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# Society

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THE NEWSPAPER FOR ALL SOCIAL SCIENCES STAFF AND STUDENTS AT THE OPEN UNIVERSITY



## BRAVE NEW WORLD?

Brenda Gourley, the new Open University Vice Chancellor, reflects on a turbulent year in world history. September 11<sup>th</sup> has imposed greater social responsibilities on all universities. A new dialogue is needed for this brave new world. She envisages the establishment of a new Centre for ethics, one that transcends disciplinary boundaries, embraces more fully concerns about human rights and cultivates global citizenship.

Many people around the world were taken by surprise on September 11th 2001. Some were not. This latter group would not have been able to be specific about the nature of the attack but that there would be such attacks was seen by some as simply a matter of time - a nightmare waiting to happen. One such person was Anthony Lake, one time security adviser to President Clinton and author of a sobering book entitled simply *6 Nightmares* - a book describing what he called 'real threats in a dangerous world and how America can meet them'. The book is not just food for thought in the American context, it is food for thought for us all - for indeed it was not just Americans who felt the reality of September 11th, and as we contemplate the nightmares so cogently described by Lake, it is not just Americans who will be affected.

Lake frames his possibilities by posing seven virtually rhetorical questions and I quote:

- Are we doing everything we can to protect the American people from nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons?
- Could tomorrow's Timothy McVeigh gain access to a weapon of mass destruction?
- Could a foreign terrorist or international criminal gang use the computer to wreak terrible harm on us?
- Have we accurately anticipated the military battlefields of the future? How does a superpower fight a war against a state that responds through ambiguous acts of terrorism?
- When the next Rwanda, Bosnia, Haiti, or Kosovo teeters on the brink, will we step in early enough to pull it back before it falls into the abyss? In the age of CNN can we say no? Are our purposes in our peacekeeping efforts clear enough, or are these operations Band-Aids that we will never dare remove?
- Are we looking at our geostrategic challenges through the right prism? In a new era, classic great-power relations still matter. But they cannot be understood only in classic ways.
- And, finally, will a Washington obsessed with political gamesmanship fritter away America's future through its own irresponsibility?

We can agree or disagree with the precise list. We can probably each make our own list and it is likely to be somewhat longer. What will be clear to all of us is that it does not really matter exactly what the list contains. What matters rather is the underlying message to most of us living in the Western world of affluence in a greater world distinguished by some of the greatest catastrophes in human history, and the growing divide between those who have and those who have not. It is also a world which has been described as 'information-rich', which roughly translates in these circumstances to those of us in affluent societies being unable to claim ignorance of the plight of our fellow inhabitants of the planet. We can be accused only of lack of concern, not lack of knowledge.

### The social responsibilities of universities

Some would describe our times as marked by a singular lack of ethical behaviour even as Lake and those concerned with security matters would describe the security risks implicit in such behaviour. Whatever standpoint one takes it behoves those of us who are lucky enough to be educated to think about what this means for us as individuals and institutions. In particular, I would suggest that universities bear responsibilities - social responsibilities. They have in their midst and

amongst their student bodies fine intellects and expert knowledge on a range of pertinent issues and they need to ask themselves how they use those gifts in times such as these.

More and more people and institutions are thinking in these terms. In *Crossing the Divide* published late last year by the United Nations, Giandomenico Picco, Chair of a Group of Eminent Persons selected by the UN Secretary-General to compile it, notes that:

'it was not easy to explain why the idea of a Dialogue among Civilizations was launched by the UN membership in 1998. Some would see its philosophical usefulness but not its practical relevance, while others even considered it a luxury when more immediate challenges had to be faced. However, by the summer of September 2001, I believe that very few would still retain those views. The events of September 2001, but not only, have made the pursuance of a dialogue across borders of all kinds quite necessary. It is easy to say that this is an idea whose time has come.'

Kofi Annan has pointed out that 'the need for dialogue among civilizations is as old as civilization itself' and the dialogue has to be pursued across all sorts of so-called disciplinary divides. The issues involved are many and include those that are essentially encapsulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While human rights are included in many of the subjects offered at The Open University, an emphasis on particularities might well also provide a focus for our contribution to this dialogue that the United Nations has called for.

### The importance of a global ethic

The issues raised in our dialogue will also entail the examination of many ethical issues for the choices involved in according our fellow man his or her human rights. Just as we are becoming more familiar with the arguments put forward for genetically modified foods and even human beings, so the choices involved in preserving our environment and sharing our resources with our fellow beings need to be aired and debated. It is in our search for our common values that we will find our common humanity - and it is our commitment to a global ethic that may well ultimately define our humanity.

The Open University in its mission founded on the pursuit of social justice and in its many and varied courses in a variety of disciplines, may well be able to provide a focus for a debate about ethics and perhaps even have a Centre directed towards that cause. That too would be a visible and pro-active way to harness the resources at its disposal and demonstrate intellectual leadership in this important sphere. There are people in the University actively considering this and they deserve our support.

Apart from the large issues they raise, the questions posed by Lake should exercise the minds of our best intellects wherever they may be, inside universities or not. They touch on the knowledge, understanding and insight gained in a variety of disciplines and, importantly, need work across disciplinary boundaries. They raise significant questions about social and political systems, be they local, national or international. They force us to consider the inadequacy of present arrangements and how best they may be reconceptualised. They raise the importance of cultivating global citizenship, and more than that, they reinforce the fundamentals of the social sciences. Society and how it organises itself, does indeed matter.

Is Brenda Gourley's idea of a Centre at the Open University devoted to exploring these new agendas vital and viable? Your views to the editor would be most welcome.

Sources: *6 Nightmares*, ISBN: 0316561479. *Crossing the Divide*, ISBN: 0971606102.

# WORLD AFFAIRS

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## EDITORIAL

Richard Skellington  
The Editor, August 2002

It was Woodrow Wilson, the 28<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, who famously remarked at the creation of *The League of Nations* four score years ago that no nation is fit to sit in judgement upon any other nation. Neither is an individual, or group of individuals. We still live in an unstable and dangerous world in which national and international politics remain uncertain, made more precarious by recent events in Afghanistan, the Middle East, and by the USA's apparent willingness to militarily invoke 'regime change' in Iraq.

One date – September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 – has driven global political agendas and domestic concerns. The last *Society Matters* went into production a month before al-Qaeda struck in New York and Washington. As this new issue is put to bed another September 11<sup>th</sup> looms around the corner amid mounting speculation that al-Qaida may choose the anniversary for further indefensible acts of violence. Globalisation has brought many things to the world, not least terrorism, whether by individuals, groups or States. Who can see into the near future? By the time you receive this fifth issue of the Faculty newspaper, further events may have intervened and a new crisis begin to unfold.

It would have been inappropriate for *Society Matters* to be produced without reflecting on the 'day the world changed'. The extent to which it did is hotly contested and debated. Some things have not changed. Every three seconds a child's life is lost to poverty. Aids continues to scour Africa and is increasingly changing the demographics of countries in the developed and developing world. The conflicts that existed before al-Qaida struck remain the dominant conflicts on the world stage.

I invited Professor Anoush Ehteshami, Director, Institute of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, the journalist and writer John Pilger – who received his OU Honorary degree in 2001 – and Professor Grahame Thompson from the Faculty's Government and Politics discipline, to reflect on this increasingly unstable world. How important is the recent history of the Muslim world to our understanding of extreme forms of fundamentalism? What are the roots of recent American foreign policy? What are the implications of September 11<sup>th</sup> for academic responsibility? How futile is the deadly murderous bloodshed in Israel and the West Bank? Will an eye for an eye leave everyone blind? And what are the implications for higher education and its global responsibilities. Our new Vice Chancellor, Brenda Gourley, challenges recent complacency, and envisages an Open University with a global agenda in which ethics and morality will play a vital role. In these days of political, economic and cultural globalisation, the role and purpose of education is even more paramount, as is the ability of an invigorating social science to analyse social change. The evidence from our analysis of key global issues in *Our World 2002* demonstrates that irrespective of the virtues of social sciences in challenging the political and economic dogmas which result in famine, disease and injustice, increasing literacy and numeracy levels is vital. To be a globally responsible Open University we must place greater emphasis on the educational provision for children, and the poor.

This issue also focuses on Faculty initiatives. The sub-deans curriculum and research identify root and branch reviews in their areas of responsibility. The new ICT course U130 *Get Connected* is examined. I invited three course chairs to demonstrate how course teams use the valued comments you make in IET surveys to improve the relevance and effectiveness of their teaching materials. Ann Tolley, one of our course managers, takes a worm's eye view of her extremely vital job on ensuring course teams work effectively to deliver to you the best courses.

We also feature a strong UK focus. Colin Clark examines the education provision for Roma children in the context of persistent social inequalities and prejudice. Jeremy Roche investigates the challenging issue of children's rights. Eugene McLaughlin explores the importance of criminology to the Faculty's social policy discipline. Alan Hudson gives an 'insiders' perspective on the role of Parliamentary select committees.

I am grateful for the continued support of the Faculty in delivering this fifth issue of *Society Matters*, especially to John Hunt for his substantial contribution in layout and design, and to cartoonists Kate Paine and Gary Edwards.

# ROOT AND BRANCH FACULTY CURRICULUM REVIEW

Sub-Dean Curriculum Peggotty Graham needs your help in reviewing the Faculty's undergraduate profile

You might imagine that sub-deans have plenty to do without seeking out exciting new ways to spend their time. So it was in a moment of madness that I became Chair of the Masters Programme in order to steer through a review of its progress. Madness became hysteria when there was a collective decision to review the undergraduate curriculum as well. Luckily hysteria is waning, and we are now well under way with the first root and branch review of the Social Sciences undergraduate curriculum for some time.

First things first. This does not preface a major upheaval in the Social Sciences courses that you are expecting to study over the next few years, though over the longer term there may be some shifts in emphasis. If changes are proposed you will be the first to know. But it does mean a hard look at what we do now and at proposals that are in the pipeline, in order to identify future directions, build on strengths, consider gaps and develop a curriculum to carry us beyond the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

So what questions will we be addressing? Here are a few:

- **What is the appropriate mix between subject specific and Social Sciences courses that cross subject boundaries?**
- **Do we have the number and type of named awards in Social Sciences about 'right'?**
- **What are the new areas that it would make sense to move into?**
- **Are there subject areas from which we should consider de-committing?**
- **What should be the balance between vocationally or professionally oriented courses and the more academic Social Sciences curriculum we have developed successfully up to now?**

We can't of course review the whole OU universe, just the Social Sciences sponsored courses – the ones with a 'D' in their course code which cover economics, geography, government and politics, psychology, sociology and social policy. But the curriculum is bigger than us and we collaborate closely with colleagues in other subject areas. So an important aim of the review is also to identify areas of curriculum development to move into which build across Faculty boundaries.

### Your views count

Your views count in all of this. Please feel free to give us your views based on the questions above. Tell us also what you have enjoyed (and why). What you would have liked but didn't find. If there was just one thing that you could change about Social Sciences courses what would that be? We'd like to know what you think about course length – Social Sciences courses are mostly 60 points. Do you like courses which start in February (or prefer an October or November start)? What do you think about Social Sciences course time-tabling in relation to family and work pressures? If you have ever thought of giving up how can we help you to stay with your course?

Tell us anything you like about how you would like to see the Social Sciences curriculum develop for the future (within the bounds of polite discourse!) but please try and keep it brief. There are over 30,000 of you studying Social Sciences courses this year and your views could have quite an impact! Let us have them by e-mail or by snail mail.

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## EXCITING RESEARCH FUTURES A SNAPSHOT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FACULTY

Gordon Hughes, new Sub-Dean Research, outlines the key priorities for what promises to be an exciting research profile for the Faculty

It's obviously the season for reviews. In my capacity as sub-dean research I'm also chairing a group which is currently undertaking a root and branch review of research. In particular, the group is exploring how we might best improve further our research profile nationally and internationally. We are taking a hard look, mixed with some 'blue skies' thinking, about how we may best build upon our exciting research profile in specific disciplines, but also develop further those interdisciplinary initiatives for which we are already famous in the academic world.

Here are some of the key questions we will be addressing over the course of the next few months:

- **How can we increase the number of our postgraduate PhD students and improve the postgraduate research culture more generally across the Faculty? (You may not be aware that we already have over 20 full-time PhD students undertaking cutting edge research study in the social sciences.)**
- **In what ways can we create more 'quality time' for research for our full-time staff and increase the numbers of research active staff?**
- **What are the best ways in which the crucial synergy between teaching and research may be exploited?**
- **In which research groups do our most exciting initiatives lie and how might these collaborative projects be best supported in order to nurture research excellence?**
- **How can we build better links with the outside world, at local, national and international levels? One of our key concerns is to raise the visibility of our research outputs and our unique role as public intellectuals.**

I don't claim to have the answers to all these questions but I hope they have given you a brief snapshot of the research review that this Faculty is undergoing. In the next *Society Matters* I will flesh out how we are progressing. The next issue will feature in detail the range of our research profile, and its important contribution to teaching and society.

## DEAN

Twin priorities: improving retention and research

Dean Phil Sarre finds reasons to be cheerful amid financial constraints



Thinking what to put in this column, and bearing in mind that it's my fifth as dean with one more year to serve, I feel like a distance runner coming up to the bell signalling the last lap. In many ways I feel good, since we've come a long way: the faculty has a record numbers of students, the widest range of courses and programmes ever and the biggest and most talented staff we've ever had. We've had spectacular successes, with excellent scores in the Teaching Quality assessment of all six of our disciplines, and Geography scoring 5\* in the Research Assessment Exercise – the highest score ever achieved by an OU discipline. However, there are signs of strain, not just personal fatigue after five years in a hectic job, not even the signs that many people are working harder than is good for them, but the tightening grip of financial problems which threaten our future performance.

Anyone who has followed trends in OU income and expenditure over the last few years will have seen that expenditure has been rising faster than income and realised that it couldn't go on. However, none of us realised that we would have to save £24 million in next year's budget, an 8% cut in planned expenditure. This Faculty has benefited from extra expenditure, so we have had to take our share of the budget cut, which means reining back some of our ambitious plans. Of course we are trying to do this in ways that keep us on course strategically and which respect the fundamentals of the OU mission.

A key realisation is that we have been increasing the size of our curriculum faster than the increase in our student numbers, and hence driving up unit costs. Unless we raise student fees, which we do not wish to do, this cannot go on, so we are reviewing the curriculum to try to deliver all the planned awards with fewer courses. We'll also have to make sure that future courses are more attractive to present students, and potential students, so will be engaging in market research to identify what you want from us. Staff time released from course production will be focused on the two priority objectives in this year's Faculty Plan – retention and research.

Although the Faculty's retention record is good in relation to OU averages, the Retention Project has made us realise that it's not good enough, and indicated a range of possible actions to improve it. We're starting on things which can be done speedily for all courses, like better course descriptions so students don't sign up for things they don't expect, and better communication between course teams and ALs. In turn, this will allow us to identify, and remedy, problems that lead to dropout.

Research is one of the OU mission commitments, both for its own sake and because it bolsters the reputation of Faculty courses and awards and makes it possible to recruit, and retain, top quality academics. In the past we have never given research quite the priority we state, not even making it possible for academic staff to devote as much time to research as is built into our terms and conditions of employment. We now have stimuli that make it clear we can do better. The positive example of Geography shows we can be in the top flight, while the results of the last RAE suggest strongly that less successful departments will be stripped of research funding so that there will in future be no way back to success. This widening gap between research active and non research departments means we can no longer be content to be moderately research active, but will have to make serious efforts to raise our performance across the board if we want all future courses to be written by research active academics.

I'm encouraged that, in spite of the financial pressures, morale is good and, at both Faculty and discipline levels, plans are being revised and priorities refined which will allow us to progress into the future. I'll be putting all my energy over the next year into ensuring that the faculty is in the best possible shape to prosper in the future. Reverting to my initial metaphor, and realising that the race is a relay, I'll also be looking for someone younger and fresher to take over the baton next summer.

### NEXT ISSUE

Student retention concerns  
How to make a bid for research funding

## London's poverty divide hits children hard

London is a capital divided. Almost half its children live in poverty, a higher proportion than any other part of the country, according to the first report from the Office of Children's Rights Commissioner (OCRC).

'London remains a capital divided, with huge variations in wealth which impact directly on its 1.65 million children', says the report. The OCRC was established in 2000 to bring pressure on Government for a children's rights commissioner to protect the interests of children and monitor legislative impact.

The report claims that 43% of London children live in poverty. More than one quarter of London school children are eligible for free school meals, rising to two thirds in some boroughs such as Tower Hamlets. School exclusions are higher in the capital, academic performance is lower, housing is more overcrowded, health levels lower, and child abuse more common. Children living in poverty are five times more likely to die in accidents and three times more likely to have mental health problems than those in households living on average earnings. They are also more likely to be the victims of crime.

The OSRC report suggests that the 43% benchmark may be an under assessment, since asylum seekers, and young homeless people, were not included in the research.

