and order and of the poison of nepotism, corruption and bribery. But shortly after his death and the assassination of first Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, the military began to inch its way into the politics of the nation, with a tendency to exert its force towards a military-offensive style of rule. Through Pakistan's turbulent political history, it has continued to be the only consistently functioning public institution.

This is also in part because it is the only institution that transcends ethnic divisions within the multifarious nation. Since the birth of the country, groups both from within and out and al-Qaeda leaders from Afghanistan have sought refuge in the tribal areas of Pakistan. Control and governance in the tribal regions has as a result become harder, and India has blamed Pakistan for the terrorist attacks in its cities. Meanwhile, Pakistan's policy shift towards militants like the Taliban - a group it had supported in earlier decades - has created further animosity between

these groups and the state. Controlling the tribal regions along the border in its attempts to reflect US policy against the Taliban and terrorism remains a serious challenge.

Furthermore, the political structure is beginning to bifurcate between Islamic militancy and secular politics, while corruption, and inefficiency increase. This is causing disillusion among Pakistanis as regards to their political system, especially in the younger generation that makes up over 50 per cent of the population. This large demographic can be easily persuaded to join militant groups, especially in the face of diminishing economic opportunities and resource availability.

In April of this year, President Zardari approved constitutional reforms aimed at reducing presidential power and increasing autonomy of provinces. But attacks by groups based in Pakistan on surrounding Afghanistan and India, as well as within the country, continue. The flooding disaster that hit the nation in August has added another burden to the already tensioned state, as agriculture, the economy, and millions of Pakistani people were affected. While Musharraf's announcement was filled with inspired rhetoric and may come timely to the discontent many have felt over the current government's response to the flood, he will have a long way to go to regain support from an increasingly unsatisfied public. ☛

**"We will launch a jihad against poverty, illiteracy, hunger and backwardness"**

- Pervez Musharraf

**Dear despot,**

**"I** take this opportunity to sincerely apologise to the whole nation. Ladies and gentlemen, only God is infallible."

Bravo, Musharraf, bravo! Thanks for giving us more proof as to why you as a politician are not God. How silly of us to believe otherwise. What with all your attempts to topple the one solid institution we have and brilliant strategy of fighting terrorism, surely you can forgive our little oversight. It must have been the strength of your grip as we tried to tug off the army uniform.

I'm not going to lie. I thought you were doing a pretty decent job when you formed the legendary 'Bush & Mush' alliance. If anything you brought in some extra cash into a treasury struggling to qualify as one. I enjoyed the surge in the number of tanks and the power cuts that went on for hours on end. It was good to know that all our industries were on the brink of collapse because you decided that all that aid was best reserved for bright, new and shiny guns instead of, I don't know, electricity maybe?

You did liberalize the media. Very God-like indeed. But what I got a real kick out of was the day you decided to take it all back and declare us to be in a state of emergency. It was pretty funny when half my channels disappeared and posters glorifying you found their way to pretty much every street in the city. Well done.

Maybe you had too many thoughts. Maybe you had too much time. Maybe that's why you penned an autobiography when your country was getting bombed left, right and center. Oh I see, you did it for PR? Oh no, wait. It was just a 368 page love letter to your wife. Hey, you know what they say; a happy husband makes a happy President.

All in all, Musharraf, I can't wait for you to make your comeback. It will be a great day when judges are placed under house arrest again and schools close down because it's too unstable an environment. What's that Mush? You're sorry? Ah well, we all make mistakes. After all, we're no gods ourselves. ☛

*Yours suspiciously,  
Rimmel Mohyidin*



Musharraf launching his new party at a recent talk in west London  
Photo credit: Alice Fonarev





Palestinian farmers work in the shadow of an Israeli settlement  
Flickr user: michaelramallah

# Internal traumas

**Zac Beauchamp** thinks the solution to the conflict lies within, not between states

**T**he newest round of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations is on life support. Israel's moratorium on settlement construction in the West Bank has expired, likely causing the Palestinian side to walk away. Further, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who along with Prime Minister Salam Fayyad forms the core of the moderate Palestinian leadership, has pledged to resign if the current talks fail, instigating a leadership crisis that could put off negotiations indefinitely. All eyes are now on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is currently mulling an American proposal for a two month extension of the moratorium.

To understand how the conflict has reached this point, one ought look first to the internal dynamics of each side rather than the interactions between the two. The Israeli-Palestinian issue is no longer a conflict between two peoples, but rather a shared struggle by the Israeli and Palestinian peace camps against internal enemies ideologically committed to opposing a resolution of the conflict. The future of the current negotiations, and the situation more broadly, will be determined almost entirely by the outcome of two civil wars, each between those committed to peace and those opposed to it.

The Israeli divisions can be represented by the political parties currently in power. The peace camp, the centrist Kadima and leftist Labour parties, are pitted against the nationalistic Yisrael Beiteinu and a slate of religious conservatives. Kadima and Labor favor a negotiated two-state settlement, while the religious conservatives believe all of the land promised to Jews by God – territorial concession is literally blasphemy. Yisrael Beiteinu, led by Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, appears to simply be too prejudiced against Palestinians and Arabs to trust them with a state.

Both the centre-left and far right blocs have enough seats in the Knesset to form a government with Netanyahu's conservative Likud party. Currently, Netanyahu governs from the right, though Labour sits

**The Israeli-Palestinian issue is no longer a conflict between two peoples, but rather a shared struggle by the Israeli and Palestinian peace camps against internal enemies ideologically committed to opposing a resolution of the conflict**

in an attempt to moderate the coalition. However, the government seems likely to fracture if Netanyahu pushes ahead with peace negotiations. In a high-profile speech at the UN, Lieberman broke with the official policy of the government he ostensibly represents by offering his own "peace" plan involving substantial transfer of Arabs currently living in Israel into Palestine, forcing Netanyahu to disavow his own foreign minister's remarks.

