

Gabby Giffords: a rift in the Arizona desert

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The Beaver

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Protesters confront Culture Secretary during POLIS event

Oliver Wiseman

A group of about 40 students, including four of the LSE Students' Union's five Sabbatical Officers, stormed the Sheikh Zayed Theatre, barracking Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt as he spoke to journalist Raymond Snoddy last Wednesday.

The event, organised by LSE journalism think-tank POLIS and entitled 'The future of media policy', came at an important time for British media, with the Secretary of State soon to announce his decision over media baron Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB takeover bid. Murdoch already owns 39 per cent of the company and Hunt must rule on the takeover's impact on media plurality.

Soon after the start of the event, the demonstrators entered the lecture theatre through a side door, cheering and chanting "Minister for Culture - Tory vulture". The disturbance provoked boos from the audience and angered the event's chairman, Raymond Snoddy. "The policy of the LSE is to believe in free speech, not shouting at people," he said to the protesters. "As you have no contribution to make, I ask you to leave."

The group, comprised of students from the LSE, UCL and SOAS, then chanted "Tory scum, here we come". One protester proceeded to read a statement highlighting the perceived lack of impartiality in Hunt's handling of the decision, soliciting applause from his fellow demonstrators.

"Is it true that today you were having meetings in private, with no official documentation and no one from the govern-



Students storm the Sheikh Zayed Theatre shortly into the Jeremy Hunt talk
Photos: David Bass

ment, with the son of Rupert Murdoch?" asked another protester. "If you had been here earlier, you would have heard the answer to that question," Snoddy replied. Snoddy had questioned Hunt on the takeover before the protesters began. Hunt said that, regardless of its outcome, his decision was likely to be the subject

of legal challenge and it was therefore important that he avoided saying anything that would seem partial. One audience member took issue with the group's methods. "I was a student at the LSE twenty years ago. When a minister came to speak we argued. You have no arguments," he said. "This is the only way we can par-



ticipate in this discussion," shouted a protester. After about ten minutes, the protesters agreed to leave if Hunt answered one question: "Are you really a fair arbiter of the decision to hand Rupert Murdoch unprecedented control of the media?" Hunt said that he was, prompting applause from the audience and the protesters' depar-

ture. As the event was about to resume, Hunt said: "While everyone might be very annoyed by the interruption to free speech and the scrutiny of government policy that was going on here before the demonstrators arrived, I would much rather live in a country where people can demonstrate freely. The LSE has a very proud history as the crucible of free speech." After the event, Hunt sought to meet with the protesters again, only to find they were no longer waiting outside.

Organised collaboratively by the LSE Students' Union and protest movement UK Uncut, the group was protesting on a range of issues including the plan to scrap the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), the recent Parliamentary vote on tuition fees, as well as Hunt's forthcoming BSkyB decision.

Before the speech, protesters had met with Hunt for about ten minutes, questioning him on his voting intentions for the upcoming EMA vote outside the lecture theatre, but the group found his answers to be unsatisfactory. LSE Students' Union Community and Welfare Officer Hero Austin said, "He gave shoddy answers which were patronising at worst and incomplete at best and people didn't feel like they were being taken seriously. So they thought screw this... He fobbed us off and we went in."

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Pal Soc campaigns to drown Eden Water

Sachin Patel

Members of the Students' Union Palestine Society are currently protesting the School's use of water from a company which operates sources and plants in the Golan Heights.

Students are lobbying the School not to purchase water coolers and bottled water from Eden Springs UK, which is part of the Israeli company Mey Eden, which appropriates and sells water from sources in Syrian land that has been controversially occupied since 1967.

The extension of Israeli law and administration throughout the territory has been condemned by the United Nations Security Council, and widely denounced.

The Palestine Society ran a stall on Houghton Street last Thursday and Friday, from which they asked students to sign a petition supporting their cause. They also sold cakes and traditional Palestinian foods to fund a new initiative with the Palestinian Women's Humanitarian Organisation.

The LSE has no central contract or purchasing agreement with Eden Springs UK, but the company is on a list of suppliers offered to individual departments by the London Universities Purchasing Consortium (LUPC), with which the School has a framework agreement.

A spokesperson for the School said that departments could choose between at least six water suppliers; empty water

canisters are regularly seen outside offices in the Department of International History, among others.

The School also clarified that water ordered from Eden Springs UK originates from West Hyde, Hertfordshire, and not from the Golan Heights.

Similar campaigns have been organised by Palestinian rights activists at other British universities. In February 2009, a sit-in protest by forty students convinced the University of Strathclyde to cancel its contract with Eden Springs UK. The protest, which was led by members of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign, presented a list of demands, including the severing of investments with BAE Systems, an arms manufacturer, and the creation of a scholarship scheme for Palestinian students wishing to study at the university.

Eleven students at UCL submitted a motion in February 2010 petitioning their students' union to "put pressure on UCL to cancel its contract with Eden Springs UK Ltd as soon as is legally possible".

The UCL motion, which passed at the union's Annual General Meeting in the same month, also mandated the education and ethics and environment Officers to write to the university's Provost on the issue. UCL's Procurement Services website, which was last updated in October 2010, still lists Eden Springs as a contracted supplier of water coolers, though two other suppliers are also specified.

A statement from the LSE confirmed that the framework agreement with LUPC

expires on 30th June, and that it would be a matter for LUPC as to whether Eden Springs retains its place on a new agreed list of suppliers.

Among the sources operated by Mey Eden is the Salukia spring in the Golan Heights. The company also owns a bottling plant in Katzrin, an Israeli settlement in the region.

20,000 Israeli settlers inhabit the Golan Heights alongside an equal number of Syrians; the unilateral annexation of the region in 1981 is not internationally recognised.

Palestine Society President Zac Sammour told the Beaver: "The natural resources of a State should be of benefit to the people of that State alone; either through national ownership or through State taxation of profits accrued through its economic use".

Sammour added, "Israel is therefore denying the people of that region the benefits of their own land and resources and illegally subverting it for themselves."

"We believe that a progressive institution like the LSE should not be conducting business with a company facilitating a state of affairs that is both illegal and which poses a massive threat to world peace, namely the continued, illegal Israeli Occupation", he said.

The School also said it was their intention in the longer term to "eradicate all bottled water supplies on campus in favour of water fountains using filtered tap water, as this is a more sustainable option."



The Palestine Society stall on Houghton Street
Photo: Ameena Amer

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Graphic: Marion Pierfitte

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"This is the only way we can participate"

One of the great aspects of studying at the LSE is the opportunity to quiz leading figures of the day at relatively close quarters, where they are free from the constraints of the party line. Indeed, according to a recent comment placed on a popular politics blog, "One could actually learn far more there in one evening, than by listening to months of media soundbites."

Last week, with surprising alacrity, the Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt was in conversation with the media commentator Raymond Snoddy in the LSE's Sheikh Zayed Theatre, when their frank discussion of media policy in the UK was interrupted by a protest whose members included at least two Sabbatical Officers of our Students' Union.

Though LSE protesters had questioned Mr. Hunt before the lecture on his support for scrapping the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), the audience in the theatre heard about little other than Mr. Hunt's ability to impartially arbitrate Rupert Murdoch's intended takeover of BSkyB, a broadcasting company. Indeed, Mr. Snoddy likened the students' actions within the theatre to a football match.

As far as this newspaper knows, the Sabbatical Officers have not to date been mandated by students to campaign on our behalf against Mr. Hunt's elevated position of responsibility.

When a student put this to them at the UGM the day after, they backtracked, and claimed that they had been using the protest as an opportunity to ask him of his stance on the EMA. A look at the video makes it clear that this issue was not raised inside the lecture theatre.

Rather ironically, the burning questions posed by the protesters had already been answered by the Culture Secretary five minutes prior to their dramatic entrance, stage-right – a fact pointed out by Mr. Snoddy, who added, "If you have no further contribution to make, I shall ask you to leave." When the students refused to follow his request, one of their number said, "This is the only way we can participate in this discussion," to which Mr. Snoddy replied, rather drily, "You could have got a ticket." This newspaper agrees with his sentiments.

We have been pilloried for our love of mature and reasoned debate on previous occasions; it would appear that our point of view remains unfashionable. As a result of this ham-fisted manifestation of free speech, an audience filled with critical media types instantly became more sympathetic to Mr. Hunt's arguments and justifications. We fear that even the ultimately backfiring nature of this protest will not put off its most vocal agitators.

We remember a time when reasoned but impassioned and entertaining debate was woven into the fabric of the Students'

Union – the halcyon days of the UGM. Since then, neither the introduction of online voting nor the appeal to auxiliary policy-making bodies, known as assemblies, has reversed the decline of this once hallowed weekly occasion. This week sees the debating of a motion to repeal online voting, with the hope of restoring the UGM to the centre-piece of our union.

This newspaper does not believe in panaceas: the personalities that inhabit the Old Theatre every Thursday play as much of a role in determining the popularity of the UGM as the voting mechanism used. But it is interesting that this year's meetings have been hijacked by the very students who originally campaigned against reforms to the Students' Union, thereby making the forum a less plural environment. Those who do not adhere to this less-than-entirely-bunch are more than ever outsiders to this uniquely LSE institution. Consequently, this newspaper welcomes the efforts of those who would do something to halt the seemingly inexorable decay of the UGM.

Without a fully functioning UGM, it is likely that many worthy causes will not receive adequate support. The Palestine Society has been blessed with activists willing to argue their cause from a stall on Houghton Street – and we add our voice to their fight to remove Eden Water from campus. But we fear that other societies may not be so fortunate.

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 www.tinyurl.com/2010beaver
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Editorial Board Elections

7PM, 20th January
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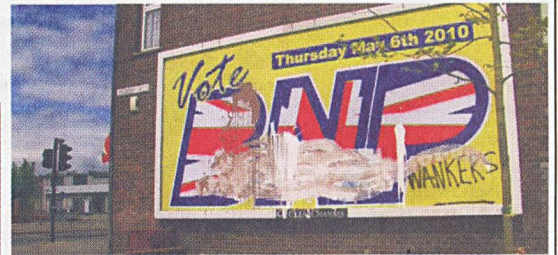
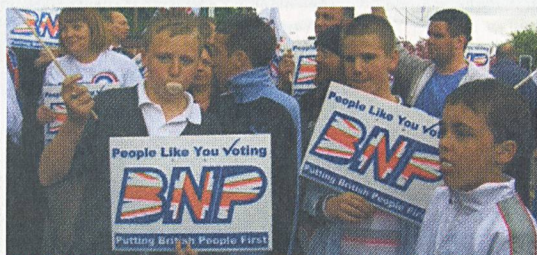
Union Bashō

Who's listening?

For your ears only,
 UGM recordings are.
 The screen moves so much.

Bashō goes to the Union General Meeting so you don't have to.

PARTB FILM INVITES YOU TO A SPECIAL SCREENING OF



Followed by a Q&A with Margaret Hodge MP and Laura Fairrie (director/producer)

"An exemplary study in how extremist politics takes hold when ordinary people feel ignored and disenfranchised by the main parties" - The Guardian

"A blow-by-blow, door-to-door account of the scrap between Labour's Margaret Hodge and the BNP's Nick Griffin for control of the East London borough" - Time Out

WEDNESDAY 19TH JANUARY - NEW THEATRE
 FILM STARTS AT 6:30PM

Societies reach détente in debate

Calum Young

Last week saw a debate, jointly organised by the Students' Union's Israel and Palestine societies, as two scholars discussed the implications of an academic boycott of Israel. John Chalcraft, a reader in the history and politics of empire at the LSE, argued in favour of the motion "This house believes in an academic boycott of Israel", while Daniel Hochhauser, a senior lecturer and consultant in medical oncology at UCL, opposed it, during the event, held on Thursday, 12th January at the LSE.

In the wake of recent acrimony involving the two societies - many Israeli and Jewish students had been upset over comments made during a December Palestine Society event with Middle Eastern newspaper editor, Abdel Bari Atwan - the debate's chair, Professor Kevin Featherstone of the LSE's Hellenic Observatory, began Thursday with an appeal to reason from both sides. He asked the audience to maintain a spirit of "tolerance, mutual

respect and calm". Chalcraft presented his argument first, delivering his case for the boycott to a silent audience. Drawing analogies between apartheid South Africa and the modern state of Israel, Chalcraft contended boycotts have proven efficacious in the past. He defined the motion as action targeted solely at institutions, rather than individual academics, making it efficient and precise.

In his fifteen-minute argument, Hochhauser appealed directly to audience members. He asked the attendees: "Do you really think that academic institutions should have declared political points of view? Should the LSE have declared itself against the Iraq War? Should we be boycotting Yale or Harvard because of American human rights abuses?" Hochhauser critiqued the motion on the grounds that "academics and the universities they work in cannot be separated", and summed up the boycott as "divisive, antagonistic and guilty of singling Israel out".

In the five-minute rebuttals, the debate took on a new direction. Chalcraft

directly challenged Hochhauser's charge that we were to boycott Israeli academic institutions, on grounds of equivalence, we would also adopt the same methods toward Ivy League schools whenever Washington contravenes international law, by citing efficiency. Chalcraft claimed a clear difference: While boycotting elite institutions in the United States had no possibility of success, he said, a refusal to do business with those in the Levant might yield results.

Audience member comments reflected the diverse opinions the issue provokes. Jonathan Rosen, a former LSE academic, highlighted the unique links between Israeli universities and the state's armaments program, while Jonathan Hoffman, a postgraduate at the School, quoted a think tank's judgment that Israel had the "most moral army in the world". Ashok Kumar, the LSE's Students' Union's Education Officer, asked: "Would those opposing the boycott in the case of Israel have supported its usage in apartheid South Africa?"

The event concluded with Chalcraft

and Hochhauser summarizing their arguments and surveying the audience's raised hands, in search of a verdict. As chair, Featherstone collated the results, saying "this is by no means a scientific sample, and I am only calling it as I see it from my perspective".

The motion was defeated.

"This is an academic institution and this will be an academic debate", he said.

After the debate, event organisers said they were pleased by the evening's civil discourse.

Israel Society President Gabi Kobrin said the debate was a success, because it "proved that when working together, the Israel and Palestine Society, can achieve constructive dialogue, even when dealing with sensitive issues".

Palestine Society President Zac Sammour said he was likewise "extremely pleased" with the debate: "This event represents an active effort by both societies to explore tactics aimed at ending this occupation".

News in brief

A DRAGON EVENT
The China Development Forum, to be held on the 22nd January, has attracted a record number of high profile speakers. This year's keynote speakers has just been announced as His Excellency, Mr Liu Xiaoming, China's Ambassador to the UK. Mr Xiaoming will join other speakers including executives from McKinsey & Company, The Financial Times, Goldman Sachs, Rio Tinto and world renowned economists from the IEA and LSE. The event is set to address issues such as China's economic policy and international relations. Few tickets are still available on the website www.lsecds.or/cdf.

BOTTOMS UP
Students attending the first Crush of term gave the event mixed reviews. Initially the event seemed to fall short of attracting the large crowds that typically flock to it; however, by midnight both The Quad and The Three Tuns were reported to be filled. Several students complained that the event was understaffed, particularly at the bar areas. Waits of up to 30 minutes were reported at the bar at the Three Tuns.

PISSARIDES CAUTIONS EU
Professor Pissarides, Nobel Laureate, has made public his opinion regarding the pending EU bailouts. In light of the recent efforts of the EU to rescue the struggling economies of Ireland and Greece, there has been speculation that Spain will be the next European heavyweight to be saved. Pissarides commented that he was not convinced that the European Union would have the funds to finance the bailout of another country. If the European Union were to attempt a rescue it could cause "the end of the euro as a common currency" said Pissarides.

NOKIA PARTNERS LSE
LSE has just launched a study in conjunction with Nokia. The study hopes to assess how the habits of mobile phone users are affected by concerns over privacy. Near Field Communications (NFC), a form of wireless communication which enables data to shift between technological devices, is the technology that is at the centre of the investigation. Academics will be looking into the status of NFC regulation in Europe and Asia and the future of NFC in developing nations. rter check the reliability of their source.

EAT, PRAY, LOVE
Professor Steven Shapin of Harvard University delivered a public lecture on the sociology of food last Wednesday. In a diverse public lecture, Shapin spoke of the changing perceptions of food, knowledge and the self. The detailed lecture addressed the way that people have understood their body over time and how this is associated with your living and dietary habits. One member of the audience said: "It was refreshing to attend a lecture on a topic other than politics or economics. It was interesting to see how perceptions of bodies have changed."

BRAINS AND BRAWN
Dr Kanazawa, LSE management researcher, has released a journal article citing UK and US studies that show that there is a correlation between beauty and brains. According to Kanazawa, men and women who are conventionally better looking, or 'hotter', are more likely to have a higher IQ. The research, seen by some to perpetuate Darwinism, suggests that the offspring of good-looking couples will inherit both intelligence and looks, which further exaggerates the link between the variables. Kanazawa commented the research is "purely scientific. It is not a prescription for how to treat or judge others."

New MSc programme attracts high-flyers

Chris Rogers

This month saw the launch of a new master's programme at the LSE aimed at "high-flyers proceeding to senior positions where they will need to think more strategically".

The MSc in International Strategy and Diplomacy, which incorporates the study of international affairs, global business and finance issues, is one of a number of executive education programmes offered by the School, which help subsidise undergraduate programmes.

Launched on 6th January at an event hosted by LSE Director Howard Davies, the programme is organised and managed by LSE IDEAS, the School's centre for international affairs, diplomacy and grand strategy.

Unlike a typical residential master's course, the twelve-month long course has been structured to enable participants to continue their careers whilst taking part in the programme.

The course has been advertised as allowing participants to immediately utilise their new skills and knowledge in a working environment. It has been described as offering a "fresh look" at the threats and risks that could arise in the future, new techniques for providing assessments of such threats, and, above all, strategies that can be used to address them.

The contents of the course will not be taught in a conventional way, programme organisers said. Instead, students will be coached and have opportunities to discuss issues with practitioners who have faced tough decisions themselves. Lessons will also include several strategic exercises.

Teaching for the new programme is set to start in September 2011, and the course is expected to include four, one-week intensive study sessions, twenty weekly evening seminars, two weekend sessions and an optional 10,000-word dissertation, according to the IDEAS website.

The LSE decided to introduce the course in order to "bridge the gap" between theory and practical application of knowledge. The programme's organisers judge this to be especially important at a time when high-profile politicians have argued that we lack strategy-making expertise. Parliament's Public Administration Select Committee concluded in October 2010 that Britons have "lost the culture of strategy making".

Several prominent diplomats and government advisers are expected to offer their expertise to the programme's participants, including Tony Blair's former Chief of Staff, Jonathan Powell; Britain's former ambassador to the United States, NATO and Israel, Sir David Manning; and Sir Richard Mottram, the former permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence and Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee.

Programme organisers say they have deliberately limited its enrollment to just fifteen people for its first year, but say they expect the new MSc will further contribute to the LSE's global reputation.

Though the programme will officially begin in September, program organisers say it is unlikely to see a full, immediate

return on its start-up costs. Course participants are expected to pay fees topping £22,000.

There has been a strong interest in the programme from the outset, with many applications. Said Howard Davies: "With so many highly experienced diplomatic and political figures joining the academic team to lead discussion and analysis, it's certain that the course will be as compelling as it will be demanding".

The MSc in International Strategy and Diplomacy is not the first of the LSE's programmes aimed at executives. The School currently operates open enrollment courses throughout the year; an executive summer school; part-time MSc programmes for professionals health economics, policy and management; and the TRIUM Global Executive MBA programme, offered jointly with New York University's Stern School of Business and the HEC School of Management in Paris.

Though other institutions, such as Harvard University and the University of Oxford, offer a type of master's programme aimed at executives, Dr Sue Onslow, who manages the LSE's new programme, described the MSc in International Strategy and Diplomacy as unique.

Onslow said no other university offers a year long master's programme in this area that enables students to continue working while they study. She added that the number and experience of top policy practitioners involved sets the LSE's programme apart.

Professor Michael Cox, a co-director of IDEAS, agreed.

"This course is the first of its kind because it looks firmly to the future, is grounded in a deep understanding of political, economic and military issues, and based on shrewd insights into how the art of thinking strategically can be revitalised", he said.

Finalists and postgrads trade TIPS

Alev Sen

A new, collaborative mentoring programme for third-year undergraduates and postgraduates launched this month. Third-Years Intermingling with Postgraduate Students (TIPS), an initiative of the LSE Students' Union, will link third-year undergraduates with graduate students to share information, experience and advice.

The co-mentoring programme was designed by Daniel Kroop, the Students' Union Postgraduate Officer, and the postgraduate assembly. It was created in response to Students' Union research on LSE students' needs.

From national student surveys, the Students' Union found both postgraduates and undergraduates at the LSE identified gaps in personal development support and academic assistance. But their experiences were very different: third-year undergraduate students knew more about societies, Students' Union campaigns, general campus activities, and life in London. Postgraduate students had more experience with applications for further study, internships and careers.

Kroop and Brigitte Witt, head of academic initiatives for the postgraduate assembly, will run the programme, in coordination with staff from the Students' Union and the University of the Arts London, which already has a similar "buddy" programme in place.

"We didn't see much benefit in launching a one-directional mentoring programme", Kroop said, adding, "This is what we call cross-year co-mentoring: third-year undergrad and master's students are usually close in age, but have different experiences and we believe these would be valuable to exchange".

Said Witt: "While the Careers Office at LSE does a great job, most of them don't have first-hand knowledge about the hell

that is application procedures, and we think it would be beneficial for students to receive help from someone who can provide hands-on personal advice and experience".

Members of the postgraduate assembly, including Kroop and Witt, have set up a stall on Houghton Street, where students can ask for further information and sign up for the programme. Students who sign up will be matched according to career, academic and personal interests.

Kroop said the programme aims to provide appropriate and helpful mentors for students, but added he wants to keep the matching process "flexible". For instance, if a student does not "click" with his or her mentor, the Students' Union will provide opportunities throughout the term for students to meet other co-mentors and find a more suitable match.

Such opportunities will include the programme's first meeting, a casual pizza-and-beer mixer, in which students will meet their co-mentors and programme organisers. Other mixer events will be planned throughout the term to promote intermingling among co-mentors, and students participating in the scheme will also be encouraged to meet up with their mentors informally, such as over coffee.

The scheme will run end through the end of Lent Term, at which time co-mentors will be asked to evaluate each other and the scheme. If the programme is deemed successful, it will be continue in the Michaelmas Term of the 2011-12 academic year.

"We decided to formally wrap up the programme at the end of Lent term as students have other commitments and priorities, e.g. exams, in Summer Term", Kroop said. "But the programme is designed to be informal. If co-mentors establish a good friendly relationship, there is nothing to stop them continuing to meet up after Lent Term ends".



As events unfolded during the talk, a number of audience members were able to capture video footage of the protest, and the reactions of Hunt and LSE Director Howard Davies
Image source: YouTube

“The crucible of free speech” – Secretary of State on the LSE

» continued
from page 1

The Beaver understands that the group then voted on whether or not to seek entry to the lecture.

Speaking to the Beaver, POLIS director Charlie Beckett described his “disappointment at the boorish behaviour of a few people at our event.”

“[The protesters] broke into the event and intimidated staff and the audience. But both the audience and Mr. Hunt responded calmly.”

“In the end their actions appeared to increase sympathy for Mr. Hunt from what was a generally critical audience,” he said, “As a journalism think tank we stand for free speech and robust, open debate – I wish those protesting students did.”

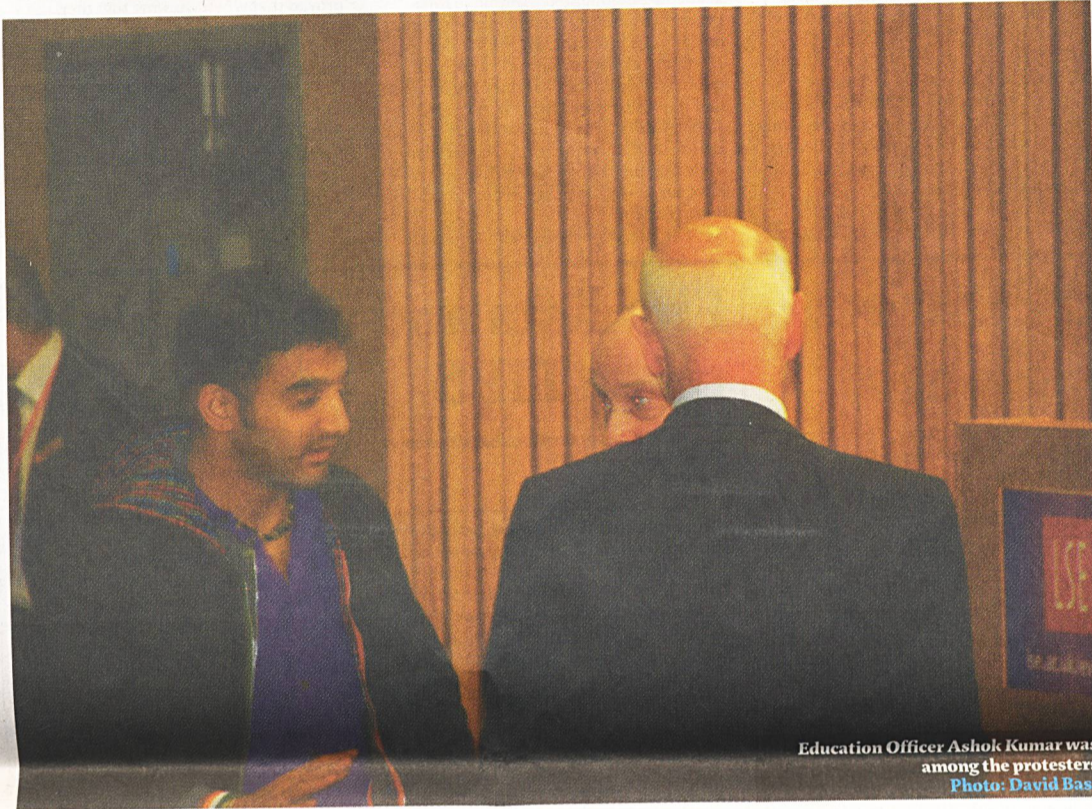
Beckett said the disturbance “certainly won’t reduce POLIS’ ability to attract important or controversial speakers as people come here because of the LSE’s reputation as a forum for civilised but feisty discourse.”

At the next day’s Union General Meeting, third-year government student Scott MacDonald asked if the Sabbatical Officers were mandated to support the protest, given that the Students’ Union has no policy regarding the prospective BSKyB takeover.

Students’ Union General Secretary Charlotte Gerada said the Sabbatical Officers were there to ask the Secretary of State about the government’s plan to scrap EMA, as they were mandated to under the Freeze the Fees campaign.

But in a Students’ Union press release on the subject, Austin said: “[Hunt] is endangering the ability of the British media to act in the public interest through the BSKyB Murdoch takeover.”

Later Austin told the Beaver: “There were a number of protests going on at the same time and in the same place. We went there with an educational slant but Jeremy Hunt is hated for a number of reasons.”



Education Officer Ashok Kumar was among the protesters
Photo: David Bass

Speaking on the efficacy of the protest in highlighting the EMA issue, Austin said, “maybe it didn’t make as much of an impact as we’d have liked but it’s the first week back.”

On the preeminence of the the BSKyB question ahead of issues the Sabbatical Officers were mandated to take action on, Austin said “Next time we need to organise stronger for it and get more people there.”

A spokesperson for the school told the Beaver the right to protest is entirely

“As you have no contribution to make, I ask you to leave”
**RAYMOND SNODDY,
CHAIR**

recognised at the LSE, and is part of the School’s intellectual freedom but added that he thought the protesters’ actions

inhibited the questioning of government policy.

