29th August 2013 Issue # 2

THE E.G.

Anyone Incapable of Taking Sides Should Say Nothing

GENERATOR
projects

DEAR READER,

This is the second daily publication of 'The E.G'. If you've missed the first one it is available online at: www.anyoneincapableoftakingsidesshouldsaynothing.wordpress.com

Envisaged as a parallel endeavour to our on-going project blog as mentioned above, this paper 'The E.G' - which plays on the Independent's more popular little brother, the 'I' for its title- aims to carry critical discourse, quality art writing & cultural comment to anyone with a working laptop, smart phone or a computer with an internet connection in a public library

Alex Niven, the man who is helping our Press Team and the GENERATOREditors compile the newspaper today, gave a fantastic presentation in our gallery yesterday evening. Available via our blog, the talk went out to untold millions.

Joining Alex last night was Dan Faichney from the local Rusty Hip Collective Zine & Christopher MacInnes from Glasgow based journal, Undercurrents, who proceeded to have a verbal fight about the prospective values and worth of zines against journals, and the digital against the analogue.

Alex's talk can be viewed in the coming days online. It will be announced in this paper and on GENERATORprojects' facebook page first. Also, recordings from our crit sessions will also appear soon too online.

Following on from his talk, Alex's article for today's paper looks at the political & societal conditions which have shaped our contemporary cultural landscape. Our economic malaise has produced a society of mass unemployment, very much opposed to the so called 'post-war consensus' of yester-year. Dennis J.Reinmuller's posters for 'JobCentreSuperPlus' use humour as their critique; satire by image making reflecting the prospects of today's victims of neo-liberalism. Beth Dynowski continues looking at the relation between the digital & analogue. Georgia Horgan of our press team follows up on some of the points Alex has brought to light in her own way.

Despite the seeming pessimism in today's issue, we hope all is not lost, and continue to believe in the ways in which art can continue to make and re-shape the way we view the world. Anyone for a revolution? There is enough to be angry about in the world.

Anyway, we hope you enjoy today's issue and remind you that if you would like to comment on any of the issues we are dealing with, or have a response to any our guest 'contributors', feel free to email: mail@generatorprojects.co.uk and let us know how you would like to respond..

Today's Editorial Team,

James Lee, GENERATORcommittee
&
Alex Niven, writer & copy-editor at Zero Books

The GENERATOR Printhouse Complaints
Commission Code of Conduct

Opportunity to Reply

A fair opportunity to engage in discussion is encouraged in response to any and all postings from GENERATOR printhouse. Whether this is through forms of public media, written or otherwise, or through private verbal discussions. It is therefore the responsibility of the writers, artists and editors to contribute thought provoking content to each issue.

THE OPPOSITE OF FOLK

"Nevertheless, the event was an embodiment of a musical trend that had been burgeoning for some time. This was nu-folk"

Words byAlex Niven

Back in October 2010 the BBC hosted a live music event called "Mumford and Sons and Friends" at Cecil Sharp House in North London. The gig was introduced by the hyperbolic Radio 1 DJ Zane Lowe, and the lineup – Mumford and Sons, The Maccabees, Bombay Bicycle Club, Laura Marling – was touted as a celebration of "the new wave of British acoustic artists making a musical impact in 2010." The description of these bands as "British folk-inspired acts" may have been pushing the definition somewhat. Despite their shared interest in twee melodies and faux-colloquial vocals, both The Maccabees and Bombay Bicycle Club were clearly electric, indie-rock oriented acts. Nevertheless, the event was an embodiment of a musical trend that had been burgeoning for some time. This was nu-folk, a middlebrow form of pastoral pop, and the BBC's showcase for Mumford and Sons' festival-anthem folk rock was its moment of mainstream apotheosis.

Nu-folk emerged originally out of the American alt-folk and alt-country scenes of the eighties and nineties. By the mid '00s, artists like Joanna Newsom, Grizzly Bear, Bon Iver, and Bill Callahan were at the forefront of a vigorous US-based scene that juxtaposed traditional elements with neo-psychedelic strangeness. Sometimes labeled "acid folk", or "weird folk", the leaders of this sub-genre were typically leftfield experimentalists, eccentric counter-cultural figures embracing the myth of the American frontier. As the US struggled to recapture an affirmative, humane collective identity in the run up to Obama's victory in the 2008 presidential election, this brand of soulful Americana seemed timely and apposite.