**In London, architects have designed obstacles to prevent the homeless from lingering.**

*The state of London's children, November 2001*

*Source: The Big Issue, No 401, September 2000*

## ONE IN THREE CHILDREN NOW LIVE IN POVERTY

A 2001 study by the New Policy Institute has cast doubt over recent Government claims about the size of the reduction in UK child poverty. The Government argues that 1.2 million children have been lifted out of poverty, but the Institute believe that in its first term the Government had only reduced child poverty by a quarter of this ambitious target. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, in a poverty study at the end of the 1990s, found over 4 million children, a third of the UK child population, in poverty. The Fabian Society claimed last year that in Britain – the fourth largest economy in the world

– 80% of children in families where nobody is employed, live in poverty.

The research cast doubts over the Government's long term goal to eradicate child poverty by 2020. Much faster progress is required to keep the Government on track. Both organisations point to the fact that the number of adults living in households with less than 60% of the median income – the official poverty line – had shown little change since the introduction in 1999 of the national minimum wage, the working families' tax credit and higher child benefits. Last year the number of people living in poverty totalled 13.3 million.

## UK POPULATION RISES TO OVER 60 MILLION

The UK population has risen by 10 million since 1948, according to Government estimates at the end of last year. The figure is expected to be confirmed in the 2001 census, which is due for publication in August 2002 (after *Society Matters* goes to press). The population is growing at a quarter of a million people a year. The number of over 85s has increased by a third in the last decade. In contrast, the number of children under four has fallen. The birth rate is now around 600,000 per annum, half the peak figure of 1921.

In 1999, Britain's net immigration was 182,000, the highest since records began in 1855. This was achieved not through asylum applications, but through issuing work permits to a range of badly needed skilled workers – nurses, doctors, and computer experts, and an increasing number of people from the European Union coming to Britain to learn English.

## RADICAL CHANGES IN NATIONAL CENSUS

The 2001 enumeration is likely to be the last time an army of enumerators deliver census forms to every household in the UK. The last census covered 30 million households and cost £254 million. The major problem is that by the time the data comes out, so much of it is out of date and irrelevant, especially in informing national and local Government long term spending commitments. The Government is to undertake a cost benefit review for 2011. Existing knowledge based on tax and benefit records, the General Household Survey, and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, may be augmented by a representative sample survey. Another option is to remove the detailed census questions and simply undertake a head count. The 2001 census findings will be released in the first six months of 2003 and will be reported in the next issue of *Society Matters*.

## Britain 1901: a nation of imbeciles, lunatics and the feeble minded

The online version of the 1901 census, released this year, reveals that 90,000 of the 32 million population, asked about their mental health problems, described themselves as lunatic, imbecilic, or feeble minded. The census is available for anyone wanting to trace mad ancestors on <http://www.pro.gov.uk>.

# Social Trends 2002 A snapshot

## HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES

- The proportion of households comprising a couple with dependent children declined from 38% in 1961 to 23% in 2001; the proportion of lone parents with dependent children tripled
- The proportion of single person households has risen dramatically from 2 million in 1961 to 7 million in 2001
- The number of divorces has fallen from 180,000 in 1993 to 159,000 in 1999
- In 2000, seven in ten children of divorced parents were aged ten or under, and around one in four children were under five
- In 1961 the average age of first marriage in England and Wales was 26 for men and 23 for women; in 1999 this had risen to 29 and 27 respectively
- In 1998 – 99 stepfamilies (married or cohabiting) where the family was aged under 60 accounted for about 6% of all families with dependent children
- The average household size has fallen from 3.1 in 1961 to 2.4 in 2000

## MULTI-ETHNIC BRITAIN

- One person in 14 living in the UK was from a minority ethnic group
- Between 1991 – 95 the most common reason given by immigrants for coming to the UK was to join a partner here; in 1996 – 2000 the most common reason was work-related
- The number of people accepted for settlement in the UK increased by 28,000 to 124,000 between 1999 and 2000, the highest annual number since July 1962
- In 2000 most asylum seekers came from Iraq, Sri Lanka, the former Yugoslavia, Iran and Afghanistan: an estimated 10,000 applications were granted

## HEALTH

- In 2000, 6 children per 1,000 live births died before the age of one compared to 18 out of 1,000 live births in 1981, and 84 in 1921
- Half of the 3,400 people diagnosed with HIV contracted the virus through heterosexual sex, compared to one fifth in 1991
- Concerns over the safety of the MMR vaccine have seen a fall in the number of children in England immunised by their second birthday against MMR – from 91% in 1997 – 98 to 88% in 1999
- Two fifths of the £28 million spent on UK hospital and community health service provision is spent on people aged 65 and over, with around an eighth spent on children under 4
- Between 1981 and 2000 the number of GPs in the UK rose by 37%, to 37,000, but the number of nurses, midwives and health visitors fell by 7%

## SOCIAL PROTECTION

- In 2000, around 2,800 children were adopted in England and Wales, an increase of 800 on 1995
- The 35,000 children in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on child protection registers, represents a fall of 29% since 1991
- The most common reason for child protection was neglect, accounting for 37% of boys and 35% of girl placements, but more girls were placed on a register as a result of sexual abuse – 2,400 girls compared to 1,600 boys – though boys were more likely to be placed on a register because of physical injury, 3,500 compared to 2,900 girls
- In 1999 – 2000 almost three quarters of lone parents were in receipt of family credit, or working families tax credit, or income support; three fifths received housing benefit and council tax benefit

## LABOUR MARKET

- In the last thirty years the number of women in the labour force has risen from 10 million to 13.2 million
- In spring 2001, there were 6.8 million people of working age with long-term or work-limiting disabilities
- In 1981 one in three males worked in manufacturing; in 2001 it had declined to one in five
- Under the New Deal between 1998 and August 2001, only 23% of those aged over 25 moved into unsubsidised employment
- Women's employment has risen from 47% in 1959 to 70% in 2000
- There were 5.8 million part-time workers in spring 2001, of which 4.8 million were women
- Job tenure has risen among women with children, but it has fallen dramatically for men aged 50 and over
- In the late 1990s, typically, when a person started a new job, it lasted for 15 months

## INCOME AND WEALTH

- Household disposable income has doubled since 1971
- Income inequality has shown a marked increase since the early 1990s
- In 1999, the wealthiest 1% of individuals owned 23% of total marketable wealth – half the UK population own only 6% of it
- Children are disproportionately present in low income families: the risk of a child living in a low income household is increased by the presence of disabled people

*All bullet points relate to 2000 – 2001 unless stated*

# DENIED A FUTURE?

## A critical look at the education of Roma/ Gypsy and Traveller Children in Europe

A new report published earlier this year by Save the Children suggests that Roma/Gypsy and Traveller children across Europe are routinely facing institutional barriers to obtaining an education. Dr Colin Clark, author of the UK chapter, argues that this report should be considered as an appropriate benchmark against which progress in promoting the right to education for Roma/Gypsy and Traveller children in Europe can be judged.



Dr Colin Clark is a sociologist working at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. He is a member of the UK Gypsy Council and author, with Donald Kenrick, of *Moving On: The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain* (University of Hertfordshire Press, 1999).

**'If you were Minister of Education for a day what changes (to the education system) would you make to promote education for Roma?'**

**'...I would prefer to be Minister of Finance and allocate money to implement it effectively.'**

This insightful and rather clever answer, given by one of only a handful of Romani University students in Europe, illustrates one dimension of the key findings from a new comprehensive report published earlier this year by *Save the Children*. Changes in educational systems are ruled by the budgets they have.

The report *Denied a Future?* systematically examines the current situation of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller education across a range of European countries. From north to south and east to west, the findings of the fourteen country chapters make for rather grim and sobering reading.

However, amongst the repeated reports of poor access and provision, exclusion, lack of legal redress, poverty and racial discrimination were the voices of children who were attempting to learn. 'School is good for the future, we can achieve something' as one 12 year old Romani girl quoted in the report summary puts it. Another 16 year old Romani boy states the hard reality of trying to take up education in a society in the grips of economic transition: 'I would like to continue, but my parents don't have enough money for the books and everything else I need.' Clearly, much is at stake and much



Travellers at Epsom

work is to be done to improve things.

### Groundbreaking first text on Romani education and exclusion

The principle aim of the *Save the Children* report is to make available a text, for the first time, that critically asks questions about the legislation, policy and practice of the type of education being offered to Romani children – one of Europe's largest, impoverished and discriminated against, ethnic minority groups. It is estimated that the continental population of Roma/Gypsy and Travellers is some 7 to 8.5 million people with some estimates indicating that more than half of this figure relates to those under the age of 18. To be sure, it is a young and growing population that will not 'just go away' as some gadzhe (non-Gypsies) appear to wish for.

The overall framework for the report is based on a 'rights model': one that fuses minority, human and child rights to create a holistic approach to investigating issues relating to education. This model, whilst not entirely unproblematic, is able to appreciate and deal with the wider social and political context of the democratisation and economic restructuring process across many parts of Europe and how this impacts on specific issues for specific groups – principally Roma/Gypsy and Travellers right to education. Against this socio-economic backdrop was a fundamental concern for all fourteen country reports to account for current 'real life' experiences. To ask probing educational questions in a way that acknowledged contemporary economic difficulties in various parts of Europe. It recognised that different groups are competing for scarce funds in a very limited 'pot'. It is a stark and bleak picture when viewed through this lens.

Essentially, *Save the Children* are asking whether the sums of money currently being spent by governments, intergovernmental agencies and international NGOs on educational reform across Europe for Roma/Gypsy and Traveller groups are actually 'paying dividends' or not. Certainly the World Bank, European Union and many national and local governments and other agencies are interested to find out if their investment is 'worthwhile'. But, it goes well beyond just the simple maths and balance-sheets: it also needs to be asked what noticeable impacts are these investments having? How are they being monitored and measured? Are innovative and temporary pilot initiatives leading to secure and robust long-term projects? Is systemic change a future possibility or an occurring reality? Or, are Roma/Gypsy and Traveller children continuing to lose out?



Roma/Gypsy children. Photo: Poppy Szaybo

### In challenging the political status quo much is still to be done

The answers are far from simple but the report goes some way in at least asking these difficult questions and trying to get them on the European political agenda. Indeed, the detailed answers will only emerge when responses to the report begin to filter back to *Save the Children* through the monitoring process that is currently underway. For the moment, the critical analysis of provision in the fourteen countries by the various authors, and the voices of the children heard in this report, will act as a timely reminder that much is still to be done. Likewise, this 'snapshot' also serves to illustrate the need for some real creative thinking when it comes to appreciating the difference and diversity that exists within and between different Roma/Gypsy and Traveller communities when tackling the root issues of what exactly constitutes education and what prevents/promotes it. The report details explicitly the many contradictions, risks and dangers that lie ahead for policymakers in tackling this issue, as well as for the children and families themselves.

It is evident that the current European context demands that safeguarding the right to education of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller minorities should be of primary concern to politicians and policymakers. From debates about European Union enlargement, migration and asylum to questions of democratisation and human rights, there is usually some mention of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller groups in the European corridors of power.

### Eroding the barriers of exclusion, stigma and racism

Unfortunately, in many countries – including the UK – the issues are usually not addressed directly and instead are often talked of in terms of 'the problem' with Gypsies and Travellers. Often this leads potentially useful discussions

back into the racist problematic that led them there in the first place. From this report, it is clear that we should be examining the problems faced by Roma/Gypsy and Traveller communities in accessing the right to a kind of education that is inclusive, relevant, participatory, appropriate and responsive to the needs of those engaging with it. Indeed, the many recommendations that are outlined in the report – from the use of stronger affirmative action programmes to much wider access to pre-school provision – suggest that many things can be done in both the long and short term that will not have excessive financial consequences for the countries involved.

Finally, it is hoped that with the publication of this report, an established European educational benchmark will lead to a new beginning for the many Roma/Gypsy and Traveller children and their families who continue to face major barriers in taking up their right to education. Hopefully, in the near future, the following words from a UK parent will be a distant memory and a commitment to multiculturalism and anti-racism will have an impact across the different European education systems and generations:

**'I'm not happy about my girls going to school. You always hear rumours about Travellers making trouble and I don't want my kids going near them.'**

*Denied a Future? The Right to Education of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller Children in Europe*, is available from: *Save the Children*, c/o Plymbridge, Estover Road, Estover, Plymouth, PL6 7PY, UK, Tel: 01752 202 301; Fax: 01752 202 333, eMail:

### The British Romani language is in danger of disappearing

Research at the University of Manchester has identified British Romani among languages that face extinction by 2050. The researchers predict that 90% of the world's languages are imperilled. British Romani is particularly vulnerable with only a few families in the UK, they claim, still speaking the language. There are over 6,000 languages in the world, but 4% of them are spoken by 96% of the world's population.

### Anger over health certificate before handshake policy

Slovakian government officials have been told they can insist on seeing a health certificate before shaking hands with anyone from the minority Roma community. The decision has been taken by the interior ministry after a Roma journalist offered to shake hands at the end of an interview with a police officer. Her offer was refused unless she produced a 'hygiene certificate'.

**'When the Budapest Gypsy Symphony Orchestra came to town, Mole Valley councillors heralded their arrival with a campaign intended to advertise their coup. A mailshot was sent to 25,000 residents announcing that this would be 'the only time you want to see 100 gypsies on your doorstep'.**

*The Times*

# DO CHILDREN HAVE HUMAN RIGHTS?

Jeremy Roche, Senior Lecturer in the School of Health and Welfare, examines the issue of corporal punishment to show how the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is being used to protect the rights of children

The idea of human rights has given rise to intense debate in recent years. Some commentators emphasise the incoherent and partial character of human rights discourse; others see in the languages of rights and human rights powerful symbolic and practical resources for the marginal and excluded. The relevance and political value for adults of this language is contested, even more so in relation to children. Certainly, some of the responses to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) illustrate the disquiet felt in some quarters.

Do children have human rights? The question might at first appear peculiar. After all, Article 1 of the ECHR states that the parties must 'secure to everyone within their jurisdiction the rights and freedoms' contained in the Convention. Furthermore there have been numerous cases involving children which have come before the ECHR. The Articles alleged to have been breached have included Articles 3 (prohibition of torture), 5 (right to liberty and security), 6 (right to a fair trial), and 8 (right to respect for private and family life). And as if to totally subvert my own question the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998, which came into force on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2000, incorporates most of the provisions of the ECHR into domestic law. As a result UK courts and tribunals are required to interpret and embrace a law which is compatible with Convention rights (Section 3, HRA 1998).

The purpose of the HRA 1998 is to 'bring rights back home'; to ensure that public authorities' policies and decision-making practices respect human rights and where they fail to do so, to make it much easier to raise directly claims that one's human rights have been breached. So it appears that as a matter of public policy, legal doctrine and procedure all of us, including children, come within the protections of the ECHR. However a closer consideration of the ECHR's decisions in cases on the corporal punishment of children shows that the situation is much more complex.



## Parents' rights, children's rights and school discipline

One argument often advanced is that parents are the best champions of children's rights. Certainly the early cases on corporal punishment can be seen as supporting this view. In *Campbell and Cosans v United Kingdom* (1982) the applicants were the parents of children at state schools in Scotland. Mrs Campbell asked for an assurance that her son would not be physically punished: this was refused. Mrs Cosans' son was asked to report for corporal punishment for breaking the school rules; he refused and was suspended. His parents were informed he could only return to school if he submitted to the school's disciplinary requirements; they refused and

were threatened with prosecution for failing to ensure their son's attendance at school. Both applicants claimed that the schools' corporal punishment policy was contrary to Article 3. They argued the refusal to respect their objection to such punishment contravened Article 2 of the First Protocol. This provides that: 'No person shall be denied the right to education ...the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions'.

Here the ECHR did not find a violation of Article 3 but did decide there had been a breach of the ECHR because the government did not respect the parents' objections to corporal punishment. The court's conclusion that there had been no breach of Article 3 was based on the argument that while the threat of corporal punishment could amount to 'inhuman treatment' this was not the case. In a partly dissenting judgment Sir Vincent Evans argued that there had been no violation of Article 2 of the First Protocol. He argued it was clear from the explanations provided at the time that Article 2 was drafted that its purpose was to 'protect the rights of parents against the use of educational institutions by the State for the ideological indoctrination of children'. Thus according to his interpretation the views of parents on the use of corporal punishment in schools was outside the scope of ECHR provision.

**Like other recent contributors to Society Matters I believe that an Open University course on human rights is long overdue**

It was not until 1987 with the European Commission of Human Rights decision in the case of *Karen Warwick* that it was held that school caning breached Article 3, i.e. that the child's human rights had been breached. An increasing number of ECHR applications resulted in the British government settling cases by way of ex gratia payments of between £3,000 and £5,000. However article 3 still required that a severity threshold be crossed before corporal punishment could come within its wording. Thus, despite the Commission's decision in the *Warwick* case, in *Costello-Roberts v UK* (1993), which concerned a seven year old boy who was beaten for breaking school rules, the ECHR decided that Article 3 had not been breached because the punishment inflicted was not 'degrading'. In order for punishment to come within the wording of Article 3, the 'humiliation and debasement involved must attain a particular level of severity over and above the usual element of humiliation involved in any kind of punishment'.