He said no mistakes had been made on the part of security and was glad that the protest remained peaceful and the event continued after the protesters left.

Mr. Hunt is the second member of the Cabinet to face protest at the LSE this academic year. Climate Change Secretary Chris Huhne was met by tuition fee protesters outside the New Academic Building, prior to a speech he gave on building the green economy last November.

Compulsory LSE100 launches following pilot’s mixed reaction

Shrina Poojara
Sachin Patel

Last Monday saw the official launch of the compulsory LSE100 course for first-year students.

The pilot scheme, which was completed by 183 second-year students who began the course last year, concluded with an examination which took place on 7th January.

Only 152 of the students on the pilot were able to sit the exam on this date; of the remainder, at least fifteen had yet to return to London.

Dr. Jonathan Leape, the course director, said that this was in fact above the expected attendance for the exam, adding that course participants had been notified in November 2009 that it would be taking place before the start of term.

Nina Wood, a student who was unable to attend the exam, said, “It seemed a little odd that a university which is known for having so many international students would schedule an exam outside of term-time. Being an international student, I had already booked my return flight far in advance.”

Dr. Leape conceded that having an exam outside of term appeared to some students to be an “anomaly”, but said setting up and taking down desks for the exam would have been impossible during term-time.

He added that three students on the course whose halls of residence operate on thirty-one week contracts were reimbursed by the School for the additional expense of accommodation.

Second-year student Shakira Chanrai, who recently completed the course, supported the scheduling of the exam, saying, “I didn’t like it at the time but having started week one of Lent Term with so much work to do, I’m now quite glad.”

Dr. Leape confirmed to the Beaver that the make-up examination paper will be different to that taken by students on the 7th.

Responding to claims made by several students that the first paper was very similar to the specimen paper provided to students on Moodle, Dr. Leape said the two papers were prepared simultaneously, and that the types of questions were intentionally similar in order to adequately prepare students.

He added that all the questions were worded differently in the two papers, and many used different data sets and case studies. Additionally, he said both papers were reviewed by an external examiner, who is the Dean of Social Sciences at the University of Warwick.

Second-year student Palomie Patel said, “The spread of topics covered in the exam paper was pretty much the same as the specimen paper... It made predicting the exam paper really easy.”

The verdict of students on the pilot

course has been mixed. Palomie Patel said, “It does give you quite a good general knowledge about key issues, and the course is structured so that you don’t have to do too much work outside of class.”

Shakira Chanrai also had positive feedback on the course, saying, “In hindsight, I am glad I took it. I learnt a lot from it.”

Dr. Leape has said that LSE100 students will see long term benefits such as having more competitive applications when applying to jobs. The LSE Careers Service reported that 83 per cent of recruiters believed that LSE100 would make LSE graduates more attractive than other employees.

On the other hand, Nina Wood said, “On the whole, it wasn’t bad but I think the anthropology topic was particularly unpopular... LSE100 may have changed slightly this year after feedback from the pilot programme but unfortunately I don’t think the course in its current form is really worthwhile.”

Dr. Leape said extensive consultation and feedback from the pilot course had played a role in changes to the compulsory course.

The pilot course, which was taken by volunteers, saw an effective dropout rate of 37 per cent. Of the 400 students who began the pilot in January 2010, 110 left the course after attending only one lecture or class. Of the 290 who remained, 107 more left the course during the subsequent

twelve months.

Reviewing these statistics, Dr. Leape said, “Since signing up for the course gave you the option to attend, with no corresponding obligation, it made sense [for students] to register if there was even the smallest chance [they] might like to take the course.”

“The withdrawal rate is on par with the only other comparable courses at the LSE – certificate courses at the Language Centre.”

Despite the pilot students’ mixed reviews, first-year students seem to be looking forward to the course. Beth Clarke said, “I wasn’t sure what to expect after hearing some negative reports about it, but was pleasantly surprised to find that I enjoyed my first class.” Chris Rogers, a politics and philosophy student, said, “The topics look interesting with a variety of expert speakers who should make the module fun and informative. I have enjoyed it so far, though it is a little too early to say how I feel about the course overall.”

The module requires first-years to attend one two-hour lecture and one class every week. As well as this, students will be required to submit assessed written work and prepare projects for class presentation.

First-years can expect an all-star line up of speakers, including Professor Danny Quah, Professor Niall Ferguson and Professor Lord Stern.

Challenge to Hunt protest at UGM

Vincent Wong

At the first Union General Meeting (UGM) of Lent Term, the LSE Students’ Union was accused of actively supporting the protesting students who interrupted last week’s public lecture with Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt.

Scott MacDonald, a third-year government undergraduate, said the Students’ Union had “enabled, funded and publicised” the protest. His claim came after an article seeming to encourage student participation in the protest was published on the Students’ Union website.

MacDonald asked the Sabbatical Officers if they had been authorised by the student body to be involved with the protest, claiming current scrutiny of Hunt’s hand in Rupert Murdoch’s proposed takeover of media giant BSKyB had “nothing whatsoever” to do with the Freeze the Fees campaign.

MacDonald also asked the Sabbatical Officers to refrain from protesting without a mandate in the future.

Students’ Union General Secretary Charlotte Gerada denied the Students’ Union had funded the protest. She said the protest had been organised by an outside group, UK Uncut, adding the Students’ Union found out about the plans beforehand and had then informed security and reception staff and porters.

Gerada also said the Sabbatical Officers had attended Hunt’s talk to discuss cuts to education spending and the education maintenance allowance (EMA), which they are mandated to do through the Freeze the Fees campaign.

Also at Thursday’s UGM, the Sabbatical Officers outlined the Students’ Union’s plans for the Lent Term. Gerada spoke of “big decisions to be made in a short amount of time” about fees. She said the School was still in the “ideas stage” and she hoped to “be able to feed into that”. She also encouraged students to take part in a survey for a report she is writing to an academic board committee, while Postgraduate Officer Daniel Kroop introduced a campaign to defend global education.

The Sabbatical Officers’ reports were followed by those of the Media Group. Sachin Patel, executive editor of the Beaver, quelled rumours about the future of the newspaper. He said it was unlikely Part B would return to booklet form, explaining that it would be “prohibitively expensive”. Stuart McColl, station manager of Pulse Radio, announced that Pulse’s “Theme Week” would be Disney-themed. Students voiced concerns about Walt Disney’s association with fascism, with some audience members making light-hearted remarks that Pulse would become a fascist platform. McColl responded: “Henry Ford was also a fascist, but he gave us the automobile industry, so I suppose that every rose has its thorns”. McColl later apologised, adding: “I think we can celebrate the youth and enjoyment it has given to us all”.

The UGM concluded with the proposal of an unopposed motion, “Flag this up”. This motion urged the Students’ Union to encourage the organisation of an event similar to International Week each year.

International Students Officer Michael Lok, who authored of the motion, stepped aside to let his seconder, Hwa Young Kim, a second-year undergraduate student, present it.

Kim praised International Week 2010, saying it was not only successful, but also required little effort on the part of the Students’ Union because national and cultural societies were able to “do their own thing”.

Next week’s UGM will see a motion to scrap online voting practices. A motion on the LSE’s RAG will also be fielded next week, and will be subject to an online vote.

Non-examined Ferguson course fills out lecture theatre

Luke Smolinski

Last Friday, Niall Ferguson held the first lecture of his ten-week international history course, "Western Ascendancy: The Mainsprings of Global Power from 1600 to the Present".

The course is non-examined and is primarily for postgraduate students reading history, international relations and government. Despite being kept low-profile by the School, the lecture attracted around eighty students, mostly postgraduates, who filled the room to full capacity, leaving ten or so to sit on the floor.



Revealed: the meaning of life

Luke Smolinski

Robert Rowland Smith, a lecturer and writer of philosophy, contemplated the purpose of life in a public lecture entitled "The Meaning of Life" on Wednesday, 12th January, at the LSE. Rowland Smith, the author of such books as *Driving with Plato* and *Breakfast with Socrates*, has contributed to the *Philosophy Bites* podcast series and writes a column on moral dilemmas for the *Sunday Times*.

The meaning of life is a philosophical issue that has been greeted with solemn contemplation and derisive laughter in equal measure, Rowland Smith said in his lecture.

"The seriousness of the question has been hotly debated," he said, adding it is a "very notable fact that the question of the meaning of life is a pretty humorous one:

you just have to mention the phrase and people chortle".

Rowland Smith said he sees this tendency to laugh as a peculiarly British habit. It is no accident, he said, that two of the most celebrated humorous discussions of the question take place in two British works: *Monty Python's Meaning of Life* and Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

If one were to conduct a lecture in Paris on the subject, it would not evoke the same tittering response, Rowland Smith said, adding, though, that the meaning of life is nonetheless a serious question.

Many philosophers have attempted to answer the question, he said, but all answers admit two basic truths: life is chaotic, and if it has meaning, we ought to find some necessity for it. Thus all responses follow the same structure, creating necessity out of chaos. In this way, life has meaning.

Rowland Smith said Jean Paul Sartre elicited the most memorable explanation of the meaning of life, arguing that the world was chaotic, there was no God and therefore there was no ultimate meaning. As such, people are likely to feel alone, abandoned, frustrated that things are out of our control; people are frightened that they are wholly responsible for their own actions. This may seem bleak and pessimistic, but, in fact, Sartre thought that only by acknowledging this utter freedom can we give our lives meaning.

Sartre saw human beings as fundamentally different from every other object, Rowland Smith said. First, humans have a character which is developed over time. Second, we create our own future and can reject our own past. For Sartre, both of these essential characteristics of humankind admit one truth: being human means creating our own destiny. We are utterly free to choose our life paths, and rather

than searching for an ultimate meaning, we must create our own meaning.

Rowland Smith said, though, that he finds existentialist ideas, such as those of Sartre, to be rather old. The notion that humans are in control of their own lives derives from the fact that we can take our own lives, and can be traced back to Kant, to Shakespeare, even to Virgil, Rowland Smith said, adding such ideas were fully realised in the Enlightenment as human beings were depicted as rational, autonomous individuals, free to make their own decisions.

Rowland Smith added that the Victorians coped with this frightening prospect by redefining an ultimate meaning to life, through self-improvement or through improving the lives of others. They saw chaos and believed a more Christian ethos would restore a necessity to life. This idea would finally be demolished by Nietzsche, and eventually Sartre.

Attendees' reactions to Wednesday's lecture were decidedly mixed. One audience member praised the speech as "intelligent and life-affirming". Another described the speech as "baffling and a little bit scary".

Kinzer: "Iran could be our ticket out of Iraq"

Bethany Clarke

Stephen Kinzer, a veteran newspaper correspondent and expert on American foreign policy, came to atypical conclusions on United States diplomacy in the Middle East in a public lecture held on Monday, 10th January, at the LSE. During the lecture, entitled "Facing Disaster In the Middle East: Do We Have Only Bad Options?" Kinzer addressed various issues facing the Middle East and offered potential constructive solutions.

Kinzer, who teaches journalism and international relations at Boston University and regularly contributes to the *Guardian*, the *New York Review of Books*, and the *Daily Beast*, among other publications, most notably argued for stronger relationships between the U.S., Turkey and Iran. "We are still stuck in a straitjacket of

policies that were designed to confront a security environment that no longer exists, so it is not surprising that those policies are failing", Kinzer said of current American policies in the Middle East. Calling for the U.S. to change its strategy, he said "one thing that seems beyond argument is that whatever policies have been followed in the Middle East over recent years and decades have not worked".

The starting premise for such a change in policy is the recognition that the United States is no longer able to impose its will on the nations of the Middle East, Kinzer said, adding the country therefore needs to look for partners in the region with similar societies and long term goals that match their own.

Kinzer first suggested an alliance with Turkey, an American NATO ally of over fifty years and a country that "is able to go places and make deals that the United States and the U.K. cannot" due to its

moral position towards the Middle East.

Kinzer added, though, that Turkey is limited by domestic problems, which will establish "an upper limit" in the role it can play, before suggesting a second ally for the U.S. in the Middle East: Iran. He said "remarkable parallels" exist between the long-term strategic interests of the U.S. and those of Iran, a country with a "very vibrant, dynamic and democratic civil society".

"Iran could contribute decisively to a resolution" Kinzer said of conflicts in the Middle East.

"Iran could be our ticket out of Iraq", he explained, adding the country has "tremendous ability to influence the course of events in Afghanistan".

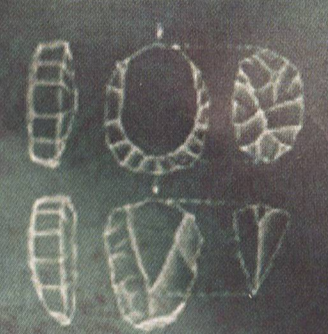
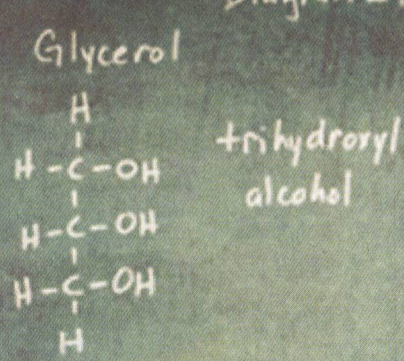
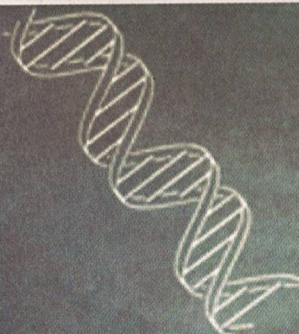
He added: "Actually, there is no major American strategic goal in the Middle East that can be reached without Iran's cooperation".

But Kinzer also said America has a

"special problem with Iran", describing the two countries' relationship as "the most dysfunctional" in the world.

The audience appeared intrigued by Kinzer's suggestion of Iran as a Western ally in the region. One attendee asked Kinzer if he thought that an alliance would be possible under the regime of Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Kinzer said though Ahmadinejad is "certainly not the ideal negotiating partner" and the United States would probably have to wait for evolution in Iran's government for a "real, long-term agreement", it is "too urgent to wait, and we should at least try".

Dr Katerina Dalacoura, a lecturer in the LSE Department of International Relations who chaired the lecture, thanked Kinzer for "being constructive", adding it is "rare that when dealing with this region we find someone who has put thought in these matters in a constructive way, and clearly this is what [Kinzer] has done".



Holiday Assignment:

Why is the sky blue?

What was the high point of the 20th century?

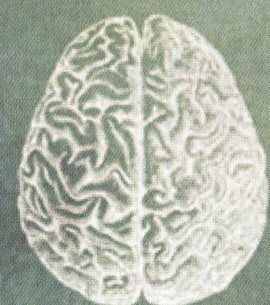
Do we need money to survive?

What was your teenage dream?

Illustrate the source of your greatest anxiety.

Photograph a paradox.

Human sciences: studying you, me and the world in the past, present and future.

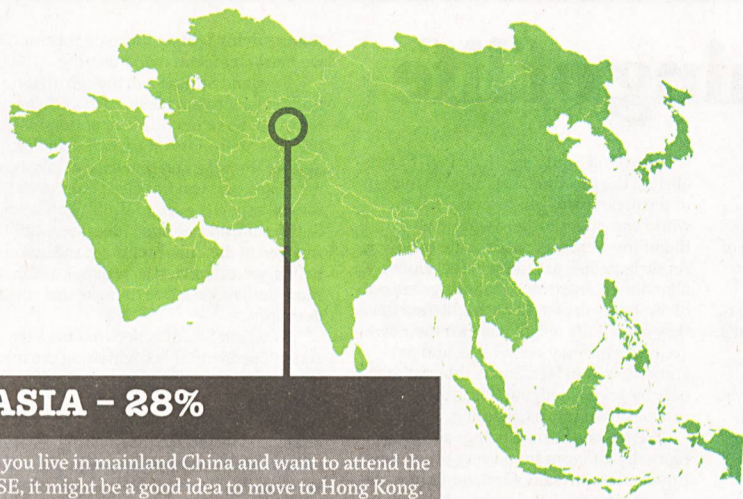


Send us your thought processes at su.claremarketreview@lse.ac.uk in words and art

CLARE
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~~Assignment 2 Deadline: 16th January~~
Assignment 2 deadline: 23rd January, 11PM

Assignment 3 Deadline: 15th February

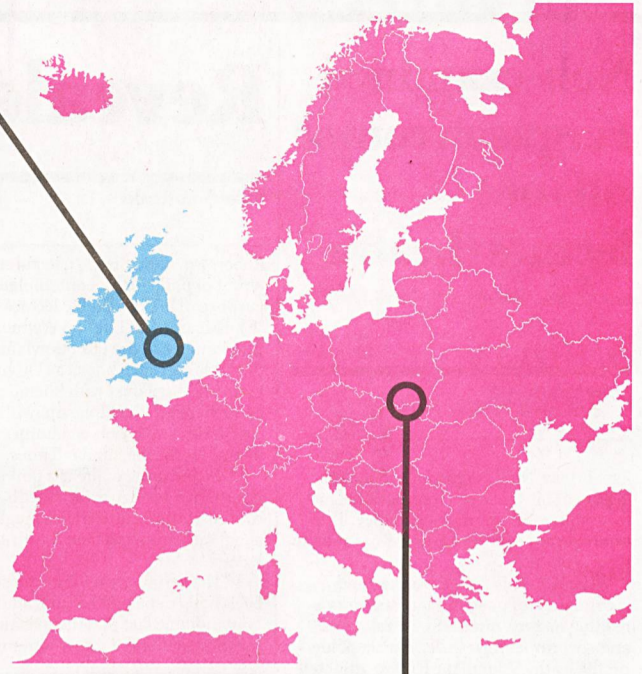


ASIA - 28%

If you live in mainland China and want to attend the LSE, it might be a good idea to move to Hong Kong. As a university-age Hong Kong resident, your likelihood being an LSE student is 351/500,000 - or 0.08 per cent. According to Betfair, this is about as probable as Charles Kennedy ousting Nick Clegg as leader of the Liberal Democrats. As a representative Chinese student, your odds would be 704/103,000,000 - slightly less than the likelihood of Gordon Brown winning Britain's Got Talent.

UK - 32%

The UK provides the LSE with a third of its students. This might sound like a lot but its fewer than any other university in the United Kingdom. Thats right folks, you're at the UK's most international university.



EUROPE - 22%

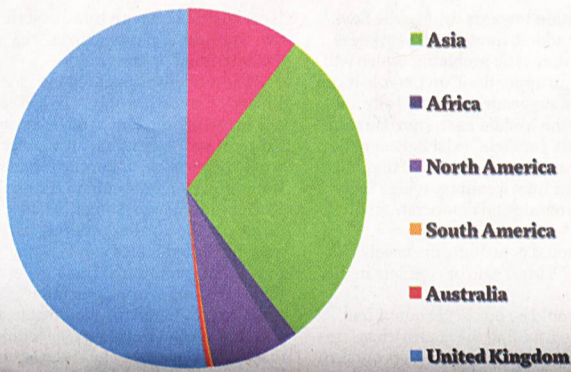
Despite relatively higher tuition fees, the LSE seems to be more attractive to postgraduates than undergraduates hailing from continental Europe. Germany, for example, supplies almost 8 per cent of non-UK postgraduates, but only 3 per cent of overseas undergraduates.

TOP 10 COUNTRIES

1. United Kingdom 3,288
2. United States 954
3. China (PRC) 704
4. Germany 442
5. Hong Kong 351
6. India 343
7. Canada 280
8. Malaysia 269
9. France 262
10. Singapore 252

(Undergraduates and postgraduates)

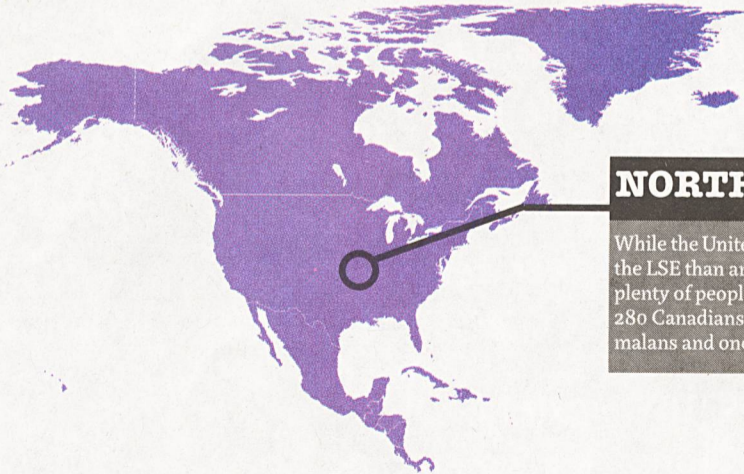
Undergraduates



Undergraduate students by continent of domicile, 2010-11
Source: LSE Press Office

LSE BY NUMBERS

Demographics by domicile, 2010-11

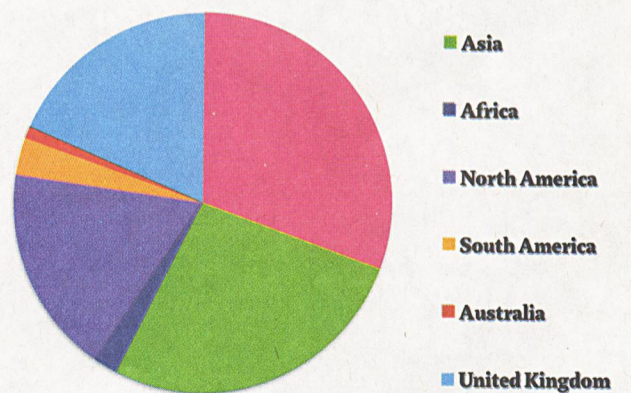


NORTH AMERICA - 13%

While the United States provides more students to the LSE than any country other than the UK, there are plenty of people from other countries in the Americas: 280 Canadians, 55 Mexicans, 4 Costa Ricans, 2 Guatemalans and one Panamanian, to be exact.

Graduate students by continent of domicile, 2010-11
Source: LSE Press Office

Graduates



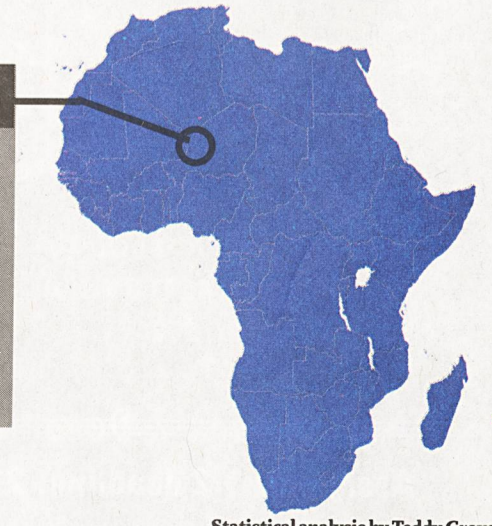
SOUTH AMERICA - 2%

South America has 75 per cent of the population of North America but sends 15 per cent of the number of students sent by their friends to the North. Despite its superpower aspirations, Brazil has just 63 students at the LSE this year, fewer than any of the previous five years. Where does Brazil expect to find its future leaders if not at the LSE? Are you the only Bolivian in LSE basket? The only Uruguayan at the University? Get in touch. We'd love to hear about you, your country and your on Houghton Street.



AFRICA - 2%

Sending just 185 students to the LSE, Africa is among the School's least-represented continents (there are 78 Australians on Houghton Street, and, perhaps not surprisingly, no Antarcticans). Kenya is the most-popular country of domicile for Africa, with 36 students at the LSE. Such countries as Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, the Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Senegal, the Seychelles, Sierra Leone and Tunisia, though, are decidedly less popular; just one student at the LSE hails from each of these nations.



Comment

Bringing democracy back to the Union

Online voting did little to encourage LSE-goers to attend the UGM

Ashok Kumar



The motion to bring back voting in the Union General Meeting (UGM) this Thursday is fundamental in building a democratic and student-led union.

The weekly UGM has been a part of our union since we were founded in 1897. We are the only students' union in the UK to have weekly UGMs and there is no denying the central role it has played in the history of the LSE. The UGM is where we as students were able to hash out the debates and vote to support student occupiers in the sixties, to boycott South Africa during apartheid, and last year establish a no-platform policy for fascists.

Chances are that if you're a first-year or taught master's student you haven't been to a UGM. So here's a crash course: The UGM happens every Thursday at 1pm in the Old Theatre. The reason there are no classes at this time is that every student has the chance to attend and propose, debate, and vote on union policy. All UK universities have elected 'councils', but the LSE Students' Union is the only union to make all of its decisions at its weekly mass meeting.

This all changed last spring when the Students' Union put its constitution reforms to referendum. Most of them passed with flying colours and have genuinely improved the union's functions. One, however, has been disastrous. By the narrow margin of three votes under controversial circumstances, the Students' Union removed the long standing tradition of voting at the UGM and replaced it with online voting. As a result we have witnessed stunningly low turnout to the

UGM and the removal of voting has no doubt been central to the decline of the UGM. Students are now saying, "I should go eat this steaming plate of Hare Krishna food instead of attending the UGM, because I can vote online anyway!" And that would be true.

The UGM has disintegrated into nothing more than a talk shop, in an empty theatre. Frankly, it has become an embarrassment.

The argument for the reform was that online voting would result in higher

numbers of voters which means more participation. This would be true if we defined 'participation' as clicking a button on your mouse. But the UGM is more than that. It presents a unique opportunity for students to engage in informed debate on local as well as global issues. It goes beyond simply voting; it informs, builds consciousness, and politicises students in a way that an online question could never do. The fact that people have to vote online is, at best, stifling debate and, at worst, eroding student democracy at our

university.

In many ways, the UGM is the centre of our Union. It is the beating heart and the breathing lungs. It is where we hold our union elected officers accountable, inform ourselves on union activities, and decide the direction of we want to collectively move as LSE students. There is room for debate on substantial matters which helps develop a kind of LSE citizenship among students, indeed a common feeling of belonging. Going only a few years back, the UGM was a flourishing

democratic institution in which hundreds of students would show up every single Thursday, ensuring the Old Theatre would be packed. What we've found this year is that even common sense proposals, such as the 'Students, Not Suspects' motion for international student rights, failed to meet quorum.

If we truly want to build a democratic and campaigning Union we need to have buy-in from students. Students have to know that they were there and had their chance to make their arguments. ☛



GOT BEEF WITH KUMAR? THINK ASSANGE WAS RIGHT? We want your Comment!

comment@thebeaveronline.co.uk

A fungus on both your houses

Why our politicians should start minding their language (in public at least)

Nathan Briant



Political spin and sensitivity to what the public is thinking has been used in British politics for a long long time, not just since New Labour: Bernard Ingham helping Margaret Thatcher out, Harold Wilson being pictured with the Beatles, Alec Douglas-Home probably not knowing who those cool kids referring to John, Paul, George and Ringo were talking about. Politicians have long known the value of keeping or getting the public, if at all possible, on their side: most of them want to keep their jobs, after all.

But looking through the annals of Google I found the following:

David Cameron: 10th October 2005, two months before he was elected Conservative Party leader, in the Daily Telegraph:

The Punch and Judy show is over: "To capture [voters'] imagination we must also adopt a new 1style of politics, with less of the Punch and Judy show that younger voters in particular find so alienating. We must win the battle of ideas."

(Funnily enough, it also contains the line, "This means not only proper control of public spending, but also a thoughtful and long-term strategy for tax reduction", which post credit-crunch looks a very long way away. That is, until about 2014, when George Osborne might realise that decreasing VAT once the deficit's been swept away might possibly be a vote winner.)