The British branch of the genre, however, was a much less exciting proposition. By the time of the Zane Lowe gig at Cecil Sharp House in late 2010, the coffee-table commercialism of Mumford and Sons (and associated artists like Emmy the Great, Laura Marling, Noah and the Whale, and Johnny Flynn) had become the dominant tendency in UK nu-folk. Unfortunately, this slick, bankable trend, described by Lowe as a "new wave of acoustic artists," had far more in common with MOR singer-songwriters like Jack Johnson and Kate Nash than it did with counter-cultural forerunners like Bert Jansch and Fairport Convention. Musically pedestrian to the point of utter banality, and lacking either a firm grasp of tradition or any experimental impulse whatsoever, genre-defining songs like "5 Years Time" by Noah and the Whale and "The Cave" by Mumford and Sons were travesties of the notion of newness, corporate pastiches of a traditional aesthetic.

But one of the most notable things about the nu-folk ascendancy was its social makeup. Interestingly, almost every single member of the Mumford and Sons and Friends lineup was educated at a private fee-paying school in London or the surrounding area (and the same 4 or 5 schools at that). We are all used to having to allow for the disproportionate influence of private-school alumni in British society, but not, perhaps, in pop music, and certainly not to this emphatic extent.

Whatever the new sub-genre led by Mumford and Sons and Friends denoted, it could scarcely be described as folk in the sense of an ordinary, grassroots populace. In fact, this musical phenomenon was an appropriation of the onetime art of the rural and urban proletariat by a privileged, youthful mandarin caste. When it was claimed that Laura Marling was a descendant of William the Conqueror, most people looked on this as a charming but irrelevant piece of biographical information. Yet the symbolic connection of a modern metropolitan elite to an ancient aristocracy was unfortunately all too apt. At the start of the 2010s, British culture was presided over by a social demographic bolstered by inherited power and influence in a way not seen since the Second World War, and nu-folk was the music of choice for this new elite. How did this inversion of folk culture's raison d'être occur?

As egalitarianism and social mobility began to fall by the wayside in the '90s and '00s, there

were signs that the old British class system was creeping back with a vengeance after the populist, reformist tides of the post-war period. But the spectacular co-option of the accoutrements of populist art, old and new, by an affluent upper middle class that accompanied the return of a stratified social order was an interesting twist. Why did this new plutocracy seize so eagerly on nu-folk pop music as a means of culturally defining itself, and what sort of worldview was being affirmed by this consumer fantasy of bucolic populism?

