

The Beaver

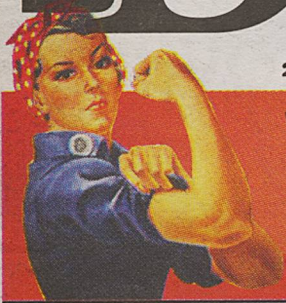
23 January 2007 Issue 656 The newspaper of the LSESU

Women's Week Special

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Palestine debate ends in controversy

■ FACTIONS PACK OUT UGM AS STUDENTS TAKE ARGUMENT OUTSIDE OLD THEATRE

Laura Deck
News Editor

Controversy arising from the passage of a Union General Meeting (UGM) motion to twin the LSE Students' Union (SU) with a Palestinian university, escalated into a dispute between two students outside the Old Theatre and resulted in an early closure of the meeting.

The motion, which was proposed by Ziyaad Lunat and seconded by Naama Nagar, recommended that the LSE be matched with a Palestinian university and affiliate with the Right to Education campaign based at Birzeit University in Palestine.

The text of the motion noted the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights' statement that "Everyone has the right to education." Supporters of the motion argued that that right was being denied to Palestinian university students who faced Israeli military occupation.

Three amendments to the motion, proposed by Daniel Sheldon, fell after they failed to gain a majority vote. The amendments would have modified the motion in order to twin the LSE SU with both a Palestinian university and an Israeli university, and would have supported the Global Campaign for Education in addition to the Right to Education campaign.

Sheldon argued that university education had been disrupted in Israel as well as in Palestine.

The proponents of the amendments also argued that twinning with an Israeli university would add a degree of equality to the motion and stop the LSE SU from taking sides in a troubled conflict.

However, the proponents of the original motion argued, speaking against the amendments, argued that the case for twinning the LSE SU with a Palestinian university was humanitarian and not political and the humanitarian situation was far worse in Palestine than

in Israel, particularly in areas such as higher education provision.

After the amendments fell, Sheldon insisted that a card vote take place on the amendments due to concerns that certain members of the UGM audience were not LSE students. In a card vote, students vote in the UGM holding their LSE ID as they raise their hands. The card vote also yielded the same results and the amendments fell.

The motion ultimately passed unamended with a majority vote.

A large number of people left the Old Theatre as soon as the motion passed. It seemed clear that factions of students both in favour of the amendments and in favour of the original motion had packed out the UGM to help their cause. As the proceedings moved onto the next motion, Charlotte Galvin, a first-year International History student, was involved in a dispute outside the Old Theatre.

Galvin, who had never

attended a UGM before and chose to attend on Thursday specifically to vote on the motion, voted against the amendments and for the motion itself.

An unidentified female student turned to Galvin on her way out of the Old Theatre and said "good job".

Galvin told *The Beaver* that she initially believed that the woman had noticed her voting and agreed with her position, but she then realized that the woman meant the remark sarcastically. Galvin pursued her out of the Old Theatre.

When Galvin asked the woman what she meant by "good job", the woman referred to Galvin as "you people". Galvin then began to shout at the woman in-question. Many students exited the Old Theatre in response to the shouting outside.

Immediately following her exchange with the woman, Galvin told *The Beaver*: "I'm really angry that for no good reason, for >>4



Photograph: Liam Chambers

The amendments failed with a card vote, following suspicions that some members of the audience were not students.

Union set for governance re-vamp

Patrick Cullen
Senior Reporter

A Governance Review of the LSE Students' Union (SU) is to take place in 2007. The SU's Constitution and Steering Committee (C&S) is to begin conducting the Review as mandated by a Union General

The Review is to be completed by:
2nd week of Michaelmas term 2007
7 members of C&S vote for the Review

Meeting (UGM) motion.

The review aims to fulfil both the short term concerns of correcting loopholes in the LSE SU Constitution and the long term concerns such as bringing the Constitution in line with the new government charities bill.

One such loophole became evident in the Michaelmas term following the resignation of

LSE SU Returning Officer Wil Barber, only a week after C&S had been no-confidenced. The Constitution did not have a clear provision for the absence of both a Returning Officer and C&S.

Recent events surrounding the election of Sean Closs as UGM Chair have raised similar concerns. As a member of C&S, Closs was constitutionally

barred from holding any other "office of the Union". There was dispute over whether UGM Chair constituted such an office. Closs subsequently resigned from his seat on C&S after a C&S ruling decided that he could not hold both positions.

One student, Andy Hallett, said that the review was taking place because "there is wide-

spread feeling that the SU could function far more effectively than it does currently. "We're also spurred on by the fact that many other unions around the UK are undertaking reviews, mostly for similar reasons. We need a new set-up which, based on student feedback, means the recurring problems should be mitigated or even >>2

Features: Nepal



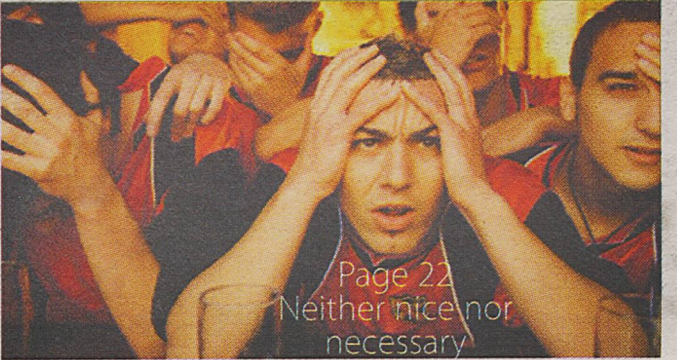
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Neither nice nor necessary

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BLOG

THEFT AT ROSEBERY
Laptop stolen as two men break in

LONDON'S FUTURE AS A FINANCIAL CENTRE
LSE SU Question Time Society holds debate

ULU CENSURE
Sabbatical Officer refuses to fund childcare

Universities face surpluses due to fall in bursary uptake;
Milosevic prosecutor discusses ICJ;
SU politics involvement low

LSE debate on animal testing causes controversy

Rajan Patel
Senior Reporter

A debate on "Animal Testing: Necessary Cruelty or Cruelly Unnecessary?" was held at the LSE last Tuesday, amid heated exchanges between protesting speakers and some members of the audience. The debate was held as part of the

LSE Students' Union (SU) Environment Week.

The audience consisted largely of anti-vivisectionists, including radical animal rights protesters and members of the British Anti-Vivisection Association (BAVA). No formal protest took place, but Professor John Stein and Iain Simpson, both of the Oxford based Pro-Test campaign, were

often disrupted by a hostile audience.

On one occasion the Chair of the debate, LSE SU Environment and Ethics Officer Aled Fisher, summoned security following repeated interruption of Simpson's speech by a member of the audience. Fisher's threat of ejection from the meeting resulted in an apology from the

audience member and the debate continued.

The speakers debated the issue from a scientific standpoint, with anti-testing arguments advanced by Dr Kathy Archibald and Dr Margaret Clotworthy of the Europeans for Medical Progress Trust.

Archibald and Clotworthy claimed that animal testing has "delayed and hampered med-

ical progress", and that increasingly sophisticated alternatives, such as computer models and 'microdosing', render it unnecessary.

At one point, Simpson appeared to deliberately cause controversy, particularly with his comment that it was "nice to see Mel Broughton [an animal rights activist in the audience] out of prison for a

that his marmosets are anaesthetised when testing is carried out, he gave no response when asked what the primates feel when the anaesthetic wears off, claiming that "to attribute to a marmoset the same feeling of pain a human does is just wrong."

His remarks enraged the audience, many of whom moved beyond the animal cruelty argument and doubted the effectiveness of using marmosets in research if their perception of pain is so different to that of humans. The reliability of laboratory data was also called into question, given that the stress of confinement might upset the animals' biochemistry and cause an unnatural response to treatment.

Speaking to *The Beaver* after the debate, certain members of the audience stated their position on the medical debate. Some criticized the traditional concentration of attention on ethical issues, claiming that "the scientific side of the question has been completely under-represented and ignored." BAVA representatives welcomed the LSE debate's attempt to tackle these issues.

Fisher issued a statement: "The event was designed to be controversial and I am glad it provoked so much interest. Many audience members had come from outside of LSE and there was a clear anti-vivisectionist caucus among audience members. I think I managed to allow all the speakers to get their views across in the fairest way possible."

"...the scientific side of the question has been completely under-represented and ignored."

Member of the audience

change." This was met with widespread disapproval, as members of the audience shouted him down and booed him. Simpson also made a provocatively sarcastic claim that he would choose "the sexy oncological drugs that have come out of big chemical places" as treatment if he contracted cancer.

Professor Stein, whose research of movement disorders involves the use of marmosets as subjects, was questioned over whether his experiments cause pain. After stating



Photograph: Corbis

The issue of animal rights has achieved heightened importance in recent years

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eliminated altogether," Hallett said.

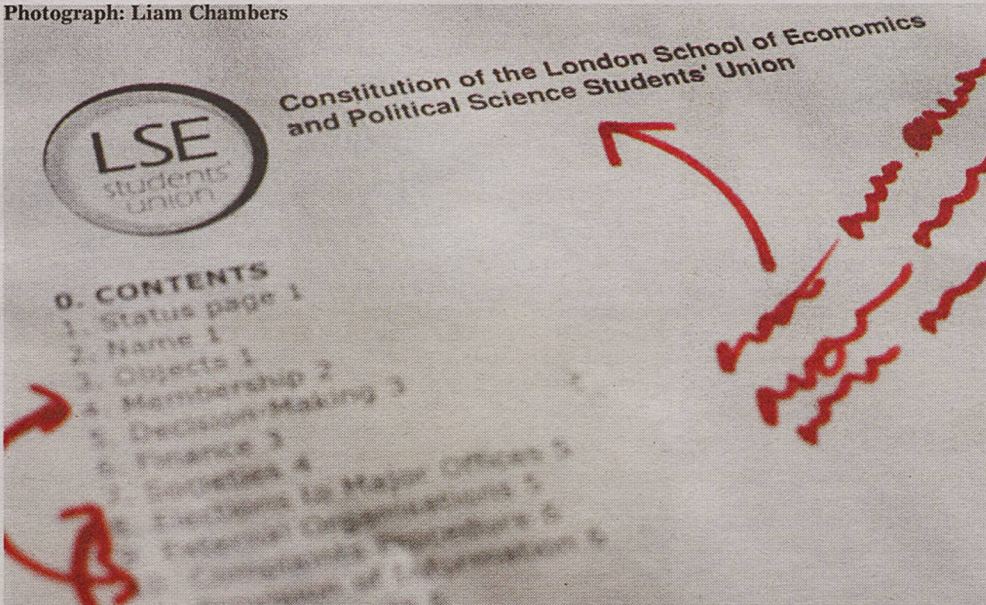
While only a small number of people are taking part in the process, C&S Committee member Simon Douglas said that the earlier UGM motion had given C&S a clear mandate to undertake such a review and that no change suggested by the review will be implemented unless approved by a UGM vote.

Efforts to publicise the process and get the larger student body involved have included an online Facebook group and mention in the Global Email. Ketteringham told *The Beaver*, "The scope of the Review includes the Executive, the Media Group, the Athletics Union (AU), societies, the UGM and all other aspects of SU governance. So this is the opportunity for students to raise [any] problems with these bodies, and any other part of SU governance, and propose solutions."

The Review is scheduled to end in the second week of the Michaelmas Term of 2007. Recommendations for change to the Constitution and Codes of Practice will be submitted to the UGM throughout the process.

One member of the LSE SU Executive said: "A governance review is urgently needed to plug the gaps in the current constitution...[and] institutional measures are needed to prevent future serious disruption."

Photograph: Liam Chambers



The Review hopes to both incorporate the new charities law and to correct loopholes in the Constitution and the Codes of Practice

Fears of grade inflation renewed by recent figures

Tim Root
News Editor

Figures released last week by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) reveal that 60 percent of university graduates in 2005-6 received a first class or upper-second class degree. This has renewed concerns over grade inflation at UK universities.

The proportion of high classification grades rose one percent over 2004-05, and has been steadily climbing for some time. In 1995-6, 48 percent of graduates received a top degree, while less than 7 percent gained a first. A total of 12 percent received first class degrees last year, up from 11.6 percent the year before.

According to HESA, of the 316,000 students leaving university, 34,800 students received a first, 137,200 an upper-second, 94,000 a lower second, 22,800 a third and 26,800 failed their degrees.

Many have claimed recently that these figures represent a grade inflation problem. This has renewed pressure on universities to consider reforming the degree classification sys-

tem.

Peter Williams, Chief Executive of the Quality Assurance Agency, has argued that degree classifications at the moment fail to provide meaningful information about a student. Williams said: "These new figures continue to raise questions about the meaning of degree classifications. They

"These new figures continue to raise questions about the meaning of degree classifications." Peter Williams, Chief Executive, Quality Assurance Agency

provide more ammunition for those who believe the system is in need of reform."

A government backed group led by Bob Burgess, Vice-Chancellor of Leicester University, similarly concluded last year that the present system is not "fit for purpose", and received considerable support

for its newly proposed pass-fail system.

In the proposed system, students would simply pass or fail, and also receive a more detailed transcript similar to those used at American universities. The group's final report is due shortly and will have to respond to a lack of support for the reforms among vice-chancellors, lecturers and employers.

Further criticism of the current system has come from Alan Smithers, head of the Centre for Education and Employment Research at Buckingham University. Smithers said: "The figures hammer home [the fact] that degree classifications as currently applied no longer distinguish sufficiently. Employers now tend to do it on the basis of which university a graduate attended, which, in effect, is using A-levels to distinguish between students. This does not leave room for students or universities to develop."

Smithers has not endorsed the Burgess Group's recommendation, however, arguing that transcripts "just confuse by providing too much information."

Rosebery robbed one week before new security measures introduced

Peter Barton

Once again, a robbery has occurred at the LSE's Rosebery Hall, amid recent security concerns at the School's halls of residence. The robbery comes only days before new security measures are to be introduced at the hall.

The incident comes after robberies at Bankside House and Butlers Wharf as well as the recent discovery that LSE Students' Union (SU) representatives' security concerns were not fully addressed by the School at the Residences Committee meeting because

“...the new measures would make it very difficult for this type of incident to happen again...”

Ros Gil
Front of House
Manager,
Rosebery Hall

the concerns were considered “reactionary” after an earlier robbery at Rosebery Hall in the Michaelmas Term.

Two men separately entered Rosebery Hall behind students who had already opened the door. The receptionist failed to check for LSE ID cards, despite this being one of the new secu-

rity measures implemented this year.

The intruders walked around the floors attempting to open room doors. Students noticed their actions and reported the two men to reception. However the intruders came across a student leaving her room unlocked, and stole her laptop.

Students went to reception, knowing that the thieves were yet to leave the hall. One resident tried to prevent the thieves from leaving by standing in front of the exit. The thief promptly pushed the student aside. The other thief exited the building through another door with the stolen laptop.

Police arrived within five minutes of the incident occurring, believing the intruders were still inside. The officers left, returning later with a forensics team to check for fingerprints and interview students. Both intruders were caught on CCTV.

These events have occurred just one week before the long awaited swipe card security system is introduced.

The *Beaver* has discovered that there have been other lapses in Rosebery Hall's security in recent weeks. Students have been able to enter the hall without ID cards after 6pm, even after the cause of the break in was discovered. Furthermore, sources confirm that guards have at times been asleep at the reception counter during the night shifts.

On at least two occasions this term, students have found the reception counter left open. A stack of all the room keys, with their room numbers printed above them, was left



Photograph: George Wetz

Police arrived five minutes after they were called, believing the intruders to still be inside

visible and unprotected.

The new swipe card system should prevent such incidents, by making it harder to follow students into the building.

Rosebery Hall management have begun negotiations with the security company working at Rosebery Hall. They have refused to employ the security guard found sleeping again.

The Front of House Manager, Ros Gil, said that the management was “optimistic that the new measures would make it very difficult for this type of incident to happen again”, but she stressed the

need for “student awareness” and “vigilance” to solve the security problems. For these measures to work they will need to be effectively implemented, as they are “not fool-proof”.

LSE SU Residences Officer Louise Robinson said: “The swipe card system is a long awaited and much needed direct means of improving hall security, and in this instance clearly comes too late. It's not enough to just stop there...students must continue to apply pressure for the changes we need to see.”

“...security concerns were not fully addressed by the School...because the concerns were considered “reactionary”



Union Jack

International conflicts raged at last week's UGM with the PLO-AU armed with only paper-rocks taking on US military might, in the form of the Juggernaut Sean wannabe-boss Closs.

But first, Cardinal Some Berk joined forces with the loony-left in order to save more babies, this time in Sudan. Preaching at his own babies, Some Berk told the Tory Troopers that they could no longer spend their well earned investment banking pennies on the colonial peoples of Sudan. The Tory Troopers hung their heads in shame and submitted to the Cardinal's will.

Like the US military, Juggernaut Closs hopped from one international crisis to another. This time, he tried to broker peace at Camp Tam, between Palestinian Loony Lunat and the Israel advocate Slimeball Sheldon.

Loony Lunat's tactic this time round was to get “moderate” Green Ken to speak first on why we should be nice to Palestinian kiddies, whilst Mad Vlad and the ISOC cheerleaders shook their pompons on the flanks in ‘the Green-Zone’.

But the Sutherland-sucker Slimeball wasn't having any of it and kept trying to put check-points on the Loony's motion by “erecting” a Wall in the form of anal amendments which even the liberal-SU-intelligentsia (the AU), couldn't bear listening to.

In a fit of desperation, Sheldon, being the Labour sidekick of John Reid, tried to introduce ID cards into the UGM by calling for a card vote, but he ultimately failed to amend the motion.

The Camp Tam Peace Accords would have gone through successfully were it not for an Israeli pre-emptive strike outside the Old Theatre against an innocent blonde English girl who happened to be wearing an Arab-looking chequered scarf and was thus mistaken for a rock-thrower.

Juggernaut panicked and decided to suspend the Camp Tam Peace Accords as the war correspondents of *The Beaver* waded through crowds of Palestinians and Israelis to cover this guerilla warfare.

Amid the chaos, Juggernaut managed to vanish into the night to avoid the wrath of the now six dwarves of C&S, for suspending the dwarves' weekly play-day hour. This was lucky for the wannabe-boss Closs who had recently rubbed up the wrong side of the C&S throne-holder Jefferson Field-Marshall CourtAmy, for trying to take over the Union by holding more than one “prominent” position. However, GenSec Jimmy failed to notice as he was too busy trying to understand culture in a three-line limerick.

Since then, wannabe-boss Closs has tried to play the victim card on Facebook insisting that *The Beaver* had launched a smear campaign against him.

This week, Jack forecasts more crisis management from the Juggernaut as Zany Zoe and other radical feminist elements of the Union try to implement a coup d'etat in the form of Zany's Weak Women's Week.

Environment Week raises awareness of climate change and ecological issues

Vishal Banerjee

The LSE Students' Union (SU) hosted several events last week addressing environmental issues such as climate change, sustainable development and animal testing, for the SU's Environment Week. The Week was sponsored by *The Independent* newspaper.

Environment Week began with “Environment Question Time,” which featured MPs from different parties. Over 50 students came to see Colin Challen of the Labour Party, Jenny Jones of the Green Party and Tim Yeo of the Conservative Party. Controversial MP George Galloway was forced to cancel due to an emergency constituency meeting.

Tuesday's event on animal testing provoked significant debate, and Professor Iain Simpson, speaking in favour of animal testing, clashed with several members of the audience.

Another event focused on the relationship between the environment and religion. Jo



Photograph: Liam Chambers

The SU organised a series of events during the week aimed at raising awareness of green issues

Abess from the Christian Ecology Link and Mizan Choudhry from The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences offered different perspectives

on the subject.

The LSE SU Brazilian Society hosted two lectures last Thursday about sustainable development. One was held on the Amazon rainforest and

another on the Kyoto Protocol.

Wednesday's events also featured a screening of the film “An Inconvenient Truth” in the Quad. LSE SU Environment and Ethics Officer Aled Fisher

told *The Beaver* that he was pleased with the high turnout for the film screening. “I think Environment Week was a big success. Around 150 people attended the showing of ‘An Inconvenient Truth’ and I hope that the film will inspire many of these to join the movement for change on climate change. All the events were well attended, with thought-provoking ways of looking at ecological issues.”

The week ended with lectures from activists from Practical Action and the Climate Outreach and Information Network (COIN). These NGOs may return to the LSE later this year for more interaction with the SU.

Fisher told *The Beaver*: “I would like to thank LSE Security and LSE Conferences and Events for their support with the particularly difficult animal testing debate, which would otherwise have quickly descended into chaos.”

With events that ranged from the controversial to the challenging, I hope that Environment Week achieved its remit to promote awareness and catalyse action.”

UGM motion raises tensions and divides student body as factions pack out theatre

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maybe putting my hand up, or for wearing a keffiyeh, I am being singled out... and called 'you people' and being stereotyped for no good reason."

A keffiyeh is an Arab scarf, often with a checked pattern. Galvin said that she wore her black and white keffiyeh on Thursday because she wanted to show her support for the motion.

Concerning the motion, Galvin said: "I'm happy that the motion passed, I'm pleased that it went through and that the right to education is ensured for Palestinians." She later added: "I also do not take the action of voting lightly, in particular my choice of vote at the UGM was not a decision I took lightly. I feel passionately about the subject it concerned."

Galvin emphasized that she did not want incident to

"My intention is that this kind of tension doesn't increase, and doesn't inhibit student opinions at UGMs and on campus."

LSE SU General Secretary Jimmy Tam



Thursday's UGM debated a topic which was bound to divide student opinion

"escalate into a non-existent conflict between supporters of the motion and supporters of the amendments."

LSE SU General Secretary Jimmy Tam spoke with *The Beaver* after the UGM: "The Union doesn't tolerate the intimidation of other students

based on what they believe. I think every student should have the right to express what they think and their opinion and act like Charlotte did in the UGM. I'm investigating [the incident] further; we're trying to hear from the other side and get both sides of the story. My



Photographs: Liam Chambers

intention is that this kind of tension doesn't increase, and doesn't inhibit student opinions at UGMs and on campus."

Zach Seeskin, the Political Officer of the LSE SU Jewish Society issued a statement saying: "Hopefully, the LSE SU's endeavour to twin with a

Palestinian University will be successful in making steps to bring peace between Israelis and Palestinians."

Similarly, Ziyaad Lunat, the Chair of the LSE SU Palestinian Society told *The Beaver*: "I hope that we can continue to work with people

from all walks of life that share the aspiration for a just settlement for the conflict in the Middle-East with equal rights between Palestinians and Israelis as the underlying framework for any negotiation."

Students' Union voter turnout high but could be higher

Erica Gornall
Senior Reporter

Student politics at the LSE remains an interest of the few, while the majority of students are unaware of developments in the LSE Students' Union (SU).

It was revealed by the LSE Academic Registrar that the School currently has 9395 'registered' students. However, the Constitution and Steering Committee (C&S) elections saw a vote of 144, meaning that only 1.53 percent of the student population actually voted. Why was this? Jimmy Tam, the LSE Students' Union General Secretary cited the fact that this election was a by-election and therefore was bound to attract less people to vote in the university community.

But if last year's Lent Term election is anything to go by, this upcoming race for Sabbatical positions will fail to attract the attention and votes of nearly 80 percent of the student body. According to Douglas Oliver, the Returning officer for those elections, and verified by a secondary source, the turnout for the Lent term elections in 2006 was 1,885. Going by present registered student figures, the turnout in percentage just reaches 21 percent. The 79 percent remaining

are either not interested in Student politics at all, or have consciously chosen not to vote.

There doesn't seem to be a lack of interest in current affairs. Far from it, student societies such as People and Planet and Amnesty International have 221 and 239 members respectively, according to the 2006 Budget sheet.

Societies such as Grimshaw, which deal with current affairs but are not politically affiliated, have attracted between 550 and 580 members this year. This is about the number of members in the Green, Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat Societies put together, having respectively 230, 200, just over 100 and even fewer for liberal democrats. The total members of 'political' societies represent 6.2 percent of the current student population, with significantly less people being members of the actual parties. Compared with the Advertising, Marketing and PR Society, for example, which has 766 members, even societies interested in current affairs in general can seem dwarfed by the more commercial groups.

Perhaps more worrying for this state of student politics is that the LSE scores one of the highest figures in student participation in universities across the UK. According to the

Cambridge Union Secretary, only 5-15 percent of the resident student body votes in sabbatical elections. Meanwhile, Kings College London sabbatical elections only see a 10.14 percent turnout rate in similar elections. Additionally, most unions have an Annual General Meeting rather one every week, only convening outside the annual meeting in an emergency.

However, despite the political reputation of the LSE, Exeter has outperformed the LSE in sabbatical elections. This has only occurred in the last year where the number of votes increased from 1800 to 3310. This demonstrates that a dramatic increase in interest and voting can be achieved in a short space of time. Their turnout currently stands at 24.4 percent, compared with LSE's 21 percent.

Jimmy Tam, General Secretary of the LSE Students' Union, commented, "We shouldn't beat ourselves up too much because we have got one of the highest turnouts in the country, so we're doing something right." Tam also mentioned online voting saying that if we introduced it, "that would increase turnout amongst the student body and generate more interest in elections."

Question Time debates London's financial future

Photograph: Liam Chambers



The panel discussed questions concerning the future of London as a financial centre

Prominent speakers addressed the LSE SU Question Time Society last Tuesday, debating the topic: "What is London's future as a financial centre?"

The debate focused on several different issues concerning London. One contentious topic of the discussion was the implementation of pay caps in financial services jobs in the City of London. This has been under constant discussion ever since the figures of salary bonuses were revealed. Some bonuses number in the millions.

Trade and Industry Secretary Margaret Hodge argued that caps should not be introduced, saying that it was "not the right way to tackle inequality in society." Her Conservative counterpart, Jonathan Djanogly agreed: "It would mean death to the City.

People would simply get up and leave over night. You have to realise we have a very fluid work place here."

However, Vincent Cable, the Liberal Democrat Shadow Chancellor added that inequality in society has been made worse due to the UK housing boom. This has seen housing prices rise and the gap in income rise.

But it is the infrastructure of London that is causing the most concern for the future of London. Anthony Belchambers, Chief Executive of the Futures and Options Association, mentioned the addition of 300,000 extra jobs in the next 25 years but stressed the importance of an infrastructure to go with it. "We've got to deal with it now if we are going to cater for future growth. If we don't do that then we are in serious trouble."

However, Cable highlighted the paradox of the desire for infrastructure where City workers who "probably sign petitions to have better air services" get back to their homes and "are lying down in the middle of Heathrow runway, they don't want the noise, they don't want the pollution."

According to Bill Russell, "London has eclipsed New York as the world's largest financial market only in the last few months" but that the situation is constantly changing "until about 2030 when Beijing or Shanghai is going to be the main financial centre of the world." The infrastructure was seen as key to the challenge London has of expanding. Talking about a friend visiting he commented, "London, great city, third world transport, first world prices."

ULU Sabbatical Officer faces censure

Doug Oliver
Senior Reporter

A disagreement about expense entitlements for part-time University of London Union (ULU) Executive Officers has escalated into a full-scale row about governance of the Union that represents over 100,000 London students. The argument, about the power of Sabbatical officers to veto Executive Committee decisions, has led to a censure motion brought by ULU Chair Rob Park against Sabbatical Officer Jim Hunkin. The motion, which will be debated at the first meeting of ULU Council year next Monday 29 January, amounts to a formal reprimand against Hunkin, ULU Vice President for Finance

“...only students who can afford it, can become ULU student officers...”

Jo Fried,
ULU Womens’
Officer

Services and Regulations, and would bind Sabbatical Officers to decisions of the ULU Executive and other Sub-Committees.

The move to censure follows Hunkin’s veto of the ULU Executive Committee’s decision to provide childcare expenses for part-time Women’s Officer Jo Fried. Fried, who is a single mother of a young child, claimed she needed expenses of around £30 for each meeting which she attended, without which she “could not afford” to attend meetings. In a letter to members of the ULU Executive, Fried said the decision effectively meant that “only students who can afford it, can become ULU student officers”.

Hunkin, who was unavailable for comment on the issue, is understood to be keen to reduce the Union’s financial problems – and one way in which he is seeking to do this is through cutting expenditure for part-time officers. Currently there is an annual set budget of £400 for expenses for all members of the Executive Committee. Fried’s expenses would amount to around £300 alone.

Other members of the Executive have argued that the Union ought not to be bound by an arbitrary figure in a case of special need. One of Hunkin’s key targets for the year, however, is to “remove unnecessary expenditure” and it is said that he fears providing expenses for Fried will “open the floodgates” to frivolous expense claims.

The controversial “Harwood report”, which Hunkin instigated to investigate the need for child care

expenses, stated the belief in an “underlying fact that if the Exec member had the child before election and understood clearly the duties and attendance required...then it is clear that there is no clear argument that they should be recompensed”. This assertion, in particular, has raised disquiet amongst many ULU representatives who feel it undermines its policy of equal opportunity, which seeks to guarantee equal access to Union facilities regardless of personal circumstances.

Consequently, there has been great unease amongst ULU Officers, with many feeling that Hunkin’s efforts to tackle ULU’s debt had gone too far. Former LSESU Communications Sabbatical and current ULU Officer without portfolio Chris Heathcote said that “this matter is a no-brainer. Unless we want Jo off the Exec, we need to support her so she can come to our meetings...I really support what Jim is doing to get ULU out of the red and back on track, because our deficit is undermining all the good work we could be doing, but refusing to pay for childcare is a cut too far.”

The ULU Executive Committee had decided to vote in favour of Fried’s expenses, but Hunkin over-ruled the decision and it was this that led to the move to censure. Whilst the issue has been passed to ULU’s Finance committee for consideration, Hunkin has privately let it be known that he

Photograph: Liam Chambers



University of London Union must now examine the issue of sabbaticals’ power

would still block the expense claim if it ruled in Fried’s favour. Heathcote said that it was “unclear” if Executive decisions were binding, but that “it would seem very strange if they were not”.

Despite describing Hunkin as an “exceptional officer”, Park said that “in my opinion he wrongly believes that he is sovereign when it comes to expenses and he can veto any committee’s decision or ruling on the payment of funds in the delivery of ULU policy”. Hunkin’s right to power of veto for the expenses claim will be debated this week by the ULU Governance Committee. The

decision of the Committee will be binding and if it decides that Hunkin has over-stepped his remit, then the Executive Committee’s decision to give expenses will be upheld.

However, Park has said that he will proceed with the censure vote in order to ensure that officers do not act in the same manner in the future. The motion resolves that “resolutions of the standing committees of the Council and any sub-committees properly created, shall be binding on all Officers of the Union and their mandates shall be fulfilled”. For the motion to be passed, it must receive support from a

simple majority of Council members. However, Park claims that it has “widespread support...from across the political spectrum, including most of the ULU Executive”.

Hunkin notes on his profile on the online portal Facebook that “I spend most of my time drinking what’s left of ULU’s reserves, disagreeing with all sensible suggestions from Exec and Council and spending as much time as possible “working from home”. I do all of this cos I can!”. The passage of the motion is likely to go a long way towards determining the right of Officers to exercise this kind of power in the future.

Milosevic prosecutor discusses role of ICJ

Vishal Banerjee

Geoffrey Nice, QC, principal trial attorney in the prosecution of Yugoslavia’s former President Slobodan Milosevic at the International Criminal Tribunal, shared his doubts about the future of international criminal prosecution with a full audience in the Hong Kong Theatre last Tuesday.

The lecture, titled “War Crimes – Why Bother?” was hosted by the LSE Students’ Union Law Society in association with the School’s Law department. Nice led the prosecution from 2001 until March 2006, when Milosevic died in his cell in the detention centre of the Hague Tribunal.

Milosevic was accused of genocide, breaking the Geneva Convention, violating the customs of war and crimes against humanity in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo. Milosevic was tried at The Hague and died six days after a fellow prisoner, Milan Babic, committed suicide. Nice commented on how Babic, a former ally of Milosevic, testified against Milosevic in the trial.

Nice shared his first-hand experiences from the trial, and said that Milosevic was “convinced he would be convicted” and saw no benefit in cooperating. He also said that Milosevic would focus on something rela-



Geoffrey Nice QC condemns current ICJ practice

tively obscure, forcing his lawyers to “muddle their ways through passages of evidence.”

His personal experiences led Nice to speak forcefully about whether international trials were useful or not. He claimed that tribunals “spent billions of dollars to bang up a few men for a few decades,” and expressed disapproval of the fact that documents that allegedly proved Milosevic’s criminal activities were “kept covered” due to Serbia’s concerns that the publications would have an adverse affect on its position in the ICJ.

Avoiding specifics, Nice refused to comment on many other topics outside of the Milosevic trial. He expressed general scepticism about the benefits of prosecuting international political criminals

under the current system, and questioned whether international tribunals had the required cultural pre-requisites needed to complete their mission satisfactorily and suggested that a “Truth Commission” would be better adapted to perform its function.

Nice also argued that many of the leaders of the West could be prosecuted for war crimes. He included Margaret Thatcher, George Bush and current British Prime Minister Tony Blair in his list of those that could be accused of committing “crimes of the worst kind.” Nice then conceded that it would be “impossible to suggest” that any of them would ever be prosecuted under the current system.

Photograph: Liam Chambers

Left over bursaries leave fund surpluses

Rajan Patel
Senior Reporter

UK universities will be left with “millions in surplus funds” this summer as students fail to take advantage of bursaries and other financial assistance, the *Guardian* newspaper reported last Tuesday.

