

CAFAS Update No. 60

11 September 2008

Council for Academic Freedom & Academic Standards

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

Meeting:

*Saturday 27 September 2008
2.00 pm Meeting
Room 313
Birkbeck College
Malet Street
London WC1*

Underground: Goadge Street, Euston Square, Euston, Russell Square, Holborn

The Envy of Excellence: the Threat to Academic Freedom

I am in the process of organizing a one-day conference on academic freedom to be held in the Spring of 2009 (date and venue to be confirmed). Although the conference will take place in Ireland, academic freedom will not be considered from an exclusively Irish perspective. The conference would aim primarily to raise awareness in Irish universities of the importance of preserving academic freedom through an examination of, for example, the impact of restrictions on academic freedom (falling standards, bullying, mobbing, disciplinary procedures etc.). Of particular interest are the legal restrictions on and protections of academic freedom and the role played by Unions. Case histories would be particularly valuable in these various respects. If you are interested in participating, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Dr Sarah Alyn Stacey,
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Renaissance Studies,
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(Please circulate the above and the New School and Critique calls below to others. They are also on the defending-academic-freedom e-list & Cafas website. (Eds.)

FIGHTING FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN IRELAND

A group of academics in Ireland have told our CAFAS Co-ordinator they plan to set up a sister organisation there.

**Have you paid your CAFAS
subscription this year?**

University of Nottingham: Hicham Yezza

As promised in the last issue, we reproduce the final letter (15.7.08) from the Border and Immigration Agency to Cafas. Mr Yezza's view of his detention can be found on:

www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/aug/18/terrorism.civilliberties

'Thank you for your letter dated 25 June 2008 regarding the rights of individuals in detention to consent to information about them being released to named third parties and their right to communicate with whomsoever they wish. Your letter has been passed to me to reply.

Under the Data protection Act 1988 any person, including those in the UK Border Agency detention estate, has the right to access their personal information. They also have the right to consent to third parties such as legal representatives and other persons to access this information on their behalf. In most cases consent will consist of written permission from the individual concerned outlining that they wish a certain third party to access their information.

With regards to your second point, I can confirm that detainees are able to communicate directly to whomsoever they wish, by letter, fax and telephone. In addition, access to the internet has now been established in some of our centres allowing detainees to email friends and family. I trust that my response has addressed your concerns.

Yours sincerely
David Goggin,
UK Border Agency'

Cafas replied on 30 July 2008:

'Thank you for your letter of 15 July 2008 regarding the rights of detainees to send and receive information.

The Council remains concerned, however, about the implications of Anti-Terror legislation for freedom of speech, academic freedom, and academic standards in educational institutions.

We also remain concerned about the use of DPA exemptions to decline public questions about the fate of those taken into custody. This is problematical under circumstances where the public cannot be certain that the individual is in a position to convey their desire for non-confidentiality.'

Free Inquiry at Risk: Universities in Dangerous Times Oct 29-31

From: Social Research Social Research
<SocRes@newschool.edu>

A Social Research Conference at The New School

FREE INQUIRY AT RISK: UNIVERSITIES IN DANGEROUS TIMES

A commemoration of the 75th
anniversary of the University in
Exile at The New School,
New York City

Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday,
October 29, 30, and 31, 2008

Rapid globalization, international collaborations, massification, corporate partnerships, increasing number of franchises, regime change, and other conditions of duress are reshaping universities around the world. What are the benefits and what are the risks to academic freedom and free inquiry as universities navigate these trends? This conference will look backward at the role of academic freedom and free inquiry in research universities and forward to what the future may have in store.

**John Tishman Auditorium, 66 West 12th
Street, NYC**

**Full conference \$30, \$10 per session (Students
are free)**

**contact socres@newschool.edu or 212-229-
5776 x3121**

for more information and to register: _

**www.newschool.edu/FreeInquiry
<<http://www.newschool.edu/FreeInquiry>>**

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

Defending-Academic-Freedom JISCMail List

You can join by going to the Cafas website <http://www.cafas.org.uk> and opening the link

NOTICES

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CONSTITUTION

CAFAS' aims are outlined on the membership form. The full constitution can be obtained from the Secretary or 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.

Next Meeting

Saturday 27 September 2008, 2.00 pm
Room 313, Birkbeck College

Agenda

- 1. Minutes**
- 2. Matters arising**
- 3. Academic Freedom**
- 4. Case work**
- 5. AOB**

Officers' meeting in Room 313 at 1.30 pm

Next deadline: 25 November 2008

Please send letters, news items and articles to:
Pat Brady patrickbrady@onetel.net & Geraldine Thorpe
Geraldine.thorpe@onetel.net

Cafas Reports

Details are on www.cafas.org.uk

MEETINGS 2008-09

27 September 2008 - room 313
17 January 2009 - room B23
25 April 2009 - room 313
4 July 2009 - room 313

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

**17 Highcliffe,
Clivedon Court,
London W13 8DP**

Editorial

The conferences planned for New School, New York, and Trinity College Dublin, and the Critique call for articles signal the need to address academic freedom and standards. They come at a time when it is widely reported that unions and many in education are demoralised.

