

*In Defence of  
Whaling*

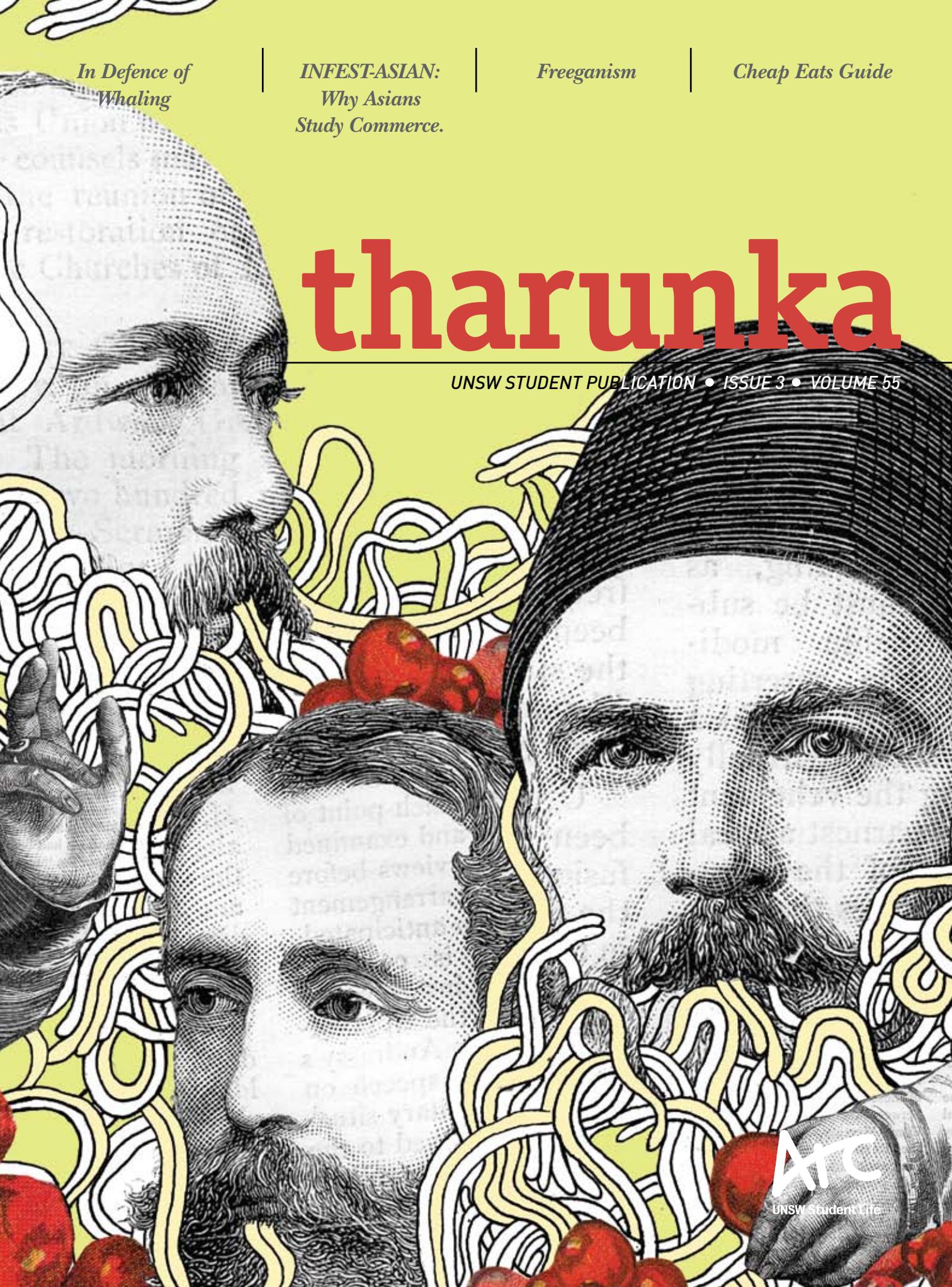
*INFEST-ASIAN:  
Why Asians  
Study Commerce.*

*Freeganism*

*Cheap Eats Guide*

# tharunka

UNSW STUDENT PUBLICATION • ISSUE 3 • VOLUME 55



ATC  
UNSW Student Life



# MENTALLY ILL JOHN'S MOBILES

**CUCKOO** call rates, **SCHIZO** SMS prices  
- get in on one of John's **PSYCHO** plans!



## PHONE

- Models subject to John's unpredictable product orders

John's loved ones are increasingly concerned by unstable behaviour - his erratic and volatile pricing practices are seriously jeopardising the family business! Prices are so sedated that they're drifting in and out of consciousness.

# STOCKS MUST GO!

All mobile phones and accessories with sharp edges must be shipped out of stores immediately - quite seriously! No padded prices here - just the padded walls of John's office!



# HURRY!

Everything has been priced to clear, like the eerie vacuum that has become John's psyche. Come in and exploit John's illness today. Impaired judgment like this can't last for long!

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*Maria Smit*

# tharunka

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Tharunka acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which the University now stands.

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# EDITORIAL

DEAR UNSW,

Normally food isn't something I like to read about – especially not when I'm hungry and would rather be eating it. My old art teacher used to put his paint brushes in an empty ice cream container. This was cruel. I would have liked to say "Forget the art, you old tosser – just give me some ice cream!"

We recommend then, that you read Issue 3 on a full stomach or at least with a double pack Mars Bar and a toasty falafel roll on hand, because there are so many things about food that we get distracted from thinking about on account of the pleasure of mindlessly eating it. Not many of us eat whale meat for instance, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't – see page 36. The entire battle-weary issue of consuming meat is re-investigated on page 32. And the far more pressing and even more ancient question of the 'five second rule' is given an intriguing scientific seal of approval, along with other food 'myths,' on page 30.

For those not ruled by their stomachs there is more comment on campus life – why are so many Commerce students Asian? And what are those mature aged students really thinking? Be sure not to miss the latest report from our Washington correspondent on page 38.

Enjoy the issue, and also take note that we are now online! Visit the website at [www.arc.unsw.edu.au](http://www.arc.unsw.edu.au) or our blog page at [www.tharunka.unsw.edu.au](http://www.tharunka.unsw.edu.au).

As an old reader of ours would say,

Vive la Revolution!

***Tharunka Editorial '09***

***Agreed:***

***Twilight is Fucking Awful***

DEAR THARUNKA EDITORS,

This letter is in response to 'Twilight and Romanticising Abuse' by Alison O'Connor (Issue 2, Volume 55).

I write mostly to vent my spleen (as the free daily railway publication Mx calls it) and to declare to the world my opinion of *Twilight*. The book came highly recommended by a friend who on previous occasions had proved quite dependable on such matters. And how I regretted it! My reaction while reading the book can be summarised as "Huh?" or "What crap? Since when do girls act like this?" but most accurately "WTF????????".

When the movie came out one could not sit on a bus or train or walk on the street without hearing young malleable minds discussing *Twilight* and how perfect Edward Cullen is. But nowhere in the book does Bella try to be an equal in their relationship. It is the boyfriend who makes all the decisions and controls the relationship. Isn't that a form of bullying? I believe the author has a responsibility to her target audience which she fails spectacularly.

Yours sincerely,  
APURVA IYER

## ***Scientific Bias An Obstacle to Life***

DEAR EMILY BEK,

Don't you think you are being too harsh on AIDS [*Tharunka* vol. 55, issue 2]? Vatican research shows it is actually very effective against promiscuity, and Africans. It can also turn homosexuals straight. Anyway, we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that it's actually not such a real problem back at home where I'm from. You young folks just need to relax and settle down in a nice family environment. I remember when I was young, I use to spend my days eating sausages in Bavaria and climbing hills – now look where that got me! Of course, in those days they used to sell sausages out of vending machines where the cool kids would hang out; but who knows what vending machines sell these days. My guess is it wouldn't be sausages, but maybe condiments or even conditioner. That would still be cool. Isn't life so precious? So Emily, I implore you, hold back your scientific bias and just GIVE AIDS A CHANCE!

POPE BENEDICT XVI

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## ***The Illustrious History of This Publication***

DEAR EDITORS,

I am somewhat disturbed by Mariel Barnes' reaction to every single one of my articles [vol. 55, issue 2]. If she is indeed opposed to everything I write, then she must logically be a supporter of twelve-week semesters (the subject of my very first article). Maybe she is, indeed, such a supporter, but would she admit to it? Probably not. Either way, her credibility is diminished.

Secondly, Miss Barnes has missed the point of the article in general. Rather than simply taking aim at President Obama, my goal was to attack the cult that surrounds him. All of my calculated arguments were based

on verifiable facts, something Ms Barnes neglects to challenge, because she can't. All that she is essentially criticising is the hyperbolic nature of the piece, the humorous intent of which is obvious.

Thirdly, Miss Barnes decides to go on the attack by half-heartedly taking swipes at John McCain and George W. Bush, both honourable men. McCain is a war hero, renowned for his extreme courage on both sides of the Vietnam War, and a respected senator, almost universally regarded as an legislative expert in foreign policy. George W. Bush had an excellent first term – especially his compassionate yet tough and decisive response to the terrorist threat, contributing to his landslide victory in 2004. This is unfortunately overshadowed by poor management decisions in his second term. When faced with such behemoths of American society, President Obama pales in comparison. He may exceed the achievements of these men, but he hitherto has not.

Lastly, I would like to say that I strive for controversy in all the articles I write for this publication. I believe that controversy in a humorous setting is in keeping with the illustrious history of *Tharunka*. Therefore, I thank Miss Barnes for contributing to this discourse and maintaining the historical fabric upon which great publication traditions are built.

MATT KWAN

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## ***Hopping Mad***

In her sarcastic defence of the use of animals for product testing, Nicole Batten [vol. 55, issue 2] reveals limited sympathy for non-human species and misses the real point.

The Draize test, and similar tests on animals, are still in use for commercial purposes where alternatives can and should be used. Indeed Nicole concedes that the Draize test is still used in Australia to test substances intended for

use in the eye for possible harmful effects. History shows that the Animal Ethics committees of individual institutions do not provide fail safe protection against unnecessary cruelty to animals and it is naïve in the extreme to believe, as Nicole apparently wishes to, that scientists deliberately testing for harmful effects of particular chemicals would wash out the substance "at the first sign of irritation". There is extensive photographic evidence to the contrary. The animals experimented on are also usually killed after being used.

Nicole's reference to the structure of a rabbit's eye is also selective and misleading. The rabbit's "eyelid" and eye structure do not have the protective facility of human eyelids and eyes or their capacity for eliminating foreign materials. First, the tearing systems of rabbits are much less efficient than those of humans. Secondly, rabbits' corneas are eight times as sensitive to light compared with humans, with a nest of nerve-endings gathered at the base of the cornea, which itself occupies 25% of the rabbit's eye surface area, compared to 7% of the human eye. Thirdly, the surface layer of the rabbit's eye is ten times more permeable to water-based solutions than the human eye. Fourthly, in response to toxic substances the human eye generally develops corneal epithelial vacuoles, which serve the purpose of isolating harmful materials. The rabbit's eye does not develop such vacuoles and a little whistling isn't going to change that.

No-one is suggesting, as Nicole assumes, that scientists "are ... some breed of morally bankrupt human, uncaring for the welfare of animals". But no-one would sensibly deny, on the other hand, that scientists, like all human beings, often fall short when it comes to ethical questions about animal rights. As Peter Singer pointed out many years ago, it does not come naturally to human beings to extend our moral concerns to sentient non-human species.

EMILY MARGO

## Man takes full minute to finish chewing mouthful before answering question

Recently at a function you attended a man took one full minute to finish chewing his food before answering the question you had just asked. Prior to the conversation, he had taken a large bite from one of many assorted canapés provided at the well-catered event. Unfortunately, the size and texture of the mouthful precluded the use of other strategies such as swallowing quickly or speaking with his mouth half full. You responded by smiling vaguely and looking at a space slightly above the left of the man's ear. The awkwardness you felt was exacerbated by the fact that you had not really wanted an answer to the question at all and had merely been making conversation out of politeness. When the man finally finished chewing his mouthful, his response to your question was neither trenchant nor memorable. The conversation was terminated shortly thereafter.

**EARTH HOUR  
ENDS  
GLOBAL WARMING**

## PEOPLE DO THINGS ONLINE

Thanks to the internet, more and more people are doing things online. Most of the people doing things online are young but some of them are middle aged or even older. Many people say that doing things online is fun and convenient. However, others say that they become distracted from other tasks and chores that they need to complete when they do things online.

Some authorities fear that doing things online may have harmful impacts on our children. Psychologists warn that young people may not be able to cope with the complex personal questions that inevitably arise when one does things online. This controversy has prompted some to say that urgent national measures must be taken to control the phenomenon. Others disagree and say that people should be allowed to do whatever they want online. Whatever the outcome it is safe to assume that people will continue to do things online well into the foreseeable future.

# Dr Phil just making shit up

## World Youth Day Participant Complains about Mardi Gras

Renee Latham was an enthusiastic member of last year's massive Catholic youth celebration, World Youth Day. She is a devout Catholic and feels that the celebration, which shut down big portions of the city, was a worthwhile event. World Youth Day brought thousands of visitors to take part in big public events such as parades, and resulted in local and state governments changing laws and spending large amounts of money to support it, much to the chagrin of many who disagreed with the Catholic viewpoint or felt that governments should not be supporting a minority viewpoint in such a big and public manner.

However, Renee does not like the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Speaking to *Tharunka* about the yearly celebration, which brings thousands of people from all around the world to take part in parades and parties. She said that she feels the event is too big and inconvenient and it "forces their lifestyle down everyone else's throats." While stressing that she does not hate gays, she doesn't understand why the government shuts down streets and spends money to support a minority group's public celebration of their way of life.

# COFA and ADFA merged in UNSW cost-cutting measure

*Tharunka attempts ill-advised joke linking gay design students to gay sailors.*

## “Cops are Tops” slogan blasted for false advertising

“Cops Are Tops”, the well known awareness campaign slogan aimed at instilling primary school children with a sense of trust and respect for members of the New South Wales Police Force, was yesterday attacked by the Advertising Standards Board for making false and misleading claims.

“The slogan suggests that police officers are in some way superior to other people in their morality, honesty, or personal conduct,” said a spokesperson for the Board, “when by any objective criterion, this is not true.” He listed top-level corruption, excessive violence, and ineffective policing as examples of police behaviours which run contrary to any claim of “top” status for police officers.

Children’s advertising watchdog group Young Media Australia also added to the attack, saying “Children don’t have the same critical thinking skills that we do. We don’t think we should be telling our kids that that quota-filling and revenue-raising police tactics, racial discrimination and ineffective investigation of sexual crimes is “tops” behaviour. They might take the slogan at face value and start to actually believe it. This is irresponsible advertising by the NSW Police Force”

Spokespeople for the Force defended their members saying that consideration must be made for the fact that many police officers exhibit below average intelligence, and joined the Force because it was secure employment and a less demanding entry regime than many other fields of employment.