The introduction of tuition fees this academic year has obliged universities to provide bursaries of at least £300 to their least well-off students. Almost all institutions also offer more generous assistance, but the disparity between the predicted and actual uptake of these schemes is considerable.

Some universities now expect their expenditure to be “less than two-thirds” their original estimations, while Bristol University has said that “take-up of bursaries is down almost 20 percent on the forecast”.

Bristol’s academic registrar, Lynn Robinson, suggested that the gap resulted mainly from problems with the university’s predictions of demand.

“The predictions were made in late 2004, when full information about national funding schemes for 2006 was not available,” she told the *Guardian*.

In addition, the fact that “students who deferred from 2005 entry would not be eligible for bursaries (as they

would not pay the higher fees)” was not recognised in the predictions, leading to significant over-estimation of their uptake.

The LSE’s Head of Recruitment and Admissions, Catherine Baldwin, informed *The Beaver* that the School is “almost on target with allocating its bursary budget” of

“the LSE is almost on target with allocating its bursary budget...” while some LSE Bursaries are still being improved due “to problems with the Student Loans Company form.”

Catherine Baldwin
LSE Head of
Recruitment and
Admissions

£317,810. Some LSE bursaries are still being approved, owing, she said, “to problems with the SLC [Student Loans Company] form”, but these issues should be resolved “by the end of term”.

Problems with paperwork from the SLC were identified

as a major cause of the shortfall by the *Guardian*. Most UK universities do not conduct their own financial assessment of students and rely on the information students provide on SLC loan forms. If students fail to tick a box authorising the SLC to share their financial data with universities, it can be almost impossible for them to receive the assistance they are entitled to.

However, both the LSE and Bristol have made it very clear to students what is required to obtain financial assistance. The LSE’s Student Services Centre web page on bursaries clearly indicates the necessity of ticking the relevant boxes on the SLC form.

Robinson added that “we have regularly communicated with our students to remind them what they need to do” and that, in her opinion, the SLC issue was not a “big element” in the difference between Bristol’s predictions and actual results.

The SLC is redesigning its form for next year and many universities are reviewing their predictions and funding programmes in the light of this year’s results.

LSE Admissions also reminded students that applications for student loans, maintenance grants and fee loans can be made in each year of study. Students starting their second year this September, for example, can apply for assistance for the coming year even if they did not do so this year.

COMMENT & ANALYSIS

C&A: Response Leading Leftie, James Caspell, thinks Dan Sheldon (*Beaver* 655, 'Are the Left all that remain?') was wrong

New Labour are New Tories

James Caspell



Last week, Dan Sheldon identified an 'intra-left' cleavage within our Union. Whilst I agree with the existence of such a cleavage, the real dividing criteria is one of the real Left versus the faux-left which Sheldon and his New Labour comrades are undoubtedly part of, replacing the Tories as the voice of defeatism dressed as 'pragmatism' within our Union.

A chasm has emerged between those on the activist Left who believe that students have a right to decide how they are governed and how their top-up fees are spent, and those on the faux-left who believe that the School should decide for us.

In an editorial littered with misconceptions, Sheldon paints the real Left as a bunch of lunatics who look for nothing else but to inflict conflict and chaos within our Union. Nothing could be further from

the truth, as even superficial analysis demonstrates.

Firstly, the campaigners against Sutherland's appointment consist of Greens, RESPECT, Socialist Workers, Lib Dems, the remnants of Old Labour and even Conservatives. This is a broad coalition concerned about an important position and not led by a bunch of 'dogmatists' on the fringe. Many of those who support the Sutherland campaign are also those individuals who are the driving force behind the Living Wage campaign and there is certainly no trade off between the two.

It is in fact the case that those students who are opposing Sutherland are probably among the most principled, hardworking and active in lobbying and campaigning for social justice and student democracy at the LSE more widely.

It is the likes of Joel Kenrick and Aled Fisher who have campaigned vociferously and, most importantly, suc-



cessfully over recent years to raise environmental consciousness and sustainability on campus. Louise Robinson has worked tirelessly for residences and lobbied the School to take issues of security in halls and affordability seriously, whilst Alexandra Vincenti continues to lobby for our right to resits. Jeff Courtney and James Ketteringham have devoted themselves to reviewing the governance structure of the entire Union with a view to increasing student participation within the School. It is several members of the LSE Green Party who have negotiated with the School to introduce default double-sided printing and increased recycling facilities across campus. Most recently, Ziyaad Lunat has worked tirelessly to ensure the passing of one of the most worthy SU motions in recent

years, displaying solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people - a measure which Sheldon opposed.

These students are the real Left - those that work hard in doing what they can to make LSE and our wider society a fairer place, rather than tub-thumping, bandwagon-jumping New Labour careerists who merely snipe from the sidelines.

As one of the main protagonists for negotiating a student place on the Directorship Selection Committee, I believe that I and others are fully able to recognise when the School has chosen to listen to us on an issue and when it has not. Indeed, it is the School and not students who decides whether consensual or more direct action is required for them to take notice.

It appears that those who Sheldon has labelled as 'dogmatic' are actually the real pragmatists in knowing when to negotiate and when we need

to stand up for what we believe in. Sheldon nevertheless complains of 'moral imperialism'. How a member of the Labour Party can lecture anyone on 'imperialism' is laughable given the quagmire of bloodshed that the Iraqi occupation has brought since the invasion in 2003. It is not the

students have the time or can afford to campaign for a better university and wider society due to crippling tuition fees and living costs. But all students are able to support (and vote for) those campaigners, many of whom were on the Sutherland sit-in, who have the courage of their convictions to stand up for what they believe in for the benefit of all students.

When New Labourites run in SU elections this term, look beyond their claims of 'pragmatism'. Look for what their Party stands for: higher fees and selling out to the increasing corporate influence in our School. A vote for New Labour is a vote for higher fees, sycophantic careerists and the acceptance of defeat. Fortunately, there is an alternative.

Instead of depending on the superficial gradualism that the careerists will describe as 'common sense', campaigning student activism provides a vibrant and effective alternative to the representative democracy that often fails us. Don't wait until the elections to get your voice heard.



How a member of Labour can lecture anyone on 'Imperialism' is laughable

imagined imperialism of the real left that New Labourites should be condemning, but the imperialism of the Israeli apartheid state that has been condemned by 138 UN Security Council Resolutions.

2007 is not 1967; not all

The Living Wage campaign has made progress, but Sam Causton and Kevin Heutchi write that the fight is not yet finished

Cleaning up poverty wages

Sam Causton & Kevin Heutchi

The LSE Living Wage campaign is one of the biggest, most widely supported student campaigns in recent history. The situation of our cleaners is unacceptable to most students. If we all expect to earn high wages when we graduate, we should be willing to pay those who play roles in our university life enough to live on. Until recently, this hasn't been the case.

Outsourced to private companies, they work very long, hard and anti-social hours, receive little holiday, have to cope with unmanageable work speed-ups. Our cleaners are paid only the minimum wage (£5.35p/hour) which, in the most expensive city in Europe, doesn't nearly cover the essential costs of everyday life.

The Greater London Authority has calculated that to live just above the poverty threshold £7.05p/hour is needed. A result of paying the minimum wage is that most cleaners work multiple jobs in order to survive. As a result they spend much time and money travelling around the capital. Public transport in London is very expensive and yet we get to benefit from student discounts, our cleaners don't.



Living Wage: A slippery issue

Many of us live in subsidised student accommodation, our cleaner don't have this opportunity. The high cost of living and travelling in London coupled with poverty wages forces our cleaners to make choices which we would hope never to face: buy food or heat the house, cloth the children or pay the rent. Apart from obvious quality of life issues a wide range of studies has shown that the result can be spiralling debt, anxiety and long term health problems. Long hours mean that cleaners have little or no time to spend with their children or families, or be involved in their communities. The LSE was founded for "the betterment of society", here's a good place for us to start.

The campaign has been going on for nearly a year now. Last academic year over 700

students, academics and London politicians signed a petition calling for all LSE staff, in house or contracted out, to be paid the living wage. This year has seen many angry articles in *The Beaver*, *Evening Standard* and *London Student*. Large demonstrations have taken place outside committees considering cleaners pay. The Students' Union elected Richard Rickards as Honorary President, a cleaning supervisor sacked by his bosses after drawing attention to underpayment of wages. A student society, LSE Citizens for Social Justice, has been set up to further the campaign.

The hard work seems to be

concluded that we ought to ensure that our cleaners are paid significantly more... It will cost us some money, but I think it is the right thing to do, and I expect most of you will agree." We are all grateful to the School for making this commitment and cleaners are grateful to students and the school for making it come about.

This may lead many to

think that the job is done. It is not. Over the next month a final decision on future wages will be made. We need to keep this issue in focus so that "we ought to ensure our cleaners are paid significantly more" means the end of poverty wages on campus. Equally, it would be easy to forget the cleaners in our residences. We cannot. They are just as badly off and deserving of our advo-

cacy as those on campus. This will be the focus of the next stage of the campaign. Students should get behind the campaign and our cleaners. Whoever wants to help, with ideas, with time or with specific know how, particularly people who live in halls, should make themselves known by e-mailing su.soc.lsecitizensforsocialjustice@lse.ac.uk.



LSE was founded for the "betterment of society" - here's a good place for us to start

bearing fruit. In an e-mail to all students Howard Davies wrote, concerning campus cleaners, that "having considered the arguments we have

Sick of reading Hacks' views in C&A? Do YOU have an opinion on life in LSE?

C&A is all about publishing everyone's views on LSE, and, in case you hadn't noticed, hacks make up a minority. Remember 'Fake Gangstas in the Underground' (*Beaver* 652) last term? Want to write something similar? Then we want to hear from you.

Email: thebeaver.editor@lse.ac.uk

Literally, any opinion will be considered...

COMMENT & ANALYSIS

The Arts at LSE

Get more than a degree

Danny Newport



A good friend of mine recently asked what I would leave LSE with. When I replied "hopefully a 2.1" he smiled to himself and retorted "is that all?". Blind to his subtlety I continued to explain that getting higher than this was almost impossible at such an institution. It wasn't until a fair while later that I realised exactly what he was getting at.

Granted, my friend had a rather smug way of getting his point across, but how glad I am he made it. You see, important as it is to leave LSE with a good grade, if that is all we have accomplished in three years, is it really a success? I fear we have almost completely succumbed to the pressure of the graduate job and forgotten that there are other reasons that university is important. It is impossible not to feel the 2.1 pressure building around campus, never more so than Lent term. We are constantly reminded of it, be it from our lecturers, our teachers, our parents, the firms or, most influentially, each other. It is this source of pressure that I detest. Whether it be in the form of

After last week's Beaver editorial on why arts should be an integral part of LSE life, avowed non-hack, Danny Newport, implores people to leave LSE with more than just a head full of work

societies, or just the friend that you meet for coffee once a week, one of us is always reminding another of this ticking time bomb.

As the days since Christmas pass, the short lived trend of talking about anything but work seems to have all but died. Why is this? Because we have nothing else to say? Probably. How can we talk about anything but work if we never do or think anything but work? And what a vicious cycle this is! This is why I believe we are missing

No matter how busy we think we are, we will be busier when we leave the LSE

one of the greatest commodities we will ever have, and will only have here at university, Time. We all have it, no matter how busy we think we are, we will be busier when we leave the sanctity of LSE behind. And yet we waste it, we waste the opportunity to take something away other than that grade. This is where the AU

and the Hacks have left the rest of us behind, because they will take something else away. Be it a team, or an achievement, a position or a speech, they have achieved something more than just sitting in the quad and sitting in the library.

Maybe you don't want to spend your time like that, maybe you are like me and think that you're not good enough at sport and the UGM is a waste of time. But there is so much more that you can do with the time you have left. There is one area in particular which we, collectively, should look to support. That area is the arts. I cannot believe that within this there isn't something for everyone. Theatre,

music, dancing, literature, debate and film encompass something that almost all of us would enjoy. Disagree? Then go and check out your Facebook profile! One of them will be there. As a university we have managed to almost completely overlook these areas. We have a hugely under-funded Drama society, a Music society without space to practise, a film making society in LooSE TV which many of us are ignorant of, and many other undersubscribed societies that could not only do with support, but could so enrich our time here. None of this will change unless our opinions change, and we look towards our own creativity to be our entertainment and interest, rather than getting to the end of a hard day, going home, and watching other people's creativity on the TV. These aspects of our

society here at LSE can be great, and can be something to be proud of, and at least something to talk about and lift the dreary clouds of exam pressure.

I don't endorse turning your back on your degree, but I do endorse finding a balance

and using the time we all undoubtedly have to do something that you can take away from here with you. Be it arts, sports, or even the much bemoaned student politics, find something that you want to be a part of and be a part of it, before it's too late.

LSE and the Arts: Worth fighting about?



C&A: Response Last week, The Beaver ran a News article and an editorial saying Drama Soc is underfunded. Ex-Drama Soc chair, Ben Partridge, disagrees

Benjamin Partridge



LSE Drama: ok

I am often suspicious that I am being misled by articles in the Beaver. It is only now that I have some authority to assert that there was an article in last week's paper that was a little misleading. The allegations made certainly did not have any parity with my experience as last year's Drama Society President. The article, "Societies complain over arts resources at the LSE", which carried a photograph of the drama society, described how arts societies within the Students' Union are "running out of resources" and how arts are being neglected here at the LSE. This is not true.

My first gripe is purely financial. The reporter points out that while the SU give arts societies above-average funding, arts societies receive no sponsorship. This is correct; however, other factors must be taken into account. For example, the drama society's primary aim is to put on productions which the wider student body pay to see. Arts societies are among the few societies that can hope to make a profit. I do not subscribe to the Tory attitude (that crippled British arts in the 1980s and

90s) that stipulates that art ventures must all become independently economically viable enterprises. As an important part of society in general the subsidization of art of all kinds is important. However, at LSE, many of the arts societies can reap the fruits of their labour. Last year the drama society received a decent budget at the start of the year which we managed to turn into a sizable profit after six successful productions. We were left at the end of the year in the enviable position of having to find ways in which to spend our money. We eventually spent it on acting workshops at RADA, a rewarding experience for all those involved, many of whom had worked hard to make the productions a success. This was also the situation at the end of the previous year, where money was left over and costumes were bought.

On top of this, the Students' Union has worked with the current Drama Society committee and used money from this year's Annual Fund to improve the ancient lighting and sound equipment in the Old Theatre. The new Parish Building will have a positive impact as a space

where rehearsal can take place without having to go through the Conferences office. The SU joint events fund also makes extra money available for ventures that involve more than one society - another financial boost and an incentive for arts societies to collaborate as is happening this year with the musical, 'Into the Woods', in Week 10. While the School itself is little help they do give performing arts societies the extensive use of the Old

Sirs Ian McKellen and Peter Ustinov (back from the grave) welcoming the throngs of enthusiastic audience members into their seats with free interval ice cream and Maltesers for all, but we must be realistic. There are improvements which can be made, but the situation falls short of the gloomy picture painted by last week's article. We do well for a university that has no arts departments.

Finally, we must not forget that art, whilst needing money and facilities, is ultimately fuelled by people and imagination. I hope these societies will not run out of. You may feel that there is little provision for the arts at LSE but if you want to put on a play, do it. If you want to start a music group, do it. I am loath to use the cliché but it really is true - where there is a will there is a way. At times it may seem like an uphill struggle but it will be worth it. The drama society has been growing since I've been here as a result of students' vision, time and effort. As with all SU arts societies, the more it grows the more help it will justify.

We must not forget that art is ultimately fuelled by people and imagination

HACKTIVIST!

Off the record, on the QT, and very... hush-hush.

It's party-season for the Eyes of Hacktivist. Despite rumours of cold-feet, Evil Ice Queen Zoë launched her GenSec campaign at a big bash, courtesy of Mummy and Daddy. At a party where every Hack in town was invited, it was easy for the Hacktivist to lose count of the numbers. Fortunately, one Vote-Counter was present to help out, although he did Dug-'imselfintoa 'Ole-ver with his windmill-style skating.

In order to impress the in-laws, the Karl Rove of SU Politics had to ditch his greasy-falafel vendor looks for the evening and look half decent, by combing his hair. Unfortunately Hacktivist thinks he couldn't Dew-ji this million dollar makeover. Nor could he out Dew-ji his girlfriend's party - with his own party being held in the classy Tuns this Friday - complete with cheap cake-cutting, tiramisu and falafel. Hacktivist urges all readers of the Global Email to turn up and make sure there are at least 5 people present, although the Mis-Communications officer must be so busy party-planning -

that he has forgotten to advertise in his much-loved Blog.

Also present at Princess Zoe's big bash were the Union's brand new couple; Liverpoolian lass Lamey Williams of Labour fame and Field-Marshal Jefferson of the failed LSE fraternity - the C&S Clowns. Despite Lamey asking Jefferson to 'Court Me,' the couple were trying to keep their love below the ice - but nothing is secret from the Eyes of Hacktivist.

One Hack was suspiciously missing. Ex-Features Editor and new Chair-Collector of The Beaver; Radical Shiksa-Feminista Man-Basher-ji was allegedly Beavering away. Hacktivist wonders if her absence can be traced to the bad blood between her and the Ice Queen, following rumours of Man-Basher-ji's bid for GenSec.

Hacktivist was going to conduct a 'smear' campaign against new-UGM chair Sean Wannabe-Boss-Closs, but has entrusted this important duty to His evil twin brother Jack.

hacktivist@tellusthegossip.com

COMMENT & ANALYSIS

SU Women's Officer Zoë Sullivan, in Women's Week, tells us why we should still think about gender discrimination

Still a fight worth fighting



Zoë Sullivan

It would appear as if we have moved beyond the need to burn our bras for female emancipation. Most of my friends, male and female, would probably answer yes (some more strongly than others) when asked, "Are you a feminist?"

If we are already so liberal in our attitudes towards gender equality and enlightened over the issues facing women then why do we need a Women's Week? It is exactly this complacency that makes raising awareness around women's issues so difficult. Indifference has replaced open hostility in the battle for female empowerment. While the struggle for gender equality may no longer be articulated through the battle of the sexes women face old and new issues all over the world.

Discrimination in employment is still a key area

for concern. For example statistics from the government's Women and Equality unit show that despite the positive impact that the 1975 Equal Pay Act has had, women working in full time employment are currently paid on average 12.6% less than men's hourly pay. This gender pay gap widens even further for women of ethnic minorities. Although the difference varies according to cultural group all

It should be clear just how far we are from winning the struggle for gender equality

women of ethnic minority groups earn far less than the average female earning, Bangladeshi and Pakistani women being the worst affected. Legislation protecting the rights of lesbian, gay or transgender women is still in its infancy.

Despite women's increased

involvement in employment sectors such as business and politics there ability to reach the highest echelons of such structures remains shockingly restricted. In the House of Commons there are just 126 women to 520 men. Before the general election in 1997 women made up 9% of MPs, this rose to just over 18% after the election due to the use of women-only shortlists. When these were deemed unlawful the percentage of female MPs dropped again after the 2001 election. However due to new legislation enabling measures such as quotas to be implemented the number rose to 20% after the 2005 elections.

Women are not only discriminated against in the public sphere, a far more worrying trend is the persistence of domestic violence. During their lives 1 in 4 women will be



victims of domestic violence and women are far more likely to suffer repeated abuse than men. 89% of all reported domestic abuse involves violence against women. Domestic abuse usually is a long standing method of control, shockingly an average 2 women a week are killed by domestic violence.

Outside of the home women still remain worryingly at risk of sexual assault and rape. The British Crime Survey places the statistic of women experiencing sexual victimisation since age 16 at 9.7%. The Home Office has reported that 4.9% of UK women have been raped at some point in their lives. However out of that it is argued that 15% of rapes are reported. 1 in 5 reported rapes make it to court and only 6% make it to conviction.

Sexual exploitation and abuse transcends state bound-

aries. It is very difficult to gain concrete statistics on the amount of women and children trafficked across the world, statistics taken in 2005 place the number at anywhere between, and perhaps above, 600,000 to 800,000. Of these trafficked women many are sold or forced into lives of rape and sexual slavery. The same report judged that most countries deemed to have a significant problems with people trafficking were not doing enough to combat the problem.

It is impossible to do women's issues any form of justice in this short article, however it should be clear just how far we are from winning the struggle for gender equality. We should be anything but complacent. We need Women's Week to celebrate how far we have come in the fight against gender discrimination. However we also need Women's Week in order to remember the actual battles that women face day to day all around the world and how far we have to go on the road towards true gender equality.

ULU Mature and Part-time Students' Officer Shayaan Afsar talks about the financial plight of mature students

Priced out part-timers



Shayaan Afsar

For any education system, it is vital that students are able to study in an environment conducive towards other obligations they have, including employment and caring responsibilities. This is why part time education is essential for people who wish to achieve their full potential. It also bodes well for an efficient labour market where those who wish to retrain can more

easily do so. However, the current education system in England does not promote this in the best way possible. In a recent report released by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) the government acknowledged that "If we ignored tuition fee income, we believe it would lead to an inefficient and less effective distribution of public money... part-time provision [would be] left under-resourced," meaning that part time students pay disproportionately higher in fees than their full time colleagues for the services they receive. However, the government has done little except assert a

"commitment to keep the funding of part-time provision under review in light of the introduction of variable fees for full-time undergraduate study." Despite the recognition that part time students are paying more, there have been no transitional measures implemented and the government has simply deferred its decision until "market had established itself and its effects had become clear."

Between 1997/98 to 2003/04, there was more than three times more growth in the numbers of students opting to study part time than full time (Higher Education Statistics Agency, HESA). There has

been evidence from the HESA figures that this trend is now at an end, if not being reversed. The percentage of students opting to study part time has been falling.

It is time for the government to begin taking part-time study seriously

During the top up fees debate, one thing that didn't receive sufficient attention was the plight of part time students. The government touted that it had increased grants for part time students. What the government did not advertise with such enthusiasm was that most part time students would be ineligible for the grants in the first place. In a recently published Universities UK report, it was revealed that only 13 per cent of part time students receive a government grant. The reasons for this are clear: government grants are restricted to students that study at least half a full time course and those with no previous higher education qualification. The means testing that takes place ignores the fact that these two eligibility criteria exclude the 77 per cent of part time students that study less than half a full time course and 46 per cent that already have a degree, regardless of their economic circumstances.

A common government claim is that part time stu-

dents do not require adequate economic support because employers fund their study. The truth is that only about a third of part time students have their fees paid for by their employers. The rest have to pay their entire fees up front, with no choice to defer payment like their full time peers. Furthermore, nearly half of part time students choose to study part time because of inability to afford a full time education. It is the greatest factor for low income students (64 per cent), lone parents (62 per cent) and women (58 per cent). It is absurd that the government penalises those unable to afford full time education by making it more difficult or even impossible to claim a grant.

It is time for the government to begin taking part time students and part time study seriously. The alternative to the current system is not to simply offer part time students the chance to defer their fees. The UK report revealed that there is no demand for such a move. Neither do the current government measures of providing £40 million extra in grants to higher education institutions (of which half is diverted from core teaching funds) for part time provision go far enough. If fees for part time higher education are not cut, the best alternative would be to reform the system of grants, where ability to pay is properly taken into account. A formal cap must also be placed on fees for part time higher education if we do not want part time students to be priced out of higher education.

The Beaver is looking for more talented people

The Beaver is again looking for people to take up positions on our Marketing and Admin teams. The Marketing team promotes *The Beaver* as a brand on campus and externally. The Admin team takes care of the smooth functioning of the paper's non-editorial operations. To apply for a position, or to find out more, email: thebeaver.secretary@lse.ac.uk

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COMMENT & ANALYSIS

The Beaver

Established 1949 - Issue 656

The controversial motion passes...

...and the Union fails to solve the Israel-Palestine debate

This week the LSE Student's Union agreed to twin itself with a Palestinian University. It was clear from the outset that the Union General Meeting in which the motion was passed would be different from the others. The Meeting easily had one of the highest attendances of the year and several societies had mobilized their members to the Meeting to vote. This motion more than any over the year managed to bring in a lively and excited audience.

The manner in which the meeting ended demonstrated the amount of tension bubbling in the room. The fact that it ended so acrimoniously could have been frightening for some, but many will argue that this clearly showed the passion derived from opposing opinions – a positive in light of the dull endured so far this year.

For the first time in years, it really did look like racial tension had taken over at our UGM. With the 'fight' that brought the meeting to a close, came also the fear that this could lead to wider discontent.

In hindsight, this appears to be an irrational fear. The people involved were angry at the time, but it was more a result of the combative environment of the UGM. It would be more interesting to ask, just what have we agreed to do.

The motion was, fundamentally, meaningless in that it did not promise the financial assistance, knowledge, books or free clothes that would provide real concrete help to the students of Palestine. Instead we are lumbered with (or they are) a symbolic mandate to 'twin' ourselves with 'a Palestinian University'; a concept rather than a practical solution.

Without doubt the proponents of this motion did well to promote the whole Israeli-Palestine issue out to the wider student conscience. Whether that was the main motive for it, we will never really know, but we do know that they have not really managed to get students to do something purposeful yet. What is for sure is that the answer to the Israel-Palestine problem will not be found at the UGM.

Letters to the Editor

The Beaver offers all readers the right to reply to anything that appears in the paper. Letters should be sent to thebeaver.editor@lse.ac.uk and should be no longer than 250 words. All letters must be received by 3pm on the Sunday prior to publication. The Beaver reserves the right to edit letters prior to publication.



not extremism

Dear Sir

We would like to express our disappointment at your choice to publish a column that labelled a particular Muslim individual an extremist. This specific label, especially in the current climate, has taken on a very sensitive meaning and is associated by many to mean somebody involved with terrorism. We therefore feel that it was a particularly insensitive word to use.

We would also like to make the wider point that defending Palestinians and raising awareness of their plight does NOT make somebody an 'extremist'. This kind of labelling simply hinders debate as connotations of this word lead people to have prejudiced ideas of the situation.

In a society where Muslims are being increasingly discriminated against, it is precisely this type of labelling that exacerbates the increasing stereotyping of and prejudice against Muslims today. Whilst many are working towards bringing people together and promoting tolerance between people of all faiths and backgrounds, comments such as these thwart attempts to build a peaceful society.

We believe that it is most important for those whose writing goes to print to take such serious effects into consideration.

Shanella Haque
LSESU Anti-Racism Officer
Ruhana Ali
UGM Vice-Chair
Fadhil Bakeer-Marker
LSESU International Officer
James Caspell
LSESU Postgraduate Officer
Jimmy Tam
LSESU General Secretary

surprised

Dear Sir

I must say I am surprised by the recent revelations about halls security. I was always told that LSE is hard to get in to.

Benjamin Partridge

"justice is enshrined"

Dear Sir

Dan Sheldon's article 'Poverty or Planet?' fundamentally misunderstands ecology and makes numerous hypocritical contentions about 'Greens'.

Social justice is enshrined in the Green Party's Philosophical Basis: sustainability, equality, peace and participatory democracy are equivocally fundamental pillars of Green politics.

Sheldon suggests Greens are too ecologically preoccupied to consider people. Ironically, his party, Labour, wasted billions replacing Trident and fighting an immoral war in Iraq, introduced top-up fees, extended privatisation, failed to reaffirm union rights and abandoned the working-class for a corporate agenda; the Greens opposed all student fees and privatisation of public services, and encouraged student grants, strengthening of workers' rights and a truly redistributive income tax system. Greens on the London Assembly have been described by London Citizens Living Wage campaigners as their most influential help, ironic considering the larger number of evidently ineffective Labour Assembly members.

Sheldon's short-termism is dangerous as it fails to recognise that environmental crises will worse affect the world's poorest –

97% of natural disaster victims are found in the Global South, and climate change intensifies such disasters. Ecology and social justice go hand-in-hand. Embarrassingly, Sheldon's party are years behind on this: only Labour and UKIP have no international emissions trading policy.

The trade-off Sheldon assumes between poverty or planet evidences Labour's failure to deliver on pledges to eradicate poverty. Ten years on, the fact that Blairites still talk without action highlights their inadequate response to social issues.

Louise Robinson, LSESU Green Party Female Co-Chair
Aled Dilwyn Fisher, LSESU Green Party Male Co-Chair

"of tomorrow"

Dear Sir

The LSE Student Union ran Environment Week from 14 to 19 January.

While we wholeheartedly support promoting environmental issues, we feel that the selling of "environment week goodie bags" was counterproductive. For a nominal fee, students could purchase bags with a copy of The Independent newspaper and other promotional material inside. The material had little relation to environmental issues, and unfortunately most people will probably find no use for it, creating yet more unnecessary waste.

This worrying culture of consumer environmentalism seems to present a message of "We'll be fine consuming the way we consume, but let's pay token attention to pressing issues." The problem is how the SU does not practice what it preaches, but opts instead to unload stuff on students. Events like the LSE SU Environment Week certainly raise awareness and can potentially change the opinions of tomorrow's world leaders. It is unfortunate that its good message is tarnished by unnecessary consumerism.

Kai Hoffman
Emma Cardwell
Michael Deas
Andrej Lavtar
Felix Kirsch
Petra Sarapatkova
Martha Syvertsen
BSc Environmental Policy

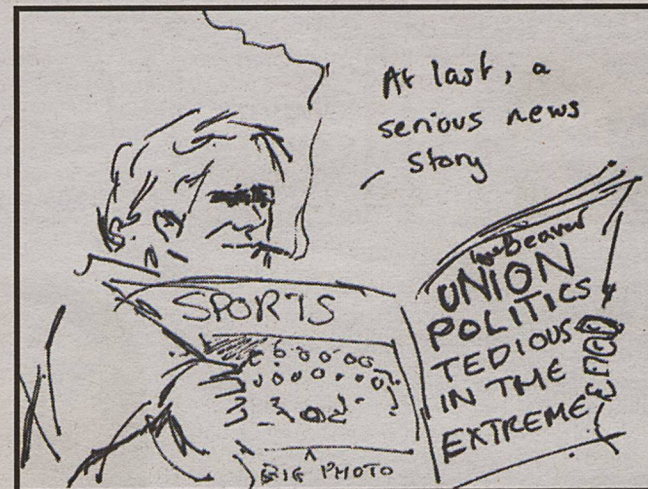
Ewan O'Connor
International History

"demand influence"

Dear Sir

I would like to comment on Elle Dodd's piece on student's possibilities for feedback to the school. I support her original intentions, but think she makes a fundamental mistake in her take on the subject.

In her article she depicts the relationship between university and student as one between a firm and a customer. This view of a university is dangerous and counterproductive. To demand influence over our education just because we pay for it undermines the struggle for free, independent universities and is further fuelling the commercialisation of education. Students should have an important role in shaping the university because it is their education and they are a valuable resource. If your only motivation for being at university is a prestigious university's name on a degree that you can present for the market, there is no incentive for the students or the university to develop. Only through a total reformation in the teaching methods and the way students can influence



these will the university stop being a student factory and instead become a creative, academic arena for both students and staff. Sadly, Dodd's representation of university is just another example of how one does not question the influence of capitalism in education and the results this might have.

Matilda von Sydow
BSc International Relations

"totally wasted"

Dear Sir

I attended a debate at your college entitled 'Necessary Cruelty or Cruelly Unnecessary' as part of the Environmental Week which Aled Dilwyn Fisher organised and chaired extremely well.

On the panel, speaking in favour of animal based research was Prof. John Stein, neurophysiologist at Oxford University and Ian Simpson from Pro-Test. Opposing speakers were Dr Margaret Clotworthy and geneticist Kathy Archibald from Europeans for Medical Progress Trust.

I had not heard either of the pro-vivisectionists speak before. I was, therefore, surprised by Prof. Stein's attempt to justify mutilating the brains of non-human primates. His presentation lacked scientific content and there was no reasoned argument based on the supposed value of the monkey model. He failed to address the issue of the animal's post operative suffering. Furthermore, Ian Simpson's immature and supercilious attitude did nothing to support the case for animal experimentation.

Had it not been for the skillful presentation by the speakers from Europeans for Medical Progress who backed up all their arguments with concrete evidence it would have been a totally wasted evening.

Their descriptions of the many recent developments in non-animal science-based research gave enormous hope for the future of human health without inflicting unnecessary suffering on other sentient creatures.

Alice Griffin
Cambridge

Vlad's right (wing)

Dear Sir

Imagine my surprise when I opened last week's Beaver to find two right-wing columnists instead of the customary one! Vlad is an extremist; an apologist for reactionary terrorists and gay-bashing totalitarian regimes. This is the depressing face of the modern far left and it makes me ashamed to be a socialist. By allowing such an outdated Trot write for your paper, you are painting a grossly unrepresentative caricature of the left both at LSE and in the wider world.

Would you invite someone on the far-right to write for your esteemed organ? I suspect not.

Whilst I can't be bothered to engage with most of his clichéd "Fight Zionist-colonial-fascist-racist-apartheid" bollocks, I will say this. To support an academic boycott is racist, and those who support it should question what they hope to achieve. At a time when Israeli and Palestinian universities are attempting to work together to build bonds across the divide, excluding academics based on their nationality is an abhorrent affront to every principle of academic freedom and should be condemned. We cannot pick and choose who we afford human rights to: freedom of education should be universal whether you are Erik Ringmar, Satoshi Kanazawa or an Israeli academic.