CAFAS and its predecessor, the Campaign for Academic Freedom & Democracy (CAFAD), have a wealth of empirical material in casework on academic freedom and standards, only some of which has been reported in the public domain. Published CAFAD documents can be found at the University of Hull. Some copies are also in the British Library and the London School of Economics. Cafas reports are listed on www.cafas.org.uk. *Cafas Update* has carried summaries of cases. There is of course a general body of work on academic freedom from around the world to be found in libraries and news reports.

Attacks on academic freedom are part and parcel of the history of universities. A study of this will show that certain times were worse than others in, for example, British universities. During Elizabeth I's and Charles II's reigns the ancient universities were several times subject to Acts of Uniformity. The Universities Tests under the Uniformity Act, 1662, affected most of the Oxbridge Colleges, Trinity College Dublin, and Durham University (Scotland differed here) for up to 200 years. In 1871 with the development of finance capital and imperialism, Gladstone abolished the Tests. Pressure for change came from non-Anglican religious groups, the development of the labour movement, science, education including new civic universities with greater freedom. Why then in this present phase again governed by finance capital and 'globalisation' are education and research being squeezed? One view is that they are expanding while we are in a crisis and public funding has to be cut, hence neo-liberalism - the attempt to return to the expanding, laissez-faire capitalism of the nineteenth century - and so on. At the same time vast amounts of the world's capital are lying idle. Another, more general and arguably related view, is that we are in a process of systemic decline and this is being fought out in an underlying class struggle. It depends whether the evidence of capitalism's capacity to change is seen as that of its resilience or that of its passing into a transitional phase into another system altogether. Capitalism certainly had a long phase of development during its predecessor's decline. We live in interesting times. There is every reason to fight for academic freedom and academic standards.

Critique

Journal of Socialist Theory

Editor: Hillel Ticktin
University of Glasgow, UK



Critique is an independent, refereed, scholarly journal founded in 1973. It attempts to analyse contemporary society from a critical Marxist perspective. *Critique* takes the view that Marxism has been so degraded by the Stalinist period that much of what has passed for Marxism has ranged between incoherent nonsense and empty if complex scholastic schema. Since socialism in one country is a theoretical and practical impossibility, *Critique* rejected and continues to reject analyses purporting to show this or that country is or was socialist. Furthermore, *Critique* emphatically insists on the impossibility of an undemocratic socialism.

The aim of *Critique* is to take part in the restoration of the earlier pre-eminence of Marxist thought by encouraging discussion around the political economy of contemporary capitalist and non-capitalist societies. For this purpose, it regards debate around methodology and as a consequence philosophy to be essential. Inevitably, contemporary political economy must also involve debate around the importance of historical events and so *Critique* encourages contributions of historical analysis.

In short, *Critique's* aim is to publish theoretical work at various levels of abstraction from the most profound to that of analytical description in order to help provide the theory required for socialist change, which with the end of Stalinism is once more on the agenda.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

2008 – Volume 36 (3 issues per year)

Print ISSN 0301-7605 Online ISSN 1748-8605

Institutional rate (print and online): US\$343; £227; €274

Institutional rate (online access only): US\$325; £215; €260

Personal rate (print only): US\$51; £28; €41

Special Issue: Marxism and Freedom of Speech

CALL FOR PAPERS

In light of recent events *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory* will be dedicating a special issue to Freedom of Speech. *Critique* is looking for high quality scholarly articles on or surrounding, but not limited to, the following topics:

- Marxism and Freedom of Speech
- Stalinism and the Nature of Control on Freedom of Expression
- The Question of Socialism and Freedom of Speech
- The Role of Freedom of Speech in Modern Capitalism
- The Impact of the Patriot Act on Freedom of Speech
- The Impact of Terrorism Legislation on Freedom of Speech
- The Issue of British Control Orders
- Freedom of Speech and Forms of Protest
- The Limits of Academic Freedom in the Current Epoch

Articles should not normally exceed 7-8,000 words in length. Articles must include an abstract of no more than 300 words and a maximum of 6 key words. Articles will not be considered for peer review unless they are complete with an abstract and key words.

For full details on how to submit a paper please visit

www.informaworld.com/critique

The final deadline for articles is **March 1, 2009**. Please send articles via email to the editor: **Hillel H. Ticktin** at gkfa02@udcf.gla.ac.uk and to the *Critique* collective at critique@eng.gla.ac.uk

www.critiquejournal.net

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

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**

**If you would like a speaker from CAFAS to address a branch meeting, contact Colwyn Williamson,
colwynwilliamson@hotmail.com; 07970 838 276**

www.cafas.org.uk