Suggested alternative slogans include “Cops are not all bastards,” “Cops don’t shoot innocent people much any more” and “Cops are doing a very difficult job so don’t be too mad when they do it poorly.”

## UNEMPLOYMENT NOW LARGEST SECTOR OF AMERICAN WORKFORCE

### United States surrenders to Iraq

After 8 years of draining warfare, the United States was finally defeated yesterday by Iraqi forces, which entered Washington DC and arrested President Obama and the American leadership after a brief siege of the city. Obama agreed to an unconditional surrender on behalf of his shattered, war-torn country and issued a statement to the American people calling for them to end armed resistance and cooperate with their new Iraqi rulers in rebuilding their homeland.

Declaring the war over and mission accomplished, Nouri al-Maliki, Prime Minister of Iraq, announced the establishment of a provisional government made up of Iraqi advisors and cooperative American officials. He outlined plans for purging the country of former government officials and the phased instalment of a new, pro-Iraqi government. He said that he expected that the occupation will be brief, and that with the cooperation of the American people, democratic elections could be held as early as 2012.

However, critics in Iraq and around the world warn that ordinary Americans

### Everyone has opinion on why the train stopped

As an afternoon service stopped unexpectedly en route to the next station, sitting for several minutes on an empty expanse of track, many theories were proffered by irritated passengers as to why this event was occurring. One popular theory was that a suicide down the line had caused services to be delayed and rerouted around the site of the incident.

Another theory related to the hot weather, with an elderly man suggesting that the tracks were “bent” due to the heat and trains couldn’t use them. He had no evidence for this. His wife muttered something about animals on the tracks, a theory which was widely dismissed as being unlikely in this part of the city.

One woman who gave an unsubstantiated impression of knowledge and expertise pointed out that if a train was delayed elsewhere on the system, the flow-on effects could cause trains to wait so as not to get in the way of other trains. She said she had read this on a public service announcement. A final possibility offered by some passengers was that perhaps the train had actually been running ahead of schedule and had to wait so as to catch up with its timetable.

At the time of printing, none of these evidence-free possibilities was either proven nor disproven. All passengers agreed, however, that this was fucking typical of those Cityrail bastards. As the train began moving once more, no explanation was forthcoming from the driver.

will not welcome the presence of Iraqi troops in their streets, nor the surrender of their sovereignty, and that they will continue to resist the occupation. The explosion of a car-bomb in Los Angeles yesterday seems to support this view. The bomb attack killed 20 Iraqi troops and a number of American civilians, but the Iraqi commander in California insisted that these attacks were launched by isolated “former regime elements” and terrorists, saying that the majority of the population supports the troops’ presence and sees them as liberators.



# INFESTASIAN

## WHY ASIANS STUDY COMMERCE

SU-MIN LIM

My immediate thought on walking into my first commerce lecture was that I had never seen so many Asians in the one place before. Theatre G04, normally so pale and unthreatening, was barely visible beneath the sea of accents and little pencil cases and mobile phones with things hanging off them. Three hundred dark heads bent over identical sets of lecture notes, three hundred hands clutching at three hundred calculators...It was as if Pauline Hanson's worst fears had been realised. The Australian School of Business, at least, had been swamped by Asians.

It's not like this everywhere. Having transferred into Economics as a third year, I can vouch that other faculties do not feature such a disproportionate ethnic mix. As far as I can tell, no one has ever published a study of this phenomenon. However, a quick poll of friends and colleagues revealed various popular explanations:

- They've been pressured by their parents
- They're obsessed with money
- Their individuality was burned away long ago, and since then have obeyed the instructions of the hive-mind

Needless to say, each of these statements is coloured with a (yellow) tinge of racism. And yet each successive lecture made it more and more difficult to deny that there was something going on here. Such an overwhelming ethnic majority just couldn't have arisen by coincidence.

I decided it was time to investigate, in a spirit of genuine curiosity, why so many Asians choose commerce. Further research reveals that while there is a (rice) grain of truth to the stereotypes, Asians aren't so different from everyone else after all...

### STEREOTYPE 1: THEY'VE BEEN PRESSURED BY THEIR PARENTS.

Asian parental pressure in education is legendary, and rightly so. Just look at how many Asian kids attend tutoring colleges, an extra commitment most other parents regard as unnecessary. Having worked at one such institution, I retain fond memories of the mother who tried to lodge a complaint when I ended her son's lesson a full *three minutes* early. The boy was in Year 2, between six and seven years old, and already receiving intensive one-on-one training in comprehension and grammar. As far as his mum was concerned, those three minutes might have been the sole factor jeopardising his future entry into Harvard.

Gripped by academic mania, some Asian parents push their children into commerce regardless of talents or interest. A Commerce degree appeals to the Asian academic sense in a way that arts, for example, does not - there are clear goals, measurable outcomes and lots of exams. I remember how one Asian family friend, determining that her daughter would apply for commerce at UNSW, declared that “*She* doesn’t know what she wants to do!”

But is any of this intrinsically Asian? Jelena Dokic could tell you that there’s nothing culturally specific about pushy parents. Umpires at school sporting matches often report rudeness and even abuse from mums and dads on the sidelines. Non-Asians can be just as inappropriately intrusive in their children’s lives – they just channel their obsession through different outlets.

Neither is being pushy always a bad thing. Sure, many Asian students enrol in degrees for which they don’t have any particular interest. If it wasn’t for the parents, though, some of these students might not have made it to uni at all. Doing commerce because someone told you to isn’t ideal, and it would be better to seek out something that you really love. Still, at least you’ll develop some skills and knowledge along the way, and there are worse ways of spending your time than getting an education.

#### STEREOTYPE 2: THEY’RE OBSESSED WITH MONEY.

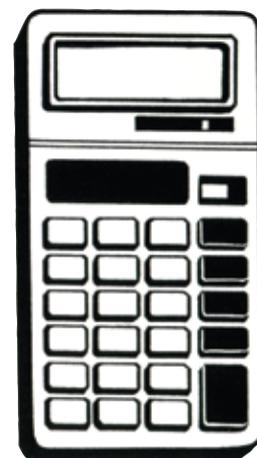
I initially planned to argue that commerce in all its forms is a subtle and captivating discipline. Rumours that it is ‘boring’, or that the only reason you would do it is ‘for the money’, are thoroughly unfounded and misleading. That was before I came across the following passage in my Financial Accounting textbook:

“The individual items in each of these lists are called accounts, so over the centuries the task of preparing them has been named accounting, and the people who do it are accountants. All of these words are derived from count, which is where accounting began: just counting things and listing them.”

Read it and weep, my friend, read it and weep. But I digress – is it fair to say that Asians, in contrast to other ethnicities, prioritise money over other values?

Cultural cues suggest cash is important to some Asians. Chinese people commonly wish each other a ‘prosperous’ new year and burn paper banknotes in honour of their ancestors. Apparently oranges are also considered lucky because the Mandarin word sounds similar to ‘wealth’. In modern times, it was the Chinese statesman Deng Xiaopeng who famously pronounced that ‘to get rich is glorious’. However, according to Confucian tradition, the merchant class is ranked at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Asian culture, like all culture, is full of contradictions. You can draw on different bits of it to justify either celebrating wealth or condemning it, depending on your purposes.

While there is a (rice) grain of truth to the stereotypes, Asians aren’t so different from everyone else after all...



Certainly some Asians choose commerce out of avarice and not much else. One student of finance, when I asked how he had selected his major, responded simply "To get rich!" Still, it's worth remembering that Asians aren't the only bloodless money grubbing freaks out there. Just look at Bernie Madoff, or any number of the financiers behind the GFC as they're calling it these days. Greed transcends all racial boundaries.

There are also compelling circumstantial reasons why Asian migrants, in particular, might be especially concerned about financial security. Many come from countries where there is no such thing as government welfare, and rely instead on extended family networks when things go wrong. Separated from these networks and set loose in an unfamiliar country, it's no wonder they worry about money.

### STEREOTYPE 3: THE HIVE MIND.

Some time ago I asked a second year commerce student how she had chosen her degree. She replied simply "Because I'm Asian." And then shrugged. At the time I took this to be a sad indictment of an unthinking group mentality. Why devote years of your life to something you didn't really care for, just because people around you were doing it too?

I see things differently now. Sure, some Asians opt for commerce out of a lack of imagination. But are they really so different from the private schoolboy who enrolls at St Paul's because his father did? Or the young achievers who tumble like lemmings into the law because they've got the UAs, as documented by Lisa Pryor in *The Pinstriped Prison*? Everyone wants to be an iconoclast, and yet the truth is we are hugely influenced by the norms and behaviours around us. Even the decision to attend university at all is coloured by peer pressure. You're far more likely to enter tertiary education if your parents did, or if the majority of young people in your area do.

In my opinion, saying that any high school student 'chooses' a degree is misleading in itself. Meaningful choice requires some sort of understanding. Most high schoolers simply don't *know* anything. When I think back to my own Year 12 cohort I am astounded by the bovine depths of our ignorance and naivete. We the proud completers of the HSC, we the voters of tomorrow. It's a wonder we could even feed ourselves.

And therein lies the miracle of higher education. Most of us fall into our degrees through a combination of ignorance, apathy and following the path of least resistance. And most of us turn out fine.

I speak from experience here. In 2006 I enrolled in an Arts/Law degree because I thought the law might be interesting. Realising quite quickly that it wasn't, I stayed on anyway for want of a better idea. In the meantime, I signed up for a Development subject in Arts because it fitted my timetable - and found that I loved it. Three years on, I finally found the nerve to ditch the law and have taken up Economics instead, in the hope it'll be useful for development work later. I think it's going to be great.

It would be wonderful if everyone at the age of 18 knew what they were doing and why. In fact, it would be wonderful if people in general knew things like that. Unfortunately most of us don't, never have and possibly never will, at least not without a great deal of trial and error. Some Asians who fall into commerce will love the subject and the career for which it prepares them. Others will end up bored and disenchanted. Thankfully we live in a society full of wealth and second chances. It's not necessarily easy, but if you find yourself dissatisfied you can usually seek something different.

I was pretty young at the time, but I do remember some of the mid-'90s panic about the 'floods' of Asian migrants apparently descending upon our white and peaceful shores. The current infest-asian of the Australian School of Business is about as frightening as all of that turned out to be - that is to say, not frightening at all. Asians who study commerce are just doing what everyone else does, but with more Easyway - muddling through the system to find a plan that works for them. I hope it all works out, for the Asians in commerce and for everyone else as well.

# ScRAPING The BOTtom OF THE bARREL

ELSE  
KENNEDY

Despite record food prices and an economic downturn, millions of kilos of safe and edible food are dumped in Australian landfills every year. Dumpster divers are reclaiming the waste. Also known as urban foragers, alley surfers and D-mart shoppers, they're taking to the backstreets to feed themselves – and to protest a social and environmental disaster.

One dark Thursday evening, Else Kennedy went 'diving' with a group of students to explore the underbelly of the food industry...

what the hell  
is freeganism?

## WHAT IS 'FREEGANISM'?

A: Free food!

C: I guess it's trying to live in a non-capitalistic way. To use the excess that is everywhere and going to waste.

A: It's a form of protest in a society that wastes lots of stuff.

M: For some it is an anti-capitalist statement, but for others it's a necessity. A lot of people can't afford the food miles that we have to pay for when we buy food at a supermarket. We're here because we have to eat, and this is one of the ways that we can. But I think it also challenges the system, and that is why I feel comfortable doing it.

## **THERE IS A LOT OF FOOD IN THIS DUMPSTER. BOXES OF AVOCADOES, PEACHES, NECTARINES, PLUMS, CORN, CARROTS, POTATOES. WHY IS SO MUCH BEING THROWN OUT?**

M: Often a supermarket over-orders, or doesn't sell a product quickly enough. When the new shipment is coming in, everything that is on the shelves goes in the dumpster. I think that is a really bizarre thing to do, and really evil. There is a lot of waste. This dumpster fills up every day.

P: People have ridiculously high standards. If there is a bruise or a spot on a fruit or vegetable, no one puts it in their basket, so it goes in the bin. Same with a dent in a tin or a tear in a package. It doesn't matter that it's still good to eat. The irony is that these standards of aesthetic perfection are actually the wrong indicators when it comes to health and nutrition. It doesn't matter if food is big and shiny or cleanly packaged when it is full of chemicals and contains preservatives, fats and sugars.

C: It is also important to remember that supermarkets are only one of the places where food is wasted. At every stage of food production: harvest, sorting, cleaning, packaging, transport, processing and distribution, waste is being created.

It has to do with the way food is produced and distributed in our society. We are so far removed from the site of the food production. In the US, there are reports that show up to 50% of food ready for harvest never gets eaten! Australia isn't far behind.

P: The awful thing is, the most energy and resource-intensive foods to produce are also the ones being thrown out the fastest. In particular animal products: meat and dairy. They have a really short shelf-life, and shops can be over-cautious about health and safety, which makes for a lot of wastage.



### **WHAT ARE THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS?**

P: The decomposition of organic matter such as food waste in landfill is a major contributor to the generation of methane, a dangerous greenhouse gas. In 2006, landfill produced 13.2 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent in the form of methane. In conventional agriculture the production of food has high environmental costs. Water is used intensively in growing and processing food. According to the CSIRO, dumping a kilo of beef wastes the 50,000 litres of water it took to produce that meat. Throwing out a kilo of white rice will waste 2,385 litres. Wasting a kilo of potatoes costs 500 litres. Meanwhile, a large amount of energy and fuel is used in the refrigeration, transportation and processing of food, and fertilisers and pesticides used to grow food pollute land, air and water runoffs.

### **WHAT IS THE LEGAL SITUATION OF WHAT WE ARE DOING RIGHT NOW?**

P: In Italy, Sweden and Germany it is illegal, although enforced to varying degrees. In Australia what they would call you up for is trespass. The bins are often on the shop's property. I've never heard of anyone being arrested for it though.

M: It is definitely something security guards can pull you up for. They can complain that the waste we are taking is still their property and on their land.

C: People threaten to call the police. They may or may not do it, and the police might be like, 'thanks for wasting our time'.

P: How ridiculous is it? What is the real crime? Sending several tonnes of good food to landfill daily, or putting that excess to good use?

### **HAVE YOU EVER HAD ANY BAD EXPERIENCES WHILE DUMPSTER-DIVING?**

C: One guy told me to leave or he would call the police. A lot of people don't know how to react because it can be quite confronting. What we are doing is probably quite different to where most people think food should come from.

M: I've never felt unsafe, but I have felt a bit threatened by supermarket workers, but that is because of how they are trained to deal with us, or more accurately that they are not trained to deal with us. I wish it wasn't that way. I wish the workers could be on side with us.

C: And sometimes they are.