Daniel Sheldon
LSESU Labour Secretary

"like hizbollah"

Dear Sir

Yet again on the Western Left and the Resistance in the Middle East

Mark Dauo's major criticism of a meeting organised by LSESU SWSS entitled: 'Hamas, Hizbollah and the Iraqi Resistance: Why the Left should support them against US imperialism' was that the Left should be capable of mounting fierce criticism of Western intervention in the region while simultaneously backing only those forces on the ground seeking liberal democracy. This is because radical Islam represents, in the words of the Euston Manifesto, 'the third major form of totalitarian ideology of the last century, after fascism and Nazism, on the one hand, and Communism, on the other'. The logical end-point of Dauo's argument is to end up critically supporting the liberal imperialism of the West as a lesser evil to home-bred radical Islam.

Comparing the abstract programmes of different organisations tells us less about them than looking at the social dynamic behind their ideological face, however. Many Islamist groups, like Hizbollah, preach not class struggle like the radical left but the return to a community (umma) which reconciles the rich and the poor. Where they are in a minority, like in Lebanon, this has meant additionally that they drop their programmatic demand for an Islamic state in a bid to unite their predominantly poor social base with other religious and social groups. Far from being totalitarian, therefore, these movements are fighting for a fundamental democratic right: to control the resources of their own countries against outside powers. As such, they deserve our critical but unconditional support.

Vlad Unkovski-Korica

The farce surrounding union politics

...could be less farcicle if you just get involved

Recently the UGM mandated the Constitution and Steering Committee of the LSE SU to begin a process of Governance Review.

Why Review Governance? And more importantly, why is it being undertaken by the so-called "seven dwarves" of C&S?

Two hundred and twenty-five years ago, a small group of thoughtful and committed citizens came together. They concluded: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal."

Strangely enough, it was the first time that such a simple principle had ever been written down. They intended the document they devised to act as something through which they would identify themselves.

Similarly, the Constitution of our Union is the document by which we govern ourselves. It should explain to us who we are and what we stand for. It is important and consequently it is only prudent that there is student input in the process, so that it identifies every student, not just the vocal minority. In this context, the vocal minority is C&S.

We live in a society where the majority of our fellow students are unaware of the existence of that venerable institution, the Students' Union. They are unaware where the services which they consume originate from. They think of the Union as simply a playground of student politics.

Governance Review is a delicate process and a magnanimous task undertaken for the betterment of the student experience through the Union, whether those who experience it are aware of it or not.

But, there is a final category of student; those who know of the Union's existence but never cease to deride its activities and its purpose, arguing it is a failure as an exercise in student democracy.

For these people, the Governance Review is an excellent opportunity, better still, a privilege to make the Union what they want it to be.

FEATURES

In this section:

Politics/Society/Business/Special

thebeaver.features@lse.ac.uk

Feminism

Womens Week
Special Analysis



Nepal

Political conflict



Christian

Perspectives
on the world

The Vladical Left



Vladimir
Unkovski
-Korica

Studying, research and teaching are coming more and more to resemble work in mass knowledge factories. The neo-liberal transformation of Britain apparently has a vital interest in restructuring universities: they will be at the vanguard of the 'knowledge economy'. While countries with cheap workforces like India and China grow at a furious pace, it is the production of 'human capital' – the skills, professionalism and creativity of the labour force – that will give countries like Britain the edge in international competition. Allegedly, socio-economic infrastructure and technological capital are no longer central.

This seemingly flawed development strategy is having a serious impact on the restructuring of universities in Britain. Squeezing knowledge for profit involves reprioritising funding strategies in existing universities to favour research-based institutions and more profitable courses. This is accompanied, ironically, by centralised management and state-led focused on creating research at the expense of teaching.

These conditions seem to have created a 'mass student', treated like a commodity and subjected to similar pressures white-collar workers face. However, university still retains a complexity that makes it difficult to compare it to the world of employment. Simply, students haven't been known to go on strike against top-up fees or to go on prolonged protest against neo-liberal restructuring of universities.

There are three distinct reasons for this. First, university is not a life-long experience: many students enter university with the expectation that they will find a managerial position after graduation. In fact, up to a third almost certainly will enter the 'new middle class' if present trends continue.

Next, almost half of Russell Group students come from a managerial and professional family background. (22 percent of all students come from private schools, when only 7 percent of students attend them.) Most of these students will probably not have to squeeze part-time jobs into their study-week or long holidays.

Lastly, even though a large proportion of the student body will come from lower social classes, it is not easy for them to see themselves as a homogenous group with common interests, in a mixed student population. Can it be surprising, therefore, that narrow economic demands generally don't motivate students?

This is not to say that the experience of being a 'mass student' does not lead to high levels of stress, tension, alienation and atomisation. Students retain a deep reservoir of tension and dissatisfaction in the age of permanent neo-liberal counter-reform. As people train for highly complex tasks in an ever more complex world, they inevitably develop the potential for critical reflection on the world outside university.

It can be no surprise, therefore, that students were at the forefront of the anti-capitalist and alter-globalisation movements, as well as mass protests against the Iraq war and global poverty. A broader appreciation of society as a whole leads to feverish levels of debate among students that can often combine with their dissatisfaction to produce broad and active social movements.

The student protests of 2006 are an indication of what can happen. Small groups of activists mounted ideological offensives against the function of educational institutions and their implication on social mobility. Their demands were the mobilising factors for protest by a wide range of sectors hit by neo-liberal change, drawing in both public and private sector workers.

These processes represented a critical practice undermining the very logic of neo-liberalism. But they also represented leaps in consciousness that could only be explained by the ability of students to connect various campaigns and struggles to wider forces outside the universities themselves. It is at more privileged research institutions like the LSE, that the conditions exist for sudden explosions of activism that can go beyond immediate demands and question the rationale of neo-liberalism itself. ■

Editors' Blog

Last week, I was lucky enough to get onto the guest list for a rather exclusive event at SOAS; an audience with the Vice President of Iraq. Security was extremely tight; when confirming your attendance, it was also necessary to state any political affiliations to Iraq, countless numbers of police officers conducted thorough checks before you were allowed to enter and there was a ban on photography. Clearly, Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi was fussy about who wanted and he did not want in the audience. Despite this he entered looking relaxed and confident, with a whole entourage of Iraqi MPs and several scowling, moustached bodyguards in his company.

His speech started off well; displaying a frank honesty for the situation in Iraq. He accepted that three governments since the war have not been able to prevent the chaos, that there was a need to understand the mistakes of the past, in order to be able to deal with the future.

For example, Al-Hashemi identified the disbanding of the Iraqi army as being a key error in policy; Iraq is now left with an army which is poorly trained and partisan in a sectarian battle. He recognized how unemployed and disillusioned young men could easily turn to terrorism in Iraq and distinguished between Iraqi insurgents fighting against coalition forces who "simply want to see their country free," and the external influence of Al-Qaeda, who have "no sympathy to the political process." The Vice President also spoke of his personal losses. Three of his siblings have been killed as a result of the conflicts raging in Iraq. As Al-Hashemi stated "Pain is something, all Iraqis are suffering."

It would have been an intelligent analysis, had it not been towards the end when Al-Hashemi (an Iraqi Sunni) was quick to criticise the failings of the Shia in a semi tirade. At one point in his ramble, he even stated: "The Sunni are not killing people." This is precisely the problem with Iraq. Al-Hashemi himself noted "Saddam Hussein was an Arab Sunni, but never defended their interest. Among his brutal henchmen were Sunni, Shia, Kurd and Christian."

Yet today, Iraqis are increasingly identifying themselves as Sunni, Shia and Kurd and the created political structure encourages them to do so – a sense of national identity is rapidly eroding.

In the end, any attempt at filtering out political opposition to Al-Hashemi from the audience, clearly failed and he was met with a largely sceptical if not hostile reception. A woman sitting directly in front of me, aggressively challenged Al-Hashemi over his reluctance to criticise the American occupation; a presence which was "damaging the dignity of Iraqis" and the "root of all the problems." Another member of the audience questioned the involvement of Iran, whilst others began to interrogate him over the subject of oil. A heated battle of words began to rage in the room.

In a strange sense, the atmosphere of room could be seen to represent Iraq, Sunnis, Shia, Kurds and of course foreigners – all with a different outlook on how Iraq should be governed and by whom. Al-Hashemi could not address the criticisms of the audience and nor could he broker peace with the woman directly in front of me; who shouted angrily and declared she would never shake hands with him. Makes you wonder how he can possibly broker peace amongst 28,807,000 Iraqis...

Closer to home, this week is LSE SU Womens Week and should be a time for reflecting on the great achievements of women's rights activists in the past, as well as examining the changes which still need to be made in society – in order to achieve gender inequality. Sadly, for many young women today feminism means very little – as reflected in our random poll of female students at the LSE. Too many females have forgotten the struggles of those who battled for us to have basic equal rights to men. Too many women have forgotten the Suffragette who was killed under the King's Horse – all because she demanded that women must have the right to vote. Instead we take our rights for granted. We ignore the exploitation of women – whether it is in the workplace, the home or on the streets. And instead the women in the media are now the most aggravating D list 'celebrities' – who continue to make the headlines for doing absolutely nothing except sitting around on a reality TV show – and then coming fourth. Or was it sixth? ■

FEATURES CREDITS

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Jade Goody and the destruction of Feminism

The Right Approach

Sam
Burke



Go North! seems to be the call. News of the BBC and the Conservative Party taking 'the North' more seriously meets welcome reception in this column. Saving the best until last, we'll start with the BBC.

Let me confess something about the BBC: I love it. There are three other commercial terrestrial channels and countless others on freeview; so why would any self-respecting conservative support the principle of public broadcasting? Shouldn't I use a rise in the licence fee to lambaste the BBC bosses, the government which funds it, and sling as much mud as I can find to discredit this has-been institution?

No. I say "no" not because I think the BBC is always a fair and impartial broadcaster, or because I have a vision of market-free broadcasting. The reason I love the BBC is because it's bloody good stuff and I would feel immeasurably poorer without it. The quality of programming, reliability of news, sheer professionalism and "something for everyone" approach, pitch the BBC above any comparable equivalent.

TV station, radio station, website, Ambassador-at-large: could it get any better? Yes, it would seem. Mark Thompson, the Director-General, plans to move a substantial part of the BBC to Salford in the North West. He said, "I am very committed to the vision we have for a new broadcast centre in Salford. I believe it is right for the BBC. Right for the UK's creative industries. Right for the north – indeed for the whole country."

For those of you who do not know where Salford is or much about the area: think Manchester, formerly industrial, socially regenerated metropolis. Not my cup of tea, to use another Northern expression, but a hub of modern creativity, affordable housing – and best of all, warm, hearty people!

No surprise then, that the Conservative Party should be keen to get warm with the North. David Cameron has been well-briefed on "The Northern Problem" as it has been termed in CCHQ (Conservative Campaign Headquarters). A YouGov opinion poll (paid for by Eurosceptic businessman Paul) reported in the Yorkshire Post last week showed the Tories are "flat-lining" at 29% across Yorkshire – the same percentage won at the last General Election. From my own experience, I can tell you that a slightly better, though worryingly similar situation, is present in the fine county of Lancashire. Philip Davies, MP for Shipley put his finger on it: "It's a wake-up call that proves the messages that might work in the Home Counties don't necessarily work up here and reaffirms my view that we need to be talking more about everyday concerns like crime and immigration, as well as the environment."

But there is an even more fundamental issue. Graver than the need to make sure the more traditional policy concerns of the North are reflected in Conservative policy, is the need to give a forum to allow those concerns to be articulated – and then listened to. We must listen more to this increasingly isolated constituency. Indeed, as the BNP, UKIP and others continue to court the region, the Conservative Party – all major parties – ignore the North at our peril.

It's encouraging then, to hear of plans to change the way the party is organised so that the Northern regions have more autonomy to set budgets and organise campaigns – albeit "within the Party's overall national strategy". Northerners will also have more of a voice in the Party with the creation of a Northern Board, similar to the Party Board, chaired by the indefatigable former party leader William Hague MP. It remains to be seen what effect such measures will have, but this must be viewed as progress.

So hurrah for the BBC, hurrah for the Tories, and hurrah for the North! All that needs to change now is the weather. But I hear from Aled Dilwyn Fisher that chances of climate change are good. ■

Arming the Enemy

Michael Deas exposes the former role of the current US Defence Secretary in Afghanistan

During the Cold War it was normal for America to fund an armed resistance to the spread of Communism. But the Islamic fundamentalist army the US raised wasn't exactly the most obedient of clients. Those who were radicalised and armed with US dollars would later become the foundations of the Taliban, al-Qaeda and terrorist groups the world over.

To top it off, one of the warlords armed by the US, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, revealed last week that he masterminded the escape of Osama bin Laden from US special forces in the Tora Bora mountains in 2001. One of the men key to the operation that funded these radicals was newly appointed US Defence secretary Robert Gates.

Gates must be elated that even this new revelation hasn't resulted in any tough questions about his appointment or the funding of the Mujahadin. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a favourite of the US, received more US taxpayers' money than any other faction leader and went on to aid the escape of the USA's most wanted terrorists. The funding of the Mujahadin itself is arguably one of the main factors in the creation of al-Qaeda and 'global jihad'.

Research carried out by people such as Pulitzer prize-winning journalist Steven Coll and terrorist expert Oliver Roy reveals the extent of this support. During the 1980s, the US gave a total of \$3billion in support to Afghan resistance during the 1980s. They initially used Pakistan's security service, the ISI, as a conduit between themselves and the resistance. US secret flights carried weapons and high-tech equipment while its special forces provided training, and there are suggestions the British Home Office provided mercenaries to support the training. Most significantly, the US, with assistance from Saudi Arabia, deliberately radicalised young Muslims around the world to fight for Afghanistan.

Religious schools known as Madrasahs, typically used for Theology educations, were set up by the US and Pakistan to not just provide religious teachings but weapons training as well. 25,000 of these institutions designed to produce fanatics were built on the Afghan border with Pakistan. Many of the camps still exist today, training contemporary terrorists like those of 9/11 and the 7th July bombers.

The Taliban was the Islamic fundamentalist group which gained control of Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal. The word 'Taliban', explains Tariq Ali, originally meant 'promising student', and its clear that these fundamentalists were such pupils. These students of American funded Madrasahs created a state that was hated by the west and gave sanctuary to al-Qaeda. Now, as the US and Britain seek to destroy a Taliban re-emerging after its defeat in 2003, it is impossible to deny that the US and British servicemen in Afghanistan are dying at the hands of those trained by the CIA.

The students of the Madrasah's are not just fighting coalition forces in Afghanistan, though. Young Muslims from across the world who went to Afghanistan to fight a jihad went home after the Soviet defeat, returning with all of the training and material support they received. Poor safety measures in weapon distribution meant US equipment distributed to various groups ended up all over the world. For example, CIA-supplied Stinger rocket launchers were later



America's strategy of arming revolutionary forces is backfiring

used by Muslim fighters in Chechnya and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.

The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), an Islamist party whose repression led to the Algerian civil war in 1991, was led by veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war. Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya, whose earliest leaders were Soviet-Afghan veterans, have carried out attacks in Egypt that have claimed 1,200 lives, including the Luxor massacres. Veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war are also believed to have played a part in Chechen terrorist activities, where it is estimated 300 of a total 6,000 guerilla fighters active in 1995 were trained by the ISI.

Whilst there are conflicting reports of the extent to which Bin Laden's involvement in the Jihad was endorsed by official agencies, it is clear that the Afghan conflict created a situation favourable to the founding of al-Qaeda. The Taliban put Osama Bin Laden, the future leader of al-Qaeda, in charge of the foreign volunteers who did not return to their home countries and those Afghans left leaderless by the conflict. Bin Laden claimed that after the Soviet-Afghan conflict he was in control of a 60,000 strong army. An army highly trained at the expense of the American taxpayer in guerrilla warfare. But, most importantly, he established himself as a spiritual leader capable of a call to arms that actually led to terrorist attacks.

The report of the 9/11 commission has a chapter entitled 'The Rise of Bin Laden'. It begins with the explanation

that 'A decade of conflict in Afghanistan...gave Islamist extremists a rallying point and training field.' Skills, weapons and structures acquired in Afghanistan were used in countless other terrorist campaigns. More importantly, it had been proven that a Jihad army could defeat a superpower. Is it possible that the US/UK alliance faces the same fate as the last superpower who went to war



The US and UK servicemen are dying at the hands of those trained by the CIA

with Jihadist Islam?

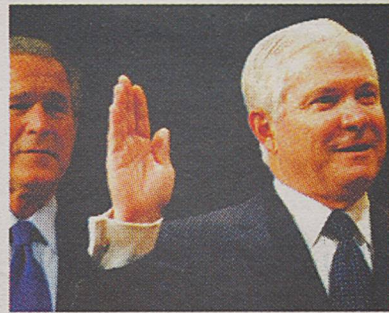
British and US troops are now engaged on a daily basis with fighters in Afghanistan and Iraq that were either recruited and trained by the US during the Cold War or later by networks the CIA created. Both the UK and US have felt the effects of the rise of militant Islam on their home soil. I would love to be able to say that Robert Gates will have learnt his lesson and that no more militias and no more Hekmatyars will be funded in this way. But I don't think I can.

I can, however, say with confidence that US funding/training of the Afghan resistance hastened, if not created, this spreading global jihad. The UK is now in direct danger of groups directly descending, both in ideology and infrastructure, from those that fought on behalf of the west during the Cold War. We are now spiralling out of control towards total war against Islamic terrorism.

When former US National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brezinski was asked if he regretted his role in the creation of Islamic militias during the 1980s, he replied 'what is more important to the history of the world? A few crazed Muslims or...the end of the Cold War?' When Brezinski cast aside the criticism that he had helped form al-Qaeda, he was probably preparing to be remembered as the man who masterminded the fall of the Soviet Empire. But the Cold War was fought at the negotiation table and in the countryside of the Third World.

In their attempts to end this con-

flict largely controlled by diplomacy, Brezinski and the US government spawned an enemy that does not hesitate to attack on western soil. The



Gates must be elated that there haven't been any questions about his role in funding the Mujahadeen

Afghan conflict taught 200,000 soldier how to fight enemies of Islam and simultaneously created a spiritual movement that would define America as one such enemy. ■

A Less than Perfect Union

Greg White celebrates 300 years of the Union of Scotland and England

The *Sunday Telegraph* released a poll in late November announcing that 52 percent of Scots intend to vote for independence, via the Scottish National Party, in the next Scottish Parliamentary election this May. The BBC has reported a slightly different account, with 56 percent of responders favouring remaining in the union in Scotland. But what is important is the proximity of these figures to that fearful fifty percent. And it must be frightening for a Labour Party led by a team of Scots, particularly Prime Minister in waiting Gordon Brown. Also, perhaps invigorating for a Conservative Party who received more votes in England in the last election than their in-power counterparts.

What is more shocking, however, than the Scottish push for Scottish independence must be the English push for the same result, with 59 percent of England supporting the expulsion of their near 300 year northern brothers according to the same polls in the *The Sunday Telegraph*. As we sit here in London, under countless Union Standards flying high and fast in the January breezes, it won't be weather tearing the colours apart, but perhaps an election a few months away.

As such, Labour has been scrambling to reconquer lost lands, and the bombast has been fantastic. Blair and Brown spent the Scottish National Labour conference muttering on about the benefits of Britain to crowds that are undeniably already convinced. They talk about a fight for Union, for Britain, for the security of

Scotland under Trident, the up for debate but un-debatable independent nuclear deterrent program, and for the hope that is apparent within the economic progress for the United Kingdom.

Blair knows, as does Brown, that to lose Scotland is to lose parliament, at least in the short term. It would force a reconstruction of the Labour Party that would see its leadership ravaged prior to the next national election. While some might argue that Labour could do with some new blood, particularly in leadership positions, Labour must be truly frightened at the consequences of such a move.

To a certain extent, all this political jibber-jabber they are making for their own self-defense and electioneering purposes is actually true. Yes an independent Scotland would have a stronger sense of self, a stronger control over its own affairs, and perhaps even do a better job at managing its own domestic affairs, but would it ever be so economically strong? Dependent on a massive yearly subsidy in aid from English taxpayers, the only people who might benefit from Scottish withdrawal from the Act of Union are the English. Times have certainly changed since 1707.

The consequences would be grave for the other members of the United Kingdom as well. With Scotland gone, Wales might quickly slide away and Northern Ireland with it. Now England might not be bothered by the economic loss, in fact it might actually be a gain at the outset, but the loss in prestige would be crippling. Britain



The Last King of Scotland

would have lost its closest neighbors, and be left as merely the Albion of old, floating alone surrounded by the hordes of barbarians, errr, Scottish and Welsh, in an odd sea of Europeanism.

And what of Europe with a divided United Kingdom? Scotland might move ever closer to its continental

brethren, economically and, the horror, monetarily. Nothing would be worse for the pound than for it to be found merely in England. Its viability as an international currency might be shattered if it does not cross a few more faux borders. The damage to the value of the pound would be minimal, but it would make England feel awful

lonely in a sea of oddly proportioned and coloured bills with random monuments.

The consequences for England are meager at best and, even for Scotland which might feel a pinch in the short run, minimal. The monarchy would sustain, without the Scots direct dependence, for certain. Somehow I think the Queen would barely notice she was not running foreign policy north of the border anymore. Might make Prince Charles' vacations a Balmoral a bit more difficult, visa issues and all.

But really that is the only viable argument on this issue and one Gordon Brown seeks to often reiterate: the value of Britain. While Britain might not have the same image it once held, rule the seas and all that nonsense, it still carries a weight of prestige with it. Great Britain, the United Kingdom, these places sound grandiose, the home of important figures, of a great history, and of wonderful peoples. But simply Scotland, or simply England does not carry that same weight. Suddenly everything seems very 1600s. England is yet again encircled, while not at war, but by foreign economies and ways of life it no longer controls or, in a more modern sense, can directly relate to.

The Scottish National Party may argue they deserve control of their own affairs of state, that their nationalistic goals are no different than their continental neighbors, but there is something intangible to be lost with the disintegration of the Union, not the mention one of the most famous flags in history. ■

Latin America and the return of the Left

Victor Clark welcomes the growth of left-wing politics on the continent

In recent years the Latin American left has enjoyed an unprecedented revival. In December leftist Rafael Correa won the Ecuadorean elections, closely following US nemesis Daniel Ortega's victory in Nicaragua. These two leaders join an established circle of 7 left-wing governments in the region, and both Mexico and Peru the left wing candidates narrowly lost elections dogged by controversy and allegations of fraud, and in Chile a centre-left coalition has been in power since 1990. But why this resurgence, and why has it happened now, when the left supposedly has nothing 'left' to offer?

Each Latin American country is somewhat different and has a different national history, but there are some common themes. What Simon

Americanness". It was this resistance that defined the nature of US domination in Latin America.

Latin America had subsidised the US war effort by agreeing fixed raw material prices at a time when real prices were rising and expected to reap the rewards of this afterwards. Populist and left of centre coalition governments tried to develop health and education programmes and industrialise. But the presence of left wing and nationalist parties in these governments threatened US political hegemony in the region and their policies of nationalisation threatened US investments. The US found this unacceptable during the birth pangs of the global Cold War. One after another democratic governments fell to dictatorships friendly to US business interests and supported by the US government and local elites. In this atmosphere of anti-communism, even mildly reformist programmes were repressed, often bloodily, as in Guatemala in 1954.

Towards the end of the Cold War, the left was weakened by repression and then dealt a body blow by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Recovering from repression and still searching for a positive alternative to capitalist development, the left was in no position to challenge the neo-liberal model of reform that was imposed upon Latin America by the dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s, and continued by the new post cold war democracies.

The 1980s became known as the 'lost decade', and things hardly improved during the 1990s. At the same time the liberalisation of trade and financial markets, imposed by the international financial institutions, caused thousands of local enterprises to close, putting millions out of work across the continent. State employ-

ment was no longer secure either as spending cuts forced job losses in the public sector and privatisations led to mass layoffs. Those made unemployed were forced into the informal sector, where earnings were unstable and jobs often extremely hazardous, according to ECLAC, over 70% of new jobs created in this period were created in the informal sector. Mass poverty caused widespread malnutrition, an increase in disease and violent crime.

Even the wealthiest countries in Latin America have done little to tackle inequality, a problem more severe in Latin America than anywhere else on the planet. In Latin America the bottom 30% of the population receive only 7.5% of income. What is more, inequality in Latin America has not improved since the 1960s, the only region of the world where this is the case.

During the 1990s the resistance was the resistance of non-traditional mass movements such as the indigenous movements in Guatemala, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru; or mobilisations around specific issues, such as resistance to the CAFTA free trade agreement in Central America. Economic crisis undermined the governments bringing in neo-liberal reforms, especially in Argentina and Venezuela where the governments of Carlos Menem and Carlos Andres Perez were elected on anti-neoliberal platforms and once elected enacted precisely the measures they had condemned. Gradually, popular movements began to develop cohesion and began to win local power in countries such as Uruguay and Brazil. With the severe economic crisis of 2001 even the elites in Argentina saw that neo-liberal policies had brought the country to ruin

Whatever one may think of him, the election of Chavez in 1998 was a real turning point in this sense. The success of the Venezuelans in improving healthcare, education and opportunities for the majority of the population, together with a Latin Americanist foreign policy designed to break with the continents dependence on the United States has breathed new life into the left not just in the countries where the left is in power, but also in countries where power remains in the hands of the elites. Giving battle to inequality is back on the agenda in Latin America.

This resistance to neo-liberalism has caused serious worries to Washington and has alienated the Latin American elites. These elites perceive that they have a vested interest in the status quo, and in many cases also actively resent being ruled by governments of the poor and the dark skinned. The result of this has been growing hostility on the part of elites unaccustomed to being out of power and having to deal with opponents within a peaceful framework. This hostility has been evident in one attempted coup against the government of Hugo Chavez, and in the efforts to undermine the government of Evo Morales in Bolivia and the sustained campaigns against the Obrador, Ortega and Correa candidacies in Mexico, Nicaragua and Ecuador, which demonised the candidates and threatened all kinds of terrible outcomes if they were elected.

The people of Latin America can build more equitable societies, but it remains to be seen whether they will be allowed to do this without the usual violent opposition of the United States and elites within Latin America. ■

Battling with inequality is back on the agenda in Latin America

Bolivar called "La Patria Grande" (the Great Homeland), has shared characteristics due to the colonial past. These have been reinforced by the foreign domination of the region since independence. The United States has unwittingly played an important role in creating a Latin American consciousness through its economic, political, and military domination of the region. From the beginning, resistance to this domination helped to create the notion of "Latin



Customer service leaves much to be desired

World Trade Disorganisation

Meryem Torun discusses the changing purpose of the WTO

It's been six months since the Doha rounds came to a diplomatic stalemate, and with the start of the New Year there seems to be a renewed aspiration to revive them. This comes partially from the now-or-never awareness that unless they are started again this spring they will potentially be delayed a further two years. Unfortunately not much has really changed – the disagreements that stalled the rounds have not disappeared in the cooling period. This inability to concur on the key issues, in this case farming subsidies and trade barriers on manufactured goods, not only threatens the future of the Doha rounds but also poses questions regarding the potency of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) role as an international agent.

The WTO's goal of promoting free trade, whether you agree with the cause or not, has become increasingly relevant due to globalisation.



The role of the WTO is challenged on the streets as well as in the boardroom

However, how much of a role it plays as an international agent is debatable. The problem isn't only the level of bureaucracy that restricts such global institutions, but also the desire of the more powerful member states to wield the organisation to their own advantage. Since these vested interests often contradict each other, it's no wonder that the Doha rounds, in the five years they have been going on, have achieved less than they should have.

In fact, the WTO seems to be nothing more than a social club – it's dominated by those who possess economic

influence, in the current deadlock this is the EU, the US and India. Then there are those in the club watching the main members squabble and bicker over who gives up what. Unfortunately, this struggle for control and the overall power imbalance that exists within the institution impedes its stated mission.

In some ways, this seems inevitable. For an organisation that is centred on economics to have the wealthy countries in the spotlight is hardly surprising. On the other hand, it's disconcerting. Surely the only reason for having such an agent in the

first place is to stop from these countries from exploiting their power status? What is the point of having trade rounds if all they do is provide a forum for countries to negotiate their share of the cake? If this was the purpose then WTO appears to be neither a promoter of free trade nor a truly representative 'world' organisation.

The imbalance within the WTO is the reason that it's often harshly criticised. Most of its meetings are accompanied by demonstrators who claim that it is unjust and unethical, causing detriment to the 'little people' and the poorer nations. This is par-

tially down to the fact that many disagree with free trade in principle and believe it to be a cause for many problems such as poverty. However, even those in favour of free trade and who have faith in its benefits can hardly deny that the WTO rarely helps the cause. In spite of what they claim, free trade is often what countries want for others but have no desire to comply with themselves. This illustrates why the Doha trade rounds are a futile effort and why the current state of limbo is unsurprising.

The question is, given its ineffectuality, is there a role at all for the WTO? It seems unreasonable to cast it aside altogether when, as mentioned, such an organisation is ever more relevant in the current world system. A more independent and democratic WTO, less politicised and more able to focus issues of global significance, would provide a good intermediary between its 150 member states. This seems like a highly optimistic expectation from an organisation that was essentially built to serve the few, not the many.

So it probably won't be end of the world if the Doha rounds do end in failure, with the three players agreeing to disagree, as this is the expected result. The only consolation may be that in their hope to end the squabbling and bickering and reunite, the EU, the US and India can make concessions that may inadvertently do some good. After all, acting unilaterally they are often more destructive in their economic policies.

So, all there is to do is wait for the Doha rounds to resume, however long that may be from now. Even if there is reconciliation there is really no telling how long it will last, or how long it will be before any real progress is finally made. ■



The question is, given its ineffectuality, is there a role at all for the WTO?

Rwanda Remembered

Laura Kyrke-Smith questions the role of the media in humanitarian intervention



The Rwandan genocide devastated the country

This January saw the beginning of the trial of Colonel Tharcisse Renzaho, former prefect of the Rwandan capital Kigali. He faces charges of genocide and life imprisonment if convicted. In 1994 Renzaho was in charge of police and local officials, but far from controlling the violence, he used the notorious Radio Tele Libre Mille Collines to incite Hutus to kill Tutsi 'cockroaches' in the genocide that resulted in the deaths of up to one million people.

Allan Thompson of Carleton University, Ottawa, spoke to a packed audience at LSE last week on the controversial role of the media – local and international – in the killing. With fellow panellists Richard Dowden, Director of the Royal African Society, Linda Melvern, investigative journalist and author, and Mike Dottridge, Director of Anti-Slavery International, he gave a damning condemnation intended to shock.

How many of the audience had

seen the blockbuster 'Hotel Rwanda' Thompson asked. A good three quarters of the audience raised their hands. He then showed a rare and horrifying piece of actual 1994 footage taken by cameraman Nicholas Hughes. How many people had seen that before? Almost no-one. The failure (or inability?) of the international community to act in Rwanda is now quite deeply embedded in our conscience, helped no doubt by the film industry's interest. But at the time we understood very little – and Thompson blames the media.

In 1994 most Africa correspondents were sent to cover South Africa's elections, anticipating bloodshed. When the elections unexpectedly passed calmly some journalists decamped to Rwanda, but while the evacuation of ten Belgian peacekeepers was reported in detail, the mass slaughter of Rwandans remained unseen. The journalists undoubtedly faced real obstacles, kept in the ranks

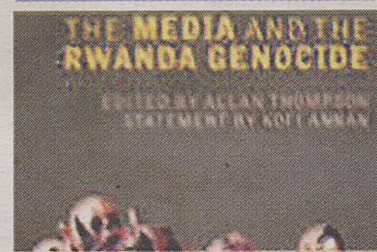
of the Rwandan Patriotic Front and barred from witnessing the genocide first hand. But coverage could have been more thorough and, Thompson argues, this would have spurred public indignation and obliged governments to intervene. When pictures finally emerged from Rwanda they featured dead bodies and refugee flows, and the message was clear: it was too late, the damage had been done.

The African media was no better fluctuating between denial and indifference according to Thompson. And the local media, as is now well known, was integral to the genocide – transmitting the messages of hate that perpetuated the killing.

The international media certainly covered the genocide, but only sporadically and superficially. The parallel conflict in Bosnia gathered an estimated 25 times more news articles that month. *The New York Times* used a photograph from Kenya's 1950s Mau Mau rebellion to accompany its lead story on Rwanda. Africa, it seemed, was perpetually embroiled in violent and timeless tribalism: no further explanation required. Unfortunately, Thompson and the panellists left many questions unanswered.

Even if the media had put pressure on governments, was intervention ever a realistic possibility? Alan Kuperman argues that, given logistical constraints, intervention would have been ineffective or impossible. Does media coverage really compel governments to act? We've seen the victims of Darfur, but little has been

done. Does increasing the quantity of reporting improve the quality of coverage? Thompson himself admits that the 24-hour news cycle just means we know more and more about Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie's flying visits to Africa – but little more about the continent itself. And, as one audience



Does media coverage really compel governments to act?

member asked, how do we realistically reconcile the need to improve reporting of international news with the inevitable commercial and audience pressures that the media industry faces?

Rwanda's own media, too, should have done a better job, and should not have been allowed to run riot with hate speech. But Thompson and the panellists did not probe any further. Should the international community have prevented this? Should the

transmitters have been bombed, as happened controversially in Belgrade in 1999 – using force for humanitarian ends? Would more gentle 'peace broadcasting' have made a difference? What criteria legitimise this kind of information intervention?