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the spiritual guide of the religious party Shas, recently gave a speech calling on God to 'strike them [the Palestinians] down with plague.' Members of Yosef's party called the remarks a direct response to the settlement freeze, and Yosef's comments were widely seen among Palestinians and other Arabs as a sign that the current government could not commit to peace.

However, such public infighting will pale in comparison to the war that will erupt if the Israeli majority – which polling data consistently finds to endorse a generous peace plan by wide margins – keeps putting off a fight with the settler minority. The settlers and their ultra-orthodox allies are the fastest-growing segments of the Jewish Israeli population. The larger a percentage of the population they become, the more their already-powerful elected representatives become capable of dictating government policy, making it even harder politically for an Israeli government to commit to peace. Netanyahu is capable of taking on the settlers now and coming out the winner. He could partner with Kadima if abandoned by the right. What is less clear, however, is whether Netanyahu actually wants the settler faction to lose. He has been quite critical of the peace process in the past. His first election to the Prime Ministership in 1996 was widely credited to his repudiation of the Oslo peace negotiations. However, his rhetoric of late has, perhaps in part due to American pressure, become far more conciliatory, even including an endorsement of Palestinian statehood. Further, American and Israeli officials have both reported that Netan-

yahu is personally leading the charge for the extension of the settlement freeze in the Israeli Cabinet, indicating he may have had a change of heart.

The will for peace on the Palestinian side, by contrast, is not in doubt. Most observers of Palestinian politics believe Abbas and Fayyad are committed to a peace agreement with Israel. The duo's ability to implement a settlement is far more in doubt. Fayyad's increasing reliance on authoritarian tactics to enact his (highly successful) economic agenda has alienated many among the Palestinian population, spurring talk of non-electoral means of effecting a change in the PA's leadership. Whether this government can enforce a peace deal that will by necessity compromise a central Palestinian demand – the right of return – remains to be seen.

And then there is Gaza. Hamas, despite attempts by many in the media to make it seem otherwise, remains a fundamentalist organization committed to the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state and hence the failure of a two state solution. Recent attacks against Israeli civilians

by Hamas militants, including one in the West Bank immediately before the start of the current negotiations, have widely interpreted as an attempt to sabotage the current talks. Indeed, Hamas used the same tactic in during the Oslo process, when it timed suicide bombings to maximally disrupt the ongoing discussion. If Abbas and Fayyad lack a serious ability to challenge Hamas and address the plight of the people living under its rule, they may not be able to hold on to control of an independent Palestine even if they manage to obtain it.

The future of the peace process, then, depends not on the actual negotiations – it's really quite clear what the contours of a peace deal would be. Instead, the central questions now are whether Netanyahu has really turned the corner on his anti-peace past, and whether Abbas and Fayyad have the power and political skill to enforce a peace deal once made. If the answer to either of these questions is no, then don't expect the current negotiations to produce any more than a whole lot of press clippings. ☛

**O**bama has been urging Netanyahu for a two-month extension of the settlement freeze. He has reportedly offered Netanyahu incentives that would protect Israel's security needs in exchange for a limited extension. These incentives include a presence in the Jordan Valley area after an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and increased coordination over the Iranian issue. These would make it easier for Netanyahu to pass the extension of the settlement freeze in his right-wing coalition. Obama has also reportedly offered incentives to the Palestinians including a commitment to a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders in exchange for staying in the peace talks. This would mark a shift in American policy. It contradicts the 2004 letter from former President George W Bush to Ariel Sharon that guaranteed certain settlement blocks near the Green Line remaining as part of Israel.

There is a risk that an overemphasis on the settlement issue in US policy will shift attention away from the ultimate goal of sustaining negotiations. It is important for Obama not to be seen as wanting agreement more than Netanyahu or Abbas. Obama's reported incentives suggest recognition of the need to continue talking, and not let the settlement issue take over.

Meanwhile, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Moratinos are due to arrive in Israel on Sunday. They will discuss plans for a summit in Paris, a move for more French involvement in the peace process. These plans have not been developed in cooperation with Washington and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has not yet responded to the invitation for her attendance. ☛

-Aimee Riese



# Keep calm and carry on

**Alex Welsby** believes that the security warnings have had little effect on day to day life

**A**re we facing an imminent threat? Are we prepared for such an atrocity? If the recent European travel warnings are to be believed, are we even safe on campus?

Due to the increased publicity these warnings have gained, a vigilant mindset has descended upon European capitals and their tourist citizens. But are these alerts really working? Are people actually taking notice? As an International Relations student, Foreign Office travel alerts are an intriguing insight into international security measures, but to thousands of tourists at airports and train stations across the continent it doesn't appear to have yielded the desired effect.

Already the Eiffel Tower was evacuated twice last month with the latest terrorist threat now uncovered to be a commando-style attack on the major European cities. The Fernsehturm TV tower in Berlin would have been a target along with an unnamed train station in London. This would have echoed the 2008 Mumbai attacks which killed over 175 people and left 300 wounded. Moreover, recent context only serves to compound these heightened international tensions. The trial of the Times Square car bomber Faisal Shahzad and his chilling forecast of a constant and imminent threat to the West, combined with Osama Bin Laden's statesman-like address regarding climate change and the Pakistan floods has unveiled an increased uncertainty with regard to the current nature of terrorist activity.

In line with this apparent terrorist threat, the Foreign Office has issued advice for travel to France and Germany following the US state department's widespread warning concerning the whole of Europe. France, Japan and Sweden have

all since issued travel advice to the UK this week.

Such advice places Europe at the forefront of terrorist manipulation, with the US State Department concluding, "Terrorists may elect to use a variety of means and weapons and target both official and private interests". French authorities have also published advice asking travellers to be extremely vigilant on public transport and at popular UK tourist sites." The UK Foreign Office has two additional warnings regarding a substantial threat of Irish terrorism in mainland UK and a severe threat of Irish terrorism within Northern Ireland. These have largely been ignored due to the immediacy suggested by the current perceived threat of al-Qaida and affiliated groups.