### **IF FREEGANISM IS ANTI-CAPITALIST, ISN'T IT IRONIC THAT FREEGANS ARE DEPENDENT ON CAPITALIST SOCIETY TO PROVIDE THE WASTE THEY LIVE ON?**

P: Freeganism isn't necessarily just about reusing waste. It can also be seed-saving, community gardens and swaps. By not taking part in economic exchange for goods, freeganism can subvert capitalism, if that's what your aim is. There is also a large amount of creativity and initiative that go into reusing wasted resources, it's not just reactionary. 'Food not Bombs', for example, takes 'reclaimed' foods and cooks up big free meals for the homeless in cities in the UK, USA, Canada and Australia.

For me it is interesting the social change that occurs when food becomes free and plentiful. Purchasing food creates artificial divisions in a house about what is 'mine' and what is 'yours' – what my money paid for and what your money paid for. Freeganism breaks that down. It says: "there is more than enough food in the world to feed everyone, only our economic system creates a process whereby not everyone has access to it. Let's get rid of that idea and create an alternative."

### **WHAT DO OTHER PEOPLE THINK OF WHAT YOU DO?**

C: It's pretty common amongst our friends. Pretty well accepted.

P: I have family and friends who think it is dirty. My mum is pretty wary when she comes for to my house for dinner. I don't mind having the discussion. People are curious about it. It makes people aware about how much wastage there is. We are always having friends over for dinner, and we can afford to be generous. When people are eating the food, they become involved. When they see what it looks like and where it comes from they realise there is nothing wrong with it.

**ARE THERE ANY DISADVANTAGES OF DUMPSTER-DIVING?**

P: You don't have much control over what you find.

C: You don't get to choose what to eat or whether it is organic. It is more empowering to grow your own garden rather than living off waste.

**AT THIS POINT, A MAN IN HIS THIRTIES (N) ARRIVED WITH SOME EMPTY SHOPPING BAGS.**

P: Hello.

C: Hey!

N: How you going? Is there anything left in there for me?

M: Yeah, there's heaps. There's heaps of grapes.

Man: What a waste, hey?

C: Yeah, well, not anymore. (Laughter)

Some grapes later, we returned to the interview....

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***When people are eating the food, they become involved. When they see what it looks like and where it comes from they realise there is nothing wrong with it***

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**WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST DUMPSTER-DIVING EXPERIENCE LIKE?**

C: It was so exciting. I couldn't believe there was so much food. I was shocked so much was being thrown out.

M: I had a really awesome first dumpster-diving experience, where we just got like 20 kilos of chocolate and 6 crates of alcohol. I was amazed at this whole other world that was like, free. And also quite political. I really like it.

N: This is my first time. I heard about it on a radio program. There was a guy in Berlin, a professional in a company who went out every night, jumping fences to collect food. It was his protest about the amount of waste produced by supermarkets.

P: I had to be introduced to my first real dumpster. I'd tried a couple of times by myself and never found anything decent. I'd heard quite a bit about it and agreed with the idea, but I wasn't really sure where to go, and I was easily discouraged. It takes a bit of guts to rifle through a dumpster. Often they are on a street or in a carpark and there are people around. Once you've seen a few you know what to look for.

**WHAT PROPORTION OF FOOD IN YOUR HOUSE IS DUMPSTERED?**

P: Basically all our bread, fruit and vege. We only buy staples: pasta and rice, muesli and tea. They have a longer shelf life, so they're less common in dumpsters, although sometimes we find them. Between us we would be saving several hundred dollars a month on food, and there is always more than we can eat. The best part is that the food is shared, which means less work for everyone.

**WHAT'S THE BEST THING YOU HAVE FOUND IN A DUMPSTER?**

M: A brand new ski suit in an Aldi dumpster

C: A guitar. That was at Aldi too.

**IS FREGANISM ONLY FOOD?**

M: I don't think so.

C: All your furniture, paint, clothes, toys, pretty much everything can be found for free.

For more information, visit <http://en.wordpress.com/tag/dumpster-diving> or [www.foodnotbombs.net/](http://www.foodnotbombs.net/)



# HYPOTHETICALLY SPEAKING

*“Cruelty to animals is bad. So is environmental degradation. Is it better to eat food produced using humane but environmentally destructive methods, or food which involves cruelty to animals but has minimal environmental impact?”*

Salima Fung-Ying Yeung

I have loved animals all my life, so naturally I'm strongly opposed to animal cruelty. With this in mind, you would probably expect me to argue in favour of the humane but environmentally destructive option. I will not. To keep things clear and simple I will refer to the animal friendly but environmentally degrading method as option A, and the environmentally friendly, but animal unfriendly method as option B.

I oppose animal cruelty because I don't like animals to suffer unnecessarily. However, I believe that in both of these cases, suffering is unavoidable. The wellbeing and comfort of every living thing depends on the environment. Take the recent oil spill in Queensland - 60 kilometres of the coast was declared a disaster zone, and scores of birds, turtles, fish and other wildlife were left choking and saturated in black oil. Another example is global warming, which is said to cause mass starvation, coral bleaching and drowning.

Which option should we choose if both entail suffering? The one which results in less pain and destruction: option B.

While damage to the environment can lead to the extinction of many species, the suffering caused by the slaughter of livestock is confined only to those that are meant to be killed. The hypothetical doesn't stipulate the extent of the environmental damage caused by option A; thus it is unclear whether the number of wildlife affected would be greater than the livestock. However, even a small amount of damage can have major consequences. For example, a single plastic bag can be eaten by, and thus kill, a critically endangered turtle, which puts the rest of its species at greater risk.

Moreover, the killing and suffering of livestock is tightly managed and controlled, whereas the effects of environmental degradation are widespread and uncontrollable. Therefore there is much more risk with option A if things turn out for the worse.

Another aspect which should not escape our attention is how environmental damage affects people round the world. Human wellbeing is directly dependent on the land, especially if you live in an underdeveloped rural area. It is therefore in our best interest to ensure that we maintain the land in good condition.

Some might say that suffering is a part of the daily struggle of life in the natural world, and will continue regardless of how we treat the environment. But indirect suffering from environmentally destructive activities is just the same as directly inflicting cruelty. We caused it, we are responsible, and we have the power to stop it.

*Indirect suffering from environmentally destructive activities is just the same as directly inflicting cruelty. We caused it, we are responsible, and we have the power to stop it.*

Although it is very important that my dinner was not mistreated when it was alive, it is also important that when I turn on the Discovery Channel, I can see a wide variety of vibrant, healthy animals and ecosystems. Yes, surviving in the wild can be hard, but the lives of many creatures have become harder and harder because of destructive activities like logging and mining.

One environmentally damaging act does not necessarily result in mass extinction, suffering, or severe population decline. However, it's important that all our activities aim to have a minimal environmental impact. Bit by bit, they contribute to the health of our planet, which affects everyone and everything. Including what we eat.

# HYPOTHETICALLY SPEAKING

“Cruelty to animals is bad. So environmental degradation is better for us. Food produced using humane but environmentally destructive methods, or food which involves cruelty to animals but has minimal environmental impact?”

Rachel Hayter

Option 1: Endorse cruelty to animals in food production and ensure a sustainable environment, and thus the survival of life on earth.

Option 2: Endorse the humane treatment of animals in food production and condone the destruction of the environment, and thus the demise of life on earth.

Food and a sustainable environment are both necessary for survival. The humane treatment of animals is not. Protecting animals in the short term, while degrading the environment, is a self-defeating act—in the animals’ case, a different means to the same end. Eventually the environment, sustainer of all life, will be destroyed. Surely the ultimate end, or rather the avoidance of ours, is what matters most?

Although it seems the practical choice, the ethical implications of subscribing to Option 1 are dire. Yes, life on earth is ensured, but at what cost? When our ‘humane-ness’, our humanity, is compromised, what have we left but mere subsistence? Is an inhumane world even worth preserving?

Let’s imagine a world sustained by the logic of Option 1. The moral worth of an action is not determined by intention, or the character of the act itself (e.g. cruelty), but dependent purely on its outcome (e.g. survival). By this reasoning, any apparent moral action which is not necessary for the ultimate survival of the human race is worthless.

Anthropocentrism assumed, let us hope a perfect definition of what it is to be an animal has been established. It seems the only thing protecting individuals from this fundamentalist utilitarianism is our membership to the species *Homo sapiens*.

Is the distinction between *Homo sapiens* and animals, including great apes and whales, as pronounced as Option 1 would imply? Is it enough to warrant the institutionalised cruelty by the former to the latter?

Rejecting Speciesism entails an alternative understanding of what it is to be human—a quality of personhood, rather than the evolutionary providence of belonging to a species. The concept of personhood is vague. There can be drawn no precise line between classifications of ‘is’ and ‘is not’. DeGrazia outlines distinguishing properties of autonomy, rationality, self-awareness, linguistic competence,

## *Is an inhumane world even worth preserving?*

sociability, capacity for intentional action, and moral agency.

By this definition, great apes and whales are cases of paradigm persons and severely mentally handicapped and infant humans are not persons at all. Support of Option 1 has suddenly become more dangerous than anticipated—parallels with Nazism are clear.

Before subscribing to Option 1 based on your animalistic survival instincts, trace the consequences of your decision. Once cruelty has been institutionalised, our moral watershed has been sacrificed.

There exist cases of healthy whales, voluntarily, temporarily beaching themselves, as displays of solidarity to dying, beached group members. Is it morally justifiable to endorse cruelty to one of these animals in the interests of sustaining the life of a human mass-murderer, or rapist?

# (Dave) *the* *Agony* *Aunt*

Dear Auntie,

The other day I got into my old Fiesta and drove off to work. Two streets away, the car suddenly dies. After popping the bonnet I eventually discover the problem is a broken radiator belt, and neither I nor any passers-by could fix it. I walk back home to get help from my husband of 16 years, but find him in bed with his secretary! They were making love so loudly they couldn't hear me walking up the stairs, and now he says he wants to leave me. What should I do?

- JANE JERMIR PUNTHAKEY

**Dear Jane**

You should never go to anyone except an authorised mechanic to fix a broken radiator belt – it can be dangerous! In the future, you should call NRMA Roadside Assist – they can give you a temporary “fit-all” belt that will last you until you can book in to get a permanent replacement, tailored to your automobile's needs.

Dear Auntie,

My boyfriend Chris and I love each other very much, but have had several well-publicised altercations recently. Do you have any way to reach out to Chris with a message that what he is doing is wrong?

- RIHANNA

**Dear Rihanna,**

I think what has happened to you is completely Disturbia. All week long I've been trying to reach out to Chris by amassing comments from my many friends in the world of pop music. Flo Rida thought Chris Brown's actions were Low, low, low, low and MGMT were just relieved no Kids were involved. Lily Allen, in particular, understood The Fear that you must be facing – but I don't think I'll pass on Britney's request to Hit me baby one more time.

Dear Auntie,

David, the tone and colour of this Agony Aunt column is unacceptable. You've trampled over taboos about foreign students, sexual abuse, overweight communists and incest. Help someone with an actual problem, or we're pulling the column.

- SEAN LAWSON,  
(*Tharunka* Editorial Team)

**Dear Sean,**

So you think you can dance. Err, pull my column. Seriously, what are your alternatives? Bellamy's Barometer? That's 500 words of observational humour, minus the humour part. Here's a guess for What's hot this week: an element of pop culture that you can make easy gags about. What's not? Creativity. And then we have Dr. Lurk. Last week's top article: kids with warts in a pool. Wow. Even Grey's Anatomy has better unintentional medical humour. I think I'll keep writing.

Dave Maher

Dear Auntie,

My dad can be a bit of a monster sometimes, and rarely lets us out of the house. My sisters and I were wondering if you knew a way to get a mail-order delivery of anti-chafing cream to a subterranean dungeon? Asap would be good.

-ELIZABETH FRITZL

**Dear Elizabeth,**

If you have daddy issues, here's a tissue. I can understand that you might feel “chained up” at times by an overprotective father, but I think the dungeon allegory might be going a bit far. For a teenage girl, the father-daughter relationship needs to be about give and take, and if you're not taking it at least some of the time you can understand the obvious frustration that might develop.





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THOM LOVEDAY

## *Ghost Town*

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This is the third review of *Ghost Town* I've attempted to write. Initially I actually felt quite positive towards the film, but having failed to come up with just 400 words of positive things to say, I'm forced to conclude that I was wrong, and that it's actually terrible.

I think that *Ghost Town* is supposed to be a romantic-comedy. It is neither romantic nor comedic. It is also slightly depressing, so maybe it's actually a drama, in which case I suppose it's OK.

*Ghost Town* is about a guy (Ricky Gervais) who is objectionable. He sees some ghosts, does some objectionable things, and lands the girl of his dreams, because coincidentally she's got a thing for objectionable guys. Not in the cool damaged way either, (like her dad was really strict so she hooks up with guys that are bad for her just to piss daddy off), just the more common, boring sense: she is an idiot and has bad taste in men.

I can't remember who played the love-interest, or really anything about her. I'm pretty certain it was a reasonably well-known actress. Maybe she's married to a good actor or something. Think Katie Holmes but older.

Throw Miss Forgettable's dead ex-husband (Greg Kinnear) into the mix. Remember the last time Greg played a character that wasn't a smooth talking douche-bag? Me neither. At this point I can only assume that like Christopher Walken and Samuel L. Jackson, Greg Kinnear no longer acts. Greg Kinnear is actually douche-bag who just turns up on set, acts normal, and answers to a different name.

Oh, and did I mention the midget from *Poltergeist*? She's not in this or anything, but she really should have been. Oh, actually, I just looked her up on IMDB, and she's dead, so I guess we need to cast another midget or something.

In summary, I didn't hate this movie. However, since I like almost everything, still couldn't to come up with 400 words of positive things, a normal person would probably hate this film. Also, it's pretty much like *Ghost Whisperer*.

P.S. Sorry if midget is a slur or anything, but I'm not sure what you people like to be called.

## *Taken*

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*Taken* follows in the footsteps of *Commando* by establishing a strong father-daughter bond, then having the daughter kidnapped by some guys, with a fairly vague connection to the protagonist. However, *Taken* deviates from *Commando* in that it stars Liam Neeson who is like 100 years old, as opposed to Arnie, who at the time didn't look old enough to be a father, let alone a good one (He looked 23, the same age as me). Also, he's ex-CIA as opposed to... actually I'm not sure what Arnie was exactly. A commando maybe?