And how do we prevent local media from facilitating genocide in the long run? Thompson identifies the need for a 'bottom-up' approach: adequately train the journalists on the ground, and their increasingly responsible reporting will suppress dangerous speech. But again this is not sufficient. What use are good journalists if editors won't publish their stories, or if media institutions cannot support them, or if the laws don't protect them? Two journalists in Morocco have just been fined \$8,000 and given a suspended three-year sentence, based on a fifty-year old press code, for what effectively amounted to what we here regard as good journalism. There are serious questions to be asked and answers to be found if local media are to be built to be sustainable and effectively counter potential incitement to violence.

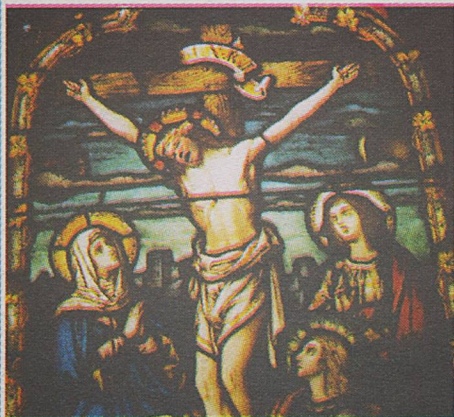
What happened in Rwanda was horrific. The audience were made to feel guilty, shocked, angry; and rightly so. But I couldn't help but feel that there were questions left unanswered, and a default position of outrage that blinded the speakers to more thoughtful conversation. Thirteen years on, there surely comes a point when we must react more measuredly, to reflect objectively and dispassionately on not just the lessons to be learned but the ways to move forward. ■



The End of

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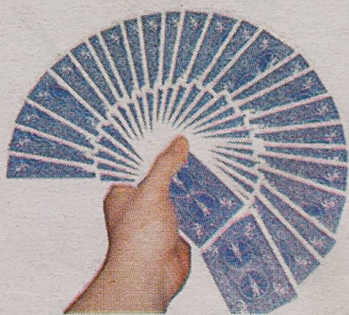


Interview

Stewart Lee. a giant of comedy. a normal size for a man.

Top trumps

Religion is as serious a subject matter as one encounters. we make it ridiculous.



Style

The i-phone is here. mobile communications will never be the same. they will be slightly different.



Food & Drinking

hari krishna feeds the heathens

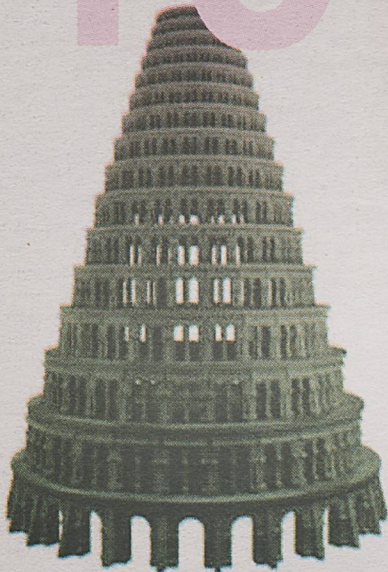
Part time punks are fulltime fuckers...

Music

Nice young gentlemen who care.

Film

A lot of inconsequential babbling. but in fine style.



Tommy Smith Quartet

Scottish National Jazz Orchestra leader playing at Ronnie Scott's with a quartet. Jazz hands essential.

Where: Ronnie Scott's, near Leicester Square
When: Tuesday 23

Private Eye Cartoon Exhibition

Show of the most offensive and hilarious political cartoons from the 45-year-old publication.

Where: Cartoon Museum, 35 Little Russel St, WC1

Snow

Disappearing weather condition old people don't like. Cold and white like the contents of a Scotsman's trousers. Probably not actually happening because global warming is real.

Where: London
When: Most likely on Wednesday

Decorative Antiques and Textiles Fair

Special fair for interior decorators. Featuring furniture, textiles, chandeliers and tribal art from around the world.

Where: Battersea Park, SW11
When: Jan 23-28

rant comptroller
joshheller

cartoon comptroller
alexsmall

visual arts comptroller
daisymitchell-forster

film comptroller
angustse

literature comptroller
erinorozco

editorial assistant
bealong

theatre comptroller
mollytucker

style comptroller
abaosunsade

travel comptroller
jessicamcardle

food & drinking comptroller
kimmandeng

comedy comptroller
christinewhyte

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EDITORIAL

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.
And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.
And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.
And people say to me a lot 'get out of my garden'.

your humble disciples,

Daniel B Yates & Kevin Perry



religion

fatimamanji is devout and moral lauraparfitt is devoid of morals

Have you ever noticed atheists are so God-damn arrogant? So here it goes - the standard line. Your average arrogant atheist will patronizingly inform you humans created God to explain what they 'couldn't understand.' Mr Arrogant Atheist with his rational, logical science of course understands all. Poor me - backward babbling believer in God can only clutch desperately on to my prayer beads in a fit of irrationality; bordering on insanity. But here's the real madness of it all. If we, the people of the world created God; who is only a figment of our imagination - who created us - the people of the world?

Easy - says Arrogant Atheist smiling at his own know-it-all-ness; It's all about two things. Monkeys and Big Bangs. That is two separate things. Not monkeys banging. (Sorry for lowering the tone, but some of you Part B readers have warped minds.) Back to THE Big Bang. Millions of years ago, there were a big clan of atoms, happily floating and frolicking through space - individually minding their own business in a free and liberalistic way. But the atoms were growing in

the case of some Hollywood actors - the brains that God gave the plastic surgeons.

Okay says Mr Arrogant Atheist. So God created the world through intelligent design. But who created God? And anyway if God does exist - why can't we see him? This is the point, where Arrogant Atheist gives you a smirky, slimy smile and looks down geekily at their Richard Dawkins book, thinking they have won the argument. Touche say you. But that's why it's called belief. Seeing is not always a necessary component for believing. We can't see oxygen or gravity but we know its there. We can't see Jade Goody's brain. But we know its there...hmm - or maybe not.

But in any case, belief is a good thing. It provides you with morals. With a meaning to life. It's a statistically proven fact that believers in religion are less likely to turn to drink, drugs or suicide. A nicer society for all of us. And most importantly, belief gives you hope in times of sadness and need. Although according to one Arrogant Atheist - the same comforts can be derived from food and drink. Great -

Take me, your typical non-believer. One day, I am rudely awoken by one of my Mother's pointless daily phone calls about the bug that is permanently going around or an in-depth account of her trip to Hilary's, who lives down the lane. I crawl out of bed, grunt down the phone and am met with "afternoon?", some sarcastic comments about my foregoing evening and other implications of my innate idleness. This angers me, and she hears my wrath. After delicately replacing the receiver, I might mutter a profanity or two under my breath.

I'm famished, I need sustenance and since it's the weekend; I plump for a bacon sarnie and a large coffee (caffeinated). I'm that hungry, I could have another sarnie. And I do. I vegetate on the sofa for a while, pretend to do some work, smoke, gossip, bitch, snooze and eat more.

It's soon the evening again and my flatmates and I begin to get ready for our imminent night out. One comes out wearing new shoes. They are beautiful, I love them and they're my size. Dare I say I want them for myself? We leave the flat. I'm showing my thighs, my face, a modest cleavage and God help me; I'm even showing my ankles. I have a bit to drink and lose my inhibitions. Fuck it, I have a lot to drink. Later, I observe one

Waterstones. Yet because religion is universally accepted as rational and quasi-logical, people allow themselves to cling to hopes and "values" that in many cases are fundamentally wrong and hypocritical. All this so that they can justify their own prejudices and actions, and achieve peace of mind. Religion is always seeking answers to questions we mere mortals simply cannot answer; why can we not accept that there just isn't an answer?

Stephen D. Unwin, a risk management consultant in Ohio, concluded: "The probability that God exists is 67%." He calculated this using Bayesian Statistical theory, and being a statistician myself, I feel obliged to take heed. Unwin does however later admit "This number has a subjective element since it reflects my assessment of the evidence." Michael Shermer, publisher of Skeptic and author of The Science of Good and Evil reveals: "...based on my own theory of the evolutionary origins of morality and the sociocultural foundation of religious beliefs and faith...I estimate the probability that God exists is 2 percent." I'm with Shermer.

Our brains simply cannot handle the idea of there being no beginning or end to the universe, nothingness after death or the absence of a higher being. So to cope with



number...traffic was on the rise and despite Atom Ken's attempts to introduce a congestion charge - soon enough there was a problem - and a big one at that. BANG. Atom hits Atom. And so the world began, the planet and all its creatures began to evolve. Now its not that I have a problem with the Big Bang theory in itself - but the idea that the entire universe and its amazing wonders, could just have emerged from sporadic randomness is pretty ludicrous. For something to work well, it needs a Boss, an intelligent force who will guide it in the right direction. Now The Beaver has Super Sid Kamath, Britain has Brilliant Blair (or Brown) and all those poor little atoms trying to turn into riveting rivers, pretty plants and terrific trees? Well they sure couldn't manage it all by themselves. They had God. A supernatural force who designed the whole universe. So - Arrogant Atheist - there might well have been a Big Bang - but it sure had a Big Boss to oversee it.

And what about the monkeys? Apparently beautiful me, not-so-beautiful Mr. Atheist and all our wonderful cousins in humanity all descended from apes. Fair point - I can see where this one came from - some 'human beings' - LSE-newcomer Peter Sutherland for instance does bear an uncanny resemblance to a gorilla. But honestly - creatures like Jude Law, George Clooney and Will Smith? Their looks can only be a work of God...or in

apparently next time you're stuck in a tsunami, all you need is a pint of Guinness to be saved?!

So we can't see God. Maybe God does exist - after all. But belief isn't necessarily a good thing is it? All that shebang about killing infidels and all says Arrogant Atheist. Evil Ozzy Bin Laden and his henchmen murdering hundreds of innocent people, the whole Christian hating on Christian in Northern Ireland and (dare I mention the words) Israel and Palestine. And before all this of course, the Crusades. Arrogant Atheist will tell you: Religion is all about killing people. Religion is bad. Aha, Brilliant Believer - this is where you serve your ace card...it's like an Eye for an Eye. The next time arrogant atheist starts listing 'religious' ruthless murderers - all you have to do is sing a song in a piercing voice. Each verse is the name of an evil God-less dictators and then the word 'Aaaaaaaaatheist' will be the chorus. If you do this, not only will Arrogant Atheist be baffled by the fact its not just religious zealots that can be crazy killers, he or she will also be forced to surrender - if only to stop you singing. So here goes, repeat after me: Hitler - Horrible, Hateful, Holocaust man? Aaaaaaaaatheist. Stalin - Silly, Socialist, Sadist? Aaaaaaaaatheist. And so on. And you might just find yourself in Guantanamo. God Bless.

flatmate stumble into the Ladies' and orally ejaculate the contents of her stomach. I quietly revel in her "misfortune" and contemplate my own ability to hold alcohol. I conclude I have a stomach of steel, I am the Lady of Liquor, the Booze Baroness, the Plonk Princess. It may be the drink talking, but I'm proud. Damn proud.

I buy another drink at the bar and the barman gives me too much change. I say nothing. I glance across the room, and through the mist I see a beautiful pair of flashing eyes. In my merry malaise, indecent thoughts enter my mind, the type usually reserved only for certain members of Girls Aloud. I recall a visit to Canal Street in the summer when I... and I'm not married.

We get home, I pass out. And all this on the Sabbath day. The next day I pop to the dry cleaners to pick up my asbestos suit in preparation for my impending and unequivocal decent into the underworld. Am I worried? Hell no.

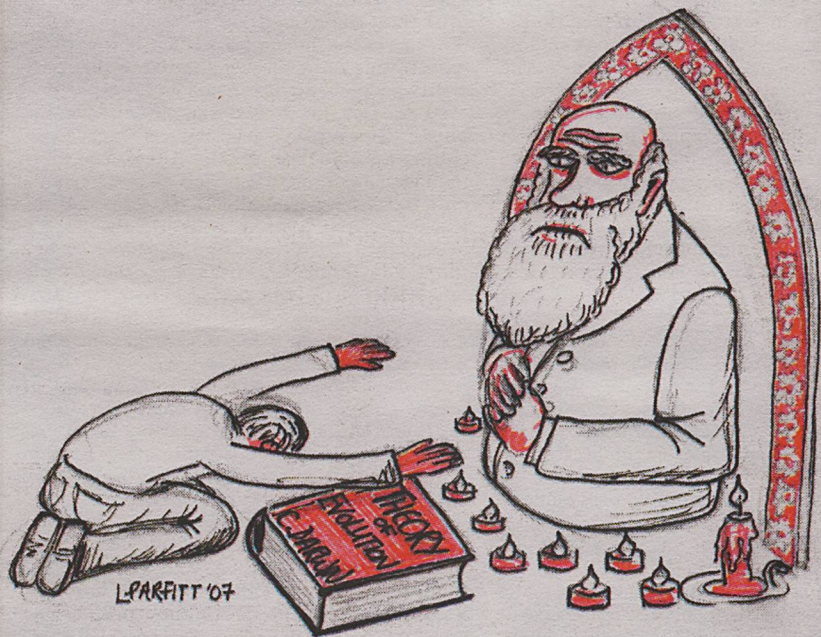
I am not worried because I do not believe in hell, heaven, God, Allah or Krishna. The only belly I stroke is my dog's. So what do I base my doubts on? Well basically, lack of substantial evidence. Take the Bible, for example, a supposedly eye-witness account of the miracle of Jesus. Yet change the word "Jesus" for "Xenu" and the word "disciples" for "renegades" and what do you get? Scientology.

Any sound-of-mind person today, having never had experienced any sort of holy teachings would pick up a religious text and conclude it was the work of a fantasist and destined for the science fiction bin at

their own inner turmoil, a bunch of failing tabloid hacks wrote a collection of scriptures and staged elaborate performances to a needy crowd of 'shroomed-up primitives, guaranteed to spread the word to even more gullible plonkers. Somehow, the word of "God" has renounced though the land for centuries following and I can only assume my EC102 teachings have come into play here: Where there's the demand, there's a supply. There's a supply of literature and preachings on how evil society is, inciting hate toward anyone who is gay, who is of another faith, who drinks, who takes drugs, who has had sex and even anyone who has any desire for anything, material or otherwise. A visit to yourgoingtohell.com will show you how ridiculous some radicals sound. And don't get me started on Holy wars.

Now don't get me wrong, I can appreciate there are a few good things to come out of religion. I accept that some religions do essentially have good intentions and teach some handy life values, and often give people the hope they desperately need. I just don't see why we should institutionalise our beliefs and set rules and restrictions that don't make logical sense.

Anyway, enough of the serious stuff. If you believe, then good for you, because I simply can't. But if I want to live my life freely, succumbing to temptation then leave me be. I'm a sinner, but I'm having a ball.



IRRAWANT

the passion of stewart lee

partb talks to iconoclastic comedian
stewartlee about what judas would do,
jerry springer: the opera and driving over
minis in a tank

No matter what medium he has chosen to work in, Stewart Lee has been dogged by controversy. In the 1998 he and Richard Herring found a cult audience with 'This Morning With Richard Not Judy', but the show was cancelled after falling out of favour with the BBC hierarchy. Seven years later, the BBC had forgiven him enough to televise the musical that he had written with the composer Richard Thomas, 'Jerry Springer - The Opera'. They received 55,000 complaints prior to the show even being broadcast, due to claims of blasphemy and ridiculing Jesus, not to mention profanity due to its reported 8,000 obscenities. Stand-up comedy is perhaps his most natural habitat, and his latest work combines this with his new-found love of theatre. "It's called 'What Would Judas Do?' and it's sort of me being Judas for an hour talking about the last week of his life and why he did what he did."

Before the show, he plays down the comedy aspect "I wanted to do it in character and I wanted the jokes to be incidental to it, rather than being the bits where you 'tick' whether it's worked or not." In fact, the show is as funny as you'd expect from a winner of the prestigious 'Tap Water' Award, the anti-Nestle version of the Perrier. Despite the furore that surrounded 'Jerry Springer', it might seem that Lee has no qualms about making a joke out of Christianity, but he denies that he has explicitly set out to mock the faithful. "It's not really about religion. It's about hero worship, about being let down by someone you've idolised. This is a really good way of telling that story. I don't set out to prove or disprove the existence of the characters involved. I thought that about 'Jerry Springer', which wasn't in any way a criticism of religion, it was just the use of a story that's very familiar in the Christian West to look at some different ideas. They don't own the story. It's in the public domain, so I think you should be allowed to do what you want with it."

It is not, however, merely a story amongst others. Surely he must have expected to cause some controversy? "Well 'Jerry Springer' played for four years in theatre without a problem, it was only when it was on the telly and it was seized upon by a succession of right-wing gay-hate groups as a platform to get their own stuff into the marketplace that anyone gave it any thought. Before that it had got good reviews in the Church Times. The difference between its content and its supposed content was vast, really." It is perhaps worth noting that despite the 55,000 complaints it received before going on air, it received only 8,000 afterwards.

Clearly well versed in Scripture, and a talented wordsmith, the role of preacher would seem to come naturally to Stewart Lee. Has he considered going into the Church? "I don't even like going into the actual buildings anymore. I think the Church of England would probably be able to accommodate an atheist priest though - they seem very broad-minded. The good thing about doing a show here [The Bush Theatre] is that it's an eighty-seater room, I'm on equity minimum every week, it'll sell out before the loonies even find out about it. It's on a safe level - I wouldn't want to do anything particularly high profile again, all that happened is that I was kind of randomly picked on by mad people. You don't make any money of it.

What is the point? There is actually no point. I suppose when you start writing and you have a little idea you think, "It would be great to communicate with the masses", they can fuck off. They can have all the shit that they want. It's not my problem. The masses are idiots if they allow themselves to be dictated to by the Christian right, so they're welcome to it." Spleen vented, he smiles, "Much better to be here, in this 'elite' theatre, limited so that only eighty people a night can come."

Like Lou Reed releasing 'Metal Machine Music', Stewart Lee has actively engaged in culling his audience. "Daniel Kitson said after the Perrier awards that he felt he had to shake off a lot of his new audience, they had sort of expectations of what he would do. I've largely managed to drive those sort of people away I think. You think "This'll shake a few people off." Also, where you perform, how you promote it, which magazines you go in. My DVD got reviewed in Nuts and Zoo magazine, but I refused to do any interviews with them, because you don't really want those sorts of people coming to see you. I might have done ten years ago, before I was bitter, but now I just think it'll make for a miserable night. A room of thick people, you couldn't use irony, I'm too old to struggle."

In his younger days, however, Lee and Herring were lauded as the comedic kings of the emerging 'Lad' culture. "Well we didn't pull in much of a crowd. I think that was probably because a lot of the two million people who watched the TV show were about twelve years old and couldn't really go out. Ironically now fifteen years later they're journalists and promoters and things like that so there's been a sort of weird second wave. 'Loaded' was different in '95 anyway. It used to have decent articles."

Youth culture has certainly shifted, and student life is very different to the mid-90s. "It's harder for students nowadays, I got a grant. I don't think I'd become a student now. I think people were more politically active, or more visibly politically active I suppose, 20 years ago. Every day you were faced with a new challenge about what was the correct way to address a woman. Those things have just sort of settled down now. I enjoyed being a student though, I wrote for the Oxford Revue, and directed. That was amazing. There was money for student arts then. You could go to Edinburgh Festival. I didn't really appreciate it at the time, but one of the best things was the opportunity to have educated, clever adults who were obliged to speak to you about things that you were supposed to be interested in. To treat that as a chore was really disgusting. Looking back, I really wish I'd done more work! The last few years, a lot of things that I've written have used things that I studied. 'Jerry Springer: The Opera', the framework of it was very Blakeian, with a sort of Miltonic quality, so it was nice to find an outlet for all that, fifteen years later."

Lee's current work is eclectic to say the least. "I'm writing a sitcom about the Norse myths, about Odin and Thor, and I'm working on a sort of folk-music musical about William Blake at the National. And I'm doing a site-specific theatre piece about DIY - someone walking you around their house, explaining why they want to sell it because they've done it



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all wrong. And then I'll do another stand-up show in August."

With all his work, however, he is defiantly steering away from the mainstream. "Critically, 'Jerry Springer: The Opera', was a big hit, but because of all the problems we didn't really make anything out of it. So that's kind of put me off commercial theatre. But 'What Would Judas Do?' is great - it's cost effective and I might get a little radio drama out of it. I can't keep doing things for nothing. Supporting the things that you want to do even if they aren't viable. Working away at stuff that you think will make a difference."

Music is one of Lee's great passions. Offering him the opportunity to drive a tank, he says "I'd drive over all those Foxtons Estate Agents Minis that are made out in a kind of punk-rock livery, as if Foxtons Estate Agents had anything to do with the spirit of '76." But in his new-found spirit of pragmatism, Lee finds himself accepting Murdoch's greasy buck. "I write record reviews for The Sunday Times every week, and I do about one feature a month, and you know what? Between 2001 and 2004 that was the only money I earned, I earned about £12,000 a year, and it was exclusively from writing about music in the papers. Jerry Springer was being written, I was kind of doing that full time, and that's really what this show is about. About being an idealist and about where you draw the line in the sand. I'm really glad to have that job. They let me write about whatever I want, and yeah...I hate Fox News, I hate Murdoch as a person, but it buys me the time to do other things. I'd have been in a lot of trouble without it."

"I have a much more straight-forward relationship with my editor at the Sunday Times culture section than I've ever had with anyone at the BBC, who are the most duplicitous, lying, dishonest people. I feel much happier, much more ethically comfortable writing for a Murdoch newspaper than I would doing anything for BBC2, which to me is just so mad and chaotic and dishonest and panicky. I've wasted so much of my time there. There are things I wouldn't do, I wouldn't write for the BNP paper, but no-ones ever censored anything I've done for The Sunday Times on the grounds of politics or taste. Whereas you run into that sort of thing all the time in the BBC. You never know where you are, or what they want. It's not even political correctness; it's more non-sensical than that. When people say that there's too much political correctness I think they forget that there was a black bloke beaten to death in Liverpool last year by racists, and that the next week there were MPs standing up in Parliament trying to deny gay people the same rights to goods and services that straight people enjoy. There are still people trying to prevent the exercising of basic human rights, and using the media and the courts to do it. It's a bit of a red herring to blame political correctness."

Speaking of Herrings, how does Lee view his long time partnership with Richard, forged in the writing of 'On The Hour' and growing to fruition with 'Fist of Fun' and 'Lee and Herring', "We were diet coke visionaries, we were like the romantic poets with laudanum, except we were on diet coke. We wrote about a hundred hours of radio on diet cokes and crisps between 1994 and 1997. We were caf-



feine visionaries.”

“Armando Iannucci got us in to write ‘On the Hour’. It was a satire of what radio sounded like. Satire had traditionally been about personalities, but he made it about the delivery mechanism, rather than the information itself. It was something new, compared to the very retrograde world of *Dead Ringers*. We wrote two series of that, and loads of things that went on to become comedy staples of the nineties, but we dropped out when it went to TV as ‘*The Day Today*’. Patrick Marber managed to get a share of the credits for the creation of *Alan Partridge*, even though he hadn’t been on original creating team, and we had. We felt we should have some sort of recognition for that, which seemed fair at the time. It could probably have been handled better. Sometimes I think dropping out of that was a major career mistake, but then on the other hand, it did mean that at least we were still, throughout our twenties when you’ve got a lot of energy, we were still coming up with our own ideas, rather than becoming writers for hire. Both individually and together me and Rich sort of developed our own voice. I can’t really write

for other people, and I’m quite proud of that – it means that what you do is more distinctive. Although, if I had a percentage share of *Partridge* like Marber does, I wouldn’t be sitting here now with this on. Swings and roundabouts.”

“I learnt that I’m in this for the long haul. Doing a show at Edinburgh, touring it. That’s the only thing that I’ve got which is a certainty. There’s no interface between me and an audience. It doesn’t have to go through the filter of people commissioning it or funding it or whatever, and it also doesn’t have to go through the filter of someone deciding whether it worked or not. It’s pretty obvious if it worked. It went well. More people come next time. So that’s really really simple. I’m not managed by anyone at the moment, because I was very reluctant to go with anyone who wanted a cut of my work, because at the end of the day, it’s kind of all I’ve got. That and writing reviews of leftfield free jazz for a neo-Nazi newspaper, is all I’ve got.”

“I’d love to do a radio show, but the breadth of things I’d want to play wouldn’t really fit in anywhere. Which, again, is their

problem. It’s a problem of broadcasters and formats and producers – it’s what you call narrowcasting. I got sent a letter asking if I wanted to write for a new comedy, and it explained how it had to be a little bit risqué and blue, but be targeted at 25-35 year old women with a sense of independence but also a degree of responsibility. I just screwed it up and threw it in the bin. Only an idiot, or a person with no heart whatsoever, would write to that brief. I mean, my *Odin* sitcom is going to be targeted at people who believe literally in the existence of Norse Gods.”

The internet is changing the way that comics work, and, thankfully for us, the audience, reducing the importance of agents, PR and management. “I’ve just put out a DVD through a website [www.gofasterstripe.com] because no-one wanted to put out my new DVD after the controversy that surrounded ‘*Standup Comedian*’. They’ve covered their costs so now they’re doing loads of stuff with people who can’t get deals. Its sort of an indie label for comedy DVDs.”

“I’m not at the stage where I’m thinking about developing content specifically for the

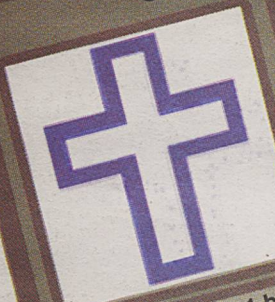
web, but to sell DVDs just through a website, with no advertising, is entirely cost effective. About 2,000 people come to my website, and there’s another 1,000 or so on a MySpace page I have, so if I alert all those people to new shows and stuff I can sell out venues with no advertising costs. I was invited to go on ‘*Derren Brown*’, and I like ‘*Derren Brown*’ but they don’t pay you anything. Three million people watch it. It’s not worth being recognised by three million people in the street, for no money. It’s not really worth being recognised by eight million people for the amount of money you get for going on ‘*Have I Got News For You*’. It’s quite disconcerting.”

On the other hand, there’s still people who recognise him from ‘*This Morning With Richard Not Judy*’ “It’s tailing off, but it’s astonishing and very gratifying the amount of very nice people who do come up and say Hi.”

At least some of the sacrifices of celebrity are worthwhile then. Stewart Lee may not be the messiah, but he’s a very funny man.

TOP TRAMPS of religions

Christianity



AGE: 2000 years

STYLE: Monks often caught with dirty habits

MEMBERSHIP: 2.1 billion worldwide

PROPHETABILITY: All-round entertainer and super-hero Jesus attains a rather special status. Sometimes he was angry, the atmosphere in certain temples/malls didn't tend to suit him. Most of the time he was quite relaxed.

PLAUSIBILITY: According to some, Dinosaurs were a special trick from God. God also made the world in 6 days. After the 7th day, he gave up. Forever.

TABOOS: Sexing basically. Spilling 'seed' like heathens is not encouraged. You must use a cup. 10 commandments form a handy how-to.

CRUSADIBILITY: Quite a lot of it. Crusades and witch-hunts in medieval Europe. Evangelical Bible Belters started a revival for the 21st Century.

Islam



AGE: 14 centuries

STYLE: Ladies favour the all-in-one burkha, Men enjoy a trendy beard.

MEMBERSHIP: 1.4 billion worldwide


PROPHETABILITY: Muhammad was a human, just like us, so he had the common touch. No noticeable super powers, but to make up for it, Islam has a staggering 123,999 other prophets.

PLAUSIBILITY: "Borrowed" cosmology from Judaeo-Christian tradition, so pretty standard.

TABOOS: Pork, getting drunk and shagging people you shouldn't. Pretty much Friday nights then.

CRUSADIBILITY: Jihad is sometimes referred to as the sixth pillar of Islam, but there remains a widespread misconception that it refers to Holy War. In fact, Jihad is a struggle, sometimes against oppression but often simply striving to live a moral life.

Jedi



AGE:

STYLE: Natty Shitty

MEMBERSHIP: 2001 census: 36,000

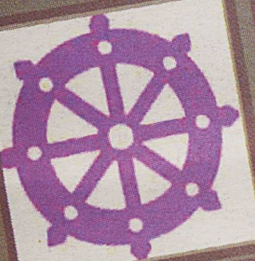
PROPHETABILITY: Countless generations of Jedi Knight linnia. Yoda was a little green genius famous but couldn't write. Fortunately preserved on celluloid.

PLAUSIBILITY: About as plausible as any of the other religions. **FUCKING DEPRESSING** considering the **MOVIE.**

TABOOS: Being naughty. Killing people. (Unless for a good reason, or they were wearing armour).

CRUSADIBILITY: Loads of it. Lightsabres are too. It is to a Catholic nun.

Buddhism



AGE: 2500 years

STYLE: Funky orange and yellow robes.

MEMBERSHIP: 350 million


PROPHETABILITY: Buddha was really great. Chilled, thoughtful, generous. No magic, just the power of thought. Or something.

PLAUSIBILITY: Karmic wheels and reincarnation. In your next life you might be a hippo. Buddha was going pretty well with his whole no deities trip but thats pretty far-fetched.

TABOOS: Eating animals. They could be your parents. Dalai Lama, the best Buddhist in the world, isn't vegetarian. Cause he knows it's the great taste you can't beat.

CRUSADIBILITY: Shit in a fight. Let the Chinese run all over Tibet. Most violent act is likely to be setting themselves on fire, which probably doesn't help.

Judaism



AGE: 41 centuries

STYLE: Hasidic Jews: long beards, big hats and curly sideburns. Icons

MEMBERSHIP: 12-14 million

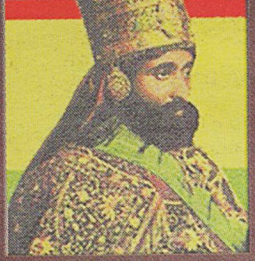
PROPHETABILITY: Abraham: quite literally the daddy of all prophets. The "exalted father" not just of Judaism, but of the theologians that fed Christianity and Islam.

PLAUSIBILITY: We are all the children of Adam and Eve. And of Noah. We are all inbreds. Pretty plausible.

TABOOS: Pork, working on the Sabbath and foreskins.

CRUSADIBILITY: Have historically generally been on the receiving end, but now they've got The Bomb so probably not wise to mess with them. Hasn't stopped people trying.

Rasta



AGE: Around 70 years

STYLE: Dreadlocks endorsed by Leviticus Sovereign rings demanded by Job.

MEMBERSHIP: A million.

PROPHETABILITY: Haile Selassie (Jah) was God incarnate. When he died, those who went to his funeral pretended it was a birthday, you see, if he had died then he couldn't be God.

PLAUSIBILITY: Believe that only half of the Bible has been written, and that the other half is written in a man's heart. Whilst this gives hope to the illiterate it is also pretty weird.

TABOOS: Many Rastafari follow an Ital diet which essentially means living by the dietary Laws of Leviticus and Deuteronomy in the Old Testament. No McDonalds.

CRUSADIBILITY: Too mashed.



Jedi

AGE: Dates back to 1,000 BBY (1977)

STYLE: Natty robes. Shitty ponytails.

MEMBERSHIP: 2001 census: 36,000 Jedi in London


PROPHETABILITY: Generations of Jedi Knights, spanning millions of years, was a little green genius. Luke was quite good at it. Unfortunately his legacy was celluloid.

PLAUSIBILITY: As plausible as any of the others. Which is a bit of a surprise considering ITS A FUCKING RELIGION.

TABOOS: Killing people. (Unless you had a really good reason, or they were wearing intense space armor.)

CRUSADABILITY: Lightsabres are to the Jedi what a rosary is to a Catholic nun.

Sikhism



AGE: 500 years

STYLE: Awesome turbans.

MEMBERSHIP: 23 million


PROPHETABILITY: Guru Nanak. Lifestyle guru to the sword-wielding classes and all round nice guy, kind of like Mr Motivator, but with a great big sword. Nine more Gurus followed, like tribute bands.

PLAUSIBILITY: They don't believe in hell. Clearly they've never been to Hell. Instead they believe you become one with God and achieve salvation. With Swords.

TABOOS: Cutting hair and not having a sword.

CRUSADABILITY: Everyone has a sword. Their symbol is a sword. There's an awful lot of swords flying about.

Jainism



AGE: 2,600 years

STYLE: Wear vegan clothes at all times.

MEMBERSHIP: 5 million

PROPHETABILITY: Tirthankars are prophets and brilliant because they have reached total knowledge (Keval Gnan). This doesn't mean they know exactly what's in a nik-nak, rather they know not to eat nik-naks in the first place.

PLAUSIBILITY: Empirically-fraught belief that time exists in 19,000 year cycles.. An Utsarpini and a Avsarpini constitute one Time Cycle.

TABOOS: Specifically violence, but they have a whole list of activities that aren't so hot. These include criticism, gossip, likes and dislikes.

CRUSADABILITY: Jains are expected to be non-violent in thought, word and deed, towards humans and every living creature. Famously they sweep ants rather than burning them with magnifying glasses or pulling off their legs.

Hinduism



AGE: 38 centuries

STYLE: Krishna had blue skin. The pinnacle.

MEMBERSHIP: About a billion. Mostly Indian.