However, as the Guardian reported last Friday, these alerts are regarded by some European intelligence officials as a "nonsensical seamless narrative" indicating that the threat exists but not in the same capacity as previously reported. Moreover, this is supported by Wajid Shamsul Hasan, Pakistan's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, who regards the United States' vague and widespread warning as a political cover-up, masking the increased use of US drone and helicopter attacks within Pakistan. This comes after the legality of the death of Abdul Jabbar on 8th September from a US drone strike in North Waziristan, which has now been called into question, owing to its pre-emptive nature. With the mid-term elections coming up next month and the Republican foundations for victory already laid, is Obama therefore utilising threats to international security to secure his administration domestically? Is there any threat at all?

There is an alternative question to

**Such an ignorant mindset decreases the effectiveness of the travel warnings, causing advice to go unnoticed; if anything, the advisories have proved inconsequential, as they do not present sufficient evidence of the risks facing us**

be asked as to whether the travel advice has led to ignorance instead of vigilance. Rather than a state of alert, it appears that despite the warnings, London staples such as the daily commute and open-top bus tours have not yet been affected; the capital is certainly not gripped by fear. Indeed, Tuesday's Evening Standard's headline urged Britain to 'Keep Calm and Carry On'. Public concern has undoubtedly been nurtured by media outlets who, while reporting the travel warnings, have all appeared to downplay the severity and imminence of an attack. There appears to be no current sense of urgency and while the US warning indicates advice regarding the whole of Europe, is such widespread advice necessary or is it just scaremongering?

I have no doubt that the current European threat is real, but a call for vigilance must be supported with more specific information. Living and studying in the capital we are faced with an abundance of information reporting the alleged threats and the consequent Foreign Office warnings. But many European citizens remain unaware of either the likelihood of a militant al-Qaida group launching an attack on Tallinn, or of Irish dissidents targeting Ambleside in the Lake District? Such an ignorant mindset decreases the effectiveness of the travel warnings, causing advice to go unnoticed. If anything, the advisories have proved inconsequential, as they do not present sufficient evidence of the risks facing us. Of course, popular tourist destinations and public transport infrastructure are prime targets, but specifics have not yet been divulged.

In this sense, as Home Secretary Theresa May calls for public support in reporting suspicious behaviour, support it seems is not easily garnered, as the warn-

ings have not yet proved to be a deterrent. The majority of the British public and, in the context of the Foreign Office advice, French and German citizens too, are not going to change or cancel planned European visits whether they be for city breaks or business trips owing to the recent warnings.

Furthermore, the Coalition Government has not openly acknowledged the dangerous extent of the threat, instead appearing preoccupied by their respective party political conferences and domestic concerns of public-sector pay reform. They have yet to be tested on matters of national security as it becomes ever increasingly apparent that the war on terror is now to be fought at home. Certainly, Cameron and Clegg's European counterparts, Sarkozy, Merkel and Zapatero have all yet to face the full force of terrorist activity upon the European landscape whether the immediacy of the threat is real or not.

Is warning therefore too harsh a word regarding the situation? Advice, however, does not indicate the immediate potential of a terrorist attack, ultimately leading to an ignorant atmosphere of both uncertainty and invincibility. If such a large majority of people are unaware, (the Foreign Office website is unlikely to be your homepage), coupled with the new government's undeclared security stance, it is hardly surprising that the British public has been unresponsive to the travel warnings. An armed guard around the Eiffel Tower will never be an effective deterrent to tourists or terrorists. In which case, what have we really been warned about?

# The birth of a nation

**Andreas Kuersten** speaks of South Sudan and its future prospects with a referendum

**A**t the start of the new year the world may witness the democratic birth of a new state. On 9th January 2011, the people of the region known as South Sudan are scheduled to head to the polls for a referendum in which they will choose whether or not to secede from Sudan. Yet, what would appear to be an amicable separation of Sudan from its southern region is not quite as it seems. Beneath the upcoming referendum lies a tale of war, Western influence and factionalism, which threatens Sudan's future.

South Sudan has fought Africa's longest civil war against the central government in Khartoum. This has cost the lives of 2.5 million and displaced many more. Underlying the conflict is the oppression and neglect of the mainly black African, Christian and Animist south by the mainly Arab-Muslim Sudanese government.

The end of this conflict came in the form of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005. The CPA created South Sudan as a semi-autonomous region, required the federal government to include the south's main political party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), and instructed the two sides to work towards unity while also giving South Sudan the right to a referendum on independence.

The CPA, however, was not a straightforward bilateral agreement between the two warring parties. The terms of agreement were heavily influenced by Western pressure, namely as regards to the right of South Sudan to hold the referendum on secession. Nonetheless, President Omar Al-Bashir and his ruling party have constantly brought up the need and their desire to maintain unity whenever asked about the issue of southern independence. While Bashir has stated he has no intention of interfering with the referendum, the central government has a history of destabilising and confrontational internal actions. There are numerous ways in which it can delay the referendum or undermine the new state once it is formed. Already, voter registration, which was scheduled for late October, has been pushed back three weeks until

15th November, citing problems with staff training and form delivery.

Aside from delaying tactics, Khartoum also has many resources and connections which would enable it to significantly undermine a fledgling government. The central government controls and administers the wealth-sharing arrangement whereby oil revenues are split with South Sudan. This being the south's main source of funding, Khartoum could choose to alter or terminate this deal and considerably weaken and destabilise the possible new state.

In the past, Khartoum has also shown a willingness to use rogue groups instead of direct action. It infamously turned the Janjaweed loose in its troubled Darfur region to carry out heinous crimes. It has also used the rebel group, the Lord's Resistance Army, from Uganda to attack and weaken South Sudan. In addition, the central government has allegedly had a hand in South Sudan's internal problems. Since the promise of a referendum, southern actors once held together in an alliance by their shared goal of independence have begun to express separate aims and aspirations for power. After a recent battle between the SPLM and the forces of one of its former members, the SPLM claimed that the arms being used by the renegade faction were supplied by Khartoum.