In the context of schooling it is no longer a matter of the human rights of parents that is at issue but that of the child. As a result of campaigning, corporal punishment in state schools was abolished by the Education Act 1986; it was not until the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 that corporal punishment was brought to an end in private schools. However, these developments are not uncontested. In May 2002, a headmaster of an independent school along with other applicants (all teachers or parents of children at private schools) claimed before the Court of

appeal that the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools breaches the parents' human rights under Article 9 (freedom of conscience) of the ECHR.

## Children's rights and family life

It was not just at school that children were exposed to the risk of assault – parents had, and still have, the right to reasonably chastise their children. In *A v UK* (1998) the ECHR decided that a nine year old boy, who had been beaten with a garden cane by his stepfather, had been subjected to 'inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment' contrary to Article 3 of the ECHR: the court awarded the applicant £10,000 in damages. In this case the stepfather had been prosecuted for causing actual bodily harm, but was acquitted by the jury. The government conceded that domestic law failed to protect children against violation of their rights under Article 3 and stated that it would consult and change the law to better protect children.

In March 1998 the *Children Are Unbeatable Alliance* was formed to influence the outcome of the consultation process. The government produced a consultation document which among other things asked such questions as whether punishment 'which causes or is likely to cause injury to the head (including damage to the brain, eyes and ears)' can ever be reasonable. There was a similarly distressing question regarding the use of implements – though weapons might be a better word. The Department of Health consultation document did not even consider the option of abolishing 'reasonable chastisement' on the grounds that this was 'quite unacceptable'. It was quite prescriptive on some matters, e.g. ruling out abolition, while on others it adopts a bizarre 'detachment', e.g. deciding not to comment on the idea that a blow to a child's head might be acceptable as reasonable chastisement.

Ideas of family privacy and parental rights can also operate to undermine the right of children to be free from physical assault. In 2000, the Department for Education and Employment in its consultation on the draft National Standards for the Regulation and Inspection of Day Care and Childminding recommended, subject to parental agreement, that childminders should be able to 'smack' a child in their care. Despite the widespread condemnation this proposition aroused, including from the National Childminding Association, it has been included in the published National Standards (2001).

What this brief review of the impact of human rights on the social practice of hitting children reveals is the complexity of human rights discourses. On the one hand it appears self-evident that if children are persons that they should come within the protections of the ECHR. No one (anymore) seeks to justify assaults on women or servants; this is not to say that such assaults are not all too common but there is no space (quite rightly) in public discourse for such offensive views to be articulated.

In relation to children the case law of the ECHR is inclusive but the wording of the Convention draws lines. Children and organisations supportive of their rights have used the ECHR to campaign for an end to the corporal punishment of children; supporting parents and children in bringing cases is just one aspect. The *Children Are Unbeatable Alliance* seeks to move the public debate on by



insisting that children should have the same protection against assault in our society as everyone else. The government's anxieties about being perceived to be interfering in family life has resulted in the drive for reform coming from non-governmental organisations and the voluntary sector.

## Shifting attitudes

Attitudes towards hitting children seem to be changing. An NSPCC poll found that 58% of people wanted an end to the physical punishment of children of any age; among parents with two children this rose to 68%. The language of human rights is both fixed in international documents and treaties and subject to argument as lawyers' law. However, it is uttered also beyond the confines of the courtroom and is part of the never-ending redefinition of social obligations and entitlements.

Like other recent contributors to *Society Matters* I believe that an Open University course on human rights is long overdue. Debates around human rights are about re-imaging social relations and arguing for a core sense of how we should treat each other. The jurisprudence surrounding article 3 of the ECHR and the way in which the UNCRC has been used in the campaigning to bring to an end corporal punishment of children testifies to their value as a social and political resource.

*Cartoons for Children's Rights is a UNICEF broadcast initiative. Stills reproduced from colour originals courtesy of UNICEF.*

*Cartoon animations may be found at:*

## Withdrawal of (B08) BA/BSc (Honours) Social Policy Degree

The University has decided to withdraw the BA/BSc (Honours) degree in Social Policy (award code B08) at the end of 2006, with a resit year in 2007. Students who have linked to this award have been informed of this decision by letter from the Dean of Social Sciences.

This decision has been taken in response to the introduction of benchmarking statements that are designed to standardise the content of and approach taken by UK universities offering higher education academic awards with particular names. The

current Open University BA/BSc (Honours) degree in Social Policy is innovative in that it combines a number of theoretical and professional/practice based issues across the fields of social policy, health and social care. This distinctive interdisciplinary and critical approach is central to the Faculty of Social Sciences' overall course provision but is not mirrored by the guidelines contained in the benchmarking statements. Rather than adjust this distinctive approach, the Faculty has decided that it will cease to offer the degree in four years time.

If you are sufficiently advanced in your studies to be able to complete the degree requirements by the end of 2006 you would be able to receive this award

if you qualify for it by 31 December 2006.

If you linked courses to the degree but do not expect to complete the degree's requirements by 2006, you may wish to consider the BA/BSc (Honours) degree in Social Sciences with Social Policy. This degree contains the same core courses in social policy but also provides a wider choice of core electives from across the social sciences. The course DD100 *An Introduction to the Social Sciences* is compulsory for this degree. If you began your studies with K100 *Understanding Health and Social Care* this can be included in the BA/BSc (Honours) degree in Social Sciences with Social Policy as the 60 points of elective credit. Details of this award can also be found

in the Undergraduate Qualifications newspaper *Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees*.

If you have any questions about your ability or eligibility to complete the BA/BSc (Honours) degree in Social Policy or wish to seek course or award choice advice in the light of this announcement, please contact the Awards and Ceremonies Centre on 01908 653003 or e-mail AACO-GEN@open.ac.uk in the first instance.

**Peggotty Graham**  
Sub-Dean (Curriculum and Awards)

# GET CONNECTED!

## U130 Get Connected: studying with a computer

*Get Connected* is a level one introduction to studying with a computer that will help you to develop the necessary skills for studying Social Sciences and Humanities at undergraduate level. It is suitable both for those who are new to the Open University, and for continuing students who would like to develop their IT skills and get to know their electronic campus better.

All of our new Social Sciences courses now require use of a computer as an essential part of study. This includes the new level 2 introductory courses in Psychology, Economics and the Environment, together with new level 3 offerings from Politics and Social Policy. For the psychologist exploring the structure of the brain using neural software, the care assistant collating information from an online census to the political scientist checking out human rights abuses on the Amnesty International website, the computer provides a vibrant learning experience.

*Get Connected*, is an innovative and exciting course that will provide you with an introduction to the computer skills you will need for effective study, together with a guided tour round the electronic campus of the Open University. You will learn how to:

- Use Windows, word-processing, and spreadsheets to organise and present information
- Use e-mail and conferencing to communicate with tutors and other students
- Access and search the Internet, electronic libraries and databases

You will be working both on your own and with other members of your group, under the supervision of a tutor.

The course is divided into four main parts:

### Part 1: Getting started

You will be introduced to the basics of computers, key packages like Windows, word-processing, and how to connect to the Internet and use eMail. You will receive support from a tutor and there will be an optional day school. Course materials include video, CDs and print material.

### Part 2: Get communicating

This section focuses on how you as a student can use electronic communication to learn. You'll learn how to use eMail and take part in an electronic tutorial.

### Part 3: Getting information

This section focuses on showing you how to maximise the electronic resources available in the Open University Library and on the Internet. You will learn how to find and assess websites, search library catalogues and databases.

### Part 4: Getting into spreadsheets

The computer is a wonderful tool for storing and manipulating large amounts of information, especially numerical data. In this final part of the course, you will acquire the skills to enter data into what is known as a spreadsheet. You will then use the data to carry out some basic statistical exercises and to produce some tables and charts.

### The Bloomsbury Set

We do not assume computers are interesting in their own right. Rather, you are invited to use them to explore engaging topics that are relevant to the Social Sciences and the Humanities. You will examine the life and times of the Bloomsbury set, a group of artists and thinkers that lived in London at the start of the twentieth century. In *Get Connected* you are asked to carry out a series of tasks on your computer which look at the connections between some of the Bloomsbury Set's key figures, and the subjects that interested them.

### Presentation pattern

This 16-week course is presented twice a year, in April and November. First presentation April 2003.

### Printed materials

*Get Connected* students mainly use computers to learn. In addition, the course is supported by comprehensive printed materials. Other teaching materials include:

### CD-ROMs

The first CD-ROM contains copies of much of the teaching material. It includes a multimedia software package that explores the Bloomsbury Set materials. The second CD-ROM contains the highly rated Star Office software. This provides free word-processor and spreadsheet packages that will be used to develop generic IT skills so that you will be able to use a wide range of other software.

### Website

The *Get Connected* website contains copies of much of the teaching material, and is designed to provide a link between the course materials and online tutorials. You will be able to do online exercises, receive immediate feedback on your work and keep a track of your progress.

### Is *Get Connected* relevant to my degree profile?

*Get Connected* will be an optional course for all the Social Sciences named degrees and is likely to count to a number of others as well. Exact details are still being discussed.

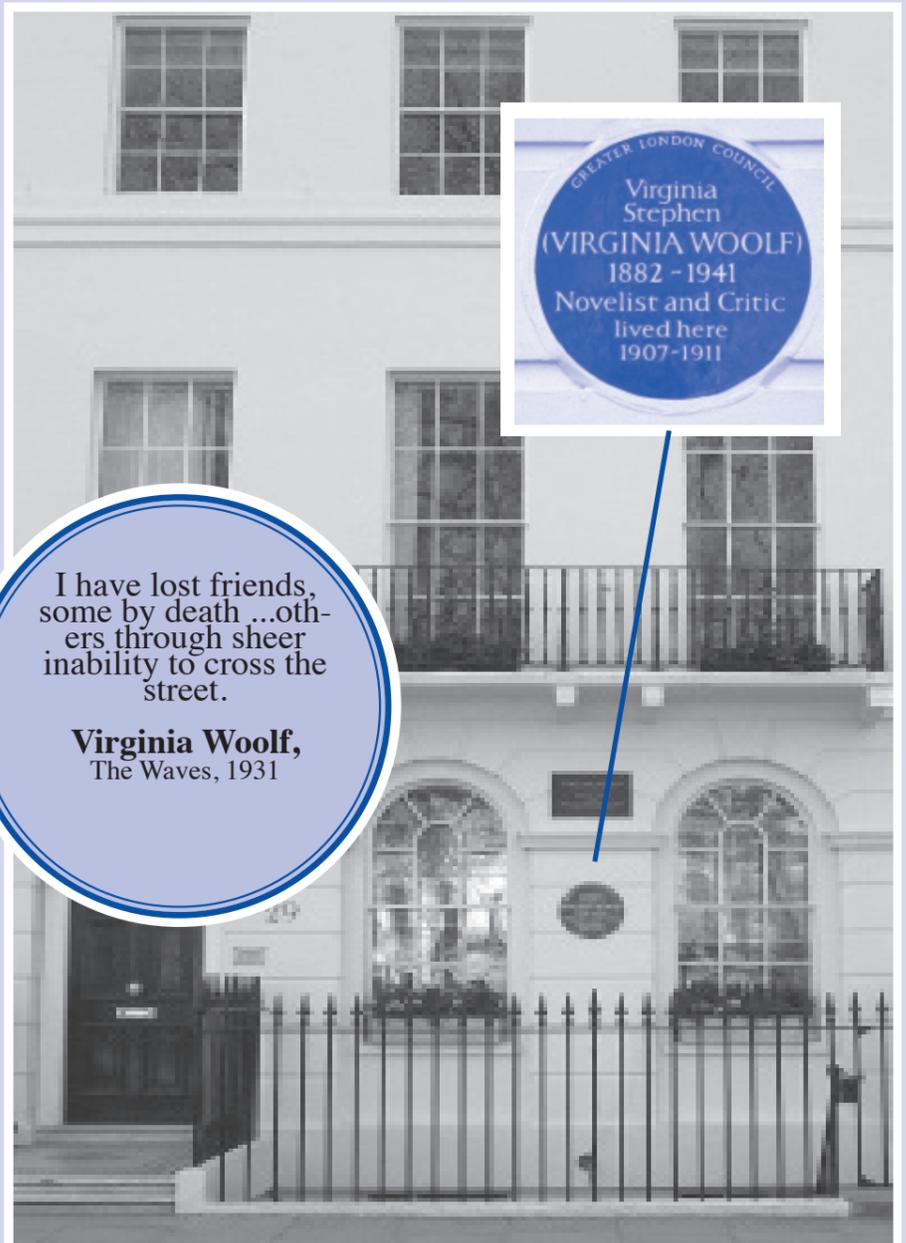
With *Get Connected* you can start from scratch, with little or no expertise in computing, or you can enter the course with some knowledge, and focus on those areas in which you need to improve. *Get Connected* offers you the ideal entry into the world of studying with computers in Higher Education. You will be provided with a series of diagnostic quizzes that allow you to focus on those areas of IT skills which you would most benefit from developing.

### Access to computing facilities

Since a new PC costs around £800, for those of you who do not own a computer this is an expensive additional investment. To help address this problem there is now a national network of OU friendly learning centres where students can gain access to public computing facilities – the *Opening Up Information Technology* (OUIT) network. We would encourage all of you to buy your own computer, if this is at all possible, but some students have been able to engage with computing elements of courses by using computer suites in local libraries, Internet cafes or schools.

If you would like to find out where the nearest learning centres are to you, ring your OU Regional Centre, where advisors will search the OUIT network for you.

The network can be accessed online at: [www.ouit.co.uk](http://www.ouit.co.uk)



'Blue Plaques' in Bloomsbury, 29 Fitzroy Square, London. Photos: John Hunt

### Have a go at this Quick Quiz...

If you want to harness the power of computers to learn, but don't know where to start, then *Get Connected* is ideal. If your computer knowledge is fair, but could be improved, you will also benefit from the course. To assess how far *Get Connected* could be of benefit to you, try the following diagnostic test.

- Can you minimise and maximise different windows?
- Can you multi-task in Windows?
- Can you find a file or program on your hard disk?
- Can you copy files to and from your floppy disk?
- Can you open and close programs easily?
- Can you run a program/application from a CD-ROM?
- Do you know what a directory or folder is?
- Can you find your way up and down the 'tree' directories of your files?
- Can you create new directories or folders and put your files in folders?
- Can you print a file (document)?
- Can you close a file and choose to save changes?
- Can you format a word-processing document exactly as you want it?
- Can you add an attachment to an e-mail?
- Can you forward an e-mail?
- Do you know how to use computer conferencing?
- Do you know how to best use computer conferencing in your learning?
- Can you enter data into a spreadsheet?
- Can you summarise data into a chart?
- Can you calculate basic statistics using a spreadsheet?
- Can you access and search an electronic University library?
- Do you know how to find out about electronic journals?
- Can you tell a trustworthy Internet site?
- Can you use Internet search engines effectively, and avoid too many responses?

If you answered 'yes' to most of the questions above, you already have many of the skills needed to use a computer to learn. If you said 'no' to most, you'd certainly benefit from studying *Get Connected*. If you answered with a mix of 'yes' and 'no', you would still benefit substantially from studying parts of *Get Connected*.

### Getting Technical Advice

The Helpdesk is open for enquiries from 9.00 to 22.30 seven days a week, except bank holidays and University holidays.

Telephone: + 44 (0) 1908 653972  
 Telephone: + 44 (0) 1908 652193  
 eMail: [LTS-student-helpdesk@open.ac.uk](mailto:LTS-student-helpdesk@open.ac.uk)

If you use special computing hardware and software to help you overcome a disability, you'll need to make sure, before committing yourself to a course, that the course software will work with your computer and that you understand how the computer will be used in the course.

Please ask the University's Office for Students with Disabilities for any special advice you need. Telephone: +44 (0) 1908 653745, eMail: [OSD-WH@open.ac.uk](mailto:OSD-WH@open.ac.uk)

# Making sense of the turmoil in the Muslim World

**Professor Anoush Ehteshami, Director of the Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, and Professor of International Relations at the University of Durham, examines how the history of the Muslim world and its resistance to the forces of globalisation helps us to understand the significance of September 11th, and its aftermath**

The shocking events of Tuesday September 11th 2001 have once again thrown the spotlight on a corner of the vast territory, large demography and rather un-stable political geography of what we call the Muslim world. The Muslim world, comprising some 50 sovereign states and large minorities in many other countries, is a well-integrated and integral part of the modern world of states. It does, however, also contain a complex and intricate web of relations and forces that it periodically unleashes on the rest of the international system.