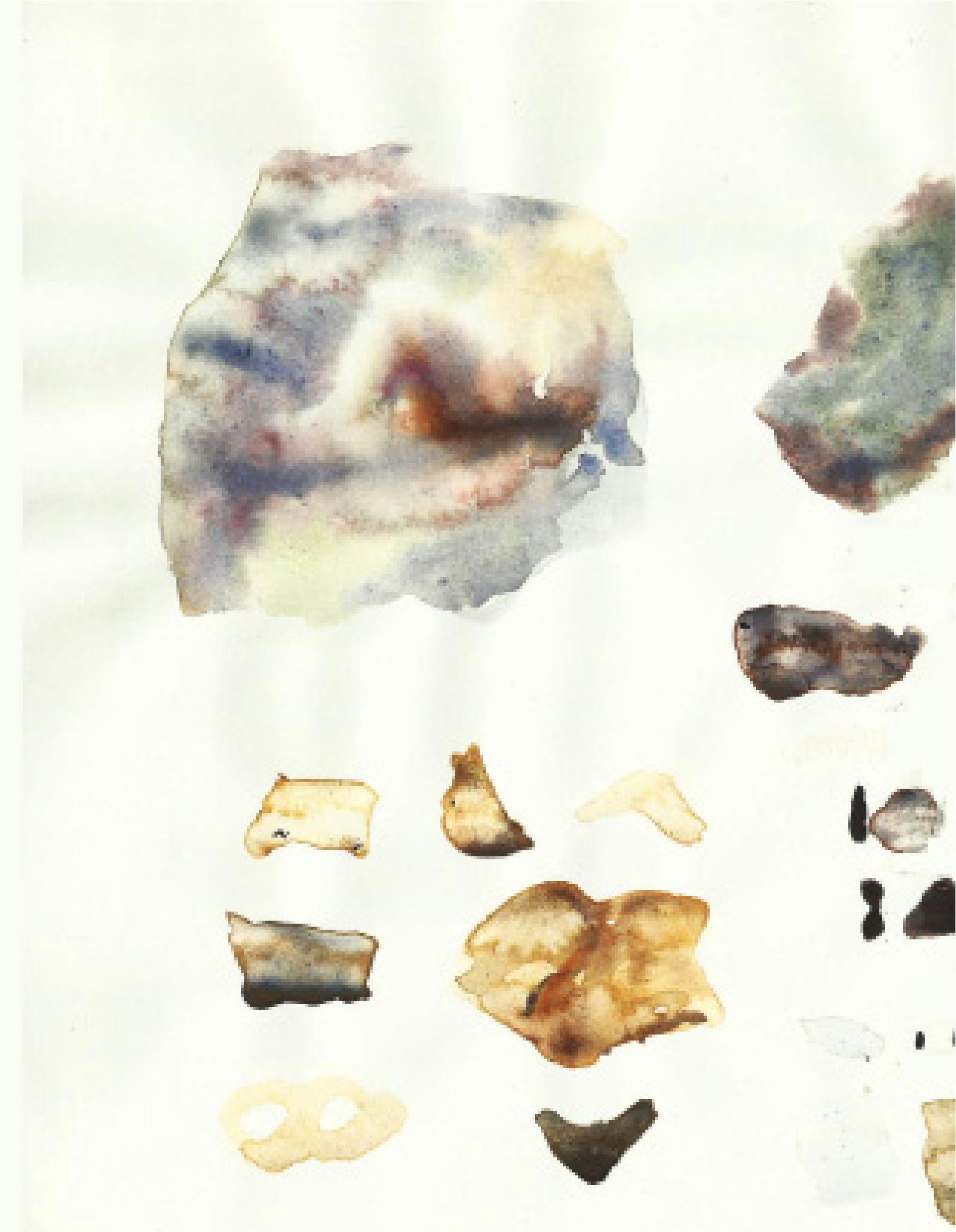
One of David Cameron's stabs at "progressivism" in the run-up to the 2010 election, one of his most blatant attempts to win over the liberal centre, was the projection of the Green Conservative PR myth. In a much-hyped 2008 speech, Cameron performed an act of cartoon rebranding when he declared that green should join blue as one of the primary colours of Conservative Party identity. The old Tory logo (a blue torch) was swapped for a badly drawn English oak tree, an emblem that tapped into both Tory traditionalism and a new plutocracy's hankering after a kooky rural lifestyle. In reality, what looked like an attempt to innovate a European-style progressive conservatism was little more than an ad-hoc piece of image-making, a publicity stunt that was forgotten after a minor media kerfuffle.

Nevertheless, for all that the new Green Toryism was an obviously spurious gimmick, it was a pithy and accurate summation of the British middle-class zeitgeist at the turn of the decade. Specifically, its relevance lay in its metaphorical synthesis of Old Tory myths of organic order with the values of a new hegemonic bourgeois class, one that was yearning for a cultural paradigm that would simultaneously justify its escapist lifestyle and its often unconscious dedication to hierarchy and inheritance.

The mood and values of Green Toryism were so pervasive that it defined even the cultural outlook of many non-Tory voters, garnering sympathy from the class that had sustained and profited from Blairism – Guardianistas, Nick Clegg acolytes, the new legions of allotment keepers, aging indie musicians – as well as from the Old and New Right base that was by definition always inclined towards aristocratic and pseudo-aristocratic values. Its shibboleths were littered across the culture. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's River Cottage franchise was one of the runaway TV success stories of the late '00s, so much so that by the beginning of the new decade its presenter had the temerity to venture into working-class council homes to lecture the beleaguered inhabitants on the virtues of organic eating. Barbour jackets became frighteningly ubiquitous. Lily Allen, a privately educated London popstar with famous entertainment industry parents left the music business after meteoric success and celebrity to live with her ducks and run a small clothing business in the Surrey countryside. Overall, the classic popular cultural depiction of the countryside was as a quasi-fictional playground for London professionals indulging in weekend escapism.

