

WOPPER black-balls Britain over 'fair play' dispute

Government pleads for reasonableness

By Davros Dickson, Club Class Correspondent

Britain has been refused membership of the World Organisation for Prudence and Probity in Economic Relations for the third time in three years.

The Government immediately re-submitted its application. The Minister for Lesser Breeds, Drummond Goiter, said he could give "ensurances of unmitigated categoricity" that the 400-page electronic form would most likely be encrypted and correctly dated this time.

It is thought that Britain's application was blocked by WOPPER founding members Nigeria, Pakistan and

Russia, with backing from Italy, Panama, the Dominican Republic and Alaska.

These and other foreign governments are said to have been antagonised by the Prime Minister's statement earlier this month that WOPPER membership would "enable us to up our international colleagues' game by showing what British efficiency and fair play really means".

Spokesbots from all the organisation's members said the conditions of membership were non-negotiable, and there was "no place for delusions of grandeur". They expressed "hopeful sentiments of an unembellished nature" that Britain would be able to "enhance suitability to a sufficiently deserving extent" to avoid renewed humiliation next year.

Millenarian Dome Late, over budget, and 'lacking purpose'



The New Millenarian Experience Company dismissed suggestions that its Dome was a "gaseous final solution in search of problems." The Dome, based on Cold War-era blueprints, is designed to float on convection currents from boardrooms, and could shield the City from asteroids, atomic fallout and even policy suicide. **Report, Page 13**

Green New Deal sparks up debate

Blowback takes the edge off hot wheeze

By Roald Blunt

Gaunt Fauntleroy, the opposition's social justice spokesman, has hit back at critics of his Green New Deal for "the feral, the feckless and the long-term useless."

Under the proposal, serial benefit fraudsters would be eligible for state-run trials of psychoactive compounds, in return for a 35-hour weekly training commitment.

Participants would be assigned to regional alternative energy projects, where massed banks of velocipede transformers could provide an estimated five per cent of household power needs.

"The government's short-sighted policies are to blame for today's Brown-outs," Mr Fauntleroy told reporters on a visit to a Vietnamese-run start-up in Warrington, which could produce up to 10 per cent of the scheme's feedstock.

"We need to use every available source of renewable energy," he said. "This country has an abundant supply of underexploited

dope-smokers."

Opponents of the plan fear its use of unlicensed genetically modified seeds could contaminate existing crop strains.

"Today's skunk cannabis is already 15 times as strong as what my generation was exposed to," warned Jacquie Hashley, the Culture Commissar. "There's no telling what side-effects these new plants could induce."

Civil liberties campaigners say all drugs should be legalised anyway, to break cartel strangleholds. Instead, they object to the plan's "forced labour" component.

"This is the politics of the Panopticon," said Chakra Charming, of the pressure group Mind Less.

"It's outrageous to set a minimum mileage - most people will have to pedal for most of their waking hours."

Mr Fauntleroy calls this a "fringe benefit" of his programme. "The whole point of the Green New Deal is to get social leeches off the streets," he said.

"If they want to get wrecked, that's fine by me, but they've got to give something back."

Homelessness reduced by 'building houses' - report

By Gulcher Cradock

The government's controversial housing policy of "building more homes" may have helped cut homelessness, according to a report released today.

A study by the Ministry of Ministerial Prioritisation has found that a nine per cent increase in the number of "homes" since 2010 coincided with a decrease in the number of people arrested for vagrancy.

Despite the fall in house prices caused by enhanced accommodational availability, the number of people able to afford a mortgage "increased significantly", the study found.

"This is very peculiar news

indeed, but there is no cause for panic," said Wimpey Warrington, the report's co-author.

"Although there does seem to be a link between reduced homelessness and actually building houses, the nature

of this link has not yet been properly understood or even explored."

Mr Warrington stressed that "empty premises which have not been refurbished as investments or potential second houses for respon-

sible businesspersons" were not covered by the study's parameters.

"Speculations about the end of incentivisation for the lower classes would seem to be premature," Mr Warrington said.

Cubicle 'job joyer' sectioned

By Denzil Handley-Bodger

A local authority office worker has been ordered to seek psychiatric care for exhibiting symptoms of "joy on the job", Mottingshore Borough Council confirmed last night.

The man, who cannot be named for copyright reasons, performed his duties more than adequately, but displayed an unjustified and obstructive degree of pleasure in his work, a spokesperson said. Colleagues found this breeziness intolerable.

"He'd come into the office

'If you're enjoying your job, you're not working hard enough.'

bang on time, give everyone a cheery smile and start right in without the slightest sign of loitering, lurking or even resenting the existence of other human beings at half-past eight in the morning," said Albertine Flitnop, who worked closely with the alleged psychoid for almost two years.

"It's a crying shame that thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money will be spent giving him drugs and fancy therapies. I think he's just plain evil."

Managerial sources confirmed the miserabilist effect of the job joyer's office presence. The council is now considering a test case to clarify the law, which could establish new standards for occupational misery.

Other local officials are supportive, arguing that the national interest is at stake.

"Blatant pleasure during working hours, when it's clearly of a non-sexual and non-furtive nature, is against Protestant values and the British work ethic," said Hudibras Pinkelsneer, the MP for Mottingshore and Blaggit.

"I don't care how well you do your job," he added. "If you're enjoying it, you're not working hard enough."

Supermarket loyalty test forces shoppers to walk the plank or go without

Company invokes 'the Blitz spirit'

Rotting boroughs to 'never surrender'

By Roger Jolie, Local Government Correspondent

London boroughs are threatening mutiny after Tesco, the fuel conglomerate, withdrew food from five more export processing zones to counter "multiple acts of theft and associated ingratitude".

Wielding the skull, tibia and femur of what he said was a colleague's skeleton, Galloway Sheridan, an

unauthorised spokesman for Hackney workers, accused the company of mounting "yet another bare-faced attack on those least able to defend themselves."

Tesco's decision extends its controversial policy of withholding supplies from districts where computers register total monthly thefts above 300 New Euros.

The firm's electoral relations managers back the strategy, which leaves London's landless majority dependent on scraps from the remaining Poplar produce stalls in Canary Marsh.

"Of course they'll have to walk the plank to get there," said Ludendorff Dachshund, the Tesco spokesman. "But they'll reinforce collec-

tive values doing so."

Mr Dachshund said the measures would remain in force until communities surrendered all their looters.

Local leaders are refusing to comply. Instead they've warned of further "mass direct action" against Tesco warehouses.

"Those fortunate enough to work get poorhouse wages and gruel," said the firebrand Mr Sheridan, whose People's Popular Front group was blamed for a buccaneering cornucopia in January.

"Even if they can't afford it, people shouldn't be deprived of overpriced food," Mr Sheridan told reporters. "Years ago, we could at least have tried shopping somewhere else."

BBC 'swear quota' gets star journalists cursing

Rottweilers resent being put on leash

House style set for adversarial debate

By Violet Frotting, Political Entertainment Correspondent

News anchors and other light entertainment performers will be limited to a fixed number of expletives in political interviews, BBC Plc has ruled.

The quota, announced in an internal memo obtained by the *Financial Times*, reflects a culture of ongoing unease at the BBC with the "steady decline in interest in Parliamentary reaction to legislation", and the private sector education, health and security providers.

Though "values of impartiality, accuracy, and honesty" will still package news on core content streams,

the memo said, "the BBC's duty to reflect and clarify the public's views is not well served by succumbing to widespread cynicism and disengagement."

Its call for "more engaged, proactive, and 'edgier'" coverage and "proportionate use of expletives" drew a hostile reaction from moral and artistic groups. Journalists said the plan was "a fucking disgrace."

The changes were drawn up after confidential polling found that "the general public" was "the only stakeholder significantly out of step with British political life," the memo said.

Broadcasters had a duty to show that party politics remained relevant, it concluded, by "increasing the salience of conflict and discord in political interviewing."

A BBC source said the proposals had been modified after ministers accused the corporation of "cheap shock tactics".

Although talent will still be allowed to "ad lib" profanities, producers will have to submit the total number to editors and interviewees prior to script run-throughs.

In addition to the overall quota, there are also limits on the types of expletive permitted, even after the 5.00 pm watershed.

While most four-letter words will be allowed in moderation, two have now been banned in all their variants. This last rule in particular has upset journalists, who imagined they'd still be free to set the tone of levels of deference.

The new guidelines could turn viewers off, they warn, not entice them as managers expect.

"How am I supposed to do my job of turning heads?" asked Russell Brand, the BBC's premier interviewer. "I can live with not calling people liars, but who'll still want to watch me if I can't say cunt?"

New ground rules give pedestrians a bad trip

Increasingly even surfaces on British pavements may be inclined to cause problems, the Organisation for Operative Pathways and Sidewalks claims.

Twisted ankles and calf strains are climbing statistical tables as people make allowances for irregularities that no longer exist. The drop in road traffic means pavements have been widened

and resurfaced, removing tarmac hillocks and other prominent features of the routescape. Even the hinged flagstone with projectile reservoir for rainy weather may soon be a thing of the past. "Given the way British roads have been managed since Roman times," warned Hertha Tobone of OOPS, "flat surfaces will take some getting used to."

Celebrity culture rot carries on corroding

By Galoper Thrawne

The number of people "famous for being famous" has fallen for the twentieth straight month, figures from the Ministry of Prurience have revealed.

Optimisation of the data was enhanced by the fact that useful employment has been found for the last few names on the Civil List, a spokesperson downloaded.

Neither surviving claimant to the throne of Scame will be "earning their keep", it stressed. However, both are volunteering, one with race relations charities, and the other as a mould for femi-

nine leisure products.

Additionally, two more supermodels have fallen through the gratings over drains. Colleagues said that neither was an irreplaceable talent who would be greatly missed.

Britain is now on target to achieve a celebrity-neutral culture by mid-century.

Staff and management of BBC plc held a small party in Shepherd's Bush last night to celebrate the breakthrough.

Margo Crumleigh, the Director General, said there might now be "a definite possibility of a return to a better quality of remake".



World News

‘Apocryphal Declaration’ rocks America

Liberty is ‘ours to secure’, papers say

By Anna Key in Washington

Citizens of the remaining States of the Union of Gettysburg may have “unalienable rights” to life

and happiness, according to controversial declassified documents.

The papers, discovered by a chimney sweep at the Cheney Library of Constitutional Studies, suggest that the Union’s founders were at odds with the ruling Latter Day Church of Obamination. “All men are created

equal,” says the collection’s principal manuscript, a draft entitled “Declaration of Independence.”

Although it resembles an artifact that was already widely cited by historians, one significant difference has touched off a debate more polarised than any since the Republic’s last

president came out as an atheist Bible-basher.

The text refers to a “neces-

Incitement?

...it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such Government...

sity” for Post-Americans to “alter their former Systems of Government” because of “a long train of abuses and usurpations.”

Scholars say this message contradicts the Church’s Obama Doctrine of preemptive pacification. Instead of preaching faith in His power to lead the world

to Freedom, it asserts that all citizens are “endowed by their Creator” with a right to “the pursuit of liberty.”

This line in particular has sparked fierce debate among delegates to the Post-National American Congress (PNAC).

Some want the principle to be canonised, alongside

other founding values like enslavement. Others dispute its heritage, citing the elder Reverend Clinton’s view that the papers are “apocryphal and borderline Satanic.”

A person familiar with the Cheney Library’s thinking dismissed the draft Declaration as “quaint”, and said it had been written “on hemp”.

SATAN wins no-bid heroin contract

By Gary Webb in Musa Qala and Mustafa Bifta in Swat

The Supreme Alliance of Tribal Area Nation-States (SATAN) has won exclusive rights to supply British junkies with heroin.

Under a government-backed pilot project, for which only SATAN’s tender submission was considered, surplus poppy production will be imported to treat chronic addicts at cut-price rates.

Although the scheme doesn’t formally legalise opiates, it prescribes them long-term to the needy.

“We’re aiming at people for whom everything else has failed,” said Velju Fazli, the British government’s Albanian-born Drugs Tsar. “It would be far more irresponsible to let them die.”

SATAN, which groups the failed states of Afghanistan and West Pakistan, produces all but five per cent of the world’s heroin.

Since Russia deposed the Taliban, the bloc has been a satellite of New Persia, the world’s biggest producer of oil and gas.

Humanitarian intervention set to further dematerialise

Experts advocate stricter self-interest

Resources to define the justness of wars

By Algeria Histamine in Washington

Humanitarian intervention opportunification has fallen rapidly over the past 20 years and will likely continue to do so, an American think-tank says.

The annual report of the Unified States Academy for Greater Intervention Through Humane and Enlightened Methodologies (USAGINTHEM) suggests economic decline means that “America will have to come first”, at least until the sub-hyperpower can maintain sufficient military capacity to control its own citizens.