Yet, the majority of the South Sudanese remains overwhelmingly in favour of independence. This exuberance, however, is being misdirected by ruling authorities. New civic buildings, streets, and lamps are going up in the south's major city of Juba but aid agencies have said progress on reconstruction of essential buildings destroyed during the civil war is still agonisingly slow. A new presidential compound designed by expensive foreign architects complete with a gym, sauna, and helipad has been completed while funding and construction lags tremendously for South Sudan's main centre for higher learning, the Dr. John Garang Memorial University, which has a mere 100 students.

University enrolment is a result of poor infrastructure and governance, but is not the most telling statistic; 85 per cent of adults in South Sudan are illiterate and

44 per cent of a population of 500,000 in the province of Jonglei were being fed by the World Food Programme this past summer.

In spite of this distressing situation, South Sudan is forced to spend 60 per cent of its budget on defense rather than elsewhere due to continued aggression from the Lord's Resistance Army and internal conflicts.

The state of affairs in South Sudan is precarious and not simply dependent on the actions of the central government in determining if the much anticipated referendum becomes a catalyst for further conflict. If Khartoum does set its sights on halting southern secession by delaying or even canceling the referendum or allows the independence of South Sudan but still aims to bring the new state back within its sovereign fold through insurrection or financial collapse, the jubilation of independence could quickly be replaced with further violence. The most disturbing possibility is that even if Sudan's central government stands aside, the new state could bring itself down through mismanagement and internal factionalism.

What needs to be accomplished in order to prevent these scenarios is for a comprehensive agreement to be formulated between the African Union (AU) and the states bordering South Sudan. These powers would agree to pressure Khartoum to honour the CPA and to steadfastly support a new state should it come to exist, whether in a political, financial, or military dimension. The AU must see this as a chance to show it can effectively be involved in and handle African affairs whilst convince neighbouring states must see the security and trade benefits of a stable South Sudan.

At the start of the new year the world may indeed witness the democratic birth of a new state, and the chances of this are much greater if South Sudan has help in keeping Khartoum faithful to its word.





# The legend of Chang'e

**Pern-Yi Quah** tells of the roots and reasons behind China's ambitious space program

According to legend, Chang'e and her husband Houyi were immortals living in the Jade Emperor's palace in heaven. One day, Houyi made the Jade Emperor angry and so both of them were banished to live as mortals on Earth. As a result, Chang'e was extremely miserable, and being the good husband, Houyi decided to embark on a long and perilous quest to find a pill to restore both their im-

mortalities. He eventually found the pill, and was told that each person would only need half of the pill to become immortal. After bringing the pill home, Houyi placed the pill in the case and warned Chang'e not to open it. Feeling curious one day when Houyi was not around, Chang'e opened the case and discovered the pill just as he was returning home. Anxious about not wanting Houyi to catch her discovering the pill, she swallowed it ac-

identally. She soon started floating into the sky because of an overdose and kept floating until she landed on the moon.

Today, Chang'e is known to many Chinese as the mythical goddess of the moon, and the annual celebration of the Mid-Autumn Festival, which is held in her honour, is celebrated by over one billion Chinese. This myth and celebration is an integral part of Chinese tradition and culture, and it is no coincidence that China

has named its lunar exploration program as the Chang'e programme.

Last Friday, a Chinese rocket carrying a probe destined for the moon was blasted into space. This probe is known as the Chang'e 2 and will be used to test key technologies and collect data for future landings. China's recent space blast was undertaken by the China National Space Administration (CNSA), and is the latest step in a long series of steps in hopes of reaching the eventual goal of sending a man to the moon.

The major reason underpinning China's moon mission is its symbolic role, showing rivals that China has arrived on the world stage. Only two countries in the world have had boots on the moon, the United States and the Soviet Union, and both were the main protagonists in the Cold War. Even the sole twenty-first century superpower, the United States, has not sent a man to the moon for the past 38 years. Thus this symbolism will be even more enhanced, and no doubt China feels that this moon mission will be appropriate for the fastest growing economy in the world and the holder of the world's largest foreign capital reserves.

But success is not enough for China – it also wants to succeed on its own terms. The Beijing 2008 Olympics had arguably one of the best opening and closing ceremonies ever, and this achievement was made even more impressive because it was attained while showcasing a rich assembly of ancient Chinese art and culture. It is the same reason that China has named its spacecrafts after Chang'e, in order to reinforce the perception that the success of this moon mission is truly China's. The hope that a Chinese person can actually walk on the moon like Chang'e makes the dream all the more potent.

Although such a symbol serves to enhance national pride, there are other reasons for China's moon mission. One of the major ones is motivated by domestic concerns and to maintain the support that

the Chinese people have of the current government. In the face of corruption scandals from municipal politicians and bureaucrats, and difficult problems such as melamine in milk, success in the moon mission will help legitimise the current government in the eyes of the people. It will serve to demonstrate that the current government is able to achieve things that no previous government has ever done.

Aside from the rather intangible, and yet important, objectives there are other reasons why China wants to go to the moon. By supporting such a programme, the Chinese government is pouring its formidable resources into the development of advanced technologies that could be transferable to other sectors. This is useful because China is attempting to move up the value chain – from being a mere manufacturing powerhouse to becoming a hotbed of technological innovation. The economic incentives are very real, and could really serve to inspire a whole new generation of engineers and scientists.

Naturally, the development of space technology also benefits China's military, because a military set-up which can launch multiple satellites on one rocket can also launch multiple warheads on one rocket. The moon mission is therefore also congruent with the building up of China's military, which is essential to its grand aim of achieving hegemony within the East Asia region. This aim, however, is also partially motivated by pride. It is obvious that China wishes to have the influence to match the economic and political strength that they have now.