Without going into detail, while the film makes some half-hearted attempts to point out how awful human trafficking is, the film is really just an opportunity for Liam to destroy large sections of Paris for 90 minutes. As someone that both hates Paris, and is aroused by violence, this is pretty much the best movie I've ever seen. My flatmate, with similar qualities to myself agreed. We seem to be in the minority however, because Metacritic assigns the film a score of just 48 based on 29 reviews. Therefore, in the interest of objectivity, I will attempt to review the film as one of those chicks that doesn't really like action films very much, and who seem to constitute the entire film critic set:

*OK, so the film starts with super-hot Liam Neeson going to his daughter's birthday! I love that he's a good dad too! There's some talk about a broken marriage with that slut Famke Janssen. I'm not too sure, because her daughter's cute outfit is too distracting. Not long after, there is a super-cute French guy. And Paris!*

*Anyway, then the plot basically ends, and I'm forced to sit through the most boring ninety minutes of my life. I can't really tell what the director was thinking. Who wants to see a film set in Paris, but with no romance? AT ALL! My boyfriend seemed pretty into it though. Actually, now that I think about it, about 10 minutes after the film ended he took me like a wild beast. This happened once before, after Shoot'em up.*

*Anyway, I hate this film. Don't see it.*

# Princess of Wails

MATT KWAN

Here's some food for thought: why is Diana, the late Princess of Wales, so bloody popular? This is a question that has often baffled me. Despite plenty of evidence that she was nothing particularly special, she has regularly been raised to the level of a saint. She is sometimes referred to as Princess Diana, despite never having held the title of Princess of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This is the mistake of misguided fools with a blinkered view of her legacy.

Diana was not a particularly bright woman. On an objective level, Diana was academically poor and failed her O-levels twice. How pathetic. On a subjective level, if she were more intelligent, she would have been able to realise that she could have married someone who doesn't have the expression of a stunned mullet permanently etched on his face. Or have married someone who wasn't still in love with his ex-girlfriend. She would also have seen that marrying her eldest sister's ex-boyfriend would be a recipe for disaster.

People sometimes blame the paparazzi for ruining, and then ending, her life. The same people ignore the fact that Diana used the paparazzi to help make herself famous. In her final holiday prior to her death, many pictures were snapped of her posing on the Al-Fayed yacht in a brief swimsuit. Hardly the victim, Diana was a manipulative attention whore. Sorry, Paris Hilton, you weren't the first.

Others claim that Diana contributed much to the world by way of humanitarian work. They say she gave movements such as landmine removal and anti-HIV/AIDS a famous human face, much the way Sir Bob Geldof is the face of anti-poverty. Fair enough, but so what? It is not as if she went out into the field to defuse landmines. She was in a position of influence, thus it would have been easy for her to get attention. Besides, as an attention whore, it is doubtful that her motives were pure. She simply wanted to get the public on-side with her, and not Prince Charles.

Some people accuse Prince Charles of destroying Diana's life. They claim all Diana needed was Charles' love and devotion and if she had received that, her life would be complete. This makes no sense. It reminds me of the film *Bride and Prejudice*, where the mother of the protagonist says "marriage first, love comes later". This is wrong. If Diana knew Charles didn't love her (i.e. the truth), she should have bugged off and found someone else. Fair dinkum, she was only nineteen!

She did end up finding someone else, conducting a long-term extra-marital affair with Major James Hewitt, in effect aiding and abetting a crime under the Treason Act 1351 (25 Edw. III c. 2). With such vile behaviour, it is no wonder Prince Charles fell back into the arms of his best friend

and ex-girlfriend Camilla Shand. With all these facts, it is possible to deduce that Diana married Charles only because she wanted to be Queen Consort, thus taking status-seeking to a new level.

Speaking of Camilla Shand, now Duchess of Cornwall, I have long wondered why people speak such ill of her. She is reserved, polite and supportive, rather than abrasive, attention-seeking and accusatory like Diana. She maintains a good relationship with Queen Elizabeth II, in contrast to Diana, who never got along with Her Majesty. Sure, Camilla is not as good-looking, but at least she seems like a nice person. Is it wrong to be in love? We should be happy for her in her marriage to Charles.



*"It's not as if she went out into the field to defuse landmines"*

The wave of hysterical sadness which gripped Britain and the world following her death was irrational. What did Diana ever do for her country besides bear the heirs to the throne and satiate the appetite of tabloid newspaper consumers? The reaction to her death is one of Britain's greatest national embarrassments, alongside pop group UB40.

For instance, I recently visited the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain, a government-commissioned installation located in London's Hyde Park. It looks like a complex drainage system, because it is one. People are encouraged to 'refresh their feet' in the drains and feel the essence of the late Princess of Wales. Such ridiculousness is the strongest reason for Australia becoming a republic.

There has long been a saying: 'The King is dead, long live the King!', encouraging people not to be too downcast over the loss of the sovereign, for there is a new one. Diana died in 1997. Prince Charles has married the person he should have married in the first place. Diana is dead, long live Camilla! Get over it! It's not like she was anyone worth mourning.



# Dr Lurk

**Dr Gordon,**

I am writing in disgust at your total lack of sensitivity to our mother, who is still suffering horrific pain from the tumble she took down the second floor laundry chute of your Eastern suburbs mansion last week. You absolute prick. You wouldn't even bulk bill for the pain medication! When are you going to realise that you're an oxygen thief and should have been rubbed into the marital sheets.

Your Brother,  
WINSTON LURK QC.

**Dear Winston,**

Well hello to you too, brother. What, is it 15 years to the day since we last spoke? And you still hold a grudge! Yes, I'll admit, your late wife died of a fatal dose of vitamin C tablets, as the coroner found, after taking directions from a script supposedly in my handwriting, using my letterhead, faxed directly from my own office for which only I have the key. But I maintain my innocence! As I said, I was on holidays at the time in Bolivia, and that the mono-browed epebe who was my alibi in court was an honest and reputable young chap, and that I only paid for his entire college education because I liked the cut of his jib.

Anyway, if you see mother anytime soon could you tell her I have some laundry that needs doing, and that the government has just announced that the pension is going down this week so she'll have to find some other way of repaying the twenty-three dollars she owes me.

Kind regards,  
Gordie.

**Dr Lurk,**

I was out quite late last weekend and didn't have enough money for a taxi, so I found some bushes in Hyde Park and slept in them. I now seem to have a very bad case of scabies. I have applied baby powder and only wear a dressing gown when I must leave the house, but the red spots refuse to go away. Please help.

SYLVESTER, COFA.

**Dear Sylvester,**

When not polishing my Gardini leather shoes on their ribs, I cannot help but feel a touch of envy for the way of life of the homeless. Your freedom to sleep in bushes is an expression of man's deepest ties to Nature. I believe it was Wordsworth who wrote "Hark! Hear the sweet bells of dewy morning and/Get those fucking filthy people off the streets/For God's sake". You may not contribute much to society, Sylvester, and I suspect even I would sport the beret and the easel with more aplomb (and less pants), but if you ever actually were in some kind of life-threatening situation I would perform mouth to mouth resuscitation - through a rolled up \$100 note. I too apply baby powder and only wear a dressing gown when I leave the house. My patients love it! This is not the cure for scabies, but I encourage you to continue the practice.

Yours at a safe distance,  
Dr Gordon Lurk

**Dear Doctor,**

I like to ride my skateboard to university as I live at the top of Barker St and enjoy the sensation of the wind in my hair. Unfortunately, I also often experience the sensation of coarse bitumen on my face because I have frequent and sudden onsets of narcolepsy. Friends say that there is something aesthetically sublime about the way my body seems to be leaning into a turn only to continue dipping until it violently embraces the road. Are these people really my friends?

EDWARD, B Media Comm.

**Dear Edward,**

What you describe is indeed sublime - the concept of a man hurtling towards a sure ill-fate, towards extreme danger, with a recklessness that is as brave as it is beautiful. You are an artist, Edward. And I encourage you to practice your art in many more places, such as busy highways and cliff edges.

Please, let me know how you go.

Yours in friendship,  
Dr Gordon Lurk



Hot dang I love cheap ethnic food. The awesomeness of food, like fashion, is only sometimes positively correlated with its price – cheapness does not automatically equate to badness, and vice versa. Frequenting dodgy looking restaurants or cheap ass, mass-manufactured clothes stores is not only a humbling and character-building experience, but can really pay off with some great finds.

Just a caveat before the listing begins: I haven't included a lot of ethnic cuisines, like Italian (or Europe generally for that matter), Japanese, or African, due to the cuisine being meat-heavy, fairly mainstream or because, well, I'm still a bit ignorant of the cuisine (so far, anyways).

## 1) FALAFEL ROLLS

Falaf, for the unacquainted, are deep-fried balls of chickpea, mixed with a delicious combination of things like onion, parsley, sesame seeds, cumin and other spices. Although it's on the menu of almost every kebab joint, I only eat it from three places.

Fatima's (294-296 Cleveland St, Surry Hills) – offers freshly made, crispy falaf that's golden yellow on the inside, homemade tabouli and hummus wrapped in pita bread (although available, the default roll doesn't include any of that lettuce/tomato/onion silliness). I always go the garlic sauce, but it's not for the faint hearted. A bargain at \$5 without the garlic sauce, \$5.50 with.

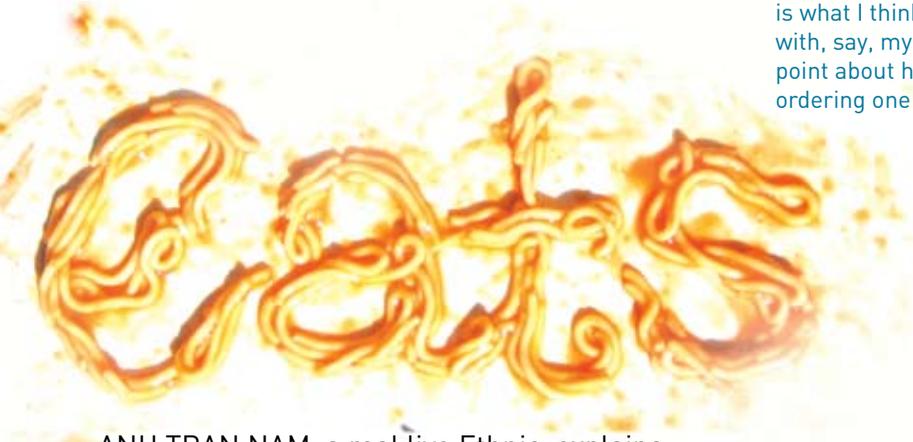
Yummba (the sophisto food court in the Bondi Junction Westfield) and Savion (38 Wairoa Ave, Bondi Beach) – make what I call 'Jewish' falaf. Both places serve super tasty falaf, freshly made and crispy like at Fatima's, but smaller in size and green on the inside. An incision is made in the side of a pita bread pocket, allowing a generous stuffing of falaf and delightful fresh salads (tomato and cucumber, purple cabbage, tabouli) as well as slatherings of delicious dips (hummus, tahini, tomato salsa). I haven't been to Sabbaba (82 Hall St, Bondi Beach), but I hear it's solid as well.

## 2) GOZLEME, TURKISH BREAD, AND PIDE

For any unfortunate souls who have not been acquainted with gozleme, it's a handmade pastry that's a bit like thin pancake with spinach and cheese sprinkled on top and folded over. It's really hard to describe how delicious this simple food is, and it's pretty hard to get your hands on freshly cooked gozleme on a regular basis (not pre-made and heated up gozleme which sits under the window of a lot of kebab stores). Fresh gozleme stalls feature at music festivals (I'd say it was probably one of my highlights of Good Vibes), markets (e.g. Glebe), and other odd places, like food stall days at hospitals. It should cost you around \$7.

Everyone knows what Turkish bread is, but arguably Sydney's best is from the excessively exotically named Sultan's Table (179 Enmore Rd, Enmore). Baked fresh, the bread is crispy on the outside, doughy but not heavy or crumbly on the inside. From memory, it might not actually be under \$10, but whatever the price, the starter of bread and what I call 'rainbow dips' (mixed dips in a variety of striking colours, e.g. yogurt/white, parsley/green, chili/red) is a must.

I'm also really glad to see that pide (pronounced "pee-deh", not "pyde") is becoming increasingly commonplace around Sydney. Most pide that is made fresh is good. I really like the egg, spinach and fetta one at Golden Pide (500 Cleveland St, Surry Hills) but I think last time I was there I didn't see it on the menu, and the potato one at ATA Restaurant (Shop 303, 116-132 Maroubra Rd, Maroubra). Golden Pide and ATA charge about \$10 for their pides.



ANH TRAN NAM, a real live Ethnic, explains where to get the best cheap ethnic foods.

### 3) PASTIZZIS

Pastizzis are crispy, hearty pastries where multiple, delicate layers come together and curl around fillings like ricotta (+/- spinach), lentils, peas, and vegetable curry. At the Original Maltese Café (310 Crown St, Surry Hills) they're super value at around \$1.50 each and very satisfying.

### 3) VIETNAMESE SALAD ROLL

I'd feel a bit self-hating if I didn't give a shout out to Vietnamese food, which is awesome, but unfortunately (for me), generally pretty meat-y so there isn't a huge amount I'd recommend in the way of veggo Viet. The UNSW Vietnamese place, Tropical Green (two locations – in the Roundhouse not too far from the DDR machines, and in the Pavilion above the Mathews Arcade) does a good salad roll. It's basically a mini baguette roll, spread with special buttery mayo (I ask for a generous spread of this) and filled with lettuce, grated carrot, tomato slice, onion and garnished with coriander and splashes of soy sauce. Fresh chilli is optional – I recommend foregoing the fresh chilli and opting for the chili 'satay' instead (the 'satay' will be with the other condiments and looks like an orangey-red oil with a sediment of chilli seeds and lemon grass at the bottom of the jar). Insane bargain times at around \$3.50.

This isn't a super veggo-friendly place (but does have a good chilli and lemongrass tofu dish), but I'd give a shout out to Hai Duong (304 Illawarra Rd, Marrickville) if you want to have some authentic, tasty, very reasonably priced Vietnamese food.

### 4) HANDMADE NOODLES

Speaking of Malaysia, I had this amazing handmade noodle soup in KL the day before I left. On a quest to find something similar (I still haven't found anything like it yet), I eventually found Chinese Noodle Restaurant (Prince Centre, 8 Quay St, Haymarket). Their handmade noodles are doughy and have the right amount of chew, and are stir fried in an XO-type sauce, with an inspired mix of celery, tomato and capsicum. The only size, which only costs \$7, is what I think of as a supersize and would normally share with, say, my boyfriend but he's always trying to prove some point about his appetite and/or masculinity and insists on ordering one just for himself.

### 5) YOUTIAO (CHINESE 'DOUGHNUT'), CONGEE, AND SHALLOT PANCAKE.

My cousin's always making this joke about how Asians are always coming up with ridiculous translations to explain what their food is like to white peeps. His prime example is how youtiao (also called you char kway, or yau ja gwai), was somehow named 'Chinese doughnut' even though doughnuts are circular and sweet, while youtiao is a long stick of deep-fried, savoury bread. The youtiao at Mother Chu's Taiwanese Gourmet (Shop 1, 8688 Dixon St, Haymarket; not be confused with the veggo place on Pitt St) is freshly rolled and fried in store, and juxtaposes crispy and oily sensations on the outside with doughy and chewy textures on the inside, not unlike churros.

