

# Union

## *A Brave New World?*

**T**o the LSE historian of 2095, I say welcome! When reading this *Centenary Review*, I hope you still recognise the institution of which we speak. You can fully answer the question that I have been set – what future for the LSE in its second century? My only sources are extrapolations from the present, my three years at LSE, and the limited knowledge of the School's history that I've gained. Yet for you there is no need to predict from the past, the answers surround you.

This text, by your era, presumably will be transmitted in the form of data floating through an intangible technology. However it's neither developments in technology and the structure of society, nor LSE's place within it, that matter. You will know where the School is now located (did we ever move to County Hall?); whether a mass higher education system means video-enhanced console learning for undergraduates, a 'Fordian' LSE education; and whether the institution is a part of the University of London or Independent as part of the World Universities League. All these questions will be answered but that is not of prime import.

The true question should be how has the nature of the School and its students changed. The student demography, funding and recruitment patterns from today create the spirit of the LSE. Change these and you change the institution. Virgil's '*rerum cognoscere causas*' (to know the causes of things), adopted in 1922, and the Fabian origins of the LSE would tend towards a progressive Social Science School, with ferocious debate, discussion and a melting pot for radical ideas; the best students being trained as undergraduates then postgraduates, promoting their disciplines and evolving Social Science Rules into Theories and towards Laws.

So, will the LSE become a Global Graduate School or are we perhaps due for a return to our radical roots and traditions? The future could unfold either way.

If we extrapolate from the present, the future of the LSE's Fabian tradition will be extinguished. Students' entrance requirements will become primarily financial; research will be based on what the corporate world is willing to pay for, rather than academic merit; progressive developments will be nullified by computer-based statistical sampling and perhaps even philosophy replaced by pure logic. A Dystopian view, but perhaps this 'Brave New World' of LSE is inevitable.

Creating the future lies in the actions of those in the present. Of course, externalities of government, technology and the forming Global Village have a role to play – but to the Decision Makers, Students, Alumni, Governors, Academics and Friends of LSE, I say it is our role to protect the principles that the LSE was built on; off-beat, up-tempo and ahead of its time. I hope that you, the LSE's 2095 historian, will still be able to say as much!

**Martin Lewis**



Beaver