As with the corporate-trad of Mumford and Sons and their ilk, these avowals of folksiness and green identity were part of a top-down inversion of the notion of an indigenous grassroots. The more the British middle-class benefited from an ultra-modern, ultra-technological system of global production, the more they sought refuge in a cult of the earth that suggested they were still in sympathetic allegiance with a humble, peasant-like way of life. As Cameron's New Tories began to implement the most profoundly un-sympathetic, anti-populist agenda in living memory, there was solace in the mirage of an eternal, agrarian world that would safeguard earthiness, simplicity, quasi-pagan mythology, and primitive labour no matter how viciously actual working class people were treated by a neoliberal economy founded on minority (urban) affluence.

As is so often the case with unequal power dynamics, inequality was compounded by that fact that the dominant influence managed to seize the garments and vocabulary of the opposing side. In place of a real engagement with a modern day proletariat, Green Toryism propounded the fiction of a sturdy rural yeomanry dedicated to service, on hand to provide labour for upper-middle-class consumer whims like real ale and organic food. In a very literal sense, the folk became the property of the anti-folk, who were then able to characterise the identity of "the people" in whatever way they saw fit. Without significant opposition, a hierarchy comprising old Tories and a new upper-bourgeois caste was utterly free to develop and consolidate its inordinate wealth and centrality, while the real folk populace languished behind an all-encompassing wall of silence.



STUDY FOR ANTIKYTHERA MECHANISM
Beth Dynowski

FREEDOM OF PRESS

Words by Georgia Horgan

The Press Complaints Commission is the UK regulation board for journalistic writing. They have a Code of Conduct, more of a gentleman's agreement as opposed to law, which attempts to regulate the press in order to protect individual rights in tandem with freedom of expression and 'the public's right to know'. However, a regulated press is being increasingly undermined with the explosion of online media such as the blogosphere and Twitter. First hand accounts and increasingly opinion driven content, free from the constraints of a Fleet Street gentleman's code, is changing the way we consume news and is radically affecting the distribution of facts.

The Internet has provided a platform for an essentially entirely uncensored press of first-hand accounts and updates: a platform where, in 2011, BBM and Twitter aided looting and disorder in London that created a governmental crisis. Although the London riots lacked a political agenda, it certainly proved digital medias capability to rally resistance. This was demonstrated in a more productive form in the deposing of President Mubarak in Egypt that same year.

In contrast to an increasingly tainted print press, restricted by legal hoop-jumping and financial incentives from advertising, the blow-by-blow blogosphere news seemed veritably utopian. It echoed the principals of forms of computer utopianism, such as the Californian Ideology, which believed that by having the entire world linked via the individual nodes of personal computers, a self-organizing, inter-connected paradise could be realized. In a constantly fluctuating and redistributing network, computers could be left to organize even the delicate equilibrium of the financial markets. Governments would become irrelevant, and a peer-to-peer super-democracy would flourish. But, as argued in Adam Curtis's ironically named documentary All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace, this somewhat negligent attitude led to the seizure of power by a select, neo-liberal financial elite.

Furthermore, neo-liberal governments are increasingly policing the World Wide Web, dismantling the digital dream with increased online censorship. With the recent American email monitoring scandal, Cameron's pre-censored Internet provider subscription initiative, and the arrest of the administrator of the dark net provider Freedom Hosting, the 'liberal' West has been flexing its proverbial censorship muscles. As family-orientated or pure of intention as Cameron's legislation or FBI hackers may seem, it potentially only signals further restrictions and scrutiny of the general publics' internet activity, never mind dark net distributors of illegal material.

As part of the Generator Printhouse Talk series, blogger and journalist Alex Niven has agued that a more complete, cohesive and collective initiative needs to be taken to encourage radical social change. It seems that this is where the printed word could find its place again: by collating and distributing information from the blogosphere into print through projects such as Zero Books, leftist opinion that would otherwise be lost to cyber space can reach a broader audience in a more digestible framework than a raft of reactionary Tweets. Equally, independently run journals and zines help to provide a form of canonization for texts that would otherwise fade into obscurity. And, perhaps in the face of increased monitoring online, the printed word may have a renewed life as a guerilla tactic - as far as I'm aware, no one can track your location from a book or pamphlet.