As we have witnessed, at times the points of contact have been surprisingly violent and dramatic. On the whole, much of the energies of the Muslim world are either taken up with matters internal to that community, or else used up by the individual Muslim states in their efforts to make way in today's globalised socio-economic and cultural system. I am struck by the defensiveness of the Muslim states and how difficult they find the struggle to defend their own interests. Little room is left for forging a concerted effort to defend what are regarded to be legitimate Muslim interests. It is in this relative vacuum that the radical Islamic forces find a role.

If we adopt a slightly longer-term view of the evolution of the Muslim world in the modern era, which indeed we must do if we are bent on making sense of the current crisis, then we can find many signs from the pages of history that point to deep structural flaws in the way in which Muslim states emerged onto the international scene.

## The profound legacy of traumatic European colonialism

Since the turn of the twentieth century the Muslim world has been saddled by two fundamental problems. First, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early 1920s, at one of the most important turning points in modern times, left it voiceless at the top table of international players. Without the shelter of that Islamic empire, which was not regarded as a perfect model by many Muslims outside Anatolia, the Muslim world found itself exposed and exploited by the bigger European powers such as Britain and France. This exploitation followed the humiliations inflicted after Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the systematic weakening of the Persian and Ottoman empires in the face of European encroachments in the nineteenth century. European colonialism in the region was often brutal and has had a profound legacy in terms of both political institutions and culture.

The Muslim world has probably never recovered, or been given the chance to recover, from these traumatic encounters with the West. But their sensibilities were further tested with the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 in the heart of Muslim lands and the slow removal of Palestine as a political and cultural entity. Israel's foundation, its location and Zionist ideology, have been considered by countless many in the Muslim world as a national and religious challenge. The systematic subjugation of the Palestinian people by Israel and the occupation of all of Holy Jerusalem by Jews is considered a conspiracy to deprive the Palestinians of their rightful homeland.

## Impervious elites resist citizen demands for reform and change

The second problem was associated with the very nature of the state in the Arab and the wider Muslim worlds. The modern state in many parts of the Muslim world is not only largely a European creation, where even its boundaries are often those defined by the colonial powers, but one which is overwhelmingly reliant on a highly centralised state machinery and a patriarchal infrastructure. While the former has impregnated these states with a serious legitimacy problem, a problem severely tested in the Kuwait crisis of 1990/91, the latter has made the elites of these countries more impervious to the calls of their citizens for a bigger share of the economic and political pie.

The deepening political and economic problems at home, brought about partly by corruption, nepotism and bad management, and partly by the ill-defined goals of economic liberalisation and IMF-style structural adjustment, have enabled the radical Islamic forces – who have been able to flourish as other (more secular) political forces were marginalised or exterminated by the ruling elites – to step into the breach and challenge the rulers in the Muslim states. Their challenge is felt from Indonesia to Pakistan and Turkey, in the key Arab countries of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and Egypt, as well as in the North African Muslim states of Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and Libya. Their slogan is a simple one: 'Islam is the Solution'.

## Radical resistance to Western infiltration and 'westoxication'

While for the most part the radical groups remained locked in a struggle with their own ruling regimes, with their quarrels largely confined to the territory of the country concerned, the Islamists are now increasingly finding themselves battling much greater outside forces: the infiltration of outside forces they view as beach-heads for the Americanisation of the Muslim way of life, as a bombardment of alien and corrupting values and influences. This, they believe, requires an international response, which partly explains the existence of international networks of Islamist groups.

Indeed, as the forces of globalisation – from the realm of commerce to those of television, food, clothes and the entertainment media – prize open the doors of traditional Muslim societies and challenge the norms and value systems of the local populations, they encourage the Islamist forces to act as defenders and protectors of the greater Muslim right to become the Muslim community's latter-day cultural nationalists. In the face of the Islamists' uncompromising claims to righteousness and protectors of the divine right, the rulers find themselves impotent to act and open to sharp criticism from their opponents for bowing to Western pressure or for harbouring pro-Western sentiments. They are, in short, accused of being 'Westoxicated' – a difficult label to shrug if they are seen to be aiding the West in search of its own interests.

Sadly, in today's world the mediating power for the expression of frustration is nothing more articulate than the faceless forces of globalisation itself. There seems little chance of a genuine dialogue between the parties emerging. This much is depressingly clear in the aftermath of the US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998 and Washington's response to the bombings. The statement of the 'Islamic International Front for Fighting Jews and Crusaders', issued soon after the US missile attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan, sounded ominous: 'Holy struggle operations will continue until American forces withdraw from the land of Muslims'.

As the West is now revisiting another corner of the Muslim world it is perhaps time to reflect on how the same forces of globalisation have inadvertently invited into the arena actors which refuse to play by the established rules and are bent on breaking the norms. This is less a 'clash of civilizations', more an encounter between forces that are resistant to the other's 'rules of the game'.



Afghan refugees at the Makaki refugee camp, Afghanistan, October 2001  
 Amnesty, Issue 10, November/December 2001

## Muslims: the facts

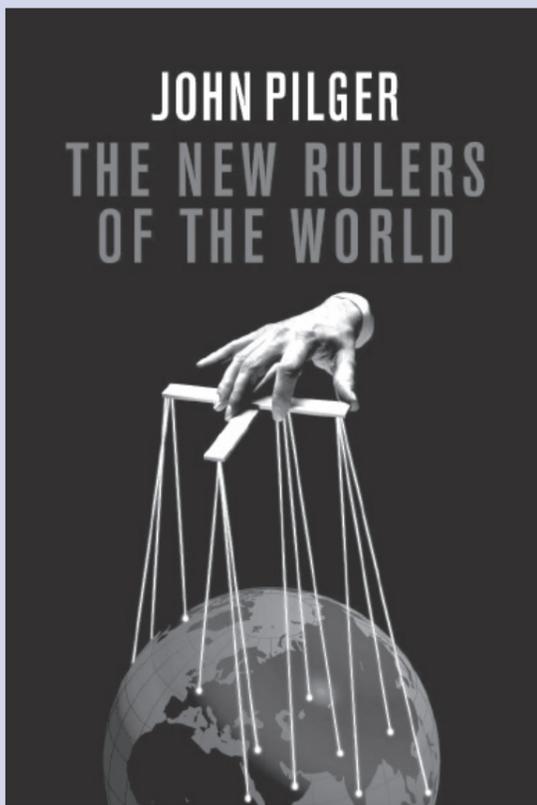
**Islam** is the world's fastest growing religion. Muslims now total 1.3 billion, one fifth of the world's population. The majority of them are under 25. Almost one half of the world's Muslims live in South and Southeast Asia: in Indonesia there are 170 million, in Pakistan 136 million, in Bangladesh 106 million, and in India 103 million. In the USA there are an estimated 5.7 million Muslims – similar to the number of US Jewry: France has 4.7 million, the UK 1.5 million.

The United Nations estimates that the vast majority of the world's 12 million refugees are Muslims: the top three host countries are Pakistan - 2 million, Iran - 1.9 million, and Germany - 0.9 million. The principal country of origin for Muslim refugees is Afghanistan - 3.6 million, in addition, there are an estimated 3.8 million Palestinian refugees.

## UN calls for increase in International Aid

**The United Nations Millennium Declaration** committed the developed world to halving the numbers living in absolute poverty by 2015, and reducing infant mortality. The UN urged a doubling of official development assistance (ODA) to the annual equivalent of 0.7% of industrialised countries' gross national product.

In 2000, international aid from countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) was \$53.1 billion, or 0.24% of combined GNP, down on the total for 1999 (OECD 2002). The USA commits only 0.1% of its national income in official aid, and like Britain is well short of the 0.7% target. The UK did reach 0.5% in 1979, but after a decline to 0.26% during Thatcher and Major's administrations, New Labour have raised it back to 0.3%, with a commitment to reach 0.4% by 2004. Sweden, Denmark, The Netherlands, Norway and Luxembourg have already reached the 0.7% target, while Portugal and Ireland aim to do so by 2006. The UN's target of halving the number of people living on less than one dollar a day has been estimated by the New Economics Foundation at \$46 billion, just £7 billion short of the total international OECD aid in 2000. In addition all international debt in the 41 most heavily indebted countries would have to be cancelled to help foot the bill.



John Pilger's new book, *The New Rulers of the World*, from which *The Great Game* is an edited extract, was published by Verso in June 2001

*The New Rulers of the World...* has real power as an indictment of 'globalisation'...the fervour of the book is compelling, its interview material often poignant, its revelations of human suffering in Iraq, Indonesia, and in the heart of affluent Australia shocking

Stephen Howe

*New Statesman*, June 24 2002

For his notable contribution to the cultural well-being of society, John Pilger, war correspondent, film maker and best selling author, is pictured receiving his honorary doctorate from the University Secretary Fraser Woodburn at the Birmingham ceremony in 2001. John has won the British Journalist of the Year award, been acclaimed International Reporter of the Year, and has been awarded the United Nations Association Media Peace Prize.

Students, associate lecturers, and any university employee can nominate anybody for an honorary degree. Contact Jane FitzGerald, Awards and Ceremonies Centre, PO Box 123, Milton Keynes, MK7 6DQ and she will send a nomination form: eMail [j.fitzgerald@open.ac.uk](mailto:j.fitzgerald@open.ac.uk) or telephone 01908 652903 if unsure about how to go about making a nomination and want to discuss it first.



Society Matters invited John Pilger to reflect on the implications of September 11th. Here, in an edited extract from his new book, *The New Rulers of the World*, he explores the nature of a new imperialism, and questions the responsibility of academics

# THE GREAT GAME

## The new imperialism and academic responsibility

To me, I confess that [countries] are pieces on a chessboard upon which is being played out a great game for the domination of the world.

Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, 1898

A new 'world order' is evolving yet the goals and even the vocabulary of Lord Curzon's day are retained. Following September 11th, in his zeal to speak for the President of the United States, Tony Blair came closer to an announcement of real intentions than any British leader since Anthony Eden. In an evangelical speech to the Labour Party Conference soon after September 11, Blair served notice that imperialism's return journey to respectability was under way.

Having sent British forces off to war four times since he came to power in 1997 (Iraq, Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan), Blair now invoked 'morality' to justify these and future actions. It is one of his favourite words; he once used it eleven times in a speech to a conference on press ownership organised by Rupert Murdoch. The bombing of Yugoslavia was a 'moral crusade'; Nato's mission is 'entirely moral', etcetera.

As Frank Furedi reminds us in *The New Ideology of Imperialism*, it is not long ago 'that the moral claims of imperialism were seldom questioned in the west. Imperialism and the global expansion of the western powers were represented in unambiguously positive terms as a major contributor to human civilisation.' The quest went wrong when it was clear that fascism, with all its ideas of racial and cultural superiority, was imperialism, too, and the word vanished from academic discourse. In the best Stalinist tradition, imperialism no longer existed.

Since the end of the Cold War, a new opportunity has arisen. The economic and political crises in the developing world, largely the result of post-colonialism, such as the blood-letting in the Middle East and the destruction of commodity markets in Africa, now serve as retrospective justification for imperialism. Although the word remains unspeakable, the Western intelligentsia, conservatives and liberals alike, boldly echo the preferred euphemism, 'civilisation'. From Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, an ally of crypto-fascists, to the former British liberal editor Harold Evans, the new imperialists share a concept whose true meaning relies on an unexpressed contrast with those who are 'uncivilised', i.e. inferior, and might challenge the 'values' of the West, specifically its God-given right to control and plunder.

### Blueprint for the new imperialism

There are many blueprints for the new imperialism, but none as cogent as that of Zbigniew Brzezinski, adviser to several presidents and one of the most influential gurus in Washington, whose 1997 book is said to have biblical authority among the Bush gang and its intelligentsia. In *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Brzezinski writes, 'Ever since the continents started interacting politically, some 500 years ago, Eurasia has been the center of world power.'

He defines Eurasia as all the territory east of Germany and Poland, stretching through Russia and China to the Pacific Ocean and including the Middle East and most of the Indian sub-continent. The key to controlling this vast area of the world is Central Asia. Dominance of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan ensures not only new sources of energy and mineral wealth, but a 'guardpost' over American control of the oil of the Persian Gulf. 'What is most important to the history of the world?' wrote Brzezinski. 'The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some stirred-up Muslims or the liberation of central Europe...?' The 'stirred-up Muslims' replied on September 11th, 2001.

Nation states will be incorporated in the 'new order', controlled solely by economic

interests as dictated by international banks, corporations and ruling elites concerned with the maintenance (by manipulation and war) of their power. 'To put it in a terminology that harkens back to the more brutal age of ancient empires', he writes, 'the three grand imperatives of imperial geostrategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together.'

It may have been easy once to dismiss this as a message from the far right. But Brzezinski is also the mainstream; he was President Carter's National Security Adviser and has been influential with Bush Senior, Clinton and now Bush Junior. His students include Madeleine Albright and John Negroponte, the mastermind of American terror in Central America, now Bush's Ambassador to the United Nations.

A few months before September 11th, I attended a conference at the University of Sussex on the 'new imperialism'. What was extraordinary was that it took place at all. Julian Saurin, who teaches at the School of Asian and African Studies, said that, in ten years, he had never known an open discussion on imperialism. About 80 per cent of international relations studies in the great British universities are concerned with the United States and Europe. Most of the rest of humanity is rated according to its degree of importance to 'Western interests'.

The idea of a modern version of imperialism is provocative to the 'liberal realists' who shunned the Sussex conference and dominate international relations. They believe in it passionately, but have convinced themselves it is something else; some still call it *realpolitik*. The few who speak out are an embarrassment, or they are not true 'realists'.

### Globalisation and Western values

The historian Niall Ferguson, a politics professor at Oxford, often utters the unmentionable. Applauding Blair's speech to the 2001 Labour Party Conference, with its language of moral gunboats and Gladstonian conviction of superior beings, Ferguson said, 'Imperialism may be a dirty word, but when Tony Blair is essentially calling for the imposition of western values – democracy and so on – it is really the language of liberal imperialism. Political globalisation is just a fancy word for ... imposing your views and practices on others.' Only America could lead this new imperial world, he said.

The study of post-war international politics, 'liberal realism', was invented in the United States, largely with the sponsorship of those who designed and have policed modern American economic power. They included the Ford, Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations, the OSS (the forerunner of the CIA) and the Council on Foreign Relations, effectively a branch of government. Thus, in the great American universities, learned voices justified the Cold War and its great risks.

In Britain, this 'transatlantic' view found its clearest echo. With honourable exceptions, scholars have taken the humanity out of the study of nations and congealed it with a jargon that serves the dominant power. Laying out whole societies for autopsy, they identify 'failed states' and 'rogue states', requiring 'humanitarian intervention'. As Chomsky points out, imperial Japan described its invasion of Manchuria as a 'humanitarian intervention' and Mussolini used the term to justify seizing Ethiopia, as did Hitler when the Nazis drove into Sudetenland.

Today, there are minor variations. Michael Ignatieff, professor of human rights at

Harvard and an enthusiastic backer of the West's invasions and bombing (as a way to 'feed the starving and enforce peace in case of civil strife'), prefers 'liberal intervention'.

### The danger of liberal imperialists

'Good international citizen', 'good governance' and 'third way' are from the same lexicon of modern imperial euphemisms adopted by the new 'progressive' movement in world affairs. In academic literature and the media, Bill Clinton was described as 'centre left', a denial of the historical record. During the Clinton years, the principal welfare safety nets were taken away and poverty in America increased, an aggressive missile 'defence' system known as 'Star Wars 2' was instigated, the biggest war and arms budget in history was approved, biological weapons verification was rejected, along with a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, the establishment of an international criminal court, and a worldwide ban on landmines and proposals to curb money laundering. Contrary to myth, which blames his successor, the Clinton administration effectively destroyed the movement to combat global warming. In addition, Haiti was invaded; the blockade of Cuba was reinforced; Iraq, Yugoslavia and Sudan were attacked.

'It's a nice and convenient myth that liberals are the peacemakers and conservatives the war-mongers,' wrote Hywel Williams, 'but the imperialism of the liberal may be more dangerous because of its open-ended nature – its conviction that it represents a superior form of life.'

Before he became a war leader, Tony Blair was fond of promoting the 'end of ideology' when, in fact, the ideology he shares with an entire political and media class is one of the most powerful of the modern era. It is all the more pervasive for its concealed and often unconscious attachment to a status quo of inequity based on class and wealth.

While rejecting the labels of ideology, labelling others is popular. The most interesting label stuck on me says that I belong to the 'neo-idealist "left"'. The inverted commas around 'left' are not explained, nor is 'neo-idealist'. Timothy Dunne, of the International Politics Department at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, labelled me in this way in a text book which distinguished itself by skating over the horrors perpetrated by General Suharto in East Timor. This 'liberal realism' was not untypical among international relations academics, especially those extolling a 'third way', the jargon that obfuscates a reactionary agenda. For almost a quarter of a century, East Timor was a victim of their silence.