And then, just under five years later, in the first speech Ed Miliband gave as Labour leader on the 25th September at the Labour Party Conference:

'Let's be honest, politics isn't working. People have lost faith in politicians and politics. And trust is gone. Politics is broken. Its practice, its reputation and its institutions. I'm in it and even I sometimes find it depressing.'

So do I Ed, so do I, and I'm not even in it. But, on Wednesdays, you're not helping the cause or your own by calling George Osborne 'fungus' at Prime Minister's Questions.

PMQs is usually a bit raucous – two sides, the coalition and the rest, shouting at each other – but this week's seemed to take an even more unpleasant tone. It's not often I agree with the Speaker Berrow's lame protestations that 'the public don't like it', which make him look like an overworked and struggling primary school teacher – often I like watching a good verbal ruck on a Wednesday afternoon – but last week I found myself agreeing with him.

David Cameron said that Alan Johnson can't count after Johnson made another gaffe on Sky News the previous Sunday. Such a banal comment does not only damage Cameron – he can do far better than that – it damages the whole of the event and with it politics. Will it make Cameron more electable or more attractive to voters in 2015? No; and if anything it shows off the Eton Rifle which he says he's so proud to be – which is fine and understandable I suppose – but tries desperately to suppress or hide from view. Of course, if Johnson's got something terribly wrong then it would be folly for Cameron and his coalition's merry men and women

PMQs is usually a bit raucous – two sides, the coalition and the rest, shouting at each other – but this week's seemed to take an even more unpleasant tone

not to make political capital of it, but not in a way that descends way beneath what might be seen as Punch and Judy politics. Sure, call Johnson something, but don't reference his background: no-one likes it.

Likewise, Ed Miliband is not helping get the new politics hit the road. If he thought the old politics bad he should review what happened last Wednesday. For one thing, on the jibes themselves, the fungus thing's worse than not being able to count. I'd certainly rather be an innumerate human than sat on a toadstool

all my life or as a magic mushroom rooted from my damp hidey-hole and eaten in a student's dormitory in Hull. So, Miliband, don't do that sort of thing again.

Can we expect Miliband and Cameron to change their ways? Bluntly, no, no way. Ed Miliband hired some new guard dogs to help him out in the shape of the arch-Blairite former Times journalist Tom Baldwin and Daily Mirror man Bob Roberts before Christmas, and the attacks at PMQs were surely encouraged by them. The Punch and Judy politics is here to stay – I expect Wednesday was just a blip as far as how aggressive and borderline offensive it all was and that it will eventually settle down.

Who wants to dent the House of Commons' freedom of speech? Not me. Who can forget the countless hits that it's given us such as: Vince Cable's now hilariously or horrendously ironic 'Stalin to Mr Bean' jibe at Gordon Brown (in my mind far and above the comments of fungus and accusation of innumeracy because it was highlighting an actually well-loved character, and, in some episodes, Mr Bean actually does some quite industrious things, so he might have been paying him faint praise as well. Or maybe not) or Margaret Thatcher's 'No! No! No!', something she might also have repeated in bed several times with Denis over the years. I just wish that when I'm watching the Commons, the debate could be a little more constructive.

Our politicians need to be honest and straight-talking, not just able to call their opponents fungus, but even when they are that they can kick up a fuss. Jack Straw's 'white meat' comment last week, that men of Pakistani origin being especially likely to groom white girls, should plainly

have been either not said or, more likely, phrased better, especially by someone with such political stature and experience. There's such scrutiny on everything a politician or public figure says or, that said, types on Twitter, it's a wonder that talented people like Cameron, Miliband and Straw don't always see the full consequences of what they say. Perhaps sometimes they should think beyond the next YouGov or MORI poll, or a by-election they knew they were going to win or lose anyway – that might be better for everyone. ☛

We've done it before and we'll do it again

Resilience, positivity and breathing space can go a long way to make Pakistan bounce back

Asad

Rahim Khan



In light of recent events in Pakistan, the Economist said that its founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah's hope that it would rise to be among the greatest countries on earth, "rings with tragic irony today". It is really this sort of pretense that retards the whole debate. But though I cannot empathise with the Economist's viewpoint, I can understand it. What I don't have patience for is this glut of local apologists; the 'Pakistanis' who crop up after every hit and make full use of the world's magnifying glass on them to scream of how ashamed they are to be Pakistani in English weeklies and Facebook statuses. Please stop embarrassing yourselves; the country can do without your superb political analyses and sighs of resignation. It has done so for a long time. Instead, tackle the issue with your self-respect intact.

When Lebanese Premier Saad Hariri spoke at the LSE last term, he said in a tired voice, "Mine is a complicated country". But even the challenges of running Lebanon dwarf in comparison to the complexities of the second-largest Muslim country on Earth. And yet, it needs repeating that there is no hurdle too great for Pakistan, the creation of which was a culmination of a series of near-impossible achievements, to overcome. It has soldiered on through wave after deafening wave of floods, earthquakes, terrorist attacks, and political crises that would have crippled the morale of countless lesser nations. While Cameron and Sarkozy preached in Mumbai against 'exporting terror' as they salivated for access to Indian markets, Pakistan bore the loss of more civilian lives than Afghanistan in fighting that same 'terror' abstract last year.

There is no doubt that the country's current trajectory is one that it should never have been put upon, between sordid civilian rule and crude military interventions. But it is the same people that shout from the rooftops about Pakistan's imminent implosion that help push it toward that imagined scenario the most. The fact is that for all their braying, for all of the Republican dropouts at Fox News, the weeping, air-conditioned closet Pakistani bloggers abroad inhabit, and the droll Economist briefings, Pakistan is too big to fail. Because 180 million people wake up in the morning and make a life for themselves, and that driving force, with those sheer numbers, is far too difficult to upend, let alone radicalise.

But yes, granted the apocalyptic coverage it receives and the reactionary everyone-is-out-to-get-us perspective that encourages in return, Pakistan will continue to be in the purgatory it finds itself in. It is sickening that in the aftermath of the shooting of a Democrat congresswoman in Tucson, commentators had the nerve to compare the US to Pakistan. People found fault with the comparison itself, but just about everyone missed the point; that the country was implicitly used as a journalist's noun for a violent, radical mess, rather than the world's sixth-largest country with endless resilience and aspirations of its own. People need to start making room for it to breathe, to not impair their own rational, logical means of discourse every time the unfortunately drama-prone country makes headlines.

Why give it another chance, is usually what the self-proclaimed pragmatists say. Foreign governments and their presses surely forgive corruption and they can even turn a blind eye to slothful governing. It is when the precept of Islamic fundamentalism arises, in a world of an electable Geert Wilders, that everyone else takes for the hills like it were a malignant cancer, and writes editorials on how Pakistan is going the way of Taliban-run Afghanistan, though with nuclear weapons. Not giving Pakistan a chance means you condemn it to surviving, rather than realising its boundless potential. Investors will not pursue a country personified as a green and white grenade on magazine covers.

But again, why give it that chance? They argue that there are no angels in this dynamic, that Pakistan has long used militant groups as state assets in Kashmir, India and Afghanistan. That these retrograde policies will never let it progress. But let's shift the burden of responsibility here. For those blaming the army for cultivating a vicious culture of militant groups since the Soviet Union rolled into Afghanistan in 1979, what serious alternative were they expecting? It seems so easy now that the USSR has rotted from within, for both the West and Westernised Pakistanis, to totally fail to comprehend the concept of a Communist superpower next door. Having bulldozed through the Baltic and Central Asia, the USSR was making strategic gains towards ensnaring warm water ports in South Asia through Pakistan or Chahbahar in Iran. Upon the Soviet invasion, the US and Saudi Arabia waited and watched, then dove in behind Pakistan's resistance. The Afghan mujahideen were glorified in James Bond movies, then left to slaughter each other as everyone moved on with their lives when the Russians withdrew and Pakistan was left, as always, holding the ball.

Yet the wrong answer would be to blame the others. Just to name a few



Pakistani Flag
Flickr user: Mark Bickerton

though: the haplessness of Hamid Karzai and his druglord brother; the Bush/Cheney neoconservative adventurists that blindly went in, invigorated the Taliban, then thought of pushing them into Pakistan; the illegitimate Obama drone strikes that spawn ten militants for every woman and child they kill in the north. Within India, even the hardline Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has stopped talking of Pakistani incitement of Kashmiri rebels: Pakistan, the world knows, is stretched too thin in all other places, and, as the world also knows but often fails to men-

tion, those teenagers throwing stones at tanks in Srinagar are all homegrown.

No one is asking for exoneration – crudely put, the country's too vital to need it. There is a fringe element mired in poverty, in desperation, in a lack of all prospects of living in human dignity, that is very real and very dangerous. The recent assassination of the governor of the Punjab province is symptomatic of that rage. To bridge the divide, and to heal all the other endless wounds Pakistan inflicts on itself, would require sustained development. Years of political progress,

economic growth, and austere and effective leadership is what's necessary here. It would need the embrace of other countries, not their condescension, as well as constant initiative and genuine goodwill of its own people, not their self-doubt and resignation. This is a Herculean task, but all this can only truly begin when the cynicism felt for Pakistan by those within and without, be replaced by the pragmatic, undying idealism of its founder who realistically said not too long ago, that Pakistan would one day take its proper place among the greatest countries on earth. ☘

Thanks a lot, Julian Assange

Why Wikileaks crossed the line

Teresa

Garcia Alonso



More than 250,000 confidential American diplomatic cables from Obama's administration were recently disclosed by the Wikileaks website. This information revealed all kinds of details about the foreign policy conducted by the United States in recent years: covert operations, intelligence agency reports, transcripts of conversations with local politicians, or mechanisms of action in conflicts such as Afghanistan. The White House has said that this disclosure is a "dangerous action" and a "disrupt of American operations abroad".

By revealing this secret information, Wikileaks has influenced international affairs significantly. However, apart from the need to review and restructure the system so far used by diplomats, this

event opens a more relevant debate: how to balance the right of information with the importance of protection of sources and the security of a country.

It could be said that thanks to these leaks, people are enjoying the opportunity to learn the intricacies of international relations. So far, it has revealed through these documents, some abuses made by the authorities such as how the US Department of State gave instructions to its officials to obtain confidential information on the United Nations General Secretary and representatives of other countries and conflict zones. However, in some cases, the content of the cables is less important than the identity of the source. According to the US Department of State, the leaks "put the work and even lives of confidential sources of American diplomats at risk", and "it could deeply impact not only US Foreign Policy interests, but those of our allies and friends around the world". As it has been shown in the different publications of the cables, they contained private conversations and the names of people who provided information to the American diplomacy. Probably, these sources are now in danger, or from now

Freedom of information, the protection of sources and the security of the international system have not been balanced properly in this case

on, they will think twice when informing their contacts. This fact affects the public interest directly.

To get a story, a journalist often has to rely on information from people whose safety or careers would be at risk if it became known that they had provided it. Furthermore, if it became common practice to divulge such sources, the job of a journalist would become much more difficult. So the way the free press works is that journalists cultivate sources by promising them confidentiality. That is a commitment made in the service of greater public interest. It is thanks to this commitment that we partly enjoy freedom of information. It has been the case where journalists had to disclose their sources because it was a 'national security' need, as has happened a few times in England. The media has always defended its sources and claimed authorities' obligation to respect them in order to serve public interest. Should journalists not have the same consideration for governments in some cases? It is in the public interest that authorities, diplomats or international organisations rely on their sources to obtain information necessary for instance, to prevent an un-

fortunate event that could affect national security. By revealing these diplomatic cables, Julian Assange, the editor-in-chief of Wikileaks, has disclosed the sources of US diplomacy and this might have serious repercussions on national security, not only of the US but also other related countries. Therefore, freedom of information, the protection of sources and the security of the international system have not been balanced properly in this case. Then, after this historic leakage, it seems that it is more of an 'international responsibility' issue which is yet to be resolved. ☘

Studios or suicidal?

Can extreme study stress levels and debt drive you to take your own life?

Alexander Young



I'm no stranger to mental illness: whether it by some errant divination, pure chance or by my own subconscious volition, I have been and continue to be drawn to people with an array of afflictions pertaining to their mental faculties. Be it bipolar disorder, generalised anxiety disorder, anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, eating disorder not otherwise specified (EDNOS) or simple depression, I've been rather au fait with its functions through my social associations. It would not be unfair to say that I use the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) as a criterion in selection of who I will decide to spend time with. I make this point only to insulate myself from any criticism I would face for being 'ignorant' of mental health issues: while my experience is ultimately subjective and anecdotal, I cannot reasonably be accused of ignorance of how these illnesses manifest. Having established this, I wish to claim that the rise in numbers of student suicides is not due to the oft cited institutional factors but rather weakness on the part of students themselves and an ineffective psychiatry.

Causes often associated with an increase in the number of student suicides tend to consist of a narrow range of institutional factors within the tertiary education sector: debt, the stresses of study, and a lack of support from the universities for students chief among these supposed causes. Indeed, a representative of the NUS was quoted as saying "debt is the biggest cause of strain upon students and, unfortunately, as it increases the risk of depression and suicide is also likely to increase too." The spectre of debt seems

to me, upon examination, a lazy and misappropriated scapegoat. Any concern over maintenance and tuition fee loans is completely irrational given the nature and terms of the loans, with repayments being taken care of independently of the student and at a later date. There is nothing that students can actively do to reduce these debts while at university, so it is without reasoned basis that any anxiety to the point of depression and suicide would occur. It may be argued that concerns over overdraft and credit card debts would be more genuine concerns: this contention is something that I too will disagree with. The student overdraft and the student credit card are two of the easiest forms of credit that one with ever be able to obtain over the course of an entire lifetime: the terms of both are fairly relaxed in terms of punishment for non-payment (none in the overdraft case, and a comparatively low rate of interest on most student credit cards) and the overdraft is there as a facility for five years until interest is charged on its balance. A genuine concern over this issue can only really be borne of ignorance of the reality of the debt or of mismanagement of finances. A suicide over debt would point, in any case, to a weakness on the part of the student.

The 'study stress' argument is equally borne of individual weakness: I fail to see why the education system should be held responsible for the suicides of students due to the pressures of exams when a premise accepted by the student upon their attendance at a university is surely that there will be the pressure of exams to cope with. Universities are academic institutions; academic institutions require methods of assessing student progress in order to give qualifications in line with achievement; the most common method of assessing student progress is through examination: this, surely, entails that one university student is more than likely going to be subject to the stresses of examinations. The institutions cannot be held

accountable for students being ignorant or incapable of what they have signed up for.

The posited lack of support for students given by the universities, however, seems to be a more acceptable institutional factor to be held as 'blameworthy' in the incidence of student suicide. Coloured as this is by my relative experiences of Royal Holloway, University of London (RHUL) and the LSE, I find it an incredibly likely suggestion that certain institutions do more to help their students in the field

The institutions cannot be held accountable for students being ignorant or incapable of what they have signed up for

of mental health than others. Whilst I am fully aware that our SU provides an Advice and Counselling service, whose services are taken up by some, it is not a very well publicised service. Compared to RHUL, we have our services presented in a third-floor 'hole', whereas theirs take centre stage in many SU events: in a quick straw poll conducted in Crosslands at RHUL and the Tuns, we have a 30% awareness of

the SUs counselling services, compared to 90% at RHUL. Of course, this is an awful measure of true awareness, but the findings can't be said to mean nothing: they are at least indicative of relative efforts. There are, no doubt, people who would use the services available if they were more widely known. It could save a life.

I mentioned a 'broken psychiatry' in my opening spiel: this is indicative of my vehemence towards a profession declaring itself 'expert' in analysis of mental states. Weisstein (Psychology Constructs the Female) details how clinicians are never consistent in how they diagnose patients presenting with similar symptoms and how the results of the Rorschach, TAT and MAP tests are no better than blind chance for assessing certain characteristics of people. In *The Trap*, Adam Curtis makes great use of the findings of the Rosenhan experiments, by which 'false patients' were admitted into psychiatric hospitals in an attempt to challenge the prevailing norms of psychiatric clinical practice. All of the false patients were admitted, confirming that psychiatry was an imprecise discipline. If psychiatry were a more truthful discipline, it may be that those likely to commit suicide who had taken up facilities available for mental health issues would have been identified and thus been less likely to do so.

In closing, I don't believe that traditional reasons for student suicides stand up to much scrutiny. It may be that there are cultural factors within the student population which serve to precipitate suicides that are yet to be explored. The inconsistent nature of psychiatry serves to hinder the diagnoses of such mental imbalances and identification of social factors constitutive in the phenomenon of student suicide.

Quick COMMENT

How balls is leaving halls?

Not very. I was really excited at the prospect of having complete control over where I live, who I live with and what I do with my place

-Hyder Saleh, 2nd year LLB Laws

Very little compared to the euphoria I felt upon packing my last bag and leaving Huge Prison Halls. Goodbye and good riddance is all I have to say.

-Ahmed Alani, Design Editor, The Beaver

One can't fully experience London without living on their own and being independent.

-Nivedita Agarwal, 1st year BSc Mathematics and Economics

The most challenging part is finding an ideal location. I'm excited to have my own place, although it will be sad to leave halls life behind

-Vardhan Kapoor, 1st year BA Anthropology and Law

My hall was balls so moving out was great. Better location, better room for the same price.

-Ailin van den Honigkuchenpferdlande, 3rd year BSc Environmental Policy

It's intimidating but a refreshing change knowing I'm leaving after having memories in halls with a great friends network.

-Nik Adhia, 3rd year LLB Laws

I'll miss all of my three hundred flatmates! No, just five.

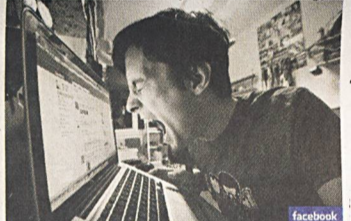
-Angelina Castellini, 2nd year BSc International Relations

Very balls. It's hard enough to leave your family at home, and now I'm leaving my family in halls too?

-Katy Green, 1st year BSc Management

The excitement of having your own space sadly fades away when you get hit by rats, noise complaints, and creepy hobo men who try to follow you inside your flat

-Musfira Shaffi, 2nd year BSc Sociology



NEXT WEEK...

Does Facebook make us selfish?

Send in your submissions! Email comment@thebeaveronline.co.uk



Psychiatric Ward
Flickr user: anima_1

Letters to the Editor

Sir - I am writing on behalf of one of our members Professor. Mundy. I was greatly perturbed to read in this week's Beaver "following concerns over Professor Mundy's chairing of the event". You did not contact Prof. Mundy for comment before printing this unfounded criticism. The School and the SU have both carefully reviewed the video of the meeting and neither has discovered cause for complaint in the chairing of the meeting. We note that you print without comment or reservation a statement by 'Student Rights' a body external to LSE who have previously been judged by the BBC to have misled them into printing a greatly distorted account of a meeting on Palestine at SOAS (see <http://www.bricup.org.uk/indexOld.html#032>). You also print Student Right's claim to have published a video of the event while not noting that LSE Palestine Society had published a video as soon as it had been processed after the meeting

We are concerned that Beaver prints unsubstantiated, unreliable and unchecked reports from outside LSE while not contacting LSE staff for comment before printing derogatory reports about them.

Mike Cushman
LSE UCU Secretary

Sir - I am writing further to last weeks' article 'Pan-Arab editor provokes tension on campus' for the relatively bizarre reason that I believe it treats me, and other students, too favourably and as a consequence grossly misrepresents Professor Mundy's firm and fair chairing of the Atwan event.

I would like to point out that I did not 'make continued efforts to have Professor Mundy choose students with a variety of opinions to pose questions', nor was it at any point necessary for me to do so. Such an assertion implicitly suggests firstly that it was possible for Professor Mundy to accurately know what particular students political affiliations are and secondly that my efforts were required to ensure Professor Mundy did not abuse her position as Chair through discriminatory malpractice. Both implied suggestions in last week's article are entirely false; Professor Mundy consistently picked audience members in a fair manner resulting in a wide range of opinions and viewpoints being expressed, including those of the President of LSE Israel Society. My sole interference with Professor Mundy's impartial chairing of the event was motivated from self-interest rather than magnanimity; I was aware of a certain member of the audience complaining about not being picked and I

wished to ensure that there was no reason for anybody to complain at the end of the event. Needless to say my attempts at placation were an utter failure.

It is clear to my mind that we need look no further than ourselves to find the causes of many of the problems at the Atwan event. I contributed through my interference with the chairing of the event for self-interest, others contributed through continuous interruptions of the Chair and speaker and others contributed through their incendiary personal attacks on the Chair and speaker. Whilst it is no doubt convenient for the students involved to appoint all blame to an academic, it is neither a fair nor accurate reflection of the individual accountability for the unfortunate scenes that occurred towards the end of Mr Atwans event.

I am personally grateful, as too is the Palestine Society, for Professor Mundy's firm and fair chairing of last terms event in extremely difficult circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

Zachariah Sammour
Chair of the Palestine Society

Sir - I was sad to see the inclusion of what appeared to be a clear case of racial stereotyping in the otherwise sober article on the Abdel Atwan event in last week's Beaver.

The article contained a photo of one of the typically typecast victims of racism today: a young, bearded Arab with a keffiyah and sunglasses. In this context, the image invokes thoughts of 'the Muslim terrorist' in the way tabloid mass media usually preaches. I feel it is unconducive to creating a safe environment for ethnic minorities on campus when a student society with many Arab members is linked to this - instead, we must fight these stereotypes in all their forms, together. That the man is furthermore shouting and chanting at what appears to be a demonstration in Algeria or Tunisia, where dozens of civilians have lost their lives in recent days, makes me wonder what the rationale was behind including this image. If anything, we should be mourning the deaths of these individuals fighting for justice like we would do in Burma, Gaza, Tibet or Western Sahara.

In future issues, I hope the editorial team will be more careful in selecting its graphic material to avoid perpetrating stereotypes of a minority already discriminated enough against in this country and beyond.

All the best for the new term.

Lukas Slothuus

Lukas - Thank you for your letter. Your concerns over the Atwan story, 'Pan-Arab editor provokes tension on campus' (12 January 2010), are refreshing. Too many ignore the power of images, instead scrutinising semantic differences of little consequence.

That you feel our decision to accompany the piece with an image of the front cover of Al-Quds Al-Arabi, the newspaper Abdel Atwan edits was a "clear case of racial stereotyping", however, is unfortunate. If the implication of your letter is that the image's inclusion was a deliberate effort to perpetuate the stereotypes you identify, then we want to make clear that no such intent exists at this newspaper.

Nor, as you claim, was the image's inclusion a result of negligence on our part. We wanted to give the piece colour and thought the front of Al-Quds Al-Arabi did well to demonstrate that the paper focuses on Arabic issues.

There is also an irony in your criticism - the original editorial decision was of course made by Mr. Atwan and his colleagues, who it is fair to assume take a sympathetic view of goings-on in Tunisia. Like ours, their decision to include the picture is defensible. The defining feature of Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution has been the spontaneous and wide-spread participation of everyday people. Thus, a picture of an impassioned protester seems appropriate.

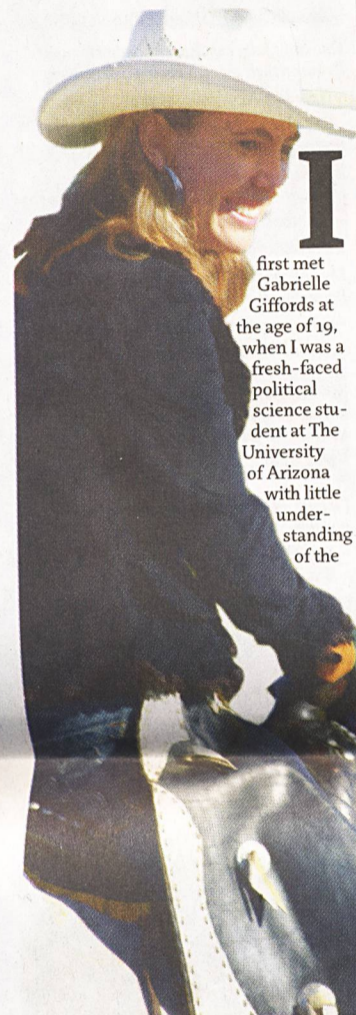
I hope you now understand the reasoning behind the action with which you were concerned.

We wish you well this term,
The Beaver Editorial Board

Features

The Gabrielle Giffords I know

Leslie Harris speaks of the Congresswoman's life and work



I first met Gabrielle Giffords at the age of 19, when I was a fresh-faced political science student at The University of Arizona with little understanding of the

American political system. A state legislator at the time, "Gabby" (as I knew her) took me under her wing – picking me up at my dorm to walk door-to-door in her district, showing me how to compile lists of donors for record-

keeping and thank-yous, and including me in campaign strategy sessions with the small team of experts whom she called on for help and advice. In support of my political interests, she gave me copies of writing that had impacted her political development – a copy of The Geneva Convention, The Right to Privacy by Caroline Kennedy, and All Politics is Local by Tip O'Neill. Her approach to politics, even then, seemed to me both incredibly intellectual but still genuine and home-grown. An increasingly rare combination in the modern American politics. I attribute this both to her background, and her strong independent streak. An intelligent and accomplished student, Gabby received a Fulbright grant to study in Mexico and a Master's from Cornell – and yet had returned to her hometown, Tucson, to run her family's tire business. I remember asking her how and why she decided to transition into politics, and her response was simple: as a small business owner and citizen, she found that she did not agree with much of what went on in local politics, and one day she realized that she could actually do something about it by running for office herself.

To say that Gabby loved Tucson would probably be an understatement – when I knew her, she owned a distinctly Southwestern-themed house, complete with a classic, hand-painted Vespa in the living room (engine removed), and a desert-landscaped front yard. She is a motorcycle aficionado with a quick laugh and warm smile who speaks Spanish, tirelessly attends town-hall meetings

and debates, and developed keen interests in issues unique to her region and district. In short, she lived, breathed and loved her job as a state politician. That she went on to win a highly-contested, historically Republican seat in the House of Representatives at such a young age bears testament to her commitment. Despite the demands of national politics, Gabby continued to spend as much time as possible playing an active role in her community – which is exactly what she was doing when Jared Loughner shot her at point-blank range.