YOU WILL NEVER BE SUPERMAN

BUT YOU MIGHT BECOME AN EMPLOYEE

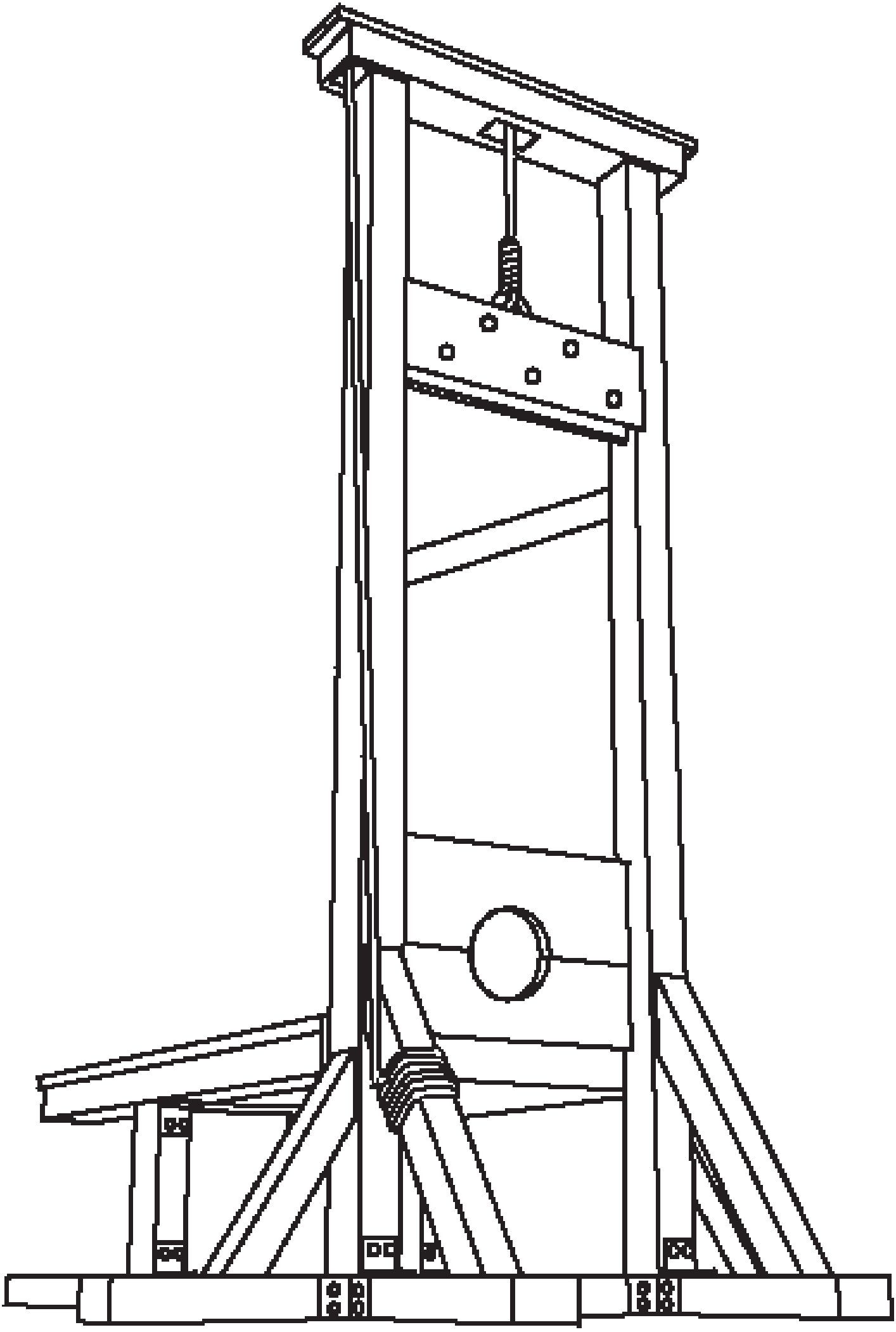
Dennis J. Reinmuller

jobcentresuperplus

jobcentresuperplus

“YES.”

jobcentresuperplus



Georgia Horgan