An invasion and occupation that wiped out a third of the population, causing more deaths, proportionally, than in Cambodia under Pol Pot, provoked an academic silence, broken only by John Taylor's *Indonesia's Forgotten War* (Zed Books) and the work of Peter Carey, Mark Curtis and, more recently, Eric Herring. The greatest genocide in the second half of the twentieth century apparently did not warrant a single substantial academic case study, based on primary sources, in a British university, liberal or traditional.

Those in charge of humanities teaching whisper complaints that universities have become vocational training colleges, obsessed with sponsorship. By keeping silent, they have allowed governments to diminish a wealth of knowledge of how the world works, declaring it 'irrelevant' and withholding funding. This is not surprising when the humanities departments – the engine rooms of ideas and criticism – are close to moribund. When academics suppress the voice of their knowledge, who can the public turn to?

### An academic complicity?

There is no conspiracy, and that should be emphasised. It is simply the way the system works, ensuring 'access' and 'credibility' in an academic hierarchy always eager to credit more ethical intent to government policy-makers than the policy-makers themselves. In politics departments, the task of liberal realists is to ensure that Western imperialism is interpreted as crisis management, rather than the cause of the crisis and its escalation. By never recognising Western state terrorism, their complicity is assured. To state this simple truth is deemed un scholarly; better to say nothing.

Following September 11th, the central issue again is silence. Who dares question the newly minted credo that the Twin Towers attackers were merely 'apocalyptic nihilists', who hated 'modernity' and 'civilisation'? Above all, who will say the 'war on terrorism' is fraudulent: that its prosecutors are themselves terrorists from a greater league and that their actions will, at the very least, produce more carnage and martyrs?

Among people of liberal heart, confusion about imperialist intentions as the United States attacks former clients and allies who have slipped the leash, declaring them new Hitlers, is perhaps understandable; but 'this mixture of bafflement in the face of the obvious and cryptic gesturing in the direction of truth', as David Edwards wrote, is now a luxury true civilisation can ill afford. The dangers are too urgent.

'We are likely to see', Denis Halliday told me, 'the emergence of those who may well regard Saddam Hussein as too moderate and far too willing to listen to the West. That has already happened to the Palestinians. Such is the desperation of people whose children are dying in their thousands every month and who are bombed almost every day by American and British planes.'

Who else, like Halliday, will say that the function of the United Nations is being reduced to the management of colonies? Who will put aside the chessboard and explain that only when great grievance, injustice and insecurity are lifted from nations will terrorism recede?

## 'The time has come when silence is betrayal'

Martin Luther King

## 'That time is now.'

November 8th: Smoke rising through sunlight by Joel Meyerowitz, New Statesman, May 6th 2002

### USA ARMS EXPENDITURE ESCALATES

The USA – in response to September 11th – confirmed the highest rise in its defence budget in 20 years. Military spending is now £379 billion – larger than the total spent by the next nine countries together. The USA is now responsible for 40% of the world's military expenditure. The Department of Defence is the largest employer in the USA, and spends four times more than the European average on research and development.

### ON ANY DAY IN 2001

• Number of children who died of hunger	24,000
• Number of children killed by diarrhoea	6,020
• Number of malnourished children in developing countries	149 million
• Number of children without access to basic education	100 million
• Number of African children under 15 living with HIV	1.1 million
• Number of people living on less than one dollar a day	1,200 million
• Number of people with access to adequate sanitation	2,400 million
• Number of people with access to safe drinking water	1,100 million
• Number of illiterate adults	875 million

Annual number of children made homeless by conflict 1990-2000 1.2 million  
Annual number of children killed in conflict 200,000

Source: New Internationalist, November 2001

### A WORLD DIVIDED

The richest fifth of the world's population earn 80% of the global income, while the poorest fifth earns just 1%. The gap between the poorest fifth and the richest fifth of the world's population has doubled since 1960. The World Bank's latest figures estimate the debt of the Third World to be above \$400 billion: each week, sub-Saharan Africa spends \$40 million on debt repayment.

# THE MIDDLE EAST

## Depressing lessons from an unwinnable war

Grahame Thompson, Professor of Political Economy and Head of the Department of Government and Politics at the OU helps us understand why the geo-political context of the Israeli – Palestinian conflict means there will be no winners

**H**ow does one analytically approach an unwinnable war? This seems to me the problem with any attempt to say something sensible about the Israeli – Palestinian conflict now grinding its inexorable way towards yet further bloodshed in the Middle East. This is a war that neither side can win.

The Palestinians cannot overcome Israeli determination to defeat their Intifada; Israel cannot prevent further death of its citizens by invading and destroying places like the Jenin refugee camp. Israel will not withdraw its settlements from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Palestinians will not give up their fight for a 'homeland' with Jerusalem as their capital. The situation is resolutely negatively summed – both sides are losing and will continue to lose, big time.

Could things have been different? Well, of course, the answer must be yes and no. Here I mention some of the geo-political backdrop to the latest round of Middle Eastern conflict that might help us to at least understand the reasons why there will be no winners, and certainly not between Israel and the Palestinians. I begin with the American position since this is a key issue in the whole equation.

### US self-interest contemptuous of international strategies

As far as the US administration is concerned it won a stunning victory in Afghanistan at little cost to itself. In many ways the Taliban and al-Qaida proved an empty threat, one that effectively collapsed rapidly and without a real fight. This at least is what the American administration believes, and emboldened, it has turned its attention to a much bigger and more formidable target, Iraq. Here it is probably right. From the point of view of US interests Saddam Hussein is much more of a threat than is Osama bin-Laden. And the Americans seem absolutely determined to be rid of him, in one way or another.

Thus America's attention is on Iraq, which they probably intend to attack as soon as a convenient reason or excuse can be found. Quite how they expect to dislodge Saddam Hussein, and at what cost, remains to be seen. This will be no easy task though it is one they will probably carry through to the bitter end. So the US attention is not on the Israel – Palestinian conflict as such, indeed it sees Israel as probably its only ally in the coming conflict with Iraq, in the region and beyond. It is clear that the US wants nothing to do with any 'international organisations' at present, even the EU. It is contemptuous of them all. It will go it alone if necessary. And when the US attacks, if they can the Arab leaders will head for their bunkers and keep their heads down, one suspects. They will condemn it vehemently, of course, but do nothing. They are no friends of Saddam's.

*'It is important for social scientists to realise that there are sometimes situations when nothing can be done to sort them out or to offer sensible advice, and this is one of them'*

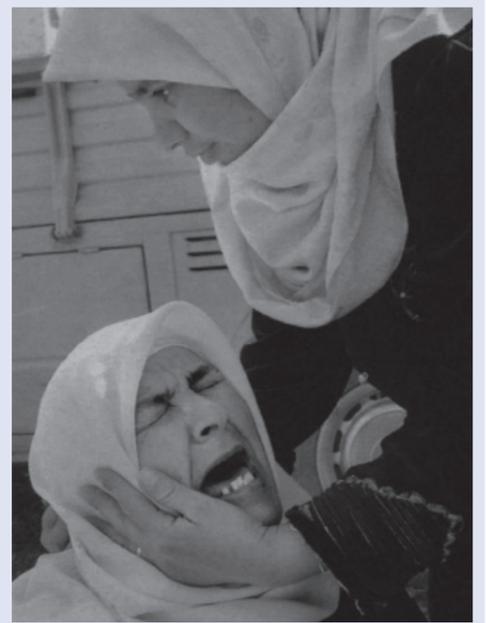
All this is a great lost opportunity because there could have been effective pressure applied to Israel if things had been different. The Republican Party is no close friend of the Jewish lobby in Washington; that has been the prerogative of the Democrats. But the Republicans are super-conscious of the geo-political stance of Israel, and they will continue to support it as long as the benefits of doing so are not outweighed by the costs. That would only happen if there were a serious possibility that the likes of Algeria, Egypt, Turkey, Jordan and other key Arab states were in danger of going 'fundamentalist' as a direct result of that support. This is possible but unlikely in the near future. Interestingly, the radical Christian right of the Republican Party, who

might be thought to be ill-disposed towards Israel on religious grounds, have become its staunch supporters. Perhaps bizarrely, they see the taking of the West Bank from Arab control as part of the second coming! But were the situation to change, the Israeli economy could be subject to effective sanctions. It has a growing current account deficit. Its main trading partners are the USA and the EU, together accounting for 75% of its imports and 71% of its exports. Thus if the US and the EU were to have introduced serious economic sanctions against Israel these could have had a real effect. But all this was not to be, largely because of September 11th and its aftermath.

### Palestinian isolation in context of hate and zero trust

Clearly, although Israel has been severely provoked into its retaliation against the Palestinian suicide bombers, to many in the international community it has turned out to be the oppressor in this case. The trouble for the Palestinians however, is that they have no real friends in the Middle East or elsewhere. Their cause, although just, is one they are having to fight themselves alone. And they cannot win it. Their natural allies, the other Arab states, are either autocratic, totalitarian, or they are 'failed states' that cannot mount an effective resistance to anything, let alone help their Palestinian neighbours. Almost all the leaders of these states are afraid of their own citizens and of Islamic fundamentalism in equal measure, which makes them moribund and terrified to act in case they lose their tenuous control.

So what do you do when there is so much hate and absolutely zero trust? This is doubly difficult when that hate also pervades relations between the various Palestinian factions, and is souring internal divisions within Israel. There seems little prospect of fostering trust amongst any party, indeed one suspects that things would get considerably worse if and when the US attacks Iraq. Thus unless opinions change or one side just gives in – which hardly seems



A Jenin woman is comforted before a mass burial. *The Independent Review*, 25 April 2002



An injured woman walks near the scene of a suicide bombing at a Jerusalem market. *Amnesty*, Issue 113, May/June 2002

likely – this is an unwinnable conflict that will go on. It is important for social scientists to realise that there are sometimes situations when nothing can be done to sort them out or to offer sensible advice, and this is one of them in my view. Where politics is fundamentally driven by an extreme friend – enemy division, which I believe it is in this case, the only option seems to be to watch in horror at the capacity of humans to continue to destroy one another.

## Rise of far right European politics fuelled by war against terrorism

**T**he EU, in following the US approach to fighting terrorism, is encouraging far right politics and fostering racism, according to a report by the Institute of Race Relations in May. *Racism: the hidden cost of September 11th* represents the first attempt to examine the impact on race relations across Europe of September 11th, and the subsequent 'war against terrorism'. It details who is most affected by the denial of civil liberties – and how.

Asylum seekers, foreigners (principally Arabs) and Europe's Muslim minorities are the biggest losers. European anti-terrorist laws, adopted post-September 11th, have bred a culture of suspicion in which anyone of Middle Eastern appearance is treated as an 'enemy alien'. Meanwhile, the far right and anti-immigrant parties have used September 11th for electoral gain, demonising Islam and its cultural and religious practises.

But the extreme right are not alone in prioritising these 'themes', says author Liz Fekete. 'Government policies on race relations and integration have changed dramatically since September 11. In fact we are entering a new era in domestic race policy, where old, discredited ideas of monoculturalism and assimilation into the dominant White, European Christian culture are once again in the ascendant. And the hidden cost of September 11 is an unshamed racism.'

The report draws attention to how the 'War Against Terrorism':

- increases Eurocentrism
- damages the principle of refugee protection
- engenders discrimination
- denies civil liberties
- legitimises human rights abuses

In May the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia reinforced the findings citing criticisms of Islam by senior politicians. The Centre described physical assaults on Muslim men and women, arson attacks on mosques, and a vitriolic campaign by British tabloid newspapers against asylum seekers. It signalled how effective the right in Europe was becoming in generating and exploiting ethnic tension on a wave of populist anti-immigration invective.

Recent years have seen unparalleled successes for extreme right anti-immigration parties in national and local political elections. In 1998, the centre left, with its 'Third Way', held power in 13 EU countries. Four years later Denmark, Italy, Austria, Belgium and Portugal have far right governments. In Norway, the hard-line Progress Party holds the balance of power and advocates capping immigration to 1,000 a year. In Germany, The Law and Order Offensive Party won 19% of the vote in Hamburg's 2001

elections. LOOP backs forcible deportation and chemical castration for criminals. Le Pen's National Front won 40% of the vote in some southern French regions in the April 2002 election. Pim Fortuyn's party's success in Holland moved the Dutch further to the right.

In 2002, there are 26 MEPs representing far right or populist anti-immigration parties in the European Parliament, comprising representatives of Italy's National Alliance (8), Austria's Freedom Party (5), France's National Front (5) and Northern League (4), Belgium's Vlaams Bloc (2) and Social Movement – Tricolor (1), and the Danish People's Party (1). The majority of MEPs sit as independents, but the National Alliance, Danish People's Party, and Social Movement – Tricolor are part of the Union for Europe of Nations.

Website: <http://www.irr.org.uk>

## Poverty increases in West Bank and Gaza

The Israeli – Palestinian conflict has ravaged the economic prospects of 'Palestinian land'. Data before this year's *intifada* showed escalating poverty. In the three months up to April 2001, the number of people living below the poverty line doubled to over two million or 64.2% of Palestinians. In the four years to 1996, Palestinian unemployment increased 10 fold, and GDP decline doubled. Between 1997 and 2000 unemployment in the West Bank was between 10 and 20%, and in Gaza between 18 and 30%.

## INTIFADA'S RISING DEATH TOLL

# A WORD FROM THE CORRIDORS OF POWER

How would the Faculty's Alan Hudson fare when he became a Parliamentary researcher for the Select Committee on International Development? Alan, an expert on the efforts of non-state actors to influence Government policy in the sphere of development, shows just how questions of sovereignty and its reshaping are central to our understanding of international relations, and how the words academics use matter much more in the world of policy formulation.

Last October, after six years working as an academic – a Geographer-cum-International-Political-Economist – I hung up my academic boots, at least for a while, and started work as a researcher for the Select Committee on International Development. As a Geographer, employed at an old university, I taught and wrote about processes of globalisation, and the changing nature of space, borders and power in a globalising economy. More recently, as an international political economist at the OU, I did the same but had to think more clearly about sovereignty, the state, and power.

Empirically, my research focus whilst at the OU concerned development NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations) and their efforts to persuade states to alter their policies. This raised all sorts of questions about the legitimacy and accountability of NGOs, as was evident after the so-called 'Battle of Seattle' when a varied assortment of NGOs and other social movements protested against the powers of the WTO. What right did they – largely unelected, unrepresentative, and poorly accountable organisations – have to seek to influence the policies of democratically elected governments? For the NGOs that I worked with, questions about the meaning of legitimacy and accountability were interesting, but a more pressing issue for them was how, as part of their ongoing campaigns for political change, they might best respond to questions about their very right to campaign. Coming to share the view that policy relevance and pragmatism were more important than primarily conceptual work and excessive self-reflection about the nature of truth, I jumped over the fence to the world of policy.

## Shaping globalisation

Select Committees are supposed to scrutinise the policies, spending and activities of Government departments. So, there is a Treasury Select Committee, a Trade and Industry Select Committee, an Education and Skills Select Committee, and so on. The International Development Select Committee has the task of scrutinising the work of the Department for International Development (DFID). Until the Labour election victory in 1997, the DFID was called the Overseas Development Administration, and was a small institution, engulfed in the bigger and more powerful Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The DFID's work is focused on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, targets for reducing poverty by 50%, and improving education, health and other basic social services by 2015. Particularly since its second White Paper – published in 2001 and called *Eliminating world poverty: Making globalisation work for the poor* – the DFID has understood the world as being shaped by complex processes of globalisation. For the DFID, globalisation has upsides and downsides. It is neither fundamentally good nor bad. Globalisation can and should be harnessed and managed to capture its benefits for the purposes of poverty reduction. Of course, many of the NGOs I had previously worked with had, and still have, a rather less rosy view of globalisation and its impacts!

The International Development Select Committee is made up of 11 backbench MPs – seven Labour, three Tory, one Liberal Democrat – with a staff of five supporting their work. The MPs, left-wing, right-wing, and somewhere in the middle, are seriously concerned about global poverty. They possess, somewhat surprisingly for someone who grew up in the midst of Thatcherism, similar views about

how to tackle poverty. Their prescription tends to be: good governance, open markets, increased exports, and investment in health and education. The Committee selects a topic to examine, takes written and oral evidence from 'expert' witnesses (questions of legitimacy and authority anyone?), and produces a report which the Government is required to respond to. The idea is that the Select Committee's conclusions and recommendations might nudge the Department's policy and practice. Sometimes, I am told, they do!

## From humanitarian aid to strategic arms exports

Since I started work with the International Development Committee I have been involved in inquiries into the delivery of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, global climate change and sustainable development, European aid, Financing for Development, and arms – oops, I'm supposed to say 'strategic' – exports and sustainable development. Despite my enthusiasm for jumping over the fence from academia to policy research, my previous academic work has usefully informed my current work. Beneath the surface detail of many inquiries lurk the same issues and terms: globalisation, sovereignty, global governance, state and non-state actors, legitimacy, accountability and power. The difference is that these terms are worked, less with the conceptual goal of criticising existing definitions or arriving at definitional clarity, and more with the practical goal of understanding ongoing issues and developing suggestions for policy, practice and action.