If China achieves its mission, it would be symbolic to all that it has "arrived", and on its own terms at that. Even though there are economic and military reasons for China's support of this project, it is largely about vanity; only a wealthy and successful country can afford such a "luxury" item. So Chang'e will be here to stay. Because China wants the moon too. ☛



Flickr user: gruntzookie

# Democracy in Brazil

**Bianca Nardi** gauges Dilma Rousseff's chances in the run-off against Jose Serra



In figures, Brazil is staggering. It is a country of 190 million inhabitants, its size is comparable to the whole of Europe and it houses the largest rainforest in the world. It has been considered a country with potential for an embarrassingly long period of time, and one has to wonder when this potential will materialise. Whether this will finally happen may greatly depend on the result of this year's Presidential elections, of which the first round took place last week.

Voting is compulsory in Brazil, where 10 per cent of the population is illiterate and many don't have access to television, newspapers or the internet. It was speculated that the Workers' Party candidate, Dilma Rousseff, would have a majority of the votes and win straight from the first round. Rousseff ended up with almost 47 per cent of the votes; the runner-up José Serra secured 33 per cent, and Marina da Silva, from the Green Party, obtained 20 per cent of the votes – the greatest surprise of the ballots results. The other candidates were too far behind to be of any significance. The second round between Rousseff and Serra will take place on the 31st of October, giving this Halloween an extra aura of mystery.

Under the leadership of President Lula da Silva for the past eight years, Brazil's economy has grown significantly, and approval for him is outrageously high, nearing the 80 per cent. Unfortunately for him and all his supporters, Lula is constitutionally barred from running for President for the third time. An economics graduate known for her lack of charisma and difficult temper, Dilma Rousseff was named to be the Workers' Party candidate in the 2010 elections. Given her little administrative experience, it is believed that da Silva will act as a tutor to her government. This is greatly criticised by a former President, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who believes that da Silva is not acting as the chief of a nation, but as the chief of a party. One could say that da Silva is transferring votes that were essentially his to Rousseff. She lacks a policy of her own, and repeatedly references her close politi-

cal relationship with da Silva and her willingness to continue what his government has done. Due to this, Rousseff is often portrayed in the media as an 'accessory' and a 'puppet' – a means through which the incumbent President can continue to govern.

If Rousseff manages to gain the support of 20 per cent of Marina da Silva's voters, she will be the next President of Brazil. As a fighter against the military dictatorship in the 60s, Rousseff spent three years in prison and represents the worst fear of the American government: a left-wing ex-guerrilla member in office. She would continue Lula da Silva's foreign policy, by allying with the left-wing governments of Latin America such as those of Bolivia and Venezuela, supporting the Iranian nuclear programme and fighting for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.

Rousseff's policies and propaganda have been heavily condemned for lacking in consistency. In the first round, Dilma supported the right to abortion – a very sensitive matter in a Catholic country like Brazil. A video from 2005 has been circulating the internet, in which she claims that it is "absurd" that abortion is illegal. Fearing to lose millions of votes over the issue, she has in the past week shifted her policy towards supporting the 'right to life'. Additionally, alliances have been formed with politicians such as Jader Barbalho, Renan Calheiros, the Sarney family, the ex-president Fernando Collor – all have been accused of corruption and were opposed to the Workers' Party beforehand. This emphasises that the Party has no clear stand and will side with whoever suits them best at a given stage.

This very same political organisation has received several accusations over the past eight years, the largest one being the Allowances scandal in 2005, where it was revealed that politicians were paid an 'allowance' to vote in favour of projects that interested the members of the Executive Power. Other politicians close to Lula da Silva have been accused of corruption, of shifting away ridiculous amounts of pub-

lic money, and of fraud. Dilma Rousseff will carry into the Presidential office the shameful aspects of the Workers' Party's past. She will be a constant reminder that Brazilians will forgive and forget any political scandal, voting en masse for a party which has very recently been all over the news as highly corrupt.

The opposition candidate José Serra, who lost the presidential election to da Silva in 2002, is far more experienced than Rousseff, and claims that Brazil can do more in the areas of health, security and education. It is difficult to be a candidate from the opposition, with a popularity phenomenon such as da Silva; Serra avoids the subject of the President, and does not criticise or support him. He has recently defended the approval of a law which would stop the current President from participating in electoral campaigns – mainly recognising the effect of da Silva's support on Rousseff's campaign success. The only way Serra stands a chance against Rousseff in the second round is by gaining the support of a majority of Green Party votes. Considering the latter would prefer to remain neutral, this outcome is highly unlikely.

President da Silva is known for his populist style, and has risen from a simple factory worker to the Presidency. Although he is praised for Brazil's economic growth, The Economist states that he has been a "lucky president"; "reaping the rewards of the commodity boom and operating from the solid platform for growth erected by his predecessor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso". He gives himself credit for Brazil's economic achievements, and has acted oblivious to the corruption scandals of the Workers' Party during his years in office. He has recently threatened the "bourgeoisie" press with censorship and created the government channel Brazil TV. He regards the free press as an obstacle, and last year a propaganda film about his life was released. With Rousseff in office, all we can expect is that she will follow the same path. A scary Halloween indeed. ☛



**A** liberal society should adhere to the ideal of public reason, which outlines a tolerant and orderly way in which public discourse can be conducted. This means arriving at political decisions through arguments that others can be reasonably expected to accept, in view of the fact that they might not share the individual's normative beliefs. This ideal should therefore inform our judgement as we attempt to answer the question at hand.

The nature of the dilemma might seem moral rather than political, which would then exclude the ideal of public reason from our consideration. However, the ideal arises from a condition under which a liberal society is built and governed, namely the existence of a pluralism of reasonable beliefs. This condition is worth protecting in order to respect individuals in accordance with the liberal (some might say Kantian) conception of persons as free and autonomous beings. Hence, a liberal society should consider carefully the implication of moral imperatives in the public sphere.