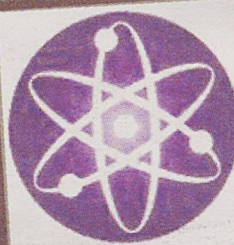
PROPHETABILITY: From time to time God descends to Earth to help humans along in their struggle toward enlightenment. Such an incarnation of God is called an avatara. Krishna was a brilliant one, and had a lot of sex.

PLAUSIBILITY: Loads of crazy stuff. It's insane inside a membrane.

TABOOS: While vegetarianism is not a requirement of Hinduism, it is recommended as a sattvik (purifying) lifestyle.

CRUSADABILITY: Infrequent but lethal. See Kashmir.

Science



AGE: 2,500 years

STYLE: Nerdy glasses and lab coats.

MEMBERSHIP: A lot more than understand it.


PROPHETABILITY: Darwin was into beaks. Tasty, tasty beaks. Dawkins loves genes. Tasty, tasty genes. Mad old men with fire in their eyes and truth in their loins.

PLAUSIBILITY: We used to be monkeys!? The gibbering ravings of a drugged chimp-fancier!

TABOOS: Creationism. Praying. Friends. Sociability. The absence of systems.

CRUSADABILITY: Eugenics. Nuclear warfare. Big brains, bigger guns.

Scientology



AGE: Dates back to 1952

STYLE: High-tech laser sun glasses and electric hotpants

MEMBERSHIP: 500,000

PROPHETABILITY: Sci-fi author L Ron Hubbard once quipped he could create a religion from nothing and become a very rich and powerful man. This resulted in a life on a ship, avoiding taxes and being looked after by topless young women.

PLAUSIBILITY: Xenu brought billions of people to Earth in spacecraft resembling Douglas DC-8 airliners, stacked them around volcanoes and blew them up with hydrogen bombs. Their souls stuck to the bodies of the living.

TABOOS: Noise during birth. Women giving birth are encouraged to be silent as noise will make their baby all spiritually wrong. Breastfeeding is another one.

CRUSADABILITY: He had frequent screaming tantrums and instituted brutal punishments such as incarceration in the ship's filthy locker for weeks at a time and "overboarding", in which errant crew members were blindfolded, bound and thrown overboard.

new look, look again.

hollieeastman finds new-lows in the highstreet

Okay, think of New Look and you think of fourteen year old girls trying to dress like they're legal, girls called Chantelle and dodgy innuendo t-shirts of the FCUK variety. With Topshop becoming more high fashion every season, H&M still appealing to the euro-chic corner of the market, and even Primark coming up from the rear New Look needed the style to support their neon signs to avoid being left out in the high street wasteland resembling Topshop's chavy and not always cheaper relative. So with the festive season over, our food babies subsiding and global warming making it already feel like winter is well and truly over, it seems like the opportune moment to be planning your spring wardrobe. New Look have got in there early, and you're going to be pleasantly surprised!

think nineteen-fifties Brighton beach hut colours, nautical stripes, ladies in high waisted shorts on bicycles holding a 99er. Translating into high waisted white trousers, silk swing tops with puff sleeves in yellow and beach hut patterns, teamed with mafia shoes. Metallics are here and more pronounced, although with

no fear of looking astronaut or like a character from the Wizard of Oz. Matt gold swing jackets, matt silver round neck A-line dresses, to be teamed with skinny jeans (still a wardrobe staple...) or anything purple. Brown is not quite the new black but still showing its face in the shape of long gypsy style patchwork dresses teamed with purple, earthy green and yellow. The best combination of this being a plaid style swing top with yellow ribbon fastening. Boiler suits are also threatening to make an appearance, good news for anyone starting a Blazing squad tribute band or wanting to embrace their inner Proletariat. Swimsuits this season are going to leave even more random tan lines than the last, with even further plunging v-neck lines/one shoulder straps/ holes.



Jewellery is getting bigger. The kind of jewellery every five year old girl dreams of, big plastic bangles

with flower detail in pastel colours, beads, and matching earrings. Also Indian style bangles in golds and oranges. New Look has always been a reliable source of footwear, the Bugsy-Malonesque shoes in blue/white and black/white are fantastic and still at the kind of price you'd expect. Suede platform heels in purple and emerald green encrusted with big jewels may not sound appealing on paper but are sure to be hit. Bring on the Spring!

i-phone i-rony

stevehampson is angry about a phone

Introducing the iPhone, a smashing idea in concept with more technology than you can shake a stick at, but sadly it's a load of bollocks.

Granted the silky smooth contours of any apple product are reason alone to invest such huge amounts in their overpriced goods. And what a class idea it is to combine the much-lauded iPod with a high-end smart phone: they even managed to jam a camera in somehow. If any company has claim to revolutionising consumer electronics, and draining my bank account at the same time, surely Apple wins hands down. However I can't help but think that the iPhone is destined for the scrap heap along with every other all-in-one product, e.g. the Oakley MP3 player sunglasses or even the mobile phone wristwatch.

Many companies have tried to produce such a product, but have always failed to achieve the correct balance of phone and MP3 player. The Sony-Ericsson Walkman phones for example with their tasteless orange trim, small memory and miniscule screens. The iPhone on the other hand has no such shortcomings and is styled brilliantly with far superior features to any conceivable rival. But still you are left with a device, which has one-tenth the song capacity of an iPod, a phone with a battery life of 4/5 hours and finally a mobile computer with painfully slow Internet and a BlackBerryesque ability to read your emails where ever you are. I know for a fact that I don't want to receive emails from my philos-

ophy teacher when I'm out making a vodka-inspired tit of myself.

Another massive problem with the iPhone is that by the time you have paid £500 for it and been confined to a 2 year contract, your not going to want to take it beyond the safe confines of your room. So for all those hot sweaty nights, with drink flying everywhere (bloody Walkabout), you most certainly are not going to want an electronic brick worth more than its weight in gold in your pocket.

For all of you Macaholics who are still are intent on wasting your student loan, may I offer you solace in the form of a printable cut-out of the iPhone. Go to <http://www.iphonecountdown.com/>, print it off, stick it together and you have all the style of the device without the mammoth price tag, but sadly it's absolutely useless.



No doubt the iPhone is an amazing device, but once you have been driven to insanity by its button less keypad, teased by its paltry battery life and dropped it on its sensitive touch screen. The inevitable event of having it stolen from you on the dingy streets of Southwark will bring such relief that you will be praising the day a mugger taught you that phones and iPods just don't mix.



STYLE

If you're a Christian not shopping for a new religion, but in need of some time to reacquaint yourself with your old religion, take stock of your life or feel that you are in need of penance, a pilgrimage might be right up your alleyway. If you can't "find yourself" on the famous trek of El Camino de Santiago (The way of St. James) you may be lost forever. The walk takes around a month and goes from a number of locations in France to the city of Santiago (Northern Spain). The route is usually traversed on foot but bicycles as well as donkeys are other modes of transport worth considering- sitting down for 500 miles is always that bit more enjoyable than standing up don't you think? The next question is where to stay? Pilgrim's hostels, largely run by parishes and monasteries, line the route and are cheap at the price of €3-7 a night or if not run on donations. On your journey there'll be plenty of time for reading, in between bouts of soul searching, so if you're looking for a book to read why not consider Paulo Coelho's philosophical story; *The Pilgrimage*, or for something more light hearted perhaps consider *Spanish Steps* by British humorist Tim Moore. Perhaps, if things spiritual aren't goping so well for you *Conversion for Idiots* by Chappel Books. If these don't take your fancy you could always bone up on that scripture.

El Camino de Santiago

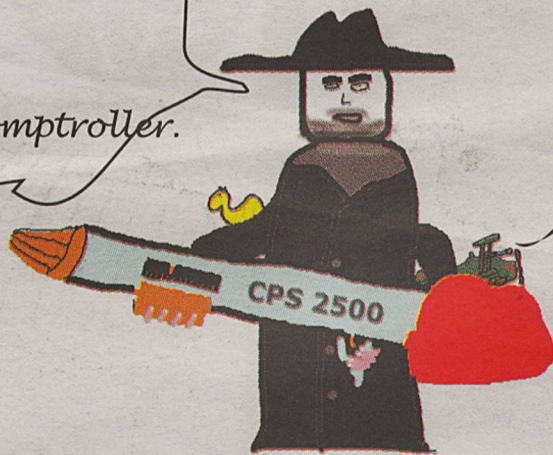
jessicamcardle reinvigorates her faith

TRAVEL



thebeaver.partb@lse.ac.uk

come and help me.
Be a PartB comptroller.



music comptroller x2

job description: mastering music in written form. once a week.

perks: gig tickets, free music, interviews, industry contacts. taste arbitration.

phat comptroller x2

job description: a comptroller without portfolio. to head a part-time miscellaneous section including DVD, Comedy and About. you will learn layout and graphics skills. you will hang around on Sunday and eat things.

perks: free meals. interviews, free DVDs, free funny. taste abitation.

the geek's guide to magazines

it's all geek to simonwang

You know who you are, you technology-interested, anime-watching, videogame-playing, techtoy-loving boys and girls – and I know what you read. And I want you to read more. So I give you the Geek's Guide to Magazines: a literature guide for the true geek.

For the gamers amongst you, a clear option would be to choose a magazine for the specific platform you're interested in – be that PCGamer, PSM, Official Nintendo Magazine or Official Xbox Magazine. Yet be warned: while you do get exclusive interviews and previews, make sure you fully read the content of a review before making a decision about a purchase. Usually the scores are skewed to a higher value, especially in 'official' magazines, so make sure you take that into account.

For someone who wants to read a videogaming magazine with a more mature demographic, I would suggest multiformat magazines such as GamesTM and Edge. They usually have some very well written articles. Edge, in particular, is possibly the videogame industry's most influential and important magazine so if you're interested in videogames, give it a look. It usually gives a balanced opinion and its features and articles are some of the best I've ever read, videogame-related or otherwise. It also features some excellent interviews, which are a great read for anyone interested in the people behind the games they play.

As for technology, an obvious choice would be Wired. It takes itself seriously, even if others don't. To its credit, it offers a good array of interviews, product

splashes and general techo-paraphernalia, and covers every possible and imaginable (albeit sometimes extremely boring) business and consumer computer market. Unfortunately it is also littered with advertisements, to the point of making it difficult to read. Altogether it comes across a little too self-conscious and a touch too smug to be de-rigueur for the more fashionable geeks out there.



What is a pity is that there really isn't much to read about anime and manga out there, other than manga itself. Granted, if you look around in one of the bigger WH Smiths there is bound to be some anime literature available, but there really isn't a major magazine to which one can subscribe. Occasionally magazines do features or anime editions, such as SFX's anime special last month, and 3D World's Japanese animation cover this month. However, though spo-

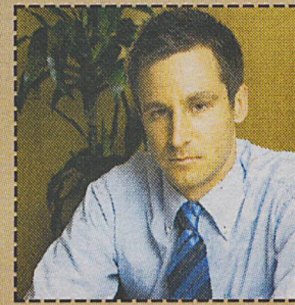
radic, these publications are often done very well, with some excellent written articles and reviews.

Of course, there's also the source which all geeks visit regularly, the ultimate source of information – the internet. There's a ton of literature available on the web with weekly, daily or even hourly updates, especially with the development of the blog as an information medium. There are many, many gaming sites on the internet – Kotaku, Techcrunch, Joystiq, Geekspeak, Engadget – with up-to-date news, as well as articles and interviews. It's extremely important for any geek to truly keep up to date with what's going on, especially since geek news moves quickly. These sites will help you stay in touch with your geekiness on the go.

What is intriguing is how mainstream geeky topics, such as technology, anime, and videogaming, have become in the media. Time demonstrated with this year's person of the year – 'You' – the increasing influence of social networking such as YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, last.fm, and others. It should come as no surprise then that Time, and other magazines, are becoming more and more geeky by the day. Increasing interest in geekiness combined with the increasing influence of individual geeks, is touching the wider literary world.

Ultimately, no matter what type of geek you are, whether you're interested in Technology, Videogames, Anime or otherwise, there's plenty of good literature out there to read. So put on your spectacles and put down that joystick and read.

literature event



Who: Ryan Heath, Australian author living in London

What: A book. Called *Please just F*off it's our turn now: Holding baby boomers to account*.

When: Tuesday 23rd January

Where: S421; in association with the Australia New Zealand Society

Why: This book is for anyone who thinks that it's time for the baby boomers (who are now in their 50s and 60s) to move on, or as Heath so gracefully puts it: "f*off". Heath addresses the concern widely held in Australia and other countries that 50-60 year old "baby boomers" are hogging all the jobs, housing and opportunities. He challenges the perspective with which boomers view Generation Y and calls for a bit of respect for the challenges faced by young people today.

Opinion: Opinion on this book is divided; "A slickly crafted message, sparking with sound bites." Annabel Crabb, The Sun Herald;

"I'm sorry, Mr Heath, but you're going to have to prise these cold, dead fingers off my rung with your teeth."

Keith Austin, Sydney Morning Herald
jessicamcardle

I have to admit that I was a little worried at first about trying the free food handed out by the Hare Krishna Rickshaw Project. It wasn't fear for my tastebuds which prompted these misgivings – I was wondering how I would be received. Surely it would be entirely obvious that I was not the neediest of Londoners. Surely I would be subject to a torrent of abuse and angry stares from the genuinely less well-off.

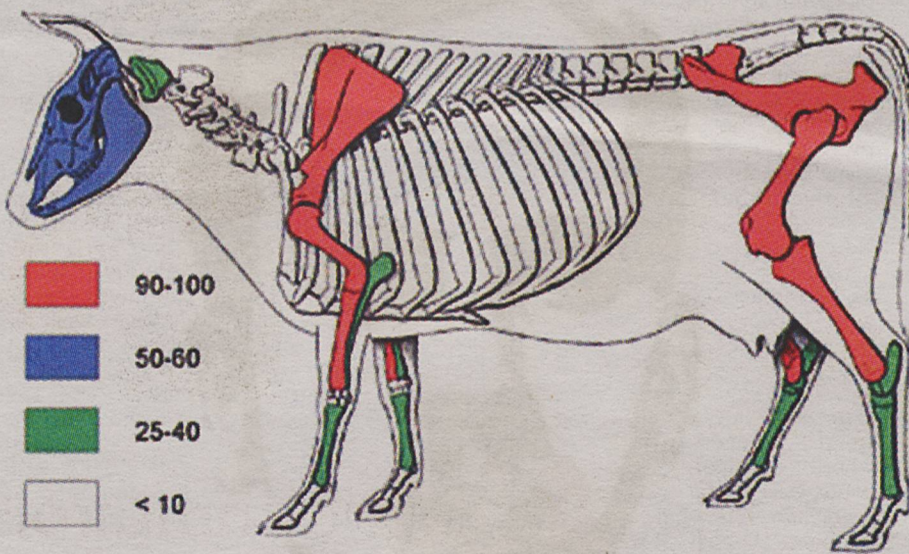
As it happened my fears were unfounded, and no one gave me a second look. It was about 2pm when I found the nondescript blue van parked along the side of King's Cross Station, dishing out the grub. I waited in line quietly, feeling slightly uneasy as the exclusively male queue made its way forward. The situation could have looked like something more sinister than what it was: each man filing past a small opening in a generic looking vehicle, reaching in and taking what was being offered. It felt suggestive of something illicit and seedy, which really couldn't have been further from the truth.

I wondered what to do when my turn came up; how to act, what to say. In the end I just said 'the same', hoping to get what I saw the man in front of me having. In fact, he too had just said 'the same', so that he might get what the man before him had had. In times of social discomfort (or free food) it seems I revert to an unthinking, sheep-like state of mind. I suppose I could have distinguished myself from the others by adding a 'please' to the end of my utterance, but that might have given me away as the

well-spoken, middle class student-journalist I am.

I received my food in accordance with the hurried, unglamorous way they served it, feeling a little awkward and

mous block of cake on top of the plate covering my food. Feeling a little disorientated by the experience, I made my way back across the road to sample all I had been given.



inept. They wouldn't let me go without thrusting upon me a half-litre of diet ginger beer. They also wanted to give me an extra piece of cake, but I hastily declined.

I stole away quickly with the bright yellow vegetable curry and rice they had burdened me with, balancing my enor-

Despite my upbringing in a culture where desserts are traditionally eaten after the savory course, I had to eat the cake first out of sheer necessity. Being that it is given out for free, with benevolent motives, I'd feel uneasy expressing any criticism of the food itself.

Luckily I don't have to. Packed with chunky walnuts and pieces of dried fruit, it tasted very nice indeed. If you really wanted to complain, you could note that it was perhaps a little dry.

On to the main event; the luminous curry with rice. The Hare Krishna website explained that the aim of the project is to distribute 'free hot, nutritious meals to the public', and this dish certainly ticks all of those boxes. The constituent parts of this particular dish were potatoes, peas and chickpeas, all coated in a very mild creamy sauce.

The fragrance and flavour on offer reminded me vaguely of something of a different colour altogether; namely a red or green Thai curry.

Undeterred, and dining al fresco as I was, I hungrily ate everything on my plate, lest it turn cold and inedible. It was wholesome and filling, and I could not have asked for more. The potatoes stood out as particularly delectable, being gloriously soft with a melt-in-the-mouth quality to them.

As my Hare Krishna dining experience drew to a close, I reflected upon the fact that not a shred of propaganda, religious or otherwise, had been sent my way throughout. Absolutely nothing was asked of me, and yet I was offered a hot, tasty meal, an oversized cube of cake, and a fizzy beverage. In a world where everything has its price, this is surely quite a remarkable phenomenon, deserving of our support, not criticism.

rahimrahemtulla is cheap and theologically easy

free food: hare krishna style

literature

food and drinking

rock the cashpoint : Ise's own record label

iangordon is religiously devoted to his own indie venture

It is the responsibility of everyone to help combat the growing problem of global warming, in whatever small way we can. My plan, although more unorthodox than recycling, is to go to the theatre. Theatre, when compared to every other artistic field whether it be the movies, music industry or fashion, leads the pack when it comes to being green. You think it sounds absurd? Read on.

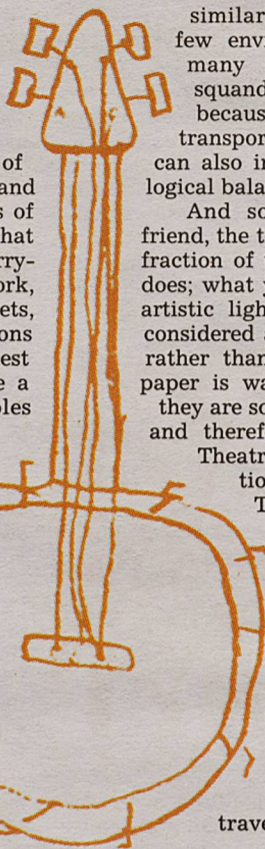
Film is the biggest culprit by far, with its huge amounts of wasted energy (lights, cameras, action!), non-recyclable materials (film reels/old sets/past-their-peak stars) and possible ecological damage when filming on location. That's not to mention the waste involved with the distribution of the films, paper tickets, and the rubbish created by the food counters.

Music could be argued to be a real contender in the Green ring, since not a lot of energy or natural resources are wasted in its production. However, if you look at the squandering of paper, plastic and other materials in the packaging of CDs (which are generally not recyclable), not to mention promotional posters and leaflets that help fill landfills, it paints a different picture. Gigs are hardly earth-friendly either, especially open air concerts, which not only eat electricity like it's chocolate cake, but also hurt the local eco-system (just look at the grass, or lack

thereof, in Hyde Park after Live 8).

Fashion is another guilty party, for even if you disregard the obvious cons of using endangered animal products like fur in their clothes, designers and models are some of the biggest abusers; not of coke, but of carbon. To be fair, film and rock stars are also notorious users of our precious energy resources. What with the constant holidays and ferrying back and forth between New York, London and LA on their private jets, gas-guzzling cars and McMansions generally built using only the finest endangered trees, celebrities leave a carbon footprint that resembles Bigfoot's.

Food and drink can't be held to blame too much, although the amount of energy wasted on imported and exported luxury food items and fine bottles of foreign wine is staggeringly disproportionate to the net gain, what with getting them via truck, ship and plane from point of origin to your 5 star dining table. Art



similarly commits relatively few environmental crimes, but many of the larger pieces squander a lot of carbon points because they are so difficult to transport. Large land art pieces can also interfere with local ecological balances.

And so we come to Earth's friend, the theatre. Theatre wastes a fraction of the electricity that film does; what you thought was moody artistic lighting could actually be considered an energy saving device rather than a plot one. Although paper is wasted on the programs, they are so expensive that demand and therefore production is low. Theatre is live, and so distribution costs are negligible.

The impact on the local eco-system is practically nothing, and once a theatre is built it can be reused for decades. Sets and costumes can also be recycled from play to play. Theatre actors are also more eco-friendly than their silver screen counterparts: they barely have time to travel because they have

such unforgiving schedules, and generally have to live in the same city, for work. Since most theatre productions take place in cities, most actors and crew rely on public transport to get to work, not cars and jet planes.

What is more, the theatre has the potential for longevity that most other arts don't. As crude oil runs out, the general excess of the film, music and fashion industries will be drastically reduced, and may well even hinder their ability to create movies, pop songs and high culture. It will be also be increasingly difficult to obtain fancy imported foods, or even anything not produced locally. Theatre, on the other hand, will be able to go on as it has done for hundreds of years. Until the water starts to rise on London and New York, nothing will really change, and even then, one of the glories of theatre is its ability to transfer; look at touring companies or outdoor theatre. If theatre were an investment option, it'd be the least risky by far in the uncertain future of our environment. So give the theatre another chance, and help save our planet as yo do. Sort of.

'Religion is shit and we're fucking fast. We don't go to church, don't go to mass. It's all melting my mind.' (Brain Dead)

It seems that you get a lot of praise from all corners of the hardcore scene. Why do you think that is?

I think it's partly because of our previous band. I think a lot of people who were into that style listen to Brain Dead, even though it's not the sort of thing they'd normally be into. It seems that we do crossover into a few crowds; fast/thrashcore, "straight edge", grind, metal etc...We'll play with anyone though, we have quite wide musical tastes (our drummer even likes Phil Collins! He's sick in the head). When we play live, we just sound like a wall of noise and our singer goes apeshit; the last show he pulled the Sciatic nerve at the bottom of his back, and vommitted onstage...Maybe some people are impressed, or freaked out, i don't know. Three of you were in xAim for the Head before Braindead. The approach and style of the two bands are quite different. What lead you to form Brain Dead?

After Aim For The Head split up (we were never a straight edge band, Squire always drank) we decided just to start a band where we played as fast as we could. Like when AFTH started, we were listening to bands like Sheer Terror and Poison Idea and shit. We kind of went back to our roots as a band, with an added Infest/Crossed Out/No Comment influence. The new songs we've been writing are slightly different, they've got some Man Is The Bastard-style bass riffs and grindcore elements. Generally though, we haven't changed too much since we started.

Some of your lyrics are ever so slightly anti-religion. Is that a result of personal experiences with God-botherers?

Not really. I'm not from a religious family, I don't think any of the band are really, apart from Pope-loving Bucky. It's just something which bothers us; how something so illogical can predominate so many aspects of society is beyond me. When people start to find answers where are none, and put their "faith" in ancient

ideas which are harmful...well, i think there's a problem. The idea of "faith" itself is harmful; to blindly accept, and follow (and even sometimes die for) a belief in something which is not based on fact, but based on mindless superstition and tradition. We shouldn't be trying to DISPROVE that there is a god; the burden on proof is on the believers to give us one piece of evidence. (well, where is it?). Religion isn't something that can just be ignored or blindly accepted. Every one should be questioning why they believe the things they do.

And what's all this i hear about JesusXcore zine, from Coventry? What a joke, fuck off!

In 'fuck the NME' you talk about how people's attitudes and style are dictated by the views they read in magazines such as the NME. Do you think that the hardcore scene is really all that different?

No, the word magazine can be replaced with the word "message-board" or whatever. You can see the trend anywhere; what bands were cool 2 years ago and what bands are cool now. It just goes in circles. That's the problem with society, and religion is a good example: everyone is a fucking sheep who wants to be disciplined and told what to think or how to act.

Saying that, i'd take most hardcore kids over people who listen to "indie rock" (even though it's far removed from being independent). At least hardcore kids generally use their imagination, and

don't just listen to bands that the NME, or whatever, say are good. It's style over substance, a bunch of wankers who are trying to be the Clash.

Conspiracies, mind-numbing jobs, serial killers, religious bigots and lies, corrupt coppers, trendy wankers. Is there any hope for humanity?

No. We're all just dumb animals who have an overblown sense of self importance. To think that there is any "meaning" or "purpose" to existence or humanity is futile. The only thing to do is have some fun, be creative, watch classic episodes of The Simpsons...Everything else is going to shit.

The Midlands has a history of bands playing fast and aggressive music since the 1980s. Is that a residual influence on music in the area and what you play?

We're miles away from the sea and the landscape in almost completely flat. I think that's had an influence on the bands from our area, faced with the mindless characterless monotony that is Middle England. However, there are only a few people from Leicester who are even into hardcore, so I think we avoid a lot of the backbiting and trend-following that some areas suffer from. Some of the best UK hardcore bands were from the Midlands too (Heresy, Ripcord, Hard To Swallow etc).

The transition from 7" to LP for many hardcore bands is a hard one. Is an LP in the pipe-line?

Yes, sometime this year. I'm not sure how it's going to work. Whether it's going to

be 20+ short as fuck songs, or 15 with a really long droney jam...Who knows, we'll see what we come up with. A good fast hardcore LP is hard to pull off, 7" normally work much better. Also there's more space to worry about on the insert etc so we'll have to put more effort in sorting that out. You'll see it in bargain bins and in the £1 box at distros in a year or so, don't worry.

Our 'Priest Killer' 7" should be out by the time you're reading this, go to www.myspace.com/feastoftentacles and ask for a copy.

The artwork on your records is really fucking good, who does it for you?

Our good friend Rob Nabbe The Bastard from Holland. He used to be in that band INSULT, and is now in goregrind band SKULLHOG (what a name!). Hopefully we'll be getting him to draw the cover to our LP too, we'll think of something sick and blasphemous I'm sure.

Thanks a lot! That's about it for questions, any last comments?

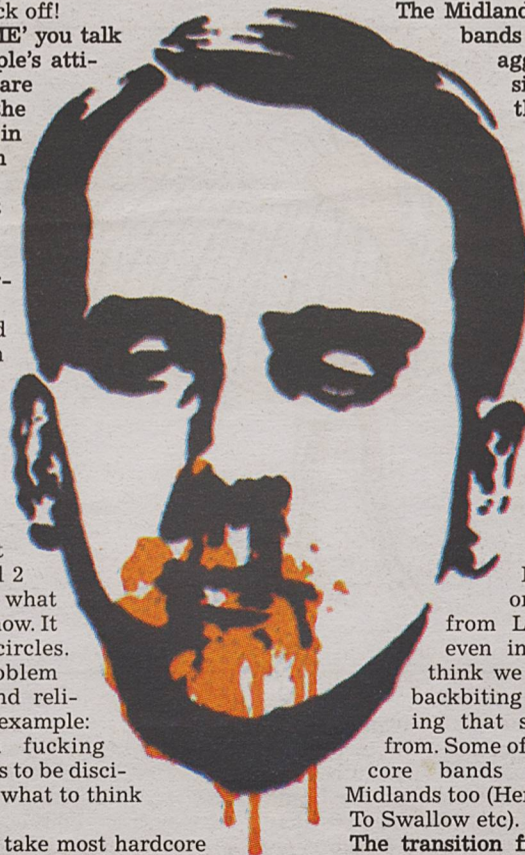
Thanks for the interview. Brain Dead are looking for shows, so email us: xmyturntowinx@hotmail.com.

There's an INFEST tribute CD coming out soon which we should be on, so keep a look out for that. Also, we're appearing on a compilation 7" being put out by Fuck Yoga Records which has HATRED SURGE, IRON LUNG, APARTMENT 213 etc on it, loads of good bands! Our song on it is a blatant rip off of 'Mindless Mutant' by Infest.

Every one should go choose a book and read it, instead of wasting their time checking myspace or faceparty.

Watch Alan Partridge and Brass Eye. On a side note; Don't listen to the propaganda, and support South America's socialist governments, like in Venezuela (unless they turn totalitarian). It's about time they became independent from US dominance, and strengthened their weak economies, lifting people from the slums they grew up in. If I'm wrong, and it all ends badly...my mistake.

Read WATCHMEN, and go see IRON LUNG and HATRED SURGE when they tour the UK this year!



greglewis misconducts an interview with religious fervour when brain death is the beginning of life

babel

angustse is speaking in tongues

Babel n. 1. A famous tower built by a united humanity to reach toward heaven, causing God in his anger to make each person involved speak different languages, halting the project and scattering a confused and disconnected people across the planet.

Morocco- The couple Richard (Brad Pitt) and Susan (Cate Blanchett) are among a group of tourists. Susan is accidentally shot by Ahmed, a boy who's out hunting with his brother Youssef.

Mexico- After the shooting incident, and despite Richard asking their nanny to stay behind, Amelia (Adriana Barraza) brings Richard's children, along with her nephew Santiago (Gael Garcia Bernal), to her son's wedding in Mexico.

Japan- The rebellious death-mute Chieko (Rinko Kikuchi) is looking for love. She is coping with her mother's suicide, and has a strained relationship with her father Yasujiro (Koji Yakusho), who the police are looking for.

No doubt, Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu is an ambitious director/writer. The same narrative device was used in his previous films, *Amores Perros* and *21 Grams*: seemingly separate stories and characters are miraculously connected by twists of fate, allowing the exploration of themes of love, suffering and guilt. *Babel* is no different, except this time the plot spans several continents, the action intercutting between stories but not as annoying as the idiosyncrasy found in *21 Grams*. Alejandro's intentions seem clear- he wants to examine humanity, and by utilising the Tower of Babel allegory, the contexts of human communication and cul-

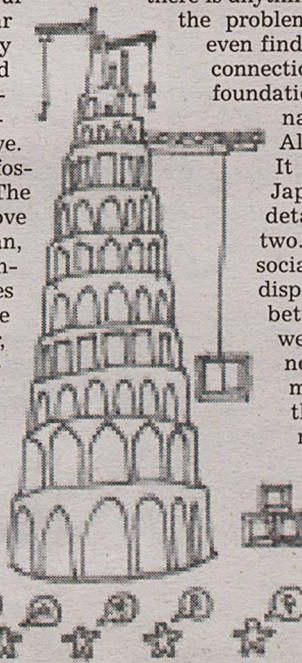
tural differences are particularly relevant.

Babel is about the failure to communicate. The violence instigated accidentally is wrongly described in the media as terrorism. The Western tourists' mistrust of the Moroccan villagers inhabits the 'us versus them' mentality in the war on terror, and also the natural fear of the unknown. Recklessness, by the children in Morocco and Santiago in Mexico, and misunderstanding leads to grave consequences. *Babel* is also about love. The motherly love that Amelia fosters over Richard's children. The ultimate bonding nature of love found between Richard and Susan, despite hints that their relationship was faltering. The distances that people go for love, where Chieko, the permanent outsider, is desperate to seek love and intimacy and escape loneliness.

Babel has a lot to say, but a lot is omitted too. Sexism is introduced, and oddly enough through the form of incest, but barely scratches the surface. Furthermore, the terrorism issue is merely portrayed in news clips. Is it a touch of realism reflecting the global implications of the war on terror? A comment on the paradox that modern media still has a long way to go to unite people? Or is Alejandro not interested in the political dimensions, rather placing them at the backdrop to the characters' interactions?

It is this ambiguity that deals the fatal blow. The same themes are prevalent throughout, but is *Babel* meant to be

viewed as separate but similar stories or a large puzzle? The connections in Alejandro's previous films are incidental to the strong narratives, but in *Babel* this is unclear. Besides the chronological link between the stories, one wonders whether there is anything more substantial. It is the problem of making sense, or even finding the existence of any connections, that shakes *Babel*'s foundations and challenges the narrative device that Alejandro repeatedly uses.



It is peculiar that the Japan story is uniquely detached from the other two. Also, there is a lack of social and cultural issues on display, nor a real contrast between stories, if they were intended to be connected. *Babel* is not meant to be subtle, but the stories seem minimalist compared to its scope. Furthermore, *Babel*'s tagline- 'If you want to be understood...listen'- hints it wants to adopt a moral high ground. Is it an invention by PR, or Alejandro's call for tolerance?

Wouldn't a better summary be 'Act sensibly' or 'Love thy neighbour'? The message is so cliché and even arrogant - a book called *The Bible* taught that ages ago.

It is also this ambiguity that absolves *Babel* to an extent. Compare it with last year's Oscar winner *Crash*. Both films are well made, boasting great performances

and serious drama. The problem arises once you recognise director/writer Paul Haggis' goal to make a film about racism and prejudice. It is ironic that *Babel*, in failing to be a product of its intentions, escapes the blame that *Crash* deserved, where it tried to tackle the issues head on, and thus exposing its shallowness and ignorance. At least *Babel* doesn't insult our intelligence, and one can at least see three separate episodes, compared to the racism and prejudice lock holding hostage to the stories in *Crash*.

I can't decide whether *Babel* is genuinely or accidentally self-important. Of course a film could have multiple interpretations and purposes. But Alejandro's choice to amp up the scale of his project and the use of the Biblical tale suggests an ultimate ambition to create a colossal global saga of connectivity. He instead created a big conundrum.