Because it's fatty and heavier, you'd only want to eat a couple. I like to offset the greasiness by eating it with congee (both plain or veggo options are good at Mother Chu's, the latter gives you a good dose of Asian greens), but I think I'm the only person among my family and friends who orders congee at restaurants. Congee is a bit like a rice soup – it's simple, hot and satisfying, but also the food my grandmother would make me if I were sick. Kingsford Chinese Restaurant (426 Anzac Pde, Kingsford) make a killer plain congee, which I like to eat with salt, soy sauce, and a bit of fresh chilli and youtiao on the side.

Mother Chu's also make a really good shallot pancake, which is also a bit on the oilier side, but also simple and tasty – it's basically spring onion sprinkled through a flat, circular pastry. Food at Mother Chu's is cheap as chips. You can have good servings of everything I've mentioned for less than \$10.

## 7) BIBIMBAP AND TOFU HOT POT

Bibimbap is basically a bowl of white, short-grain (more gelatinous than long-grain) rice, with assorted veggies (like cucumber, zucchini, mushrooms, bellflower root, spinach and other lovely surprises) laid out separately on top and finished with a fried (or sometimes raw) egg. You then add your preferred amount of mild chilli sauce into the bowl, mix everything all up and then go for it. My favourite variation of bibimbap is dolsot bibimbap, which is served in a hot stone bowl. The bowl is so hot that the rice actually gets fried and you end up with lots of yummy crunchy bits. You can get bibimbap at any of the Korean restaurants on Liverpool St in the city (the stretch between the Hungry Jacks on George St and Museum station), like at the popular Seoul Ria (Level 2, 605-609 George St). Tofu hot pot is another choice Korean dish. Although not under \$10 (it's only slightly over), it's still great at Gourmet Tofu (Level 1, 524 Anzac Pde, Kingsford) where you can get smooth, silken tofu cooked in a light chilli soup with things like kimchi or multiple types of mushroom.

## 8) ROTI CANAI

When I went to Malaysia a couple years ago, everyone kept telling me that the food was great, and although I thought that it was a bit rude to reduce a country's assets down to its cuisine (a bit like saying the best thing about your mum is that she can make a mean chocolate cake), wow were those dudes right about the deliciousness of Malaysian food. The poster boy for Malaysian food is probably roti canai (pronounced "chanai") – it's a little bit like naan bread, but lighter and fluffier, and is dipped in simple, spicy curry sauces. Mamak (15 Goulburn St, Haymarket) is the place to go for roti – the queue outside the restaurant is a bit of a bummer, but you do get to watch dudes making the roti right next to you. The restaurant itself feels pretty authentic (it's small, busy and kind of hot due to the lack of ventilation) save for the price of roti which starts at \$5, seemingly a bargain but about 10 times the price you'd pay in a KL food court.

## 9) INDIAN FOOD

Okay, I'll admit upfront that this 'pick' is a bit lame, but Indian food generally is a vegetarian haven of a cuisine, so it's really hard to single out just one dish. Naan and pappadums, assorted chickpea/potato/eggplant curries, spinach and ricotta, masala dosa (giant crispy lentil pancake stuffed with spice potato), dhals of all kinds of persuasions, mango lassis – what's not to love?

There are a bunch of good places on Cleveland St, Surry Hills (near Bar Cleveland and Mister Stinky's). The place at uni, Jewel of India (in the Mathews Arcade), is great – I recommend the double veggo deal (two curries with rice for \$6.90), in particular the buttery yellow dhal punctuated with bits of coriander, and the potato and cauliflower or potato and eggplant curry. I also quite like Jaipur Sweets (188 Elizabeth St, Sydney – near Central) which is excellent value and has a great range of foods, including masala dosa.

## 10) PORTUGUESE TARTS AND OTHER SWEET TREATS

Dulwich Hill is like the Petite Portugal of Sydney, in part because of Fernandes Patisserie (516 Marrickville Rd, Dulwich Hill), which has killer Portuguese tarts, the pastry embodiment of sweet, custard-y goodness. If you come in the afternoon, though, they're often already sold out (boo-urns).

Speaking of excellent ethnic baked goods, Athens Continental Cake Shop (924 Anzac Pde, Maroubra) has an impressive array of delectable Greek pastries sweets, as does the better known Christopher's Cake Shop (three locations in Surry Hills, Mascot and Kogarah).

For Asian sweets, I'd hit up 85°C Bakery Café (three locations in Chatswood, the city, and Kingsford – 392 Anzac Pde, Kingsford) and get the taro ball with a crumbly egg yolk centre (sounds a bit odd, but it's great). Mochi (pronounced "moh-chee", sticky rice balls with a core of sweet filling, e.g. mashed red bean) is a great Japanese dessert, and you can buy it in packets at Asian groceries, or have fresh mochi from Makoto's (two locations in Chatswood and the city – 119 Liverpool Street, Sydney) where a wedge of fresh strawberry is inserted into the centre along with the usual bean. Pricy but fancy fresh mochi, e.g. green tea, truffle, yogurt mochi, is available at Shu Shin Bou (Miracle Supermarket, Lower Ground World Square Shopping Centre, Sydney). Closer to uni, sometimes you can find homemade mochi at Kaki Lima (3/343 Anzac Pde, Kingsford), which incidentally has an amazing vegaquarian but not vegetarian Penang laksa.



**Antiquated grammar**

The following conversation just evokes so many warm fuzzy feelings for me. I bet they live somewhere cold and Poppa wears slippers, like 24/7, even to the grocery store where the clerk looks at him lovingly, because what is he if not a sweet old man trying to get by on a lousy two-bit pension?

SON: Poppa, I got some news that ain't gonna be pretty.

POPPA: Oh boy.

SON: Oh boy indeed Poppa. I've been kicked out of school.

[Pause]

POPPA: Well if that ain't a blow.

What'll we do with you, boy?

SON: If only I knew, Pop. If only I had a plan. I think I'd better go job huntin'.

POPPA: Yes, boy. I think you'd better had.

**Being overly familiar with other peoples' pets**

I was sitting in the waiting room of my chiropractor, preparing an explanation for why my neck wasn't turning to the right properly (because it's sort of embarrassing to explain that every time I attempt to do some study between 2.00 and 6.00pm I fall asleep WHEREVER I might be studying, even if on an uber-uncomfy couch which then leads me to put my neck out).

And suddenly, two cute dogs emerged from one of the examination rooms. They both had sweet little under-bites from car accidents and were the sort of friendly that even cranky old people can enjoy. So instead of writing up intelligent things about my thesis to impress the other people with fucked up necks sitting next to me (assuming they could turn to the side to perve on my notebook) I found myself grabbing the dog's beautiful velvety ear and just rubbing away at its plush shaggy flappiness.

While enjoying this, I suddenly thought how uncool it would be if this was my dog, or baby, that someone else was drooling over and how I'd probably bitch-stare them out of Fido's personal space. Luckily I was a paying customer and that's the trick, ladeez and gents. If you pay for shit you can get away with anything.

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JESS BELLAMY

*Good morning my sweet honeyed crumpets, my drizzled smatterings of vinegar, my light pepperings of herb salt. It's time for another edition of Bellamy's Barometer and this time it's the Food Edition. I sort of wish I knew that when I wrote a whole riff on how much I love cheese in my last column, but whatevz my friends, that shit is now out in the open and I can breathe easy at last.*

*I can't promise to keep this all about the theme - I CANNOT CONTAIN MY SPECIAL ART LIKE THAT WHEN THERE ARE TOPICAL INTERNATIONAL ISSUES LIKE GRAMMAR TO DISCUSS - but let's give it a burl.*

**Poached eggs**

I went out for eggs the other morning. It was after a big night where I drank a jug and a quarter of beer followed with a jägerbomb chaser that made me want to puke into the trendy potted palms in Zanzibar, so eggs and buttered toast were important for my recovery. I decided to shake things up a little, cos I'm crazy and experimental like WHOA, and ordered 'poached eggs with home-made baked beans'. Let me tell you a lil something:

- Home-made baked beans are chewy and grainy and the sauce is always underwhelmingly saltless. And I don't know about you guys, but salt is a puhretty major part of all my meals.

- This breakfast was a 'special' on the new Autumn Menu. Never order a breakfast that is seasonal. Stick to the year-round basics, my friends.

- These poached eggs were improperly cooked, and not pretty. The white inside was pure liquid goo, the yolk was a hard little tumour, the whole thing jiggled with a scarcely-contained malevolence. The eggs reminded me a bit of that episode of Bondi Vet when the hyper over-sexed bulldog has to have his balls removed and replaced with these synthetic testicles shipped in from the USA. I felt like I was cutting open dog balls and eating them. I AM SO UNCOOL WITH THAT. THERE IS NO WAY I COULD BE ANYTHING BUT 'UNCOOL' ABOUT THAT SITUATION.

# *'University of Yesteryear'*

ROGER DAVIS

Mature aged students often arrive at UNSW with expectations formed by the 'University of Yesteryear'. For older mature aged students the changes in universities in the past twenty or thirty years are very striking. The focus at UNSW now often seems to be exclusively on providing employment qualifications.

Nowhere is the chasm between then and now more apparent than in tutorials. Talk to contemporary students and they will tell you just how embarrassing it is to sit in a group with a mature aged student who has done all the readings and is keen to share their thoughts with the group. Talk to almost any mature aged student and they will tell you how little they want to dominate the discussion and how much they wish everyone was as prepared to contribute. When tutorials had less than a dozen students it was hard for anyone to hide – everyone was drawn into the discussion and it was very apparent if someone had not done the preparation.

At sixty years of age I have reversed the usual order by following my three sons and daughter-in-law to study at UNSW. After retiring from a career in international management I decided to formally pursue my passion for reading history.

***“The hardest part of being a mature-age student is deciding what not to read and when to speak up.”***

Not surprisingly, I have noticed some big changes since I last attended a university over thirty years ago. One of the most exciting things about Australia in the late sixties and early seventies was that we actually took politics and social activism seriously, whether it was the Vietnam War, anti Apartheid, electing the ALP in 1972, the constitutional crisis in 1975, a quest for more student involvement in running the institution or some other issue where we thought we could make a difference. Whatever happened to student activism? Did it go with compulsory student unionism or was that just the last nail in the coffin? Academic staff were openly political too – I can remember some great stoushes between commo and conservative economists.

Whilst the internationalisation of Australian universities brings many great benefits, maybe it's the combination of HECS, the focus on getting the right job qualification, domestic political disillusionment, or internationalisation, that means universities are no longer Australia's hotbeds for growing political and social activists. I also feel university life no longer seems to place much emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge out of intellectual curiosity (apart from compelling largely resentful students to take General Education courses).

It is challenging to be the oldest student in the class, usually by several decades and to relearn studying and writing skills. The hardest part is deciding what not to read and when to speak up. It is really tough retiring as a senior executive and becoming an entry level student at a massive institution like UNSW where it is easy to feel more like a serial number rather than a person; but almost all of my teachers have been willing to invest time in people who are making a serious effort.

Despite the sacrifices all are agreed that, as one mature-age student puts it, “The opportunity to exercise one's brain after years of stagnation is one that increases one's feeling of self-worth like no other.” Another confides: “Connecting with other mature aged students was really important. I knew I wasn't alone, others had already done it or were doing it and they were surviving and going on to bigger and better things, and when the going got hard the group encouraged me to believe in myself and to tough it out.”

Mature aged students still find university life offers a range of activities from sport to mentoring but they are generally not into the wild partying and rock band stuff. The final word belongs to a student older than UNSW itself: “You may see us as dull, but they call us mature for a reason.”

# THE SHARKS!

## *SURFERS WORRIED BY INCREASE IN SHARK-SPOTTING HELICOPTER SIGHTINGS*

SAMUEL MAY

Surfers and other frequent beach-goers are worried about an increase in the number of media helicopters spotted over Sydney coastal waters.

Milsy, a surfer from North Narrabeen, said "In all my years surfing I've never seen so many shark patrols in my life. Yesterday morning a few of the crew spotted the channel 10 heli in the morning, and then today the channel 7 helicopter appeared right in the middle of the beach, in the middle of the day! They just hover around filming, like they're waiting for Jaws to appear and eat a lifesaver so they can put it on the evening news. It's out of hand."

Skazza, a bodyboarder from Mona Vale, agreed. "The government should be doing more to protect beach-goers from knee-jerk reactions and media frenzy at the slightest hint of an increase in shark activity. Ever since that kid got attacked up at Av, it's like, never mind you've got a one in five chance of being glassed in the head at Mona Vale Hotel on a Saturday night, we should all be worried about SHARKS."

Still, this illogical fear of fins does have its advantages, according to Milsy. "Mate, I went out this morning, and there were 3 people in the water. You'd think no one wanted to go swimming in a murky rivermouth at dawn by themselves!"



## *SHARKS SHOULD BE ABLE TO EAT WHATEVER THEY LIKE*

MATT WARD

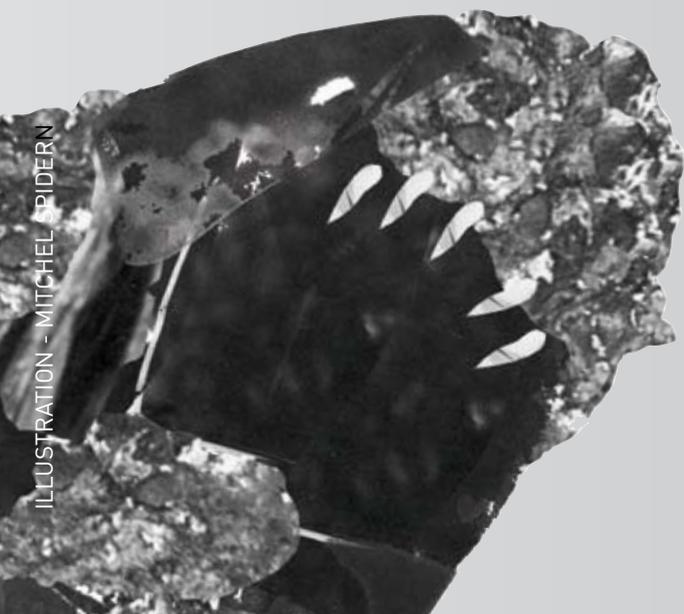
Lately the media has been calling for an increase in the quota of sharks that can be caught by hunters. This is an alarming trend as sharks are vital to the ocean ecology. Sharks are what is known as a keystone predator, and eliminating these predators from the ecosystem would have disastrous effects. Let's look at some examples of what could happen.

In the absence of predators, the animals that would normally constitute their prey are able to breed and increase in number. The Bull Shark, one of the three species known to attack humans (along with the Tiger and the Great White) commonly feeds on rays. Eliminating sharks would cause a rise in the number of rays. This would make swimming more dangerous.