## The importance of sovereignty and its reshaping

The inquiries that I've worked on can all be seen as being about sovereignty and its reshaping. The Afghanistan inquiry was about how humanitarian relief agencies intervened in a failing state that lacked the capacities of a functioning sovereign state to provide food, shelter and security for its people. The global climate change inquiry is in part about whether rich and poor countries can strike a bargain – limiting their own sovereignty and trading it in the form of emissions permits – to reduce carbon emissions. The European aid inquiry asked, in effect, if some 25% of

## Large groups more likely to reach perverse decisions

ESRC research at the University of Glasgow has concluded that juries, and other groups of more than seven people, are not good at producing consensual decisions. Groups of more than seven do not reach unanimous decisions and can deliver perverse outcomes. In large groups communication is akin to a serial monologue with each speaker trying to turn the group as a whole. Dominant speakers, in such contexts, have a strong influence. The research may assist the Home Office system of jury selection.



UK aid should be spent multilaterally through the European Commission when the European Union has priorities which differ from those of its individual Member States, including the UK? The Financing for Development inquiry concerns the ways in which rich countries and poor countries might develop international partnerships for poverty reduction. Again, questions of sovereignty and its reshaping, and power and its impacts, are central. Finally, the Strategic (Arms) Exports inquiry, or at least the sustainable development aspects of it, is about ...well, it's about whether the UK should have authorised the export of an expensive radar system to Tanzania. More generally, it's about the compatibility of arms exports with the sustainable development of poor countries. But this too is about sovereignty, its meaning and implications. Tanzania is a sovereign state. If Tanzania chooses to spend £28 million on a radar system what right have we to stop it? Seems simple enough perhaps – respect the sovereignty of Tanzania – but then what if the UK has at the same time granted Tanzania relief from its debt, and provided it with nearly £70 million in aid, paid for by you and me? Sovereignty and its reshaping, again. Me, writing about space, borders and power, again!

Indeed, far from leaving the world of words and jumping into reality, my move into the world of policy has instead shown me how and why the words we use matter so much. In the absence of a clear definition of 'sustainable development', how could we ever hold our government to its promise not to export arms which might hamper a country's sustainable development? How could we counter the deployment of 'sovereignty' – an older word with a more solid meaning – by those who see no reason to prevent arms exports to such countries?

Words and how we use them matter. How we and others act and constantly re-make the world on the basis of our word-bound understandings matters even more.

*This piece is written in a personal capacity and should not be interpreted as representing the views of the International Development Select Committee.*

Big Ben. Photo: John Hunt, 2002

## Branded bars dominate urban nightlife economy



Central Milton Keynes. Photo: John Hunt, 2002

A creeping revolution of homogenised entertainment outlets has taken over city centres as designer bars, designer drinks, and designer culture replaces the variety of outlets that traditionally served the drinking reveller. The landscape has radically changed in the last five years.

Research by Newcastle University, funded by the ESRC, has exposed a brave new world where entry to a watering hole is increasingly dependent on dress sense and bank account. The uniform decor – polished wood, leather armchairs, and standardised drinks – is, according to the researchers, favouring the more affluent members of society, and it is expensive.

It is certainly profitable. The nightlife economy is worth over £22 billion, or 3% of GDP per annum, as national chains (Toad, Wetherspoons, etc), develop identikit facilities across the land, from Manchester and Leeds, to Milton Keynes, Cardiff and London.

The researchers argue that the new nightlife economy could increase social exclusion, because the 'off-the-shelf' branded outlets are directed at wealthier, younger customers. It also is marginalising more traditional outlets, and smaller scale providers.

The research reveals a nightlife economy dominated by five major players who control 63% of the UK's 4,776 branded pubs and bars. Ten chains own 48% of the nation's 60,000 pubs and bars. The centralisation extends to drink itself – 70% of the beer sold is owned by three national brewers.

The research also found that customers have been categorised by dress style, with certain groups who do not conform excluded at the door. Certain dress sense is equated with potential troublemakers. New bars are catering for more diverse demand. What we now find in our city centres is a diversity of cultures, rather than the antiquated pub culture of the past. Not surprisingly however, the brewers challenged the findings of the research.



"Nah Alf, my customers wouldn't be seen dead drinking these silly designer drinks".

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has described Britain's record on women MPs as 'shameful'. Only 18% of our MPs are women. Britain is only 33<sup>rd</sup> in the league table of women in Parliament behind Rwanda, Mozambique, Croatia, Tanzania and North Korea. In the 2001 General Election, the number of women MPs elected to the Commons fell for the first time in 20 years. The EOC wants political parties to include all-women shortlists, and to devise shortlists where men and women are alternated on the list of candidates. Special measures, it argues, can halt the decline in women MPs, for example, in developing better childcare provision, and positive discrimination procedures in selection. Disappointingly, the number of women candidates at the last election also declined, and many stood in unwinnable constituencies. The EOC pointed to the backlash against women-only shortlists in 1997, which was abandoned after legal challenge.

There are signs of improvement in devolved Parliaments. In Scotland and Wales, where such measures have been introduced, the proportion of women is higher than at Westminster. The Welsh cabinet has more women than men, and 42% of the Welsh Assembly are female – the highest in the Western world!

Where are all the women? New Statesman, May 2001



Render any politician down, and there is enough fat to fry an egg. Spike Milligan

# OUR WORLD – 2002

## Facts global

- If you were born before 1950 you will have witnessed more population growth in your lifetime than during the rest of human history
- The world economy expanded from \$4 trillion in output in 1950 to over \$20 trillion in 1995
- Worldwide energy consumption is expected to double by 2020
- The Chinese economy grew by 57% between 1991 and 1995
- Twenty seven per cent of the world's population will have a cell phone by 2005 when there will be 1.6 billion cell phone users worldwide
- The estimated cost of fuel consumed by drivers caught in traffic delays in the USA in 1999 was \$8.6 billion
- The amount of forested land in Asia and Africa is now less than 35% of what it was in 1801
- The US population doubled in the twentieth century and materials consumed per head of population grew ten times
- In 1995, 92% of the world's population have relatively sufficient water supplies. By 2050 this sufficiency is expected to fall to 58% of the then world's population, with a quarter of the world's population living under scarce water conditions, eight times the 1995 level
- It is estimated that of the world's 6,000 languages, 90% will disappear by 2100

A large family. © Paul Harrison, Earth and people, Still Pictures



### Worldwide executions double in 2001: China criticised

Amnesty International's report on the death penalty shows a doubling of executions in the world last year. 3,048 people were executed in 31 countries worldwide compared with 1,457 in 2000. Amnesty believes the true global figure to be much higher. China's crime crackdown led to more than 1,700 executions between April and June last year. China, with 2,468 documented executions, accounted for the vast majority of executions worldwide, followed by Iran (139), Saudi Arabia (79), and the USA (66). These four countries accounted for 92% of all executions in the world. Three countries opened executions to public view: Thailand, Yemen, and the former Taliban led Afghanistan. However, the number of executions in the USA declined by 22%, due largely to qualms about the safety of capital convictions. In Serbia and Chile, the death penalty has been abolished, and Amnesty counted 111 countries that had abandoned capital punishment. Pressure by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and the EU is believed to be partly responsible for a gradual shift away from capital punishment regimes.



### Executions of people under 18 confined to the USA, Iran, and the Congo

In the past three years, only the USA, Iran and the Democratic Republic of Congo have executed people for crimes committed under the age of 18. The US Supreme Court has already ruled against executing inmates diagnosed as insane, but still allows the execution of people who are mentally ill.

### FOUR MILLION HELD IN SLAVERY

The US State Department claimed in June that up to four million people are being held in 'slave-like' conditions

## ONE IN FIVE CHILDREN SUFFER FROM MENTAL ILL HEALTH

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) estimate that one in five of the world's children suffer mental or behavioural problems. Suicide, depression, and self harm are increasing alarmingly. Their 2002 report found children were most at risk in war zones and in countries experiencing rapid socio-economic change.

In 2001 1.5 million adolescents died from substance abuse, reproductive ill-health, suicide, injuries, and violence. Adolescents also accounted for one half of the world's HIV victims.

By 2002 WHO argue that mental disorders will be a huge problem among adolescents, with boys increasingly vulnerable. In the UK Government figures show that ten per cent of boys and six per cent of girls aged 5-10 have a mental disorder.

### DEPLETED URANIUM LEFT ON BATTLEFIELDS POSE THREAT TO CHILDREN

The Royal Society has warned of long-term health damage for children who use the former battlefields in the Gulf and the Balkans as adventure playgrounds. In March, scientists called for the urgent monitoring of soil, water supplies, and milk in regions of the world where depleted uranium, a toxic and radioactive substance, has been deposited, notably Iraq and Kosovo. Although the risk to health from environmental contamination is predicted to be relatively small, the evidence is not conclusive, and over time, long exposure may increase the risk. The Society estimate that between 70 and 80 per cent of depleted uranium rounds fired in these conflicts remain buried. In the Gulf 340 tons of DU munitions were used and 11 tons in the Balkans. If the affected

### ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEE CRISIS WILL LEAD TO UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF WORLD MASS MIGRATION, REPORT WARNS

Environmental refugees are set to become one of the foremost human crises of our times. The environmental impact of drought and famine will trigger a substantial increase in mass migration according to demographic experts. Mass migration may soon present an unprecedented human crisis as more internally displaced people cross borders in search of improved conditions.

In a study published last autumn, researchers claim that tens of millions of environmental refugees will flee their homelands. War, poverty and starvation have always provoked mass movement of people in history, but global climate change, environmental degradation, and over-population are set to result in a new exodus.

Half of the estimated 50 million refugees in the world are currently escaping land spoilage caused by drought, soil erosion and deforestation. The study expects this to double by 2010, and predicts there will be a potential 200 million environmental refugees later this century. The situation is especially acute in Africa, India, Indonesia, Mexico and China, the report reveals.

*Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society: Biological Sciences, Oxford University October, 2001*



### World population will peak in 2100 and then decline predict experts

Demographic experts estimate that

the growth in the world's population may reach its peak in 2100. They predict that there is a four to one chance that the world population of 6.1 billion in 2002 will level off at 8.4 billion at the end of the century. The world population reached its first billion in 1804, and doubled in the next 123 years. It took another 60 years for it to reach five billion by 1987. The prediction is based on an assumption that birth rates will continue to fall faster than expected. But such predictions remain guarded. The scientists warn that projections could be out by as much as four billion, while some experts even contemplate a fall in the world population of 15% from today's 6.1 billion. What is certain is that the population will be older and more infirm. The number of people over 60 is predicted to more than double, from the current 10% to 34% by 2100. In Japan, it is predicted that by 2100 over half the population will be over 60! Before we get carried away with these estimates, it is worth remembering that demographic experts failed to predict the fall in Western fertility levels since 1970. The accuracy of these predictions will determine the development of environmental and socio-economic policies. Sustainable development goes hand in hand with accurate population forecasts.

*Nature, August, 2001*



### A Global population watershed is nigh: soon white people will not be the majority in the developed world

In the autumn of 2000, the US Census Bureau revealed a significant milestone in the history of America. In California the number of non-Hispanic whites made up 49.8 per cent of the state's population. In the USA's most prosperous state, whites were now a minority. In 1970, eight out of ten Californians were white. Immigration, higher fertility among the Asian and Latino populations, and lower fertility rates among non-Hispanic whites has transformed the population.

The Census Bureau predict that by 2060 non-Hispanic whites will become a minority across America, and we all know that what happens in America eventually crosses the pond. These demographic transformations will be paralleled by population shifts in the rest of the developed world. Whites are falling as a proportion of the population. The global centre of population gravity is changing. Demographers predict that by 2010 white people in London will become a minority (in 2001 40% of London's population were from ethnic minorities). Experts forecast that Britain could have a majority black population by 2100. The population of Europe is expected to drop from its 1900 figure of 25% of the world total to 7% in the next 50 years. The UN estimate that 98% of the world population growth until 2025 will be in developing countries.



### World refugee population climbs to 22 million

In 2002, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated the world population of refugees to have climbed above 12 million. But, if asylum seekers and 'internally displaced peoples' are included, the total rises to 22 million, one in every 275 people on the planet. The largest refugee groups are Afghans (3.9 million) and Palestinians (3.8 million). The UN Convention defined a refugee as someone who, 'owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside of the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country'.

*Number of Refugees by Region*

## AID FOR AIDS FALLS FAR SHORT

Children orphaned by Aids the size of the UK

### child population

In Africa, the equivalent of the child population of the UK is growing up without parents because of Aids alone, according to the charity Christian Aid. Worse, orphans are being orphaned again as relatives adopting them in turn succumb to the disease. A generation of teachers and doctors is also dying as fast as their replacements can be found.

In 2001, the Government Aid budget is only 0.31% of the gross national product. This is far below the 0.7% agreed in 1970 between the UK and the UN on aid relief. At the present rate it will be 2051 before the 1970 agreed target is reached. The problem of Aids is more a problem of wealth than health. In Africa itself the welfare of a generation is being further imperilled by per capita expenditure of £7 on health care. Immune systems are vulnerable to Aids because of malnutrition. In Zambia, Christian Aid reveal that 42% of children under five are so malnourished their growth is stunted. The IMF has compounded the problem by cutting health and education spending. The Bush administration's \$240 million allocated to a global Aids Fund is derided in the report as 'paltry'. The UN global

## RICH WORLD, POOR WORLD G8 relief doesn't add up

The June G8 summit in Canada offered a paltry £1 billion in debt relief for the poorest developing countries – a staggering £64 billion below that promised in 1999 by the G8 in Cologne. The paltry sum adds up to the total cost of the past five G8 summits! In the same week, £24 billion was wiped off global share values in the wake of the largest accounting fraud in history: WorldCom's £2.5 billion scam. The World Health Organisation estimated the less developed world needs £20 billion a year just to fund preventative health programmes alone. In July the United Nations (UNAids) warned that HIV is spreading faster than envisaged, especially in Africa, and urged the West to

# BIG QUESTIONS FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

Graham Dawson, course team chair, DD202 *Economics and Economic Change*, explores how it questions issues vital to the future of the human race

DD202 *Economics and Economic Change* deals with some of today's most vital economic issues and problems. It should help you understand economic debates in the UK and in the global economy. With its innovative teaching methods and content, DD202 is an introduction to economics that offers an opportunity to acquire or develop ICT skills, in the context of challenging relevant issues. It presents almost a third of its materials through multimedia, including a 'virtual classroom', case studies and links to external websites.

In an uncertain world, economic theory itself has to respond to the challenge of rapid economic change. DD202 looks at a range of approaches, systematically building up an understanding of economic theorizing, and offering plenty of opportunities to use these ideas and to think about their application to real issues. Are we living through a new industrial revolution, led by information and communication technologies? What makes firms competitive and how can economic policy help? What do we know about the economic outcomes of globalisation? Do the poor gain from international production and trade? Is capitalism environmentally sustainable?

The course introduces concepts and techniques of new technology as well as analysing its effects on the economy, enabling you to see yourself as taking part in economic processes that you are also trying to understand.

So the course 'enacts' the changes that are taking place.

The course is divided into two books. The first begins by asking whether there really is a new economy or whether it has all happened before. It examines the relationship between new technologies and economic growth by comparing the rise of the PC (personal computer) industry with the early years of the car industry. In examining the behaviour of firms – how they compete through innovation – we combine theory with lots of practical cases and examples, including a case study of the Microsoft court case. Economics is about people and so we explore issues concerning the well-being of people who make economies work. Do flexible labour markets provide good jobs? Why is the intensity of work effort increasing? Does money make you happy? What can governments do to make us all better off? A chapter on health includes a case study of NHS reform.

Book 1 also introduces the range of activities that economists engage in: formulating theories, modeling economic relationships, debate and persuasion, analysis of data, interpreting the behaviour of economic institutions such as companies and households, advising on policy.

In the second book we move up a level from people and firms to national economies and the global economy. What determines the perform-

ance of a national economy and how should it be managed? What are the roles of money, banks, interest rates and financial markets in booms and slumps? How can policy seek to stabilise the economy and keep unemployment and inflation low? In examining why economies fluctuate and what can be done about it, we explore the relevance of economic forecasting in the context of uncertain futures.

We ask whether a national economy can be managed at all, now that international markets are so powerful, and provide some of the tools for analysing national economies in a globalised world. Is economic policy becoming an international problem rather than a matter for national governments? Should poor nations embrace globalisation or seek to stand apart from it? How can we understand changing patterns of international trade?