When I opened The New York Times on Sunday evening and read the headline, Congresswoman Giffords Shot in Head," I was shocked and devastated. A moderate Democrat who married an astronaut and favors gun-ownership – Gabby is hardly orthodox, but neither is she divisive or incendiary in the expression of her beliefs. In fact, given the level of kindness and genuine interest she extended to others, she was the last person in American politics who I ever would have expected to be violently targeted. In the time since the shooting, journalists and pundits have tried to piece together a cohesive set of factors and motivations, many creating elaborate theories that seem to belie the actual facts. A popular left-wing suggestion has been that Sarah Palin's now-infamous cross-hairs map is to blame, which pinpointed locations of Democrats around the nation, prompting Republican voters to target and unseat them in the most recent round of elections. Other related theories hold that the angry Republican and tea-party politics have created a political atmosphere of hatred and intolerance, and that Loughner, the gunman, was a right-wing fanatic exposed to the wrong type of political messaging. From everything I have read, however, Loughner's grievances – though certainly political in content – speak more of a severe psychological disorder. Having both majored in psychology and (oddly enough) studied political assassins as an undergraduate, it seems to me that Loughner does not seem

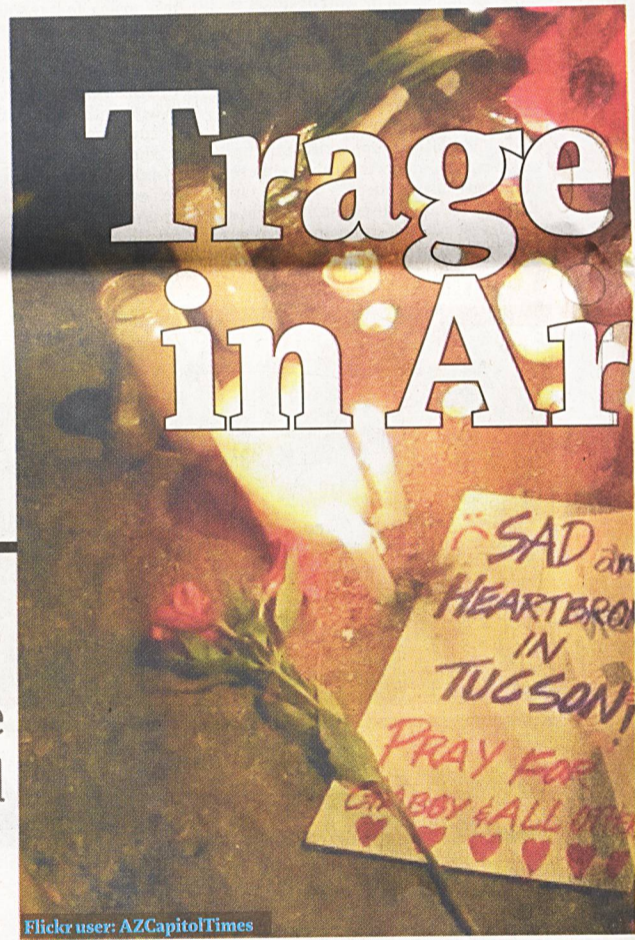
to fit the standard profile of a political assassin, and by most accounts his political views were skewed to the far-left. Rather than a substantively rational, politically-motivated actor, Loughner's words and behavior speak of an individual spiraling through psychosis – likely schizophrenia. The rambling, incoherent excerpts of blog postings and YouTube videos publicized on major news sites like CNN do not represent a person functioning rationally enough for political aims to have truly been at the core of his actions, nor do they mention or allude to Gabby. Rather, what we seem to have here is an increasingly deranged individual whose obtuse political and governmental grievances fell upon a proximate target in an unthinkable violent form.

This is not to say that that hateful political speech is just or condonable – it is not. Such things have no place in intelligent political debate, and I would further contend that public figures – especially those within the political sphere – have a social and moral responsibility to refrain from the use of needlessly incendiary, hurtful or divisive speech to promote and defend their causes. But I suspect that, as much as many people would like to cast this incident as the consequence of senseless mud-slinging and hate-mongering, the tea-party is not to blame here.

The heart of the matter, to me at least, is bigger, more fundamen-

tal, and more important than tea-party politics will ever be. It has to do with the state of mental healthcare, and of gun-rights in America: first of all, the extent to which such a mentally ill person went unnoticed and untreated, and secondly, the terrifying ease with which such a deranged individual was able to obtain an assault weapon. These are complex issues, to be sure, the remedies of which require social and political discourse that lies far beyond the scope of this article. But with the senseless deaths

of a federal judge and a nine-year old child, the injuries of 12 others, and a member of Congress in critical condition after surviving a bullet through her brain, these issues have never been more timely, or more relevant. Suffice it to say that the United States has more than just talking to do. ☛



Flickr user: AZCapitolTimes

A wounded stand

Paula Vanlaningham discusses the potential healthcare bill repeal

Debate about the gunman's motives has centered heavily around the highly-fractured political debate in America, the growth of right-wing extremism, and the legal limits of gun control.

In the hours and days immediately following the Arizona shooting, many speculated that Jared Loughner targeted Congresswoman Giffords because of her vote in favour of President Obama's healthcare reform bill. The bill, and Giffords's unflinching support of it, was a major issue in her 2010 campaign against Tea Party Republican Jesse Kelly.

As more details have emerged about Jared Loughner and his bizarre, personal grudge against Congresswoman Giffords, however, debate about healthcare reform's role in the shooting has been understandably sidelined. The incoming Republican Congress, which had announced an aggressive campaign to repeal healthcare reform only weeks before the shooting, has pushed back its timeline and somewhat softened its rhetoric. Nonetheless, the issue was at the centre of the Tea Party's campaign message, and a Congressional showdown is inevitable.

"This tragedy will weigh heavily on every member when they return, and we all hope that House business will remain focused on substantive policy differences, regardless of what legislation is considered next week," John Murray, deputy chief of staff to Majority Leader Eric Cantor of Virginia told Politico, an online political

magazine, last week.

Originally, the House leadership had scheduled a vote on their repeal bill for 12th January, but in the wake of the Arizona shooting, the vote was postponed. Policy insiders expect that it will take place some time in the upcoming week.

While healthcare reform grabs slightly fewer headlines in the wake of the Tucson shooting, it remains an important and divisive issue in America. Furthermore, in a country where over 47 million people do not have basic health insurance, it is interesting to question how much an injury like Congresswoman Giffords' would cost someone without basic health coverage.

The United States Congress has one of the most thorough and comprehensive health packages in the world. The moment a Representative is sworn in, they have the option to buy in to the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), which offers members a variety of different healthcare plans to choose from without the standard waiting period. As soon as a Representative picks a plan, its coverage is effective; most work-sponsored plans require a waiting period for new employees of up to a month or more before becoming active.

Additionally, 75 per cent of the healthcare premium under the FEHBP is covered by the federal government, which is considerably more than is managed under most employer-issued plans in the US. In September 2010, the Kaiser Foundation released a report showing an increasing trend among employers to

shift the cost of health insurance back on to employees. Since 2005, workers have seen their contributions to premiums rise by 47 per cent.

"With the economy struggling, businesses have been shifting more of the costs of health insurance to workers through premiums, deductibles and other cost-sharing," Kaiser President and CEO Drew Altman said at the time. "This may be helping to stem the rapid rise in premiums that we saw in the early 2000s, but it also means employer coverage is less comprehensive. From a consumer perspective, the cost of health insurance just keeps going up faster than wages."

For the 47 million Americans who are uninsured, however, the case is far more grim. Hospitals are required to treat any patient brought in to an emergency room, regardless of their ability to pay. However, once the injuries have been treated, hospitals will attempt to collect payment. It is possible for uninsured people in extreme circumstances to plead poverty, but it is difficult to qualify and can have disastrous effects on a person's credit rating.

Additionally, a study at the University of Buffalo recently found that among patients with serious injuries – trauma sustained from car accidents, gunshot wounds and the like – the uninsured have a higher likelihood of death. For example, even after controlling for factors such as gender, age, race and severity of injury, the study found that patients were 2.6 times more likely to die from a penetrating injury like a gunshot or stab wound.

The Obama healthcare plan, while not providing a national healthcare option, issued a number of new regulations governing insurance providers to take effect over the next five years and are designed to make healthcare far more affordable. As of 2014, most people will be required to have a health insurance plan, or face paying a separate tax.

The new Republican party made repealing the healthcare law one of the central focuses of their 2010 mid-term campaign. Primarily, the fear is that the provisions set out in the healthcare law will end up costing the federal government more than estimated while resulting in significant job-losses across the US economy. Indeed, the Republican leadership has decided to call their repeal bill "The Repealing of the Job-Killing Healthcare Law Act".

As Washington Post columnist Ezra Klein pointed out last week, the working title is hardly an example of "civil" political discourse, and it shows that the new Republican Congressional leadership is prepared to stick by the fiery, incendiary rhetoric they used to dominate the 2010 mid-term elections.

The bill took its title from the Congressional Budget Office report, which stated that the law is likely to "reduce the amount of labour used in the economy ... by roughly half-a-percent". Republican

leadership estimates that this is approximately 650,000 jobs.

In reality, however, this claim is questionable. The CBO's use of "labour" instead of "jobs" or "employment" is significant. "Less Labour" is not synonymous with "fewer jobs". Factors that reduce labour include any incentive that encourages people to work fewer hours, including tax cuts and increases in the minimum wage. Healthcare reform potentially reduces the amount of labour used in the economy because people paying less for coverage will have more income available and many will be inclined to work fewer hours.

Regardless, it is likely that the issue will come to a vote this week. Repeal will almost certainly pass in the House, where the Republican Party's stunning win in the mid-term election has given them a sizable majority. The battle in the Senate, however, is likely to be much more contentious.

Meanwhile, Congresswoman Giffords continues to make incredible progress back in Tucson, a testament to spectacular medical skill, the temerity of the human spirit and, at least in part, to good health insurance. ☛

Bowling for Tucson

The killings reveal more than ideological rifts, argues **Daniel Lahey**

Jared Lee Loughner's murderous rampage in Arizona earlier this month has understandably sparked a nationwide search for answers, particularly in the hyperbolic echo chamber of the American media. After the local Sheriff, Clarence Dupnik, a Democrat, implied at a news conference on the day of the shooting that the 'vitriolic rhetoric' pervading national politics was a contributing factor, the blame game began in earnest.

Particular focus has centred on the violent metaphors employed by prominent right-wing politicians and media figures in combating the policies of the Obama administration. Former vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin has garnered especially negative attention for her gratuitous use of gun-inspired rhetoric in the lead up to the midterm elections this past November. As has been amply reported, this included the placement of a crosshair

over the congressional district held by Loughner's principal target, representative Gabrielle Giffords, on a United States map. The argument put forward by many left-leaning commentators, both directly and indirectly, is that this violent imagery somehow encouraged Loughner to commit his crime. One prominent Democrat blogger, Markos Moulitsas, put the accusation quite bluntly when he tweeted: "Mission Accomplished, Sarah Palin."

America has been through a similar episode before, except with the roles reversed. In the aftermath of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold's 1999 mass murder at Columbine High School in Colorado, a moral panic ensued over violence and immorality in the popular media, which some believed had induced the pair to conduct their attack. That time, it was the political right that was on the offensive, with heavy metal artist Marilyn Manson under relentless attack in the place of Palin.

Just as it is believed that Loughner was politically engaged, meaning he was likely to have been exposed to the violent rhetoric that is now prevalent in the public discourse, Klebold and Harris were Manson fans. This led many right wing commentators to

infer that the shooters had been somehow inspired to kill by the dark, gothic messages contained in the rocker's music. At an anti-Manson demonstration, a right-wing speaker made the connection in this way: "Some will be so brash to ask if we believe that all who hear Manson's music tomorrow night will go out and commit violent acts. The answer is no. But does everybody who watches a Lexus ad go and buy a Lexus? No, but a few do." Harris and

Gun control is the one factor that most clearly extends across most major mass shootings in US

Klebold's enthusiasm for violent video games and films was also offered as an explanation for their actions.

Naturally, both Palin and Manson have flatly repudiated (refudiated) attempts to link them to the two respective shootings. After several days of conspicuous silence, Palin released a video in which she rejected suggestions that her use of violent rhetoric may have partly inspired Loughner to kill, referring to the accusations as 'blood libel'. Manson similarly dismissed arguments made in the years following the Columbine massacre that his music somehow served as a

catalyst for Harris and Klebold's actions. The artist countered that politicians and the mainstream media simply made him into a scapegoat due to his iconoclastic image.

It is impossible to determine with any degree of certainty the extent to which elements of the media may have prompted the shooters in both cases. If the heated debate surrounding this issue has achieved anything, other than further divide an already polarised country, it has been to divert attention from more satisfying explanations, most notably the easy availability of guns in American society. While the Tucson incident has evoked a relatively limited discussion on gun control, it is the one factor that most clearly extends across most of the major mass shootings that have occurred in the United States in recent memory.

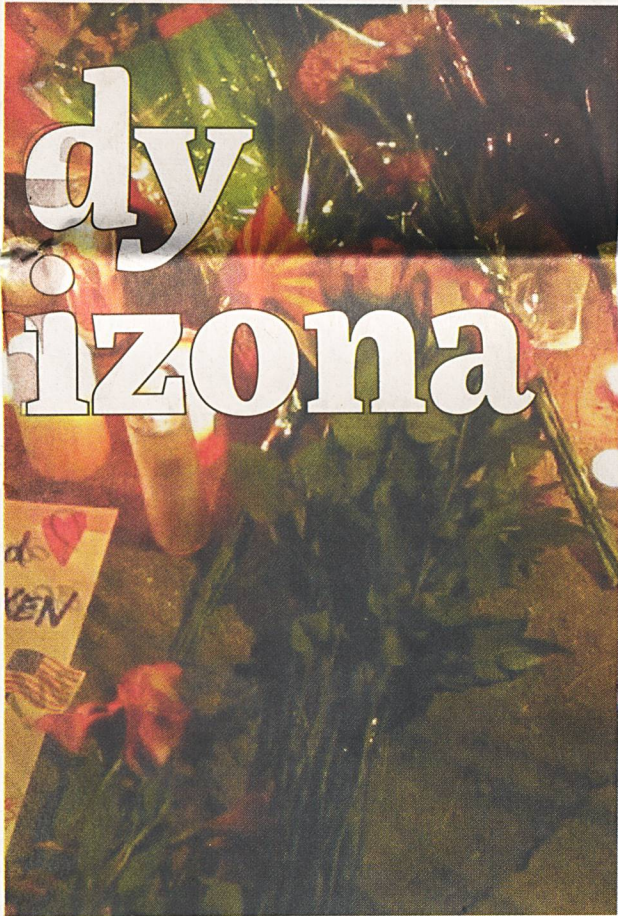
In the case of the Columbine incident, Harris and Klebold acquired weapons with ease through a friend, who simultaneously purchased two shotguns and a rifle at a gun show. Seung-Hui Cho, the perpetrator of the 2007 Virginia Tech massacre, which left thirty-two dead, faced no serious obstacles in legally purchasing the two semi-automatic pistols he used in his rampage. This occurred despite the fact that Cho had been declared mentally ill by the state of Virginia. Washington responded tepidly to the incident by passing very limited gun control measures aimed at keeping the weapons out of the hands of the insane. These were of no assistance, however, in preventing Loughner from legally obtaining the Glock handgun he used in Tucson less than two months before his attack. As with Cho, Loughner was widely believed

by his peers to have become mentally unstable.

In spite of the troubling degree of ease through which these weapons were obtained, American politicians on both sides of the political spectrum have largely shied away from confronting the obvious threat posed by lax gun control. After a long and divisive national debate over health care reform, few in the country are prepared to initiate what would likely be an equally acrimonious fight over the gun issue, particularly given the zealotry of many of its advocates.

In a cruel irony, few prominent Americans have been as fervent in defending Second Amendment rights as the principal target of Loughner's rampage. Giffords, who represents one of the most pro-gun states in the country, passionately defended the rights of gun owners as a congresswoman, and even bragged in public about her proficiency with a weapon.

The president, a former community organiser in Chicago's gang-ridden South Side, is undoubtedly familiar with the suffering that gun violence can inflict upon a community. Having already depleted his political capital on an ambitious health care reform agenda, which is now at risk under a Republican-controlled Congress, Obama no longer has the latitude he once did to make bold moves, however justified. Thus, instead of confronting the root cause behind these senseless acts of mass murder, the American public is subjected to a largely frivolous debate over the role of political rhetoric, which offers a convenient and entertaining diversion from an unpalatable truth. ☛



The war of ideas

Alex Welsby dreams of a new political discourse

political rhetoric. 'Crosshairs' is the phrase utilized by Palin's political action committee, SarahPac, which targeted around twenty Congressional districts for the Tea Party campaign during the previous Mid-Term elections. Representative Giffords was named on Sarah

Palin's political hit list because of her staunch support for President Obama's healthcare reforms and embryonic stem cell research. Other targeted Representatives included Ann Kirkpatrick and Harry E. Mitchell both in Arizona and around seventeen more stretching from Colorado to Florida. Although such a phrase is part of the hunting vocabulary associated with Palin, it has now propositioned itself as the new lexicon of hate.

The 'Crosshairs' image directly implores its audience to take a stand against the twenty House Democrats. Yet how far is this a tenuous link to what took place in Arizona or indeed a direct correlation? According to Facebook executive Randi Zuckerberg, 'Is Sarah Palin to blame?' was the number one question on the social networking site in the aftermath of the shooting.

Palin's aide Rebecca Monsour has since refuted that the now infamous image was a 'cross hairs', instead dismissing it as a 'surveyors symbol' that was never intended to incite violence; Palin however has freely admitted the image was a bulls eye. Why then should she be surprised at the backlash purported against her?

In a video statement released last Wednesday, entitled 'America's Enduring

Strength', Palin likened such criticism leveled against her campaign tactics as to that of 'a blood libel that serves only to incite the very hatred and violence that journalist and pundits condemn'. Yet, the compelling misuse of the term blood libel has merely served to propel Palin's dammed political rhetoric further. The fact that it was used to deny her political role in the shooting of the first Jewish Congresswoman from Arizona was a grave political miscalculation in the wake of the tragedy.

Such a statement has yielded much larger, puzzling ramifications to address consequently when politicized opinion does indeed go too far. Jon Stewart last week attacked FOX News for what appeared to be a barrage of unnecessary criticisms of the memorial service held for the victims. Despite the initial pretenses, pundits later began discussing how the seating arrangements could have been improved. Furthermore, the service was reported as being too positive and likened to a 'pep rally', whilst Arizona University professor Dr Carlos Gonzales who offered the blessing was called 'strange and unnerving'.

Stewart therefore quite rightly declared, "It is not a show! He did not open up a show! It is mourning with a 'u'! You are confusing a morning show, which you are on, with a show of mourning."

Yet, I find myself dumbfounded when I say that to a certain extent I agree with Sarah Palin when she states that heated political rhetoric is nothing new and as such cannot be solely to blame for the 'despicable act of this apparently apolitical criminal'. Political rhetoric and violent potential have always appeared to have a mutually beneficial relationship; the House of Commons government and Opposition benches are required to be two swords lengths apart whilst Palin argues that 'political figures literally settled their differences with dueling pistols.'

Whether or not Sarah Palin can be blamed for what happened in Arizona is a matter of contention; did she knowingly put a target on Representative Gifford's head? The asymmetrical criticism in the aftermath of the shooting alongside the wider concern over political rhetoric can-

not be dismissed so easily.

What happened therefore in Arizona is not a political tragedy but a tragedy with political ramifications, the backlash against Palin's 'Don't Retreat, Reload' is perhaps just the beginning of this political witch hunt. ☛

'Acts of monstrous cruelty stand on their own. They begin and end with the individuals who commit them.'

It does not appear that the shooting itself was the sole tragedy; instead the frightening potential of polarized political rhetoric has been brought to the fore. In a Quinipiac University poll published this week, fifty two per cent said they believed charged political debate could push unbalanced people to violence. Thirty six per cent of those surveyed blamed liberals whilst 32 per cent blamed conservatives for the harsh political rhetoric. However, 40 per cent stated that the shooting could not have been prevented, instead suggesting a combination of the failings of the US mental health system and the right to bear arms as the principal cause. How far exactly are US citizens rejecting the blame game? Despite what many media outlets have suggested, it is not necessary to lay blame at the feet of ex-Alaskan governor and 2008 vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin but instead to critically evaluate the strident tones of political language.

In the aftermath of the Tucson shooting, Sarah Palin has herself been targeted by the 'Cross hairs' of the ensuing



The Jasmine revolution

Gurdeep Chhina speaks of the recent developments in Tunisia

Following the forced departure of President Ben Ali, Tunisia has been drifting into chaos and unrest. The country's twenty-three year ruler was ousted in the face of protests which began in response to Tunisia's current economic and unemployment situation, but quickly exposed the deep-set frustrations felt towards an out of touch and oppressive regime. A state of panic and confusion looms over the North African nation as the power vacuum that the ex-dictator's departure has created remains to be filled.

Sparked by the suicide of a disillusioned youth, the wave of protests that eventually ended Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali's Presidency took everybody by surprise. Due to a state with a tradition of tight control, political unrest is extremely unusual in Tunisia. The country has long been portrayed by the West and its old ruler as a hub of democratic and economic stability; a far cry from the experiences of its ordinary citizens.

Tunisians have endured decades of curtailed political rights and restrictions on freedom of expression in exchange for slow but steady economic growth based on manufacturing and tourism provided by the authoritarian regime. However, a recent slowing down of growth combined with the exacerbation of the graduate unemployment problem has transformed unexpressed frustration at the government into an unsettling force for change which would eventually topple the oppressive regime.

The Tunisian economy has long since failed to accommodate the demand for high-skilled jobs that has come about as a result of rising levels of education. The flawed growth model of the country

has failed to fund new and innovative knowledge based sectors. The government also failed to make the business environment more transparent which is highly problematic for potential investors.

Economic problems, however, are not the reason why Tunisia became the first Arab nation to oust its leader through a popular uprising. As economic stability disappeared, so did Ben Ali's only claim to legitimacy. It became clear that freedom of expression was nonexistent within his autocratic rule, whether in elections, the media or the political party system. The only things which did seem to be present were a police state and an unashamedly lavish political elite engulfed in corruption.

As protesters gathered in the country's capital and the former President's numerous and desperate televised attempts to appease the population failed, he was on Friday forced to resign and flee the country. Confusion and chaos followed with looters and violent gangs taking to the streets of Tunis as it became unclear who would fill the vacuum that Ben Ali's departure had created.

It seemed as if little had changed when the Prime Minister, long described as 'Ben Ali's man' took charge of the country. The man who was very much at the heart of the old regime and associated with the failed economic policy of the past was soon replaced by speaker of the Parliament Mohamed Ghannouchi. The constitutional council ruled that he had roughly two months to arrange and call new elections.

The world has watched what has been dubbed as Tunisia's 'Jasmine revolution', and the ousting of the country's ruler has already been compared to that

of the Romanian communist dictator Ceausescu. There is a feeling of accomplishment amongst the Tunisian people. The sixty who died in clashes with police have become martyrs. Yet this optimistic approach is flawed. There is a danger that the seat of one authoritarian dictator can simply be filled with another.

The future of Tunisia still remains undecided. Who will fill the gaping power vacuum? Another oppressive regime dominated by the army and the previous political elite? Or could this signal a new age for Tunisia, one of democracy, liberalised media and an open and transparent political system?

What is needed from the interim administration is clear signs of change. If political and economic reform is on the agenda, then this needs to be stated before the next election. Only this will set the difficult course of nation building in the right direction. If decisive action is not taken, then there is a danger that the weak opposition characterized by divisions and deference to the old regime, could waste this hard-earned opportunity.

Already rioting and violence in Tunis has left more than sixty dead and the fatal fire at Monastir prison has not painted a picture of huge optimism regarding Tunisia's future. As unrest continues people have been forced to form vigilante groups and take the law into their own hands in order to defend their neighbourhoods from looters and gangs suspected to be the militia associated with the ousted leader. The army, which has been quick to move and seems to be absolutely everywhere,

poses a real danger and represents the threat of the return of oppressive rule to the country. The military has historically played a dominant and influential role in Tunisian politics, and old habits, it seems, die hard.

As Tunisia attempts to adjust, the leaders of the Arab world watch closely. The causes of discontent within Tunisia—oppression, corruption and unemployment—are all too familiar to its North African neighbours. Algeria has already seen protests, sparked by a hike in food prices. Will other nations follow suit and oust their out of touch leaders with the loud sound of their opposition? Or will the already ensuing turmoil in

Tunisia kill appetite for change amongst other Arab populations?

The next few weeks will be crucial for the country, as the build up to elections will be telling of Tunisia's future. There is a real chance that political reform could create the basis for a flowering democracy that will finally begin to meet the needs of the population. It is also true that there is a danger that the army could still cast a long shadow on the electoral outcome. Neji Broui, a renowned member of the journalist's trade union who has been on the receiving end of the regime's brutal and oppressive treatment, summed up the country's situation; "I woke up this morning thinking, 'Was this all a dream?' Now we have to prove it wasn't."



In the wash of sensational headlines following Wikileaks's November release of classified government documents, it has become difficult to separate the real issues from the hype. Amusing embassy memos about Moammar Gaddafi's "voluptuous" nurse overshadow discussions of government transparency. The sexual liaisons of, and subsequent legal charges against Wikileaks founder Julian Assange detract from debates over public disclosure. However,

A widely held opinion amongst journalists appears to be that Assange's occasionally reckless and calculating tactics make his cause unworthy of support

beyond the embarrassing critiques of international leaders, and less visible than the mysterious and perturbing character of Assange, simmers a quieter story—that of a divided press, unsure of how to address the potential prosecution of a man many journalists are reluctant to accept as one of their own.

The recent U.S. District Court subpoena of Twitter requesting account information for select people connected to WikiLeaks indicates that the US government's investigation into possible charges against Assange has not slowed. Many have criticized the threat of prosecution for actions connected to the November leaks as an attack on the freedom of the press. However, in the face of legal action that could pose a significant threat to the future of their institution, the mainstream US press has remained surprisingly quiet. The New York Times, a distributor of the November leaks, has not released a statement on the subject. Other prominent

organizations including The Associated Press, The National Association of Broadcasters, and the National Press Club have also chosen not to comment.

Assange has consistently referred to himself as a journalist and the WikiLeaks homepage clearly defines itself as a "non-profit media organization." The journalistic community, however, appears to be less embracing of him. Rather than stepping up to his defense, The Overseas Press Club of America's Freedom of the Press Committee criticized Assange's recent media exposure stating, "if anything, he enjoys a little too much freedom of the press." A widely held opinion amongst journalists appears to be that Assange's occasionally reckless and calculating tactics make his cause unworthy of widespread support. Lucy Dalglish, executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, echoed this distrust of Assange in an interview with McClatchy Newspapers explaining, "I think people are a little apprehensive because he was releasing information last summer he had an agenda to bring down the U.S. government."

Newsweek's Ben Adler explored this issue, proposing three possible explanations for this void in journalistic support: journalist's refusal to take an advocacy position, suspicion of Assange's objectives, and disapproval of Wikileaks' tactics. Contributing to all these factors is journalistic reluctance to align themselves with Assange's controversial mission, practices, ethics, and interests. Assange's anti-government agenda includes an activist component that is incompatible with US expectations of an objective press. As a result, his self-proclaimed journalist title has been called into question. Further complicating Assange's journalistic identity is the structure of WikiLeaks itself. As a digital dumping ground for information, the site does not perform the investigative or original content creating functions expected under the traditional understanding of a media organization. The issue of whether or not the new practices employed by WikiLeaks can be considered journalism, and by extension Assange a journalist, has generated an ongoing and as yet unresolved debate.

Many journalists are themselves concerned with the potential dangers of Assange's leaks and are eager to distance his practices from their own. In a statement to Adler, Columbia journalism professor Sam Freedman took issue with Assange's "recklessness—the disregard for the consequences of human lives." This perceived breach of journalistic integrity and responsibility undermines feelings of

Assange's identity crisis

professional solidarity and has caused many members of the press to exclude Assange's from their midst. The New York Times' chief Washington correspondent David Sanger did just this in an interview on NPR's Fresh Air where he admitted that he did not consider Assange a journalist explaining, "he's coming to this with a political motivation."

The definition of the title "journalist" and its applicability to Assange will inevitably feature heavily in a US trial against him. However, whether or not it should factor into broader journalistic support for

his cause is less clear. The questions remains: is agreement with Assange's use of free speech a prerequisite to supporting his right to exercise it? How should members of the press reconcile their disapproval of Assange with the threat of government measures that could limit an individual's right to publish? Prosecution of Assange has implications far beyond the Wikileaks case. Whether or not journalists wish to accept Assange as their peer, his fate will have an effect on their own.

Assange's professional identity lies in a gray area. He is not easily separated from the journalistic

Elizabeth Lowell ponders on the definition of journalism

Whether or not journalists wish to accept Assange as their peer, his fate will have an effect on their own

community, despite its consistent efforts to do so. Thus, any action against him could set the precedent for future legal action against other journalists who publish content conflicting with government interests. Historically, US journalists have enjoyed broad press freedom under the protection of the First Amendment. Assange's case could open the door for legislation restricting this freedom, a prospect that certainly does nothing to further endear him to the media establishment. With stakes this high the press' desire to distance itself from Assange is understandable. One does not have to be a supporter of Assange to foresee the serious effects his case could have on the future of investigative journalism. Unless the WikiLeaks case can be effectively framed as not involving journalistic practices, his fate will have ramifications for the entire journalistic community.