In this light, it is necessary to make a distinction between public and non-public reason. Public reason (as distinct from the ideal of public reason) concerns the governance of society and therefore concerns every citizen, irrespective of his or her own personal beliefs. It is thus political or universal.

Non-public reason, on the other hand, consists of comprehensive views — reli-

gious, moral or philosophical — that are freely accepted because they are less binding, since the authority on which people are asked to accept them is typically not political or territorial and individuals are free to accept or reject them.

## The beliefs of the Hare Krishna movement fall under the domain of non-public reason

The beliefs that the Hare Krishna movement stands for as a religious community fall under the domain of non-public reason. The imperative to support it through financial contributions

can therefore not be universal. Hence, in keeping with the pluralist character of liberal society, whether there is a moral imperative in this case should be decided by each individual according to his or her own beliefs.

However, there might be an objection to this answer based on the second principle of justice that I formulated in my theory of justice, which states that social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged. It might be argued that there is a moral imperative to support the Hare Krishna as long as its charity work benefits the least advantaged.

We must keep in mind that the principles of justice apply to the basic structure of society, to its fundamental social institutions. The second principle of justice would hence apply to the creation and governance of social institutions that are responsible for the distribution of resources in society, which is a political matter. Thus, as the Hare Krishna is not part of society's fundamental social institutions and is not a politically-constituted organisation, there can be no universal imperative to support it.

## WHAT IF...

### ...Nixon had shaved?

Jack Tindale

"Richard Nixon's inauguration as the 35th President of the United States came amidst one of the closest election results in American history. Had just ten thousand voters switched affiliation in Texas and Illinois, John Kennedy would have emerged victorious in the electoral college vote. As it was, Nixon's strong performance against the fresh-faced Junior Senator from Massachusetts in the first televised Presidential debates was enough to result in a third consecutive electoral victory for the Republican Party. Indeed, Nixon's oft-quoted line "this is no time for a novice" clearly resonated with the general public. With the growing feeling that America was losing ground to the Soviet Union, President Nixon used his first speech on Capitol Hill to push for a more aggressively anti-communist foreign policy.

However, to the surprise of many commentators, Nixon took a far less ideological line against Communist Cuba than people had predicted. Despite scrapping the Eisenhower administration's plan for an invasion of the island by anti-Castro emigrés, the Kremlin clearly felt that further intervention in Latin America would be too much of a risk to the policy of "Peaceful Co-Existence" mandated by Premier Khrushchev, especially given the uncertain political leanings of Fidel Castro. The official visit by Nixon in 1967 would mark the culmination of the White House's pragmatism towards Havana, a foreign policy mirrored by the President's refusal to commit ground troops to Vietnam. Aid shipments would continue, but American participation in the Indochinese War would be limited to special advisors and aerial support.

Domestically, Nixon stepped up the Civil Rights legislation that had started under his predecessor. Whilst destroying the Republican Party's minor resurgence in the Deep South, the Voting Rights Act of 1964 finally ended the legalised discrimination that had been in place since the Redemption Era. Although the Republicans would not carry a single southern state until Richard Schweiker's failed campaign in 1980, the civil rights movement would affect the Democrats far more. The split in the 1964 presidential election between Hubert Humphrey's northern faction and Strom Thurmond's Dixiecrats is widely seen as contributing to Nixon's second victory, which whilst far from a landslide, was certainly far more conclusive than his squeaker over Kennedy four years prior.

Nixon's second term in office has been largely ignored by modern historians. His foreign policy dealings maintained the détente with the Soviet Union; a stance mirrored by Prime Minister Hugh Gaitskill in London and Ernest Manning in Ottawa. Economically, America prospered under his leadership; the recession at the start of his Presidency gave way to a long period of economic growth, something that served to undermine the radical policies espoused by Nixon's greatest critic from within his own party, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona. Although the "Stop Goldwater" movement prevented the darling of the conservative wing from gaining the 1968 nomination, Nelson Rockefeller would prove unable to beat Henry Jackson in the presidential election of that year, finally ending the 16 year Republican domination of the White House.



Moses Lemuel is...  
**RAWLS**

# KNOW YOUR MOUTH

## Should I donate to the Hare Krishna?

**W**hat determines how prosperous we are in life? Is it our intelligence? Is it how hard we work in life? Is it determination? Is it the circumstances in which we were born? The simple answer to this question is, luck. Despite the surfeit of individuals who claim they are self made men and those who suggest that they have worked for their money, fundamentally those who command the greatest amount of capital in our society have been blessed with terrific fortune in one form or another.

Foremost, in a Britain today, the Postcode where you are born governs your life chances. An intelligent child born to a family in Dalston is statistically far less likely to get on well in the world than one born in South Kensington. The school we attend, as our politicians are fond of noting but not changing, is still the best indicator of exam success. Whilst 10 per cent of the population in this country is educated at a fee-paying school, private schools still receive over 40 per cent of A grades at A-levels. Why? Because they had the foresight to be born to affluent parents, not because of any innate intelligence.

The notion that the individual is sovereign and stands testament solely to his

own achievements is an entirely spurious concept. All individuals are a reflection of the society in which they are born. Thus, it logically follows that the polity in which they are born is not only responsible in part for the failures of an individuals but

### All individuals are a reflection of the society in which they are born

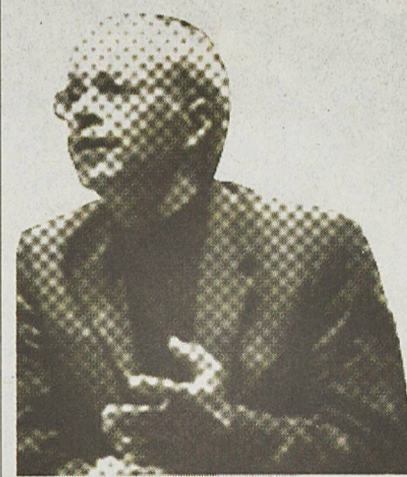
also for their successes. When someone perpetrates mass murder it is an indictment of the entire citizenry, just as when someone amasses a fortune it is in part a collective achievement.