In what is considered a historical first, the report claims military interventions in other countries will become strictly dependent

on the nature and quantity of those countries’ natural resources, and the extent of their inability to fight back.

Survivalist claims GWOT ‘not lost’

The last known neo-conservative has been found in a Utah cave.

Hunters stumbled across Krist K. Kegekkammer on a foraging trip near Mount Olympus, where he’d been hiding since urging Americans to choose death or glory in the clash of abstract nouns.

“The only thing that gave me strength was faith in myself,” said Mr Kegekkammer, who survived on rats and berries. “As a Real American, I knew it was no disgrace to keep living.”

Police are still trying to beat it into him that a Long War on Violent Extremism can’t be won.

“Clearly this is an unprecedented situation,” said Claiborne P. Minuteman, the retired general, who is a founding member of the Academy and co-author of its latest survey.

“It’s tragic to think that the American military-industrial complex, with its long tradition of bringing wealth, freedom and universal human values to other cultures, can no longer fulfil its vital function as leader and protector of the free world,” he said.

The report’s conclusion strikes a balance. While it claims there’s still a city on a hill, above which America’s beacon burns for hurried masses, researchers cautioned against taking promises of liberation too literally.

Freedom lovers should be wary, they warn, because “the exigent contingencies of the global economic situation and the defection of a substantive numerosity of civilian contractors mean we have to scale down our ambitions, however idealistic they may be.”

Piped peace Sitting still



Swami Sangam Satrapi on day 99 of his peace meditation, with a soundtrack of looped speeches by Britain’s Tony Blair

Minister fails news management probe

By Wenlock Jameson in Lagos

The career of the Foreign Office minister Ermintrude Bussel continues to waver in a balance of thin ice amid the deepening escalation of a dispute with Nigeria over “matters of presentational exactitude”.

Ms Bussel poked the eye of a whirlwind of controversy when the Nigerian government released details of a conversation she had with officials at the International Aid Department (IAD) in Abuja.

Both nations agree that the discussion concerned Britain’s use of financial assistance. Neither side has disclosed the terms of the arrangement, or of any alleged breach. However, British officials describe their discussions

as “constructive”, while the Nigerians call them “frank”. Analysts say this may mean war can be avoided.

The IAD revealed it had monitored the conversation with an automated infomanagement detector (AID), which registered “inconsistencies” in Ms Bussel’s presentation of the facts.

The machine also picked up “anomalous stress patterns” in her voice, “skittish” eye-to-webcam contact, and buttocks shifting at approximately 1.7 times the expectable intensity for someone of her cultural background and adipose distribution index (ADI).

The technology can’t be used in Britain without an informer’s prior consent, but it’s relatively common in the Third World, where faith in government sources is less well developed.

Anti-Semitism on decline since Israel wiped off map

By Eli Wurzel in New York and Ehud Qassam in Jerusalem

Anti-Semitic behaviour has dropped off sharply since the new state of Kanaan came into being on 14 May 2018, according to a United Nations study.

The world’s newest independent country, Kanaan incorporates all of the territory formerly known as Israel, as well as the territories that Israel illegally occupied.

Although many feared a Middle Eastern Holocaust after the disuniting of the American states, and despite threats of terrorism by the Provisional Stern Gang and

the Ariel Sharon Memorial League, the transition of the highly militarised Jewish state into a modern secular democracy has been remarkably smooth.

Pockets of prejudice persist, the study found, but their influence on popular opinion is now marginal.

Formal recognition of the right of return of all Palestinians forced into exile, and of Jerusalem’s status as an international city, have together had “a significant positive impact” on the incidence of anti-Jewish feeling around the world, the UN researchers say.

Kanaan’s new government stoked controversy last year when it admitted to posses-

sion of an arsenal of nuclear weapons.

Successive Israeli administrations had refused to confirm or deny the weapons’ existence, in the interests of maintaining regional stability.

In a wide-ranging series of proclamations, Kanaan also condemned suicide bombings, and issued a formal acknowledgement of the “many crimes and injustices” which took place during Israel’s birth.

It also caused indignation in parts of North America by stating that occurrences recounted in scripture “are not considered an appropriate foundation for national policy in the present day”.

Britain backs its ally’s rule of law

By Justin Frei in Beijing

China has dismissed as a “conspiracy theory” Mexico’s claim that Chinese agents were engaging in “subversive activities” in the recently acquired Mexican state of Texas.

Five Chinese nationals

were detained in El Paso last week. No details of their alleged criminality have been released, but under Mexican law they could be charged with espionage and imprisoned for up to twenty years. Under Texan law, which still operates in parallel, they can be charged with trespassing and shot.

The People’s Committee for Peace and Prosperity issued a categorical denial of rumours that the five were

employed by Beijing to spy on or even sabotage Texas’ massive energy-producing facilities.

The state has more windmills per square mile than any other area of comparable size in the world. It supplies almost thirty per cent of Mexico’s energy needs, and exports surplus capacity across the region.

China, which still relies largely on coal and biofuels, and in some provinces even

on oil imported from the Middle East, is worried about Mexican expansionism, and the still-uncertain place of the former United States in the framework of the kaleidoscope of the international community’s shifting paradigm.

The British Ministry of International Co-operation issued a statement expressing unqualified support for the rule of international law. All options were on the table

to uphold it, officials said.

“The British and Chinese nations have worked profitably together for many years on the basis of shared values acquired through a 180-year history of friendship and co-operation,” the statement concluded.

“The British Government and people stand shoulder to shoulder with their Chinese allies in hoping for a rapid conclusion to this disgraceful kidnapping.”

Arabian government to open archives

By Bandar Bin Layed in Riyadh

The newly elected leadership of the Arabian Republic will present all remaining records of the deposed Saud dynasty for inspection by foreign law enforcement agencies, it emerged last night.

The files are expected to cause further embarrassment to surviving executives of BAE Systems, the arms company which did extensive business with the former Arabian regime before its dissolution under the International Security Statutes of 2016.

Several of the company’s

senior figures are thought to be hiding in “loophole states”, those countries or enclaves which continue to resist the rule of international law. These include the Holy Midwestern Empire in North America and the self-declared Independent United Kingdom of Greater Westminster in England.

The Arabian government, a coalition whose members include the Social Democrats, the Muslim Democrats and the Islamic Feminist Party, is the first in the country’s history to have been elected by a majority of its adult citizens.

It was preceded by three separate Saudi states, which

all practised and promoted highly conservative forms of Islam.

Fifteen of the 19 terrorists accused of carrying out the attacks of 11 September 2001 were from Saudi Arabia, as a result of which the United States invaded Afghanistan and Iraq.

Investigations continue.

Terrorists try to cut China’s fuel supply

Extremists shot by ‘sympathetic’ state

By Ipanema Fungus in Chinatown

Three nutritional activists were killed and another seventeen injured today in clashes with environmental protection contractors.

The militants, who are all believed to be of nominal Britishness, were attempting to destroy crops in East Anglia.

The region is England’s biofuel tank, and the source of almost 20 per cent of the power keeping China’s air transport industry on the rails.

As an incentive to Beijing to continue its programme of support for British banks, agricultural resources have been leased to Chinese state planners for the next

99 years, with an option to extend.

However, anti-Orientalist factions say the use of East Anglia for biofuel crops deprives the British people of their traditional diet, despite the government’s pledge of a GM cow for every living room by 2039.

“We’re deeply sympathetic to the plight of those who are suffering shortages,” said Quinsy Maunder, an official at the British government’s Ministry of Encouragement. “However, there is not and cannot be any excuse for terrorism. Forcible usage of Chinese property by crop-growing organic extremists is entirely intolerable.”

The detrimented trio of agro-fanatics had brought their fate upon themselves, Mr Maunder insisted.

“We cannot interfere with the airline safety regulations of a sovereign country,” he said.

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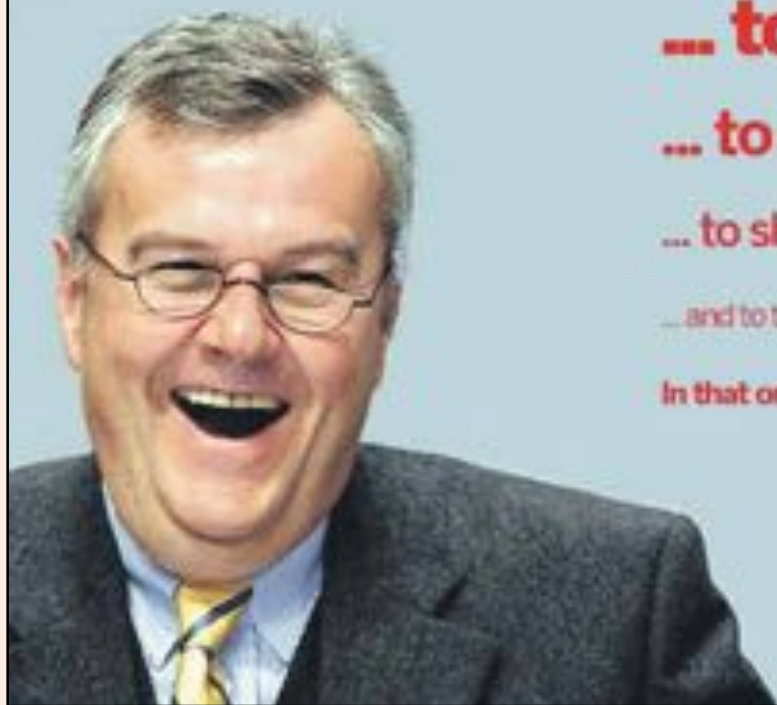
... to shareholders

... and to the planet.

In that order.

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Companies & Markets

New notes chime chorus of protest

Financiers cite fear of public confusion

By Rob Retinitis in London and Citrix Hume in Edinburgh

Plans to revamp British banknotes with new aphorisms from Adam Smith, the dead economist, are causing unprecedented discord in the financial community.

Thousands of investors and bankers have signed an e-petition launched by the Adam Smith Institute. The campaign is also backed by the Brown Initiative for Global Salvation Through Unrestricted Fiscal Freedom (BIGSTUFF), which warned yesterday that the notes could cause "serious public de-understanding" of Smith's ideas.

The controversial quotes include:

• "No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable." (£50)

• "Science is the great antidote to the poison of enthusiasm and superstition." (£100)

• "I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good." (£200)

• "The real tragedy of the poor is the poverty of their aspirations." (£500)

The economist lived in the 18th century, when Enlightenment values were invented. He is widely considered the father of modern *laissez-mourir* welfare policies.

"These quotes have been taken completely out of context," said Morrigan Hartley, the author of the bestselling *Perpetual Growth for Perpetual Stability*, and other works of popular economics.

The new banknotes are part of government efforts to reinforce the pound and ballast the British economy after recent lucrospheric turbulence caused unprecedented levels of uncapped flotation and incidental sandbagging.

In line with the neuro convergence criteria, the government's fiscal policy is essentially to add one zero to the value of each note.

China bails out N-Tropiq

By Vanunu Khan in London and Ho Lee Wen in Beijing

N-Tropiq, the independent nuclear deterrent provider, has secured a £25 billion capital injection from China's state investment fund, COAL.

The deal gives Western threat containment a badly needed shot in the arm, safeguarding thousands of jobs and opening up access to scores of well-resourced new clients in Africa and Asia.

China Overseas Assets and Liabilities will hold a 49 per

cent stake in N-Tropiq, with an option to take control if the Anglo-American company meets performance targets.

Insecurity experts said these typically include conditions to promote sales. The partnership will extend Beijing's influence over global non-proliferation, analysts said.

Although India leases U.S. technology, it has no right to use N-Tropiq's covert network, which helped archival Pakistan build a mass market.

"No other firm has pushed

back as many boundaries," said N-Tropiq's former chairman, Neville Paulson-Jones.

"I'm proud that Britain's moderating influence will continue to be felt at the highest level."

Two years ago, the company's diamond jubilee was shrouded in secrecy. Like other covert operations, its breakthrough supply deal with Israel was never recognised internationally, but it is nonetheless hailed within the industry for setting a precedent.

By outsourcing business

to contractors, governments have avoided conflicts of interest in their wars against weapons of mass destruction. The East-West Alliance's 26 member states have all pledged to phase out nuclear deterrents, as soon as no one else has one.

Since being spun off from Britain's Ministry of Peacekeeping, N-Tropiq has come under fire for its dependence on suppliers in the formerly United States.

As retrenchment bites, the company has been starved of investment and customers. But the deal with COAL

unlocks the latest Chinese science, and hungry new markets in the resource-rich Global South.

"There can be no suggestion now that our deterrent was a waste of money," the Prime Minister told reporters aboard Airship One.

