

# *CAFAS Update No. 71*

*25 October 2011*

*Council for Academic Freedom & Academic Standards*

*<http://www.cafas.org.uk>*

*Meeting:*

*Saturday 5 November 2011  
2.000 pm  
Room 254  
Birkbeck College  
Malet Street  
London WC1*

*Underground: Goodge Street, Euston Square, Euston, Russell Square, Holborn*

## **Inquiry into Academic Freedom at Nottingham**

Sir Henry Brooke, former Lord Justice of Appeal, has agreed to chair an inquiry into academic freedom at Nottingham University, 2008-11. John Pickering has agreed to join him as a member, and we are now looking for a third member to join them.

Nottingham University has told us that in its view an inquiry is an inappropriate intrusion on its autonomy and might jeopardise the resolution of ongoing employment disputes. CAFAS would like to continue with the inquiry: Eric Barendt will give a verbal report with an opportunity for full discussion.

## **Viewpoint**

The general economic and political crisis is reflected in education. Underlying the problems in education are the efforts to reduce it to a commodity and to go further down the road of privatisation. This week we learn that public spending on education is falling at a rate not known since the 1950s.

Merlin Stone and Michael Starkey have written an article on corruption in universities, 'The possible impact of corruption on customers' ethical standards'.<sup>1</sup> They argue that the drive for money has replaced meeting educational need of students and society. Students (whom the authors argue are 'customers') are encouraged by the practices in universities from the top down, including many academics, to cheat. This ranges from plagiarism to fraudulent qualifications. Many readers will know about the pressure to pass students, agencies selling essays and private organizations selling degrees. Those receiving research funding from big companies, such as pharmaceutical ones, are under pressure to produce findings that favour the funders.

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<sup>1</sup> See the abstract below, p2.

Their article can be obtained from <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/dbm/journal/vaop/ncurrent/pdf/dbm201118a.pdf>

In our view the context for the last three decades has been that of finance capital. According to Hillel Ticktin<sup>2</sup> the economic system is in deep trouble due to the over-reliance on finance capital. Although there is much talk about deficits, in reality there is a surplus of capital in the world that is not being used productively as finance capital does not want to risk capital in long-term projects. The making of the quick buck is the name of the game, which fell apart in 2007. Britain's infrastructure, due to the reliance on finance capital, is one of the most rundown in the advanced capitalist world. Spending on this would create jobs, boost consumption and revive the economy. The downside for the entrepreneurs and government is that this would be accompanied by increased demand for a higher standard of living and a fairer society.

In education, another problem in the present context is that many are afraid of losing their jobs. London Metropolitan University is entering its umpteenth round of redundancies. At the same time it is looking to hiring bars on its premises to Arsenal fans for Saturday afternoon drinking. This is one way of opening the doors and making money but it should not be at the cost of widening access and quality of education. Sacking staff militates against these. As part of their response to cuts and attempts to privatise education, London Met unions are jointly holding an open meeting, 'Defending Education for All', on 25 October. Its purpose is to critique the Higher Education White Paper, and to argue for the defence of the idea of the public university and education for all.

Those individuals with cases against the universities and colleges seem to be more reluctant to publicise them. They need collective support in order for their cases to be known. In one sense, they are often the testing ground on issues related to the defence of quality and public education. If ignored, the response against a more general attack is that much weaker.

**PB & GT**

**CAFAS Update seeks to provide an open forum for opinion and discussion. Items do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council.**

<sup>2</sup> Hillel Ticktin, 'The Myths of Crisis: A New Turning Point in History?', Critique, Vol. 39, No. 3, August 2011, pp 407-419.

## **The possible impact of university corruption on customers' ethical standards**

**Merlin Stone and Michael Starkey**

**ABSTRACT** This article explores the rapidly rising incidence of corruption and fraud in universities, whether by students or staff. It asks whether companies are prepared for the extent to which their future customers or employees may have been socialised into unethical patterns of behaviour, and outlines an agenda for students to enable them to identify whether they are getting fair value for money and to determine how they should respond in situations where they are not.

Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management advance online publication, 19 September 2011; doi:10.1057/dbm.2011.18

Keywords: students; cheating; plagiarism; corruption; fraud; qualifications

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## **Message from the Treasurer**

Dear CAFAS Members,

A few weeks ago somebody broke in to one of our bank accounts hoping that CAFAS would pay his AA membership of £105 every year. It was not difficult to identify the person as we have had a relevant AA membership number. Fraud is a very serious crime. On this occasion CAFAS has decided not to inform the police. However, if this happens again the police will be involved immediately.