In the end, journalists find themselves in an exceedingly difficult position. To defend Assange is to accept into their ranks an individual whose methods and agenda many of them find objectionable. To justify his opponents is to lend support to government action that could infringe on their own rights in the future. In light of these options it is perhaps not surprising that so many outlets have chosen to remain silent. The more elusive question is, how long can major media outlets avoid taking a position and when the time comes, on which side of the issue will they stand?

Drowning Queensland

The floods will have lasting consequences, writes **Tatum Summers**

In a country more accustomed to bracing the hardships that accompany drought, the torrential rain and consequent devastating floods in Queensland, Australia have come as a complete unprecedented shock to its inhabitants. What is being dubbed 'Australia's Katrina' is due to heavy rainfall in Queensland since November, and has resulted in 75 per cent of the state to be declared a 'disaster zone', as well as 16 deaths and 53 people still missing.

Australians have watched in disbelief as waters surge from overflowing rivers to heights peaking at 4.6m, just short of the all-time high recorded during the 1974 floods which resulted in 14 deaths. Scientists have put forth the theory that the current state of strange weather patterns in the world – which includes flooding in Australia, Brazil and Sri Lanka – is likely due to the 'La Niña' phenomenon, whereby a drop in the temperature of water in the Pacific Ocean has intense repercussions in the form of heavy rainfall for certain areas.

For the population of Queensland, the floods have taken an incredible toll. Twenty thousand homes in Brisbane, Australia's third largest city, have been inundated with water, and thousands across the state have been forced to evacuate their homes, leaving their possessions in the path of raging, unforgiving torrents of water. Residents of affected areas have been forced to rely on the charity of friends or family, while others are living in makeshift community centres – upon visiting these victims, Prime Minister Julia Gillard said that their stories both swelled and broke her heart.

Many who did not escape in time however have been rescued from their rooftops by helicopter, although not all have been so fortunate. The story of one such boy, thirteen year old Jordan Rice from Toowoomba – one of the worst hit towns in Queensland – touched the hearts of Australians and indeed observers from all over the world. The young boy, known

to be 'terrified' of the water – as he could not swim – sacrificed his own life so that his ten year old brother could be rescued instead. Both Jordan and his mother perished when they could no longer sustain their grip on the tree they were clinging to whilst waiting for the rescuer to return. Jordan is now being hailed as a hero in Australia for his courage and selflessness in asking the rescuer, a passerby, to "save my brother".

Economists have predicted that the disaster could incur a total cost amounting to \$13 billion

The example of Jordan Rice illustrates the resounding fortitude of those dealing with this unfortunate calamity, and as a visibly emotional Anna Bligh, Premier of Queensland, addressed the public she reminded them "We are the people they breed tough north of the border. We're the



Flickr user: Salvation Army IHO

ones that they knock down, and we get up again". Up again they will eventually get, with clean-up preparations already well underway in some areas as people sift through the sludge and destruction left behind in the remains of their homes. Economists have predicted that the disaster could incur a total cost amounting to \$13 billion, and are warning of the effects the disaster will have on Australia's growth this year, which fared comparatively well following the global financial crisis but is now likely to slow.

One of the most significant economic effects of this flooding is the impact to the coal industry. Australia is the largest supplier of coking coal in the world and comes in at second in supplying thermal coal – the floods, which have made transportation of goods near impossible, increased the world coal price last week to a two-year high. This holds implica-

tions for the steel-making industry, which relies on coking coal for production, and the worrying prospect of a global steel shortage is looming – companies Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton saw a drop in their shares of more than 2 per cent last week. Agriculture, another important sector of the Australian economy, also suffered. The floods struck with hopelessly bad timing during the Australian summer harvesting period, and have forced farmers to leave acres of ripened crops to go rotten, as the prospect of harvesting them – not to mention transporting them through the flooded roads – is impossible. Scientists are also warning that the overflowing of fresh water from the rivers, which contains a "mix of nutrients, sediment and pesticides from agricultural run-off, plus currently unknown amounts of trace metals from flooded mines" could seriously harm parts of the Great Barrier Reef, the

state icon of Queensland which generates up to AUD\$4.3 billion every year.

The situation overall seems very dire indeed, and Prime Minister Gillard has warned that it is likely to get worse for many in Queensland. They have not only lost fellow Australians, livelihoods and worldly possessions, but have also been warned of the threat posed by crocodiles and deadly snakes that inhabit the region and are now present in the sewage-infested flood waters, as well as the horrendous menace of looters, of which ten have been arrested by police. The clean-up action is predicted to take months if not years, with particular significance resting on the state's hugely important infrastructure. Analysts estimate that this reconstruction will at least boost the economy somewhat and add to the country's total output – until then, the outlook is bleak to say the least.

A protracted recovery

Bianca Nardi describes the problems which Haiti faces a year onwards

It has been a year since the magnitude seven earthquake hit Haiti, killing around 230,000 people and leaving over one million homeless. After patchy attempts at reconstruction, thousands are still living in temporary tents and corpses are still being found amongst rubble in the streets: only 5 per cent of it has been cleared. A cholera outbreak has hit the country and the presidential elections last November were postponed due to claims of fraud, leaving a damaging political vacuum. Meanwhile, many Haitians are now openly hostile towards foreign aid workers. There is still a lack of infrastructure, unexplained by the billions of dollars donated by foreign governments and NGOs alike. American households donated over a billion dollars to the re-construction of the country: only about half the amount raised was spent. Whereas the short-term focus was keeping people alive – through providing imminent medical

help, bottled water and supplies – a year after the disaster it is argued that rebuilding should be the main concern. There have been complaints that not enough has been spent on permanent construction and development, such as building hospitals, houses and a water treatment plants. For more than a year, many have been living in tents without electricity or treated water. The economic impact has been just as drastic. Millions were left without a source of subsistence, and unemployment rates, although high even before the earthquake, have shot up. These difficult living conditions have helped the spread of diseases and crime – hundreds of women have suffered from rape, cholera and shortage of amenities.

Cholera has hit Haiti strongly. United Nations Peacekeepers have been accused of spreading the disease, stemming from reports that tanks on a base leaked into a tributary of the Artibonite River, where locals bathe and drink. Despite the UN's

denial of these claims, hostility turned to violence. Cars were torched, police stations set on fire, and stones thrown at the soldiers. The death toll for the cholera epidemic has soared beyond a thousand, and the fact that cadavers infected with this highly contagious disease are lying on the streets is all the more cause for concern.

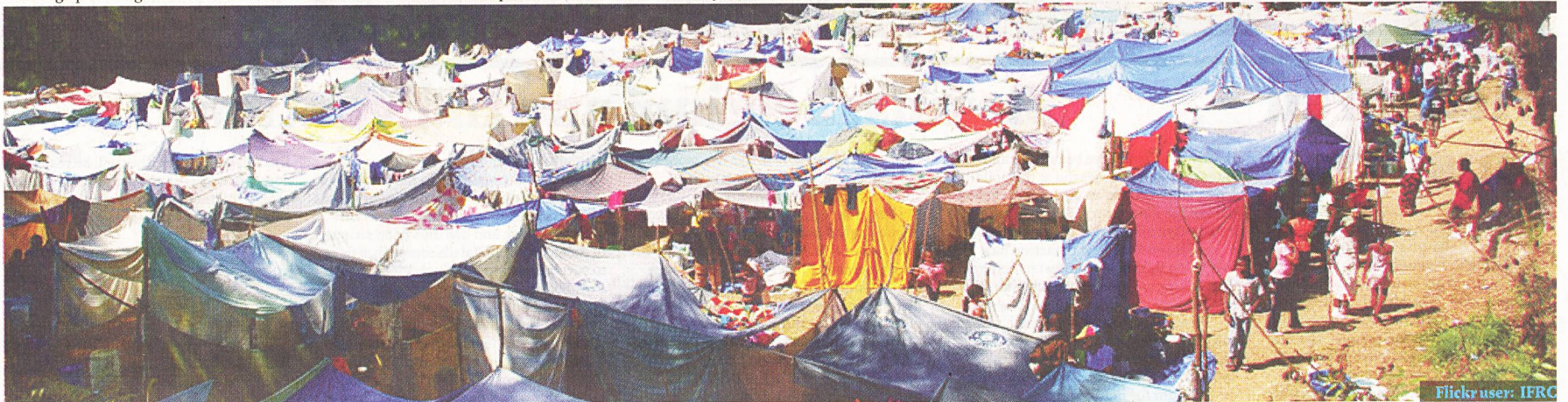
According to NGOs working in Haiti, progress is limited by the lack of communication between the government and international entities providing aid. On Monday, organizations including the Red Cross, Action Against Hunger and Action Aid highlighted in different statements that political instability and the inefficiency of the Haiti government has made it difficult to work towards the country's recoveries. The release of money from the American fund is a bureaucratic and slow process, and half of the amount promised to Haiti are still blocked by Congress. Additionally, out of the 2.5 billion dollars

given by the Interim Commission for the reconstruction of Haiti in 2010, only 45 per cent of it has made it to the country. The distance between plan and practice is great, and there can be no movement towards reconstruction of infrastructure without access to these means.

International bodies were hopeful that the November elections would serve as a source of stability and leadership after the earthquake, but its outcome is still undefined. There were no elections in October, and as the current president René Préal's mandate ends on the 7th of February, he remains without a successor. The second round of elections was postponed due to reports of fraud and appeals to recounting of the first round of voting by the three main candidates. Although Haiti's authorities are criticized for the lack of progress in reconstruction, it must be taken into account that living conditions in Haiti were already precarious before the disaster. Only a third of Haitians had

access to safe water, and half of children attended school. Most of the population lived in poverty. The earthquake shattered any hopes of short-term development in the poorest country in the Americas.

Frances Robles, a foreign correspondent from the Miami Herald at Port-au-Prince commented: "you don't see construction cranes, you don't hear bulldozers – you don't hear the roar of a city building itself up from the ashes." The international response to the tragedy in Haiti was immense, but the attempts at the rebuilding of the country are moving at a dangerously slow pace. The 'temporary' campsites are now both a health hazard and violent. Care must be taken so that they do not become permanent slums. This anniversary is not one to be celebrated – it serves as a reminder of the urgency of Haiti's condition.



Flickr user: IFRC

A 'bye' for the Tories

Jack Tindale reflects on the coalition government's first electoral test

The first by-election held since the formation of the coalition was always going to be unusual. Quite apart from the extraordinary circumstances that brought about the poll, caused by the result being declared void after the less-than-savoury tactics employed by Labour's Phil Woolas, the occasion to gauge the national political environment is worthy of note.

Firstly, the result must ultimately come as a relief to the Labour Party and especially to its leader, Ed Miliband. Rumblings over his leadership have been silenced for the foreseeable future, although it remains to be seen just how severe they were in the first place, no matter how his opponents in the media attempt to portray him as a hybrid between Lenin and Mr. Bean.

Whilst Labour winning this seat should never really have been in doubt, especially with the recent VAT rise and proposed cuts to police numbers all resonating with voters in "Old and Sad", the fact that the new MP, Debbie Abrahams actually won a greater share of the vote than in the landslide general election of 1997 is testament to the strong campaign run by the Labour Party and the hordes of eager activists, this commentator amongst them, who descended upon the historically marginal seat on the border between Yorkshire and Lancashire. Whilst animosity between traditionally Labour-supporting Oldham and the more affluent, right-wing leaning hill-villages of Saddleworth may not be on the same level as during the Wars of the Roses, the varied nature of the constituency nevertheless makes it a good bellwether as to the prevailing political mood.

However, Labour should not become too carried away by the result. Whilst transforming a voided majority of 103 into one of over 3500 is positive news for the

Rumblings over Ed Miliband's leadership have been silenced for the foreseeable future, although it remains to be seen just how severe they were in the first place, no matter how his opponents in the media attempt to portray him as a hybrid between Lenin and Mr. Bean

reds, it is worth noting that opposition parties usually perform well in by-election. Victories for ruling parties are rare, the last time the incumbent government gained a seat at a by-election was in 1982, when the Conservatives triumphed in Mitcham and Morden in the mist of a divided left-wing vote between Labour and the SDP. Indeed, despite being firmly in single figures in national polls, the fact that the Liberal Democrats were actually able to marginally increase their share of the previous vote will come as some relief to Nick Clegg, especially as voters do not always appreciate being forced back to the polls, regardless of the justification for doing so.

The LibDems have developed an exceptionally well developed by-election machine. Their candidate, Elwyn Watkins, was well-known locally, with the local party structure clearly focusing on his personality rather than the national picture. To have maintained his performance so effectively is testament to how well the LibDems are able to fight individual contests, although it remains to be seen how well the Party will be able to recover from their current Icarus-like performance since the first electoral debate.

Therefore, of the "big three" contenders, the worst performance in the by-election was had by the Conservatives, who saw their vote halved from May when they then ran a very close third. Despite having an excellent candidate in local businessman Kashif Ali and support from a strong local party, the Conservative campaign never really sparked up until the final week, by which time it was clear that victory would go to either the Liberal Democrats or Labour. Whilst it is true that third-placed parties are historically squeezed at by-election, a sentiment echoed by the permanently frazzled Conservative Party Chair, Baroness Warzi, the slump in support for the Conservatives

could be an area of concern for the blues.

The tacit support that many people may feel was given by Conservative ministers for their coalition partners, from David Cameron "wishing the Liberal Democrats well" to the warm support given by the International Development Secretary, Andrew Mitchell, in "doing everything we can to help Watkins win" will not have lessened concerns from the Conservative grassroots that Mr. Cameron would like the coalition to continue beyond the current parliament. Such opponents of fielding "Coalition Candidates" may feel vindicated by this result, despite collectively polling more than the Labour candidate, I remain sceptical that left-leaning LibDem voters and the more right-wing Conservatives will universally endorse an "official" candidate from the opposing party, a view shared by Tim Montgomery from the influential "Conservative Home" website.

The first by-election of 2011 holds little in the way of answers to how the coalition is holding up. The LibDems clearly were able to buck the national trend by holding their a good second place, Labour have obviously gained from simply opposing unpopular decisions made in Westminster, safe in the knowledge that any promises made will in all likelihood be redundant by the time of the next General election and the Conservatives will be looking at how best to approach future contests. The next by-election has already been confirmed in the South Yorkshire seat of Barnsley Central, this correspondent's home constituency, caused by the resignation of the latest casualty of the expenses scandal. There, the only questions will be on the BNP vote, voter turnout is and finally, how far over 50 per cent Labour will reach. Regardless of the result, the by-election there will be of little interest to the national media.

WHAT IF...

...the French Mutiny had been Successful?

Jack Tindale

The famous treatise on the historic forces of "English Socialism" by the former Commissioner for External Affairs, Eric Blair, celebrated its sixty-second anniversary last year and it is clear that his vision of a nation standing firm as "The Last Man in Europe" remains alive today. Despite ideological opposition and propaganda from our enemies, the Worker's Union of Britain looks forward to yet another new decade, despite all efforts by the capitalist powers of Central Europe to destroy us.

Few alive today will remember the victory of the workers over the last bourgeois government in 1921, when the Chamberlain administration and the class-traitors of the Labour Party sought to destroy the wave of industrial action provoked by the broken underclass of industrial workers. Even fewer will even know of the shaky coalition formed by the handful of dissident Labour MP's, and Syndicalist representatives from the military and trade union officials which met even as the final Royalist garrison in Dover held out to allow the old Royal Family to flee to Canada.

The formation of our Union ultimately has its origins in the decision of our French comrades-in-arms to reject the forces of Imperialism during the Great War of 1914-1919. Beset by the forces of capitalism forcing them to fight against their will, the decision by the army to reject their orders and capitulate set in motion a series of events which would lead to the end of the war on the Western Front. The fall of Paris and the subsequent war of attrition against the British Isles eventually forced the Lloyd-George government to sue for peace. However, even as the children of the war starved, the powers in Whitehall attempted to preserve the corruption of the British Empire, at the cost of all honour for the martyred workers. Beset by economic hardship and domestic unrest, the government fell, only to be replaced by an even more hard-line one. The formation of the "Congress of Trade Unions" and the subsequent march on Parliament set in line the events of the "British Revolution", a glorious event in the history of Syndicalism, most recently portrayed in Comrade Loach's 2009 film, "Land and Freedom".

The arduous first decade of the WUB has been documented by countless authors, yet the finest work on the subject remains Comrade Hobsbawm's three-volume "Empire's End". The ideological debates which took place over the period is too complex to summarise in a memorandum of this length, yet it is clear that the debate between the Totalitarianist Faction led by future General-Secretary Oswald Mosley and his predecessor James Maxton's Federationists was the most ardent. Maxton's assassination whilst on a visit to the Commune of France was the defining moment of this debate, allowing the Totalitarianists to gain the majority influence within the Congress of Workers.

Comrade Mosley's long and distinguished term as Union leader saw the consolidation of the WUB as the primary force for Anarcho-Syndicalism and the formation of the powerful industrial block within Western Europe. Whilst the German Empire and Commonwealth Federation remain barriers to the freedom of the industrial working class, the growing presence for the United Soviets Party in the Russian Duma and the recent successors for the American Labor Party all show the inevitable march of history against the triple-headed-hydra of Imperialism, Capitalism and Conservatism.



Flickr user: bisgovak

Measured musings

Indignation reached heights that in a much publicised YouTube video, Belgium's most famous actor, Benoit Poelvoorde swore that he would let his beard grow until the country's politicians agreed to form a ruling coalition. This declaration, source of ridicule in neighbouring nations, should not be taken lightly, for Belgium is facing one of its longest political crises in history. It has been more than 200 days since

the last elections have been held, and the leaders of those successful at the polls have yet to come to an agreement on how to manage the country. Beyond the linguistic divisions which plague the country, a general sense of dissatisfaction has overtaken Belgians; a protest to demand a functioning government is scheduled for late January.

Meanwhile, the recent French sensation is a short manifesto written by ninety-three year old Stéphane Hessel, member of the Résistance and later ambassador for France. The work's title

prescribes its readers to live in a state of indignation, justifying its anger by comparing the ambitions and ideas of the Résistance movement during the war, to how far the country has now departed from this vision. With the same spirit, Hessel reminds the French of the values of economic solidarity, endangered by the liberalization of numerous sectors which were once under the eye of the state. Trapped between a failed effort to counter Sarkozy's pension reform and a left-wing party shaken by a crisis of leadership, the French have happily turned to Hessel's

revolutionary enjoiner.

Both countries seem in the throes of a search of identity. France no longer stands as a model of economic success met with solidarity, and has thus been stripped of its unique political discourse in a fight to survive in an increasingly globalised world economy. Belgium faces the looming likelihood that its existence is only a matter of time. In addition, given its high levels of public debt and the uncertainty of its future, many are beginning to worry that financial markets will lose confidence in the country's solvency. It seems a long

road ahead before either will be ready to come to term with these profound dilemmas. Until then, Mr. Poelvoorde's beard can keep on growing.

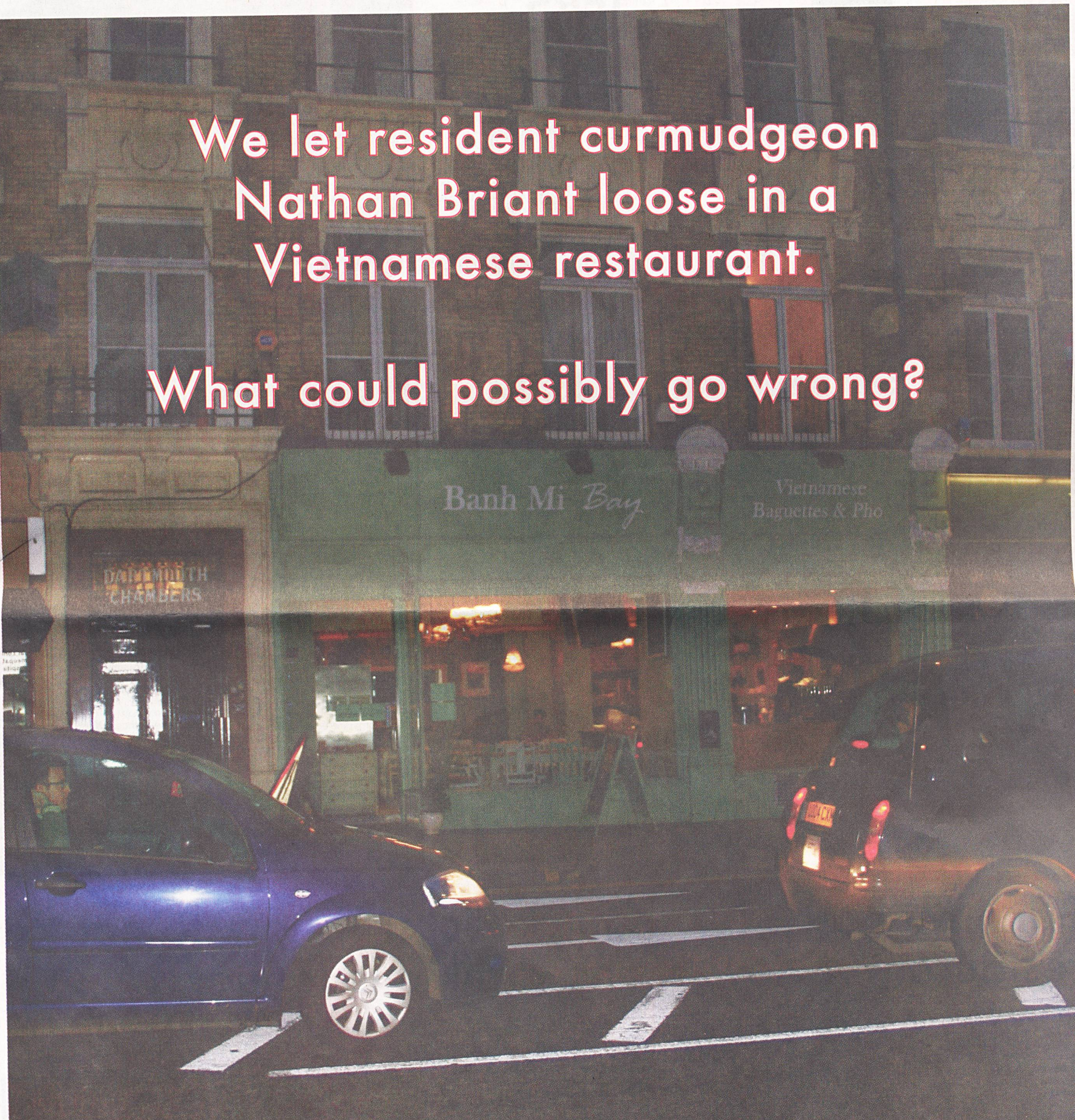
Marion Koob
Features Editor

Beards, Belgium and Indignation

PART B

We let resident curmudgeon
Nathan Briant loose in a
Vietnamese restaurant.

What could possibly go wrong?



FILM

Historial classics
and new faves

SEX

Wanna learn
about penises?

FASHION

Chic sale
shopping

Sale Shopping Shenanigans

Alice Leah Fyfe shares sale-time strategy

The sales have hit London's shopping districts like something out of Independence Day. As ever, the post Christmas retail binge has taken the country by storm, with shoppers trying to beat the VAT increase as well as catching up from a somewhat inert period in snowy December.

On my way home, I pass by the new shopping centre at St. Paul's. One New Change is a haven for shoppers living in central and east London. What Westfield did for Shepherd's Bush, One New Change, albeit on a smaller scale, has done for the City. The smart glazed structure opposite St. Paul's houses all the top names on the high street: Topshop and Next to Boss and Geiger. Generally, the stock is tailored to City workers; smarter ranges to please the main clientele. But obviously that doesn't exclude the students among us. On the contrary, the carefully selected lines showcase the season's key items and make shopping a little less cluttered and manic than wading through Oxford Street counterparts.

Unlike many, I waited a little before launching myself onto piles of crumpled jumpers. Truthfully, sales in their prime scare me a little. It's like a battlefield; hormonal women, bored men and screaming kids all jostling in confined spaces like dice in a boggle dome. And the outcome is always so disheartening. Mid-January seems to me like a quieter, more sociable time to go sale shopping if you're not absolutely desperate for something. I also recommend looking at websites before you leave the house. For me, this was the main pastime of my Christmas, accompanied by wine and chocolate, of course. But having made a mental list of all the possible purchases out there, it made the ultimate venture a lot more fathomable.

So I've browsed countless websites, and the best thing about this time of year is the fact that the student budget can cover delicious higher-street labels. Like Kurt Geiger, Reiss, Whistles, Fred Perry, and the top floor of Urban Outfitters. You know, the bit that's most often empty and immaculately laid out, untouched by teenagers. Here are some of my top sales finds for this season.

REISS



High waisted trousers £95 £29

tiered cami £69 £16

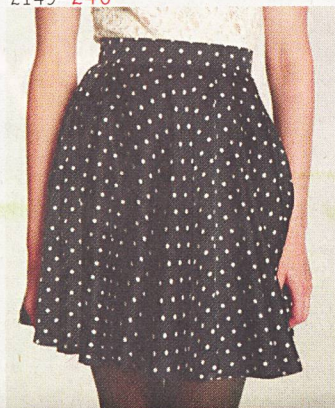
URBAN OUTFITTERS



Carin Wester Silk Trousers £149 £40



chiffon shirt £79 £30

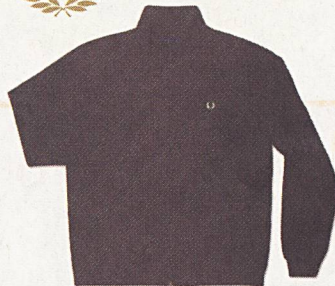


Vaudeville & Burlesque Culottes £60 £20

KURT GEIGER



sailing jacket £85 £59.50



Brown Desert Boots £85-£35

Hi Tops £115-£35

Suede Heels £120-£29

Peter, from Hong Kong, First Year Law

Clean, comfortable and colour coordinated. "First impressions are everything. From someone's style you can see how someone wants to portray himself. It's like talking to someone before you talk to them." Peter transcends his love for neatness in an understated style: good basics, from brands such as Ben Sherman, Muji and Uniqlo, and most of all no fuss. "For me, when I go to School, clothing needs to be practical and clean. I don't see the point of trying too hard and being uncomfortable in what I'm wearing." Yet his style is something else, and not just in comparison to the way people dress in his hometown. "Hong Kong is quite international, you do see some influences of eccentric Japanese street style but mostly it's focused on business and the apparel that that brings along." He also noticed that "young people's clothing" in London (he mentions tweed blazers and colourful trousers) is hardly ever seen in Hong Kong; there is a distinct difference between the sometimes daring European style and the more demure dress common back home. Though Peter also rarely goes for excessively colour-

ful clothing, he seems to have a good feel for combining colours and cuts, matching dark browns, blues and greens, with the key items being button-down shirts and cardigans that can be paired in endless combinations. On anyone else it could be dull, but on Peter it looks playful. Which is probably why he doesn't like to emulate from fashion blogs; the photographs show people that often wear "pretty out there stuff", which just does not suit everyone. The same goes for Peter: he has very much his own style, for a big part thanks to his sparkling personality!