Everything in the ecosystem would be thrown out of balance. Populations of herbivorous animals could rise, leading to increased consumption of material such as algae, sea grass and phytoplankton. These constitute the first trophic level of the food web. Reducing this vital food source would have a domino-effect on everything else.

There would also be less competition for other predators. Populations of these alternate predators could rise, and yet again the rest of the ecosystem would be affected. The alternate predators might be more specialised in attacking particular species, driving those numbers down and eventually having similar effects on the entire ecosystem.

Furthermore, animals such as lampreys have symbiotic relationships to sharks and by eliminating their hosts you eliminate them too.





# THE NSW GOVERNMENT'S 2AM LOCKOUT IS STUPID, DANGEROUS AND WRONG

SEAN LAWSON WITH NICOLE BATTEN

When a government's policy agenda has been dictated from the editorial rooms of the Telegraph and Herald for years now (draconian P-plate laws, removal of double jeopardy rules, anti-bikie freedom of association restrictions), they're going to do some stupid and knee-jerk things. However, even by the dismal standards by which we now judge the hacks and goons that are running this state into the ground, the current 2am lockout policy is wrong-headed idiocy.

The justification for this latest suite of anti-fun laws comes from a jump in the number of press reports about glassings, set against a backdrop of general moral panic about binge drinking, as though we're the first generation of Australians who like to drink heavily. After one too many reports on *Today Tonight*, the government identified a list of 48 "dangerous" venues to be subject to special rules restricting their trade.

As well as the lockout banning people from entering these premises after 2am, there's also a ban on cocktails and other strong drinks after midnight, a ban on glassware, and a 10 minute "time out" policy. That means for ten minutes every hour, they can't serve booze, in a move that seems expressly designed to cause bar staff to get abused and shouted at.

Naturally, Star City Casino and any number of pokies-dominated venues are exempt from the lockout. After all, those places aren't just frequented by young people who like scary things like alcopops and cocktails, and hey, I suppose the poor bastards emptying their life savings directly into Macquarie Street's coffers are at least sitting there peacefully.

## PUNISHED FOR REPORTING CRIMES

Supposedly the list is based on numbers of assaults, but the statistics don't bear it out. This is best illustrated on Oxford St, where among the venues that get locked-down are the very established and generally peaceful gay bars like Stonewall and the Oxford Hotel (yet seedy dives like the Courthouse escape notice). At the Oxford Hotel, only 5 of the 27 reported assaults happened inside the bar, the rest were merely reported there, or they happened outside. It's a similar story at Stonewall. In both cases, a lot of this violence is actually anti-gay violence that merely gets reported by these venues, and yet the bars are being targeted and punished for being "dangerous".

The policy has identified an arbitrary list of licensees to hit with draconian special rules, which restrain their trade and ability to compete with other venues. Some places have reported as much as a 50% reduction in takings. Furthermore, the list doesn't even accurately reflect the "most dangerous" venues in NSW. Some places seem to have just been thrown in there to give it a more state-wide character – bars in Mona Vale, Campbelltown and Albury, for example, simply should not have been on any such list of problem venues. So the State Government has basically destroyed their business based on some deeply flawed statistics from last year which include incidents that didn't even happen inside the premises. One wonders if there is any plan for compensation to the owners or their employees.

The policy is so fucked up that it could actually discourage venues from reporting assaults and other crimes to police. Since the list is allegedly based on assault numbers, it would be rational and sensible for places on the list to stop reporting assaults, thus making them look safer and helping them get removed from the list. Indeed, Don Weatherburn from the NSW government's own Bureau of Crime Statistics says this is exactly what might have happened, and is now instead looking at emergency room admissions to judge the actual levels of violence.

**IT BOGGLES THE MIND HOW ANYONE CAN THINK THE SOLUTION TO DRUNKEN VIOLENCE IN THE STREETS IS PUTTING MORE DRUNK PEOPLE IN THE STREETS.**

**ENDLESS PROBLEMS**

Ignoring for a moment the poor targeting of the lock-down, the idea wouldn't work even if it was better targeted. First and foremost, there's the loss of revenue from less people entering, which threatens hospitality jobs. Patrons who leave can't be replaced, so you end up with empty venues with crap atmosphere and nobody spending any money. Second, shift workers and hospitality staff can't enjoy a night out after work, even the poor fuckers who've just spent the last few hours getting abused during the 10 minute time outs. That's just deeply unfair. The third big problem is outside venues when people rush to get in before 2am, or find themselves rudely barred from venues if they're late. Too many people on the streets at the same time leads to violence and tension over limited numbers of buses and taxis. Anyone who's ever tried to get a cab in Perth or Canberra around closing time can attest to this.

It boggles the mind how anyone can think the solution to drunken violence in the streets is putting more drunk people in the streets. Melbourne scrapped an identical policy when this blindingly obvious prediction was paired with empirical evidence – the lockout policy was actually increasing violence. As well as increasing the numbers of drunk people outside, the lockout is also actually making bars less safe on the inside. Given that it's killing revenue, it is making staff reductions necessary, including security reductions. The Exchange Hotel, which runs 6 venues on Oxford Street like 34B and Phoenix, reports that it has reduced security by 40% and can now barely afford to have both door security and inside security.

So the lockout working? Well, Nathan Rees had the balls to actually claim that the violence had been reduced because of the policy, but this is a pretty dodgy misinterpretation of the figures. First, as we've seen, the data from Melbourne showed an increase in assaults, and it's hard to see why the exact same policy they just dumped wouldn't have the same impact here in Sydney. Second, the period in question has been quiet generally, not just in the locked-out venues. The

Sydney Morning Herald reported in February that violent crime of all types was on the decrease, so even if there is a correlation with the policy, that ain't no causation. Third, the cops have been out in force alongside the lockout – one assumes this is because of the obvious point that locking people out makes them angry and more prone to violence. Finally, of course, we can't rule out the likelihood that bars are almost certainly reporting less assaults now that they have a clear monetary incentive to do so in order to get off the problem hotel hit list.

**WHERE TO NOW?**

It's difficult to tell what the current plans are, given the State government's propensity for rapid about-faces and back downs. The SMH reported back in February that the lockout was being scrapped, but it's still in force at the moment. The touted replacement Safety Star Rating System seems intended to accomplish the same restrictive measures on "problem hotels" by stealth, but it's also been reported as stillborn because of the bureaucratic nightmare it would create. Meanwhile, Sydney City Council has made a submission to the NSW government proposing a blanket 3am lockout across the entire state, extending a stupid, dangerous half-measure into a stupid, repressive blanket measure.

This fight is far from over. When the Victorian government tried the exact same bullshit in Melbourne, the city almost went into open revolt. People rallied in defence of their nightlife and their bars. The protests forced a back down. Here I've seen no such groundswell. There's been a lot of bitching, but the only organised movement seems to be the gay venues on Oxford Street, as well as the Hotels Association's "Don't punish us" campaign. Maybe we're lazy, or maybe we're just more used to shit night-life and arbitrary authority up here.



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# Contemplating the Snozzcumber

— Food and the GFC

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ALISON O'CONNOR

The "GFC" sounds like it should come with its own ominous theme tune. I haven't seen Fox News in a while, so perhaps it already does. I am not unsympathetic to the consequences of the Global Financial Crisis, but the acronym seems closer to KAOS than SPECTRE.

We are urged to be 'fiscally responsible', to 'tighten our belts', 'keep an eye on our purse strings' and other clichés with helpful warnings about limiting spending. We are told not to spend \$4 on a cup of coffee and to cook meals at home. It all puts me in mind of Roald Dahl's BFG and his diet of snozzcumbers. This is not to say all home-cooked meals are like this vegetable of questionable origin, but I have one friend has been contacted by the Department of Defence regarding the weaponisation potential of their last attempt at cooking rice.

The question of food in time of financial hardship poses interesting ethical questions for food providers, assuming they are interested in ethics at all. Given that food is a necessity, do food retailers have a moral responsibility to keep prices affordable? I'm not suggesting Michelin Star quality produce is an essential provision for households, but as an industry do food outlets owe the same loyalty to their customers that they hope their customers will show them? Consumers are irate about banks not passing on interest rate cuts, but surely price gouging by food providers is an equal concern.



## GOUGING THE POOR

Earlier this year, McDonalds announced a plan that would raise the prices of meals in some of Australia's more disadvantaged areas. Rather than basing prices on overhead costs and expenses, they are moving to a "demand-based pricing system", which includes socio-economic factors in determining price at a location. In Sydney, the franchises that are most likely to be affected are Campbelltown, Doonside, Engadine, Epping, Fairfield, Gosford, Greenacre, Hurlstone Park and Liverpool. The increases have been in two stages, in the vain hope that consumers won't notice. The second round is due in May and includes raising the price of Happy Meals by 16.5%. This is discriminatory and it increases the cost for demographics which can least afford any price hike.

Eating at home does not avoid the effect of questionable business practices by supermarkets and chain grocery stores. In the last few years, key supermarket chains were accused of monopolistic and oligopolistic trading practices, here and overseas. A common business practice in England is for supermarkets to buy up land outside towns to prevent competitors from opening outlets whilst in Australia, Woolworths and Coles own 80% of the retail grocery market. They have the capacity to set prices on products and there have been problems with unequal pricing (particularly in rural versus urban locations) and allegations of price fixing. Doesn't the fact that food is a necessity bestow higher moral obligations on companies in the industry, or is this incompatible with their corporate responsibility to make profits for shareholders? Surely there has to be a requirement to keep food affordable.

These oligopolistic practices highlight a separate problem – the demise of the local grocer and smaller operators. In Maleny, Queensland, residents were so unhappy with Woolworths opening there that a "shop local" campaign and boycott included 90,000 brochures being sent back to the reply paid address by residents. This action began in 2006 and is ongoing. However, the question is whether this can be sustained when people's spending is under pressure.

## PAYING THE ETHICS PREMIUM

The onus is not only on the corporation. Despite how tight the financial pinch feels, there are ethical dilemmas facing the consumer too. Buying Fair Trade where available is far from standard practice. My exercise regime used to be based around the Basser Stairs sprint when Fair Trade coffee was only available on Lower Campus. Now there are options which don't leave me wheezing but because I'm still partial to the smiley face on my mocha, the trek continues. On a broader level though, this is a critical moment for Fair Trade products; will people still buy them when the cost difference cuts deeper?

There are limitations to individual capacity to buy Fair Trade. It is difficult to demand that consumers stand on principle when sometimes shopping for the cheaper homebrands is necessary. As students, we're already on low incomes with restricted hours available for extra work, to the extent that there are student union campaigns to raise Centrelink payments and provide free breakfasts on campus because students were going hungry.

How closely do people examine Fair Trade products? Use of Fair Trade as a branding exercise to attract customers, without adhering to the underlying principles, is a problem. Tesco in the UK is the first of a number of stores to stock homebrand Fair Trade – seemingly a good compromise, but homebrand Fair Trade does not allow manufacturers to share in the profits like other fair trade brands.

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*Consumers are irate about banks not passing on interest rate cuts, but surely price gouging by food providers is an equal concern.*

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## SQUEEZING PRODUCERS

In this demand for affordability, there are the producers to consider as well. Exploitation may be more extreme in the developing world, but does not only happen there. Squeezing suppliers is common practice in the grocery industry, and the methods of control include: locking suppliers into exclusive contracts, threatening to de-list them to gain more favourable terms and grouping together to pressure suppliers. This final tactic is often in violation of monopoly laws but the global supply chain makes prosecution difficult. ASDA, an English brand expanding into Australia, is currently reviewing all 30,000 of their products to find cheaper suppliers, and opening up new bidding procedures which give them greater rights to de-list suppliers.

We have competing interests here. We want cheaper prices for good quality food, but we don't want exploitation as the basis for this affordability. We can choose Fair Trade where possible but boycotts are impractical when problems are industry wide. There is a limit to how far we can disengage from the industry – co-op programmes or not.

Food is a necessity and although companies involved in production and sale of food don't have to become (gasp) socialist, the fact that they deal in an essential product means they have an inherent obligation to corporate social responsibility. They have a dependent, often captive, market in tough times and when they indulge in price gouging they are the embodiment of the multi-national corporation bogie-man. They should walk a delicate line between exploiting producers and consumers, and making a legitimate profit. As consumers, it is time for us to evaluate what our purchasing power means and how to use it to best effect for everyone.

# FOOD

## FACTS & FICTIONS

EMILY BEK explores some popular myths about food and health.

### ▶ 'A GOOD DIET CAN STOP ME GETTING SICK'

The best way to avoid getting diseased is to stay away from sick people. However, a healthy immune system can respond to lots of different pathogens if you do get exposed to germs. The effects of diet on immune function are not particularly clear, but you should probably make sure you get enough zinc as zinc deficiency is linked to immune impairment.

Some scientists argue that excessive household cleanliness hinders the development of healthy immune systems. They argue that people, especially kids, should expose their immune systems to a variety of stimuli. This is true to an extent, but it's also important to be safe. Some germs are much more dangerous than others. A hierarchy of germs, from most dangerous to least, would probably go: sick people, germs from human faeces, mouth or faecal germs from the family pet, and then germs from uncooked meat. Avoid these but don't go overboard with the disinfectant elsewhere.

Finally, make sure your vaccinations are up to date – they train your immune system to respond to different diseases without getting sick.

### ▶ 'PROCESSED FOODS INCREASE YOUR RISK OF CANCER'

This is a tricky question. It is not the processing so much as the ingredients in processed foods, which can vary. Some old fashioned preservatives for curing meats can produce carcinogenic nitrosamines. There have also been allegations that the sweetener aspartame is carcinogenic, but these have not been confirmed by scientific study. And there is certainly a link between processed foods and obesity, which increases the risk of cancer.

Eating deep fried food definitely increases your risk of cancer. When oil is held at a high temperature for frying it decomposes to form aldehydes, which are carcinogenic. High rates of colorectal cancer in the USA are linked to the consumption of fried foods. If you must eat chips etc., try to find somewhere upmarket where the oil is regularly changed.

### ▶ 'EATING THE RIGHT FOODS CAN PROTECT YOU FROM CANCER'

There is no conclusive proof to date that any particular food protects against cancer. However, because cancer is the result of mutations caused by free radicals, it is important to keep up your body's antioxidant defenses against free radicals. The main components of these defenses are vitamin C and vitamin E, which work together, and various enzymes including glutathione peroxidase which requires selenium, and super oxide dismutases which require manganese.

There are various other antioxidants found in berries, tea, coffee, chocolate, and red wine. Contrary to popular belief, there is not yet any firm evidence that these foods have a significant effect on cancer rates. It is also important to look after your immune system. This provides your body's first defense against cancer by killing cells that are starting to show signs of abnormalities. Patients with AIDS or taking immuno-suppressants experience higher rates of cancer.