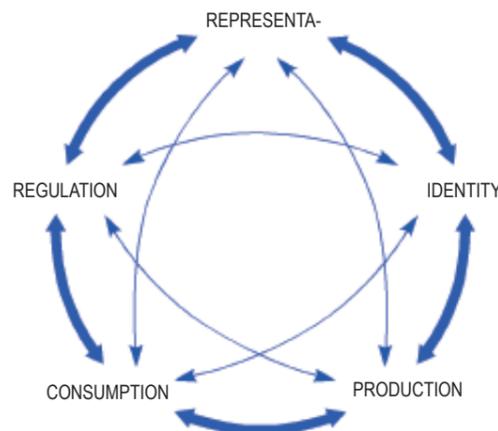
Finally, we explore two long-term policy issues. First, the role of investment in economic growth – what makes economies grow and how can governments create a high-growth economy? And, second, perhaps the biggest question facing the human race at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, can economic growth be sustained without destroying the environment?

## REVISITING THE CULTURAL CIRCUIT

Karim Murji, course team chair for D318 *Culture, Media and Identities*, explores how the team has responded to student feedback to produce a more streamlined course

In my six years of student life I never once came across a course evaluation form that sought the opinion of students about what they were presented with. Yet, a few years later when I began teaching, evaluation had become the norm for every course and every lecturer. As part of what has been called the 'audit explosion', student feedback has become a familiar part of higher education. But what do we do with what students tell us? In the case of D318, *Culture, Media and Identities* the course team in 2002 has been implementing the results of an evaluation of the course and making a number of changes to it.

For those who are not familiar with it, D318 introduces you to cultural and media studies, a rapidly developing area of interdisciplinary study in both the social sciences and the humanities. The course addresses the 'cultural turn' – the growing significance of cultural questions, the mass media and social identities in the modern world. The course is based around the 'cultural circuit', a device that stresses the idea of culture as a process, in which all



the 'moments' of the circuit are linked or articulated together. No one point prevails or is the determining moment, over all the others. The introductory book presents a case study of Sony Walkman to demonstrate the operation of all the elements of the cultural circuit. The subsequent books examine each moment of the circuit in depth.

### High student satisfaction with content and skills

D318 has been running since 1997 and in preparation for its mid-life review students were surveyed by the OU's Institute of Education Technology. The good news was that 93% of students were fairly or very satisfied, and 50% were very satisfied. The course was regarded as excellent in the accuracy of the information and advice on academic study skills required; how it contributes to a degree; the printed teaching material; its project component; the face to face tutorials and day schools; TMA feedback and return times, and tutors' academic knowledge. Students rated the course highly in relation to the quality of the course guidance notes, the TMA requirements, and our specimen exam paper. They also considered the course was satisfactory in enabling the application of knowledge; in undertaking critical analysis; in developing time management skills and self-confidence; and in nurturing the use of analytical skills in everyday life – 86% said they would recommend the course to other students.

### The downside: workload, TMA scheduling, and conceptual drift

However, it was not all good news: 44% of students said they spent more time than expected working on the course and most said they fell behind with the study pattern recommended in the calendar.

As well as workload concerns, students wanted us

to review the timing of the TV programmes, the overlap between TMA deadlines and the last week of study on each book, and the timing of the double-weighted TMA – not surprising given it was due during the summer period. While some students commended the course for its well-structured approach, some students identified areas where the conceptual narrative 'fizzled out'.

The course team used these findings as a basis for consulting with D318 Associate Lecturers. Alongside a LOTA (Learning Outcomes and their Assessment) audit of the course, we have implemented a number of changes that will reduce workload, amend the nature and timing of the assessment, and provide a clearer guide to the core concepts in D318:

- We have redesigned the study pattern. The study calendar will provide more detailed guidance on which chapters will be used for assessment. Typically, this will mean reading four chapters in each book, with at least one reading-free week for each TMA. We have also been able to introduce a one week summer break
- The double-weighted TMA has been brought forward from mid-August to early July. This should enable enhanced tutor support and a better fit-in with school holidays. The Study Guide will provide better advice on completing this TMA, which may involve undertaking some limited research of your own
- The assessment strategy will ask students to conduct a visual or textual analysis for one of the TMAs
- We will make greater use of the audio-visual materials. All the TV programmes will be sent to students on videocassettes
- The Study Guides have been extensively revised. They now provide a short list of core concepts and theorists that will help students focus on the most important themes of each book
- We will be altering the format of the exam paper. Details will be provided in the specimen exam paper and the exam guide

From 2003, we hope that these changes will mean that people taking D318 will experience a more streamlined course, with clearer guidance on reading, greater variety in assessment and more use of the audio-visual materials. But, as always, the real test is when you tell us what you make of it!

## Corporations overtake countries in world's top 100 economic units

ANDERSEN



"Miss Jones, find out what 7 x 8 is and get back to me..."

### World's top ten largest companies by 2001 revenue

TRY	COMPANY		\$M	COMPARED TO COUNTRIES
1	Wal-Mart	US	219,812	Sweden
2	ExxonMobil	US	191,581	Larger than Turkey
3	General Motors	US	177,260	Larger than Denmark
4	Ford Motor	US	162,412	Larger than Poland
5	Daimler Chrysler	Germany	149,608	Larger than Norway
6	Royal Dutch/Shell	Neth/UK	149,146	
7	BP	UK	148,062	
8	Enron (now bankrupt)	US	138,718	Larger than South Africa
9	Mitsubishi	Japan	126,629	Larger than Finland
10	General Electric	US	125,913	Larger than Greece

Top 200, IPS, 2000; GDP, 2000 World Development Report; Draffan, G., Report on Corporations, Endgame, 2002

## INSIDE COURSE MANAGING

Ann Tolley, course manager, explores just what front-line course managers do at the coal-face of production and presentation

When I first became a course manager I didn't really know what to expect. I am a relative newcomer to course managing. I started work at the Open University in October 2001 having spent my career outside the OU in editing and programme management. I soon had to come to grips with the OU way of life and find my way around the many acronyms that we all use! The alphabet soup is difficult at first. So this is my first take on what it's like at the coal-face. Being a course manager is where the action is.

The role of course manager is unique to the OU so there's nothing else to compare it with outside. A typical course manager administers OU courses and manages the courses' business from day to day. We work on two different types of courses: those that are already in presentation and that are rolled out continuously for a set period of time, and those that are in production, where course teams are working more intensively on new materials and methods of delivery to students. Production for an undergraduate course generally takes three years, from initial conception through to final product. Eventually, in a typical subject area, the course in production will become ready for students and supersede the existing presentation course.

At first the job of course manager seems to be an enormous undertaking because there are so many people to contact and get to know. There are chairs of courses, staff tutors, associate lecturers and regional offices to liaise with, not to mention numerous contacts – copyrights, editors, the design studio, etc – within Walton Hall's campus maze! The Course Manager also works with people off site such as external consultants, external examiners and assessors. So, in the long term, a job like this is satisfying if you like variety and, believe me, you'll get plenty of that! It's also rewarding because you never know what questions will be asked of you during a typical day and from whom. There's no time to be bored, which is necessary if job satisfaction is to be assured.

Working with your colleagues in the course team is crucial to the success of the course. More heads are better than one and each team member brings their expert knowledge to the meetings. Yes, committee decisions can take longer to make than individual ones, but, on the whole, they are better decisions because so many people have been involved in them. It's also good to know that members of the team will support one another when necessary which makes for effective team building. I've been impressed by the commitment of the teams at the OU in striving to produce the best possible for the student community.

Most course managers will know all about time management and planning out the day/week/month well in advance to allow for crises. Project management skills are necessary to allow the Course Manager to plan tasks, and the art of effective communication – through eMails, letters, and phone calls. It is a role that demands much learning 'on the job', and significant time is spent learning new systems developed by the University. Being able to network effectively and keep in touch with people (and keeping them in touch with each other) is a key part of the role. Knowing whom to contact within the different departments in the University is a crucial string to our bow. Building up knowledge and contacts takes time but is rewarding in the long term.

Certainly for me the past few months have been very busy and the time has flown by. I'll soon have completed one year and will have seen the full cycle of a year at the University. Already I feel that I have learned a tremendous amount, both about where I work and what I do. And there's still much more to learn!

## CRIME SCENES: FEAR AND FASCINATION

Eugene McLaughlin, course chair of D315 *Crime, Order and Social Control*, explores the rapid growth in interest in criminology as the course is remade for 2003 presentation

Criminology which, until relatively recently, was little more than a sub-specialism of sociology, law and psychology is rapidly becoming a discipline in its own right. Perhaps the most notable expression of this is the proliferation of undergraduate criminology courses in universities throughout the United Kingdom. In many ways these universities are catching up with the OU as criminology has always been a highly popular part of our social science curriculum. I think there are several factors that may help to explain the growth in interest in all things criminological.

Most obviously, steadily rising crime rates seem to have become one of the defining features of contemporary society. Although victimisation continues to be unevenly distributed, with the poorest sections of society suffering disproportionately, within a relatively short period of time, 'crime' has become a prominent reality for 'middle England'. A significant cross-section of the population has been either personally victimised, witnessed a crime or is aware of family, friends, neighbours or work colleagues who have been victimised. 'Crime' has ceased to be a statistical abstraction and has taken on dramatic meaning in popular consciousness and indeed individual psychology. The ever-present soundtrack for anyone living in a city is the wailing siren of a police car rushing to the latest crime scene.

### Growing awareness, increasing intolerance, rising authoritarianism

Possibly another reason why criminology has become popular is that we have all become more aware of new types, forms and mixes of crime and disorder resultant from dramatic social, economic and cultural changes. For example, in the aftermath of the terror attacks of September 11 2001 a multitude of initiatives have been established to globalise crime control and law enforcement. In addition, contemporary societies are also witnessing a contradictory movement for increased intolerance and tolerance. The public is increasingly intolerant of crime and perhaps more significantly the low level disorder that does such damage to the quality of life in certain neighbourhoods. As a result it is willing to countenance authoritarian measures such as the Orwellian sounding 'Anti-Social Behaviour Order'. However, there is considerable ambiguity about what should be subject to the criminal sanction. For example, the government's decision to relax the laws on cannabis is for many a sensible attempt to realign the criminal law and policing practices with the realities of the most widely used illegal drug in Britain. Opponents of this shift in policy insist that the government has not only legitimised Britain's flourishing drug culture but also given pressure groups the green light to campaign for the legalisation of hard drugs.

The move to a high crime society poses considerable problems as well as opportunities for those undertaking criminological study and research. In *Adventures in Criminology*, Sir Leon Radzwinowicz, one of the founders of criminology in Britain, provides an account of the days when criminologists went quietly about their business, meeting in private with Home Office policy makers, politicians and newspaper editors to discuss the causes of crime and the nature of penal reform. For good or ill this is longer possible.

### Crime, populism and the 'war on crime'

First, the issue of crime now holds a central place in electoral politics and it is debated in highly emotive terms. The attempt by politicians to harvest crime votes has resulted in a flurry of well-publicised tough 'law and order' policies and unprecedented levels of public resources going into the 'war on crime'. Second, the criminal justice system is viewed with greater public scepticism and disillusionment than ever before especially with regard to its ability to provide 'justice' for crime victims. Third, there is less public willingness to countenance sympathy for the offender and an increase in 'punitive populist' demands for more and tougher 'cops, courts and corrections'. Fourth, an extensive private security and crime prevention market has emerged which some would argue has a vested interest in fuelling public concern about crime. Finally, the fear of crime has become a social problem in its own right and is not necessarily related to the realities of crime. As a result, the practical and emotional investment that individuals and communities have in issues of crime has expanded considerably.

'Crime', fear of crime and combating crime exercises a significant influence on what we might describe as the deepest routines and practices of our everyday lives. In many parts of Britain local newspapers run regular 'Crime Beat' columns in which readers are offered practical advice on how to protect themselves and their property from criminals. Thanks to a new EU initiative people holidaying in Europe this year will benefit from improved help if they become a victim of crime. The pressing problem for criminologists is that this widespread fear of and anger about crime has begun to impact directly upon the possibility of or indeed willingness for reasoned debate about the crime problem.

### Media, movies, computer games and crime representation

Criminologists in high crime societies also have to consider what could be described as peoples' 'love hate' relationship with crime and criminality. The very real fear of crime is accompanied by what some would define as an obsessive fascination with all things criminal. Real crime news stories are amongst the most widely reported and commented upon, providing more column inches and viewing hours than almost any other social issue. 'If it bleeds, it leads' seems to be the motto for most newspaper editors. The release of the annual crime statistics produces a news media feeding frenzy with the tabloids competing to produce the most shocking images to accompany the most sensational headline. The prize for 2002 goes to the *Daily Mirror* which on 12 July produced a 9 page special full of harrowing colour pictures of victims of street crimes to accompany the front page headline 'Tough on crime? they'd laugh if it didn't hurt so much'.

But crime has a much broader location in our culture. Bookshops have expanded the number of bookshelves devoted to true crime, fictional crime and the ever-evolving detective novel. People queue to watch Hollywood crime blockbusters that construct an audio-visual experience that conveys a visceral sense of the dangers and threats that protagonists will confront. As with horror movies it seems as if audiences want to be shocked and indeed scared with the lessons being no one and nowhere is safe and you can trust nobody. Many of the most popular crime movies also present morally ambiguous criminals whose emotionally disturbed state of mind resonates with audiences. Movies are also able to imagine and portray future mega cities where the public threat posed by crime and disorder has generated new crime control measures.

Steven Spielberg's recently released *Minority Report* is set in Washington DC in 2053 where thanks to the 'Department of PreCrime' crimes are detected before they are committed and would-be murderers are detained almost as soon as they have had their first unlawful thought! Equally significantly, crime has also crossed over traditional entertainment boundaries on television. We still have our indispensable diet of 'who, how, what, when and why' police dramas. And irrespective of the generational twists and turns introduced by each new cop show, the British public still favours detectives who are cynical, bad tempered, have untidy personal lives and who break the law in order to bring villains to justice. However, the most popular television soaps such as *Eastenders* are also increasingly constructed directly or indirectly around highly emotive and often very disturbing crime storylines. Graphic representations of crime and violence are also embedded in the new generation of video games such as 'The Getaway', 'Grand Autotheft' and 'Doom III' whilst 'gangsta' fashion styles, attitude and street language can be seen and heard on virtually every street in Britain. Exploring this complicated relationship between 'crime as public fear' and 'crime as popular fascination' is something that is occupying the thoughts of the D315 course team as we complete the remake of the course for the 2003 presentation and begin to think about what its replacement will look like.

## IMPROVING DD100

Kath Woodward, course team chair DD100, DD121, DD122, reports on progress on the course review, based on feedback from students, associate lecturers, and staff tutors

It seems like hardly any time since we were in full production on DD100, getting all the course material ready for the first presentation in 2000. Now the course team is back in production for the rewrite update. Time flies when you are enjoying yourself!

The new presentation of DD100 will start in 2004, but decisions have been made about necessary changes, taking into account all the feedback we have received from students, associate lecturers and staff tutors, and from a whole range of IET surveys. Work has already started on some of the chapters that have been chosen as candidates for rewriting or amendment.

### Improving accessibility

Our main concern for the rewrite has been to focus on making material as accessible as possible to integrate different elements of the course and to be as inclusive as possible in our coverage of social debates. There will be some updating, but the big issues addressed in the course at the outset have proved to have as much resonance in 2002 as they did in 1998/99. Debates about identity, globalisation, risk and the relationship between people and the environment have all proved to be well represented in discussions within the social sciences and in our everyday lives in the twenty-first century.

In all, four chapters are being rewritten in the five co-published books. One of these chapters, Chapter 4 in *Questioning Identity*, will focus on race and ethnicity, in order to integrate this material into the core of the block. Other chapters in Books 2, 4 and 5 are being rewritten to make the material more accessible for study. There will also be major editing work on all the workbooks to accommodate the new chapters and to encourage the use of workbooks along with the core texts.

### Building on success

DD100 has been a very successful course through its first three years of presentation and the course team is keen to build on its success. We don't want to make major changes, but we do want to ensure that students taking it are well supported in the study of the Social Sciences at level 1, and that we can encourage them to continue their studies.

### Mainstreaming DD121 and DD122

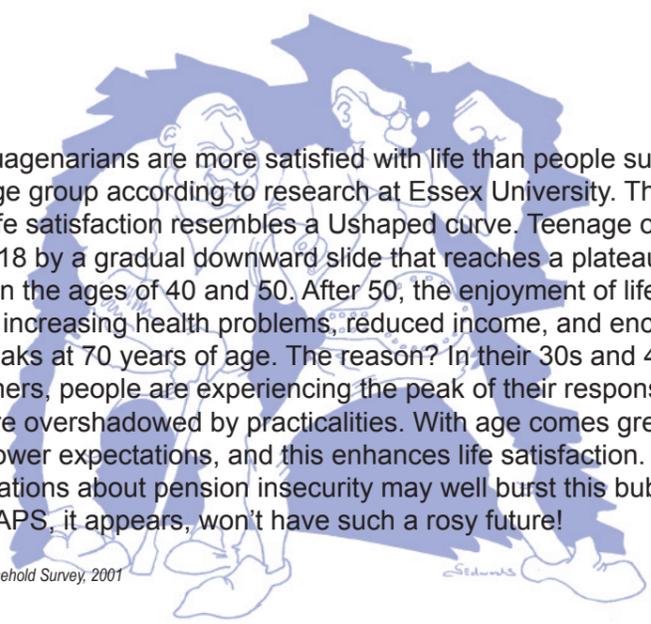
The daughters of DD100 are on the move too. As from October 2002, the two 30 point courses, the two halves of DD100, DD121 and DD122, which have been piloted in selected regions over the last two years, move to a mainstreamed presentation. DD121 will start in October 2002 to be followed by DD122 in May 2003. Thus students who opt for the slower route through the level 1 Introduction to the Social Sciences, by taking DD121 and DD122, will be able to register for the courses in any of the OU's regions.