In the blogosphere, Alejandro is one of the 'Three Amigos', including his fellow Mexican filmmakers Alfonso Cuarón and Guillermo Del Toro. They made *Children of Men* and *Pan's Labyrinth* respectively, two of the best of 2006. *Babel* isn't. Alejandro is a talented filmmaker, being able to construct scenes and manipulate the environment to portray human harmony and isolation. The scenes in Japan, especially the hypnotic disco sequence, are stunning. But his talents and the stellar cast can't hide the fact that as a piece of intellectual cinema, *Babel* fails. Whether the film is a noble failure, a missed opportunity, faux-enlightenment or pure indulgence is for you to decide. Now that's a real scope of opinion.

Why do we go to the theatre? To laugh; to cry; to be entertained; but often the pleasure we derive from the experience has more depth. We go to the theatre to see something that relates specifically to us, to discover a production with a personal sense of relevance. Marber's updated version of Moliere's debaucherous play, *Don Juan*, does all of these things fantastically. The audience is left peering into their own souls and examining their moral codes and consciences. Rarely does one see a production with such a strong sense of personal and contemporary relevance.

In Grandage's production, the setting is the present day and the location, London's millennium party scene: cocaine, ecstasy, prostitutes, alcohol, pumping house music, swanky hotels and expensive clothing are all ubiquitous.

The legendary Don Juan is now a wealthy, young, charismatic lord who frolics around in Soho's corners and the rest of the globe, delighting in sampling every kind of woman the world has to offer. He is played by Rhys Ifans, who is probably more familiar to us as Hugh Grant's Welsh flatmate in *Notting Hill*. However: do not let yourself be fooled; Ifans' Don Juan is as suave as ever. He saunters around the stage, never feeling the need to rouse himself to anything more active than a casual, sultry stroll (unless, of course, it could result in some coital action). This is a Don Juan who couldn't be any smoother, wittier, or more entertaining. It is a hilarious production with guaranteed laughs. My favourite scene follows an accident on a Thames boat party: Don Juan attempts to woo and seduce one partner whilst in the

midst of receiving indiscreet fellatio from another victim of his seduction. The ensuing scene, with its particularly sexual brand of slapstick, will have you in fits.

Don Juan's sexually predatory behaviour and his disregard for fidelity and other peoples' feelings shock the audience, as does his utterly dismissive attitude to religion, be it his own or other peoples' faith. However, his easy and fluent justifications makes us question quite what it is we have a problem with, and whether we believe what we do simply because of what society tells us to think. His casual attitude to inflicting pain upon others alarms us (he doesn't understand that emotion is often inextricable from sex) and his disregard for religion does the same. Marber has changed Moliere's original demand for the character to repent before Christ to a simple apology before one of his victims, but Don Juan still refuses the task. The scene in which Don Juan offers to give a homeless Muslim his



Rolex if he blasphemes against Allah made everyone in the audience shift uncomfortably. We are confronted with an absolutely amoral man, and one who refuses to acknowledge or cannot understand morality. It is a strange sensation, and one which leads us to ask ourselves a lot of questions.

Stan, Don Juan's manservant, adds plenty of humour to the production. His delivery is superb: notable one liners include "[he would] do it with anything, even a hole in the ozone layer". But Stan also acts as Don Juan's own conscience. The two men share a

much deeper connection than Don Juan likes to admit, which becomes most visible when Stan almost succeeds in phasing the mighty Don, accusing him of loneliness and a desperate quest for companionship. Once more this brings in an extremely poignant question to be asking in today's society. How often do we hear of people sleeping around to fill a void; or

being forced between career and family, resulting in a hurried search for a life-long partner as middle-age approaches? The production addresses another one of our society's greatest fears: loneliness.

Despite the humour and food for thought that the production offers, the update doesn't entirely work. Soho is not a place where a rich lord flaunting his money and virility is in anyway uncommon. In Moliere's world the original play's fevered eroticism was part of the shocking nature of the play, and the Don a notable exception to the rule. However, this could then be one of the production's successes.

He still coerces us into examining our own morality even though we view the story and its concepts through the viewfinder of the hedonistic playground that is modern Soho. In today's world, a play about infidelity and promiscuousness isn't going to shock anyone; it is a credit to both Marber and Grandage that the production carries any moral clout. Instead, the shock factor that the audience experiences comes from DJ's flagrant audacity in his seductions and betrayals. Contemporary audiences are just as shocked by a failure to adhere to society's moral code and our sense of decorum as Moliere's seventeenth-century audience would have been, and our ability to be shocked reminds us, in some small way, of our humanity.

Visit the www.donmarwarehouse.com for more info on tickets. If they are sold out, standing tickets are available from 10am for £7 - a bargain, and not too painful since it only lasts for 90 minutes.

Highly recommended!

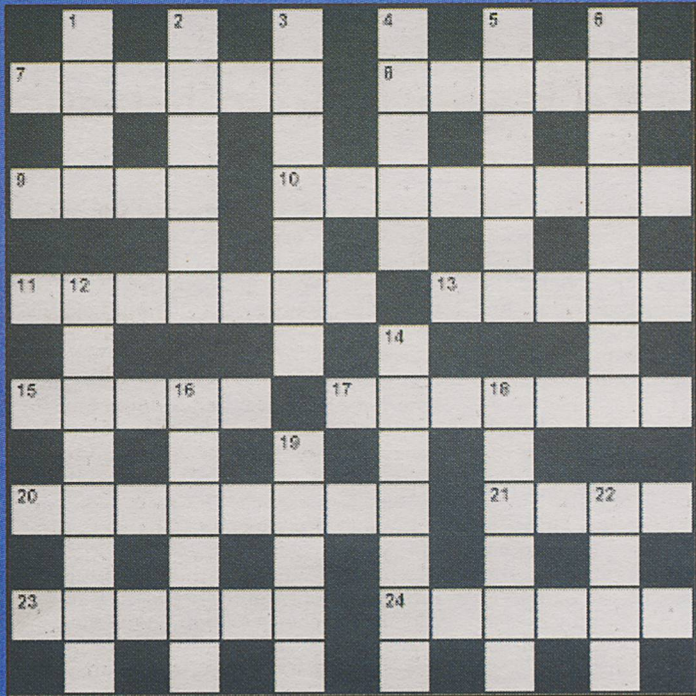
dominicrampat is seduced

don juan in soho



Theatre

SET BY JEBUS H CHRIST



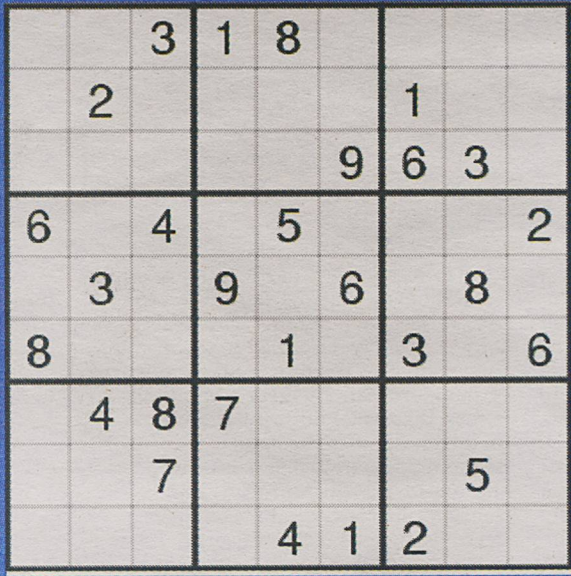
Down

- 1. mouthy(4)
- 2. plan (6)
- 3. with rage (7)
- 4. ___ back girl, like gwen stefani (ain't) (5)
- 5. watchy place (6)
- 6. surrounding cover, usually for paper (8)
- 12. about a certain thing (8)
- 14. southern hemisphere city named after a water-hole (7)
- 16. last-best; ___ age (6)
- 18. take in (6)
- 22. ended (4)

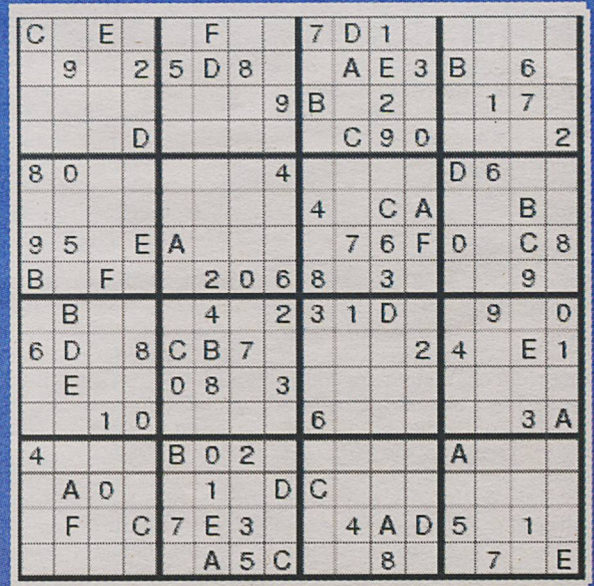
Across

- 7. mythical version of 20(6)
- 8. bulbs; know your's (6)
- 9. Sir Sugar, TV business-man (4)
- 10. let off (___ of a responsibility) (8)
- 11. in most cases (7)
- 13. little water vehicle (5)
- 15. race (5)
- 17. beige; overcooked sugar (7)
- 20. extinct version of 7 (8)
- 21. eskimos call it lots of things (4)
- 23. side-to-side (6)
- 24. heavy gym-toy (6)

Last week:
 Down: 1. shenanigans 2. evolution 4. circumcise 8. think 10. puffin
 Across: 1. sorry 3. superfluous 5. pamphlet 6. fudge 7. nihilistic 9. environment 11. conou-
 bine 12. flange



Difficult



Very Difficult



sudoku

the c-word



Ask

Auntie Shaw



Hello dahlings! Apologies for not being able to attend the almighty Foam Crush this weekend, I was invited to the Friday night at King's College instead (they're a randy bunch down at Strand Poly - Mr Shaw and I ended up taking the walk of shame back to Harrow on a Sunday morning). Maybe it's the harsh weather keeping you indoors but plenty of letters this week have revolved around TV shows. Not wanting to alienate everyone who isn't a couch potato, I haven't managed to include all the letters about The West Wing, The O.C., 24 or Desperate Housewives. Fear not my fellow sofa spuds, if there is a large enough demand, I'm sure Auntie will be able to sort out a regular spot in PartB dedicated to on screen romance, politics and bloodshed, ooh how exciting!!! In the meantime, here are some more letters about telly, crises of faith an dsadomasochism. As always, terrible spelling and appalling grammar is never left out...enjoy!

Dear Auntie

I can't decide what religious path to follow. Faith seems to be the reason for so much violence and hatred in the world today. I figured that Auntie will know which one to pick and why...you always seem to have the answers. What do you follow, why and what is it like?

DM
 Actuarial Science '08

The answer is simple my dear - choose a religion that caters to your lifestyle. Once you've decided between these well trodden paths, it's as easy as making vegetarian lasagne with béchamel sauce, sautéed mushrooms and garlic. Browse through a calend, highlight the different religious holidays and tally them up. If my figures are correct, the best way to get the most time off during term is this: be an atheist until the end of Fresher's Week, and then a devout Hindu

until November (this will let you eat during Ramadan and get time off for Diwali). In the run up to Christmas, convert to Catholicism and just before you come back for Lent Term, follow the Eastern Orthodox Church (giving you two Christmases!). In Week 2, have another crisis of faith and convert to Islam, followed by Scientology from Week 9, allowing you to drink at the end of term parties and leave early for a holy pilgrimage to Sunset Boulevard. During Easter try Judaism, to avoid Lent. To get your hands on those chocolate eggs, Protestantism should work just fine at Easter. Come exams, become Amish, as this will separate you from mainstream society and facebook, limiting procrastination opportunities. With this formula Auntie guarantees you a relaxing year with more chocolate and presents than you could ever dream of!

Amen
 Auntie Shaw xoxo

Dear Auntie

I'm so glad Jack Bauer is back. I really missed the guy. Have you seen the first four episodes of Day 6?! FUCKING AWESOME. What do you think about it all?

SL
 High Holborn '09

Indeed! Jack and co. had me on the edge of the sofa for the entire four hours! I often wonder what Jack would be like in bed. I imagine it would be very structured intercourse with a hint of sado-masochism. I enjoyed the appearance of familiar faces, although, whenever I saw Peter MacNicol on screen, I couldn't get his Ally McBeal character, John Cage, out of my head. I was constantly anticipating a Barry White jiggle or a quirky nose whistle. I expect great things from Jack this season. Let's just hope his time in China hasn't compromised his abil-

ity to pull the trigger at the drop of a hat. That's what gets me all excited...Ooh my!

Always make sure you reroute the signal from your workstation Auntie Shaw xoxo

Dear Auntie

Please 'elp Mummy, Auntie. She's desperate! It's me again. After her original fancy man, Uncle "Fit" graduated, my mum's found his lookalike replacement, Uncle "Terry". Now she's back to her old trick again by making me send admiring messages to Terry through Facebook as I was made to Fit. Shall I reveal her true identity to Terry, which will scare him off? Moreover it's not fair to her 2 young male colleagues to make them hear her latest infatuation.

LC
 LSE Staff - facebook

Dearest Lucy, I fear that you may be scaring this "Terry" character off by not revealing your true identity. Terry might resort to reporting you as a stalker on facebook and then you will be out of touch forever. If a look-alike is all you want, try www.discreetlywarpped.co.uk, where I'm sure you will be able to find the perfect looking "Terry" to take home - it's astonishing what a pinch of imagination can do for you!

Wash before and after use
 Auntie Shaw xoxo

If you want to share (or scare) me with you problems, rants and general nonsense, please do get in touch at thebeaver.partb@lse.ac.uk or through Auntie Shaw on Facebook. As explicit as you want; let's push those editorial boundaries to their limits! You are guaranteed to remain completely anonymous. Until next week my bizarre boys, girls and transgender dahlings! Ever your Auntie xoxo

ad?

erty conducted research on what female students at LSE think

"Cant I tell you what it doesn't mean to me ? It doesn't mean like, women first, or girl power kind of rhetoric, its just basic human quality"

S FEMINISM TO YOU?

"Even opening up minds to different ways gender is seen"

"Well doing things in a more female way...do you know what I mean...I use the drill, I use the screw-driver, but if there is a man around I like him to do the thing."

are. go



ARE YOU A FEMINIST ?



Based on a random sample of 85 female students at the LSE. Research conducted on 19th January 2007

th domestic violence

at problem faced by thousands of women

victim; "After 25 years of marriage, her husband started beating her. What could she do and where could she go?" Most women in this situation don't know of the available options to deal with the abuse.

Things can change and help is out there. Women need to realize that they have options, they

helpline. They can also offer counselling and shelter. Social services and the police are also now supportive when domestic violence is reported. Many local authorities run schemes to help with home security where there have been cases of domestic violence. The law also offers protection and prosecution under the Protection from Harassment Act. *Rights of Women* is a women's voluntary organisation which aims to educate women about their legal rights and can provide further information on legal matters relating to domestic violence.

The most important thing to remember is that there are thousands of women who are in this situation. If you are aware of a case of domestic violence and doing nothing to prevent it, then you are at fault too.

After the publication of alarming statistics including one call every minute in the UK being made to the police regarding domestic violence, it is clear that victims of abuse are not few and far between. You are not alone. What may have once been seen as a taboo subject in society and something to be ashamed about is now a very common and recurring problem in the UK. Domestic physical assault is a criminal offence and should be reported. If it happens to you, take action. As a woman, it is your right to live without fear.

The biggest reason for staying with an abusive partner is the fear of sustained violence even after leaving the abuser

just need the courage to face the fact that they are being abused. In this situation, denial and lack of self-esteem are the biggest obstacles to getting help. Overcoming these could mean a new life where being constantly fearful is not part of it.

Firstly, victims should seek help from friends and family. In this situation, being too ashamed to confess could be threat to your life. And help is also available elsewhere; a partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge, ensures there is a 24 hour



Where to go for help...

National Domestic Violence Helpline (Freephone 24 hours) 0808 2000 247

Rights of Women provide free legal advice 020 7251 6577

In an emergency always dial 999

Meeting the Ministers

Features Editor **Fatima Manji** interviewed Meg Munn, Deputy Minister for Women

Meg Munn epitomizes the New Labour 'Blair Babe' type MP; a woman who is well-informed, confident and articulate, Munn can prove to you, that she truly understands the average Briton and the issues they face. I spoke to her about her job as Deputy Minister for Women and how the prevailing gender inequalities in society should be addressed.

By her own admission Munn says she started politics "dreadfully" young, joining the Labour party at the age of 15. I'd "grown up in a political household, my mum was a member of the party" she says. I was "always motivated about a sense of fairness and equality - between male and females and with general distribution." She made the decision to run for parliament after she felt "politically restricted" in her role as a social work director.

When asked about her aims as Deputy Minister for Women, Munn replies convincingly and assertively, but with rather a vague answer in the classic New Labour political style; "I want to make progress" she says. "Progress by creating a structure which will achieve progress." However, when asked to elaborate on what progress entails, it is evident she appears well-aware of the problems and is clearly up to date on her facts. She speaks of how a flexible work-life balance for women in the world of employment has still not been achieved and of the persistent issue of a gender pay-gap.

Ironically, when Munn was first appointed as Deputy Minister for Women in May 2005, she herself was not given an extra ministerial salary. She defends this discrepancy articulately speaking of how the controversy was created by the media who "...made the link, that was never there. It was never an issue of gender. It was a first post for me and I was new. There are always ministers who are not paid and at the time there were also three men who weren't paid."

All-women shortlists for parliamentary candidates continue to be

controversial, yet Munn is clearly an advocate and reminds me of the "historical inequalities" existing against women. "There have only ever been 291 female MPs ever and there are currently 500 male MPs in parliament," she says. "We need to think about what women can add to the making of our laws and governing of our country." She uses examples of childcare, a work-life balance and breast cancer issues, all of which have been brought on the agenda by women. "Even as short as ten years ago, these issues were heckled at. Now men come and debate issues such as domestic violence."

Munn talks of how the government has introduced legislation to address the gender imbalance in parliamentary representation, but it is for "political parties, who must make the decision." A decision, which New



"Margaret Beckett is a role model for younger women. She deals with important international issues. We shouldn't be diverted from this."

Labour have taken she says with the significant increase in the number of female Labour MPs. "Pre-1997, only nine per cent of the parties MPs were women. In 2005, it was 28 per cent."

Yet currently the total number of female MPs in parliament is still only at 19 per cent. "Change is slow," she admits. "We have to put in more measures." She recognises the continued barriers women face in the world of politics; difficulties in getting initially selected and once elected the unfriendly nature of the system towards those with family responsibilities. Aspects such as the hours of parliament; "an issue which is still on the agenda for modernization" and something which is a part of "changing traditions."

What does Meg Munn think of the recent media comparisons of Foreign Minister Margaret Beckett's dress sense to that of Condoleezza Rice? "It's annoying" she says calmly refusing to be defeated by the hostilities of the press. "Women's style of dress is always commented on. With men, I guess it's more difficult since they're always in suits. But we continue to do the jobs we do and Margaret Beckett is an extremely experienced individual." She speaks warmly of the Cabinet minister and defends her against the 'lack of style' comments. "She's the first female politician to be in the role of Foreign Minister and Margaret Beckett is a role model for younger women. She deals with important international issues. We shouldn't be diverted from this."

So would Munn describe herself as a Feminist? "Absolutely!" she says with clear enthusiasm, not hesitating for a moment and demonstrating her passion for the job. For Munn, the source of gender inequality comes from "the ways society is constructed and the traditions which create certain roles for men and women." And Feminism isn't just about the women she claims, "it means greater equality for men too - in areas such as paternity leave, where an increase is needed. She evidently recognizes a change in attitudes towards parenting is necessary from men and women; if women are to secure de facto advancements in the workplace. "I've heard of [male] company directors who will go to pick up their kids and everyone thinks they've gone to play golf, because they



won't tell people...It's not just about the women. It's about a better balance"

I ask her if she thinks its possible for men and women to ever be equal. Predictably, she is diplomatic with her reply; "It depends what you mean by equal. Equality doesn't mean the same. Take businesses for example -there is evidence to show the way in which men and women start up a business is different. This isn't a problem, as long as they both have the same opportunities." She sees it to be inevitable that women will end up "taking on responsibilities for caring - because they physically have children. This is why we need to ensure they have support for their own life and shouldn't end up undergoing financial penalties as a result. They need to be treated fairly and not discriminated against."

With her being so passionate about issues of gender equality, does she always want to remain Deputy

Minister for Women? No she says. "I'm privileged to be an MP and right now I'm involved with an area I really care about." But she'd be happy if asked to contribute to the government in other Ministerial areas; such as those to do with "... social welfare and enterprise - I'm interested in small businesses and their development in the economy." Or alternatively, if she returns to the backbenchers, Munn claims she would equally enjoy the constituency work. "I'd be happy to continue working for Sheffield Healey and hope they'd be happy to continue to elect me."

So, what message does Munn have to those sceptics, who see her current Ministerial role as unnecessary, as women have achieved legal equality? "Look at the measures," says Munn. "They have made a significant difference and on a day to day basis, women may not feel unequal - especially young women...but there are still issues to be addressed." ■

Erica Gornall and Clare Ashton spoke to Margaret Hodge, Minister of State for industry



Photograph: Liam Chambers

Transcript of interview:

What is your biggest career achievement to date, do you think?

"Oh my goodness, that's completely, utterly and totally impossible. There are loads I'm proud of. I'm proud as a

woman, that I hope that I've helped break the ground for others. I've got four kids, that are the most important things in my life and I have to balance my life between them and pursuing a political career. I'm really proud of stuff I did when I was a councillor in Islington. I'm proud of the stuff I did as Children's Minister. I developed the curriculum for nursery education, I started the SureStart programme. I'm proud I saw through the legislation on disabilities and discrimination, that was a really important move. I did all the policy work around the welfare reform proposals that are being given their second reading in parliament as we speak."

You had a very different education from your children. You said earlier in your speech that your children go to comprehensives. You went to a half fee-paying, half grammar school ("direct grant") which is different to what you sent your children to. What made you do that?

"I just passionately believe that education is a central way of equality of opportunity and so I'm totally committed to the comprehensive ideal. I always say that I would have never denied my children the privilege of a state education."

So what do you think about Ruth Kelly and her decision?

"Oh, people have to take personal decisions around their own children. What is really difficult, and I feel this passionately as well, is that my kids had a really tough time at school with their mum as a politician, with teachers raising things at school. There were times when my kids literally couldn't get out of the front door because we had a whole lot of 'Mail on Sunday' journalists outside. If you want a representative group of people in a democracy representing you in parliament, we have then got to distinguish people from their private and their public life. There is clearly a public interest issue where what you say is different from what you do, and there's clearly an issue about that and that's legitimate but this absolute hounding by the 24/7 media. Politicians are absolutely vital for democracy. If we want to claim to believe in democracy, we also have to value the people and the processes that we have to articulate and enable that."

Moving away from Ruth Kelly, you talk about inclusiveness. Do you think it's right that there are private and state schools that are based on the ability to pay because if you want equality of opportunity, everyone should technically have the same access?

"I'll tell you what my approach to this is. I think we want to have equality of

opportunity. The way to achieve that is to raise what we spend in state schools and make every state school as good as, if not better than any school in the country. And rather than waste endless energy on the politics of envy, I'd rather raise the game in the rest of the world. I think we have done a lot towards that. The standard of schools now, compared with when we came in 10 years ago are fantastically higher. We've got a long, long way to go but still. 8 year olds now are much more comfortable with literacy and numeracy."

You made a comment that 8 out of 10 white people would vote for the BNP (the British National Party). And there was quite a lot of debate earlier in the year whether we should allow more radical speakers, such as the BNP to speak in a public forum.

"I would never share a platform with someone from the BNP, but I think we have to recognise that the challenge from the extreme right today is very very different from what it was. The way that the BNP are no longer skin-heads talking about violence, it's smart, well-suited men, most of them. And they're into community politics. The party is racist but the people who vote for it are not necessarily. For all sorts of complicated reasons, immigration being still very high, they are enticed into what is an absolutely abhorrent racist set of policies. What I

sat outside the polling station at the May elections, I was on my own with about four BNP people there. I'm an immigrant and I'm Jewish, and they were just absolutely disgusting and racist."

It's Women's Week at the LSE. What do you think is the main reason for the lack of representation of women in parliament?

"Hours. I think it is still really difficult to balance your life. I didn't get it until I was 50 when my youngest was 13. I think it is still a terribly terribly macho environment, they shout at each other, it's very confrontational and adversarial. I always notice when I chair a select committee, in my early days in parliament that we had more women in that select committee than men and it was completely consensual. And although we were different political parties, the way in which we did our politics was much more deliberative and much less confrontational. There's still a prejudice [against women], but it's getting better. I was the only one that was asked about childcare when I was interviewed. That was 12 years ago, neither men were asked although they all had children. At the moment politics is in such disrepute, we have to restore confidence in the process of politics, the culture of politics, to bring women in." ■

Sex is not a crime

Sacha Robehmed claims legalising prostitution benefit women who work in the sex industry

Advertised on call cards in phone boxes, waiting for customers on street corners, featured in news stories depicting the latest sex scandal some politician or footballer is embroiled in – we are all faced daily with the issue of prostitution. Mostly we try and ignore this shady aspect of society's underbelly; however the recent Ipswich killings have once again brought attention to the sex industry, highlighting the vulnerability of the 100,000 prostitutes that work in Britain today. It is high time that we accept social responsibility, facing up not only to the existence, but also the permanence of prostitution. Instead of brushing an important issue under the carpet in that peculiarly British fashion, we should deal with it effectively through legalisation.

Whilst we may not agree with people paying for sex, demand for prostitution has in fact grown significantly since the 1990s, fed by an increasing cultural acceptance. A survey of 11,000 men conducted by the British Medical Association showed that while just less than one in 20 men has had sex with a prostitute a decade ago, this has doubled to one in 10 men, a marked difference. This demonstrates how cultural taboos have diminished, as more men are willing to admit to paying for sex.

The demographics have also changed – younger men are now frequenting prostitutes. Men in their twenties are seeing prostitutes as part of their evening entertainment; it's less of a social taboo, and part of people's lives. It is time we recognize that prostitution has become 'normalised' by society. Thus decriminalisation would not represent any lowering of moral standards, but recognition of the industry; the people who work in



Looking for a little evening entertainment?

gives them, and wish to stay in it, or those that have other incentives such as alcohol or drug dependency, and have no other real choice but to prostitute themselves. Either way, the laws only make it more difficult for sex workers, driving them to take rash decisions and spend less time 'vetting' potential clients, thus increasing the risk to themselves. The current laws are nonsensical, create perverse incentives, and expose prostitutes to great danger. Thus there is no actual alternative, but decriminalisation and a regulated sex industry.

Decriminalisation and regulation would mean protecting prostitutes. About 30% of all sex workers in Britain are street prostitutes, the most vulnerable of all. Prostitutes working outdoors are more likely to be taking drugs, with almost two-thirds of streetwalkers claiming this as their main reason for prostitution in a 2001 study published in the British Medical Journal. However rather than demonizing drug-taking prostitutes as a social malice, we should properly address the issue by providing a framework so that women have a choice, a means of exiting the industry should they so wish. Decriminalisation should thus be supported by a strong social welfare scheme with drug and rehabilitation programmes made widely available and encouraged. It is important to note that a lack of such facilities has meant that some women are still operating outside the law in legalised countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, and parts of Australia.

Street prostitutes are also more likely to be subjected to violence from their clients – 83% have experienced client violence, as opposed to 48% of prostitutes working indoors. However, there is still an extraordinarily high risk of experiencing sexual or physical violence for both types of prosti-

tute. More than half of all UK prostitutes have been raped or seriously sexually assaulted, whilst a study by The British Journal of Psychiatry found that nearly seven out of ten prostitutes met the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder, the same as victims of torture and war veterans undergoing treatment.

Legalisation would improve this dire situation in two ways. Firstly decriminalisation, making brothels legal, would get prostitutes off the streets. Secondly, clients would be deterred from harming prostitutes protected by workers' rights and more significantly, now operating within the law and thus under police protection. A study published in the British Medical Journal showed how only 34% of female prostitutes reported attacks against them to the police. Whilst prostitutes are not currently protected from crimes committed against them, legalisation would allow for greater trust between police and sex workers.

The vulnerability of female prostitutes is best demonstrated though by their homicide rate, which is an astonishing twelve times higher than for other British women. As they are living outside the law, police attitudes towards prostitutes tends to negative, there is a notion that 'they were asking for it'. However this is symptomatic of the stigma society at large has against prostitution. A prostitute's life should not be worth less than yours, or mine. Violent crime should not be acceptable to anyone in our society.

Through legalisation, we have the ability to do something about it. Until the debate was raised by the serial killing of five prostitutes in Ipswich in December, the high level of mistreatment towards prostitutes was largely ignored by society, and thus went unchallenged. Prostitutes' vul-

nerability lies in their anonymity. They often enter the industry with disjointed backgrounds and frequently, poor relations with family. This means that should a prostitute disappear, if anyone will notice at all it is likely to be someone within the industry, who would be reluctant to talk to police because of the illegality of prostitution. Decriminalisation would remove prostitutes from the margins



Men in their twenties are seeing prostitutes as part of their evening entertainment, it's less of a social taboo, and part of people's lives.

of society and thus reports of disappearances would be more likely, along with witnesses willing to come forward. This would also act as a deterrent to those who would assume that

they could harm a prostitute, unnoticed by authorities.

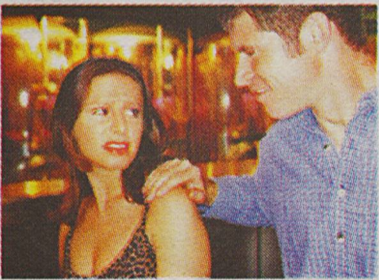
Sex workers are also vulnerable to exploitation not just by clients, but also by pimps. Legalisation would mean that girls would no longer need the protection of a pimp as the law would be on their side, they would have protection from police like other citizens. Moreover, regulation within the decriminalised framework would allow for the expulsion of such degrading aspects of protection.

Allowing prostitution to belong to a seedy underworld is inviting the sex industry to become entangled with other crime. It is undisputed that criminal gangs run brothels for profit and that prostitution is currently strongly linked to crime. Some of the main beneficiaries of the sex industry are currently organised criminals, exploiting prostitutes for their own financial gain. This is manifested in its ugliest form by the white slave trade. Trafficking figures vary wildly among sources, but some have estimated that 60% of all prostitutes in London's back-end brothels have been trafficked, mainly from former Soviet bloc countries. Removing the underground nature of prostitution would make it more difficult for traffickers.

Furthermore, sex workers are demanding their rights. The International Union for Sex Workers insists that prostitutes should have rights, just as workers in other industries do. They want, for example, the right to be able to form professional associations, to receive benefits like any other self-employed worker. They also feel that legal support should be available for those who want to sue should they deem that their labour has been exploited. They are calling for the right to training, and access to retraining, whilst clean and safe workplaces are a necessity. Decriminalisation, with a framework to protecting these rights, would guarantee that sex workers would not be treated like second class citizens in comparison to workers in other sectors.

Minimum standards, in terms of the workplace, and regular health checks, would ensure that prostitution is less risky. Prostitutes are obviously a high risk group for sexually transmitted infections. Legalising the industry and monitoring workers' health, particularly with regard to STI's and making condom use compulsory, would limit transmission. Clients would know that their 'transaction' would be risk free, the spread of venereal disease would be more contained, whilst prostitutes would be far more protected in terms of their health and wellbeing.

Whilst some may propose tougher measures against prostitution in order to tackle the issue, this has only proven to be ineffective in the short term. It is apparent that current laws are ineffective in protecting sex workers, or even to police trying to detect abuses. The sex industry has boomed in recent years, and it is time British society faced up to the fact that prostitution is not going away, rather the opposite. Prostitution needs to emerge from the shadows; we can no longer ignore the human rights of prostitutes and their vulnerability. Decriminalisation of prostitution is the only serious alternative. It can be a workable solution with correct management and enforcement of regulations. In order to combat the risk to prostitutes, remove prostitution from criminal society and give standards to the industry, action in the form of legalisation must be taken now. ■



Legalisation would mean that girls would no longer need the protection of a pimp

it and their right to be treated without discrimination on the basis of their work. Decriminalisation of their trade would remove the notion, perceived by both the general public and prostitutes, that they are second class citizens. Thus legalisation is an issue of human rights.

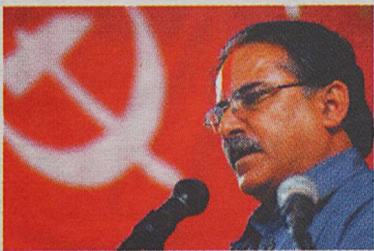
As I see it there is no other solution. The current laws are clearly ineffective. When streetwalkers have been fined for soliciting for example, the only way to earn the money to pay the fine is to prostitute themselves again! Attempts to penalise clients are equally ineffective, instead driving the industry further underground. A tough legal stance is harmful to sex workers, who either like the freedom, money and independence the business

Anarchy in Nepal

Peter Barton examines the ongoing turmoil in India's northern neighbour

Nepal's political transformation has been no less than miraculous but some of its biggest challenges still lie ahead. In 12 months Nepal has changed from a Hindu absolute monarchy which suppressed democracy, imposed press censorship, and caused massive atrocities in the midst of a civil war, into a relatively peaceful, multi-party secular state building a democratic constitution. However this brings them only a little closer to helping their people than in 1995, when the Maoists originally left the coalition Communist government out of frustration and armed themselves. Even after the difficult ceasefire and elections are implemented, the government will still have to deal with the problems of a poverty stricken country rife with discrimination and prejudice. Yet the general optimism and political will pervasive throughout the nation cannot be underestimated. The biggest achievement of the revolution may have been to overcome the resigned Nepali notion of *Ke garne?*—"What can we do?" The people now know they can make a difference.