Maaïke Mossel scouts Houghton Street's best dressed

Annika Ranga hits the sales

It's a new dawn, it's a new day and it's a new year. And what do we have to show for it? Well, 20% VAT, debt and limited spending funds. This doesn't sound great so how can we make the best of this situation? Christmas sale shopping of course. As soon as Boxing Day came, most of us girls did what we know best - hit the sales and shopped 'til we dropped and of course pushed and shoved to get the last dress on that clothing rail, which is oh-so-luckily in your size.

Christmas was great - it meant a lot of alcohol, food and lounging about. But what made it better was getting some money to spend in the sales, which is what I did. Staying in Leeds for Christmas meant I didn't get swamped in the rush of London streets, or so I thought. Sale shopping there was just as manic as it is in London, which is to be expected really. What did Leeds have to offer then? Harvey Nichols was definitely the place to hit - it had half price designer bags, with high-end brands such as Juicy Couture, Miu Miu, Moschino - the list was endless. Although this designer haven was busy, it was worth visiting as the prices were half price or less! And let's not forget the boys, for whom sales were just as good as the girls, maybe even better with the likes of a third or more off Burberry and Ralph Lauren shirts, Paul Smith ties etc.

And as if that wasn't enough, Urban Outfitters attracted customers by following in the footsteps of Topshop: they not only reduced prices by 25% but additionally offered student discount on sale products too. A definite double bargain, meaning a visit to this store

is a must. Karen Millen, known for its expensive prices, has cut them down and was filled with little ants on a mission. It is the perfect place to find 50% off party wear, such as beautiful dresses and a stunning collection of tops ranging from everyday wear to tops which are perfect for those nights out with the girls, whether you're hitting a bar or going to a club. Other great shops to visit are the little boutiques, which are scattered around London in Covent Garden, such as Happie Loves It, which sells cute dresses that are perfect for day-to-day wear or for nights out. You can also find deliciously real looking candy accessories; macaroon headbands and ice cream pendants. Boutiques like these around Covent Garden and Bloomsbury are must visit places to find hidden treats at an affordable price.



As soon as we all came back to London we've probably all paid a pricey visit to Oxford Street to check out the sales. If you haven't, then girls you should avoid River Island as it is manic and filled with organised mess, but it's also great to find those clothes that you didn't expect to find or need (or want). All in all, you should try and behave whilst shopping - keep the pushing between a minimum and maximum level, and enjoy what's left of the Christmas sales before the work load pours in.

Happie Loves It can be found on Drury Lane, or at www.iamhappie.com

Bánh Mì Bay restaurant review

Nathan Briant unleashes his unrelenting Britishness on a Vietnamese restaurant

For someone conservative to say the least with their food, tucking into Vietnamese cuisine for the first time at **Bánh Mì Bay** wasn't a challenge at all, not what I'd anticipated.

When I arrived at the restaurant last Friday there was a couple of tables spare, although they quickly filled up in the relatively small restaurant, which had a bistro feel. I was surprised to see the different people around me. To my left a family of four, in front of me a young couple and a group of four lanky long-haired students, at least they looked like students. Although the music wasn't to my taste - Gabrielle, the mid-1990s pop sensation, was playing at one point - the atmosphere was warm and welcoming.

With only a bit of time spare on a Friday night, I ordered only a main course, the chicken Pho - according to the menu, the Vietnamese national dish. I wasn't adventurous enough to eat the seafood, which they had in good supply in the shape of prawn dishes. Pho, effectively a broth with plentiful red onion, spring onion, what tasted like very fresh chicken, and flat rice noodles, didn't disappoint. An accompanying friend ordered

two vegetable 'summer rolls' with tofu. It hadn't been fried like the spring rolls I had eaten up to that point, so I was a little sceptical. I bit into one and the first taste I got was of what I'd expect from grass. That said, this is most likely the fault of my British philistinism and poor palate: my friend opposite said he enjoyed it.

Nor was it expensive. My meal was just under £10, with a drink, not that much to risk if you're not particularly experienced in experimenting with different types of food. The service was attentive and speedy - it took me double the time, if not longer, to eat the food than the time that I was waiting for it to be prepared.

Overall, a pleasant meal and first experience of Vietnamese food even if I've realised I prefer spring rolls fried

Bánh Mì Bay, 4-6 Theobald's Road, WC1X 8PN
0207 831 4079

Quick Picks: Where to eat and drink this January

Edwin Loo

Drink: The Euston Tap

Why have a few beers when you can have more than a hundred?

There are pubs, and then there is The Euston Tap. Located in one of the side boxes next to the once-famous (and once-standing) Euston Arch in front of Euston Station is a drinking venue like no other. Unless, of course, you take a severe dislike to beer. In which case I can only express my deepest pity. With a rotating selection of cask ales, keg beers and hundreds of bottled beers from around the world - including some absolutely lovely local ales from the Camden Brewery - the Euston Tap is a must-go for anyone who vaguely likes a good pint. Plus, they have a porta-loo outside. Surely that's convincing enough.

The Euston Tap, 190 Euston Road, NW1 2EF
<http://www.eustontap.com>

Eat: Koba

Korean Food in the West End takes a quantum leap forward

London, for a European city, has surprisingly good Korean food. The distinctive identity of Korean food lies in its heartiness. Most of the best picks for Korean are concentrated around the burgeoning Korean community in New Malden and Wimbledon - but the West End has a new player in the form of Koba. A fantastic variety of different types of Bimbab (rice, meat and vegetables in a hot stone bowl) is complemented by a truly authentic selection of traditional Korean starters, plus perhaps the best Korean barbecue in Central London. On the up side, it's not terribly expensive either, with a Bimbab with Starter combination for two putting you back by around £35. Worth a visit: there really is nothing quite like a good Korean meal on a cold winter's day.

Koba, 11 Rathbone Street, W1T 1NA
<http://www.koba-london.com>

Coffee: Department of Coffee and Social Affairs

The London good coffee scene is booming this year: with a slate of new openings due, and some very exciting things happening in the near future. Enter a very new (and very different player): the Department (as I call it) brings in a lovely venue with a fantastic industrial vibe to a central location on Leather Lane in Clerkenwell. These guys are truly different - bringing in a new roaster in the form of Australia's renowned Coffee Collective - with a home blend that truly blows the mind as an espresso. Watch out for the dark, delicate tones of berries, chocolate and glacé cherries at the start, and for the clean, fruity and mildly acidic finish at the end. Beautiful flat whites served to perfection, and a very enthusiastic crew behind the machine. Well worth a visit - and by far a mile ahead of anything else in the immediate vicinity. Plus, what a name for a café!

The Department of Coffee and Social Affairs, 16 Leather Lane, EC1N
<http://www.departmentofcoffee.co.uk>

Yorubeat: A Prayer Answered

Masaya Tanikawa learns of the birth of a new genre and how music saved **Tunday Akintan's** life

Born to the Yoruba peoples of Nigeria, **Tunday Akintan**, 27, dabbles in jazzy piano-playing and sings for his twelve-piece band *The Yorubeat Allstars*. He also composes his own productions and gives music lessons on the side. A saxophonist at heart, he studied at university for the past eight years taking up drama, classical and jazz courses. It was here that Tunday founded 'Yorubeat', a new style of music that 'joyously' merges tonal elements of the West with those of Africa.

Inherently traditional and predominantly modern, the music itself is funky, upbeat and always euphoric. The strongest accent is on the last beat, rather than the first, and the drum patterns are often syncopated and off-beat. After a few listens, his core influences become very clear: James Brown and Fela Kuti.

"The first part of the term, 'Yoru', comes from the kind of music my people play in Nigeria. It's very traditional, drawing from the music of Africa including Juju, Fuji, Calypso and Afrobeat," he says. "I learnt lots of jazz material by heart, and I decided to combine the two into Yorubeat. I had to give it a name. My music wasn't exactly pop or jazz."

Musicians have always taken risks embarking on something original. The great time and creative energies devoted to a new project could fall apart if no one believes in the artist's vision. In the face of such uncertainty, Tunday was confident his work would succeed. Indeed, Yorubeat became popular for its live performances complete with a flashy twelve-piece band, comprised of musicians and friends from around the world.

I want to leave a legacy... One day I want to see a Yorubeat school

"I've been playing live for almost a decade so I know what works and what doesn't. I think an artist's ability to do live shows is what sets them apart from others," says Akintan. "People can go to a studio and put an album together, even if they aren't musicians. Sadly, that's the way the real world is nowadays."

His talent was quickly recognised by promoters. The Allstars have played at prestigious venues including Elizabeth

Hall and Southbank Centre, most recently hosting 'The Genesis of Yorubeat' last August. "I want to leave a legacy that will be studied by others. One day I want to see a Yorubeat school," he says. "Many musicians try to sound like each other, but that's not me. I want to create, to invent, and Yorubeat is my way of trying to find my own place in this world."

Tunday continues to struggle with his identity. He was originally sent to London when he was 18 under his father's bidding to take over his company as a Chartered Accountant. "My father is very famous in Africa. He audits government finances and handles big clients," says Akintan. "He provided me with everything so I had no worries at all. Then one day, six months into an accounting course, music suddenly came to me. It filled my mind."

"It was like a spirit. I suddenly knew that music was going to be the only reason I'm going to live. It was like God saying to me: 'My son, you will be a musician'," he says. "It was too strong to hold back and I couldn't control it. It gave me peace inside, and so I decided to leave the college."

His father was disappointed and enraged, cutting Tunday off from all support. "I broke his hands and his heart. Not knowing what to do, I spoke to a tutor about what happened."

His talent was quickly recognised by promoters.

His father tried to control him throughout his life. During his childhood, Tunday grew up around the corner from Fela Kuti's home. He often spent time with the Afrobeat legend, sitting in on band sessions and rehearsals.

"Since I was five, I'd go down to his house and watch these great musicians play. He would give me money sometimes to help set things up. Each time he played something, I would be attracted to it like a magnet. That home was a big influence, and my father tried to forbid me from going," says Tunday. "He thought they were too radical, too influential. He was afraid I would become like him. He knew how resonant music was to me."

Music plays an important role in African religion; Tunday had been attending church since he was born, singing and being exposed to Christian choral arrangements. "Africa is a continent that is so much in pain. There are many broken, wounded people, and the only way they can come out of that fragile shell is through music," he says.

"If you want to sing, you just do it. We'll use whatever is lying around to make rhythms, even if it's just a spoon and a table to express ourselves. We

don't need alcohol to enjoy music, and most of us can't afford it anyway."

His inspiration for Yorubeat has political roots, much like Fela Kuti's work. "My music is all about unity between communities. There are so many borders. Music has the power to bring people together; so when people come to my shows, I tell them to put on their dancing shoes," says Akintan.

"It's like a dance therapy that brings you out of that Western shell and into that natural African heart-felt groove. It's joyous, it's euphoric, and soon you'll feel like you're on drugs or alcohol."

Tunday has not spoken to his father in ten years. He hopes to return to Africa someday to spread Yorubeat 'far and wide', with a debut album 'Genesis of Yorubeat' on the way.

Visit <http://www.thegenesisofyorubeat.com/> for gig dates and song samples.

It was like a spirit. I suddenly knew that music was going to be the only reason to live

Spotify Spotting

What Rhianon Parkinson, LSE undergraduate student, is listening to this week...

Tigercarts
Whitechapel Boys

Half Japanese
1,000,000 Kissies

The Shangri-Las
The Train From Kansas City

Beat Happening
T.V. Girl

The Cats & The Fiddle
When I Grow Too Old To Dream



Tunday Akintan

The Guilty Hands - Desire On A Short Leash



They won a competition from Slicethepie.com to have an album produced and recorded from hundreds of other entries. A few listens into *Desire On A Short Leash* and it becomes clear why they deserved £15,000 in prize money.

Drawing from the darker sides of indie rock and electro pop, the band's songs are emotional and jagged. They describe their own music as "bony girls washing away their sins in a cramped bathtub": Menacing and slightly creepy.

Lead single "Razor" is a case in point: the provocative lyrics are far from happy. The title itself alludes to self-harm, though instrumentation-wise their sound is solid. Quivering vocals pierce through abrasive guitar rakes and rough basslines, supported by swathes of buzzing synthesizers and sampled electronica.

Elsewhere, listeners will encounter restrained gasps, strange whispered nothings and clips extracted from Marlon Brando films. Such antics can become tiring, as songs like "The Killing of Isla Nicholson" convey. Fortunately, the

youthful vibrance of the band keeps them from falling into stale clichés that plague the "horror" scene.

While radio-friendly numbers like "Razor" make for entertaining listens, The Guilty Hands are most interesting when they are least aggressive. Track four, "The Wilder Shores of Love", is an acoustic journey into the subtle songwriting talents of the band. Sparse acoustic guitar plucks show restraint and maturity, a stark contrast to their usual spikey tones.

The album could have been stronger with more tracks like "Wilder", but The Guilty Hands show a promising start with their debut effort.

Desire On A Short Leash is released on 14th February on Amazon.co.uk and iTunes.

Kylie Minogue - Les Folies Tour 2011

Tour dates announced: April 7 - 12, London O2 Arena



Kylie Minogue

Pop icon **Kylie Minogue** has announced dates for her 'Les Folies 2011' tour, promising to be a landmark in live performance that will surpass even her previous groundbreaking shows. The first date is set for March 25 at Cardiff International Arena, ending on April 12 at the London O2. Planning is well underway; according to Kylie, "The reaction to *Aphrodite* has been absolutely incredible and has inspired me and my creative team to develop a new show that will take all of us on an euphoric journey of joy, excitement and glamour."

Everyone has heard of Kylie at some point in their lives, probably with a favourite era or phase. Perhaps when she was hanging with Nick Cave and the Manics or when she sonically mixed things up on the dancefloor in the mid-90s.

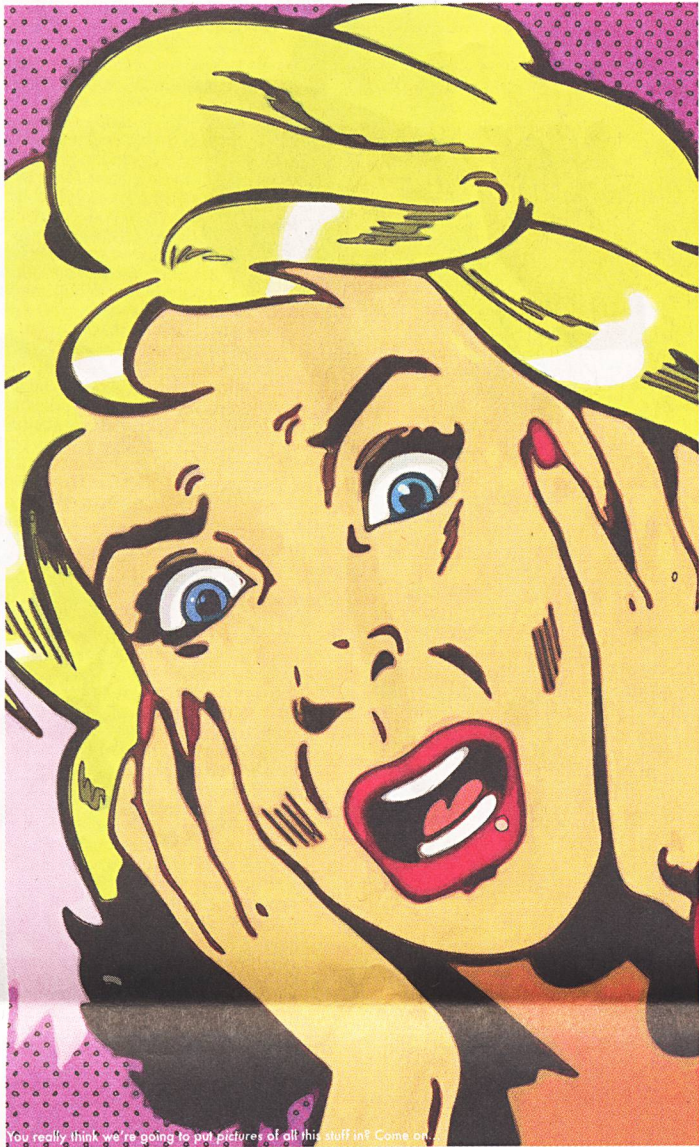
For Kylie lovers, *Aphrodite* sees her return to her dance floor roots: catchy, intensely hummable dance pop. With Stuart Price (Madonna, Scissor Sisters) at the mixing desk, the album is a non-stop disco set. There's plenty of Kylie's sugar-coated vocals here to enjoy, laced with tingly keyboard lines, euphoric synths and infectious pop hooks (the soaring chorus on "All The Lovers") sounding fresh and new. The Australian sweetheart has undoubtedly brought the light of sunshine pop back into the world, with everything that made you fall in love with her all over again.

"I can't wait to get on the road and see all my fans in 2011," says Kylie. As a special thanks, no booking fees are charged for tickets bought from official venues.

Visit the O2 website for more details.

Penis envy

Alexander Young gets better acquainted with his little friend



You really think we're going to put pictures of all this stuff in? Come on.

Let's talk about penises. The beanpole, the all-beef thermometer, the chubby conquistador: roughly half of us at LSE have one, yet they are rarely mentioned here at the Beaver, unless some unfortunate person's frenulum has been torn. The root cause of this lack of cock-coverage must be down to a feminist conspiracy within the heart of the editorial board, but I feel duty-bound to provide a forum for the old zipper-ripper. It's come to my attention recently that a fair number of males practice genital modification,

The beanpole, the all-beef thermometer, the chubby conquistador: half of us half one, yet they're rarely mentioned unless one's frenulum has been torn

and I am fascinated by this and feel that I must share for the benefit of males everywhere. No, dear reader, I am not talking about the boring ones: no, not tattoos and not circumcision. Anything but the exotic bores me: I'm talking about bihari, foreskin restoration, penile implants, penile incision and inserts, meatotomy, negation and splitting.

We're to start with the most dull: foreskin restoration. Apparently, the practice began as a method of avoiding disparagement and discrimination – clearly, the most ultimate process for a self-hating Jew (moi) to undertake to finally rid themselves of any accusations of a Semitic heritage. The process itself is merely stretching the remaining foreskin slowly until it covers the glans once again: if it is done correctly, no detectable

lacerations or stretch marks will appear. In another aesthetic modification, we have the practice of penile incision: here, the penis is split down the entire length to give the impression of a circumcision – pure barbarism. An equally vain practice is the bihari: here, the supporting ligament above the penis is cut in order that it drop forward. The ultimate in masculine insecurity, the sole effect of this is to give the impression of an extra inch or two of the shaft. How typical of my gender.

Penile implants are a less selfish augmentation: pearls and gold and silver balls are inserted into the penis in order to increase its size and increase tactile sensation for the woman involved – essentially, making the bare penis ribbed and dotted for her pleasure. Whether this would be enough to convince a numb woman to not insist upon a condom isn't elucidated in the literature, but this may be down to the fact that the practice began in order that people could emulate the penises of local animals in the Saharan plains: prophylactics may not have been too salient an issue. Inserts involve piercings of rings or bars placed into the glans at different angles. Surely this is completely impractical for the application of the penis to its reproductive role: torn skin galore on both sides is all that I can imagine here, especially with the practice apparently not being used for reasons of appearance in most incidences. The meatotomy, however, is something conducive to increasing sexual pleasure in an obvious way and consists of incisions or tearing to increase the size of the urethra. This is usually done in through insertion of an instrument of increasing size into the urethra during masturbation, with the ultimate intention of being able to enlarge it to a size where the glans of another male could be inserted. This, truly, is a tale of adaption to the homosexual lifestyle that the most vocal proponents of biological adaptation would be apt to laud.

Now we come to the strangest of the practices I have listed. Negation is a practice of rendering the penis impotent in order that self-flagellation or other masochistic practices can be undertaken without the possibility of accidental orgasm. Sometimes this is accomplished by hanging weights from the end of the penis in order that it become stretched beyond possible use or by pushing the penis inside the body and wrapping the scrotum around a rod such that, after

a period of time, the penis cannot be pulled from the body. I have no words to describe how this makes me feel as a man – just a long, low-pitched groan of a belated sympathy for these men. Splitting is exactly as it sounds: splitting the penis into two parts by means of an incision from base to tip. Apparently, this can be done without loss of function and was claimed by one Englishman who performed the procedure on himself to give 'better female orgasmic feelings' due to its 'opened effect.' As much as this would be desired by the flocks of unsatisfied women out there, the drastic scale of the

It really is amazing what you can do with the blood slug, it turns out... although coming up with penile euphemisms is much more fun

practice and its potentiality for irreparable damage to the genitals turns me right off the idea as 'wrong'.

It really is amazing what you can do with the blood slug, it turns out. Of course, many of these things are not nearly as fun as running out of penis euphemisms over the course of an article, but it seems interesting that the only widely accepted practice of genital modification in the West is that of circumcision when there are so many cultures which do so many things with themselves. Whilst many of these things are probably not advisable, I would love to see those who wish to perform such barbarism unto themselves be more aware of their options. I do love to think of myself as an educator.

Mad World

Why Rhiannon Parkinson loves Mad Men

With the fourth season finished and the fifth not due for a good few months, it's time to take a breather, step back, and appreciate the genius of one of the most lauded shows on television.

Much like the Great American Novel, the themes that dominate the **Mad Men** revolve around the endless pursuit of the American dream, its unwavering evasiveness, and the noticed and unnoticed inconsistencies within American society. The setting of a 1960s New York advertising agency also highlights the huge cultural shift towards a nation's materialistic obsessions, ensuring the golden age of advertising and the dominating influence that it commands. The very first episode of the very first season uses a throw-away remark to tie together all the major characters and themes. The primary idea behind the whole show is hinged on a comment made by Sal Romano, art director at the advertising agency regarding the supposed 'death wish of a smoking society': "So we're supposed to believe that people are living one way and secretly thinking the exact opposite? That's ridiculous." Quite.

The duality of the characters' lives and intentions is also mirrored in the fullness of the characters themselves. No one is two-dimensional and it's near impossible to identify 'goodies' and 'baddies'. Everyone seems to have a redeeming feature and an unrelenting flaw. In this way, the audience is not mollified into any particular belief regarding a character or an event. The level of subtlety within the show results in greater ambiguity and a lot left to the audience's interpretation, which is sorely lacking from most US-dramas. One of the show's greatest skills is that it doesn't rush things. Events play out slowly, and Chekhov's gun – the old idea that 'if you see a dagger in the first act it will be used in the third' – is present; the lack of idiot-proof signposting means that you

may not even realise that there was ever a dagger in the first place.

For a change, we see events unravel slowly (though not lacking in intensity), moving away from the short-term episode to episode hits of extreme drama that can be seen so often in today's TV shows. For example, we spend the first three series attempting to answer the central question of who Don Draper (the protagonist) is, and why people live one way and secretly think the exact opposite.

The show has often been criticised for its representations of women, homosexuals, and ethnic minorities, however, these are by no means static. The audience

It's more than a show, it's a whole other world where the audience can escape from the 21st century

watches a changing society, squirming at the situations forced on those who are ostracised to create their own lives. Far from endorsing these inequalities, they are meant to be shocking. Representations of women are particularly diverse and develop throughout the seasons, creating a variety of meaningful situations and characters and allowing us to see the pressures and constraints placed on women in subtly different generations. The times, they are a-changing, and while the two principal female roles are only five years apart we are able to see hugely different circumstances and positions

available to them.

This generational divide runs for both the men and women of Mad Men. We see each generation of men still haunted by the experience of fighting their very own war, with the neat generational divides of those who fought in World Wars One and Two, Korea, and eventually Vietnam (against the tension of the generation who never had to fight at all). The cornerstones of American history are explored more intricately with events such as JFK's assassination, the Beatles playing in America, and the race riots of the period. The show breaks away from being merely about the American advertising world in the 1960s, or even 1960s American culture itself. It's about the broadest of histories, and the nature of the human character, while also managing to represent the specific context in minute detail at the same time.

Many column inches have been lost to discussion over the immaculate styling of the show, so I won't spend too much time on that but suffice it to say that the dapper suits, pussycat bows, and array of pill-box hats make the whole thing incredibly aesthetically pleasing in a way that the garish glare of today's programming so often loses. Attention to detail, not only on the clothes, but the props too is executed to perfection.

But none of this really scratches the surface of why I love Mad Men. I love it because it's more than a show, it's a whole other world where the audience can escape from the twenty first century. While it might be convenient to think of the simpler times, we clearly see that this is not the case. Nothing is simple, nothing is easy, and nothing is obvious. But everything is fabulous.



Sharp suits and beautiful bows, even Mad Men's style pervades

Simon Chaudhuri's TV tips for the week

True Blood
FX, Fridays, 22:00

An excellent continuation of the series as **True Blood** returns to British screens with the premiere of season 3 on FX. The new season sees Sookie finding an unlikely ally in werewolf Alcide, with the pair trying to track down a kidnapped Bill in Mississippi. Meanwhile, Sam Merlotte takes the lead in his own major story arc while he tries to track down his birth family. To be shown on Channel 4 later in the year.

Glee
E4, Mondays, 21:00

Season 2 of the hit series continues on E4. The new season follows the struggles

of the McKinley High Glee Club through sectional, regional and national competitions. In a somewhat familiar scenario, the kids are also fighting against budget cuts. Cameos include Britney Spears. New episodes are available on 4oD.

Shameless
4oD

The critically acclaimed portrayal of life on the Chatsworth estate continues as Channel 4's longest-running drama. The season kicks off with Frank and Libby's forthcoming wedding, but plans are thrown into chaos when Frank disappears from his stag do. All episodes available on 4oD.

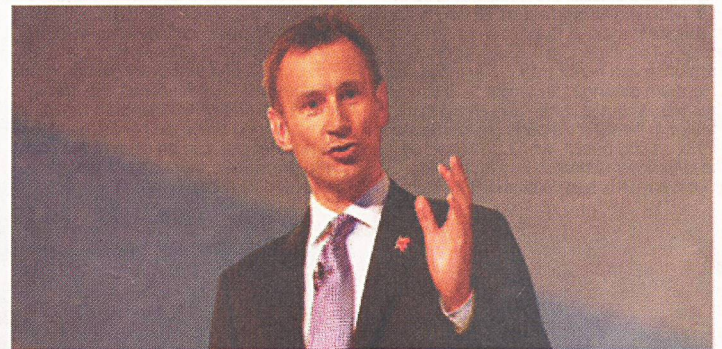
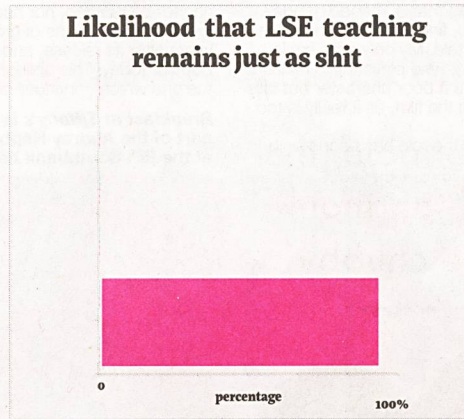
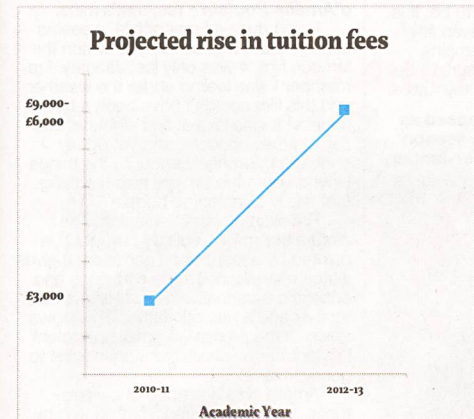
PRIVATE B

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

I have lost sight of
Why we are doing this. Still,
Beats a limerick.

Charting changes at the LSE Hunt's speech sabotaged!

The Beaver recently obtained the latest LSE statistics and have decided to leak them week-by-week...



