



Editors' letter

Hello! The Mercury subsists from strength to faltering strength under the iron fists of Charles Stewart and Ebruba Abel-Unokan. Perhaps things were better under Mssrs. Cobain and MacNeill, perhaps the best is yet to come. Whatever the result may be, we hope you enjoy reading this issue of the Mercury as much as we enjoyed writing it!

Charlie and Ebruba

Contents	
Article	Page
France in State of Emergency	1
Aunty M.	2
Deus Ex	3
Comic	3
Jeremy Corbyn: All Left, But Alright?	4

ASK AUNTY M: AGONY AUNT

Mohammed Islam

Dear Aunty M.

I'm encountering an absolutely disastrous issue which appears to be eating me from the inside out. Alas, my nights are sleepless as I ponder the solution to my nerve racking problems. When I do finally manage to drift away into sleep I'm plagued with nightmares! How on earth will I get my students to like me?

I'm frightened by the arduous task of teaching so many students when they appear to be studying the best way to undermine me, especially the select few who seem to have devoted their lives into making mine worse.

Please Help Aunty M.! I fear my stress levels are skyrocketing!

Thank you,
Anonymé

Dear Anonymé,

I empathise with your dire situation. Do not despair, for I myself have the remedies to your problems. Students, as you may realise, appear to be creatures with a strong herd mentality. When one decides to become too brave for his own good, the rest follow his act mindlessly. For this particular problem, there's a simple way to extinguish these flames.

Strike at the head of the hydra! Use the powers bestowed upon you and discipline the fool who dare attempt to go defy you with their vile tomfoolery! The others should soon fall into line, realising that you are a force to be reckoned with.

Next, in order to get the students to like you there are two criteria which need to be met. The first is to be "safe". I have yet to decipher what this means, but according to my source this actually has a significant impact on student-teacher relations!

Secondly...banter. Not regularly. Not rarely. Not these so called 'dead' jokes, nor complicated ones that require a degree to understand. Just a few really top-notch japes which everyone can laugh at. Often that is the best way to get students to like you!

Stay 'safe', Aunty M.

DEUS EX?

Charlie Stewart

“Science flies you to the moon. Religion flies you into buildings.” So said the late Victor J. Stenger.

His logic is appealing: while I know pitifully little science it is hard not to be aware of 21st-century terrorism’s very distinct supposed face, that of the young Muslim male. However, for those who - like Stenger - believe that religion is the construction of mankind, this statement creates far more problems than it solves.

All too often the irony of the phrase ‘religious people are intolerant’ is completely missed. To take an admittedly amateur scientific approach, we would need two test groups: one with a society very strongly linked with religion, and one without.

At this point, we might rather proudly forward ourselves as the former, with our practical separation of church and state and evermore secular lifestyles.

We might forward a group like the Taliban as candidates for the latter. That seems to make it fairly straight-forward. The Taliban are bad. The Taliban are religious. ‘Bish bash bosh’, we might proclaim - job done. We can proudly declare that we are not like the Taliban.

However, we are unlike the Taliban in many other ways. Political upheaval, ethnic tensions and pov-

erty are common factors linking areas where religious extremism thrives which are often ignored by men like Stenger. The issues that have arisen in their corruption of Islam is reflective of those problems already present in the society in which they live.

From the oppression of Burma’s Muslim minority by the Buddhist majority to Hindu nationalist attacks on Indian Christians, the common factor is never any particular faith, or indeed faith at all - it is people.

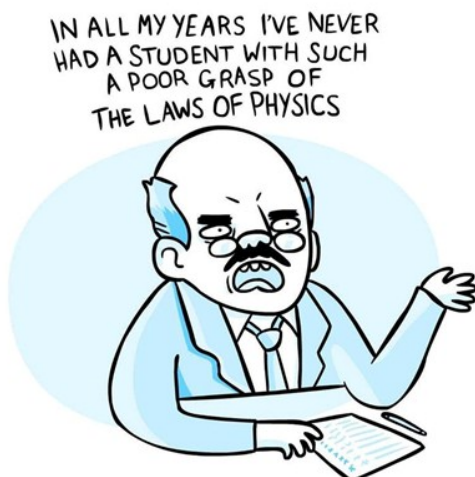
When the Nazis persecuted the Jews they did not spare those who renounced their faith. For examples of atrocities committed by atheists, one need

only look to Stalin’s Russia or Mao’s China. The risk therefore, is that we fall in the trap of ascribing intolerance and extreme views as the common traits of religious people.

“All too often the irony of saying ‘religious people are intolerant’ is completely missed”.

In creating a straw man to blame, we ironically find ourselves guilty of the same intolerances we accuse other of, judging an entire school of philosophical beliefs based on the acts of some of its most troubled pupils.

Stenger’s view is based on assumption, generalisation and stereotyping – if science flies us to Mars, it will not be on that logic.



JEREMY CORBYN: ALL LEFT, BUT ALRIGHT?

ARCHIE MACGILLIVRAY

The election for leadership of the Labour party has come to a close, and now Jeremy Corbyn stands at the head of the party, casting a long shadow full of questions.

Foremost, amongst them so far has been whether or not this choice of leader is a good move for Labour looking toward the 2020 General Election.

Of the answers proposed, the most popular stance is 'no, obviously not'. An editorial in the Observer likened his election to "a pupil who, on being told they answered incorrectly, repeats the same answer shouting ever more forcefully. It's still the wrong answer!" and this view seems prevalent.



Jeremy Corbyn has been a member of CND since his youth and is currently Vice-Chairman.

The fact is that Labour was seen as too far to the Left in the general election – too focused on a “Robin Hood” plan of taxation on the richest paying for welfare for the poorest, with no provision for those in between – and yet Corbyn represents a shift within Labour even further to the Left.

In the wake of the financial crisis that even now

lingers on, people are not willing to risk the economy by entrusting it even to the more moderate New Labour, let alone a more hard-line socialist Labour under Corbyn.



Jeremy Corbyn, with Prime Minister David Cameron, laying wreaths at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Day

It certainly seems like the party will have its work cut out come 2020. Already he has begun to make waves both within his party and on the whole political landscape, with his comments on Trident (saying that he would not press the nuclear button if it came to it) and links to extra-parliamentary pressure groups.

He provides a stark contrast to the meek leadership of the ousted Miliband, and this may transpire to be a very good thing for the party.

Corbyn has shown that he is not willing to concede ground on topics of principle in the name of preserving popularity, which is a refreshing deviation from the modus operandi of many of today's politicians – could this be a step towards more serious and grown up British politics?

We can but watch and wait.



Want to write for the Mercury?

Budding journalists, or those just passionate about a subject, are always needed. Anyone interested in writing, be it a front page spread, or a back page sports column, should get in touch with the editors:

abelunokane@wilsonsschool.sutton.sch.uk
stewartc@wilsonsschool.sutton.sch.uk