But assume we do live in a perfect meritocracy, where people rise and fall based on their own industry and intel-

ligence. The innately brilliant has been exceptionally lucky to be born with such a high IQ. If those qualities of intelligence are married to the capacity for hard work then good fortune has struck doubly. Thus, the man who owns vast quantities has been lucky not brilliant. Just as the homeless person, or for that matter the Hare Krishna guy, has not been lazy or feckless but rather unfortunate.

According to this model, private property is an oxymoron. It is an axiomatic truth that property does not have owners, but only users. Hence, there is nothing short of an obligation to pass it on to those less fortunate and more needy than yourself.

What does this mean for our mutual friend at the Hare Krishna stall. Well, it means that you have nothing short of a moral obligation to pay him for his services. The capital you carry snug has a gun in your back pocket is there purely by chance. Consider your existence lived differently. Not as an LSE student born to middle class parents who are considered rich in one of the richest parts of the world, but rather as one of the bottom billion on this planet who live on less than a dollar-a-day. Your pockets would be empty, which is exactly what they should be once you have sampled the gourmet delights of our campus' favourite food supplier.



Calum Young is...  
**SINGER**

## Measured musings



**N**ot much is known about the battle of Solferino, during which Napoleon III's armies won over Austrian forces.

By the end of the day around 40,000 wounded were abandoned on the battlefields while each camp marched on. Henry Dunant, a Swiss businessman, had travelled to the site to discuss with the emperor the difficulties of running trade in Algeria. Faced with the suffering of the wounded, he abandoned his original intent and spent days tending to the soldiers.

Rather cinematically, this day was to change Dunant's life. Determined that war needed a 'code of honour', he called for a nursing organisation to be created

## The curse of neutrality

in order to supply medical services to the victims of war, and the establishment of their safeguarding. From his belief sprung the Geneva agreements, and ultimately, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The institution didn't reach its full potential until the First World War; in addition to its medical dimension, the organisation took on the mission of transmitting messages from prisoners of war across borders to their families. Their mission also made possible the transfer of prisoners between the two camps. In 1917 the movement was awarded its first Nobel Peace Prize.

It would be accurate, but unfair, to say that the Red Cross thrives off war —

their philosophy is that conflicts are an unavoidable component of human affairs. Facing this assumption, the best thing to do is to ensure that the acts of mass slaughter are carried out with dignity. Sprung from this conviction, volunteers must take a no-nonsense position as regards to the conflict they are working with. In order for their work to run as smoothly as possible within difficult conditions, they maintain a strict policy of neutrality, and stay unarmed. Any breach of this rule would result in the loss of the trust of the warring factions, and endanger other volunteers worldwide. For their word to be reliable, there must be no deviation — a position which often takes its toll on the aid workers.

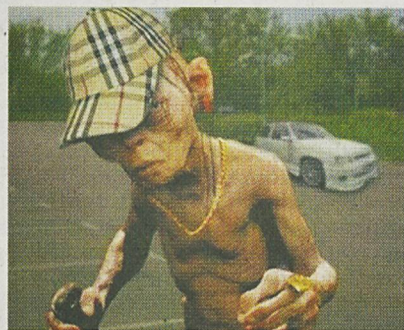
Neutrality, although seemingly a simple concept can quickly become controversial. What to do, for instance, with the knowledge of the Nazi camps of extermination with such a mandate? In the end, faced with the German Red Cross' refusal to cooperate, the Red Cross took a stand and alerted American troops to the ongoings of concentration camps. Sometimes not taking sides is the most heart-wrenching choice of all.

Marion Koob  
Features Editor



# Gossip Gollum's clunge coverage

We find out this week who has been the Lord of whose ring...



Anyone who made it to the Tuns last Wednesday will know that this year's AU might possibly be the biggest on record. The bar was rammed so full of rugby and football that netball and women's rugby were forced down into the quad to carry out the obligatory Taps teaching, a location that wasn't very helpful for assessing the talent for either side. All clubs were allowed mere glimpses of other clubs' new freshers, which meant the phrase 'nice from far, but far from nice' largely applied once all were in Zoo bar.

First things first, and amazingly enough, one antic from last Wednesday night managed to escape Gossip Gollum's attention. So in fairness to all those who have been and will be named and shamed each week, it seems a moral duty that it be publicly acknowledged this week. Footballer Latif Baluch managed to go home for more than just a wank when netballer Lauren Bowers, with whom Latif had innocently left Zoo bar, phoned her housemates to tell them she would 'see [them] in the morning'. Hedging his bets, Latif put his arm over her shoulder with his trademark smirk and guided her back

to his, where sadly she awoke in the morning to an empty bed. Although Bowers denies sexual action of any kind, the fact that her knickers were later found under Latif's pillow by his flatmates, and Latif's desperate attempts to keep the encounter under wraps suggest otherwise.

Continuing this trend for footballers taking girls home and then vehemently denying any action, Big Joe Watson, also known as BJ, was seen leaving Zoo bar absolutely panined with one Miss Christina Ivanova from hockey. Details on the extent of the sexual meeting are still hazy, since the happy couple have asked us to respect their privacy but GG's eyes will be peeled for more tomfoolery between them this Wednesday. However, since there has been no comment from the culprits themselves, GG does feel it necessary to point out that the sole source of this story is AU Exec member Kate Strivens. Perhaps those readers who are incredulous that Ivanova would ever cheat on first love Tim Cooper can remain sceptical.