A public lecture was ruined last week when Jeremy Hunt insisted on speaking at length in an annoying voice. To the audience's irritation, Hunt disrupted the lecture by answering questions on how he couldn't answer questions on the answer to the Murdoch question. One student protester said, "This stifling of debate is saddening. There was I trying to peacefully protest, trying to ruin a civilised debate, when Hunt does it for us!"

said, "I came here tonight to listen to Hunt discuss his refusal to discuss the News-corp decision, but he refused to discuss it!"

Jeremy Hunt [sorry, couldn't think of a funny name. Ed.] is currently deciding whether to allow Sucha Petal's take-over of BPartB. Mr Petal's attempts to expand his media empire have come under fire, as he already controls/micro-manages 60% of the content.

Hunt's role in the decision comes after Vince Cable was heard saying, "I declare war on Sucha Petal!"

Another angered audience member

Fashun.

Yun Git

How now, brown cow! Yun Git here, reporting for fashion duties! And wowzers trousers, have I been scouting some modish men this week! There was I, philandering aimlessly down Whitehall and before you can say Lemsip Opec, who did I see? Yes minister! I happened apron the very Deputy thingy himself - Nick Clegg!

He was adorned in an OUTRAGEOUS black suit, which Yun learns is the height of fashion in these parts. The accompanying black shoes are a MUST, and the yellow tie is a SINE QUA YES! If David Cameron is the fashionistic equivalent of a digestive biscuit, Nick Clegg is certainly a Chocolate Hobnob! If I had an extra limb, I'd give him THREE THUMBS UP!

Which goes to show, the Euro-flavour has definitely rubbed off on him! Bye, fashion folk! (Or should that be buenos nachos?)



Overdone it at Xmas? Looking for a healthier option?
Why not dine at the newly renovated...

Restaurant de Wrights

All your favourite early-deaths-inducing meals - now written in French!

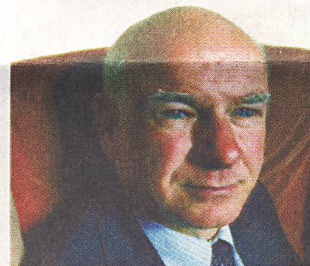
Maintenant serving:

- le pain chaud avec le delicatessen de fromage (cheese on toast)
- deux pains avec le jambon mais ce n'est pas le jambon, c'est le boeuf! (hamburger)
- les monches de montrosite (Monster Munch)
- les frites de Jacques Tintale (cheesy chips)
- le salade du jour (one lettuce leaf)
- oeuf (the noise you make when you finish)

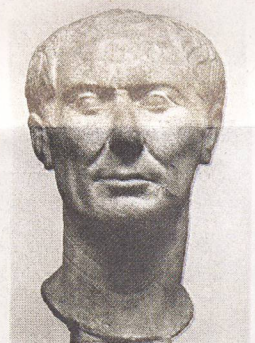
You may die early but at least you'll have enjoyed yourself!

All food may or may not be bought from the Sainsburys down the road.

LSE Looky-likey



Julius Caesar: Autocratic, egocentric, money-grabbing, thin-on-top, ruthless leader



Howard Davies: Wait... wrong way round!

Julius Caesar, The Roundhouse

Rory Creedon on the RSC's revival of one of Shakespeare's classics

I don't want to ruin this RSC production of **Julius Caesar** for you, but Caesar doesn't die in the end! Rather, he is assassinated, as the script demands, at the beginning of Act III, before the audience has even had its half time ice-cream. Indeed, Caesar only appears in three scenes - which is a pity as Greg Hicks' powerfully velvet baritone and insistent oratory make him a captivating statesman, even as his nervous hand-wringing belies the traumas and fear that run

through him. Thus, Caesar is not the central character of Shakespeare's play he is merely one of the players in what is an undulating tide of power struggle. As if to make the point, director Lucy Bailey opens the play with a scene not originally conceived by The Bard in which Romulus and Remus fight a bloody battle to the death over where to found Rome. As well as setting the gory tone of the production, this extra scene shows the audience that Rome was founded on violence, setting in motion the cycle of bitter rivalry and brutality that would plague Rome until Octavius was crowned emperor Augustus. Miss Bailey shows us then that the death of Caesar is no more than an oscillation in the waves of dominance. Certain as he was doomed to die, was Pompey before him and the conspirators afterwards.

The staging is sparse and dark. Forget the image of Rome as a great civilization of sparkling white marbled grandiosity and intelligent exchange; this is a world where fear, portents and bloodshed rule. The people of Rome, portrayed using members of the cast and video screens, are base, seemingly infirm of body and mind, wailing incoherently into the night. Wonderful music by composer Django Bates (played by a live brass ensemble) is as fanfares atonally juxtaposed to replicate the tension of the city streets.

Against this murky and electrifying backdrop a plot is hatched and executed that will ultimately taunt the conspirators until their final hour which we witness in all its gruesome detail.

John Mackay, who plays Cassius, physically dominates Brutus (Sam Troughton) which makes his attempts to flatter Brutus into conspiracy and murder all the more toe curling. Mackay seems to take a while to warm up but the flames

Forget the view of Rome as a great civilisation... This is a place where fear and bloodshed rule

of ambition are visible in his eyes even as he sweet-talks Brutus in the first Act.

It is Brutus' transformation that steals the show however. Sam Troughton takes us on a journey through the psyche of a man desperate to hide his dark inner life behind a veneer of stoicism, nobility and honour. His deliberate and taut posture reflects brilliantly his beliefs as to proper outward presentation of character. Yet Brutus, despite claims to the contrary, suffers from the same fault as Caesar - he is susceptible to flattery. Once he is flat-

tered to murder Troughton plays him as a coward, unable to come terms with what is to be done. He breaks down in hysterical tears in front of Portia, his wife (Hannah Young) who sees his trouble even if she cannot name it. At the moment of assassination he hangs back like a scared child, but then frantically joins in the violence, and the taste of blood transforms him. The character emerges the other side, louder, brasher, more confident and dominant as he tries to emulate the man he has just killed, and domineer over his new enemies. Yet the ghost of Caesar hangs over him and we never lose the sense that this is a deeply troubled man.

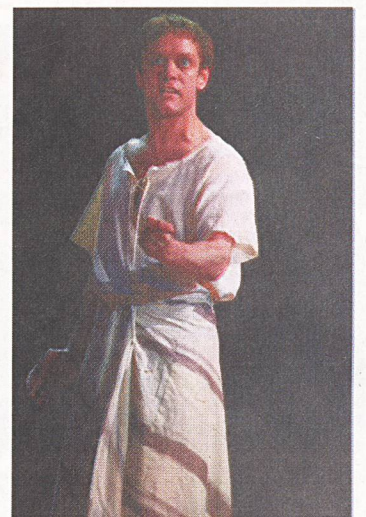
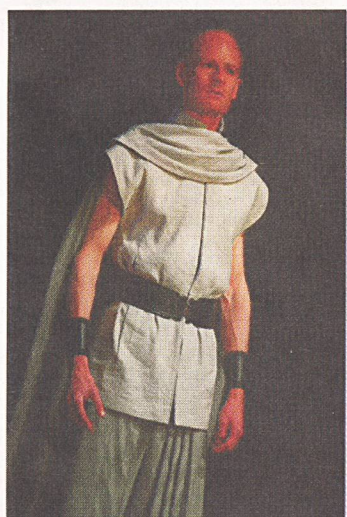
There are commendable performances also from Oliver Ryan as Casca whose naked coarseness is palpable. Darrell D'Silva plays a complex and ambiguous Mark Antony who cleverly disguises his real motives and desires. Antony's "friends, Romans, countrymen" eulogy of Caesar is masterfully delivered, bringing out the singing meter of the poetry laid thick with irony and contempt.

Lucy Bailey has created a turbulent realisation of Caesar's Rome as a place of continual strife and battle. I was not wholly sold on the constant deployment of video images of burning temples as a backdrop to the action, and the interaction between the video and characters was not entirely convincing. Audibility was an issue with less experienced members of the cast as the Roundhouse setting involves sitting around three sides of a square stage meaning that backs are turned toward sections of

the audience at times. Nevertheless this is a dark, visceral and thrilling production of **Julius Caesar** that cleverly places the central character as the history of Rome rather than the title character.

Julius Caesar is on at the Roundhouse in Camden until the 5th of February.

The Roundhouse hold 20 £5 tickets for 16-25 year olds for every performance.



Breakfast at Tiffany's

Annika Ranga

Classics

Director: Blake Edwards
Screenplay: George Axelrod **Cast:** Audrey Hepburn, George Peppard, Patricia Neal, Mickey Rooney **Runtime:** 115 minutes
Cert: PG **Year:** 1961

It's only one of Audrey Hepburn's most infamous films and considered an all-time classic: I recently got to re-live watching *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and it still manages to leave me impressed today. It's the perfect blend of comedy, romance and minor tragedy. In it, we see Hepburn playing Holly Golightly, a young woman who is carefree and enjoying all things in life. She's a party girl, someone who, as she puts it, won't be caged by love or commitments. It's a lonely life, but it pays the bills. With the film set in

the current day (1961), as opposed to Truman Capote's novel, which is set in during World War Two, the sixties are on the verge of swinging.

The film is packed with unforgettable scenes that are still reminisced about and re-enacted today. In the classic opening scene, we see her wandering home in the early hours after being out all night, in that slim-line Givenchy black dress and oversized sunglasses (what is now known to us girls as 'the walk of shame'), eating a pastry and sipping coffee, while admiring the jewellery in the Tiffany's window. This epic scene is one that every girl can relate to. Other well-known scenes that spring to mind are one where Hepburn beautifully sings "Moon River" on her fire escape and another one can be seen at the end of the film, where we see her looking for her cat (oddly named Cat).

The film has a fairy tale quality to it but also explores modern day issues and is bittersweet. We see how Holly uses her clients and allows them to use her too – it reflects the era, where ideas like these were becoming more common and people were becoming more open-minded about them.

George Peppard, who plays the guy-next-door, Paul, is very much like Holly – they both use people for their own gains and detest each other. It's the ultimate love-hate relationship that eventually ends in love, showing that damaged goods can, in the end, find love – it's an undeniable romantic tale. My only criticism is Mickey Rooney, who plays their Chinese neighbour: he's a poor character but fails in trying to ruin the film, as it really is too good to ruin.

Given that the role has become so

significant to Hepburn's career, and that it is the film which people most commonly relate to her, it is interesting to note that Marilyn Monroe had been the initial choice for the project. Instead, and luckily for Hepburn, Monroe did *The Misfits*. *Breakfast at Tiffany's* was a definite turning point in Hepburn's career: it showed her in a new light and as a different actress, leading her to take roles in other prominent films such as *My Fair Lady* and *Charade*.

It truly is a classic and a film which cannot be remade, nor needs to be. It is loved by generations of girls, even fifty years after its release, and it remains popular today. This opinion is sure to be the one which continues on in the future.

Breakfast at Tiffany's is released as part of the Audrey Hepburn season at the BFI Southbank on 21st January

Amélie

Ashma Kunde

Personal Faves

Director: Jean-Pierre Jeunet
Screenplay: Guillaume Laurant, Jean-Pierre Jeunet **Cast:** Audrey Tautou, Mathieu Kassovitz, Rufus **Runtime:** 122 minutes
Year: 2001

Everyone has a comfort film – a cinematic equivalent of a soft duvet and a nice cup of tea; something to lighten those blues. **Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain?** Yes, that's mine.

Being quite a Francophile, it seems strange that I was so tardy to watch this famous film. It was only last January. I remember I was feeling under the weather and this film couldn't have been a better remedy! It was love at first sight: whimsical, at times obscure, and yet utterly endearing. Strangely enough, the things I loved about the film are also the things that easily elude some people.

For example, the beginning. The picture of Amélie's solitary childhood is painted by a fast-paced narration. It gives intricate details of bizarre situations and eccentric personalities – including a strict mother and a neurotic father. This slows down to the present. A small apartment in Montmartre, where the story begins to gently unravel.

Amélie lives a simple, lonely existence as a café waitress, highlighted by evenings of solo television watching. One day she comes across a box, hidden by a boy many, many years ago, and vows to return it to him. This sets off a chain-reaction of sorts, making Amélie a full-time do-gooder – her true metier. Her means of spreading happiness are wonderfully innovative, and include matchmaking and Matilda-esque punishments. She also forms an unexpected friendship with her glass-boned neighbour, the voice of reason, stating the truth Amélie chooses to ignore – while she's out fixing people's problems, who will fix her own?

And then there's my favourite part – the love story. He, the collector of torn photographs, part-time porn shop cashier, part-time Ghost Train ghoul. She, the solitary wanderer, full-time café waitress and quiet do-gooder. The two lonely dreamers cross paths at the station. She feels a certain affinity to him, and falls in love based on notions and dreams – but always runs away from reality, in the fear that it may never match up.

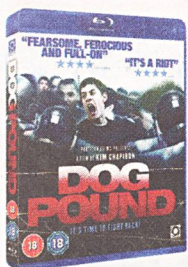
The movie definitely made me want to appreciate the simple things in life more

Visually, the film is a treat. Black and white flashbacks. Technicolor reality. The intermingling of fantasy in reality through odd elements, like a talking photograph and a beating heart. The eclectic mix of pace adds to the enjoyment – fast to slow, lulls to theatricalities. Yann Tiersen's soundtrack is unforgettable – I adored the dulcet melodies playing against the Parisian backdrop. "Comptine d'un autre été: L'après midi" haunts me, and is possibly my all-time favourite piano piece. I don't think I can really explain why. That's the thing with piano music – it speaks to a part of you that lyrics just don't reach.

This film is Jean-Pierre Jeunet's light-hearted, heart-warming play on the themes of love, loneliness and happiness. It could have well been a silent film – Audrey Tautou's quiet animation gives the story its heart and soul. And there is a lot to be said about simplicity. The movie definitely made me want to appreciate the simple things in life a little more, and made me wonder what really does make "a fabulous destiny". One character says "these are hard times for dreamers", yet somehow, this film gives me hope.



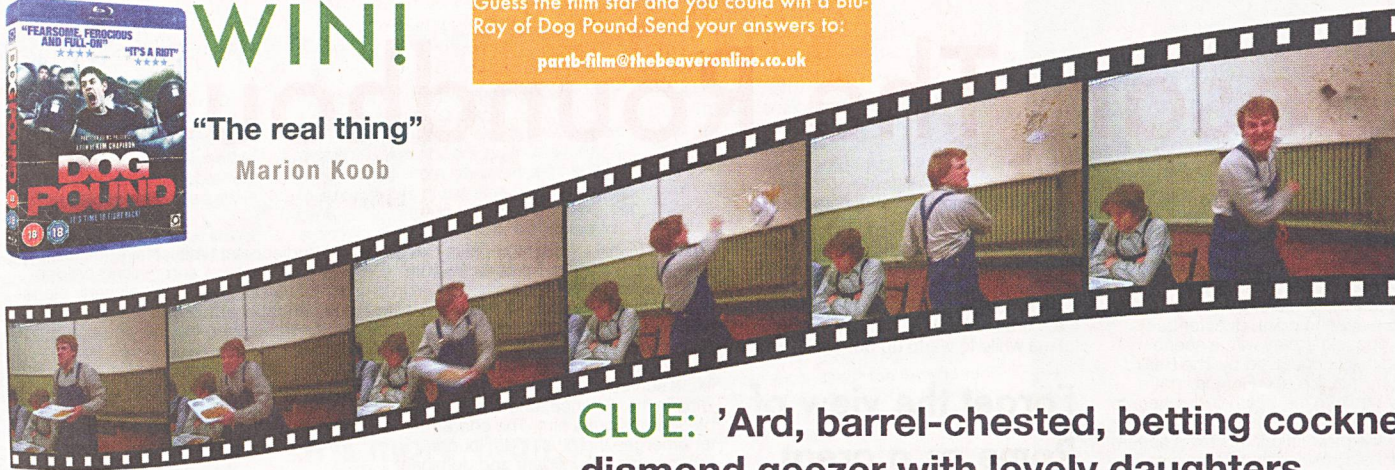
Audrey Hepburn loving life in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*



WIN!

"The real thing"
Marion Koob

Guess the film star and you could win a Blu-Ray of *Dog Pound*. Send your answers to:
partb-film@thebeaveronline.co.uk



CLUE: 'Ard, barrel-chested, betting cockney diamond geezer with lovely daughters.

Under the Moscow Snow: A Tale of Moral Degeneracy

Hannah Payne reviews A.D. Miller's debut novel, *Snowdrops*

The seemingly pleasant name of A.D. Miller's debut novel belies a somewhat more sinister entity. The 'snowdrops' in question are corpses hidden by the Moscow snow, and discovered only in the spring thaws. Set in Putin's Russia, the novel delves, as the name suggests, through the outer layers of everyday life and into the darker world of corruption, seduction and debauchery that exists seemingly below the surface.

The narrator is Nick Platt, a British lawyer and expat who has lived and worked for four years in Moscow, cashing in on the oil business and taking advantage of all amenities offered him. One day a new and financially promising deal falls into his lap in association with the

somewhat menacing 'cossack' (a man for whom 'forbidden only means expensive'); soon after, a friend of a neighbour (the older and wiser Oleg Nikolaevich, with whom every conversation ends in a proverb) disappears. However, Nick is too distracted by a new romantic interest to take heed or to see clearly the turn that his life is taking.

She is Masha, accompanied constantly by her sister Katya; both are young and attractive, and come from a desperately poor background. Since our narrator is middle aged, wealthy and unsure of his life's meaning, the relationship is questionable from the start. As Nick is drawn deeper into Masha's world and his infatuation becomes stronger, he is blinded to her flaws and the discrepan-

Miller's vivid depiction of modern Russia doesn't avoid stereotypes but reads with pace and intrigue

cies in her life. This blindness would be fine but for the seriousness of the situations to which it eventually leads.

Miller's vivid depiction of modern Russia does little to avoid stereotypes, but it does read with pace, intrigue and great honesty. Doubtless this is due, at least in part, to the author's experience as Moscow correspondent for the Economist. Miller writes of a male-dominated, authoritarian state in which bribery is a constant part of everyday life and missing people are best left ignored. Masha and Katya's likable 'aunt', the kindly Tatiana Vladimirovna, tells tales of life under Communism and her survival of the siege of Leningrad that serve as a reminder of the recentness of that period of history and its lasting effects on Moscow.

Whilst the historical context, excitement of the city and changing relationships all add great interest and colour to the story, *Snowdrops* is ultimately a novel about human morality and how one man lets it slip away. Whether it is the influence of an environment or individual, or the casual acceptance of the way things are, Nick's story is a warning that it is easy to succumb to the 'badness that is already there, always there and very close, but which you somehow manage not to see.' If everyone has something to hide, then isn't everyone a snowdrop?

Atlantic Books, £12.00, 288 pages

Social

The No. 1 Aldwych debating team

Judith Jacob battles through Botswana



Obviously we were in Botswana for a debate tournament, but the fact of the matter was that we were really on a quest to emulate Jeremy Clarkson and the rest of the Top Gear crew on their epic drive across the Kalahari Desert. While we may have missed the salt flats entirely when we finally set out on the road, we managed to drive to Zambia and back down again to Johannesburg, fight with "insurance" salesmen, bungee jump over Victoria Falls, take over a local watering hole, briefly enter Zimbabwe, dodge elephants while driving at night and of course, take a safari – on a boat.

The Debate Society's adventures in southern Africa began well before we arrived. Lost passports, a lack of visas, general snow madness at Heathrow and the simple fact that everyone went to far-flung locations (Toronto, Singapore, Pakistan, Heidelberg to name a few) for the Christmas break, meant that by the time we arrived in Gaborone we were a man down. Undeterred by this and the lack of toilet paper at the World Universities Debating Championship (WUDC), we tried to get know the country in the 35 degree heat.

There are a few realities one has to come to terms with about Botswana. Firstly, asserting that the pace of life there is relaxed is a gross understatement. Indian standard time pales in comparison to the hour long waits in between ordering your food and receiving it at restaurants or the 45 minutes it takes for the organisers to ascertain that they haven't got a first aid kit. Secondly, and perhaps far more seriously, the prevalence of HIV among the adult populace stands at 24.1 per cent according to the US State Department and is one of the highest in Africa. While this does not manifest itself overtly when you explore the capital, signs warning against unprotected sex and drug use around the university we stayed at makes the reality of the disease a hard fact to ignore. On a lighter note though, the billboards proclaiming these messages of abstinence were decidedly inappropriate and hilarious, the crowd favourite being "Just because you have a condom doesn't mean you should have sex. Just because you have car insurance doesn't mean you should have an accident." Wise words to take back to the LSE for Wednesday's AU night.

The tournament went by quickly and before we knew it, the team had made it to

the finals beating another 300 or so to get there. While this achievement was pretty awesome, the Debate Society's crowning glory was what ensued when the tournament ended. On a whim, a white Toyota Corolla was rented, a driver in the form of a nice American debater from Harvard was found, and we set off to Victoria Falls in Zambia with a large map and a small Lonely Planet guidebook.

The drive from Gaborone in the South to Kasane in the North was pleasantly uneventful. The roads are generally well maintained (give or take a pothole), as long as you drive with your high beams on constantly and are careful to avoid the cattle and elephants crossing the empty streets at night, you'll be okay. We stopped for dinner midway through the journey in Francistown, Botswana's second largest city or alternatively, a fairly dodgy suburb of LA given the proliferation of fried chicken shops, strip malls and general desolation. We had Chinese food at a pizza parlour that was looking to capitalise on the numerous and potentially homesick Chinese construction workers who slowly but surely built the vast majority of the highways and airports in the country. We drove on to Nata and stayed for the night having covered 700 kilometres or so.

Our adventure really took off the next day when we tried to cross the river that divides Botswana from Zambia. Instead of building a bridge (this river isn't particularly wide), the relevant border authorities saw it fit to operate what can generously be described as a floating hunk of metal to ferry cars, women with baskets of mangoes balanced atop their heads and the odd container truck from shore to shore. Botswana's status in our eyes went up a few notches when we set foot on Zambian soil and discovered Beruit on the banks of the Chobe River.

Foolishly, the Americans with limited experience of the third world were sent to navigate the various visa and customs charges. With the help of a "guide" we were ushered through customs fairly smoothly and dutifully paid the baffling "carbon tax" for driving a car into this country. Our guide then revealed his true identity as an insurance agent and ushered us into a shipping container that doubled as his office and tried to fleece us by asserting the necessity of "third party insurance" underwritten by his ramshackle operation. Much yelling ensued with the Southeast Asians in the backseat

refusing to be scammed given the fact that they're usually behind these operations back home.

We quickly drove off to Livingstone to spend quality time at a backpackers hostel filled with sun-burnt Australians who were searching for truth and meaning in Central Africa. Tiring of the crowd, we explored central Livingstone, which didn't offer much in terms of local food options (we wound up in a Mexican restaurant), we did however stumble upon the greatest thing since sliced bread, packet liquor. Bought off the street while simultaneously participating in a foosball tournament, we acquired 20 packets of whisky, brandy and something called "Officers", neatly sealed in plastic packets the size of a playing card. The debate team is pleased to note that no one went blind from the consumption of dubious, probably home-distilled liquor.

The highlight of the trip was the hike through Victoria Falls the following morning. Unprepared for the terrain we broke several flip-flops and made unwise life choices by swimming in rapids at the confluence of the rivers and bungee jumping from a bridge connecting Zambia with Zimbabwe. Needless to say, the scenery was spectacular, the tourist traps were plentiful ("pure" copper bracelets in exchange for your Ray Bans or women) and we discovered Zimbabwe's main imports were cooking oil and scrap metal, brought in by the trainload across the bridge. Our fun at the falls was marred by our inability to escape Zambia at the ferry crossing as the boat mysteriously "broke down" as our car drove aboard. No amount of shameless flirting with the boat captain or his gun-toting assistant would make them budge.

We made an early escape the following morning and wound up rather rapidly at the Chobe National Park, a game reserve that spans Zambia, Botswana and Namibia. We opted for a tour of the park aboard a boat, run by the aptly named "number 1 lady's travel agency" and were strangely captivated by herds of hippos for several hours. By the end of it we were satisfied we had gotten our quota of "things tourists must do in Africa" fulfilled.

Our road trip left us with beautiful pictures, great tans, a marginally better understanding of development in Southern Africa and a desire never to eat beef stew and pap (the national dish it seems) for the next decade.

Let's conspire to conspire

Nicola Alexander sits on the inside

There are three sides to every story. The story from the inside, the perceptions from the outside and the truth that exists somewhere in between. The hubris of the narrator is that they know exactly where they stand on the tale triangle but the challenge is determining where you sit as a reader. Do not be under any illusions; as an audience, especially an audience exposed to knowledge that is actually important, you are powerless. That is, unless you care to actively pursue the ever-elusive "truth". Unfortunately, should you choose to walk that line, you will inevitably come across, or even find yourself, counted among the ranks of conspiracy theorists.

Let's just say that as idealistic students with latent potential and very hazy directions, we opt to take this path of most resistance. How would we get about finding what the truth is?

The first step is determining on which side of the triangle you find yourself. More often than not, the angle that gets most perpetuated is the one with the best publicity team behind it. So, if as a history student you were taught US President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963 by Lee Harvey Oswald, an irrelevant madman, you might accept this as the truth. However, the "alternative" view, that the JFK assassination was a personal vendetta of the US government to remove a man who stirred the pot by supporting civil rights, shakes that position. The truth can quickly become the side that has the most active PR campaign. Ingredients include a smear element that discredits the opposition as "madmen", a media presence that represents only your side and a glamorous wing that puts celebrities, politicians and "experts" behind you.

You only have to peruse Wikileaks to understand just how powerful some of the PR machines have been in spinning stories and planting "facts". But herein lies the issue that is larger than whether the information we are presented with is the truth or not: is the pursuit of the truth even worth it for you? Wikileaks founder Julian Assange has had his freedom stripped, his reputation burnt and his

life threatened, for blowing the lid on the world of closed doors that is the top tier of power. This is the destined life for any truth-seeker. You will sacrifice yourself for a greater purpose. More than this though, you probably won't be believed or appreciated for the cause that you've dedicated yourself to.

Moreover, if you choose to question everything, you will inevitably find yourself drawn into the world of conspiracy, because that world is far more compelling than this. However, the danger with the world of conspiracy is that you will have to shift your entire position to fit in. It is no coincidence that only the most important and influential issues attract conspiracy alternatives. Issues of national security, the lives and deaths of the world's biggest names and everything alien are the major conspiracy fodder. So opting into the world of the alternative view, is choosing to live in a world where everything is upside down. People who are declared dead, are very much alive and well. The government, a body whose main interest is the public, is your worst enemy – megalomaniac and cruel. And, characters out of science-fiction not only exist but, perhaps even explain common phenomena that you've accepted as merely the weather. Needless to say, it is much easier to live in the world shared by most people who read mainstream media and attend certified high schools.

And finally we come to the greater question: is the pursuit of this information even worth it for the wider world? So what if Elvis is actually alive? So what if aliens came to Texas in peace? So what if Hollywood works for the government? Is anything going to actually change if you, as one individual, find out that that you were lied to? The sad truth is that, the truth is always going to be the inside story spun to give the outside manufactured perceptions. The truth is that knowledge is a numbers game, and truth is a power game. The best that we can hope for is not to suss out the sides of the triangle but to sit on the inside and know that knowledge is in fact a circle.