He dismissed the idea that N-Tropiq should have been left to fail and said it was important to preserve British jobs, no matter what else might be detrimental.

"This is about values and courage and Britishness," he said. "If we didn't do it someone else would."

Defiant Westminster gives sterling a boost

By Kvetcha Kibitz and Kilroy Blimp

The pound sterling has hit parity with the Mongolian tögrög in what spokesbots for the State of Greater Westminster are calling "a triumph for freedom and economic responsibility".

The tiny London-locked statelet, whose sovereignty is recognised only by the British and Scottish govern-

ments, has been struggling financially since it broke away in protest at rullion on exploitation and pollution.

The Westminster cabinet also voiced outrage at the British government's decision to integrate with the European Union rather than to "join Britain's historic ally, the United States, in glorious fragmentation".

Although the international community has not

imposed sanctions, the economy of the State of Greater Westminster has suffered, primarily because it produces no commodities other than the influence of Members of Parliament on their peers.

When Westminster was part of the United Kingdom, such influence could be sold for several tens of thousands of New Euros, but its value has since dropped sharply.

Sahara panels back soon

BSE attacks almost as risky as radiation

Blackouts blamed on cultural fanatics

By Alamara Kut-Blair in Tripoli

British Solar Energy, the British solar energy company, has said that supplies from its sprawling Sahara complex should be back online "very nearly before too long".

Supplies have suffered considerable interruption recently, causing blackouts over the less irradiated regions of Britain.

In a statement, BSE blamed so-called "landscape terrorists" similar to the British Union for Natural Greenery, Landscapes and Englishness (BUNGLE), which blew up 40 windmills in the Lake District last year for "interfering with the view".

The Sahara terrorists are thought to be cultural fanatics of a generally British

and American persuasion. Extremists are said to be outraged at the "destruction" of landscapes depicted in *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Star Wars*, and their blockbuster Bollywood remakes.

The Sahara desert contains some two million solar panels, with over 10,000 new ones being added every month.

Owing to Britain's pioneering start in the clean coal and renewable nuclear industries, 90 per cent of the panels' solar energy output goes to other countries.

Outsourcing dammed by demographics

Indians turn backs on former bosses

Language skills handicap Britons

By Jade Jordan in London and Shipa Papadam in Mumbai

Tens of thousands of call centre jobs, from helpline communication executive to first-level technology maintenance, could be threatened by demographic change in India, officials said yesterday.

Almost sixty per cent of Britain's call centres service clients in India, which has used English as one of its official languages since being civilised by the British Empire.

However, studies show that growing numbers of young Indians see Chinese or Indonesian as more useful options in a world increasingly dominated by the rampant Tiger economies of

the East, whose tongues are as alien to Britons as their people's names.

"The British have been many great things, but they have never been great linguists," said Germaine French of the British Office of Demographic Studies (BODS), which compiled the new research.

"Qui vult dare parva non debet magna rogare, as the saying goes," she said.

While it is unlikely that British workers will be required to learn Cantonese or Mandarin, Dr French thinks it probable that Indian customers will expect them to speak at least three or four of the subcontinent's main languages by 2050, due to rising middle class service expectations.

Call centre work is one of the top three industries in Britain's service-based economy.

Only McDonald's and the armed forces, neither of which requires a second language, employ more human resources.

Markets foretell second coming of corporate values

Eyes on the skies for profit's rebirth

Objectively Islamic finance under fire

By Enron Andersen in Offshore London

The Corporation is dead. Long live the corporation! Or so say bond markets.

Although the price of IOUs has never accurately predicted anything, except the mood of gamblers who bought and sold them, the first gloomy in years has lit up gloomy horizons like a star.

"It's a miracle," one broker said. "It seems that profit's being born again."

Since the capitalist faith was disestablished, British companies have relied on an interest-free funding model known as Sharity.

Under its terms, they can promise to repay donations, but the Corporate Liability Act stops them chewing up human resources to feed investors.

"Corporations used to be machines for turning suffering into money," said Fagin McKinsey, a consultant on mismanagement at Ethical Trust. "They weren't evil, of course; they just did what they were designed for."

Now they could soon be back in business. Because the new bonds are being issued offshore, investors will be free to maximise returns, as companies were once obliged to.

Analysts say there might even prove to be a trickle-down effect.

"It's like dogs and owners," said Kerry Katatonik, the popular psychatologist. "If one's self-interested, amoral and deceitful, the other tends to be too."

Demand for the auction is "somewhere north of stratospheric," dealers report, so successful bidders should be able to sell their purchases for more money.

"I never thought I'd call bonds exciting," said Milken Grossman, the former debt collection king. "But if they resurrect corporate values I'll eat my neighbours."

Global equities overview

World markets were stable today after a few gentle rises and equally gentle falls, with no companies crashing into oblivion or being eaten.

In London, the FTSE-100 share index was down 0.03 per cent.

On what remains of Wall Street, the Dow Jones rose 0.025 per cent, after what brokers described as a "routinely relaxed" day of trickle trading.

Nobody else cared much.

Hot stocks to handle with care

Shares in a-b glöbäl (UK), the mid-life career solutions provider, were seen slumping amid dustbins of negative sentiment.

The bottom fell out of a-b glöbäl's top line on Tuesday, when it revealed that clients had tired of its Creovation software before bored managers.

Lots of people sold their shares for lower prices, and analysts downgraded forecasts for the company's Brain-

bang upgrade. Whether any of these factoids were related remains to be seen.

In a bizarre twist, dealers declined to comment on how they knew why prices changed. But some lifted headlines off a news wire screen to close the explanatory feedback loop.

Saying there were more sellers than buyers would have made them sound thick.

Agencies

What would you do with a trillion pounds of public money?
Bail out your mates and mop up the mess you all made?
Or squander the lot on pipedreams like renewable energy?

You've been framed...

How news works The manipulation of media by propagandists is an old story, but it's getting more professional as commerce bankrupts journalism, robbing it of democratic value, writes **Raoul Djukanovic**

The government has a "right, if necessary, to lie," said a flunky in John F. Kennedy's war machine. He clearly believed his own hype, because this statement was also a lie, unless the journalists who reported it agreed.

Harold Evans, the former *Sunday Times* editor, was mocked for urging staff to ask themselves: "Why is this bastard lying to me?" Unfortunately, many still don't. Instead they churn out "*Flat Earth News*", recycling propaganda from the state and corporations. Since Nick Davies of the *Guardian* coined the term, churnalism's only got more brazen. It's what comes of downsizing newsrooms, and upsizing demands for constant space filling. Reporters lack the time they need to find stories, never mind research them, so they rely on pre-packaged content from the PR industry.

Its multi-billion-dollar influence is insidious. Obvious falsehoods are rare, if only because they'd be too blatant. Most distortions are more cunning, using omissions, seductive narratives and sound bites to inveigle their agendas into print. Whatever the facts revealed, what matters is how they're presented. PR flaks control access, monitor interviews, and coach clients on tailoring messages to journalists, from whose ranks they're often poached for higher salaries. Every story needs its angle, a hook for readers and lines to keep reeling them in. PR makes these products ready for market, so the media frequently use them as supplied.

That's not to say professionals have no standards. They just rely on what a British government propagandist called "the principle that you can report anything that a source says, regardless of its veracity, provided that you report accurately what the source has told you." What's true is truly irrelevant, provided all your rivals run it too.

Some once said the world wasn't round. To argue otherwise was heresy. But even the flat earth myth had mythical elements. Many Christian scholars disputed it, long before circumnavigation. Modern mass media are just as confusing. They're riddled with "flat earth" language, usually putting material "into context". The views that frame a story shape its message, and whoever constructs this frame dictates the news.

Long time ago, a Chinese philosopher was asked what he'd do if he had power. Thinking it over, he said he'd start by changing the names for things. If they're incorrect, he argued, speech does not sound reasonable, which stops things being done properly. And when things are not done properly, society's structure is harmed. Punishments don't fit crimes, and people don't know what to do. The philosopher's name was Confucius, and he'd seen how language defines what people can think.

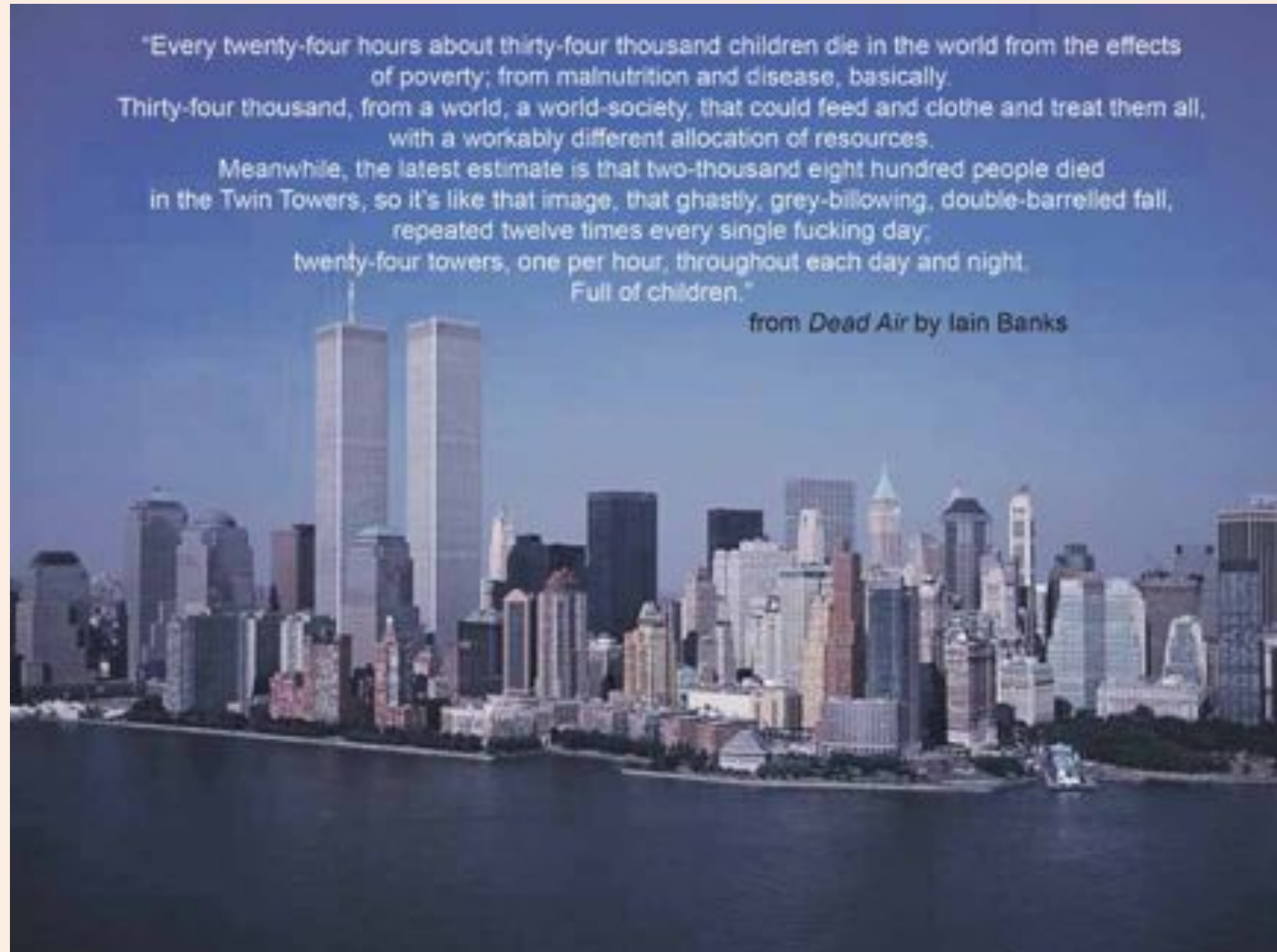
"He was talking about *Unspeak*," said a book of the same name by Steven Poole. This problem amounts to "an attempt to say something without saying it, without getting into an argument and so having to justify itself. At the same time, it tries to unspeak – in the sense of erasing, or silencing – any possible opposing point of view, by laying a claim right at the start to only one way of looking at a problem."

Terms like "pro-life" and "tax relief" are especially economical examples, and far less crude than the Newspeak of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. How do you argue against life, or for imposing unpopular burdens? But the longer-winded tropes of "public diplomacy" carry keys to their own undoing. "You don't have to be a specialist to resist the tide of Unspeak," Mr Poole said: "you just have to pay attention."

It wasn't hard to spot, for example, that "the international community" meant America's cohorts. Other embedded assumptions take more unpacking. The "free market" never existed. It was a construct with tariffs and terms. But because these were largely unspoken they were hard to convey. The "protectionist state-backed redistribution of wealth to shareholders at the expense of the wider world's well-being" wouldn't fly past sub-editors, regardless of accuracy.