It is doubtful that after Zoo bar this Wednesday many freshers will be left still wondering who AU legend Uncle Hamdi is. This year, Hamdi seems to have outgrown his natural habitat on the corner sofa, and has ventured out to welcome the freshers with (perhaps more than just) open arms. Indeed, his affections extended even further than LSE students, to employees of Zoo bar. GG can confirm from many (rugby) sources that Hamdi was first seen heavily flirting with one shot girl, whom he was later seen kissing. When questioned, Hamdi would only reveal that they had 'exchanged numbers', but GG would suggest they will soon be

exchanging more than that. Judging on the amount of freshers hankering after his attentions on Wednesday, it would seem Old Man of the AU is becoming Heart Throb of the AU. Which might have something to do with a leakage of a certain video in which he plays a naked fireman onto the netball list.

Throughout the ages at LSE, third years make a habit of trying to pull freshers and this year's oldies are making no exception. The prize so far goes to 5th team footballer-turned-rugby boy George Luther, who is (secretly) in the process of formulating a list of freshers whom he aims to have shagged by the end of the year. For anyone who knows Luther, this attitude is strangely out of character and overly confident of his abilities, since his nickname among his household is 'Bottle' or 'Cuddler'. GG thinks perhaps he won't give Hamdi such a run for his money for Lothario of the year, since his dance moves are really not up to scratch. And maybe his girlfriend might have something to say about it.

If this week was anything to go by, the AU is set to have its messiest year yet and the Baywatch-themed welcome party tomorrow will be one of the biggest piss-ups of the year. Who doesn't want to see the male contingent half naked, trying to outdo each other on a mechanical surfboard and the female half of the AU in leotards? GG would recommend you leave your dignity at the door since drink + nakedness is always a good time.

**L\*S\*SKI** give you their top tips to booking the ski trip...

Website: [www.web-based-bookings.com](http://www.web-based-bookings.com)

Trip Code: **ws11se**

- 1) Transport - choose the return coach from Uni. We promise you a fun filled journey, a great chance to bond before the trip and you'll be there before you know it.
- 2) Accommodation - make sure to let us know who you want to share a room with!
- 3) Lift pass - if you're a keen skier/boarder you won't regret choosing the 3Valley upgrade.
- 4) Insurance - MAKE SURE YOU'RE INSURED.
- 5) Beginners - Make the most of the packages available, they offer you a cheap deal on everything you may need. If you can beg, borrow or steal equipment/clothing do that also!
- 6) Hire - match the quality of equipment to your quality of skiing.
- 7) Wasteland Ski & Natives ski/Boarder X - don't miss this event!!
- 8) Food - we recommend leaving the food option, we'll be stopping in a supermarket outside of resort and there'll be plenty of cheap options in resort to eat out.
- 9) Mountain Meal - every year people don't book and regret it when they arrive.

**L\*SKI**



**LSE SKI TRIP**

**val Thorens**

**France**

Book before 25th Oct  
to WIN a free pair of skis  
and snowboard!

**£329  
PP**

**10 - 18  
December  
2010**

**Wasteland**   
[www.wastelandski.com](http://www.wastelandski.com)

TO BOOK GO TO:  
[WWW.LSE-SKI.CO.UK](http://WWW.LSE-SKI.CO.UK)



## Play-off Profiles: This week it's Netball vs Womens Rugby

### Charles Hacker

#### Who is she?

Netball Club Captain, 2nd team shooter, moody Pocahontus.

#### Where is she from?

Swindon (ask her on her wide knowledge of roundabouts)

#### Natural Wednesday Night Habitat:

Hacker is best known for her antics on the aptly named 'minge bed' where she regularly flashes her glory. She is otherwise found on the dancefloor skanking, eyes closed.

#### LSE Sporting Career Highlight:

Turning up late for trials as 2nd team Captain, after cleverly hosting a houseparty the night before.

#### Profile:

Charles Hacker is best known for challenging anyone willing to a drink-off, almost always to her detriment.

Best drunken moments so far have included wearing a blue plastic bag as a beard, and finding true love with the LGBT pink unicorn.



### Nadine Marshman

#### Who is she?

WRFC Club Captain

#### Where is she from?

Ginger Chris's mum

#### Natural Wednesday Night Habitat:

In Zoo Bar, waiting for the lads to find her.

#### LSE Sporting Career Highlight:

Calella 09 - a memorable encounter with a canine critter.

#### Profile:

Being only 17 when she came to uni, Nadine had a lot of catching up to do with her fellow sportsmen and women. Now she is going into her 3rd year and she has definitely 'caught up'. She has grown from a naive little duckling to a mature, responsible young woman. But she still likes to get her leg over boys!



## Lacrosse mixes it up

### Pooja Thakrar

It's the fastest game on two feet and one of LSE's newest clubs. Mixed Lacrosse. The first training session this Sunday showcased some of LSE's best talent. A mix of boys and girls from both the UK and across the pond proved to be rather exciting. The most recent novice, Charlotte Dunley, managed to oust the club captain, Pooja Thakrar, by hurling a lacrosse ball right on her head, setting the intensity benchmark very high at an early stage in the day. Despite the minor setbacks in the form of the odd injury or two (it is Lacrosse after all), mixed lacrosse got off

to a great start and the team are hoping for some any more new talent to augment their already promising squad at their second ever training session next Sunday afternoon. Here, we will be training for our forthcoming mixed lacrosse matches and are definitely on track for a win. However, all is needed is some more sturdy (preferably American) boys to join us and have some fun poking girls with their sticks. Dan Carroll, our wannabee Torso of the Week, (despite bottling an appearance in this week's Beaver) will be present at every training session, showcasing his amazing bod (and stick tricks). If you like playing with sticks, either lacrosse or Dan's, then e-mail us on [au.club.lacrosse@lse.ac.uk](mailto:au.club.lacrosse@lse.ac.uk) to find out more.

# TORSO OF THE WEEK



*I'll be there...*

## BAYWATCH

### Beach Party

**13<sup>th</sup> October 2010**  
**7:30pm-12:00am**  
**The Quad, LSE**  
**Fancy dress!**

**£3 in advance**  
**£4 OTD**

**SURFBOARD SIMULATOR!**