### ▶ 'ORGANIC FOODS HAVE MORE NUTRIENTS.'

The jury is still out on this one. Studies suggest there is no significant difference between organic and conventional foods in terms of micronutrients. However, organic leafy vegetables and potatoes seem to have slightly higher vitamin C levels. Animal feeding experiments conducted to date have been

small and flawed, but have indicated slight improvements to animal health and reproductive performance when fed organic foods.

Nutrient quantity is determined primarily by soil composition, so even organic food can be deficient in a nutrient depending on the soil in the area it was grown. In parts of China, erosion has caused the soil to become deficient in minerals such as selenium. Unfortunately, this has led to residents of the Keshan region suffering symptoms such as weakening of the heart, also known as 'Keshan disease'.

If you think organic farming practices are important for social or environmental reasons, then buy organic. Remember, though, that nutritional content really depends on where rather than how food is grown.



**'YOU DON'T NEED TO TAKE SUPPLEMENTS IF YOU EAT A BALANCED DIET'**

This is true for most people in most areas. It is much harder to over-consume nutrients in foods than it is to overuse supplements, so if you can avoid supplements that's good (and saves money!). If you do use supplements, be careful no to exceed the RDI of each nutrients. In particular, harmful results have been described from over consumption of vitamins A, D, E or K, calcium, magnesium, iron, and others.



**'YOU CAN NEVER EAT TOO MUCH FRUIT / FRUIT JUICE'**

Fruit is very healthy, but it contains a lot of energy meant to help the seeds it carries to germinate. Sugar and calories from fruit add to your energy intake and can make you put on weight just like calories from lollies. Try to consume the fruit that is in season, as it is unnatural to be eating fruit all year round. If you are trying to lose weight, vegetables generally have much less sugar than fruit.

Fruit juice is a less healthy way to consume fruit, because you get all of the sugar without the fibre. The sugar can be bad for your teeth as well as your waistline. However, fruit or fruit juice is still much better for you than any junk food!



**'IF I TAKE ANTIBIOTICS TOO MUCH I WILL BECOME RESISTANT'**

OK, so this one is almost a joke but I overheard someone say it on the bus so I thought I'd better put it in. The answer, of course, is 'fiction'. Antibiotics target bacteria and it is the bacteria that may become resistant to the drug. Antibiotic resistant bacteria are an increasing problem caused by the over prescription and incorrect administration of antibiotics. The resultant development of resistant bugs puts the whole of society at risk.

Avoid antibiotics where possible. Certainly they shouldn't be taken for viral infections, where they won't help anyway. But take them if you have a bacterial infection and your doctor says you need them.

NUTRIENT	BEST SOURCE
protein	Meat, eggs, milk, pulses
selenium	Brazil nuts
iron	Oysters, red meat, parsley, wheatgerm, iron-fortified cereals.
vitamin C (Ascorbic acid)	Kiwi fruit, parsley, guava
calcium	Cheese
iodine	Iodised salt
zinc	Oysters
vitamin E (alpha tocopherol)	Wheatgerm oil, almonds, hazelnuts, tuna.

For the sake of everyone's health, it is essential that you ALWAYS finish your prescribed course and MAKE SURE that the infection has gone when you're finished. If you just take enough antibiotics to kill 95% of your infection, the remaining 5% of bugs will be the ones most resistant to the antibiotic. If they grow again you could pass antibiotic-resistant bacteria on to other people.



**'IS THE FIVE SECOND RULE TRUE?'**

Every year research that "first makes people laugh, and then makes them think" is recognised by the Ig-Nobel Prizes. In 2004 the Ig-Nobel Prize for public health was awarded to Jillian Clarke. Her research found that 56% of men and 70% of women surveyed were familiar with the five-second rule. Through experiments she determined that even brief exposure to E. Coli on a tile could contaminate a variety of foods.

A more thorough study in 2006 found it could take less than five seconds for bread to be contaminated with salmonella from a tile or carpet. However, leaving the food in contact with the surface for a minute increased the risk of contamination tenfold. The five second rule would not appear to be true, but it is better that a one minute rule!

Five seconds is actually quite a long time. In most circumstances where the 'five second rule' is claimed, the food has been on the ground for less than a second. Obviously it depends how dirty that particular patch of ground is. Food in contact with relatively clean ground for a very short time is probably edible, and if it has picked up pathogens they might just keep up the strength of you immune system!



# The Sensible Meat Eater

BART CUMMINGS

Eye fillet steaks cooked medium-rare, thin BBQ sausages, hot chicken rolls and Hot Ogalo Burgers....my goodness, these are some of my favourite things. Behind the scenes, terrified cattle are painfully slaughtered in abattoirs after farting more greenhouse emissions into the atmosphere than all motor vehicle exhaust combined. Chickens spend their lives in extremely small cages and are lucky to be successfully stunned before their throats are mechanically cut. Even if factory farming were totally painless for such animals, we kill and eat creatures which in some cases have as much capacity for pleasure and as much intelligence as a human infant. I've known these facts since I read the introduction to Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* five years ago. It has been popular knowledge for over thirty years. Nevertheless, I and many people I know have continued to buy meat on a quite regular basis. Are we bad people? How do they justify them? It's a paradox I'm not quite sure I've solved.

For a considerable number of people, eating animals just isn't necessary to keep up one's health (going vegan may be a different matter, since we probably do need eggs and dairy). With so many alternative sources of nutrition available to us, the only reason most of us eat animals is because they taste good. In defence of this luxury I have heard three types of justification, one less openly admitted than the rest. The first is that eating certain animals is good for their species and the ecosystem as a whole. The second argument is a kind of broad resistance to politicisation of our personal everyday decisions. And the third, most confronting, defence is that a sensibly self-interested individual should not be afraid to accept a certain level of violence in the world.

Meat eating is good for the animal kingdom, I have been told. Since humans are at the top of the food chain, any time we attempt to disrupt the order of nature by refusing to eat meat we are threatening the delicate complexity of the global ecosystem. I'm not sure I belong on the food chain, but I'm not a biologist. Another sort of argument which seems to have a loose family relation to the anti-abortion lobby goes like this: without the massive animal harvesting industry, there would be millions less chickens, sheep and cattle. Those millions would never get the chance to enjoy life at all, if we didn't want to eat them. Never mind that before conception they had no interest in life or anything for that matter.

The second kind of defence ignores the animal rights aspect altogether. It is a popular resistance against the way in which animal activists politicise our personal decisions, such as the decision to buy a hot chicken roll with extra gravy. I have not encountered many people who will say "they are only animals so who cares." But I have encountered many who do say that vegetarians are actually often people who just happen not to like meat that much, and only jump on the Peter Singer bandwagon so that they can feel self-righteous. One person I know trialled vegetarianism for a year purely so that he could enjoy "mounting a high horse" for once (and only once) in his life.

A prevalent depiction of animal rights activists (aka vegetarians) is that they are unreasonable party poopers – "psychopaths" even, as one friend put it. We don't like to be reminded that our seemingly innocuous daily decisions represent a serious moral commitment to the death of animals. In our culture the default position is to eat meat – you can know all the facts and the reasons why not, but until you've made a decision either way you will probably be thinking about it while chewing on a ham sandwich. And nobody except the 'psychopaths' will even blink.

In my own case, I've often succumbed to this illusion of interim moral neutrality while I decide either way – but I would privately support my meat eating with the further defence that there are many big problems in the world that have equally serious claims on my attention, and since I can't attend to them all why should I privilege animal rights over, say, the global AIDS epidemic? It's a convenient sort of defeatism – especially since I could use the same argument to avoid doing anything about anything.

There is a third and final type of defence which I accept, and it is one which confronts the rights of animals head on. I accept that for some people meat tastes so good that without it their lives would not be fulfilling. For me it's rice pudding and caramel slices, but for others it's pork dumplings: a person's favourite food is sacrosanct and if that means that an animal – treated humanely, and not from a species that has much intelligence and/or awareness of itself such as, say, an octopus – has to be slaughtered, then so be it because human happiness should come first.

Meat eating is good for the animal kingdom, I have been told.

As an observation of human nature, I agree that it is true to say that people tend to privilege their immediate interests ahead of their theoretical, 'ethical' selves. For example we could all afford to donate up to 15% of our income to charity (yes, let's be honest – even

many students could afford this), but most people don't because it would mean giving up things which they need in order to feel happy and good about themselves: new skinny jeans, a ticket to the Randwick Ritz, perhaps the latest version of Warcraft. The same principle applies to our appetite for meat because, even though the value system of a conscientious person would conflict with robbing an animal of life let alone freedom from torture, we really like meat and it really makes us happy. A friend of mine even becomes happy when he sees some other (for some reason obese) fellow openly enjoying a hamburger! Why not be honest about this – our values seem to be fixed and clear, but in practice we constantly compromise them in order to accommodate our own happiness.

These are the defences of meat-eating, but given how weak most of them are relative to the overwhelming counter-arguments, there must be a reason other than self-interest that has insulated the meat industry from change. It was in the majority's interest to continue African slavery in the United Kingdom in 1807, but that didn't stop Parliament from passing the Slave Trade Act which abolished the practice. The Abolition movement persuaded almost everybody that they should align their values with their deeds and give up the benefits of slavery. Why hasn't the animal rights movement been as successful? Probably because we all have a stake in eating meat – nearly everyone likes it – whereas not every British citizen owned a slave in 1807. And also because, whereas the black liberation movement had direct victims of slavery such as Olaudah Equiano heading the campaign, animals themselves cannot argue for their cause. They need human proxies to argue for them, which may be partly why the campaign is often viewed – quite wrongly, I think – as self-righteous. In a recent speech on human rights law, former High Court Justice Michael Kirby speculated that animal rights might be one of the next great frontiers in legal reform. If he is right, then those who eat meat will need to start rehearsing their defence of the habit a bit more candidly than they currently do.



#### WELFARE OFFICER

##### *Matthew Ward*

OK guys, lots of exciting things have been happening so I will keep it brief. The National Day of Action has been and gone and it went great. A big thanks to all who took part. We got some good media attention and the word out that student income support is currently not good enough. Then we had Welfare Week which despite some minor setbacks went well. I hope those of you that took part had a good time. I also want to take this opportunity to thank Arc's student support services department for all their support because it would not have happened without them. So as you all know the budget is coming up and if we want positive changes to income support we need to be visible. If you want to know more about any of the other goings on of the Welfare Department, drop me an e-mail at [welfare@arc.unsw.edu.au](mailto:welfare@arc.unsw.edu.au)

#### PRESIDENT

##### *Charishma Kaliyanda*

The SRC is a busy space right now as a whole lot is going on in the higher ed sector – the VSU Legislation is currently being debated in parliament and the Federal Government has been incrementally releasing their response to the Bradley Review over the last few weeks.

The Government has indicated that it will support deregulating the number of places universities can offer in courses, or the 'voucher' system. What will that mean for students? The Bradley model means that instead of the Government giving universities funding for a set number of students per course, demand for a course and therefore how many students a university accepts into a course would determine its funding. This could degrade the quality of our learning further (course overcrowding anyone?) and slash diversity within course offerings.

The Bradley Review also advocates for the restructuring of Youth Allowance. With 1 in 8 students regularly skipping meals to keep up with educational costs, it's about time!

With so much going on, so many issues to get passionate about, the SRC offers the space for your opinions to be heard. Get involved in a collective or campaign by emailing an office bearer or just showing up to meetings.

## ETHNIC AFFAIRS OFFICERS

### *Aaron Chan & Celeste White*

Hi guys! Week 3 was Harmony Week, and a mega week for the Ethnocultural Department. We successfully ran an Indigenous dance performance on the Monday, a forum on the Israeli-Gaza conflict on the Tuesday, and a sample screening of short-films from the Harmony Film Festival 2008 on the Thursday. We would like to thank you for your participation in these activities.

We also run the Cultural Diversity Collective (CDC) which is a weekly social forum where a variety of ethnocultural issues are discussed and debated. So, if you are interested in combating racism, promoting cultural diversity and encouraging dialogues on relevant issues, please get involved. The CDC meets every Monday from 1-2pm at the Quad Lawn! If you can't find us simply give Aaron (0413 918 355) or Celeste (0425 259 068) a call. It is a great opportunity to meet new people and talk about important issues.

To contact your SRC Ethnocultural representatives for 2009, simply shoot an e-mail to Aaron Chan at [a.chan@arc.unsw.edu.au](mailto:a.chan@arc.unsw.edu.au) or Celeste White at [c.white@arc.unsw.edu.au](mailto:c.white@arc.unsw.edu.au). We are also free to discuss questions, queries and ideas on Thursdays from 2-3pm and 4-5pm.

Have fun, stay safe and hope to see you guys around the campus!

## INDIGENOUS STUDENT OFFICER

### *Warren Roberts*

Most of you are now back into study mode, and are well on your way doing assignments. As an Indigenous student who has been here since 2004, I know the struggle and sometimes frustration to keep up with reading, essay papers, and presentations.

Throughout this semester there are going to be great opportunities to see more Indigenous performances and speakers on campus. Look out for posters going around for upcoming events and if you would like to help out you can contact me at the Arc or you can send me an email.

Finally a message for both new and old Indigenous students on campus: I wish all Indigenous students encouragement as you take up the challenge of a University degree. Don't get me wrong, my time at UNSW has been fun, enjoyable and challenging. I congratulate all the Indigenous students in furthering your education at UNSW. Furthermore congratulations to those Indigenous students who are at the final stages of their degree – I wish you all the best for the future.

Indigenous students have a great opportunity to make a difference in Australia for future Indigenous students to come. I think sometimes we forget to congratulate each other as we take up such a challenge. I encourage you to once in a while congratulate people for their contribution and efforts in all their circumstances; it's great that people are willing to give it a go.

## POSTGRADUATE OFFICER

### *Georgie Smith*

Hi postgrads. It's been a busy month here in the PG Department. I've welcomed three (yes three!!) new PG Councillors to the fold, which means more dedicated folks to organise events and advocate for matters that need changing - all on your behalf.

An issue's crossed my desk recently that I'd like your opinion on - food. We all need it, but who can find it after 5pm? If you're like me you've got a reason to be on campus after hours (classes, research, peace & quiet). But if, like me, you rarely have the time/organisation to bring food with you, you've probably found yourself spending a ravenous evening stalking the halls looking for a vending machine. No fun! I'm working on a plan to change this, so if you want to tell me your experiences, that'd help a lot. Email me at [postgrad@arc.unsw.edu.au](mailto:postgrad@arc.unsw.edu.au).

Remember: chill out with a free movie and snacks, held in odd-numbered Weeks, Wednesdays 6pm, PG Lounge, Ground Floor the Blockhouse. Bring your mates!