It is important to realise that Nepal only had 5 years of undisturbed democracy between the protests which forced the King to end his autocratic rule in 1990 to the militarisation of the then National Communist Party (Maoists) in 1995. Nevertheless, it took time for the Communists to go beyond a shotgun-wielding rabble and be recognised as a real force. The massacre of the royal family, under highly dubious circumstances, led to a new unpopular king (who many still feel has the family blood on his hands) taking power. He reversed his brother's decision not to engage with the Maoists militarily, and was given military aid by the US as part of their "war of terror". This continued even after the king suspended elections and installed his own government. In 2005 he went further, calling a state of emergency, and installing himself as chairman of gov-



It took time for the Communists to go beyond a shotgun-wielding rabble and be recognised as a real force

ernment, to "deal with the problem of the Maoists." This forced an odd alliance between the Maoists and the disenfranchised political parties, which led to the successful protests in 2006 amongst growing dissatisfaction. It is because of this friendship of opportunity that neither the Maoist movement nor the new government is really united on what it stands for beyond the undoing of a monarchical



Between the Maoists, the Communists, the Army and the Royal family

coup. Nepali Maoism is not the same as its Chinese namesake—focusing more on issues of caste and gender equality, and arguing for a republic, not complete communism. The government was able to unite to remove the king from any role in the interim government, remove 'Royal' from the name of the government and army of Nepal, secularize the state, and promise a national assembly. With the Maoists recently joining the interim government, it is vital that they show they can act together for positive change.

The current move to accept the Maoists into government is a reluctant one for many. Numerous people have difficulty dealing with the fact that these people once called terrorists and enemies on the radio and are responsible for many civilian casualties, now form part of the government and are helping write the constitution. Similarly, those who still have relatives who were "disappeared" or simply killed by the armed forces also have difficulty forgiving what is now the state army. Therefore there is a need for truth and reconciliation, which the government has paid lip service to but has not yet acted upon. That said, most people understand the urgent need for peace. They have therefore been willing to compromise and will hopefully be able to forgive. However others resent the fact that they have been forced to make those compromises in response to violence.

There is also some doubt about how effectively the Maoists will be able to disarm and deconstruct their system of governance and influence to allow for peace and truly democratic elections. There have been significant moves here as Prachanda, the Maoist Leader, has announced that the People's government and Court have been dissolved. How effectively this will translate to action on the ground remains to be seen. It will be hard to prevent local militia from using fear and patronage to influence local government and voters' decisions. Even after the weapons are gone, the local

hierarchy based on them may still remain. There is a fine balance to be struck, as the Maoists soldiers have sacrificed a lot, and if they feel betrayed by their leaders' compromises they may well turn against them. Already one regional splinter cell of the Maoists have decided to continue fighting for regional autonomy from Nepal, and many more could emerge if Maoist politicians are unable to hold the respect of their Cadres. This may mean that Maoist soldiers will need to be integrated into the Nepali Army to prevent them from becoming leaderless bandits. However until a permanent solution is found, the country will be heavily reliant on the UN backed initiative to lock up firearms—although leaders continue to hold the key.

Having overthrown the King, the country now needs to decide the direction it wishes to take. Whether it is on issues on the future of the monarchy, the development of a constitution or the process of ethnic integration, the interim government needs to come to quick and acceptable conclusions. This is no small task considering the wide range of opin-

ions on these issues. The Coalition government is the only feasible option but it has hard to see how this will be able to act effectively, looking at its constituent parts. The important thing is that they are able to hold the support of the people, who have already learnt how effective protesting can be at implementing change. Inherently the revolution may have filled people with too high expectations, as each person hailed it as a victory despite each having different agendas and policies. Everyone risked their lives for slightly different objectives and the government now has to try and fulfill all of them.

The Process of democratic elections in a country which such geographical variations, and such poor transport system is no small task in itself. There is great difficulty in spreading information to the rural hill regions so that people can make a reasoned choice of party. This is made worse by low levels of education in such areas and a lack of understanding of the idea of democracy and free choice. The government must also show that this is an effective method for the people to affect change, so they



Never a dull moment in Nepalese politics

do not have to resort to protests and strikes as they have in the past.

However all of this is in fact just a prequel to actual governance and the process of helping the people of Nepal. One third of the population live below the poverty and three quarters of them rely on farming, much of which is subsistence, for their survival. Nepal has always had poverty but the conflict has economically crippled the country further by deterring tourism and preventing the development of infrastructure. Maoism tended to have the strongest support in the poorest areas, where most help was needed. Large areas of Nepal remain solely accessible by foot. The NGO's and other development agencies were unwilling to risk sending staff and resources to the areas that needed it most, because of the conflict and also to avoid being labeled as supporting the Maoists. In this way the creation of peace will provide a lot of benefits for the population. It was a sense of war weariness, as much as anything else that drove the protesters last year.

However more needs to be done if the marginalised groups are to be given a fair part in society. Widespread discrimination still remains in practice on caste and gender lines, although prohibited by law. One only need look at the lack of many 'Dalit' (or "untouchables") or female representation in parliament. There is still wide spread incompetence, nepotism and corruption in government and throughout the society. This cannot be solved easily, and needs extensive education to be dealt with as it lies throughout society. However government needs to do more to empower these groups and give them a stake within society, and particularly government. These groups were the foot soldiers of the protests and, unless they see change, they are likely to take to the streets again. The Maoists are currently argu-

Everyone risked their lives for different objectives and the government now has to try and fulfill all of them

ing for land redistribution to help alleviate the poverty of the landless people, this seems unlikely to help the nation's poverty but is likely to prove popular to those without land.

The people have very high expectations of the government, many of which will not be achieved. However they realize the benefits peace alone can bring. The Maoists and the Army had reached a stalemate, with no way of winning, a situation neither side would like to recreate. This provides real incentives to all to make this work, and means no one will want to stand in the way. However the real threat is if the government fails to deliver, and the people are unable to see how voting will make changes to help them in their daily lives.

As the Himalayan Times newspaper puts it: "Unless the [new] political power is exercised exclusively in the interest of the deprived and marginalised, the sacrifices of the martyrs will be in vain". ■

Give Capitalism a Chance

Jen Goldstein responds to last week's article by Aled Fisher

In the last *Beaver*, Aled Fisher wrote in a persuasive vein of the environmental threats posed by world capitalism. As a system, it encourages consumption, indeed over-consumption; consumption depletes resources, and is aimed, indiscriminately, at whatever produces a profit, rather than items of 'real' use. So a consistent green stance dictates that an alternative system to capitalism be found; you can't care about the environment without wanting to pull down this edifice.

I feel that capitalism gets a bad deal here, and suffers for the lack of comparison with the other systems humankind has laboured under in the past. Yes, it encourages consumption, the discovery of 'pointless' new tastes, and, without regulation, can proceed apace paying no heed to its polluting tendencies. But it has also proved remarkably efficient and adaptable allowing billions of people to live long, comfortable, fulfilled lives.

Feudalism, on the other hand, existed on the enforced extraction of produce from a vast labouring class with no rights over its produce. The result: centuries of low growth, oppressed multitudes, glacial technological change. The post-war socialist experiments in Eastern Europe and China were arguably worse. Probably the most environmentally wasteful regimes in history existed in the communist bloc; states that destroyed resources like their inland lakes and air quality in a vain attempt to match Western, capitalist production. Their rejection of globalization, with its accompanying insistence of national subsistence, produced vast inefficiency and pointless waste.

Capitalism has other features besides consumerism. It is based on de-centred, decision-making, personal ownership of property, and the exchange of products and services in a market-place. World history shows

us how it was only with capitalist ownership of land that farmers introduced the changes that enabled a decent surplus to be grown. China's economic renaissance was only possible once an earlier agricultural revolution based on privately owned land had taken place.

De-centred decisions are far superior to the orders of a central planner, as documented superbly in William Easterly's book, "White Man's Burden", which throws a damning light on the aid community's attempts to impose strategies on the developing

greater extent. There is something horribly invasive about someone telling me what the 'real' use-value of a thing is.

When shown a US Supermarket, Nikita Khrushchev was astonished at the variety and freshness of the product, and assumed that some vast agency had planned to put each item there. He could not conceive of the millions of small, market-led decisions that had enabled a US community to be fed so well compared to its Soviet equivalent. A market, or rather thousands of anonymous small markets, achieved brilliantly what the best Russian minds could not plan.

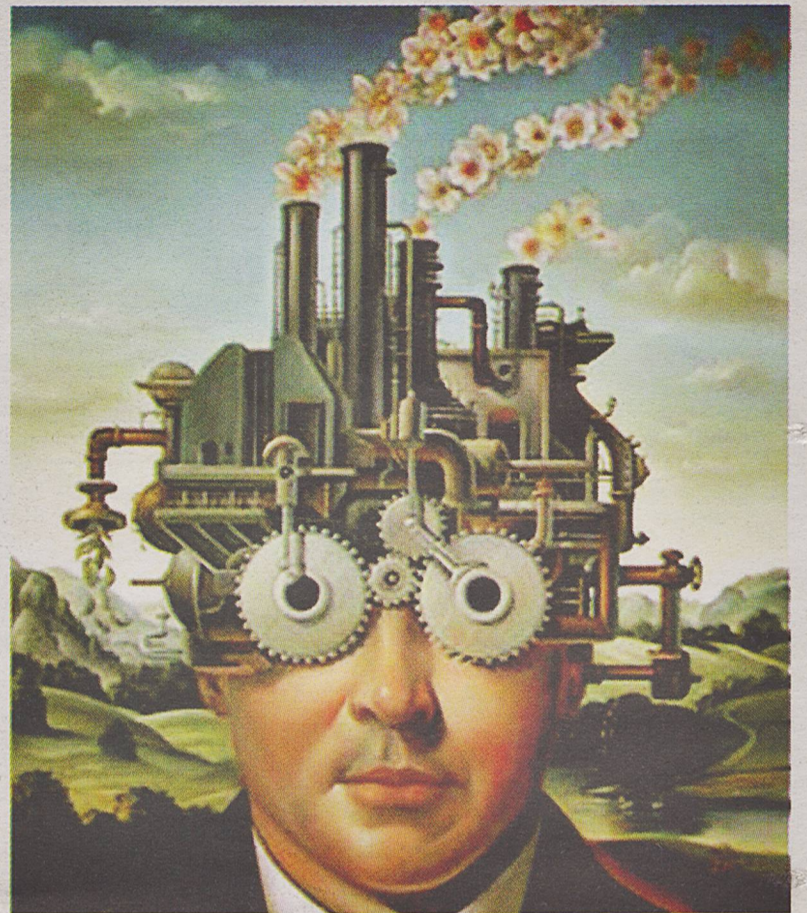
These factors matter for the environment, because a lack of efficiency is its greatest enemy. Without those agricultural innovations, the whole world would have to be one big farm – or starvation would have had to decimate the population. The birth of the environmental movement occurred in the US because where prosperity was at a level high enough to afford such concerns (I date this to Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring*). States care about security first and then welfare – only after that do they lift their eyes to the long-term, and with it the important environmental concerns that Aled raises.

So capitalism has brought us to this point; the other systems have floundered in tyranny and inefficiency. But has it now gone too far? I accept most of the points about unsustainable consumption that were raised, but feel that capitalism is flexible enough to deal with them. The downside of de-centred decisions in an impersonal market is that the environmental consequences of actions can be ignored. Hence the polluting SUV, or CFC-spewing refrigerator. But market mechanisms exist to solve these issues. There should be far higher petrol taxes in the US – if only the political will

Enjoy
Capitalism

Capitalism has proved remarkably efficient in allowing billions of people to live long and fulfilled lives.

world. Only by devolving power to the grass-roots level and relying on personal knowledge and incentives can aid get through. Furthermore, allowing people to make their own choices about consumption – unlike the Socialist or Feudal alternatives – respects their freedom to a far



Daisy production steps up

existed. Carbon trading should be extended. Capitalism has undergone vast changes over the centuries, responding to huge increases in government without losing its great virtues – it can absorb this change as well.

Furthermore, much is already being done by the market. My favourite example is the soaring oil

price. I regard this as good news for the environmental movement, because it sends a powerful signal to every energy user that alternatives must be found. The derided "exchange value" at the heart of capitalism is the best means of signalling that a resource is scarce, and to use less of it. That one simple idea is yet to be beaten by any Utopian equivalent. ■

Burning Issues: cancer sticks

Jennifer Leggett examines the less obvious implications of the smoking ban

As of July 1st smoking in all indoor, public places in England not considered to be 'homes' will be banned. This happens one year and three months after the ban in Scotland, and over three years behind the Republic of Ireland. Given that most public transport, workplaces and museums are already sporting the no smoking logo, it will quite obviously be bars, restaurants and night clubs that are most heavily affected. The personal cost of ignoring the ban? £50. A snip considering the fine payable by the owner of the premises will be £2500. Despite the law having been passed by a landslide vote in Parliament, with approximately 25% of the adult British population lighting up several times a day, the nation is divided.

As a non-smoker myself, in a social group made up predominantly of smokers, the obvious benefits of not smelling like an ashtray after a night out and reducing passive smoking are indeed appealing. However some of the less documented consequences worry me somewhat. Contrary to the vision of hoards of smokers puffing (and shivering) in pub doorways, on visiting Ireland and Scotland one plays

witness to nothing short of heated outdoor marquees where people, united in their rebellious battle against the regime, drink and chat and smoke in harmony. Quite soon these outdoor pavilions become the most sociable place to be in the evening, and are inevitably invaded by the non-smoking companions of those who frequent it. No sooner has the 'no smoking' sign been proudly displayed on the window, have smokers and non-smokers alike vacated the premises in favour of the new 'al fresco' accommodation. So in reality, nothing much has changed from the traditional 'smoke-filled room' pubbing experience, apart from the location in which it takes place. In the first few months of its existence in England it will be fine; I like nothing more than a cold beer outside in the summer. However, as winter roles in I may find following my social group out into the cold to avoid being left alone looking into my empty pint glass somewhat disagreeable.

Issues of security should also surely be considered on the introduction of the smoking ban. Club doormen, especially in the capital, undoubtedly have a reputation for keeping tough entry



and re-entry policies. Now I wonder just what will occur when approximately one quarter of their existing clientele will want to leave the club, most likely on numerous occasions, for a cigarette, and subsequently expect re-entry. Allowing this to happen will surely increase drug smuggling incidents. Forbid it and clubs, and all small businesses in the recreation industry, could risk being put out of business as smokers decide to stay at home. Not to mention, I won't have any dancing partners! Additionally, there is speculation that groups of alcohol-fuelled young adults standing around in the streets to smoke may increase incidents of violent crime as street fights and drunken brawls breakout.

Of course, one can not deny the obvious health benefits it will bring to our nation. Hopefully this will encourage many 'social smokers' to quit altogether, whilst saving smoke-free lungs from involuntary contamination. So whether you give it up or simply stub it out, do it fast. As of July 1st the ban is here to stay and there's nothing any hardened smoker (or skeptical non-smoker) can do about it. ■

Atheist to Christian

What is Christianity?

Interview with an ex-atheist

How far apart are belief and disbelief in God? Josephine Tay finds out that there is a fine line between believing in the existence of God and not, 2000 years after one man hung on a cross.

Immaculately-dressed and sporting an accent that betrays his Oxford-education, he is every part the thoughtful intellectual. Jayant Hoon, post-grad student in Economics at the LSE, has come a long way from where he first began.

It was no easy task reaching that

Free will makes no sense if there's no rough to go with the smooth

destination. Jay was raised atheist because his parents had promised each other not to "indoctrinate" him in any kind of religious teaching.

"They believed it was necessary I come to my own conclusions about God," recalls Jay.

As it was, his parents' religions were mix of the heavyweights of world-religion. Jay's mother was a "lapsed Roman Catholic", while his father was of Hindu and Sikh heritage. So they never spoke of anything that was not of this world – and Jay did not bother finding out if there was indeed more.

A brief fling with Christianity in his Church of England primary school left him unfulfilled. It did not go beyond the superficial and his logical mind was more intrigued by other worldviews of the day.

very open people, very welcoming," laughs Jay.

"I was attracted to the happiness they seemed to exude and it baffled me. I started going to chapel services with them and even read bits of the Bible a few times. It was intriguing – but I still had many doubts and questions.

"I could not get over many intellectual barriers – for one, how could a loving God allow widespread suffering and evil to exist unpunished? And Creation was a tough one for me to get over as well.

"But the one thing I really ran up against was the cautious attitude of the Church towards homosexuality. How could anyone be discriminated against on the grounds of their sexual orientation?" says Jay.

"It was a huge taboo subject, and things came to head when St Hugh's Christian Union attempted to ban my gay friend from attending their events."

More than a year passed, and Jay was still questioning. His search was growing in momentum though – he was getting answers, he was beginning to feel emotionally connected to what he was hearing and reading.

"Free will makes no sense if there's no rough to go with the smooth," he says on the problem of evil. "The Bible is an archaic text that is not easy to mesh with modern rationality. You cannot pick and choose the bits that you like, but that is not the same as reading every single thing in it literally.

"I began to see the church for what it was, not for what it seemed to me to be. It was family-oriented, close-knit, full of joy. It was more well-adjusted than most other organisations I knew. There was no tyranny, no coercion.

Then I realised that many of my



St Hugh's College, Oxford or the road to Damascus?

"By the time I was in secondary school, I was vehemently against Christianity, the Church, and any other form of organised religion," admits Jay.

"Call me simple-minded, but to me then, the Church seemed to fit the bill. And I knew God could not exist."

Jay spent years solidifying those views, growing in hostility toward Christianity – until he arrived at St Hughes College in Oxford University in 2002. Oxford University, renowned simultaneously for its incredibly strong intellectual tradition and its Christian tradition, proved to be the fertile soil in which Jay would begin exploring new perspectives.

"I suppose in university you begin to re-examine your world-views," says Jay. "Academically, you are free to think out-of-the-box, especially in Oxford where you meet all sorts of people with wildly differing opinions from yours and you spend a good number of hours bashing about your views."

As if God had designed it, Jay found himself in with St Hugh's Christian crowd.

"I was actually quite surprised that they were so friendly! They were

past prejudices were wrong."

And one day, it happened for Jay. One and a half years of attending debates, reading, asking questions and intent seeking finally paid off when things fell into place.

"In an instant, everything clicked. One moment I was sitting there with my thoughts, the next moment it was as if a wall had come crashing down in my mind and I was able to see to the other side.

"I knew that God must exist. I still had questions but there were no more doubts. Jesus was the Son of God and he died for me and rose again," says Jay.

"Once you start asking yourself 'what is this, really?' you start coming to conclusions you never thought possible.

"It's important not to be prejudiced, but to ask plenty of questions and be open to the answers received. If you are adventurous, trying reading passages from the Bible, read it with a friend. I was too willing to dismiss things initially, but it's important to see what you're condemning.

"There is nothing to lose from doing that, and you never know, it might appeal you – it did to me." ■

Jude Daniel traces the evolution of Christianity

Driving through the sultry, sticky humidity and choking car fumes, the Maruti minivan splutters and coughs to a halt at the bottom of a hill. Our guide, a lean, moustachioed man dressed in *lungi* and *banian* (traditional South Indian working class clothing), leads us along the steps up the hill. Panting for breath, we follow him as he effortlessly ambles up the slope. When we finally reach the hilltop, a breathtaking view of Chennai (formerly known as Madras) awaits us. This hill (known as St. Thomas' Mount) is the site of the Mar Thoma church. Legends tell of Thomas 'the Doubter', one of Jesus' closest friends, being executed for his faith on this hilltop.

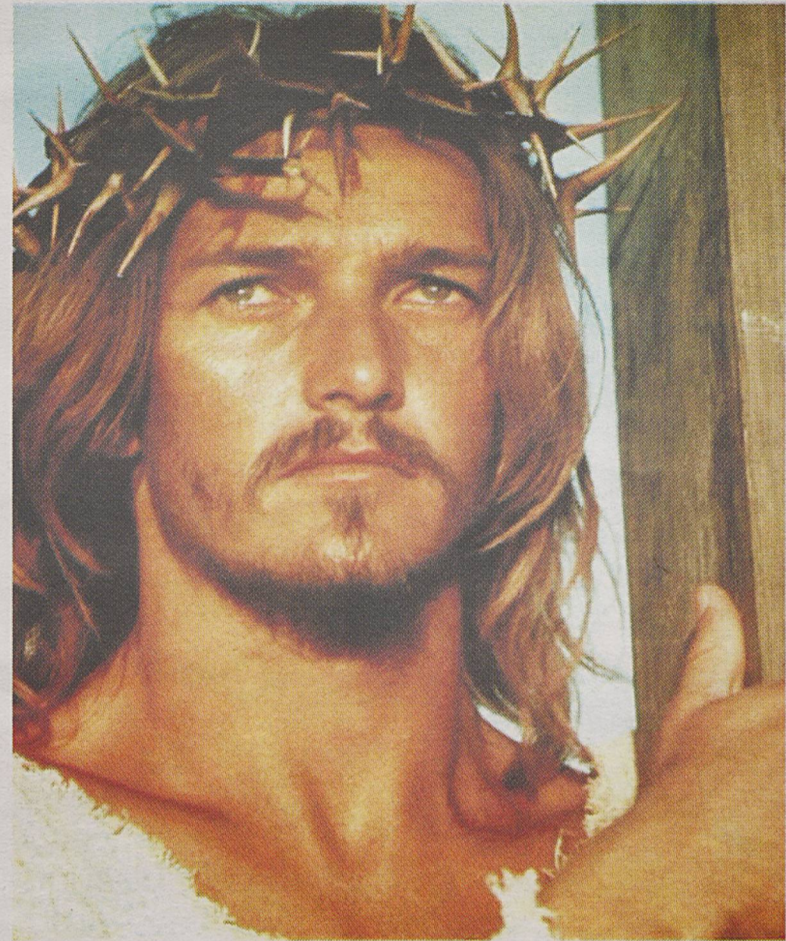
From the tropical surroundings of the Mar Thoma church, we move to the modern urban surroundings of Seoul in South Korea. The journey through the city takes a little over an hour. When we finally get to our destination, we are told that we have arrived just in time to get the last few seats in the main auditorium. As we enter the doors, the grandeur and immensity of the place is absolutely overwhelming. Welcome to the Yoido Full Gospel Church. With 800,000 official members, the church building is under-sized at a meagre 15,000 seats, with another 15,000 accommodated in "annexes" or side-rooms (By comparison, the Royal Albert Hall is tiny with only 5,000 seats).

This story exposes certain misconceptions today regarding Christianity. The first is that it is a 'Western' religion. Originating in the Middle East, the Gospel message was

Christianity is not culture, it is not Western, it is the philosophy of Jesus Christ

taken to people all over the world, including my ancestors in South India. India was home to a church before anyone in the UK had even heard of Jesus Christ. Today the single biggest church in the world is not in the UK or the US, but in South Korea. Koreans are also the biggest source of Christian missionaries. The fastest growing church is in China, despite the fact that Christians are withheld equal religious freedom and privileges if they are not part of the state-run religion.

Another misconception is that Christianity is a culture. Some think it is about going to church, about singing songs, about generally making a fool of yourself in sombre surroundings and then going back to normal



Christ's message is what matters

life again. Or maybe it's about the art, the history, the buildings with stained-glass windows. Accounts of Jesus' life do not mention him indulging in any of these activities. He most certainly did not separate his life into a personal "religious" life, and a public "secular" life. He criticised the religious leaders of his time because they were dedicated to religious ritual. His message to people was that they should seek to know God and not just blindly follow rites and rituals like their leaders did. Rituals are fine, singing is alright, even shouting Hallelujah is not a problem, but there needs to be a real relationship with God first, and everything else is just a prop.

Jesus enraged the religious leaders further with his teaching that God did not live in buildings, such as the Temple. His message was that God is with us wherever we go; on the hills, in the valleys, in the cities and out in the countryside. Architecture and art may be Christian, but it is not Christianity.

Having spent most of my life in India, I would strongly object to being told that I am anything but Indian in culture. My language is Hindi, my food is Tamil, my way of thinking is Dravidian, my hero is Gandhi. I even support the Indian cricket team (pos-

sibly the only team more depressing to its supporters than England). My faith and my culture are distinct, I am Christian and Indian. Gandhi said, "I consider western Christianity in its practical working a negation of Christ's Christianity." He had noticed the distinction between culture and Christ in the British establishment of the time, between what was considered "western Christianity", and the real deal, Christ's message.

What is Christianity? Christianity is not culture, it is not Western, it is the philosophy of Jesus Christ, a philosophy of love.

Jesus claimed to be God. He asked that his followers be completely devoted to Him, even to the point of leaving their closest families if necessary. He warned them that many of them would face death for his sake. If it was a hoax, it must be the most cruel deception possible. It is certainly not the claim of someone who simply wants the world to get along a bit better, to generally be nice to each other.

If his claim was true, then it follows that everything else he said needs to be considered the truth. Jesus gave his disciples two commands, to love God and to love one's neighbour (the people around us). Jesus' portrayal of love sometimes reminds me of the story of Prometheus, one of the immortals in Greek mythology. It is said that he stole fire from the Gods and brought it down to man. Zeus was enraged, and sentenced him to a most horrific punishment. He was to be chained in the Caucasus, where a bird would come and eat his liver each day for thousands of years. I believe Prometheus must have been in love with a mortal; the only thing that could have driven him to court such inevitable torment. Christ paints God in the same way, being totally besotted with us as humans, and willing to do anything to gain our love, to win us back to him and spend eternity with him. And this is the way we are to love God and those around us.

Christianity is about the Gospel message. It is a tale of a passionate love, of deep pain and partition, and of reconciliation and joyful celebration. ■



Yoido Full Gospel Church

Mass Persecution

Peter Willis asks how far abuse of Christians can go?

Many believe the church is in decline. This has certainly been the case in many countries in Western Europe and even North America. However, each year just under 3 million people around the world become Christians. This represents an annual growth of around 2.3% per year which is just above the world population growth rate. This growth has caused the number of Christians in the world as a share of the world population to rise from 33.7% to 33.9% between 1970 and 1996. Given the decline of the church in the West, this is due to the church's phenomenal growth in other parts of the world.

On the 15th September last year the Pope made controversial comments on Islam. Whatever your view on what the Pope said, it sparked a major backlash on many Christians throughout the Islamic world. Churches were fire-bombed in the West Bank of Palestine and Indonesia and elsewhere, as Muslims throughout the world came onto the streets to protest. This understandable reaction of a minority of extremists does not reflect on the majority of Muslims. However, as a result many unconnected Christians personally suffered (many of whom are not Catholic but just happen to live in a Muslim country) from this backlash. This is a high profile example of the day-to-day experience of many Christians worldwide.

As a result of persecution many Christians face a difficult choice of whether to stay in their own country or to leave seek asylum in the West. As you would imagine many Christians are choosing to leave places like the Palestinian-controlled areas but, nevertheless, many are choosing to stay. Why would they do this you might ask? Brother Andrew, who delivered Bibles behind the Iron Curtain, sheds some light on this. He says that "if all Christians were to leave, who would stand up for Christian belief in peace?" In his recent book *Lightforce*,

he reveals the peace efforts of both Israeli and Palestinian Christian pastors in the region.

They encourage their members to make "their house, a house of peace" and then take the Christian message of peace into their communities. One such initiative is *Musalaha* (Arabic for reconciliation). This brings both Israeli and Palestinian Christians (despite massive cultural and belief differences) together.

He is a man who has been imprisoned or on the run for more than a decade, tortured, beaten, crippled, urinated on and the list goes on, all for his faith. However despite all of this he is not bitter about his experience.

He says (quoting the similarly persecuted Apostle Paul) "for me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Here he is not saying he wishes he was in heaven dying a martyr's death but

rather he simply cannot choose between continued life on earth or the glory of heaven. Of his persecutors he says this: "God is my witness that through all the tortures and beatings I've received I have never hated my persecutors. Never. I saw them as God's instruments of blessing and his chosen vessels to purify me and make me more

like Jesus." And asked of his time in prison he says this: "The people who really suffer are those who never experience God's presence." His utmost humility and endurance in the face of such persecution is an amazing inspiration for me personally, and for many other Western Christians.

To people like me he requests that we "don't pray for the persecution to stop! We shouldn't pray for a lighter load, but a stronger back to endure." He argues that were the persecution of Christians in China to stop, the Chinese church would, like the Western church, fall into decline. However, he says the following to Western church: "You may not be beaten or imprisoned for your faith, but I am convinced each Christian will have a cross to bear in his or her life. In the West it may be ridicule, slander or rejection."

It is clear that Christians suffer for their faith around the world. But I find myself agreeing with Brother Yun that Christians like myself ought to be praying for a "stronger back to endure".



Church vandalism: a sign of the times?

Through meetings, they can see that their 'enemy' is actually a real person with a family, hopes and dreams very much like their own. From such initiatives these Christians try to bring the communities of both sides together. Brother Andrew also uses his influence to regularly meet leaders of *Hamas* and *Hezbollah* to discuss spiritual issues including peace during his many visits to the Middle East. You might say that there is still conflict in the Middle East so these Christians have failed but nonetheless they are trying to bring the two sides together in whatever ways that they can, despite being a persecuted minority in both countries.

And the Christian experience in places like China? Here there is actually a state sanctioned church. However many Christians choose to be part of the underground church where things like the way they worship, pray and read the Bible is not dictated by party officials. One such Chinese Christian is Brother Yun. In his book, "The Heavenly Man", he reveals the extent of torture and persecution many face in China for their

Christian to Atheist

Interview with an ex-Christian

How far apart are belief and disbelief in God? Charlie Samuda discovers that atheism can be a revelation.

Christine Whyte is a fire-brand socialist with a bookshelf weighed down with *The Selfish Gene*, *The Blind Watchmaker*, etc. but it wasn't always that way. She used to go to church, study theology and help out at Sunday school. The path to atheism is long and hard, but could it be worth it?

"My parents were never religious,



I don't think it was a lack of belief, my dad's told me he does believe in a higher power. Generally they were of the do-as-you-would-be-done-by school of philosophy."

Christine's interest in history and classical philosophy led to an interest in theology and church history.

"I started studying for a GCSE Christianity in my lunch hour at school, I was fascinated by the influence and rich history of the different Christian churches."

This interest led naturally to attending a local church. Christine describes it as a typical suburban Scottish church full of families, the minister leading charity initiatives for the Third World and local community projects. Her parents were pleased that she was devoting her time to something worthwhile, but worried about her losing out on other experiences.

"When I decided to help out as a Sunday School teacher, I really did it through a love of the children. The church was such a great experience for the whole family, a social, educational and spiritual experience all-in-one."

Christine never had any flash of light, or grand revelation, but felt comfortable with the idea that God existed, that there was something more to life than the material.

"Nobody really challenged me on my beliefs while I was at school, but leaving school I began to meet people

from a range of different backgrounds. I started to have to justify my faith, and examine its basis."

This intellectual discourse led to a revelation, Christine's base for faith

I started to have to justify my faith, and examine its basis.

in God and Christianity had a lot more to do with her belief in the wonders of the natural world and the joy of human company than belief in the supernatural.

"I was constantly reassessing what I felt and believed about the world around me. What had appealed to me about the church was the sense of community and the celebration of human life. That doesn't depend on belief in a higher power, I guess it has more to do with belief in yourself."

Christine's interest in science also led to her to the works of prominent atheists such as Richard Dawkins and Stephen Jay Gould.

"A lot of people see Dawkins in particular as cynical and soul-less. When I read his work, I am constantly amazed by the complexity and wonder of life on this planet. Human life and society are hugely complex, because people are complex."

The change from church-going Sunday School teacher to scientific humanist took some time, Christine had no moment of particular revelation. Rather, a process of intellectual interrogation led to a more nuanced belief system.

"I can understand the joy people feel in faith and in their relationship with others of that faith. But I would ask everyone to constantly question themselves, never take anything as read, and definitely don't let anyone tell you what to think. If you can critically evaluate why you think the way you do, you will be much happier and more confident in yourself."

Christianity Timeline

What happened and when?

33AD

Death and resurrection of Jesus

1st c.

First use of 'Christianity' by Ignatius

4th c.

The City of God, Augustine



431

Council of Ephesus

451

Council of Chalcedon

6th c.

Consolation of Philosophy, Boethius



11th c.

Great Schism

1196

The First Crusade

1265-74

Summae Theologiae, Aquinas

16th c.

Reformation



1625

De jure belli ac pacis libri tres (On the Laws of War and Peace), Grotius

1743

a set of "General Rules" for the "United Societies," which were the nucleus of the Methodist Discipline, Wesley

1781

Critique of Pure Reason, Kant

1859 *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, Darwin



1870

First Vatican Council

1932 - 1968

Church Dogmatics (Germ. "Kirchliche Dogmatik"), Barth

1962 - 1965

Second Vatican Council

1976

The Selfish Gene, Dawkins

2003

The Da Vinci Code, Brown



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The Week's Previews

Swiss Chocolate for all!

Monday 29th January, 5pm
Location: to be announced.