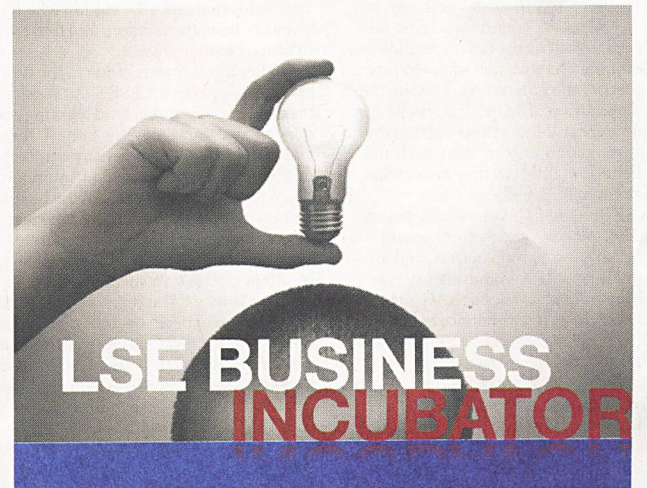
LSE Inc.

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Come along on **Monday 24 January** for your input into the new LSE Business Incubator. Refreshments Provided!



MONDAY, 24 JANUARY 2011 | NAB 208 | 18:00



LSE Diary

Iman Sana Teemul is diplomatic in Geneva

Where else in the world do diplomacy, chocolate and snow so perfectly blend? The Swiss city of Geneva exceeded our expectations. It is famed for being the international core for diplomacy, a hub for scientific innovation and a key financial centre. Travelling to this global city guaranteed a truly enlightening and unique Grimshaw Club experience.

Arriving at night and eager to explore we took a midnight stroll down to the famous Lake Léman. Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank and HSBC were among the many financial firms located in tall, lit buildings sprawled along the promenade. Snaps were taken and new friendships were forged as we settled into the 'Peace Capital'.

An early tram journey into Balexert was on the morning agenda. The bitterly cold temperature was quickly forgotten. We were overcome by contagious excitement at the prospect of visiting the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). There we had the privilege of meeting Adam Rogers - it would be an understatement to say he was an inspiring figure. Prior to joining the UN he had backpacked around the world in five years living on \$3 a day, created a magazine with Lenny Kravitz, written two books and built an e-commerce company providing solutions to a range of companies, including Disney and Marks & Spencer! His history aside, we discussed the UNDP's Millennium Development Goals. The meeting certainly instilled into us a sense of political reality and put the UN Agenda into context.

Lunch eaten, we travelled to the *Palais des Nations* to get a glimpse of 'The Broken Chair' and the grand UN building. With time to spare before our next meeting we visited the International Red Cross Museum. We visited the *Des Murs Entre des Hommes* exhibition which featured photographic images arranged between dividing walls. The images portrayed walls drawn onto military maps to mark the divide between conflicting entities, examples included The Green Line in Cyprus, the Berm of Western Sahara and the Fence between the Israelis and Palestinians. Having mused over the artwork for a little too long we hastened to our next meeting.

Tucked away in the corner of what appeared to be a residential plaza, it was surprising to find that the World Bank had chosen the most modest of locations. It was a secretive hideaway for great minds trying to secure peace and foster financial

market stability. Greeted with coffee and biscuits we settled down to an in-depth presentation about the economic downturn given by the Special Representative of the World Bank, Richard Newfarmer. We explored its causes, effects and the bank's various strategies devised for dealing with different countries. When asked whether the world was facing an unprecedented state of economic turmoil Newfarmer reassured us the recession of the 80s had been worse. Lifted in spirits and filled with biscuits we left for more adventure.

Geneva is full of surprises. Enticed by the charm of the city we decided there was yet time for sight-seeing. Nightfall took us to the Parc des Bastions the famous location of *Mur de la Réformation*. This magnificent monument built into the city's ancient walls depicts statues of prominent Calvinists. Playfully positioned by its side was a giant chessboard with life-size chess pieces and a busy ice-rink - Geneva truly represents an amalgamation of the ancient and modern world. A short ascent up a hill took us to the historic old town: *la Vieille Ville* of Geneva. It was simply surreal to visit the exact location where the Geneva Convention had been signed. Afterwards we visited a little antique shop. Having admired a selection of unaffordable relics of the past we headed off for a bite.

The following day we travelled to the headquarters of the World Economic Forum (WEF) which was situated in a glass building overlooking the vast expanse of Lake Léman. Its glamorous interior was equally impressive: it was adorned with artwork including a piece encrusted with Swarovski crystals. All of this reflected the WEF ethos that effective entrepreneurship was inspired by creativity. Managing Director André Schneider delivered an insightful presentation before discussing the agenda for the meeting amongst the global leaders in Davos. However, he addressed the public as the "driver of decisions" and emphasised how reforming public attitudes was central to turning WEF ambitions into reality. He pointed out that a practical solution to climate change could involve us doing as little as refusing to eat strawberries in the winter, labelling the growing procedure an "ecological nightmare". As we left, I sensed a boycott of the strawberry industry was in the pipeline.

We then took a tram to CERN, the world's greatest particle physics laboratory, an experience that was simply breathtaking. Upon our arrival we were warmly welcomed by Antonio Perin

before being whisked across the Geneva border into the French town of Cessy, home to the Compact Muon Solenoid (CMS) experiment. He gave us a comprehensive tour of the CMS particle detector, and provided us with the unique opportunity of viewing a biometric eye-scan in action. The magnificence of the CMS is impossible to describe, and to learn of the technical brilliance involved in creating it was nothing short of awe-inspiring. We left CERN with the unanimous feeling that we had just had a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Some of us then returned to the city where we ate hot chestnuts by the icy lake and visited the famous flower-clock before doing a spot of shopping. French cuisine was on the cards for our last night in the city. One Grimshaw member now felt adventurous enough to order a main course of horse meat! As admiring of his courage as the rest of us were, we saved our bravery for another day.

The hotel canteen was very much alive on the last day of our visit. As I helped myself to breakfast, I met a cheery chef who started to passionately sing along to the song in the background: "Je ne regrette rien". The legendary Piaf song perhaps better known today for its use in the Specsavers advert instigated my memories of the trip so far; I was content with the feeling that we had nothing to regret either.

Our final meeting was at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Here, Andrew Harper and Andrej Mahecic informed us of their current endeavours being made in Iraq and Georgia to coordinate international action in the midst of a refugee crisis. It was heartening to discover the scale of the efforts being made in the name of humanitarianism.

Lifting off into a cloud desert with a dramatic backdrop of mountains, I reflected on the extraordinary trip. Not only had we gained an in-depth understanding into how world development organisations work in practice but we had also fully immersed ourselves into the exciting culture of the city. The Grimshaw adventure had drawn to an end but a bank of memories had been left afloat.



Social advice

Charlie Glyn organises all the parties

"So do you organise all of the parties?" This was a great indicator of things to come when I first introduced myself as the new Activities and Development Sabbatical Officer to various members of the LSE faculty. Despite the broad definition of 'activities', it seems people were still set in thinking that my remit would only encompass Crush and AU nights, but little did they know what 'activities' at LSE really means.

LSE Students' Union proudly boasts over 200 societies, nearly forty sports clubs, four media group outlets, and an extremely active RAG contingency - so much so that attendance at RAG 'mega raids' compares to attendance at similar raids at the University of Cardiff, despite the fact that the LSE has a third of the student body. Now of course there are many problems with this kind of analysis including the concept that people can join more than one society or club, but it puts into context the magnitude of LSE activities.

Speak to Sabbatical Officers from universities of a comparable size, and you will be hard pressed to find one that can

boast a weekly twenty-four page newspaper, a radio station that is on air for 6 hours a day, Monday to Friday, a termly artistic journal and a TV station which gives students the freedom and flexibility to film what they choose.

A lot of this is purely due to the type of student you get at the LSE - enthusiastic, motivated, passionate, hard working and, most of all diverse. Let's be honest, these qualities are enough to get any employer dribbling. But, with increasing numbers of people achieving degrees and the hostile employment environment we now live in, employers are looking for concrete evidence that you are about more than just excellent grades on a sheet of paper.

This is why the activities available at the LSE should never be undervalued (see the start of my article). The transferable skills you develop through being involved in these are priceless when combined with a solid academic record at the LSE - this could be from playing on a team in the Netball Club, project management in the Business Society or simply socialising with other students.

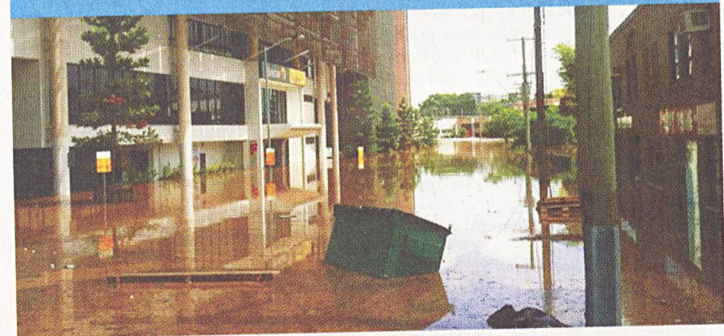
Which brings me onto a shameless plug. If you didn't realise quite how much was on offer at the Orientation Fayre,

were just a little unsure about committing to something unknown, or Clement House was rammed full of sweaty people and you couldn't find the hockey table, I urge you to check out 'Give it a Go' in weeks two and three! With a fortnight of scheduled activities varying from sports clubs to sessions by the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), there are a variety of things you can come along and try - all for free and with no long term commitments.

As a pilot scheme, it may only offer a small insight into what is really available but it's a step in the right direction and breaks down any misconceptions; idolising Delia Smith is NOT a prerequisite to take part in the Food Appreciation Society's blind food tasting event. Equally, taking part in Aerobics or the Women-only Gym session will not take you back to nightmare PE lessons similar to that in The Temper Trap's "Love Lost" music video.

An LSE graduate myself, I can safely say that I developed as many skills outside the classroom as inside. That said, I'm pretty sure I can organise an awesome party too.

QUEENSLAND FLOOD CRISIS APPEAL



The State of Queensland, Australia, has been subject to widespread flooding that has inundated Central and Southern Queensland, causing significant destruction to residential property, livelihoods and the tragic loss of life. Many people have lost everything.

On Friday 21 Jan, the Australia & New Zealand Society will have a stall along Houghton Street to fundraising for the Queensland Flood Crisis.

Please Give Generously

Donations will be directed to the Premier's Flood Appeal to support flood victims

Donations can also be made at the Activities Resource Centre at any time.

The Australia & New Zealand Society applauds the work of the Queensland Government and volunteer agencies. We thank you for your support and kindness during this difficult time.



It's good to be back...



Boy oh boy, has GG missed Wednesday nights. While the previous four Wednesdays had consisted of spending the evening in my damp squat of a cave watching repeats of Peep Show and the spectacularly unfunny Big Fat Quiz of The Year, this Wednesday finally provided GG with some good quality, wholesome family entertainment.

FAMILY

The family that proceeded to provide the entertainment was the biggest, and the most dysfunctional family in LSE, the AU. And the family reunion consisted of getting shitfaced in the Tuns and pure incestuous pulling in Zoo Bar. Mum and Dad were both out on the bozzler, and the children were proceeding to run wild.

CURIOS

GG first saw things kicking off with some truly awful karaoke in the Tuns, from both male and female children of the AU alike. It was at this point that GG noticed a lot of curious postgraduate students who had come out for a quiet drink remember the reason why they didn't go to the Tuns on Wednesdays, and proceeded to evacuate the premises, only to be replaced by droves of Netball starlets. It did seem however that much of the attention of Men's Rugby was divided between those aforementioned Netball girls and those pulling the pints behind the bar. But that's a story for another column (the one after this, to be precise.)

EVERYWAH

But then everyone's attention was focused solely on one event: the fall from grace of LSE's most upper-class student. Questions have been asked as to who had produced so much stomach bile and covered so many coats, chairs and pool tables with it. Thankfully, GG can report that Comrade Teplukreithgrad had done the dastardly deed. Moral of the story? Never trust a Russian (to drink more than two pints.)

ESCALATION

GG proceeded to follow the crowds to Zoo Bar, and arrived in the nick of time to the VIP area to spot the most polite future Olympic Men's Rowing member providing some special coaching to the Women's RC

captain for their up and coming 'coxed-pair' race.

POP IDOL

Everyone's 19th favourite Somalian, Noz, was seen sporting the best Gareth Gates tribute haircut known to man, and GG overhead him convincing yet another unsuspecting fresher female that he was actually a better singer than Gates himself. Her encounter ended as encounters with Noz inevitably do: face-rape.

THE ONLY WAY IS ESSEX

As the glamour of the Tuns' girls finally descended on Zoo Bar, GG noticed Pad 'I-just-can't-stop-training-my-arms' Dixon making a move for what many initially thought was Geri Haliwell in her Sexy Spice costume but turned out to be a good ol' feisty Essex girl. GG can confirm that Pad and the Spice Girl did begin a cab ride to Essex, but decided to stop early and stay at a house in Liverpool Street.

TOO SEXY FOR MY SHORTS

Continuing the theme of rugby players pulling Tuns' barmaids, The Lushest of The Lush Freshers, Lush Sam, finally

managed to ensnare his beloved Dyso. Finally believing he was about to seal the deal back at Holloway Road, she vomited in a fashion that would have made Lexi blush, passed out, and proceeded to let Lush Sam clean it all up and explain what happened to her the next morning. If that isn't love, then GG doesn't what is.

BOZZER

King of the Bozzler Brendan was also seen to be following in the footsteps of RFC CC Lennon by ensnaring a Women's Football stalwart. All GG can state on this matter is that they are looking forward to 'getting to know each other better'. Or shaggin'. One of the two at least.

WALKIES

GG certainly cannot wait for a return to Walkabout this week, and the return of the gossip inducing catalyst that is Reef. In the meantime athletes, stay classy. Until Wednesday at least.

CHRIS A L'ORANGE GOT A BLOZZER OUTSIDE CRUSH

IF YOUR SHAG'S NOT BOOKED, IT'S PROBABLY SMEDLEY

Sober rugby guys picked up off the street are dangerous. Text LAD to 696969 to get three numbers of local drunken rugby players.

BE SMED WISE

In association with and all-round safety

Women's Rowing make a splash in the AU

Georgie Gately

We may have been pipped at the post by Women's Hockey at the AU Welcome Party boat race, but since then Women's Rowing has continued to go from strength to strength, both in our ability to down drinks (note the midday table-dancing nuns at this year's Carol) and in the skill and fitness levels obtained by the girls involved.

Two years ago, there was no opportunity for the women of LSE to join the Rowing Club. This was a big shame given the sport's offering as a fun and original way to get fit, as well as the all-important concern of any typical LSE student - its impressive reputation with employers.

So in search of self-fulfilment (and CV bulking) Women's Rowing found itself a Captain, and Freshers' Fayre 2009 managed to recruit a small but committed group of ten or so girls, training once a week at the University of London Boat House in Chiswick. Our greatest achievement of the year was having the first ever LSE representation at Women's Head of the River: an international race on the Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race course.

It was clear however, that there was enough support for the sport to make it bigger and better in 2010-11. With more confidence, enthusiasm, and a Vice Captain in tow, interest in Women's Rowing at this year's Freshers' Fayre skyrocketed, and we had over 40 girls sign up to the

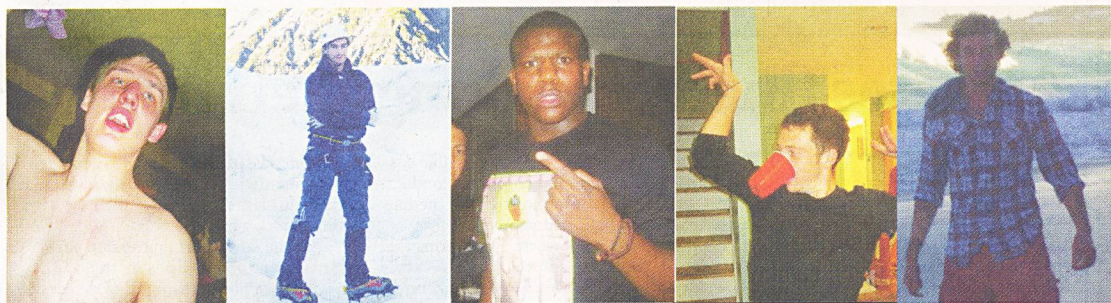
club. We now have two compulsory sessions a week: one on the rowing machines (at 8am... yes, we are hardcore) as well as separate beginner and experienced sessions on Saturday afternoons, where we row in eight or four person boats on the Thames.

We have even recruited budding Olympian Ollie Cook to coach us, which is a huge boost to the standard of rowing which can be seen in the club. Five girls took part in the Allom Cup last term, a race against all the other London universities, and we plan to do several more races next term to give everyone the opportunity to put their skills and fitness into action.

But it's not all freezing weather and early mornings; this year Women's Rowing has established itself as a key part of the social scene within the AU, with higher Zoo Bar attendance than ever before and some seriously finable activities at the Carol.

The hope is that Women's Rowing will continue to grow in popularity and success, and with so many enthusiastic girls, with great potential, it seems that whether in downing pints or otherwise, Women's Rowing have plenty of boat races to win in the future.

Come and watch Women's Rowing in action! The Rowing Club will be doing a Rowathon in RAG Week, where we will attempt to row the distance from Dover to Calais on indoor rowing machines. Houghton Street. Week 6. Sweaty boys and girls in Lycra. You know you want to...



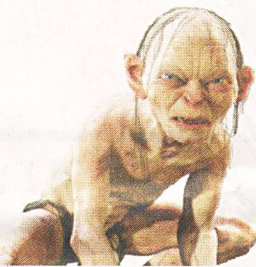
Rugby 2nd XV Teammates

If you would like to dish some dirt on your teammates with witty profiles, contact us at:

sports@thebeaveronline.co.uk

<p>Most likely to be seen crying while watching 'The Notebook' - Russian Greg: Utterly terrifying until you get to know his sensitive, sweet, feminine personality. A true softie at heart.</p>	<p>The Stephen Hawking award for the most monotonous voice - Hallam: He may send you to sleep, but his inspirational leadership has led the seconds to be title contenders.</p>	<p>Worst dress sense - Sayo: The self-proclaimed 'Banter Merchant' has the swagger. Sadly he can look like he's playing Joseph in the West End, or Mr Motivator with a paunch.</p>	<p>The Spice Emperor - Greg Jones: He looks innocent enough, but scratch underneath the surface and you'll discover that he has a ridiculous obsession with cinnamon.</p>	<p>Weakest shoulder AC joint - Dewi Hall Evans. Determined to beat Josh for the coveted RFC 'Social Player' award, Dewi has dislocated his shoulder 69 times this season.</p>
<p>Most likely to be caught breaking and entering - McGregor: When trying to get into a certain Gray's Inn residence, he managed to get his hand stuck in a letterbox, for hours. All in the name of Gary.</p>	<p>Lovable Asian 1 - Manley: To some, he's cute and cuddly. However, evidence suggests that he possesses the hairiest arse known to man. Big fan of black ice!</p>	<p>Lovable Asian 2 - Jae Park: Also the winner of the 'longest in the shower' award.</p>	<p>Male bonding award - Rob Little + Nicky Chin: A series of unfortunate events at this year's initiations led to Rob confessing his love for our Malaysian representative. "I love you man...you held my knob for me"</p>	<p>Biggest Toff - Jemmet Page: Thought it was appropriate to announce to the RFC that he had a gamekeeper, which led to him sampling some dubious looking drinks at club dinners.</p>
<p>The next winner of Britain's Got Talent - Pickles: His table climbing is nothing short of phenomenal. The only reason the seconds have gained an ounce of respect from the last two pub Olympics.</p>	<p>Worst imbibing - Stuart Logier (Luxembourg): Utterly pathetic, but we shouldn't be too surprised considering he's only 17.</p>			

Sport



**New Year,
new loves,
but no new
lessons learned**

Netball don't drink... they chug?!

Charles Hacker

With 160 sign ups this year, netball still remains the largest female club in the AU. Such a large number brought promise of higher levels of sporting finesse, and more importantly, higher levels of lash-fuelled debauchery than ever before. Have our Netballers taken part in antics on par with spitroasts and vomiting on bar tops? Hopefully not, actually. But here's an update of your netball club so far, complete with sporting and social highlights for each of our eight teams:

1sts

Being promoted often comes with a severe spanking from your new league of teams, but since the firsts got promoted less than two years ago they have taken it in their stride, and worked their way up to the top half of the league. Veteran Natalie Davis showed her Freshers that orders of priority are: lash, banter, minge and never protesting when she was forced to go home early for the first three weeks of Michaelmas Term. Assumed diagnosis: Too much bozzer. Official diagnosis: She lied so much she made herself sick.

2nds

Regarding sport, the Seconds remain undefeated in their BUCS league and look set for a well deserved promotion to a league where, rather unfortunately, Buckinghamshire University will not be able to praise our use of the "big word" 'complacent'. No, seriously. It is important to third-years that our Freshers show a taste for scandal so we may leave LSE reassured that the AU is in safe hands, and not in danger of SU reform. Fresher Mateer took it upon herself

to soothe our nerves when she left the Carol for a quickie (ET: 4 minutes) before returning no longer dressed as Rafiki, but instead a sexraggled fresher.

3rds

The thirds proved themselves to be, well the Thirds, when they prevented humiliation only seen in the FC by securing a safe win against the fifths. A win over Royal Holloway must also be acknowledged. Commitment to cause was demonstrated at the Carol for the Third team when they squeezed into Finding Nemo costumes intended for children aged 3-5. And the answer is yes, you should feel dirty and wrong if you tapped that that day.

4ths

A close battle against a team at the top of the league proved that the Fourths have upped their game this year. Needless to say their social highlight comes in the form of California Gibbons who rarely fails to amuse others/disgrace herself. A fresher who's not really a fresher, with a penchant for Russians and threesomes.

5ths

The aforementioned match against the Thirds was ironically a sporting favourite for the Fifths, who scored one goal per quarter. An appropriate representation of their aptly customised team hoodies which read: 'We Play for the Moral Victory.' In these times of austerity, initiative should be employed to ensure we are resourceful wherever possible. A certain Fifth teamer cursed the rise in VAT in Ann Summers and instead recycled the handcuffs from their KCL Robbers and Penguins Halloween costume for the purpose of sexual activity. Sources have not yet confirmed whether this was intra-

team bonding focused or imposed upon an unsuspecting AU male.

6ths

Opportunities must be seized but the Sixth team regretted such proactive decisions when they trained with the athletes of the first team. Pulling out of the 2012 Olympics was the price to pay for the chance to revel in first team glory. In addition, a drastic improvement against Queen Mary should be acknowledged: a previous loss of 110-2 was redeemed when this year the sixths lost only 14-13. Corruption at its best: the AU President let his phobia of cats cloud his judgement when 24 of them in hats harassed him for the Halloween Fancy Dress prize, despite there only being three teams in the Tuns. Captain Gavaghan may look like butter

wouldn't melt, but she is capable of inspiring upheaval that would leave fees protesters in awe.

7ths

The Seventh's have taken a while to find their feet, with initial losses of 39-3 scales, they have closed the gap though-out term and nearly drew with St Barts, a mean feat when their renowned ghetto fabulous, slightly camp, netball incompetent umpires are taken into account. A massive team has led to massive carnage for the Seventh's. Survivors of Club Dinners in Brick Lane were few and far between for all teams, but one girl bravely carried on to Zoo Bar where she displayed remarkable compassion when she nursed an injured soldier on the Minge Bed.

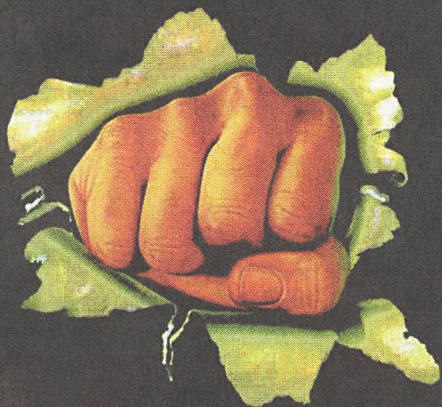
8ths

The eighth's have proved their name 'social 8ths' is well deserved, although they play no netball their presence is well and truly appreciated in the club. They always have some impact on a Wednesday night, with a special mention to Miss E. Taylor, who has proved she really does LOVE Wednesdays. They looked incredible at the Carol, somehow managing to make the Grinch look sexy. They made a massive impact on both Halloween and Pub golf, which their captain has described as, "HORRENDOUSLY drunken", stating the wine-fuelled Pizza Express as a personal highlight.

Hopefully this term will be as eventful, but remember ladies - WEDNESDAY NIGHTS NEED YOU!!!!



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Athletes finally speaking their minds

Stuart Smedley

This past week saw a reawakening for sport that took place on both sides of the Atlantic.

Out of the woodwork emerged two stars willing to break the mold of their acquaintances, two stars who dared speak their minds, rather than engage in the mundane cliché that has streamed out of the mouths of those plying their trade at the highest level for what has seemed like an eternity.

Finally, it appeared that characters who fans can actually relate to do still exist on the sporting stage.

Liverpool's Ryan Babel began this revival with his tweets regarding the performance of referee Howard Webb following his side's 1-0 defeat in the FA Cup third round against Manchester United.

Incensed at the official's decision to award United a controversial penalty in the opening minute from which the deciding goal was scored, the Dutch forward chose to post a link to a doctored picture of Webb in a Red Devils shirt. Adding further fuel to the fire, he branded the referee a 'joke'.

In the US, ahead of his team's playoff encounter with the New England Patriots, the New York Jets' Antonio Cromartie, when asked for his views on Patriots' star quarterback and NFL darling Tom Brady, pulled no punches whatsoever.

"Fuck him, he's an arsehole," was his ever so subtle response.

Unsurprisingly both were severely

scolded, with Babel facing a possible suspension for supposed 'improper conduct'.

But while the authorities and media act all moralistic in response to these outbursts, is it not worth considering that the consumers of sport – the fans – actually appreciate the kind of outspokenness demonstrated by the pair? They were, after all, talking in the way fans love to communicate.

In a day and age when the distance

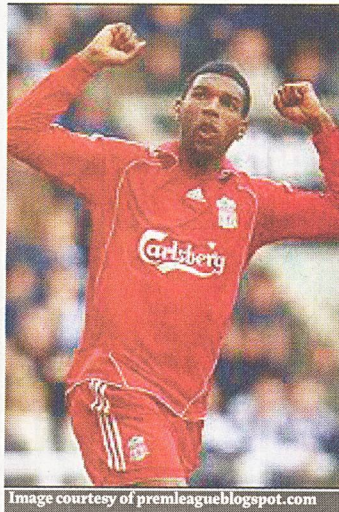


Image courtesy of premierleagueblogspot.com

little chance of ever getting to meet them – is lamented, it should be celebrated that there do exist those with similar views to their adoring masses.

To the fans, sport matters. In particular, winning and rivalries matter.

When a player responds to defeat with the standard line of: 'To be fair all credit to the opposition, at the end of the day they done good, and it's a game of two halves and the lads gave 110 per cent' it gives the impression that, in actual fact, defeat to them doesn't really hurt. For those in attendance though losing is a painful experience. The feelings linger, often for days.

What Babel demonstrated was that he didn't take the loss – to a hated rival no less – well. And that should always be the case.

Cromartie's case is similar, although his tirade came pre rather than post match. Between the Jets and Patriots, like Liverpool and United, there exists a tense rivalry. Therefore, heaping praise on an unloved opponent, however great he may be, is not going to endear you to your fanbase.

Launching a four-letter word shower of hate in the direction of an adversary, on the other hand, will.

Speaking their mind may not do an athlete's public image much good, but why should that be of concern? Just tell it how it is – it's what supporters would love those they worship to constantly do. And it's the fans who are the most important people, right?

between sporting legends and the public – who often pay extortionate amounts of money to see their heroes perform with