

# *CAFAS Update No. 61*

*5 January 2009*

*Council for Academic Freedom & Academic Standards*

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

*Meeting:*

*Saturday 17 January 2009*

*2.00 pm Meeting*

*Room B23*

*Birkbeck College*

*Malet Street*

*London WC1*

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

## **More Anti-Chinese Racism in Wales**

I don't use the term racism lightly. In the case of Yu Jin, the young Chinese girl convicted of cheating in Swansea, I pointed out in two previous Updates that, although there wasn't a shred of evidence against her, Swansea decided her guilt 'on the balance of probabilities'. She was accused by the chief invigilator in one of her examinations of having an unauthorised piece of paper in her possession. (He later described this as just a 'suspicion'.) She immediately volunteered for a thorough search by the female invigilator who was present, but this was refused, and a charge of cheating was instead lodged against her. With nothing more than suspicion to go on, a Committee of Inquiry resolved that she 'probably' did have a piece of paper and that something helpful was 'probably' written on it.

The Committee didn't attempt to explain what their assessment of the 'probabilities' was based on. When the case was brought to me, I was strongly inclined to conclude, in the absence of

such an explanation, that their verdict was based on general assumptions about Chinese students. I was no doubt influenced in this by knowing at first hand the kind of thing that academics in Swansea tell each other about the Chinese, but I didn't rely primarily on that when I concluded that racism had been at work. The crucial point for me was that sheer prejudice is the natural explanation when a quasi-judicial outcome flies in the face of the evidence.

I have already described in my previous reports how we took Yu Jin's case to the OIA, who noted the lack of evidence against her, and commented on several material irregularities in the proceedings. Their report pointed out that the refusal to grant the search she requested had effectively denied her the opportunity to prove her innocence, and it criticised the way in which 'probability' had been substituted for the customary judicial standard of 'proven beyond reasonable doubt'. Swansea was instructed to appoint a new Committee of Inquiry to reconsider her case.

Swansea settled on a more convenient course of

action. They thought it would be best if the verdict against Yu Jin was reviewed by the Chair of the committee which had found her guilty. After due consideration, he decided that there had been nothing wrong with his previous verdict or the procedure he had used to reach it. This novel process was called an 'appeal', but neither Yu Jin nor CAFAS was informed that it was taking place, let alone provided with an opportunity to argue her case.

We took the case back to the OIA, pointing out that Swansea had displayed complete contempt for due process, and for the OIA itself. At this stage, the OIA seems to have abandoned any further attempt to get Swansea to deal with Yu Jin fairly, and instead simply instructed them to expunge her conviction and to pay her £500 compensation.

The attitude towards Chinese students in Swansea, and a great many other universities I expect, is interesting from a psychological point of view. Starved of public funding, British universities have become dominated by the need to raise money privately. A popular strategy has been the increased recruitment of lucrative overseas students, especially from China. But the relationship between the recruiters and the recruited is curious. You might expect the recruiters to despise themselves for becoming little more than secondhand car salesmen; what you find instead is that they transfer this contempt to the students they recruit, whispering to each other that such students are the products of a 'culture' in which cheating is normal and acceptable.

It is easy to show that Swansea is not alone in its attitudes.

Odgerel Hatlenboer planned to enrol in an accountancy course at what used to be the North East Wales Institute and is now called Glyndwr University, which is in Wrexham, where she lives. She is a 33-year old married woman with a child. Originally from Mongolia, she has lived in the UK for seven years, and already has a Masters in Development Economics from the University of Manchester and a Diploma from the Association of Accounting Technicians. She attended an open day at Glyndwr earlier this year, and was interviewed by a staff member whose comments on her plan to study more accountancy surprised her. The course, he said, might not be suitable for 'Oriental people'. According to Mrs Hatlenboer, her interviewer told her: 'I'm not saying you're Chinese but people like you, Oriental people, tend

to accept what is written in the books and what the lecturer says, whereas this kind of course is nothing like you have studied in the past, it requires more analytical skills, you will have to do more yourself.'

'I'm not the sort of person who makes things up', Mrs Hatlenboer says, 'this is exactly what he said. He didn't even ask about my background or qualifications.'

Despite what she regarded as these racist comments, she completed the application form and was told it would be passed on to the relevant department and that she would hear from the university within a week. But she didn't hear from them, and when she inquired why, was told that the department had never received an application from her. She made a formal complaint.

Glyndwr apologised for having 'misplaced' her application form due to 'human error'. Dr Moore, Glyndwr's director of policy and projects, was quoted in the press as declaring that 'the university is very proud of, and values, the multicultural nature of its student population and has enjoyed considerable success in attracting students from across the world.' Glyndwr had, Dr Moore said, 'responded promptly' to Mrs Hatlenboer's complaint: they had 'launched a thorough investigation', and as a result of this 'appropriate action' had been taken. He declined to say what the appropriate action had been.