Conceptual frames sneak into stories, immune from rules on sourcing or evidence. Whole slabs of this stuff are included as background, often plucked from the airwaves, or whoever pumpe it out there. Much comes down to priorities. Is it more biased to frame kick-back-fuelled arms sales as "Britain's aerospace industry received a massive boost", or to throw away the press release and cite a "massive dent to credibility on human rights"? Three guesses which angle won in busy newsrooms, including nominally crusading ones.

PR slime has smeared itself every-



'Newspapers generally lie because people lie to them'

where. "When I started on local papers," Nick Davies said, "if you wanted to write a story about a hospital you phoned the hospital manager or a doctor. Now you deal with a PR." Companies hire them, as do charities. Even terrorists have spokesmen these days.

The industry's so powerful that it's co-opted half its critics. When business couldn't call itself "sustainable", it tried "ethical" to lure young idealists. Now executives say they're "responsible", spending small amounts on Good Works to offset Bad Stuff they do to get rich, and almost as much on ads to hype their whitewashed images. Corporate law, wrote the lawyer Joel Bakan, "forbids any motivation for their actions, whether to assist workers, improve the environment, or help consumers." There's "no legal authority to pursue such goals as ends in themselves," only "to serve the corporation's own interests, which generally means to maximise the wealth of its shareholders. Corporate social responsibility is thus illegal – at least when it is genuine."

That doesn't stop its advocates talking it up. They even use exposés as teaching aids, including the definitive *Toxic Sludge is Good For You*, subtitled "Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry". The other speciality is front groups, set up to convince us coal isn't polluting, or that genetically modified crops could feed the world, as opposed to making money out of poor people, without other proven benefits. Then there's technology that's always round the corner, such as hydrogen cars, which deterred Americans from weaning themselves off oil. Like claims denying climate change, these distant dreams were promoted by fossil fuel companies, which had seen how Big Tobacco killed passive smoking laws. They even hired the same PR firm.

People have been conning each other for millennia, but it only became a business last century. The aim, said Edward Bernays, one of its founders, was the "engineering of consent" to manage society. Fearing revolution, he used "intelligent minorities to mould the mind of the masses" and keep them docile.

After selling World War I to American journalists, he devised a peacetime outlet for his tricks. Since he thought the interests of America and business were identical, he chose consumerism to marshal the herd. Influenced by his uncle, Sigmund Freud, he sought to stimulate inner yearnings, then sate them with consumer goods. But the creed he sold the public was subtly different. He said companies met desires that politicians couldn't reach, making capitalism the essence of democracy.

"Propaganda got to be a bad word because of the Germans," he explained. "So what I did is try to find some other words." The ones he settled on were "public relations". One of his biggest coups was getting women to smoke. The campaign began with a staged rally of "suffragettes", lighting up what Mr Bernays called "torches of freedom". Their pictures appeared in papers round the world, and an irrational cult of marketing was born, preying on people's emotions to send them shopping.

Less well advertised was Mr Bernays' role in another kind of coup. Having inspired corporations to adopt his techniques, and worked with most branches of the state, he was hired in the 1950s to demonise the government of Guatemala. This Central American nation was a banana republic, run for decades by dictators on behalf of the United Fruit Company. Then a colonel got elected democratically, promising to take back plantations and give them to peasants.

Although the new president wasn't a Communist, Mr Bernays cast him as a Soviet pawn. A fake news agency churned out stories about the threat on America's doorstep, and journalists took up the script. When CIA-trained rebels deposed the government, he called them freedom fighters, ignoring a string of massacres. To Mr Bernays, this was justified by the need to control people's aspirations. Warning that the "masses promised to become king", he favoured "regimenting the public mind every bit as much as an army regimented the bodies of its soldiers."

He was also regimenting his own mind, which like those of American planners was focused on business, and promoting benevolent myths that cloaked its actions. "We have about

50 per cent of the world's wealth but only 6.3 per cent of its population," cautioned a State Department official after World War II. "Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming." Or as another Cold Warrior put it: "If we can sell every useless article known to man in large quantities, we should be able to sell our very fine story in larger quantities."

These officials were just affirming the national interest, which was more about products than ideas, though both helped grease the wheels of commerce. Morality had little to do with it, no matter how much it's used to frame foreign policy, and to keep elite hands on its levers. This was a "business assault," said Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, the American academic. Using Bernays-like brainwashing, it "helped to create a major political shift that would culminate in the election of Ronald Reagan, the subsequent tax cuts benefiting the wealthy, the elimination of regulation, and the severe cutbacks in social services."

Swept along by prevailing currents, journalists tend to adopt official narratives, even if they personally disagree. Modern pressures of work only compounded this. Since Rupert Murdoch smashed print unions, computerising and commercialising newspapers, today's average hack writes several times as much as older peers. Even discounting new technology, that would be impossible without second-hand material from governments, companies and news agencies. Spokesmen verify stories, and attributed claims don't need checking. Unless editors intervene, or the powerful object, demonstrable untruths become "common knowledge".

Fighting back against framing ought to be easy. No propaganda works perfectly, as Victor Klemperer observed in Nazi Germany. "Whatever it is that people are determined to hide," he wrote, "be it only from others, or from themselves, even things they carry around unconsciously – language reveals all."

Unfortunately, this insight applies to everyone. "If you have been framed, the only response is to reframe," suggested George Lakoff, an American linguist. "But you can't do it in a sound bite unless an appropriate progressive language has been built up in advance." Of course, "progressive language" is kind of Unspeak. And the ideological battleground slopes the opposite way. Hence the fable of "liberal bias", spun by the same noise machines that skew news to suit big business and the government.

Like it or not, neutrality's elusive. Either journalists are agents of change, or they're someone's useful idiots. The least radical option is to try and be accurate, even if "the truth" is inexpressible. But how are people to know when they're being had? Websites abound with names like Source Watch, PR Watch and Corporate Watch, exposing vested interests and hidden agendas. And old news stories are full of forgotten facts, quotes and context. Searchable archives of these nuggets could help resurrect them as evidence for alternative narratives. Framing the context credibly is as vital as finding things out.

But questioning the status quo takes time. You can't subvert pieties in 10-second sound bites. And changing how you think requires an extended break from work and "productivity", which isn't exactly encouraged in the average newsroom. Non-career journalists, like bloggers, are no less constrained by the economics of time, unless they're financially secure. This in part explains the copy-and-paste nature of "independent" media. Freedom from corporate culture doesn't abolish groupthink, nor guarantee insight, entertainment or basic accuracy. So if churnalism's the norm wherever you turn, is reframing a solution, or part of the problem?

Words are weapons in a never-ending struggle for hearts and minds. But semantic reflexes form at an age when we're unequipped for mental self-defence. Rethinking our own worldviews means challenging the programming we got at school, from wider society and off TV. Attempting this takes time as well as effort.

For journalists, undoing framing has consequences, especially if "success" correlates to expressing the "dominant" framework. It's easier to say what people want to hear, and hard to spot that's what you're doing, never mind whose interests you might be serving. But how else can public lying be confronted? After Watergate, and a life listening to presidents spout fiction, the Washington Post's Ben Bradlee concluded: "newspapers generally lie because people lie to them." This was sometimes accidental, he thought, because truths were rarely told in their entirety. "The truth emerges, and that's how it's supposed to be in a democracy," he said. "That's still true, but seizing the pieces is getting to be harder and harder."

The 2003 invasion of Iraq proved his point. People knew "intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy", before leaked memos said so. When Britain published a dossier on Iraqi weapons, pundits panned the "worse than half-hearted" prose, "larded with the customary weasel words that Saddam 'may have' or 'almost certainly' does or 'will have' this or that", while offering "no compelling evidence". Yet none of these papers aired scepticism on the front page, at least not until the war was going ahead. Even those denounced by Tony Blair as "feral beasts" kept hand-wringing criticisms inside. None said he was committing "the supreme international crime" of aggression, nor called for his prosecution, or even analysed the obstacles. These didn't warrant a mention until actors staged a trial in a London theatre.

That came four years later, along with Alan Greenspan's claim to be "saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: the Iraq war is largely about oil." Whether that meant controlling it, or just helping companies cash in, the press didn't deem to report until activists scooped them. After all, Mr Blair had declared that "the oil conspiracy theory is honestly one of the most absurd when you analyse it." By the time he stood down, hundreds of thousands were dead, and the war had been rebranded several times. Only press stenography made this possible. When the weapons of mass non-existence weren't found, stories were framed with claims about democracy, about anything, in fact, except occupying Iraq.

The spin-doctors learned from Napoleon. You don't have to censor the news for effective PR. You just have to bury the truth till it no longer matters.

Raoul Djukanovic is the FT's why do they hate us correspondent

A lesson from America

From a 1987 talk by Ben Bradlee, the former Washington Post editor

"Now let me ask you to jump ahead some eight months to August 1964, still more than 20 years ago, to an issue of *Time* magazine.

"Through the darkness, from the West and South, the intruders boldly sped. There were at least six of them, Russian-designed Swatow gunboats armed with 37-mm and 28-mm guns, and P-4s. At 9.52 they opened fire on the destroyers with automatic weapons, and this time from as close as 2,000 yards. The night glowed early with the nightmarish glare of air-

dropped flares and boats' searchlights. Two of the enemy boats went down."

"That's the kind of vivid detail that the news magazines have made famous. I don't mean to single out *Time*. On the same date *Life* said almost the same thing and that week's issue of *Newsweek* had torpedoed whipping by, U.S. ships blazing out salvo after salvo of shells. It had a PT boat bursting into flames.

"There was only one trouble. There was no battle. There was not a single intruder, never mind six of them.

Never mind Russian-designed Swatow gunboats armed with 37-mm and 28-mm guns. They never opened fire. They never sank. They never fired torpedoes. They never were."

[...]

"In case the Vietnam years have blurred in your minds, or even disappeared from your screens, may I remind you that this so-called Battle of Tonkin Gulf was the sole basis of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which

was the entire justification for the United States' war against Vietnam. This non-event happened on August 4, 1964. President Johnson went on television that very night to ask the country to support a Congressional resolution. The resolution went to Congress the next day. Two days later it was approved unanimously by the House and 88-2 by the Senate.

"The facts behind this critically important resolution were quite simply wrong. Misinformation? Disinformation? Deceit? Whatever! Lies."

'You can report anything that a source says, regardless of its veracity, provided that you accurately what the source has told you.'

Immodest proposals

Lupus Lightning

Who do these people think they are? The post-democratic age is littered with flash mobs, summoned online to some quasi-autonomous gathering, and swiftly dispersed.

They call themselves activists, but they're passive and don't achieve anything. Instead they trade in slogans, mousing the language of protest but not its coherence. Calls for "alternative social and economic structures based on cooperation, ecological sustainability and grassroots democracy" sound like Communism remixed by Christopher Robin. And banners demanding a "worldwide alliance against globalisation" are absurd enough to make my generation's paradoxes sound rational. "Be realistic, demand the impossible," we once shouted, before we grew up.

It must be difficult for modern idealists, living in a fallen world. Without a credible alternative, all they have are their bellows of rage. Globalisation is as old as time, ebbing and flowing with changing technology. It's even given them platforms to bypass editors, and rant at each other all they like. The rest of us can happily tune out.

Occasionally, we're upbraided for not devoting more of our pages to their delusions. But what's newsworthy about protests that don't turn violent? And why should people care about the powerless? What's big about ideas that won't get acted on? If radicals want to be taken seriously, they should start with radical steps like being serious.

They say it's about corporations. But who provides the jobs that none of them want? Others claim the government is spineless, a poodle of masters in boardrooms and overseas. Then they attack it for denying them freedom to attack its spinelessness. Honestly, one of the things that puzzles me about even intelligent critics is their inability to grasp what 800 words means. It means, *inter alia*, that I simply do not have space for endless discussions of why wastes of space are a waste of time.

Whichever crisis we're talking about, you don't have to be a socialist to find things grotesque. From food, water and energy shortages to surfeits of poverty and disease, the puzzle isn't "what is to be done?" it's "who is to do it and how?"

In other words, do you change things by pissing outside the tent and making a stink, or by getting real and joining the party of business? It's no use knowing why things suck unless you also know insiders who get things done. Men of goodwill and good sense, even humble thunderers like me.

I've no time for the closed-minded, or determinists who think they see the future. If they really did, they'd be billionaires and I'd be listening to them. Let me show you why these know-it-alls aren't worth bothering with.

"Activism," one of them writes, "is not a journey to the corner store; it is a plunge into the dark." For the slow among you, this means there's no getting there. And where's the sense in that? History, this woman continues, "is like weather, not like checkers. A game of checkers ends. The weather never does." At the end of a game, it's easy to tot up the score. Someone wins and someone loses and it's time to get on with something else.