Due to the incident it was necessary to withdraw the number of the bank account, sort code etc from the CAFAS website and the application form published in Update. We are very sorry for any inconvenience this may cause.

**Eva Link  
Treasurer and Membership Secretary**

## Noam Chomsky on academic freedom:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q97tFyqHVLs>

## NOTICES

### Meeting 2.00 pm 5 November 2011

#### Agenda

1. Minutes
2. Matters arising
3. Nottingham Inquiry
4. Website
5. Academic Freedom
6. Campaigns
7. Casework
8. AOB

Officers' meeting in Room 254 at 1.30pm

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#### Cafas Reports

Details are on [www.cafas.org.uk](http://www.cafas.org.uk)

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## Committee

#### Co-Chairs:

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#### Founding Members

Michael Cohen

Colwyn Williamson

## DO YOU BELIEVE

- That academic standards have been dumbed down throughout the higher and further education sector?
- That this decline has been accompanied by the escalating rhetoric of 'excellence' and 'world-class'?
- That the number of contact hours between teachers and students, which the Dearing Report described as a proper measure of the quality of education, has been reduced across the board?
- That there are all sorts of pressures on examiners to pass candidates who would previously have failed?
- That it is far easier to obtain Firsts and Upper Seconds than it used to be?
- That practices which used to be treated as academically unacceptable, or even as cheating, are now widely regarded as normal and inevitable.
- That the effect of the RAE and other pressures on

academics is to increase the quantity of research, not the quality, and to restrict innovative and critical thought?

- That there are pressures, often of a commercial nature, to avoid certain areas of research, or to falsify results or to distort their conclusions and significance?
- That, despite lip-service to the importance of teaching, universities and colleges take little account of this in career advancement?
- That academic values have been largely displaced by market values?
- That the stated 'mission' of universities to serve the community has been abandoned in favour of commercial priorities?
- That education in the UK no longer has the status of a right bringing social benefits, but is instead treated as a commodity to be bought and sold?
- That discrimination against women and ethnic minorities is still rife in the employment and promotion practices of tertiary education, despite the multicultural community it is supposed to serve?
- That the work of the union in fighting discrimination and victimisation can usefully be supplemented by specialised advice and support from an organisation which focuses on issues of academic freedom and standards?

If you believe that many or most of these propositions are true, you ought to be a CAFAS member and your UCU branch ought to affiliate. Membership Secretary & Treasurer: Dr Eva Link, 17 Highcliffe, Clivedon Court, London W13 8DP 02089982569; [rekgemL1982@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rekgemL1982@yahoo.co.uk)

If you would like a speaker from CAFAS to address a branch meeting, contact Colwyn Williamson, [colwynwilliamson@hotmail.com](mailto:colwynwilliamson@hotmail.com); 07970 838 276 [www.cafas.org.uk](http://www.cafas.org.uk)

## CONSTITUTION

CAFAS' aims are outlined on the membership form. The full constitution can be obtained from the Secretary or [www.cafas.org.uk](http://www.cafas.org.uk). CAFAS was founded in February 1994. It depends on subscriptions and an active membership. It meets in January, April, July and September/October.

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### Next deadline: 20 March 2012

Please send letters, news items and articles to:  
Pat Brady [patrick.brady28@googlemail.com](mailto:patrick.brady28@googlemail.com) & Geraldine Thorpe [thorpegm@googlemail.com](mailto:thorpegm@googlemail.com)

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### Meetings 2011-2012

5 November 2011  
21 April 2012  
23 June 2012.

All in room 254, Birkbeck College

### Defending-academic-freedom discussion list

Access defending-academic-freedom on [www.cafas.org.uk](http://www.cafas.org.uk)

### SUBSCRIPTION

Dear Members

**Some of you have forgotten to pay your membership fee. Could you please be kind enough to check the date of your last payment on the address label? If you should find there "\*\*\*\*" or "\*\*\*\*!!!" could you please send a cheque without further delay as your contribution is absolutely crucial to the well being of CAFAS.**

**Many thanks for your contribution.**

**Your Treasurer and Membership Secretary,  
Eva Link**