Mrs Hatlenboer described what had happened as 'outrageous and 'certainly racist'. 'This didn't happen on the street or in a shop', she said, 'this happened in a university, which is supposed to be a multi-racial institution run by educated people.... Glyndwr University must learn to live in the 21st century'.

'We are disappointed', Dr Moore said, 'that Mrs Hatlenboer remains dissatisfied with the outcome despite prompt action to clarify the matter'.

**Colwyn Williamson**  
CAFAS Co-ordinator

## **Defending-Academic-Freedom JISCMail List**

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

# Heresy and tenure

Any biochemist can tell you what happens in the nucleus, the membrane or any part of a cell. He may or may not know that information is based on experiments, in which, for example: a guinea pig is killed; its liver is excised; strong chemicals are added; the liver is homogenised; it is centrifuged; a layer in which nuclei can be identified is separated. The chemistry of this 'nuclear fraction' is regarded as that of the nucleus in the whole intact guinea pig, and, usually in most mammals. The overall assumption of such 'subcellular fractionation' is that none of the reagents or manoeuvres used affects the chemistry of the nucleus.

In 1972, I wrote a book listing the steps taken in six well known and popular biochemical procedures. I then cited from the literature the effects that each of the steps of the procedures had on the final results of the experiments. Next, I identified the assumptions, *inherent* in the use of the procedures, and examined the warrantability of each. Finally, I listed suggestions for control experiments, which would have to be done to decide whether what was found in fractions at the end of experiments reflected the properties of the structures in the living intact healthy animal cells. Although this is one of the most fundamental questions in biochemistry, it has never been addressed before or since. Nor could I obtain a grant for research into it from any public body for over 30 years.

About 10 years later, I questioned the use of electron microscopes in biology. Although it magnifies at least 50 times that of the light microscope, it cannot be used to examine living cells. The living tissue must be killed, embedded, stained with heavy metals, cut into sections and dehydrated. The electron microscopist then examines the metal deposit by bombarding it with an electron beam. When I examined electron micrographs under the instrument and in the literature, I noticed that many of the apparent structures have never been seen, and could not exist in, three dimensions. I concluded that several of these structures did not exist in living cells, and were consequences of dehydration.

I then subjected electron microscopy to the same analysis as I had subcellular fractionation. I was equally horrified that no one had ever carried out the necessary control experiments. I then turned

my attention to the cellular structure of the brain and spinal cord, but that is another long story. (1)

There were several consequences of my heresies. First of all, I was not invited to speak to national and international meetings of learned societies. Next, I was taken off the teaching of physiology, of which cells are only a small part, and I taught what was in the textbooks - because I wanted the students to pass their examinations - rather than what I believed. Next, my tenure was taken away, and the University of Surrey tried unsuccessfully to fire me. I believe that I am the only academic in Britain to have lost their tenure over their scientific views, although being Chairman of Surrey Association of University Teachers may have helped.

After I retired, I wrote a book, responding to all the criticisms of my academic views, which I had heard. It took a long time to obtain publication, but eventually it appeared.

Hillman, Harold, 2008, *Evidence-based cell biology, with some implications for clinical research*, Shaker Publishing Company, Maastricht. 600 pages, price 32 Euros

## Harold Hillman

76 Epsom Road, Guildford, Surrey GU1 2BX

(1) Hillman, Harold, 1986, *The cellular structure of the mammalian brain*, MTP Press Lancaster

### 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.

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

# Obituary: Irene Bruegel

## Academic and activist against injustice

### Sue Himmelweit and Simon Mohun

*The Guardian*,  
Wednesday October 15 2008

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"Life's not fair" - that was the advice the feminist, economist and socialist Irene Bruegel, who has died aged 62, gave to her children. She deployed her prodigious appetite for life to fight for equality and against injustice, inspiring and cajoling others to do likewise until a chronic liver disorder stopped her. In 2002, she founded Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JfJP), today one of the largest and most influential of Jewish voices against the Israeli occupation.

Irene was born in London to German-speaking Jewish social democrat refugee parents. The family returned to Prague while she was still a baby, but her parents had to flee soon after without her, and it took some time before they were reunited in north London. Other refugees often passed through that intensely political household, an experience that fuelled Irene's drive to fight for the dispossessed.