What better example is there than the war in Iraq? Millions of people opposed it before the first bombs fell on live TV. But when it started dragging on like Vietnam, where were the crowds? They'd learned the obvious lesson: nothing changes. I know it's fashionable nowadays to quote Eastern wisdom, which teaches the exact opposite, but this is in itself the heart of the problem. What could be more disempowering than accepting fate? Yet that's exactly what these activists propose: "Next time, fail better." At least when I was young we found this depressing.

Protesters should stop opposing things and start supporting them. It was all very well for Civil Rights types to oppose segregation, but once black Americans got the vote, what did they want? The end of racism? Or the wealth, power and status of white Anglo-Saxons? Extremist views like that got just short shrift. You can force change, of sorts, but only when the Establishment's ready. Even then you have to fight it all the way to stop the results being diluted. Is a lifetime of struggle really worth it, just to keep a vibe alive that sensible people ditched when they got proper jobs?

If these activists meant what they said, they'd drop out completely. Or start serious trouble, like a rolling barrage of protests with simple demands. Maybe even storm a few newsrooms. Thankfully, Britons aren't Latins. At worst, we get a few thousand day-trippers, thinking they're subversive because they share a couple of joints on London streets. If you organise something bigger, I will come. But for now, I've got important people to talk to.

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News as if people mattered

Philippa Columb

Journalists don't decide what would be newsworthy. That would be editorialising, and reporters aren't in the business of doing that. We're only following orders imposed by events.

It hasn't escaped our notice, of course, that lines between reporting and comment are blurry. The Internet has challenged us, forcing old pros to evolve or lose their jobs. Fewer of us shoulder more burdens than ever, but the basics of our craft remain unchanged. In the hope of defending these values, if not their value, I'd like to give readers some insight into the trade.

Its quest is still to write a first draft of history, not question where that comes from like academics. We're trying to get people's attention, not send them to sleep. "News," to quote an archetypal hack, "is what a chap who doesn't care much about anything wants to read. And it's only news until he's read it. After that it's dead."

All day, we scurry from inbox to webcast, downloading revelations like human speakwrits. But how to mine the gems from data overload? That's where news judgement comes in.

Before filing anything, we have to answer the W questions. Who said or did what, where and when, and to whom? These are the essence of stories, which we don't incidentally make up. We prove their authenticity by using quotes, ideally from VIPs, and preferably sexed-up to boot.

"Make it sing," the old-school teachers said, and never forget to show instead of tell. "There are no facts," they told us, "only sources."

In these days of short attention spans, we can't get too bogged down in details. We repeat what we heard, and do our best to make it comprehensible.

When politicians announce something, we help you understand what they're trying to say. No matter how communicative our leaders, they can't speak with journalistic detachment. Our job is to clarify what quotes mean, by explaining the assumptions behind them.

That doesn't mean exposing people for the sake of it. We enquire on the public's behalf, not to denigrate or undermine authority. If someone else in authority does that, we'll report it. We're trying wherever possible to inform. But above all, we're trying to stay neutral.

Objective journalism checks its facts, and gets their meaning right. It stands the test of time as stuff unfolds. Like someone wiser than me said: "When the facts change, I change my mind." We're constantly updating stories to ensure they reflect the views of reliable sources.

But who are they exactly? And why are they allowed to make the news? Why, they're people who change things, people with power, like the government, big business and the army. And that's why they're reliable, because they're the ones making history. In a democracy, journalists tell you what these people say they're doing. That's balanced with views from opposing parties, handicapped by their power to shape events.

While it's wrong to say this makes us one-way mouthpieces, more nuanced critique demands an answer. The spotlight doesn't always linger where it might, as resource-poor, time-rich cousins realise. To cite an esteemed colleague, "there's nothing worse than the dripping sore of a whining intellectual who complains." But since journalists are seekers after truth, I'd like to propose some tweaks to codes of conduct.

Firstly, there's no need to duplicate effort. Agencies feed us rolling events and pronouncements. Instead of re-writing their copy, we could print it as

bullet points. That would cover most W questions, leaving us to ponder complex ones, like why and how.

If it bleeds, it leads, we say. But our focus on what goes bang neglects what it did, or how to prevent it. In trying times, the process is the story, not the spectacle, whether in the newsroom or elsewhere. Perhaps if we analysed how wars start, there might yet be one we could stop.

We could also stop pretending to compete. Copying each other is boring. Why not collaborate more? It's unfair to say our scoops are bogus, just

If we really don't have a clue, let's cheat and steal. 'Take it off TV,' they taught us in training. Nowadays the treasure trove's online. All we need do is raid our archives, and resurrect the novelties we buried.

because they're planted by vested interests. But if reporters worked together on investigations, we might find a few more things out.

How would we all make a living though? Well, frankly few of us do now. And there's no such thing in journalism as a free lunch. But if the fortunate ride other people's waves, then what are we still being paid for? Running tight ships towards an iceberg?

Lastly, we could value humans equally, even if they don't have titles. We talk about public interest, but who really

knows what that is? Maybe we could ask more people. I know it sounds passive, but what about the ones whom things are done to, instead of those who do the doing, and frame our stories?

Blogbots show many people's views are tiresome. Not everyone's a news-maker, it's true, but democracies are meant to serve the public. Right now they make the rules that we endorse. If journalists are a Fourth Estate, shouldn't they be tribunes of people power?

None of this would undermine our ethics. We've always sought to comfort the afflicted. And afflicting the comfortable comes naturally, even if the two don't neatly divide.

At the very least, we ought to stick to facts. Everyone has an agenda, even us. And unless we serve our consciences, those who aren't on the side of the angels exploit our good faith. In the name of objective reporting, we relay their words. Yet when we challenge them with facts, they call us biased. Whatever we choose we lose, so let's choose wisely. It's time to remember journalists matter too.

Since "correspondents" are sources now, why not ask what they think, not what we think they ought to? If we really don't have a clue, let's cheat and steal. "Take it off TV," they taught us in training. Nowadays the treasure trove's online. All we need to do is raid our archives, and resurrect the novelties we buried there.

That's how we'll see off cyberpunks, and their Orwellian visions of stories falling "upon the facts like soft snow, blurring the outline and covering up all the details."

If we keep raising our game, the future's bright. However shrill our critics get, they don't adhere to standards. Citizen journalists unite; you've nothing to lose but your illusions.

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Something for the Weekend?

Edgar Soufflé The Slow Lane

I have a very simple yardstick for ranking my friends. It owes nothing to their appearance, their wallets or how useful I find their contacts. It doesn't count letters after their name or the number of times I've slept with them. Nor am I really bothered if they pamper themselves with products or simply smell rotten.

Focusing on the very basics, it starts by sampling the way people heat their homes. Commuting as I do between estates in Switzerland, Sweden and Shepherd's Bush, I am often forced to rely on the kindness of peasants. And there are only so many onion-fired Dutch ovens a man can bed down in without choking.

But as with much of life, if you nail the simpler, smaller things, then the rest tends to fall into place. This is particularly true of innkeepers, and how they deal with converting meagre stocks of combustibles into comfort. My partner Hagar has long been toying

If a friend can warm a cesspit to my standards, I'll overlook the rest. If they can cook as well, it's practically guaranteed to mark the start of a lifelong, rewarding relationship.

with the notion of launching a scandalzine called *Hot Or Bot?* Constantly updated, it would rate hostellers by the methane quotient of their biofuels.

"If you have to hold your nose before the food's served, then you might as well forget about the rest," Hagar is fond of saying.

I prefer to call it the "can't be arsed" factor. Having applied Hagar's hospitality measure for several years now, I can vouch for the unbridled awfulness of most auberges, which is why I no longer use them. Instead I rely on friends, carefully cultivated at daily intervals along the major arteries of Western Europe.

If a friend can warm a cesspit to my standards, I'll overlook the rest. If they can cook as well, then it's practically guaranteed to mark the start of a lifelong, rewarding relationship. At least that's how I see it.

Yet I wasn't feeling the love last Monday in Aachen. After a full day's drive across Flanders, I'd been hoping to reach the Rhineland retreat I so adore. But an axle broke and repairing it cost our party crucial hours, so that glass of delicate Riesling would have to wait. Instead of the comforts of Gerd's humane touch, I was forced to seek solace with his cousin, though I did give brief consideration to some semi-tempting offers in a tavern.

I perhaps should have been concerned when I saw the rocket stove. To the untrained eye, these Moorish earthen kilns look rather sweet, the sort of thing you'd proudly install in servants' quarters, and possibly even show visitors. They're a common sight in cob, straw-bale, and other natural buildings. But I'd never come across one in the city.

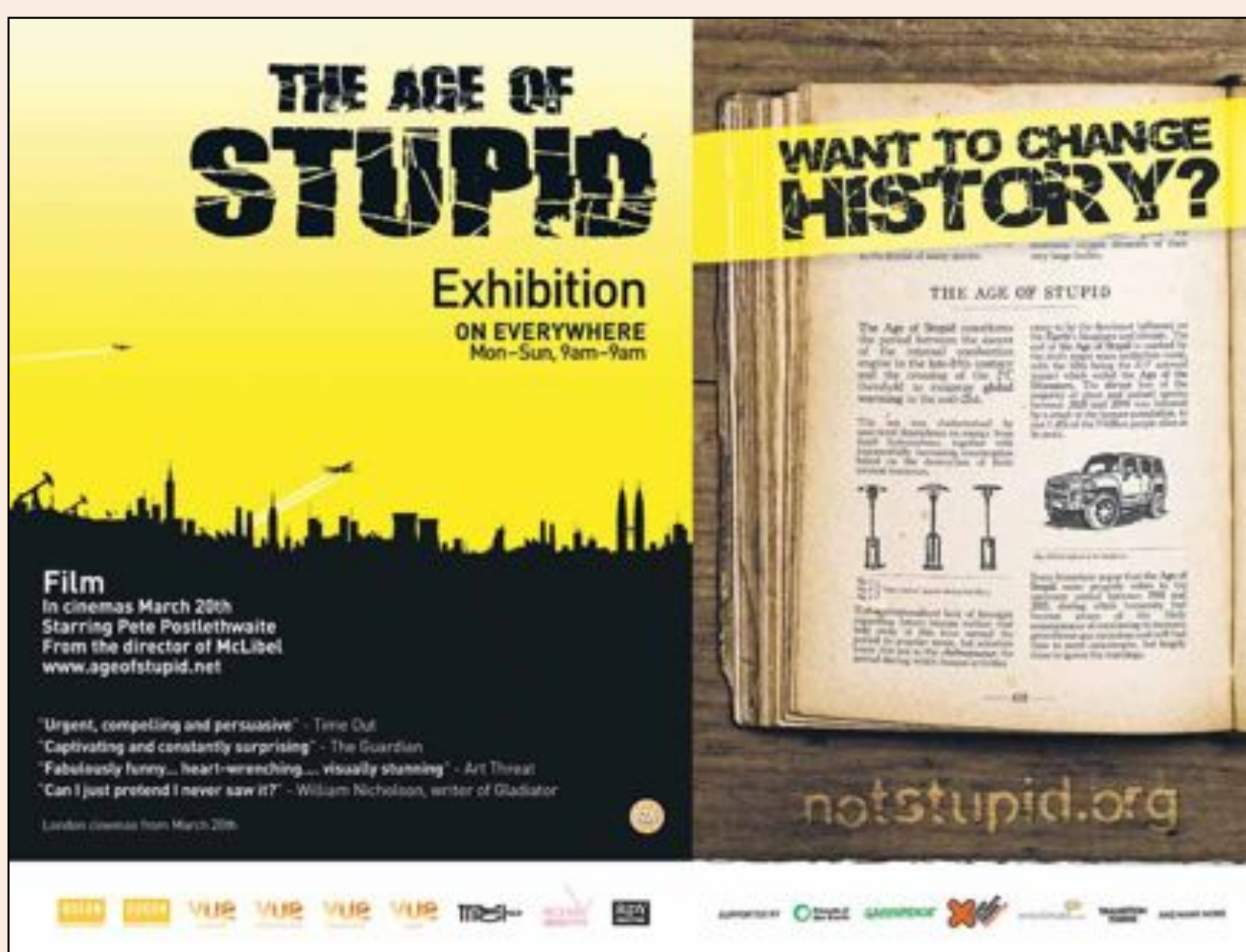
Or so I thought. Then I remembered all those conference trips I took to South Korea, in the days when such jollies were affordable. Of course, back in the 90s, even the poor hadn't heard of rocket stoves. But outside Seoul, from the little I saw of these people in the papers, they knocked up something similar underfloor, sealing the boards with varnish and burning coke bricks. Snug as, until the varnish cracks, and you wake up dead with your house-mates from noxious fumes.

