

CAFAS Update No. 83

23 September 2015

Council for Academic Freedom & Academic Standards

Website: www.cafas.org.uk

Meeting:

Saturday 3 October 2015

Meeting 2.00pm

Room 252

Birkbeck College

Malet Street

London WC1

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

Obituary

Dr Robert D Potter

Bob died peacefully at 7.45am on 07 August 2015 at the Royal Sussex County Hospital - he'd had a massive heart attack and lost consciousness. He will be remembered with enormous respect and affection.

He was successful in lobbying for media attention on topics he was deeply committed to.

He wrote to me frequently about the NHS and his experience and sent me copies of the pieces he wrote for his local patient participation group. I visited him at his home in Hove once and with Loretta Olusanya on another occasion in London. In both cases he and Marigold were very welcoming. I was delighted on one

occasion when Bob and Marigold came to visit me in Southend-on-Sea.

He was an active member of CAFAS for many years and became an effective treasurer for some years before he resigned. Thereafter he devoted his time to being a community activist.

Neil Vowles of Argus wrote on Tuesday 11 August 2015 the following:

‘TRIBUTES have been paid to a passionate and energetic community campaigner who proved a tireless adversary to misconceived ideas. Hove campaigner Bob Potter was a determined and vocal resident who cared deeply about his surrounding neighbourhood. A regular contributor to Argus articles and our letters page, Mr Potter was at the forefront of campaigns to improve Seven Dials and a strong critic of council proposals he disagreed with.

He sadly passed away following a heart attack at the age of 83. Among Mr Potter's campaigns over the years, he was one of the first to highlight issues with the revamp of the

Seven Dials roundabout pointing out safety concerns and cracks appearing within months of the completion of the £1 million project. Brighton and Hove City Council have since installed safety bollards to prevent lorries driving on the roundabout and contractors have replaced broken paving slabs. Mr Potter was also part of a determined community effort to save a 150-year-old elm tree at Seven Dials which was due to be chopped down as part of the roundabout project two years ago. He also led a campaign against new parking restrictions proposed for the Goldsmid ward in the city in 2000.'

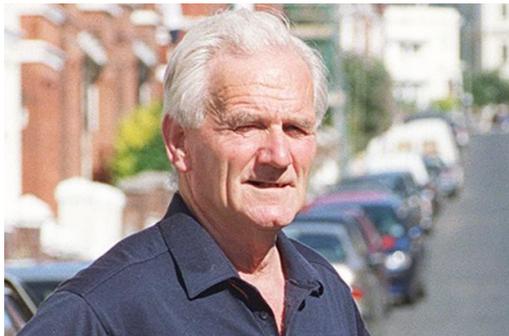
Valerie Paynter of SaveHove said, 'We are a network of civic activists and Bob kept SaveHove involved and informed concerning issues in the Seven Dials area. It was from him I learned about the crumbling of the new roundabout and I steered him as to whom to lobby, including The Argus. He took his retirement years seriously as a time to make a community contribution.'

Green Councillor, Tom Druitt, said that Mr Potter was a "great supporter" in the campaign to save the Seven Dials elm. He said: 'the city has lost a great campaigner. He was the sort of man who could make councillors tremble at his name; he was able to pick out flaws in their plans.'

'At council meetings there are a handful of committed local democrats who have read all the papers and they are quick to point out when things aren't right and Bob was one of those residents. He was a great supporter and it's really sad that he has passed.'

Bob leaves a wife, Marigold, and three daughters.

Majzoub B Ali
8 September 2015



Bob Potter

I met Bob Potter at a Cafas training meeting in the 1990s.

Bob was generous with his time and valuable expertise, serving as Membership Secretary and Treasurer shortly after joining until he retired in the early 2000s.

As an honorary member, he continued to offer welcome support and encouragement with his customary wit and good-humour up until shortly before his death. His contribution was much appreciated and he will be warmly remembered.

Geraldine Thorpe

FROM THE MAGAZINE: Index on Censorship

Student reading lists: threats to academic freedom

By Max Goldbart / 2 September 2015

To tie in with the release of Index on Censorship magazine's summer 2015 issue on academic freedom, Index put together a reading list of articles looking at the issues surrounding freedom of speech in universities from all over the world. Highlights include Kaya Genç's examination of the Turkish universities that are restricting professors' rights to teaching certain portions of history and Duncan Tucker's look at the academics and students facing death threats in Mexico. There are also testimonies from young women who faced obstacles to getting an education. All of these articles are taken from the special report of the **summer 2015 issue** of Index on Censorship magazine.

Students and academics can browse the Index magazine archive in thousands of university libraries via Sage Journals.

