

# What am I bid for the Beaver?

NASDAQ in surprise bid for LSE! You will have seen the headlines, and perhaps been fooled for a moment into thinking that the home of the Beaver was about to be gobbled up by some entrepreneurial predator, the library filled with loud young men in red braces, and the plaza turned into a parking area for Italian two-seater gaz-guzzlers and sports utility vehicles. And then you will have realised with relief that LSE stands for more than one organisation, and that in this case the reference was of course not to us at all, but to the London Stock Exchange which was being stalked by the Northern Alliance of Scottish Dancing And Quadrilles.

But the confusion over the bid for LSE is part of a wider crisis. Worldwide, academic and organisational warming is leading to an acute shortage of acronyms. AA is claimed by not only the Automobile Association, but also by Alcoholics Anonymous, the Architectural Association, the Advertising Association, and the Aluminium Association, whilst PSA identifies not only the Political Studies Association, but the Protein Sequence Analysis, the Psychological Society of America, the Professional Squash Association, the Photographic Society of America, the Plano Sports Authority and the Professional Sports Authenticator. Even LSE is not rivalled by the London Stock Exchange alone, but

by Life Style Extra, Linux Scalability Effort, and Lucas Software Engineering. The short acronyms are the most vulnerable, and people trying to book tickets at the National Theatre risk ending up with the National Trust or the Northwest Territories.

The problem is particularly severe because of a parallel development in the way we now write and speak. The burgeoning length of organisational titles, and hence of acronyms, has been crowding out mere words from many sentences. Think about what would be involved in saying that the quality assurance audit at the London School of Economics would be undertaken before the research assessment exercise in order to make the best case to the Economic and Science Research Council, the Arts and Humanities Research Board, and the Higher Education Funding Council (England) and you will understand why this is collapsed into ‘QAA at LSE will be carried out before RAE in order to impress ESRC, AHRB, and HEFCE’. Even the definite and indefinite articles are sacrificed in order to conserve enough breath to complete the sentence. But if RAE is as likely to mean Russian Aeronautical Engineers and HEFCE Hispanic Educational Foundation for Cultural Excellence, the confusion is simply compounded.

It is to address this crisis of acronyms that LSE (this LSE) has established the Advisory

Board on Acronym Development for Academic Bifurcation Analysis and Departmental Organisation (ABADABADO) which will look at all acronyms, identify first use and first claim, set up an international register and, with the income generated by the small charge levied for compulsory inclusion in the online database, order, monitor, and sort out the current growing confusion.

It is already clear that there will be troubles ahead, as not every organisation will be pleased to learn that it was not first in the field, that it will have to yield up its acronym, and in all probability come up with a new title for itself in order to avoid Acronym Dissonance (AD). One of the most ancient of European professional academic documentation guilds has already indicated to the American President that he will have to consider a new name for his country after the likely registration of title by the Union of Slovenian Archivists.

The position of the School itself is not guaranteed, since in addition to the London Stock Exchange, the Loughborough Society of Eel-catchers is claiming priority in the competition for the crucial initials. The School is already actively pursuing alternative titles in order to ensure a unique acronym, and will shortly announce a competition for the best new name. As a guide to entrants, several pilot proposals have been suggested, though they will not be entered in the final short list. The leading suggestion to date is ‘Buoyant, Entrepreneurial And Visionary Eclectic Research (BEAVER)’. Suggestions on a post card only please (SOAPCOP). ■

Rodney Barker

We welcome letters by post or email. Please send correspondence to: Editor, *LSE Magazine*, Press and Information Office, LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE. Email: [lsemagazine@lse.ac.uk](mailto:lsemagazine@lse.ac.uk). The editor reserves the right to cut and edit letters.



## Gift aid

I was delighted to see that student Tom Ketteley (pictured above, *LSE Magazine*, summer 2006) is entering the charitable field.

On a related charity topic, the Gift Aid system in the UK seems to me to be dealt with by the government in an unnecessarily bureaucratic (and expensive) manner. To compel donors to sign gift aid declarations to each charity supported has the potential to generate millions of documents, and considerable administrative costs for charities and the Inland Revenue. I wonder whether Parliament would object to a proposal that, in future, total audited donations received by a charity should attract a percentage grant from the Treasury? Charities would know that all donations (including

those from collecting boxes) would attract grants. They might then find it unnecessary to contemplate the employment of ‘chuggers’ at the expense of donations.

**Derek Pearson**  
Sussex, UK

[An update: **Anne Kroijer** (above) is now working for JP Morgan. **Tom Ketteley** went to work in Kazakhstan as a development adviser.

The School welcomes all Gift Aid donations, as a charitable institution itself. ‘Chuggers’ – street canvassers for charities (the word ‘chugger’ comes from the idea of a charity ‘mugger’) – around campus are sometimes LSE students too!]

## Thanks for Peru

The *LSE Magazine* allows me to remain in contact with life and activities of LSE, where in 1956 I spent a wonderful and fruitful stage of my life.

I was awarded a research scholarship by the British Council to study philosophy under the learned and friendly guidance of the late Professor Oakeshott and others. I was in London between October 1956 and July 1957. Like many other scholars from South America, my journey to Britain was on the ship *Reina Del Mar* from Callao to Plymouth – a dream trip of 30 days. I can only express my lasting gratitude and admiration to the British Council and to LSE.

**Dr Walter Garaycochea**  
(Research Fee, 1957)  
Arequipa, Peru

## Sociology memoirs

I joined the LSE Sociology Department in 1953 and remained there until 1959 when I went to Oxford to put sociology into its Politics, Philosophy, Economics degree (not without a certain amount of turbulence).

My contemporaries and seniors at LSE were a very lively lot: Marshall, Ginsburg, Glass, MacRae, Oakeshott, Popper, Robbins, Gellner, Miliband, Firth, Bottomore, Titmuss, Leach, Schapera and others. I have set down my recollections of these persons and events, as seen by a New Yorker in London, in the first draft of a memoir, which is now in the LSE Archives. It is my intention to complete a publishable version of it but, since I will be 80 this year, that remains an intention. I hope others will find the recollections of interest.

**Norman Birnbaum**  
Professor Emeritus, Georgetown University  
USA



## Fabian window

It was a pleasure to read that the Fabian Window has been installed in the Shaw Library.

Between 1965 and 1974 I taught at Labour Party summer schools at Beatrice Webb House. The schools and the House were then an important feature of Labour's social and political life. Trade unions awarded Beatrice Webb scholarships. Cabinet ministers gave lectures there. Each week students and lecturers assembled for a group photograph by the croquet lawn.

The Fabian window, sited discreetly in the House's main hall, was a source of fascination and pleasure to lecturers and students alike. The School is to be congratulated for rescuing it and for placing it in such a suitable place.

**Ann Carlton**  
(BA Sociology 1964)  
London, UK

I very much enjoyed reading the somewhat epigrammatic article on the Fabian window, and I am delighted to hear that it has returned home after what must have been a very ‘painful’ separation from the LSE community after being stolen from the Beatrice Webb House in 1978.

Will the LSE be selling high-quality prints of the Fabian window – perhaps as a way to generate scholarship funding? I for one would like to obtain such a print and share it with my economics students who would, I trust, enjoy learning about a very interesting stained glass window, originally commissioned and designed by our own George Bernard Shaw. Such knowledge will no doubt prove useless at examination time, but prove invaluable as one reflects upon the role and place of meaningful satire in everyday life!

**John M Carfora**  
(MSc Econ 1978)  
Boston, MA, USA

[There are no plans at present to sell prints of the window. It belongs to the Webb Memorial Trust, with the School having it on campus on long term loan – Ed]