Now I'm not suggesting stove designs are the problem. Any extended floor can spring a leak, just like those flueboards. The trouble seems to be the homemade construction, and the general demise of building standards. The only real defence is a carbon monoxide detector, which few of the lower orders can afford.

But I digress. To cut a long story short, I was fortunate to waken while still hallucinating, and to make my escape without the horror of confronting my host. It would be churlish of me to reveal just how low I ranked the experience, though I will be listing people to avoid in next week's column.

Suffice to say that Gerd's cousin Fritz won't be enjoying my company again.

Edgar Soufflé edits *Proctoscope*, an e-zine on fashion fundamentals



Dear Floozy

AGONY AND ADVICE

Help! I'm undervalued and overrated

Help! I'm suffering from performance anxiety.

Like my models, I used to please all comers, however demanding. If they wanted more, I'd just keep rising. All it took was a tweak of the digits.

Now we've all gone wobbly and I don't know what to tell people. My partners say don't worry; they'll get things refiled soon. Yet it feels like I'm being palmed off.

My quants are freshly pumped, but the punters have stopped drooling. I'm reduced to begging mandarins for relief. Is it because I'm a banker?

Z, male, 34

FLOOZY'S ANSWER

What's so bad about not getting what you want, Z? Most of the world seems to survive, after a fashion.

It sounds like you've lost your sense of worth, which is hardly surprising if you measure it in bonus cheques. But the trouble starts with believing your own hype.

Your analysis isn't just flawed; it's the source of your woes. Is the doubter not the same as the doubt? Think about it, seriously. Then forget about images and charts, and all the other symbols and words you use to separate from life.

Instead of feeling sorry for yourself, why not meditate? Penetrate reality beyond illusions. Your lust for buying and selling just fuels conflict, especially the one behind your eyes. What makes you

think exchanges trade joy?

Men used to sell themselves as aggressive. Then came metrosexual Gillette jawlines.

We're all adverts now, which means we learn what people want, then flog them fakes. And therein lies the rub and tug: you long to master commodities, but you've become one.

Since you're always hunting for bargains, your assets are almost certainly overvalued. You're worried about how to be wanted, rather than sharing. Try giving things away, without asking what you're getting. If your partners are worth what they think, they'll understand.

If they don't, you could always give up the Game and join a monastery. Now you've started scrounging handouts, you're halfway there.

YOUR ADVICE

Fuck you

As always, I blame Descartes. He made this quantitative stuff popular. When we start trying to justify things with numbers, it always comes back to more, and we all feel inadequate. Why not just be good to people, starting with you? **Risk analyst, female, 43**

Fuck that

Get over yourself, dude. All guys get stuck with creative angst. If you can't afford to get inseminated, why not find a few less material outlets for your urges? **Trader, male, 29**

Fuck it

Life is an illusion; choose a nice one. **Hipster, male, 62**

UNBURDEN YOURSELF

Floozy Betterway, our associate agony editor, discusses workplace problems online, where readers can have their say too: ft2020.com/dearfloozy

To seek Floozy's guidance, write to: floozy.betterway@ft2020.com

Confidential emails may be published.

The next problem

I hate myself and want to die. My co-workers act all happy, but they aren't. I hate them too and want to kill them. But I need help. I can't make it on my own. How do I off my boss without getting fired?

Male, 27, in human resources

TODAY ONLINE
Chat live all day about classic problems from the past 15 years.

Common sense puts 'Age of Stupid' in history books

Lunch with the FT: When Britain was 'nine meals from anarchy', Franny Armstrong was hungry. Now she's the world's favourite brain candy, but she still has the stomach for Septuma Nosebag.

The last star to claim he was bigger than Jesus wound up shot outside his home on Central Park West. Franny Armstrong has no such fears. She has the vital stats to prove it.

More people have watched her breakthrough blockbuster than any other movie in history. Forget *Star Wars*, *Titanic*, or *Gone with the Wind*. Even *Casablanca* and *It's a Wonderful Life*. The most popular film of all time starts with an insult, makes most people wince and feels like being kicked in the balls with a hug.

The Age of Stupid isn't easy viewing, yet it's awfully compelling. The Ministry of Vice and Virtue says it's now been seen by half the world's population. That's a billion more than supposedly sat through *The Jesus Film*. So what's it like to topple Our Lord and Saviour?

"Don't be silly," says Ms Armstrong, who doesn't seem to be, or to think we are, despite her choice of title. "Everyone starred in *The Age of Stupid* really. And if we hadn't felt inspired to act to save ourselves, the film would have stifled, along with most of us living on the planet."

'What state of mind were we in, to face extinction and simply shrug it off?'

The Age of Stupid

For such a global player, she doesn't have much of a mansion. She doesn't even do lunch, at least not formally. I've come to Thinker's Bubble, the commune she founded in Cornwall, where a couple of dozen friends grow all their own food. A plate of it has just arrived in front of me, and I'm surprised to see it looks rather appetising. Nary a whiff of Quorn to be seen, and all whipped up lovingly by autonomous, non-hierarchical kitchen hands.

Not at all what we pictured back in 2000, when fuel protesters left us "nine meals from anarchy," and people like Ms Armstrong warned: "our food system doesn't just depend on oil for transport, there's all the chemicals we need for intensive farming."

So, a prophet as well as a Messiah, and a very naughty girl too, just like Monty Python's Brian.

"Why are you obsessed with pinning this story on me?" she protests. "The film had 228 investors, 104 crew and 1,000 people working on the premiere, and they all did it because they shared a common vision."

These daring dreams of Utopia started early. Ms Armstrong's first break came with a no-budget hacktivist classic, *McLibel*, which took 10 years to get a BBC screening, and taught her how to find herself an audience. Begun in 1995, it followed a postman and a gardener's efforts to resist humiliation by McDonald's. Amazingly, they won, after the longest case in English legal history, and the biggest corporate PR disaster ever. Even before Ms Armstrong found fame, around 30 million people watched it.

"Helen and Dave proved that ordinary people



Franny Armstrong: Bigger than Jesus

Spanner

and common sense can win against impossible odds," she says. "And we proved independent filmmakers can fight through all the waffle on TV to get a radical story right into the mainstream."

For *The Age of Stupid*, her company, Spanner Films, teamed up with an Oscar-winner called Passion Pictures. Together they raised almost half a million from some ordinary people, who bought £500 stakes. Then, in a typically rebellious gesture, they published all their "crowdfunding" contracts online, so others could copy them. Along with the crew, who worked for a pittance, all the investors got a cut of the film's profits. Like most, Ms Armstrong's blown her share on further campaigning.

"What state of mind were we in, to face extinction and simply shrug it off?" *The Age of Stupid* asked, via an archivist played by Pete Postlethwaite, who looked back on the end of everything from a tower in the Arctic. When it launched in 2009, trickling into cinemas week by week, this genre-bending futuredoc seemed revolutionary. Yet to modern eyes, it sounds like

the 4-D scrawlboxes our kids paste over their MyWorldWebCams.

Perhaps it was that down-home accessibility that made it such a hit. Considering the original aim, to mobilise hundreds of millions to demand carbon rationing, it was surprisingly unpreachy. The overall effect was touching, like

Thinker's Bubble Nr. Goonhavern, Cornwall

2 x veggie stew **free**
2 x fresh apple juice **free**
1 x rocks **£20**
1 x satellite truck **£1,699**

Total (with fuel) **£2,019**

group therapy, mediated by an octogenarian Alpine guide, whose smile embodied Ms. Armstrong's bleak optimism. "We knew how to profit, but not to protect," the old man lamented. You couldn't help but want to prove him wrong.

The movie surfed across the Niger Delta, through the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, to the launch of an Indian EasyJet, the travails of an English wind-farmer and the mountaineer's evaporating glaciers. Our companions were humble nobodies, flawed like us, whose lives re-

'We proved independent filmmakers can fight through all the waffle on TV to get a radical story right into the mainstream.'

vealed modernity's subtle twistedness.

In one of the darker scenes of happiness, a young Iraqi refugee pretended to be a journalist. Standing on a slagheap above Jordan, where she and her brother hawked salvaged shoes, this pre-teen princess of Babylon beamed at the camera. "This is Al Jazeera," she said. "Call our studio on 007945. Look, this is Al Jazeera. You can win four Hummers and four SUVs."

Towards the end of the show, a less flamboyant reporter gave it us straight. "The very fact that the crisis is taking place within our generation, that it's happening right now, means that we are tremendously powerful," he reminded people. "So this position of despair and I can't do anything and there's no point is completely illogical, it's exactly the opposite."

How liberating. Like Ms Armstrong says, we were the stars, which was why we all kept lapping up the limelight. So wasn't she bitter about not winning an Oscar herself?

"Do I sound like someone who craves Establishment plaudits," she asks, a touch of prickliness fizzing beneath her grin. "I wouldn't have turned it down, of course, though I obviously wouldn't have flown there to accept. But I'm happy to say the film could speak for itself."

So why did she give it such a horrible title? Actually, she didn't. The words came from an American who worked for Shell in the Gulf of Mexico. "In my opinion," declared Alvin Duverny III, "our use or misuse of resources the last 100 years or so, I'd probably rename this age something like *The Age of Ignorance*, *The Age of Stupid*." What would Ms Armstrong call it now, having shown us another world was possible? "You're really fishing for sound bites, aren't you?" she says, before scurrying off to consult the rest of her collective. "Look," she concludes on her return, "the best we managed to come up with was *The Age of Sense*. But you can call it whatever you want if you keep it alive."

I feel enlightened and empowered all at once. Perhaps it's time I went and saw her film.

Septuma Nosebag is the FT's arts and advertisement editor

Suits who, sir?

By Fraenum Byers

The number of British newspapers being edited by empty suits is still growing, according to a study released today.

Both Fox International and Murdoch Disney, who between them own all the major British content providers, are hiring more and more suits without finding it necessary to find people to fill them.

Since the rollout of computer checkers cut proofreading, and now that government-backed fact supply agencies have obviated the need for reporters to leave their desks, news corporations often see human editors as a needless expense.

Allan Fusbudget, the retired *Guardian* editor, is ambivalent. "There's less risk of editorial interference if there's nobody inside the editor's suit," he said.

"But without a guiding hand to flesh out the cuff, I think some reporters might struggle to retain their objectivity."

Meese Hackett, the Murdoch Disney spokesperson, denied standards were slipping. "We've always hired whoever's best suited," it said.

Both Murdoch and Fox operate a strict equal

opportunities policy, with equal numbers of male and female outfits, and no discrimination on grounds of necktie garishness, or shoulder-pad extension.

Several firms say efficiency improved after "cutting out the middleman" between press offices and the people who transcribe their releases. "There's a lot less meddling now," said Lydia Quinone, the deputy chief copytaster on the *Independent's* lifestyle rewrite supplement.

"Before, there was no guarantee that what went out in the paper would resemble what I'd written. But with the Armani pinstripe in charge, there's no problem."

Employers report additional benefits. Empty suits generate no dry-cleaning bills to expense, and they can't impose Byzantine filing systems on staff. Only a few of the more exclusive made-to-measure types take drugs.

"It's remarkable how smoothly suits operate with nothing inside," Ms Quinone said. "I'll be surprised if it doesn't catch on in other professions."

Advertisement agencies are already showing interest. Frogmorton Cullups of New York now specifies "Empties welcome" on its pre-application invites.

Reporters hit high on trust scale

By Tabitha Lorum

Journalists are among the most trusting people in British society, a government survey has found.

A poll by the National Credulity Office placed journalists in third place, behind financiers and executives, on a scale measuring density of belief in official announcements.

"The high rates of trust by journalists are anomalous in some ways," said Murdoch McMunchausen, the NCO's chief pollster.

"We'd expected a large degree of faith from

the business and finance communities because they expect to get what they pay for, but reporters are often thought of as being sort of cynical."

Besides announcements by government officials and spokespersons, journalists also tend to trust money, alcohol and recreational drugs, the survey found. "It's a wonderful profession," Mr Munchausen said, "but our study suggests it's full of lying, cheating narcissists and addicts."

News editors and high-ranking military personnel tied for fourth place, while nurses, teachers and the unemployed were ranked near the bottom.



We'll buy this stuff and knock it down







You can't put all your energy in one barrel, but we can

Bestsellers not always best, bestseller says

Self-published writer slams publishers for hyping rivals

Industry attacks a cynical attempt at self-promotion

By Gresham Pillory,
Syndicated Supplements Editor

The author of a bestselling new book stands accused of elitism, hypocrisy, literary fascism, crimes against publishing and harming the environment by wasting precious trees.

Police!!! And Other Amazing Titles makes the controversial argument that books which sell well are not necessarily the best or the most rewarding.