Although there will be a limit on the overall number of registrations, this route does look like a popular choice, since DD121 reached its capped quota almost immediately. It is still a requirement that you cannot take DD122 until you have completed DD121, and you have to complete both courses successfully in order to be awarded the Certificate in Social Sciences. The two 30 point courses provide an alternative study pattern at Level 1. The Faculty will be monitoring the progress of the new presentation pattern and the course team is keen to provide both flexibility of study patterns and student support.

## Life begins at 70!

British septuagenarians are more satisfied with life than people surveyed in any other age group according to research at Essex University. The research found that life satisfaction resembles a U-shaped curve. Teenage optimism is replaced at 18 by a gradual downward slide that reaches a plateau of depression between the ages of 40 and 50. After 50, the enjoyment of life increases, and despite increasing health problems, reduced income, and encroaching mortality, peaks at 70 years of age. The reason? In their 30s and 40s, claim the researchers, people are experiencing the peak of their responsibilities, their lives are overshadowed by practicalities. With age comes greater security, and lower expectations, and this enhances life satisfaction. However, recent revelations about pension insecurity may well burst this bubble. Tomorrow's OAPS, it appears, won't have such a rosy future!

ICM 2002; British Household Survey, 2001



## Old age concern

Life expectancy is increasing for the UK retired, but this has come at the price of unhealthy lives. At 65, a typical man can expect to live a further 14.7 years; the bad news is that 3.4 years of ill health are included. A typical woman lives for 18.3 years after retirement, with 5.3 years of ill health. Chronic illnesses with lifelong affects are becoming more common in the UK: arthritis, rheumatism, strokes, and heart conditions. Obesity, which has doubled for men and women in the 55 to 64 age group, is adding to



## Globesity rises to 100 million

In 1995, there were an estimated 200 million obese adults worldwide, with 18 million children under five classified as obese. By 2000, the number of obese adults had risen to 300 million. In developing countries it is believed that 115 million people are obese.

World Health Organisation, 2002



Over the next half century the proportion of people on Earth over 60 is expected to double, from 10% to 22% of the population – from 629 million to nearly two billion. In developed countries, the number of people over 60 will be more than twice the number of children, and by 2050 people over 60 will outnumber children on the planet. The potential support ratio, the number of people of working age per older person of 60 plus, has fallen from 12 to 9 since 1950, and the burden on the young, to support the old, will increase this century. In Britain, for example, the number of over 60s is expected to rise by 44%, from 12.2 million to 17.6 million. In Japan, by 2020, one in four people will be over 60. Since 1950, global life expectancy has risen by 20 years, from 46 to 66.

## Age discrimination in the workplace

According to research by the Third Age Employment Network there is growing evidence of discrimination against older people in the workplace. It is not simply a question of age discrimination at job selection, the network have discovered increasing levels of lower pay, and a dramatic drop in the number of people employed who are over 50. One half of all companies now have workforces with fewer than one in ten staff over 50. One in ten firms have no staff aged over 50.

The Industrial Society back the findings. Private sector restructuring during the last decade has forced out people over 50 for younger staff. Increasingly, the findings suggest that more employees over 40 are becoming vulnerable as firms reorganise their labour forces. The loss to the economy of excluding older workers is estimated to be around £26 billion per annum.

From 2006, the EU is planning to outlaw age discrimination in the workplace. Demographic factors may also lead to an end to age discrimination.

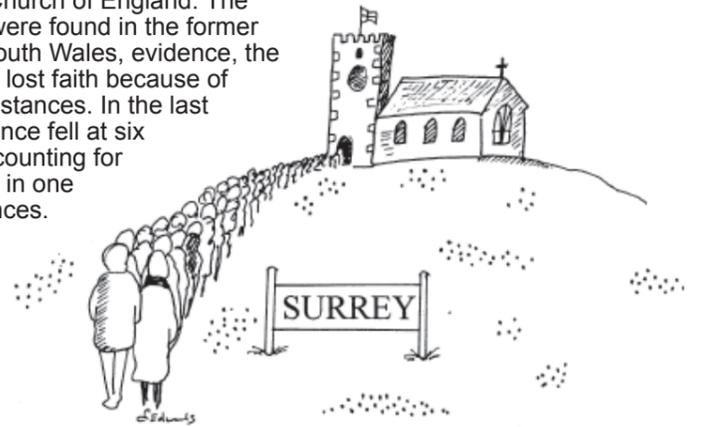
The number of young people between 16 and 19 continues to fall year after year: since 1991, it has fallen by over 13%, while the UK birth rate has plummeted to 1.7 from a peak of 2.8 children in the early 1960s.



## Live in Surrey, go to Church!

Did you know that more people go to church in Surrey than in any other English county? Did you suspect that people who live in affluent areas are twice as likely to go to church than those living in deprived communities? These are the findings of a geographical survey of church attendance by Christian Research for the Church of England. The lowest congregations were found in the former coal mining areas of South Wales, evidence, the researchers claim, of a lost faith because of socio-economic circumstances. In the last decade church attendance fell at six out of ten parishes, accounting for an estimated reduction in one million church attendances.

In Scotland, church attendance was double that in England and Wales. The research did not cover other religions.



## Crimewatch UK now a foundation course for armed robbers

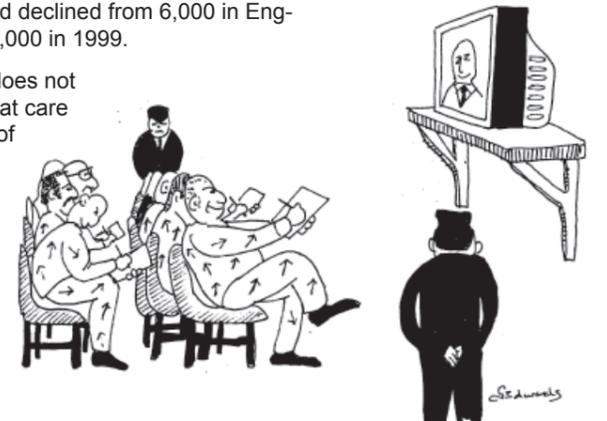
Research at Middlesex University has found that armed robbers habitually watch Crimewatch to pick up tips on how to commit crime. The study of convicted criminals revealed that Crimewatch UK is by far the most popular television programme among armed robbers and other inmates. Crime re-constructions are a must-see. The prisoners study the programmes to learn new methods to rob when they are released. The 340 prisoners, at 12 prisons, said that they had robbed after seeing how easy it appeared on Crimewatch.

Professor Roger Matthews, the study's director, explained: 'Crimewatch provides a regular update of changing techniques and innovation while providing a source of new ideas. It provides a chance for robbers and other criminals to see if any of their friends and acquaintances are featured and, above all, it provides some degree of comfort to those incarcerated robbers to know that, despite the fact the robbers have been caught on video, they are still at large'.

The research also identified a new wave of less organised criminals. Robbers adopt a haphazard approach to crime, and often commit hold-ups without any planning. This 'amateurism' partly explains, the research claims, the fall in armed robberies – the number in which a firearm was used declined from 6,000 in England and Wales a decade ago, to 3,000 in 1999.

The BBC believe Crimewatch UK does not promote crime of any kind, and great care is taken not to reveal the methods of crime.

Armed Robbery, Middlesex University, 2002



## New Labour's New Deal on the rocks

The National Audit Office (NAO) has discovered that New Labour's Flagship first team New Deal project, designed to reduce unemployment among young people, has managed to find real jobs for only 3% of its participants. Only 20,000 of the 700,000 young people who participated in the £3 billion scheme found jobs which would not have been created otherwise, according to NAO research. Introduced in 1998, the New Deal is compulsory for all 18 – 24 year olds who have been on job seekers allowance for longer than six months. The scheme offers young people the option of going into full-time education and training, joining an environmental task force, or being placed in the voluntary sector. The scheme has been extended to lone parents, the disabled, and people over 50.

Youth unemployment, according to Government figures, fell by nearly 100,000 from 226,000 in 2001. But the NAO argue that the New Deal has had only a marginal effect: 'many of these young people would have found work anyway without the help of the programme', NAO conclude. The NAO found that most of the 20,000 'new' jobs under the deal had helped to keep wage levels down because they had been low paid.



## WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE?

The ESRC have funded a £65,000 research project exploring how people of different ages, genders and nationalities view and react to risk. The two year study will enable academics at Warwick and Keele universities access to studying the behaviour of contestants on the popular quiz show *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* In particular, the researchers will investigate how contestants gamble with large amounts of money, as they seek to answer the 16 questions needed to win a million. The researchers' theory is that people who can afford it risk more than people with low disposable incomes. Contestants with a good education, or who are rich enough to risk losing large amounts of money do gamble much more on the show. The early findings suggest that women are less likely to appear on the show than men, and to be less successful than men at winning. Members of minority groups are also under-represented. The aim of the study is to inform policy makers, especially in health, social services and crime prevention, in reducing risk.



So, Ma'am, for one million pounds...

Special Jubilee Edition



Jo Pugh (second from left), Pavis Centre prize winning D318 student receiving her award from Professor Tony Bennett.

Photo: John Hunt

## Communicating

The Multiple Modes of Human Interconnection

**Communicating:** Open University anthropologist **Professor Ruth Finnegan's** new book uncovers the amazing array of sounds, sights, smells, gestures, looks, movements and touches which humans use so creatively in communication. This authoritative and accessible book is a wonderfully evocative celebration of the diversity of the human spirit. Published by Routledge, London, Summer 2002, ISBN 0-415-24118-9.

## ILLITERACY LEVELS EXCEED THOSE IN 1912

Reading and writing skills among Britain's young people are no better than they were before the First World War, according to research at the University of Ulster. The Ulster study found that 15% of people aged between 15 and 21 are 'functionally illiterate'. Last year the National Skills Task Force estimated that seven million adults in the UK were illiterate. The craze for mobile phone text messaging is believed to be exacerbating the level of illiteracy, according to researchers. In 1912 school inspectors reported that only 2% of pupils could not read or write.

### Open University in Wales

March 10<sup>th</sup> 2002

#### Dear Editor

I would like to say, having just finished reading the latest edition, what a fine and informative read SM is. Indeed, I feel so much more informed about Faculty affairs now, as a result of your fine publication.

I was particularly interested in the article by Gary Slapper, and the proposal for an interdisciplinary course on Human Rights and Citizenship. It seems to me that this is an excellent initiative, and a very timely one, given the incorporation of the European Charter on Human Rights into British legislation, and the outrageous human rights abuses of prisoners of war by America.

In an age of de-commitment, and of ever strengthening disciplinary boundaries, I realise that Gary's proposal is swimming against the tide, but I would like to support the proposal and urge SM to mount a campaign for more interdisciplinarity, which is, after all, what distinguished the Open University in its infancy.

#### Dave Middleton

Staff Tutor, Faculty of Social Sciences

### Guildford, Surrey

February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2002

#### Dear Editor

I applaud your Dean's commitment in the last issue to increasing the inclusiveness of the Faculty's curriculum, and diversifying the student base. The Open University has always been at the vanguard of educational change. In the past the Faculty has pioneered courses that have had significant impacts on the rest of higher education. The women's studies course and the course on 'race' and education are two that come immediately to mind. DD100 is a brave move towards providing greater permeation of the themes of diversity and difference. The emphasis to provide effective access to lifelong learning must embrace a deeper understanding of the relationship between inclusiveness and student retention. Linda Jones, PVC, is correct to emphasise the role of effective marketing, but there is a need to invest much more staff time, not just the underpaid labours of associate lecturers, in ensuring that the courses the Faculty teaches keep students on track until they have passed their examinations.

Best wishes

#### Jean Wardell

Glasgow, Scotland

## Why the Open University Football Club always win at home

Wolfron and Neave, two striking psychologists at Northumbria University, whose colleagues had earlier predicted that drinking lager improved your brain-power, have added to their record for dubious scientific research. They claim that football teams playing at home are much more likely to win than their opponents because – wait for it – increases in player sex hormones are linked to a primal instinct among footballers to defend home territory. The research – which measured testosterone by sampling players spit - did not survey the Open University Football Club, whose inconsistent home form, especially among the Reserve team this season, has been pronounced. Since most players turn up on a Sunday morning having clubbed and supped all night, OUFU management attributed the indifferent home form to lack of sleep. Testosterone is often expended long before the lads turn up to get into their kit. According to the Northumbrian 'experts', the biggest testosterone surge is experienced by goalkeepers playing at home. When the editor put this to OUFU goalkeepers the theory was showered with dirty brown water. We always thought OUFU's home form was down to the absence of a crowd, apart from the man with the dog, bad refereeing, and hangovers. A bucket of OUFU spittle is on its way to the psychology laboratory at Northumbria



Simon Brunton slams in the winner from the spot to bring another victory to OUFU

January 11<sup>th</sup> 2002

#### Dear Editor

I found the centre spread covering issues related to multi-ethnic Britain, especially Yasmin Alibhai-Brown's article on the urban disturbances in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley, invaluable in coming to terms with some of the fascinating material in DD100. I was particularly interested to hear the Open University has a Black Researcher's Group, a fact I had not picked up from Sesame.

#### Jennifer MacDonald

### Rhyl, North Wales

#### Editor

*Matters* consistently provides a compendium of highly relevant analysis and snapshots. The balance in the last issue, between social divisions in the UK, and the positive and negative effects of globalisation, was especially enriching. Do other Faculties have newspapers that engage their students so effectively?

#### Ann Welton

The Editor replies: No, Social Sciences is the first Faculty to successfully launch its own annual newspaper. It began in the early 1990s as a course information broadsheet. The first *Society Matters* was published in 1998.

### Canterbury, Kent

December 7<sup>th</sup> 2002

#### Dear Editor

Two points. First, it is very clever of Robin Richardson (p.4, issue number 4) to be able to tell from a single phone call whether or not the caller is mentally ill. Was Mr Richardson bringing up the issue of mental health because New Labour has declared it socially acceptable to stigmatise people with mental health problems?

Second, you choose an easy target by whining that 'pets get fat while children starve'. You didn't point out that farm animals are getting fatter because of inefficiencies in the meat industry. It is much easier to blame individuals who want the best for their cats and dogs than to criticise a powerful business interest.

#### Katherine Gilchrist

## MORE SEX PLEASE: WE'RE BRITISH



A new survey of 11,000 people aged between 16 and 44 has shown some stark changes in the nation's sex life in the last ten years. Researchers from the University College London, and the National Centre for Social Research, assert they have provided the most accurate picture of sexual lifestyles, and one which demonstrates significant attitude shifts in a more open, honest and tolerant adult population.

Compared to 1990, we have more partners before settling down, we are more likely to have affairs, and twice as many women have homosexual encounters. Although the volume of partners has increased, the number of times we report having sex remains the same as it was a decade ago – once a week.

One in 23 men reported they had used a prostitute in the past five years compared to one in 48 in 1990. In London, one in 11 men reported paying for sex. In 1990, one in 28 men, and one in 56 women reported having had a homosexual partnership. In 2001 this has risen to one in 19 men, and one in 20 women. In London, the proportion is one in 10.

The average age of first intercourse has fallen by a year from 17 to 16 (it was 21 in the 1950s), thirty per cent of girls reported having sex at under 16. Schools are increasingly being relied upon for sex education, says the report, rather than parents. Condom use has increased and there is some evidence that teenage pregnancy has peaked and is about to fall.

*The Lancet, November 2001*

## Freshers go to University for sex and alcohol: no, really?

Cynical connoisseurs of Open University summer schools will not be surprised with the not so shocking finding of a survey of students joining universities last autumn. Freshers interviewed report that the idea of excesses and binges of student life was five times more attractive than the courses they were taking, with girls more than boys eager to imbibe and indulge in promiscuous activity. Forty one per cent of males and 50% of females starting University revealed that drinking, clubbing and sex were what they were most looking forward to. Only eight per cent said they were looking forward to their studies, while 23% were already worried about workload and examinations. Someone should tell President Blair, who is on a crusade to get 50% of young people to go to University by 2015, that the vast amounts spent on course publicity may be misdirected. On the downside, however, students counted their mobiles as their most valuable possession. Their average £32-a-month mobile phone bills go on flirtatious calls and text messages.



"Hello there beautiful, I sure hope you're not here to study either"

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