LSE SU Swiss Society Chocolate tasting event sponsored by Lindt: Entrance for members free, non-members pay only £1. There will be loads of free chocolate and a free lottery with prizes related to chocolate. We will take you on a discovery of taste and culture of Lindt's Excellence Origins and their latest addition to their range of finest dark chocolate tablets. You will learn about the process of chocolate making and taste distinctive cocoa flavours coming from Cuba, Madagascar or Ecuador.



Scandinavian Society Pub Crawl

Thursday 25th January, from 7 pm
Location: starting at The Three Tuns

New Year, new term, new resolutions... New Pub Crawls!

In the best Scandinavian tradition we offer you our first pub crawl of the year. We promise you a great ambience, good (and cheap) beer, more or less civilized company, as well as a fun and challenging Nordic pub-quiz!

We'll be starting off with a few calm warm-up drinks in the Tuns (trying to look steady while still on campus), and from there embark on our expedition to various pubs around the area. The night will end in style at The Langley, dancing and drinking the night away...

So get ready (you'll need your strength, mental and physical), hope to see you there! You probably know who to look for, but if you don't: tall and blonde.

"Tea & Knowledge" on China's private sector

Title: Implications of China's developing private sector
Speaker: Dr Kerry Brown
Wednesday 24th January, 3pm
Location: G1

With a case study of a Chinese motorcycle company - Lifan, Dr Kerry Brown, director of Strategic China Ltd, will talk about the implications of having a developing private sector in China, its impact on the global economy, and the importance of its success to China's future development.

Dr. Kerry Brown is a Director of Strategic China Ltd, one of the first UK companies to assist private Chinese companies and entrepreneurs to come to the UK and also a Associate Fellow on Asia Programme at Chatham House, with seven years of working experience in Asia, both as a businessman and a diplomat. He has published articles in over 10 journals internationally and has spoken on BBC World and the BBC World Service about China.

Women's week

Monday 9am: H103 LGBT Coffee Morning - Free coffee and pastisseries.
3:30pm: H605 confidential surgery with Daphne Josselin, LSE Advisor to Women students.
4pm: D302 "Feminism and Islam: an unlikely alliance?" Presented by Islamic Society and Feminist Society
6pm: H616 "Stop China's forced abortions and release Chen Guang Cheng"
Speaker event on the One Child Policy in China
8pm: Women's Quiz Night with drinks discounts. Topsy Beaver Bar, Rosebery Hall.

Tuesday 1pm: D302 Conservative Party Vice Chairman Justine Greening MP hosted by LSESU Conservative Party
7pm: D311 Film Screening: 'The Colour Purple' - Golden Globe winner starring Whoopi Goldberg. Refreshments provided.

Wednesday 1pm: D109 Screening: 'Moolaadé' addressing the practice of female circumcision in Africa.
5:30pm: G25 Film Screening: "Tale of the Night Fairies" addressing the commercial sex trade. Part of LSESU India Week 2007.
5:30pm: D702 Women in Politics LSESU Labour Society welcomes Labour Party Chair Hazel Blears MP.

Thursday 10am: S50. Gender equality focus group - come and help LSE draft its first Gender Equality Scheme.
5pm: 'Love Yourself' party hosted by the Body Shop. Please email su.womens@lse.ac.uk to reserve a place.
5.30: Z325 "Negotiating safer sex?" hosted by LSESU Feminist Society and LGBT Society
6.30pm: D1 Public Lecture - 'Illegible Rage: Reflections on Young Women's Post Feminist Disorders'
6:30pm: S75 Speaker Event - "Inequality in Journalism: women on the same page as men?"
8pm: Debate - "This house would implement a gender-based quota system for election candidates" hosted by LSE Debate Society

Friday 3pm: S50 Cancer Awareness: be Alert not Alarmed. The rise of cancer in the UK and how women can protect themselves against breast cancer
5pm: S75 The Poppy Project give a presentation on the fight against sex trafficking /15% off Crush entrance for all women - reflecting the current female graduate pay gap!! www.lsesu.com/womensweek



One World Week 2007 at Warwick University

The World's Largest Student-run International Event

One World Week (OWW) takes place at the University of Warwick in England each January. It is a nine-day event with over 140 different events, aiming at celebrating the cultural diversity of over 120 nationalities. It is organised by a team of over 240 student volunteers and is recognised as the World's Largest Student-run International Event with over 22,000 spectators and over 1,000 performers.

One World Week began its life as a one-day event and has since expanded into a nine-day celebration of ethnic diversity through the mediums of speech, sight and sound. The event is also a registered actor within UNESCO's decade for a Culture of Peace, and, being a not-for-profit organisation, the vast majority of the 140 different events on offer are run completely free of charge for all visitors. In addition to this international renown and popularity, the celebration is also held in high esteem by former UN Secretary General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Gali, who in previous years has declared it to be the 'most important international student festival'.

One World Week celebrates the world's mosaic of cultures through the four elements of **Forum, Festival, Arts and Sports**:

One World Forum, the intellectual element of OWW, hosts conferences on a variety of current international affairs coinciding with this year's theme *Progress: Our Shared Responsibility*. Confirmed speakers at this year's event include **Professor John Hume** (Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1998), **Ms Kate Allen** (Director, Amnesty International UK) and **Mrs Wijdan Salim** (Acting Minister for Human Rights, Iraq). One World Forum also consists of a **Film Festival** screening Oscar-nominated films, directly related to the issues discussed in the Forum talks that take place throughout the Week.



Meanwhile, the action runs constantly throughout the days and long into the nights through the **One World Festival**, with passionate entertainment ranging from the glamorous catwalk of the **Fashion Show** and the **World Party** to the raw energy and enthusiasm of the **Carnival** and the international cuisine on offer through the **International Food Festival**. Other highlights will include One World Week's own version of **Eurovision** and special **themed nights** in the **University of Warwick's Student Union**, such as **SensAsian**, this year featuring none other than the international superstars **Rishi Rich** and **Juggy D**.



One World Arts, the creative element of OWW, is set to showcase its largest ever portfolio of exhibition, creativity, music and drama. The most awaited events are the annual **World Music Concert**, a **Graffiti Exhibition**, and **theatre performances** including *Whodunnit?* by Neil Harrison and *The Island*, set in South Africa's Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was held hostage.

One World Sports consists of a wide variety of competitions and workshops including football, water-polo, cricket, and a highly anticipated **Pro-evolution** football computer game tournament. Workshops are also held on swimming, water polo, lacrosse and even **capoeira**, a unique fusion of music and martial arts, will teach students how to practice martial arts to the sound of music.



With a goal to increase awareness and appreciation of the 120 different nationalities and cultures present on the Warwick campus, One World Week is a magnanimous event and is considered to be the pinnacle of entertainment at the University of Warwick, while raising key values that will remain with visitors long after the celebrations are over.

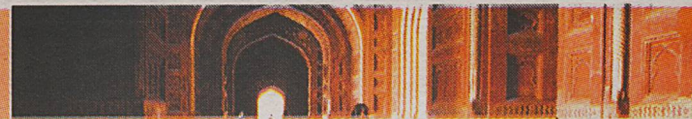
One World Week 2007 will take place during the 19th - 27th January.

www.oneworldweek.net

oww@sunion.warwick.ac.uk

the Beaver Listings

www.lsesu.com/whatson



TUES 23/01

H216

8:30 CU prayer meeting
Chaplaincy EVERYDAY

9:10 Catholic Pro-life
Group meeting Café Nero

11:00 India week Super
Sixes Cricket Tournament
Old Gym, Old Building

12:30 India week Vasant
Panchmi Ganesh Puja S75

13:00 India week Super
Sixes Cricket Tournament
Old Gym, Old Building

14:00 Yoga Ashtanga Yoga
Badminton Court

15:00 CSSA Chinese
Classes – B-class D206

17:30 Islamic Eid Dinner on
a boat (ticket price 10 pounds,
on sale on Houghton Street)
Temple Pier, Victoria
Embankment, Westminster

18:15 Yoga Intermediate
Ashtanga Yoga D002

19:00 Debate Weekly meet-
ing D302
Dance Ballet (Beginners)

19:15 India week Inter-
Faith Dialogue - "With a
Muslim President, Sikh Prime
Minister and an Italian-born
Catholic as the Head of the
largest political party; Is India
the icon of global religious
tolerance?"; Hong Kong
Theatre

19:30 Labour Hillary Benn
talk, Secretary of State for
International Development
TBC

20:00 Dance Ballet
(advanced) H216

WED 24/01

12:00 India Week Saree
Demonstration Quad

12:30 India Week
Educational Lecture -
"Fundamental Concepts in
Hindu Thought" H103

13:00 Catholic Mass
Chaplaincy
Green party weekly meeting
H104
Hindu Vedic lunch D211
Anime & Manga drawing
class and gaming session
Z129

Accounting homework help
session G107

Student Action for Refugees
Weekly meeting A283

Go Weekly meeting
V101

India week Chaat Stall
Quad

14:00 Pakistan Weekly
meeting U203

Opera Weekly meeting
H104

Yoga Intermediate Hatha
Yoga D702

China Development Tea &
Knowledge: Implications of
China's developing private sec-
tor G1

15:00 Maths and Stats
Homework help session
Z332

Chess weekly meeting K05
CSSA Chinese Classes – B-
class

16:00 Bridge Weekly meeting
G107

CSSA Chinese Classes – I-
class H206

17:30 India Week Movie
Screening - "Tale of the Night
Fairies" G25, 20
Kingsway

18:15 Politics Discussion
forum / meeting H103

18:30 India Week Panel
Debate - "Hi-Tech India,
Challengers at the Gate? Will
India build on its lead in tech-
nology or lose out to China
and the new players in global
services?"; New Theatre

19:00 Swing Dance
Improvers Classes G108
Classes cost £2.50/£3.50 (mem-
bers/non-members)

THU 25/01

11:00 Australia and New
Zealand Weekly meeting D9

13:00 SU UGM Old
Theatre

India Week Interactive
Spiritual Lecture - "The
Hidden Glory of India"

15:00 CSSA Chinese
Classes K05

17:00 AIESEC Weekly
meeting H104

17:15 Interfaith forum
Holocaust Memorial Day,
Address by Simon Keyes,
Director of St Ethelburga's
Centre for Reconciliation and
Peace

17:30 Yoga Hatha Yoga
Badminton Court
Argentinean Tango classes
K05

18:00 People and planet
weekly meeting H103
Sikh-Punjab music class
S78

Dance Intermediate hip hop
class S75
Filipino Tagalog lessons
G107

continued

India Week Art of Living
Workshop - Inaugural Event
D602

Visual Arts Life drawing
class D206

18:15 Catholic Bible-sharing
Group Chaplaincy

19:00 Debate Workshop
D302

Dance Hip Hop (advanced)
H202

Scandinavian Pub crawl
Start in the Three Tuns
Nightline Beat the Blues in
support of Nightline, Quad

20:30 Dance Hip Hop (begin-
ners) Badminton courts, Old
Building

21:00 India Week Retro
Bollywood Party SOHO
Spice, 124-126 Wardour Street
European Euro Trash II
Underground Bar

FRI 26/01

12:00 India Week South
Asia Fair Quad

13:00 Yoga Intermediate
Acrobatic Yoga D702

14:00 CSSA Chinese
Classes – A-Class Y115

15:00 GO Weekly meeting
K05

16:00 CSSA Chinese
Classes – O-class S221

17:00 Hindu Gita Classes
D11

18:15 India Week Movie
Screening - Lage Raho
Munnabhai D602

19:00 Dance Ballet Class
S75

20:00 - ...Crush

MON 29/01

12:00 Knitting workshop
Quad

16:00 CSSA Chinese
Classes – B-class K05

17:00 Swiss Chocolate
tasting event tbc

19:00 Swing Dance
Beginner's Classes D502
Dance Street Jazz G1

19:15 India Week Masti
Ke Rang Cultural Show
Peacock Theatre, Portugal
Street

22:00 India week Masti
Ke Rang - After party Sway
Bar, Holborn

QUAD OFFICE HOURS

Aled Fisher, Environment and Ethics Monday, 12PM

Anushka Shenoy, General Course Tuesday 1-2pm

Fadhil Bakeer Markar,

International Students Tuesday, 1-2PM

Ali Dewji, Communications Tuesday, 4-5PM

Emma Hallgren, Students with Disabilities Tuesday 1-2PM

Michail Retsinas Mature and Part Time Students
Wednesday, 4-5PM in D302

Jimmy Tam, General Secretary, Wednesday 12-1PM

Joel Kenrick, Treasurer, 2-3PM, Thursday

Alex Finnegan, LGBT

Thursday, 2-3PM (in office of Alex Vincenti)

Adrian Beciri, Returning officer, Thursday, 2-3PM

James Caspell, Postgraduate Officer

Thursday, 3-4PM

Zoe Sullivan, Women Thursday 10-11 in D703

Louise Robinson, Residences Thursday, 12-1PM

Alexandra Vincenti, Education and Welfare

Wednesday, 12AM-1PM

Arthur Krebbers, Societies Friday, 1-2PM

Shanela Haque, Anti-Racism, Friday, 11AM-1PM

COMING UP

WEEK 4

Jesus Awareness Week
(JAW) hosted by LSE
Christian Union

WEEK 5

Global Week

WEEK 6

RAG Week

LooSE TV is hosting a
special video making
competition. Those
interested in getting
involved can set up a
society

Punter

Have a flutter on the Froggies



Matthew
JCG
Partridge

This week the Punter gives us the odds on the French elections and Oscar nominations. We get the lowdown on Downing Street and Matthew plans to give UK bookies a run for their money.

The French Presidential election presents one of the largest 'free lunches' available to punters for quite some time. Although you should never rule out a candidate from one of the two main parties, especially when there is an outside possibility of someone like the far right Jean-Marie Le Pen knocking the frontrunner from the first ballot and therefore guaranteeing the other candidate a victory, it is extremely hard to understand why Tradesports.com is quoting a price of (50-56) on Segolene Royal. Her apparent agreement, on a trip to the Middle East last December, with a comparison between Israel and Vichy and an economic programme that is closer to the

1970s, will handicap her campaign considerably, even if the opinion polls put her close to Sarkozy. Her decision to cohabit rather than get married will also make it difficult to reach out to both older and more centrist voters. I would estimate that her chances of winning are no more than 20-25%, making the even money shorting opportunity one of the best on offer.

In terms of the Oscars I think that the best value lies in *Babel* (12-14). Although *The Departed* is an excellent film, the Academy will be unlikely to vote for what is essentially a remake of *Infernal Affairs*. Similarly, *Dreamgirls* lacks

either critical acclaim or blockbuster status. It should also be pointed out that since the 1997 the winner of the Golden Globe for Best Drama has won the Best Picture Oscar half the time. Also, since *Babel* is part of a self-styled trilogy, academy members may be looking to reward *Amores Perros* and *21 Grams* by voting for *Babel*. In terms of acting, both Forrest Whitaker's (73-84.9) and Helen Mirren's (91-95) prices are too high and present shorting opportunities (though in the case of Whitaker you might

want to see if you can get a price in between the current spread).

The conventional bookies offer a few good punts. If you put the hysteria in the press about the 'cash for honours' enquiry firmly to one side, and you remember that a leadership election will take at least two months, William's Hill prices on Blair relinquishing his duties as Prime Minister look attractive. Indeed, if you put an amount of money on June, July, August, September, October and Other in proportion to the odds given (you may need to use a spreadsheet to work the shares out exactly) you should get odds of approximately (2.33/1 or 3.33 in decimal form). Also, the fact that William Hill gives Labour dec-

imal odd of (2.25) to win most seats at the next election, shows that bookmakers do not understand that the Conservatives would have to win the popular vote by several percent to stop the government from achieving a plurality in the House of Commons. I recommend that you give them a sharp lesson in British politics.

Use any advice given here at your own risk and don't gamble what you cannot afford to lose. Columnist(s) may have positions in wagers mentioned. Prices quoted are correct at time of going to press.

Great Debate

Women in sport: Debatable?



Sanch

In the most recent edition of the *Observer Sports Monthly*, I counted two photos of women. With the Australian Open around the corner one would figure these photos would be of the returning Hingis, the dominant Mauresmo or at least the stunning Sharapova...

The photos were of the girlfriends of famous sportsmen.

Throughout the sports pages of the nations press, WAGs are getting more column inches than the sportswomen. So as we celebrate LSE's women week I ask why is it that sportswomen in mainstream sports don't attract the fans, the money and more importantly the competitors like their male counterparts?

In 396 BC the female made her first appearance on the sporting stage. Kyniska, a Spartan princess, won the Olympic chariot race (albeit she was barred from collecting her prize). She was the ancient worlds answer to Kournikova, although she undoubtedly actually had talent, didn't wear a tiny skirt, and wasn't fortunate enough to have a few millions worth of Addidas sponsorship to her name. 1800 years later my idol was born as the first female sports journalist

published. Her name was Dame Juliana Berners and the title of her piece was the questionable "Treatise of Fishing with an Angle." I thought I'd give it a read and although not quite BeaverSports style, after an exhilarating 1000 word introduction I have to admit this girl had some wit.

The press would have us believe that behind every great sportsman is a great WAG, although there is a known negative correlation between the length of the relationship and the sportsman's sporting talent, (Tim (Henman), maybe marriage wasn't the best laid plan?)

Already I am yielding to my own accusations. Enough about men, what about women? Out of my top ten sporting idols, one is female. I can name you practically every premiership player but struggle when it comes to more than one female British footballer. In my office to trade U19 women's football is seen as the lowest of the low.

Sadly the biology argument is not only my starting point but also my main point. I took a test the other day to determine whether my brain was more masculine or feminine. Part of the test was to measure your ring finger and your index finger and calculate the ratio. My freakish finger length apparently proves that I have more of a masculine mind than most females. Slightly freaked out I threw on Bridget Jones, pumped out some Whitney and ate half a box of chocolates.

I am the first to admit I am a competitive sod who loves her sport but why does that make me an anomaly in the eyes of society? There is nothing I enjoy more than beating a boy at his own game? Why is it his game, why is it not our game? Men dominate most sports, even at tennis and athletics which undoubtedly put women on a more level playing field, fan base and salary wise, men still earn a little bit more

and will attract the larger crowd. Why do I get more enjoyment out of beating a boy than a girl? Have I been trained to think men are a better opponent or is it... well a fact.

Women on a whole are less strong than men. Before the feminists among you bite my head off I am not talking about strength of mind, or even the ability to survive child birth or the flu with only mild complaints, I'm talking about physical strength. Women have twenty to thirty times less testosterone than men. One of testosterone's prime functions is maintaining and growing muscle mass. Therefore men are stronger; with this they are faster and more powerful. If a woman can do it, a man can do it faster, throw it further and last longer, the fastest female in the world will barely qualify for the men's heat. The fastest man can say he is the fastest in the world; the woman on the other hand can only dominate half the population with certainty. Is there something in that? The Williams sisters, Navratilova, and even Graf, who as a serve and volleyer had a more powerful and attacking approach to the game, drew more attention than their counterparts. Yes, some of the attention was because they were totally dominant but was it also due to their masculine games. Women have to play like men, why?

Is there more enjoyment in seeing a faster paced and more powerful game? This is not necessarily true. I love the French Open where the male tennis game gets taken down a notch, where it's not all about being 7'7" but shot placement and long rallies. Maybe it is in our nature? Do women lack a certain bite? When I was younger I remember going on court and having a nice chat with my opponent about the new Nike Spring line and then I would bitch worse than Jade Goody in the locker rooms. At the same time my brother

would play cards with his opponents off court and usually end up hospitalising them on court. Generally, is it in the female nature to be as competitive and as aggressive as men? Passion evokes passion in sports.

Here we have come to the chicken and the egg problem, is there a lack of passion because female greats are less accessible than their male counterparts? I would probably get passionate about female footy if I knew anything about it.

So then it is the lack of interest. "I played cricket" gets a surprised response from most. I learnt the sport, I played the sport, I love the sport. That's how it works. However much you force feed a girl MoTD she won't enjoy it until she understands it. When I say understand I don't mean name the starting eleven of every premiership club, I mean the technicalities of the sport. And you can only do that by playing. But females don't get involved because they seem to lack an interest and no one to aspire to. I know few girls who get together and play footy in the park or hit the nets on a Sunday and so why am I surprised that no players come through the system? With lack of players, there is lack of competition and therefore no interest and subsequently no money. To represent England as a woman in a mainstream sports such as football and rugby is significantly easier because there are less people and therefore we respect the players less.

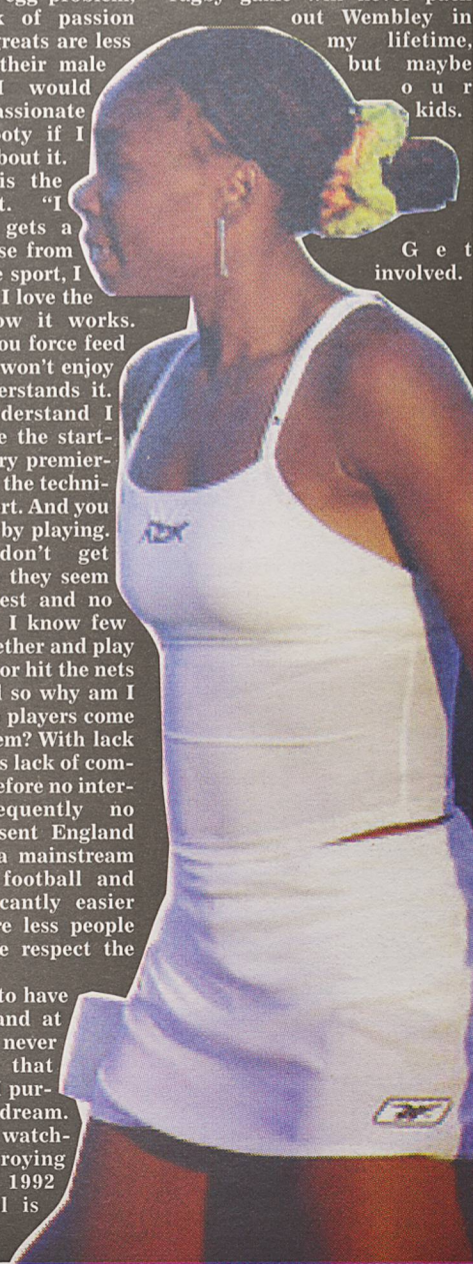
I would love to have played for England at cricket but I'm never going to own that Aston Martin if I pursued that dream. Having said that watching Graf destroying Seles in the 1992 Wimbledon final is

one of the greatest sporting moments of my life.

So this is my plea to girls out there, get out and play, don't care if you are no good, play, understand and fall in love. Ignorance breeds ignorance.

A women's football or rugby game will never pack out Wembley in my lifetime, but maybe our kids.

Get involved.



Sporting Rant

Negative fans are neither nice nor necessary



Josh Heller

Is it ever ok to berate the team you supposedly love? Is that acceptable when you describe yourself as a fan? There are fans that veer from critical to worshipping, but at every football ground on a Saturday afternoon, there are those few fans that do nothing but whinge and complain. Abuse is hurled at the team they claim to "support." Moaning fans like this do not deserve the replica shirts they wear.

There are two types of miserable fans. Some violently shriek at every player giving the ball away and others grimly mutter complaints to anyone who will listen. It seems odd that people would pay £700 to whinge, week in week out about the entire squad. For these people, precious little joy can be squeezed out of the

fleeting ecstasy of a goal scored, knowing as they do that their team is liable to concede at any moment. Insults are meted out to any player not at the very top of his game; no mistake, however small, is overlooked. So embittered are they that the notion of support, let alone simply abusing the opposition, is ludicrous. Should constant whingeing be permitted though? After all, they do pay £700. After forking out the extortionate prices for Premiership games perhaps people should be allowed to complain as much as they like?

Absolutely not. Firstly, it isn't support. Football fans are called many things, indeed they call each other names that I won't disgrace this paper to repeat, but one of their guises is supporters. It is their job. Like Spurs winning the UEFA cup this season and Jose leaving Chelsea in the summer, it is their destiny. They can't escape what they're there for, that is to support. At anywhere other than the sterile corporate boxes at the Emirates stadium,

helping the team win is a fan's duty. Songs must be sung and chants be chanted. At 1-2 down it is not the time to start bemoaning your lack of a decent keeper or any good left sided players, it is time to scream "Come on you Yids!" as loud as possible. The lift given to a team with 33,000 people willing them on is undeniable. How dare an individual try and undo the work of an entire crowd? Particularly counter-productive is the singling out of one player. All the complaining fans harp on at the one player doing especially bad. Confidence is shattered and the spiral of decline is inevitable. People who go to the matches simply to complain can only hurt their team's results.

Also, they can never get any joy from games. I hate going to football as much as the next real fan. We understand that it is not a nice day out or some such nonsense. You're constantly worried that you're going to lose. So scared of the inevitable cheers of joy



Photograph: Corbis

from the opposite end of the ground that the only real contentment comes after the final whistle of a win or if you are 8-0 up. Yet if you're only negative and have no possibility of seeing anything good from your team, you have no possibility of enjoying yourself. So

rare is a good performance from any team but the top four, that some kind of happiness must be squeezed from any good piece of football witnessed, however brief.

A fan may be positive most of the time, but every so often get frustrated and blurt out

something harsh. Yet if you are only negative, if you will only berate the players and manager, you haven't earned the right to. If you'll never sing with passion of how much you adore your team, then you have no right to point out how terrible they are.

Women's Hockey

Women's Hockey does a Rocky



Lol Venables

LSE 2
KCLSM 2nds 2
Fortress Battersea

All good things must come to an end (ask Jose Mourinho or Nelly Furtado), but this isn't to say that the LSEWHC has given up its Arsenal (2003-04)-esque form. After an unbelievable battle with King's medics on Wednesday, we emerged with our unbeaten record intact.

Let the scene be set; the dark, hurricane-carrying clouds parted briefly before 3pm and the sun popped out. This in itself was remarkable because it rains or snows every Wednesday we play down at Battersea Park without fail. We arrived ridiculously early to this crunch fixture, obviously following the Aston Villa mantra of 'Prepared'. A bit of dynamic stretching, a fag for Parfitt, a discussion of how having the Baywatch theme tune on in the dressing room would psyche us up no end, and we were ready. It was all getting a little tense...

The ULU league we inhabit is annoyingly balanced between two teams every year, one being us, the other obviously being King's Medics this

season. This means victory would be perfect, and a draw essential if we were to hold onto our aim of double promotion. By the end of the first half our dream was hanging in the balance; a rare defensive error had resulted in King's taking a 1-0 lead.

The score line was quite a fair reflection of the game up to this point, after a slow, post-xmas pudding start to the game. The Medics were also physical, vociferous and had some very big hitters all over the pitch. We completely lost our width, which is usually our strength and took time to adjust to their pacy and unusually tall forwards (surely they should be on a netball court?) As a rule, we play attacking hockey with the left and right backs especially pushing up high, but this team were a different kettle of fish to a slow and jewellery-clad Pompey side, for example. However, it wasn't long before we sussed them out and the last fifteen of the first was ours for the taking. Only a TRIPLE save from the King's keeper kept them in the driving seat. She was shit hot.

We knew we couldn't lose this momentum and the half-time talk was the most positive and hockey-related so far this season. King's were going to prove a real test so we decided to tackle them in pairs and try and stifle them in the mid-field, where most of their defence-splicing attacks had begun. We took faith from a very strong and solid first half

performance from sweeper Verity and knew we had the firepower up-front to overcome the deficit. Having said this and shown to each other how much we wanted the result, their second goal was a real blow. They seized upon another mix-up with our mids failing to track back, and 2-0 down looked like the biggest ever challenge to date. But then, look at how far Rocky has come.

Enter extreme determination. Suddenly (I say suddenly, what I mean is, how did the team call a 'Time Out?') we upped our aggression and instead of being second to the ball we were coming forward and making everything ours. I don't think I have ever witnessed such a mass concerted effort, with every player working for each other. On the left there was smooth link up from back to front. Ju was having a blinder at left back and Alex was driving play forward whenever she was in possession; the way she would receive the ball out on the left then ride the tackles to take it infield was creating chance after chance for us. Paul, our coach, would be most proud of her slap hits, ending across Battersea Park with the smallest of effort. We were winning short-corners time and again, and they were working like a dream. Ju's decision to learn how to stick-stop in training paid off as we converted to make it 2-1. Alex injected and made a dash for the left post, Ju stopped and knocked the

ball into Lol's path who took a straight strike which met Alex's flat stick and flew in unstopably - just what the coach ordered.

A break in play came and Parfitt was subbed on. As we huddled round, our mood was summed up by both Alex and Gabba declaring that they would take 'nothing less' than a draw from this game, but with ten minutes left, and the medics getting riled, this was a big task. They put the pressure on and won two shorts of their own; the bravery and resilience of the back four must be praised here; at 3-1 we would have been dead and buried. MC's clearances out to Sarah on the right were turning defence into attack for us, and Razzle had her best game yet at centre-mid, stamping her authority on her opposite number in Keano style. But it was another move on the left which brought the equaliser. I don't think I will ever forget this goal; I text my dad about it in explicit detail: Sideline ball, just over the half way line, on the left in front of the support in the dug-out. Ju steps up and takes the sneaky one-two option with Lol, then launches the ball up to Alex on top-D. A very insightful pass. Alex picks up the ball with her back to goal and takes it round three players in the D, but can't get her shot off. Gabba's on the right hand post at an impossible angle, so wisely slips it back to Parfitt. The little'un hits it first time... keeper is beaten... 'crowd' (Himesh

'Mascot' Sheth) go wild... 2-2 with two minutes on the clock.

We held out for 120 seconds by crowding around our goal and I can honestly say it felt like a win when that final whistle blew. Gabba summed up the feeling by saying the game felt like all of her exam

period last year crammed into 70 minutes. A fantastic squad effort resulted in a game which showed us all how far we have come; to make it back from 2-0 down is testament to our attitude this season. Prepare for the next sequel.



Women's Hockey

23

Lau forces a draw

Women in sport

22

Sancha Bainton

Fault-finding fans


23

Josh Heller

23.01.07 thebeaver.sports@lse.ac.uk

Beaver **sports**

Power team pump it up

 <p>Libby Meyer</p>	
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The dodginess of my flat's internet connection has forced me to find new ways to procrastinate other than Facebook. I have finally discovered the main purpose of an LSE diary: reading the most important and riveting historical moments that have occurred on different dates (or alternatively, trying to figure out how to describe the little things under each day in my diary for this article). My skills at pub trivia must have skyrocketed by now. I know all the most essential dates in British history, from the publishing of the first rail timetable (for all those train lovers out there, you know it's the 25th October 1839) to the date when the school leaving age was raised to 15 years old (1st April 1947). Another great date in British history was 15th January. No, not because of Elizabeth I's coronation in 1559, but the power team's first match of 2007!

The power team enjoyed a cracking first half of the season and with the onslaught of 2007 we were ready to convert our ranking of 2nd in the ULU league to champion status.



While most of you were gorging out on mince pies and other Christmas delicacies, the power team were sweating it out to maintain our peak physical condition for the intense netball matches that 2007 would bring.

The mighty power team pulled out all the stops on

Monday night - from our fork kissing ritual to the echoing shouts of 'Sabai Sabai' down the court. The black bibs were on. We were all in our 'mad dog' zone and ready to kill another poor unsuspecting team. Our competitive spirit stepped up a notch when Anita Wings-It promised we could

all play hop scotch if we won the match! (The courts were a primary school's playground).

It seemed that UCL had also decided to take the match to another level. The goal keeper decided during the warm up that wearing trackie bottoms inhibited her running style. Any normal female

reaching this conclusion would have switched to wearing a netball skirt. But, as a girl who didn't believe in leaving things to the imagination, she decided playing in a t-shirt and her underpants was a great plan. I've played in 40 degree heat before and never seen a sight like that (and hope I never will have to again). Luckily her team didn't appreciate the extreme show of skin so she was relegated to the sidelines until someone finally lent her a skirt.

As soon as the power team stepped onto the court, UCL knew we were a force to be reckoned with. After a team meeting (which I'm sure mostly consisted of trying to convince the goal keeper that clothing really was invented for a reason) UCL correctly concluded their skills and abilities could never reach anything near the netball prowess of the mighty 3rd team. Their captain knew there was only one desperate option left: to bribe the umpire. But even halving the three second rule, ignoring all the blatant crazy contact and shortening 30 feet to 30 centimetres couldn't stop the power team!

We were on serious form. With BarkerJJ and Bingo alternating the wings and Anita and the Twangmeyer centring it up, the ball was

moving like magic into the goal circle. The amount of goals scored by The Bodyguard and Miss Universe was insane! In order to keep track of the excessive number of goals swishing through the net (and prevent boredom from having to constantly shoot), they decided to have their own scoring competition. Sadly we were never able to figure out who won the competition since they were scoring goals faster than you could shout the word 'Sabai'!

There were a few rare occasions that UCL actually touched the ball. Obviously this only ever happened when the umpire made biased calls. No matter how dodgy the umpiring stooped, the power team knew there was nothing to fear! Emma again demonstrated that she has more energy than a whole box of Coca-Cola cans and Parky Parkinson running reached superman speed to intercept the ball. Say-No-More and NatTan worked the goal circle and wrecked any dreams UCL had of scoring goals. When the final whistle blew, the power team put another victory in the bag. And Miss Universe added another prize to the collection - man of the match. It's only a matter of time until we snipe the lead ranking from the Vets...



"You could take crack cocaine and I wouldn't care" - Off-duty caring Dave V