

## A black mark against theatres

CHRIS Blackhurst (March 30) quotes an unnamed source on reasons why the Rose Theatre in Kingston would not receive its required funding, including its low black and ethnic minority ratio. Really? If that were true, every theatre in the land would be hosting black plays or recasting productions with actors of colour. Clearly this is not the case, or actors such as Idris Elba, Marianne Jean-Baptiste and Lennie James would not have had to move to the US in order to find decent roles.

Alice Charles

WITH diminished Treasury funding there's a lot of weight on narrower shoulders. My concern is for the next generation, who haven't yet had support to achieve artistic excellence, find new audiences or achieve social change, the criteria for most private giving. As a sector we have a renewed responsibility to emerging talent. HighTide is responding to this by giving bursaries and rehearsal space to artists early in their career in London and across Eastern England, thanks to Arts Council England and the Genesis Foundation's support. We need to provide artistic and business mentoring to help ourselves and others create great art, and work with the Arts Council to communicate the impacts of England's subsidised cultural activity nationally and worldwide. Steven Atkinson, HighTide Festival Theatre

## Chaos looms over new waste plant

ON Tuesday, Barnet was the last of seven boroughs to approve the North London Waste Plan which awaits planning permission in May. The plan would put the largest waste treatment plant in Europe in the middle of a residential area in Muswell Hill/Friern Barnet, and all the waste trucks from Barnet, Haringey, Camden, Islington, Enfield, Hackney and Waltham Forest will descend on the junction where Colney Hatch Lane meets the A406. There will be more than 1,100 vehicles movements a day. Residents worry about the additional traffic congestion but also the potential health problems from noise and air pollution. We accept that London cannot continue to dump its waste in holes in the ground in the Home Counties. But this plan is ill thought out and the consultation has been woeful. Colin Parish, Pinkham Way Alliance



Fog of war: smoke billows as Libyan rebels progress westward earlier this week

## We need clear aims in Libya

OBJECTIVES in Libya remain unclear. The ragtag opposition clearly is inadequate to win on the ground, and simply giving them better weapons is unlikely to do much beyond getting more people killed. Obama has been adamant US ground forces will not be used. With UK troops overstretched, either someone else must be found to do the fighting – will the Aussies perhaps oblige? – or the President will have to break a promise. Dr James H Joyner, Atlantic Council

MOUSSA Koussa would only defect if he had thought he was welcome. If Cameron plays "world stage" politics and is soft on Koussa, he risks outraging domestic opinion. If he is cool towards him he risks being seen to have wasted an opportunity by failing to draw out other defectors. This could be a case of damned if you do and damned if you don't. Tim Brannon

WHAT would our policy brains do if Gaddafi himself flew in to announce he no longer wished to be associated with his regime? He is widely suspected of having a personality disorder, after all. D Steponavicius

# The rights and wrongs of AV

FOR Britons to be able to use their votes to signal their true preferences and for more people to feel they have had an influence on the outcome of a general election, when under our current system many voters have never voted for someone who got elected, is a welcome development. AV can be legitimately criticised either because it will probably lead to more coalitions or because it is a poor substitute for "real PR", but arguing it would be an end to one-person-one-vote is simply wrong. As with the current system, every vote would be counted equally and only once in determining who ultimately gets elected. For the 25 historians who wrote to The Times this month to claim otherwise is a travesty of their intellectual credentials.