# IN DEFENCE OF WHALING

SEAN LAWSON

Okay. The Australian consensus against whaling is virtually universal. All our political parties agree on the issue: Japan are a bunch of evil bastards who gleefully murder Free Willy and drink his salty whale blood, or something. Hell, even John fucking Howard has joined the moist-eyed concern party in defence of the gentle giants of the deep. 300 000 people have joined the hilariously melodramatic Facebook group "Fuck off Japan, leave the whales alone!!!" while the two pro-whaling groups I could find had 135 and 38 people, and they both might be parodies. But you know what? It's a bunch of rot. There's a pretty good case for a sustainable commercial Minke whale hunting industry, and the entire Australian position seems to be based on a mixture of ignorance and pure squeamishness.

First of all, how many of the 300 000 bogans in the "fuck off Japan" Facebook group know that Norway and Iceland also hunt whales? Hell, Japan learnt modern whale-hunting from Norway during the 19th century. Not only do those vicious Viking fuckers up north kill whales, but they do it commercially, not scientifically. Why does Japan get all the attention when Iceland kills 250 minke whales a year, or roughly one per 1000 Icelanders?

Second. The whales being hunted are simply not endangered. Contrary to what many people seem to think, "the whale" is not one species but many. The Blue whale is critically endangered. The Right whale is also threatened. However, the vast majority of whales Japan and others kill are Minke Whales, and it's these which will be the basis for any future commercial industry. Minkes number 800 000 or more (there are 4 times as many as Minke whales as Icelandic people) and have never been endangered. Japan kills less than 500 a year, and even before the commercial whaling ban the Japanese fleet killed about 2000 minke whales per year. That's about 0.25% of the total Minke population. For comparison, Australia's annual kangaroo quota is 2 million of 25 million, or roughly 8% of total numbers. We monsters.

In 1986, the International Whaling Commission passed a moratorium on the whaling industry, which meant a ban except for a few exceptions for some Arctic indigenous badasses who hunt small numbers of whales in hella dangerous little kayaks. As with all things the IWC does, the vote was a bit of a joke. A bunch of rich western nations in the thrall of the new wave of environmentalism found a way they could take a consequence-free stand on a green issue. They mobbed the vote and Japan lacked small countries to bribe for their vote in its favour (something they're working hard to rectify as they stack pliant and bribeable new members like Mongolia into the Commission). Norway and Iceland just opted out and kept on hunting, but for some reason Japan didn't, instead reacting by switching to scientific whaling.

The thing is, the ban really affects fishermen. Icelandic fishermen argue that since whales eat half a million tonnes of fish every year, they are a predator that needs to be controlled in order to protect fishing stocks (their biggest industry, now that their financial system has collapsed and Björk is no longer popular). Japan argues something similar, but it also has a lot of underemployed fishermen owing to the drastically reduced fishing quotas that it's gotten from countries like the USA since the 1980s.

So what about this scientific whaling business? It's a bit of a fig-leaf and a legal fiction, but ask yourself, how the hell else do you collect samples of a giant swimming animal? As far as I can tell, Japan primarily does scientific whaling thing as a 'fuck you' to the countries that banned it from commercial whaling and to keep the whalers in jobs and well practised. However, it's also trying to build up data arguing for the possibility of a managed, sustainable hunt (you can see a list of the scientific papers they've submitted at [http://luna.pos.to/whale/icr\\_papers.html](http://luna.pos.to/whale/icr_papers.html)). The irony is that the anti-whaling countries refuse to accept a simple head-count as evidence, which lets the Japanese argue that they need "lethal sampling" in order to build up population distribution models and convince them.

When you get right down to it, the international debate over whaling is absolutely fucking absurd. It's political theatre of the worst kind. Firstly, since when do fucking Labor or the Liberals give a shit about green issues? It's like watching Alan Jones and other old misogynist bastards suddenly discover feminism, when they can use it as a club to bash Muslims with. Meanwhile, the Japanese continue acting all persecuted when they've got the 3rd biggest economy and 8th highest military spending in the world and could very easily have just toughened the fuck up, objected to the moratorium, and kept hunting like the Norwegians.

It's a funny debate. It doesn't matter in geopolitical terms, but emotions run incredibly high with governments indulging in incredibly bellicose rhetoric. There's never any effort to compromise nor spirit of moderation, because that would look weak. It's always "stop the whaling, you yellow barbarians!!!" versus "you hairy monkey bastard cultural imperialists are conspiring against us!!!" The inconsequential nature of the issue gives governments on all sides a chance to talk real tough and act all belligerent over something that isn't going to have consequences for any of them. They'd all much rather yell at each other because it's politically cheaper. It keeps the peons impressed with your decisiveness and pumped up with national pride. After all, as a diplomat or statesman, you can't carry on like this over nuclear weapons or terrorism. That shit has actual consequences.

Even more than that, for either side to yield and create a moderate solution involving IWC oversight and strict quotas would cause political problems for both sides. The Japanese government would be accused of selling out the national interest to foreign cultural imperialists or something, whilst governments like Australia would be accused of being soft on the slaughter of innocent whales. So it's easier for everyone involved to keep yelling about it instead.

Not only do those vicious Viking fuckers up north kill whales, but they do it commercially, not scientifically

Look, there are some good arguments against whaling. It's gross and ugly, and it'd be nice if the exploding grenade head shots had a higher instant kill ratio. Whales are smart and they're near the top of the food pyramid. They're pretty and live in the oceans (although that doesn't help swordfish). Our inability to effectively manage the ocean and its resources might be an argument for leaving the fuckers alone completely. There's also a case that whaling impacts on other economic activities like whale-watching and tourism. But in the end, whales are an ecological resource just like any other, and it's stupid to take a fundamentalist NO WHALING EVER policy if it's not achieving anything except to make Japan dig its heels in further. We should be negotiating with them, trying to get them to agree to sustainable quotas and international oversight, instead of having our policy set by a bunch of angry bogans on Facebook and populist politicians scoring cheap political points.



# The US Congress:

## A New Hope or the Empire Strikes Back?

*Thomas Liu, our man in Washington, looks at the US Congress from the inside. We should note that despite his last name, he has not been accused of being a spy. Yet.*

Sitting atop the North Wall in the old Hall of the House (today Statuary Hall in the US Capitol Building) is Carlo Franzoni's marble masterpiece, The Car of History. It depicts Clio, the Muse of History, riding a winged chariot with a clock for a wheel and writing in a book while watching over the hall with an earnest gaze.

In the days when the House of Representatives used to meet in what is today National Statuary Hall the statue of Clio was a constant reminder to the members of Congress that the eye of history was on them. Today the Hall is more frequented by tourists visiting the Capitol than by members of the House, but it remains useful to be reminded of history's constant watchful eye. This is perhaps all the more so, given the historic nature of recent events.

With history made and future history in mind, all attention in this town has turned to one actor at the centre of the action: the United States Congress. Sitting atop the Capitol Hill district of Washington DC, the Capitol building is an enduring symbol of both American democracy and what much of the world sees as the American tragedy: the greatest power rendered unto any Caesar, equalled only by its flaws.

Like it or not, it is Congress that has been charged with the task of fixing, in the coming days and years, the problems of America and by association, much of the world. The spectrum of issues on the docket range from designing the face of a new global financial system to funding volcano monitoring programs.

So what hope is there of success? To answer this one needs to go beyond the conventional wisdom and look within the halls of the Capitol itself.

### THE VIEW FROM THE INSIDE

Star spotting is a favourite pastime among political junkies in the Capitol. One day you'll get on a subway tram with the Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman and another you'll be eating in the cafeteria with the House Financial Services Committee Chairman or getting kicked out of elevators by Secret Service because the Homeland Security Secretary needs to use it.

There's even a good bet you'll bump into a foreign leader. Take for example the not-so-foreign Kevin Rudd, who himself felt Clio's gaze on Tuesday 24 March, when he marched past me on some very official business.

While these things epitomise the fun one can have on the Hill, there is another side of Capitol life that is less enjoyable. Take for example Congress' reputation, where the less said the better. Among the public there is a general existential dislike of the institution reflected in opinion polls that regularly show Congress' approval rating in the teens or as low as 9%.

The perennial hatred toward this august institution is attributable to perceptions of hyper-partisanship, pork barrel corruption and general sleaze. While there are undeniably elements of this, the view from within the Capitol itself is of noteworthy difference.

Take for example the debate process. The images that will get played on television are of House members and senators sitting on opposite sides of the aisle throwing partisan darts at each other. The reality is at once both more depressing and more neutral.

In reality there are actually very few people to throw darts at when the firebrands of either party stand on the floor of either chamber. While the microphones will pick up the cross words and the cameras will lock in on the angry facial expressions what often gets missed is the mostly empty room being spoken to.

Members of Congress in fact spend very little time in one place and are even less likely to be found loitering on the House or Senate floor, especially when colleagues are speaking. Seeing the eclectic operations of the modern day House the eyes of history may well be forgiven for raising an eyebrow.

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To say that there is less theatre however is not to say that there is no partisan theatre at all. Take for example Senator Jim Bunning of Kentucky (who is not a doctor), when he publically diagnosed Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg as having only “nine months” to live as she underwent surgery for pancreatic cancer . Or Senator Charles Grassley, who suggested to AIG insurance company executives that their only honourable options after spending tax payer bailout money on bonuses was to “resign or go commit suicide”.

Despite the obligatory partisan spasms that erupt from time to time, the culture on the Hill is one that leans away from naked corruption and hackery and toward relationship networks and sometimes genuine friendship. And despite bringing ample amounts of crazy, many of the lawmakers are very likeable people.

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*The Capitol building is an enduring symbol of both American democracy and what much of the world sees as the American tragedy: the greatest power rendered unto any Caesar, equalled only by its flaws.*

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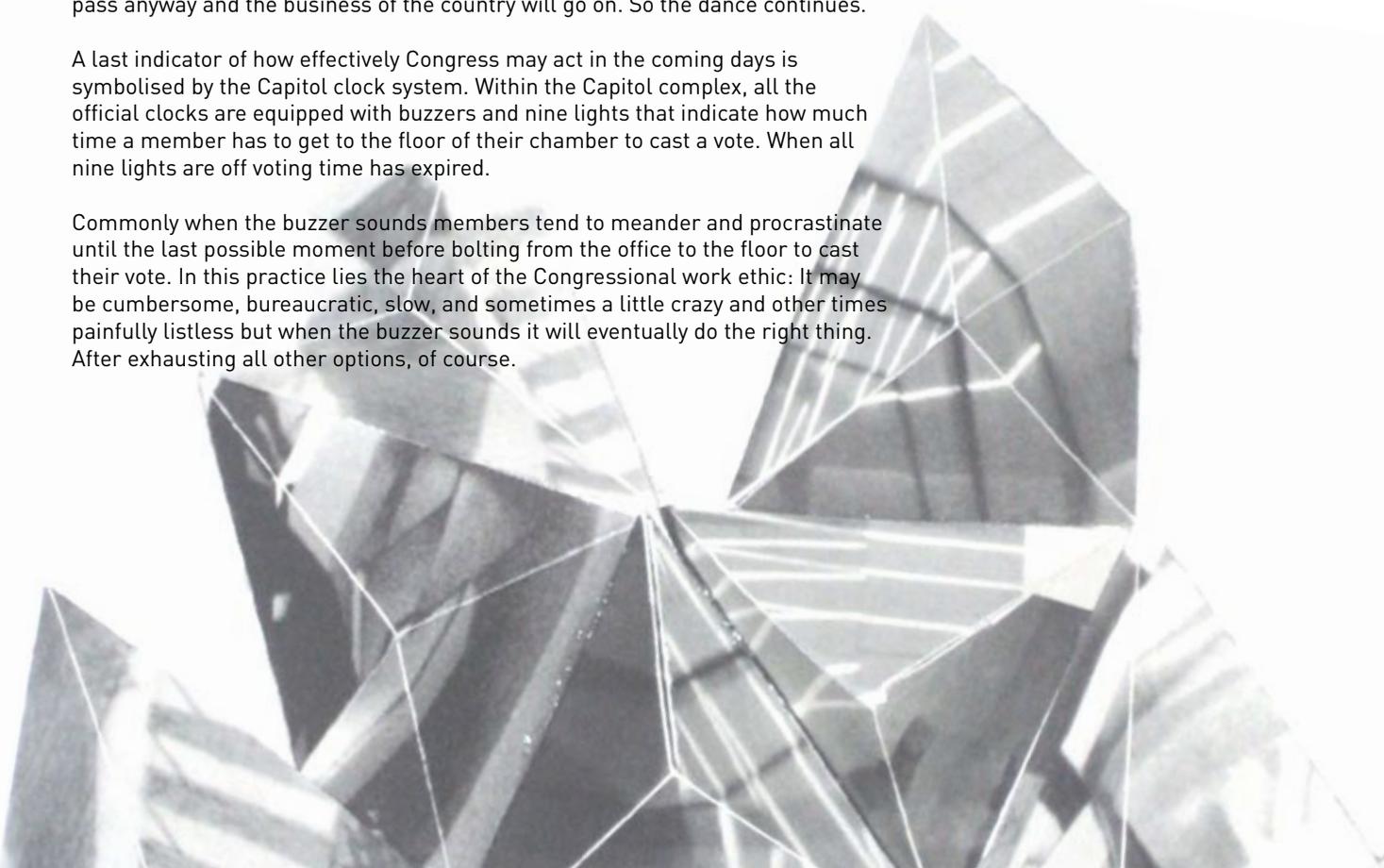
#### A NEW HOPE?

Given the Scylla and Charybdis [eds: what?] of Congress’ shortcomings on one hand and the eye-widening list of problems it must address on the other, the trillion dollar question remains whether there is a sliver of hope going forward.

Clichéd as it is, the motto of the United States, *E Pluribus Unum*, is a fitting description of the sausage making process that is the work of Congress, as well as the short answer to the very open question of whether there is any hope. It may be messy but it works. Republicans may vote against the stimulus and the budget near unanimously but they do so with the safety of knowing that it will pass anyway and the business of the country will go on. So the dance continues.

A last indicator of how effectively Congress may act in the coming days is symbolised by the Capitol clock system. Within the Capitol complex, all the official clocks are equipped with buzzers and nine lights that indicate how much time a member has to get to the floor of their chamber to cast a vote. When all nine lights are off voting time has expired.

Commonly when the buzzer sounds members tend to meander and procrastinate until the last possible moment before bolting from the office to the floor to cast their vote. In this practice lies the heart of the Congressional work ethic: It may be cumbersome, bureaucratic, slow, and sometimes a little crazy and other times painfully listless but when the buzzer sounds it will eventually do the right thing. After exhausting all other options, of course.



The image is a dense, stylized illustration of spaghetti. The spaghetti strands are drawn with thick black outlines and are colored in white and yellow. They are tangled and looped across the entire frame. The background is a light yellow-green color. In the upper left quadrant, there is a blue starburst shape with the text "THE FOOD ISSUE" written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. In the lower right corner, there are several red, round objects that look like cherry tomatoes, also rendered in a stylized, textured manner. The overall style is graphic and illustrative, typical of a magazine cover or a food-themed poster.