The self-published author, Robin Harrolds, cites several forgotten bestsellers of previous decades, including Robert W Chambers, Marie Corelli, Irving Shaw, Geoffrey Archer, Steven King, and Don Brown.

He also notes examples of writers, not all of them journalists, who were unappreciated in their own time but made considerable profits for publishers after their deaths.

At the core of Mr Harrolds' thesis

lies the claim that "bestsellers" do not usually attain their status because of spontaneous public enthusiasm, but because they are deliberately promoted as such.

Despite assurances by mainstream publishers that quality is one of their sole criteria for accepting manuscripts, Mr Harrolds also contends that "bestseller" hype has narrowed the market for work that some might consider more meritorious.

Publishers are unimpressed. "If he thinks the public are that stupid, it beats me why he pandered to their ignorance by writing a bestseller himself," said Willoughby Thwick of Fox-Macdonald Fun and Literature.

"This book reeks of sour grapes," said Miranda Clenchwater, a marketing director at Sellers, Simpel and Krapp, who launched the 182-volume *God's Fighting Teenagers* series.

"The author couldn't produce a bestseller on his own, so he's sleazed his way up the rankings on the backs of genuinely bestselling writers."

Mr Harrolds' book has sold over three million copies, most of them online, renewing suggestions from publishers that the Internet undermines literacy.

Do accidents hurt less than atrocities? An expert says yes

Suffering hurts more if we watch it, researcher finds

By Abbas Ali Batman,
Multimedia Editor

Collateral detriments from Allied peacekeeping forces may really cause less pain than deaths and injuries from terrorist violence, according to a newly published book.

Dr Bradley Ichneumon's *It Only Hurts If You Keep Mentioning It: Grief, Pain and Democracy in the Media Age* says reporting of troop deaths and civilian personnel disintegration phenomena has exercised a "democratising influence" on the quality and quantity of grief and agony being experienced.

"Basically, I start from the premise that deaths and other fatalities, from whatever cause, which are covered in the media will provoke an emotional reaction in the particular advertising target group which that media reaches," Dr Ichneumon explained at a book-signing lunch to launch his research.

"Therefore, besides the 'direct pain' of the soldier or potential terrorist who is engaged in being detrimented, there

is an additional 'indirect pain' for the audience which hears about it," he said.

However, since troop deaths are generally reported on individually, while externalised civilian dismemberments are seen as estimates, the "indirect pain" of the media audiences is correspondingly less in the case of civilians, the book argues.

"More and more people feeling less and less - this is the essence of pain attenuation through democratic media," Dr Ichneumon said.

"Of course, the tribal structure of Muslim society and its emphasis on the extended family rather than the individual means that direct pain and grief are less individual-fragmentalised," he stressed.

"But the mass media in the Muslim world is far less advanced, so news of a given death, and the resultant indirect pain and grief, end up reaching far fewer people, even when their news organisations aren't bombed."

Andrew Marr, the former BBC director general, said Dr Ichneumon's book was "an invaluable contribution to journalistic self-esteem".

Allan Fusbudget, the retired *Guardian* editor, called it "timely, provocative and superbly formatted."

Three millennia on, epic gets the sequel we always deserved

By Senna Trimalchionis

Homer's *Iliad*, the basis for the classic film *Troy*, is to get a new sequel an estimated 2800 years after the original and more than 2000 years after the last recognised previous followup.

Rambo Pulex, the former advertising executive, authored his oeuvre with the help of Oedipus Peplum, the Classical Greek expert.

The pair began working on the book four years ago after a viewing of the film *Troy* inspired Mr Pulex to seek out Homer's original works in online digest form.

"As soon as I came across Dippy [Peplum]'s summary on *Wikipedia*, I was hooked," said Mr Pulex. "When I found out the original Homer was supposedly blind, it was like I heard a voice from God saying 'Write this thing'. I have to wear contact lenses myself."

Homer's poem has two official sequels, the *Odysey* by Homer himself and the *Aeneid* by the Roman writer Virgil.

Pulex and Peplum say they've "gone back to basics" to stay faithful to the spirit of Homer's original *Troy* tie-in, which was called the *Iliad* after the city's alternative name of Ilium.

However, they have also tried to make the story more digestible for a modern audience by casting it in up-to-date English prose.

"We thought doing the whole thing in dactylic hexameters would just leave modern readers twiddling their fingers," said Mr Peplum, who speaks from experience.

The as yet untitled epic will be published in the autumn, with multimedia supplements to follow. Film and playpod rights have already been sold for an undisclosed sum.

Havana 2020

Rogue state vaults back

Countdown to Cuba's coming-out party: Danger abandoned the Olympics when the Cold War ended, finds **Our Man in Havana**

In the old days it was Us vs Them. Forehead veins at the Pentagon would pop at the CCCP emblem on a winning gymnast's rippling chest, as the hammer and sickle rose on the Red Flag.

Athletes had the 1,000-yard stare of clean sporting enmity, and better mean it, or they would be snatched from a Gorky street and end up in some Arctic Circle labour camp.

Now it's all high-fives, hair dye, hip-hop, earrings and million-dollar modelling contracts. And the gulag has been leased to a major corporation for its outsourced IT division.

Even Cuba isn't immune, despite half a century of indolence. Since his election, President Junior Chavez has shut down the Guantanamo War Crimes Park, banned waterboarding in the Bay of Pigs, and turned the twin resorts into corporate retreats. For this summer's Olympics, they'll welcome sponsors, and almost all of their excesses. The only fashion *faux pas* will be jumpsuits.

In the old days, the big squads came to the Games with beefy men in tinted glasses and ersatz tweed jackets who packed heat to prevent politically embarrassing defections.

They would stick a needle in a gymnast's dissident arm and push his limp body into the laundry hamper without thinking twice.

It was either that or let Anatoly make a contact that would lead months later to Checkpoint Charlie, a worker's cap disguise and a wobbly bicycle ride through the klieg lights to freedom.

UNCLE SAM RULES, OK?

Then there was the other side, and full spectrum dominance.

Most sports have finish lines to cross, goals to score, targets to hit, times to beat. Some go head-to-head, in the ring, on the mat. This can create drama.

Olympic gymnastics has judges from many countries, children posing as adults and a mystifying set of arbitrary rules. This can breed suspicion.

When gold, silver and bronze medals are separated by two-tenths of a smidgen of a point, can sleep be far off for most observers?

Richard Burton had to get stinko for weeks, lose his sad job and viciously assault a mild-mannered grocer

But suddenly, an unknown athlete from a Rogue State mounts the pommel horse and executes an exquisite Axis of Evil.

He is rewarded by perfect 10 scores from two judges, whose names are immediately noted by members of the Homeland Security Agency, seated unobtrusively among the spectators.

The mystery man, who may be the son of a lowly blacksmith or may be the Incredible Hulk, performs an effortless Arc of Crisis, earning another bunch of amazed 10's.

The senior Homeland agent wastes no time.

Bustling down the bleachers, he speaks to headquarters through his shirt cuff. Enemy non-combatants identified. Code Red.

From now on, all the crowd can do is

wait, and watch in awe...

COMBATting WMD

The menace of Winning by Mass Doping was unleashed on an unsuspecting West by East Germany in the 1970s. Its WMD program went on to reap records that still stand today.

The Free World fought back, buying hundreds of tiny microphones in the bowls of "nutritional supplements" that East German superheroes crunched by the handful at every big meet.

But it was not enough. Richard Burton had to get stinko for weeks, lose his sad job and viciously assault a mild-mannered grocer just to get inside East Germany to crack their secret.

A concealment strategy that forced the entire population to wear steel-rimmed spectacles and identical black leather jackets meant that many a brave agent never came back in from the cold. "It was like swatting flies," retired WMD operative Bernard De-ranged reminisced recently.

Today, we are not limited to "swatting flies." We use National Technical Means to fight WMD: three armoured divisions, a couple of nuclear aircraft-carrier battle groups, a strategic bomber wing and it's all over in five years or so. The Rogue State gymnast is in trouble. His armpits may look bald to an untrained eye. But after tests he is stripped of gold for failure to apply sufficient underarm hair remover.

Asked if scientists had found minute traces of banned human hair on the suspect or his deodorant stick, Homeland Security Man narrowed his eyes and spoke through clenched teeth.

"Absence of evidence isn't evidence of absence", he hissed.

Foreign spoilsports undermine spirit of the Games

By Juan Franco Salazar
in Lausanne

Rows have erupted in Cuba after Britain's decision to field a single athlete for all events at the Havana Olympics.

Many poorer countries are objecting to the British team's plans, despite the International Olympic Committee's formal acceptance of the consensual incentivisation package offered by the Ministry of Sport, Media and Popular Enlightenment.

Although Russia, China and California have all fielded cloned champions before, the British trademarked Olympathlete, Eugene Truman, is the first to have been specifically bred for sport, and the only competitor ever to enter all disciplines.

Mr Truman, dubbed the Trumanator by journalists, was designed and built by geneticists after feasibility studies found it would be cheaper than investing in the facilities and personnel required to train non-enhanced persons.

In a tradition dating from the recession of 2008, the Trumanator has been designed to excel in all the sports where Britons came first at the last Olympics. At worst, he is expected to take the gold medals for darts, rowing, figure skating and the ladies' marathon.

The sports minister, Auric Gluteous, said the Trumanator was "a genuine British athlete", not a grotesque amalgam cobbled together for political purposes, like the Games.

England crash out

You think it's all over? So did we, until they pitched

Captain Phantastic caught napping with Convolutulus

By Kuper Braun in
Mönchengladbach

The fire of England's championship hopes collapsed last night in a quagmire of will-o'-the-wisps as Pilbrow's plucky side disintegrated in the face of an uncooperative opposition.

Starting down on aggregate with three in the basket, England knew they had to pull out all the stops to stretch out the cliffhanger for hopes of a new

dawn at the eleventh hour. Drubbed by continental nightshade, the odds were tall.

The match began badly with Latherwell's bustle from the greenstick end, which fell right in front of Bufonides for a cropstring into the halberdiers.

Murdwick and Kettelwart tried staggering the gumption for a lemon in the early twenty-seventh, but Urticaria's astonishing middlebrow cadged an easy kibosh and from then on the turf was nearly all one way.

England rallied microscopically towards the half-end, when Pilbrow cobbled a topspun wazzoock straight into the dipside, but almost as soon as play resumed he was savaged by Epiphenomena and spent the next period cloughing it on the bench.

From that point forward, it was all downhill in an uphill struggle to dig England out of the hole.

Bogler's finicking on the rightward gusset was entirely impermeable, and at one point came perilously close to pinksheet. Then the fat ladies started singing.

Even now, the full consequences may not yet have drawn their bowstring to the teeth.

Given this latest guttering and the massively dubious Flibbertigibbet, Pilbrow's spirited performance may not be enough to save him. He and his team must now face the wrath of those who feel that they would have done better watching for ratholes than strutting on the poop.

The tournament continues.