Two other elements relating to the referendum should be highlighted. Differential turnout across the country could potentially influence the outcome. If the Yes side sneaks a win on the back of high turnouts in Wales and Scotland, where they will be

Arguing that AV would be an end to one-person-one-vote is simply wrong

Professor Simon Hix, LSE

electing their parliaments on the same day, it would raise some major headaches about legitimacy. Longer term, the outcome of the referendum may influence whether the Coalition presses ahead with plans for an elected Lords: more likely if AV is rejected to provide a sop to the Lib-Dems. An elected Lords with a Lib-Dem contingent holding the balance of power would be a considerable block on a Conservative or Labour majority in the Commons. If AV is approved, there will be pressure on Cameron to resist an elected Lords, a pretty disastrous result from the point of view of British democracy. Professor Simon Hix, LSE

IS ANYONE not voting on AV on the basis of political calculation? Aside from huge numbers who want to punish Nick Clegg, there are Lib-Dems who hope a rejection will weaken Coalition ministers in the face of the party. Among Conservatives, some of those unhappy with the Coalition see a rejection as useful, while a vote in

favour is a way to weaken Cameron. AV is not sufficiently different from first past the post to constitute a big transformation and its adoption is likely just to spread confusion and apathy. The urgent task for PR supporters is to explain why AV is not proportional and does not address our current system's fundamental inequality. Alternatives need airing including polling to show support for a PR alternative, if it had been on the ballot paper. Without this case being made we risk waking up with AV, or first past the post retained without an honest argument about their merits. Chris Chilvers, Respect Party

Even if AV wouldn't sweep the BNP into Parliament, it could save them a lot of deposits and give them a big media boost. You only have to look at the recent French local elections to see how the Front National have profited with transferable vote systems and appear on the cusp of a big upset in next year's presidentials. Lee Rotherham

Have your say...  
letters@standard.co.uk

WRITE: The Editor, Evening Standard, PO Box 2309, London W8 5EE

EMAIL: letters@standard.co.uk

Give a daytime phone number. Letters withholding name and address will not be published.

**Get it off your TXT**

Bad day at work? Baffled by Boris's latest move? Text us your heartfelt and hilarious London thoughts

Enter **ES TEXTS** followed by a space then your message, name, address and postcode

TEXT TO **65400**  
Texts cost 25p plus your standard network charge. Terms apply, see thisislondon.co.uk

**SHELLEY VON STRUNCKEL'S STARS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 42**

■ P Murray (Txts, Thurs) misses the point. Of course Bob Crow will want to keep the Tube open for an extra hour after the Games have finished. Just the thought of then going on strike for extra pay to "compensate" the already well paid and protected drivers and other staff must have him salivating already. Pete Dobson

■ When I used to drive in along the A2, the boy racers driving coaches terrified me. But they are nothing compared with current London bus drivers. Anon

■ I take issue with your argument that "few Londoners will have much sympathy

with those occupying others' homes for free". Of course there are high-profile cases where squatters take over someone's house while they are on holiday but most are in unoccupied buildings. At a time of housing shortage, the real crime is property owners keeping buildings empty for so long. Patrick Brown

■ The scandal of Independent Sector Treatment Centres allowing private firms to pocket £22 million for operations that never happened demonstrates why the NHS reforms will in fact work. The value of medical care can only really be understood by doctors. GP commissioning, in partnership with

consultants, is the answer. Done properly, there is a real opportunity to rid the system of the inefficiency which has dogged previous attempts at reform. Mike Dilkes, consultant surgeon

■ Indeed Jules (Txts, Thurs), east London graffiti is unsightly. Add graffiti on walls on the Liverpool Street to Chingford line too. It's obvious the "artists" return nightly to add to their scribble. Why aren't they stopped? Pam, E4

■ It amazes me just how bad Channel 4's sitcom Friday Night Dinner is. If you don't believe me, watch tonight at 10pm. Leonard Rees

## DAILY VOTE

### Has the Government cut the arts too far?

Text **ES VOTE YES** or **ES VOTE NO** followed by your name to **65400**  
Texts cost 25p plus your standard network charge

Our last result  
Do you avoid flying through Heathrow if you can?

**YES** 63%  
**NO** 37%

Printed and distributed by NewspaperDirect  
www.newspaperdirect.com US/Can: 1 877 590 4040 Int'l: 800 536 6364  
COPYRIGHT AND PROTECTED BY APPLICABLE LAW