She attended Henrietta Barnett and South Hampstead high schools before studying economics at Sussex University (1964-67) and taking an MA in urban planning at University College London. Her career spanned education, policy research and local government. Her first job was at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies in Birmingham (1968-70), followed by a year at the Centre for Environmental Studies, Lanchester Polytechnic and the Architectural Association (1971-76), what was then North East London Polytechnic (1976-80), the National Children's Bureau (1980-83), the Greater London Council in its glory days until it was abolished by the Thatcher government in 1986, the Centre for Local Economic Strategies in Manchester (1986), the

London Strategic Policy Unit (1986-87) and the London borough of Ealing (1987-89).

She returned to academia at South Bank University in 1990, where she was promoted to reader in urban policy in 1995 and professor in 2000. Since her retirement in December 2006, she had taught an evening course at Birkbeck College on researching London's localities, a subject she loved.

Irene was a gifted teacher who expected high standards from students, while understanding their needs and never patronising them if they did not have conventional qualifications or felt unsure about whether they belonged in a university. As a researcher, she never lost sight of the big picture, though her work was meticulously grounded empirically. She made a significant contribution to the understanding of gender and class as a system spanning both the labour market and the family.

All the while, Irene was politically active - starting with the Young Socialists, the Labour party, and the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. She was part of the 1970 Ruskin conference that founded the new women's movement in the UK, and was active in campaigns for equal pay and abortion rights. She took part in debates about the relationship between feminism and socialism, and scorned the idea that one had to trump the other.

In the 1960s, she joined the International Socialism group (now the Socialist Workers party), which provided the framework for her activism for more than a decade in trade unions, the Conference of Socialist Economists, and other organisations. But Irene never subordinated her free-thinking to demands for political orthodoxy, and, as the space for debate within IS/SWP shrank, she grew increasingly distanced from it. The final straw was its hostility to autonomous women's organisation, and she left in 1979.

Soon afterwards, she rejoined the Labour party, but quit over the first Gulf war. She supported Women in Black for Justice against War, the European Forum of Socialist-Feminists, and more recently campaigns over adult education, the treatment of refugees and the impact of climate change. Local issues were also important, such as a fight against London Underground's refusal to renew a local dry cleaner's lease, and she hurled herself into a campaign to keep her beloved ladies' pond on Hampstead Heath open and free.

After visiting the West Bank in 2001, she rounded up some dozen like-minded Jewish friends, mostly women, to found the JfJP to campaign for an end to the Israeli occupation and a just settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Now more than 1,300 strong, the group has been instrumental in shattering the illusion that all Jews unconditionally support the Israeli government.

Irene's partner, Richard Kuper, was JfJP's co-founder. Theirs was a remarkable relationship; each was intellectually autonomous, but they often worked together. They also raised four children in a highly political, intellectually vibrant household that welcomed activists from all over the world with Irene's wonderful soups and cheesecake.

No matter how much Irene persuaded her friends to do, she would always be doing more - too much, as it turned out. But somehow she managed to reconcile being in a rush with always having time for people, and never made one feel small for not managing the level of activity that she did. She died peacefully, surrounded by her family: Richard, her children Dan and Jo, and stepchildren Martin and David. Her rare gift for friendship transcended political and intellectual differences, and she would have been astonished and delighted at the huge turnout at her funeral.

• **Irene Bruegel, academic and activist, born November 7 1945; died October 6 2008**

*'Obituary: Irene Bruegel  
This article appeared in the Guardian on Wednesday October 15 2008 on p33 of the Obituaries section. It was last updated at 00.08 on October 15 2008'.*

## MEETINGS 2008-09

17 January 2009 - room B23  
25 April 2009 - room 313  
4 July 2009 - room 313

## PROPOSAL

**'That at intervals of not less than a year, CAFAS should publish edited descriptions of the cases of victims. The descriptions would each be 3000 to 5000 words long. CAFAS would edit them to ensure uniformity of style, and to avoid the risk of legal action. The publication would depend upon the efforts of the victims, and the support of all CAFAS members.'**

**Proposed: Harold Hillman  
Seconded: Geraldine Thorpe**

**29/10/08**

## 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**

# NOTICES

## Cafas Reports

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

## Committee

### Co-Chairs:

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### Students' Complaints:

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#### Ali Hosseini

### Committee Member

#### Professor Eric Barendt

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### Founding Member

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### Health & Safety Spokesperson:

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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](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 Meeting

**Saturday 17 January 2009, 2.00 pm**

**Room B23, 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 March 2009

Please send letters, news items and articles to:  
Pat Brady [patrickbrady@onetel.net](mailto:patrickbrady@onetel.net) & Geraldine Thorpe  
[geraldine.thorpe@onetel.net](mailto:geraldine.thorpe@onetel.net)

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## **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  
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**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)**