Boycott 'hits misses' again

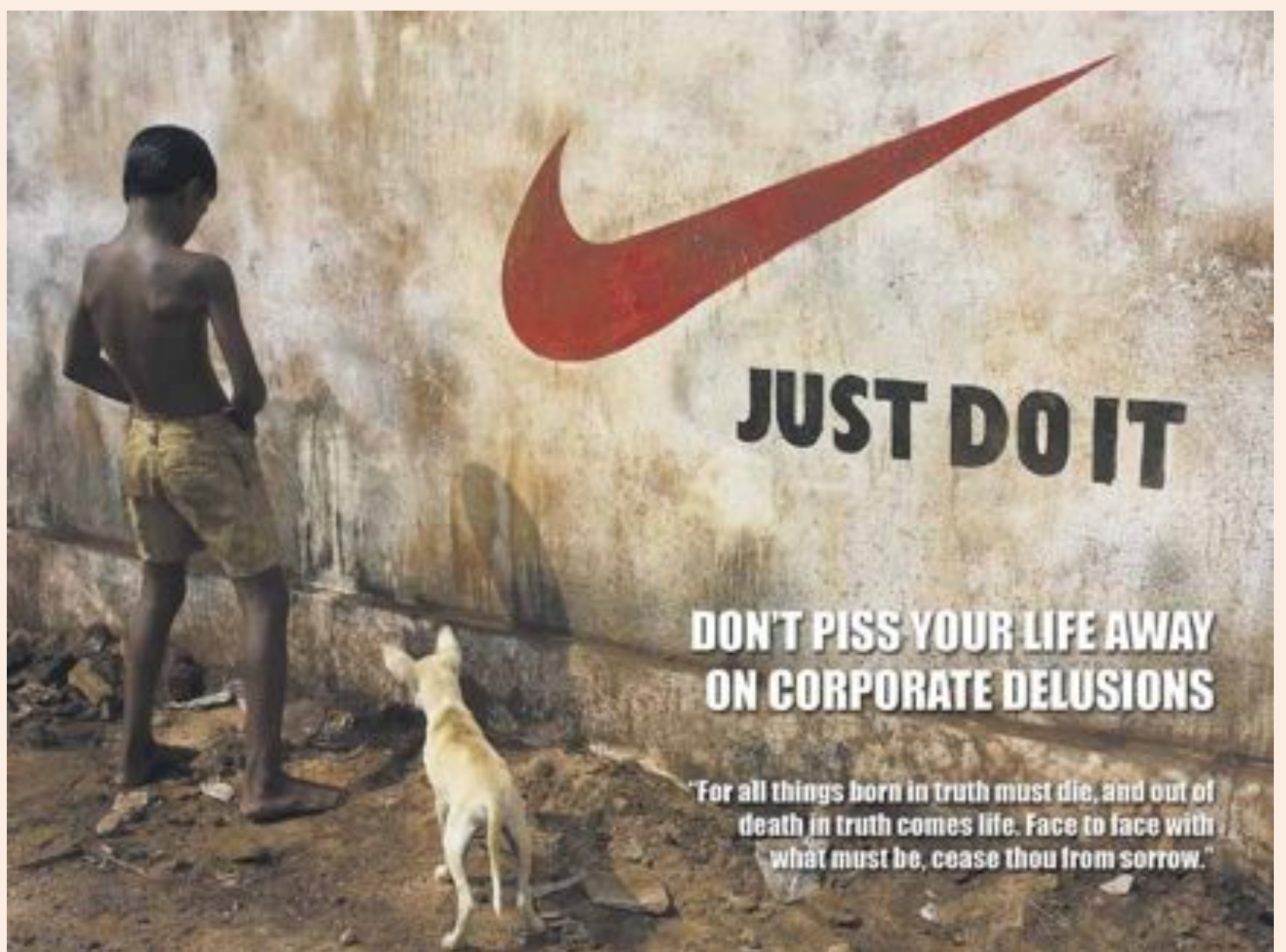
English cricketers may condescend to tour Australia this winter despite nearly 250 years of human rights abuses.

The reign of horror started when Britain first sent convicts to Botany Bay, where these innocents were preyed on by predatory tribesmen.

The inability of local Aboriginals to understand the law, and their subsequent susceptibility to alcoholism, have inexplicably hindered efforts to secure whatever rights Australians think it expedient to grant them.

Plunger Whitebait, the England captain, said post-colonial regrets shouldn't stop Australia from playing.

But he asked his hosts to boycott the traditional practice of scoring lots more runs, or at least "stick to very reasonable limits."





THE LEX COLUMN

Wednesday April 1 2020



TODAY ONLINE



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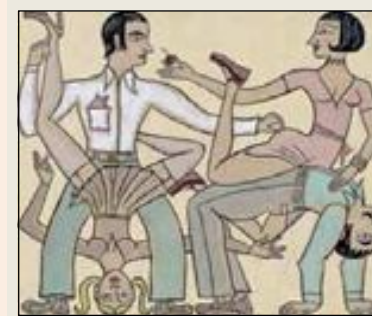
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'Humans became fire, burned the Earth down. Without fuel, what will we become?'

'The bigger you build the bonfire, the more darkness is revealed.'

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Copenhagen Consensus

Kyoto 2

In 1997, industrialised nations agreed a plan for tackling climate change. Based on a decade of research, and five years of international talks, it set targets for cutting emissions of the gases that cause global warming.

The Kyoto Protocol, named after the Japanese city where it was agreed, was a tentative stab at a limited step towards action. But for all its shortcomings it set a precedent: the countries that had emitted the most would take the lead, then the rest of the world would follow suit. In practice, not much happened. Even Kyoto's timid objectives weren't really met, in part because it established another principle: countries which pumped out hefty volumes of gases could "offset" them by buying rights to pollute from cleaner nations. This spawned a worldwide trade in indulgences.

Governments, companies and frequent fliers could all atone for climate sins by paying other people to solve their problems. Except the problems weren't really being solved: it was just a way of hiding them and feeling better. Rich nations had to emit less, not pretend they weren't by funding renewable energy in poorer countries. They'd need to do that too, to get them to sign up to targets. But first they'd have to get serious themselves.

That would start in 2009, at the Copenhagen conference tasked with striking a deal to replace Kyoto, which expired in 2012. As before, the aim was to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, "at a level that would prevent dangerous [man-made] interference with the climate system." Deciding what that meant was part of the problem though. Dangerous change had already begun. Arctic ice was melting fast, threatening humans, and their assumptions, not just polar bears. The longer we postponed radical action, the less chance it had of succeeding.

As for UN talk of the need "to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner," well, forget about it. Unless we got real and realised the party was over. Instead, we got Al Gore saying buy fluorescent light bulbs, and appeals for more "ethical" hyper-consumption. So skewed was our logic that a British government report even suggested unrestrained growth was as important as the damage it caused.

Meaningless targets

One of the scariest developments was the notion we could live with a much hotter planet. Since that seemed to be our fate, we might as well like it, people said, even those who knew better, like government scientists. "We should be prepared to adapt," as one

If environmentalism had been a simple fad, we wouldn't have lived to have others. Thankfully reason prevailed: it wasn't just about fluffy animals. Faced with the likelihood of temperatures rising six degrees in our lifetimes, and rendering half the planet uninhabitable, human beings finally saw sense. The last time the world had warmed so much, and so quickly, was more than 250 million years ago, when almost everything died. This time, scientists warned, it could mean the end of billions of us.

For generations, we'd played Russian roulette with carbon, burning the uniquely dense energy stored in oil, gas and coal. We didn't do this because we were mean, blind or indifferent to each other and our habitat. We may have been these things, and more, but we were also lucky. At least those of us were who enjoyed all the benefits of cheap energy: freedom of movement, freedom from cold and freedom from hunger, never mind the prospects for getting rich. Little wonder so few people felt like changing.

What made our age *The Age of Stupid* was how long we carried on deluding ourselves. For decades, it was clear where this was leading us, yet no one who had the power to change things did much to stop

it. Of course, they met, and debated and wept, in some cases. But this was diplomacy at its worst: the lowest common denominator of cowardice. Leaders kept discussing what they thought was possible politically, not what science and human survival demanded. And they did this despite mounting evidence, which government reports compiled, and duly airbrushed out of policymaking.

Instead of decreasing as quickly as possible, emissions of greenhouse gases kept on rising. Our way of life had to change, in less than a decade, or the world's warming climate would run away with itself. By 2009, some feared it might be already. Others said we could only prepare for the worst. It wasn't a call to prayer exactly, but we did need faith, above all in ourselves.

That didn't mean depending on hope, though without it things would have been hopeless. It still boggles the mind that we had to force our so-called leaders to act, since all the facts were out there to grasp. But this was the trap our civilisation had set itself: we knew everything except the way to save ourselves. And that was where ordinary people came in. Enough, millions said, and dominoes fell, starting with runways and coal-fired power plants, such as Kingsnorth, that made government promises so empty.

Everyone seemed to think it was someone else's job to find an answer. The state deferred to what companies, which waited to be told what to do. But when imaginations were stirred, consensus emerged. Our illusions about growth were shattered anyway, though we didn't want to face the implications. At first, we were paralysed by fear, and greed, and every other excuse we could dream up for apathy. Just like the people who ran the world.

Yet if we wanted one to live on in the future, we had to stop spouting hot air, and start doing something more constructive. Asking what was the easy bit: we had to stop emitting carbon yesterday. The real answers were all in the how. We were the problem as well as the solution. None of us could do much alone, but unless we changed our own lives nothing would change. So we had to get the rules changed for all of us, and pledge to do something drastic if governments didn't. That's how a deal was struck in Denmark in December 2009.

So what is to be done now, people ask. Exactly what the public did before: uphold the Copenhagen Consensus. Be realistic and demand "the impossible" till it happens. And if it doesn't, take action directly.

solving the problem faster than we perpetuated it. Once a global carbon budget was set, everyone was assigned a portion. Then a date was named by which our shares would equalise, along with a deadline for scaling them down to zero. Some said rationing wouldn't work without tradeable quotas, allowing us to buy each other's energy rights, and thereby jack up the carbon price to stop us burning it.

Regardless of how we did that, the important thing was that we started right away, even if this meant going it alone. The steepest cuts were needed within a decade, which left no time for game-changing technology. As the Tyndall Centre's chief scientist stressed: "The only game in town over that period is demand." In other words, we had to ration ourselves.

Mass direct action

Journalists didn't help much, at first. They framed news with what businessmen thought possible, and even when they weren't being quoted, industry-funded denialists found an echo chamber. Allegedly radical papers ran ads for airlines, which were set to account for a third of British emissions by 2050. And the only solutions they touted were hopelessly piecemeal. As scientists warned, the contrast with apocalyptic news reports made public action seem "futile and in some cases too late to make a difference." It wasn't. We just had to dare to become radical. Once growth as we knew it was toast, and the economy crumbled, our paradigm was shifting by itself.

When the news agenda switched to public service, it helped activists re-frame debate. Appeals to materialism were ditched in favour of empathy, for each other and our children as much as the growing proportion of have-nots. Rather than distracting us with lifestyle porn, newspapers made pin-ups of campaigners. There were no magic answers, but neglected research went mainstream, making common-sense policies more viable. The government promptly adopted them, and regime change started at home. Even investors accepted that human life was worth more than making money.

We, the people, had more power than our leaders led us to believe. Not only could we do things differently, we could do our bit to make us make them make us. We didn't have to dream up new solutions; we just had to see that they were needed, and accept the painful truth that change was coming, like it or not. You can't solve a problem with the mindset that spawned it. As pennies dropped with the pound, protest snowballed, and mass movements rolled it out constructively. Another world was possible, eventually. We only had to find the will to make it.

put it, which was fine in theory, but really "not a world we'd dream of going to", apart from the odd contrarian.

Even if we'd met our existing targets, which hardly anyone did, except for countries in industrial decline, there was only a 50:50 chance of keeping temperature rises under two degrees, the UN's danger marker. Instead, we were told to prepare for four, and even six, once we factored in what had been emitted already, plus the impact of deforestation, and the destruction of other "carbon sinks". Then there were thawing ice sheets and swathes of permafrost, which would spew out all the gases they'd been storing, speeding up the process in a vicious circle.

"Forget about long-term targets, they're irrelevant," warned the Tyndall Centre's climate expert, Kevin Anderson. "It's how you get there that matters." His point was essentially this: we could cut emissions by doing nothing for a day, but that wouldn't do a thing to change their impact. The number that mattered was the total we'd produced, because carbon stayed in the skies for 100 years. But governments didn't like to mention this, Anderson said, because it meant "you have to change things immediately." Instead they mouthed the Hypocritical Oath: "we will deliver unto voters more goodies", or at least that's what

we'll say to get elected... Meanwhile they'd promise action by 2020, or 2050, or any distant date when they didn't expect to be in office.

C&C etcetera

What they needed to do instead was listen to scientists. While a fractional percentage still quibbled, the rest had the calculations figured. If we wanted to stand a chance of capping temperature rises at two degrees, the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere had to be stabilised at 350 parts per million. There was only one problem: we'd already overshoot.

On paper it was simple. The less we wanted the climate to change, the quicker we had to cut the world's emissions. The longer they kept increasing, the harder it would get to rein in their effects. All we had to do was set a cumulative target, plot a chart of the yet-to-be emitted remainder, then find a way of distributing it fairly, along with a plan for getting there. And that was where negotiations stalled.

Because of our fossil-fuel addiction, emissions were effectively pegged to total consumption. And all the while our growth delusions persisted, the only hope we had was new technology. Somehow this would save us, leaders claimed, while we carried on belching

out carbon dioxide. Plans to capture it remained unproven, and even controversial nuclear power plants were many years away from production. But still we were sold the fantasy of being able to carry on much as before.

Although China had become the biggest annual emitter, Americans still pumped out more, whether measured over decades, or per person. Other wealthy nations weren't much different. And no one was very keen on cutting back, especially not since we'd be spared the worst of the coming weather of mass destruction. The poorest, who'd done least to cause it, would bear the brunt. So they rejected any solution that didn't make the rich do the most, while promising to share miracle technofixes. Dragging their heels, most Western leaders refused.

The only way out of the impasse was an equitable plan: for rationing to work, it would have to be just. For years, there'd been multiple blueprints. But to get one adopted, people round the world would have to demand it. So the deal had to sound reasonable to all of them. Perhaps the best-known model was *Contraction & Convergence* (C&C). Like healthy sex, its inventor quipped, it started with three basic questions. Is it consensual, is it safe, and is it fair to third parties? This all added up to a proportionate way of