[Academic freedom articles](#)

Student reading lists

- [Censorship in the arts](#)
- [Comedy and censorship](#)
- [Journalism and censorship](#)
- [Ken Saro-Wiwa](#)

- [Minority groups and censorship](#)
- [Threats to academic freedom](#)
- [About the student reading lists](#)
- [Technology and censorship](#)

Silence on campus: How a Turkish historian got death threats for writing an exam question by Kaya Genç

Kaya Genç, June 2015; vol. 44, 2: pp. 10-13
Index's Turkish contributing editor discusses threats against professors that refuse to stick to the syllabus in Turkish universities

Universities under fire in Ukraine's war by Tatyana Malyarenko

Tatyana Malyarenko, June 2015; vol. 44, 2: pp. 14-17

Academic's jobs are under threat in Ukraine, Tatyana Malyarenko discusses how many academics are being hauled in front of special committees and accused of terrorist activity

Industrious academics by Michael Foley

Michael Foley, June 2015; vol. 44, 2: pp. 18-19

Lecturer Michael Foley on the commercial pressures being applied to universities in Ireland

Stifling freedom: One hundred years of attacks on US academic freedom by Mark Frary

Mark Frary, June 2015; vol. 44, 2: pp. 20-25
Mark Frary takes us through one hundred years of attacks on freedom of expression in US universities

Stripsearch by Martin Rowson

Martin Rowson, June 2015; vol. 44, 2: pp. 26-27

Cartoonist Martin Rowson's regular Index illustration looks at students being gagged at graduation

Ideas under review by Suhrith Parthasarathy

Suhrith Parthasarathy, June 2015; vol. 44, 2: pp. 28-30

In India, the autonomy of universities is being challenged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi amidst growing concerns of censorship

Girls standing up for education by Natumanya Sarah, Ijeoma Idika-Chima, and Sajiha Batool

Natumanya Sarah, Ijeoma Idika-Chima, and Sajiha Batool, June 2015; vol. 44, 2: pp. 31-33
Three female students from Uganda, Nigeria and Pakistan discuss their experiences of their own education systems

Open-door policy? by Thomas Docherty

Thomas Docherty, June 2015; vol. 44, 2: pp. 34-39

Government suppression of UK universities is becoming more and more of an issue, reports Thomas Docherty. Includes the students'

view by the editor of The Cambridge Tab Sarah Ivers.

Mexican stand-off by Duncan Tucker

Duncan Tucker, June 2015; vol. 44, 2: pp. 40-43

Journalist Duncan Tucker lays out the battle for academic freedom in Mexico, where death threats, harassment and beatings are commonplace in universities

Return of the Red Guards by Jemimah Steinfeld

Jemimah Steinfeld, June 2015; vol. 44, 2: pp. 44-49

Index's contributing editor in China Jemimah Steinfeld reports from China where a targeted campaign against anyone who criticises the ruling party has recently moved to universities
The reading list for threats to academic freedom can be found [here](#)

Tags: [academic freedom](#) | [Duncan Tucker](#) | [Jemimah Steinfeld](#) | [Kaya Genç](#) | [Mark Frary](#) | [Martin Rowson](#) | [Michael Foley](#) | [Suhrith Parthasarathy](#) | [Tatyana Malyarenko](#) | [Thomas Docherty](#)

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Web

reference: <https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2015/09/student-reading-lists-threats-to-academic-freedom/>.

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More articles on academic freedom can be found in Index on Censorship's [Summer magazine 2015: Is academic freedom being eroded?](#)

<https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2015/.../magazine-summer-2015-is-a...>

Others include:

'From Ukraine to the UK, academic freedom is under threat': Rachael Jolley, *The New Statesman*,

www.newstatesman.com/.../ukraine-uk-academic-freedom-under-threat

Jonathan Dimbleby in *The Guardian*:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/21/freedom-of-speech-online-witch-hunts-law--bbc>

NOTICES

Index on Censorship and CAFAS would welcome your views on the extremism bill

In light of the new extremism bill, Index on Censorship is interested in gathering views from academics on their perceptions of challenges to free speech/academic freedom on campus.

Please email:
info@indexoncensorship.org.

The extremism bill is on the agenda for the CAFAS meeting on Saturday 3 October. It would be useful to know how members feel on the subject. Your views could be included in our submission to Index on Censorship. This would not exclude you from contributing individually.

Please email the Chair, John Fernandes,
johnfernandes500@gmail.com.

Meeting

Saturday 3 October 2015
Room 252, Birkbeck College
Meeting 2.00-4.30

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Approval of minutes of the AGM and Ordinary Meeting of 27th June 2015
3. Correspondence between Elahe and i) Dean of Law UCL, ii) Rashid Mehmood.
4. Letter from President and Provost UCL- Sir Tim Hunt
5. Academic Freedom: counter-extremism bill
6. Update newsletter
7. Casework
8. AOB

Pre-meeting from 1.15 pm. All welcome.

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 organization 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: Kirit Patel, Tel: 0208 427 9770, kiritone@live.co.uk If you would like a speaker from CAFAS to address a branch meeting, contact: John Fernandes , 07551823361 johnfernandes500@gmail.com

CONSTITUTION

CAFAS' aims are outlined on the membership form. The full constitution can be obtained from the Chair or www.cafas.org.uk. CAFAS was founded in February 1994. It depends on subscriptions and an active membership. It meets in March/April, June and September/October.

Have you paid your SUBSCRIPTION?

Please send your cheque or standing order to the Membership Secretary, Kirit Patel, 19 Greenhill Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1LD kiritone@live.co.uk, Tel: 0208 427 9770

Next deadline: 18 March 2016

Please send letters, news items and articles to:

Pat Brady
patrick.brady28@gmail.com &
Geraldine Thorpe
thorpegm@googlemail.com

You can also send us items at any time for earlier publication on the website.

Dates of Meetings 2016

17 April 2016

26 June 2016

Please check the website for venue and changes.

CAFAS Update seeks to provide an open forum for opinion and discussion.

Items do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council.

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