

**A N G L A I S**

**L V I I**

## ORAL CONCOURS 2017

### ANGLAIS - LVII

#### **Activism is mainstream again ... how can protests create change?**

**From the women's march to climate change protests, people are taking to the streets in an attempt to get their voices heard. How can they make an impact?**

Protesting is back. People have woken up to the undeniable fact that power ultimately lies with them. We can't change what's already happened, but we can organise to ensure that the huge progress we have made tackling some of the world's greatest problems is not lost. We are returning to the traditional and most effective form of protest – marching, with placards, bull-horns and a collective, defiant voice.

The fragmenting of political systems across the globe has worrying implications for democracy. But it has also sparked greater determination. A visible, protesting public is one of the most effective ways to hold political leaders to account and push the agendas that matter.

In Romania, it's estimated that 500,000 people recently took to the streets to protest about corruption. A friend, Bea, who took part in the protests, described them as driven by anger, but that people were left with a sense of community, hope and solidarity. Those protesting included families, professionals, creatives, journalists, students and more. They exchanged tea, snacks and water. They exchanged tea, snacks and water. Reminiscent of the days of Jubilee 2000, a human chain of 30,000 people was formed around parliament. Bea believes the protests have produced a mindshift, people now understanding that we can only drive positive change together. That in itself is an incredible outcome.

Anyone who has been on a protest can attest to the exhilaration that people power provides. This renewed protest zeitgeist offers a golden opportunity to reawaken those causes. But how can this new found vigour have the most impact?

It would intensify impact if we link protests to the UN's sustainable development goals, aiming to make the world a safer, fairer, cleaner and more peaceful place by 2030. In 2015, 193 countries signed up to the SDGs and it's up to the people to hold their governments to account to achieve them.

Reminding our leaders of their duties requires everyone who cares to take action. With renewed purpose, activism must become as much a part of our civic duty as paying council tax or dividing rubbish up for recycling. [...]

#### ***Five tips for making the most impact***

1. Clarity of message and a clear end goal are crucial. Think of Make Poverty History – a simple, clear ask.
2. Balance political and news agenda opportunity with public zeitgeist – for example, the UK's anti-corruption summit and perfect timing of the Panama Papers.
3. Make it as easy as possible for people to get involved; they're busy, they have other things going on, but with the right information and support they will join in.
4. Make sure your protest targets know what's happening and why. There's no point in thousands of people taking to the streets if the targets don't hear about it. That just making noise, not making change.
5. Know that change is possible. We were part of the campaign that secured legislation to enshrine in law that 0.7% of UK gross national income goes to overseas aid – the UN's aid spending target.

There's a saying: if you want to build a ship, don't ask people to collect wood and assign them tasks, but teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea. It's the same principle for campaigning – if people care about an issue, they will take action.



**ORAL CONCOURS 2017  
ANGLAIS - LVII****Mark Zuckerberg tells Harvard grads that automation will take jobs, and it's up to millennials to create more**

Mark Zuckerberg finally has his Harvard degree. The Facebook CEO and famous college dropout left the Ivy League university 12 years ago to found the social network, but he returned Thursday to pick up a honorary doctor of laws degree and drop some wisdom on the class of 2017.

Zuckerberg called on his alma mater's newest graduates to tackle major, ambitious "great works" projects that bring together masses of people for the general benefit of society. He noted that many technologies — including some being developed at Facebook — are changing the world and also presenting new challenges.

"You're graduating at a time when this is especially important," Zuckerberg said in the speech. "When our parents graduated, a sense of purpose reliably came from your job, your church, your community. But today, technology and automation are eliminating many jobs. Membership in a lot of communities has been declining. A lot people are feeling disconnected and depressed, and are trying to fill a void in their lives."

The Facebook executive said that it's time for this generation to define a "social contract" in the vein of the New Deal or the Great Society. In his remarks, Zuckerberg said that we should explore ideas such as universal basic income — the idea that everyone should receive a base salary — and explore ways to provide health care and childcare in ways that aren't tied to an employer.

He also acknowledged that this won't be cheap. "And yes, giving everyone the freedom to pursue purpose isn't free," he said. "People like me should pay for it. Many of you will do well and you should too."

Zuckerberg, 33, is the youngest person to deliver a Harvard commencement speech, according to Facebook — a fact that he wanted to highlight to the crowd. "We walked this yard less than a decade apart, we studied the same ideas and slept through the same lectures," he said. "We may have taken different roads to get here — especially if you came all the way from the quad — but today I want to share what I've learned about our generation and the world we're building together."

Some of Zuckerberg's remarks echo the manifesto he published earlier this year, outlining how he saw Facebook's mission as establishing a social infrastructure for the world. But the central theme of Zuckerberg's address was to call on young people to create a world where "everyone has a sense of purpose" by looking beyond their own needs.

Noting that society will likely see "tens of millions of jobs replaced by automation like self-driving cars and trucks" in the coming years, Zuckerberg called for young people to work on large public works projects to make new jobs. Though he didn't specify what sorts of projects those should be, or what hand companies such as Facebook could play in them, he did cite some past examples.

Zuckerberg noted that previous generations have their own defining works — the Hoover Dam, the space program, the fight against polio — that pulled them together and imbued America with civic pride.

"To keep our society moving forward, we have a generational challenge — to not only create new jobs, but create a renewed sense of purpose," he said. "So what are we waiting for? It's time for our generation-defining great works."

## ORAL CONCOURS 2017

### ANGLAIS - LVII

#### **Labour will scrap university tuition fees if they win general election**

The Labour Party will scrap tuition fees "once and for all" if the party wins power, the shadow Chancellor has said. In interviews today, the party refused to say whether or not axing fees – of up to £9,250 per year at English universities – will be in the party's manifesto.

But footage has emerged of John McDonnell, the shadow Chancellor, revealing the policy during a speech in Mansfield.

"It's not a commodity to be bought and sold," Mr McDonnell said, of education, at the event two weeks ago. "So we want to introduce – just as the Attlee government with Nye Bevan introduced the National Health Service – we want to introduce a 'National Education Service'.

Free at the point of need throughout life. And that means ending the cuts in the schools at primary and secondary level. It means free childcare. It means free school training when you need it throughout life. And yes it means scrapping tuition fees once and for all so we don't burden our kids with debt for the future."

The Coalition's tripling of tuition fees in 2012 forced a collapse in the Liberal Democrats' poll ratings, which all but wiped out Nick Clegg's party three years later.

Labour's policy at the last election – merely to cut tuition fees from £9,000 to £6,000 a year – was criticised as timid.

In the 2015 party leadership campaign which followed, Mr Corbyn said he would get rid of tuition fees by hiking either National Insurance for higher earners or corporation tax. In recent weeks, Labour has been criticised for appearing to indicate several priority areas it would fund from hiking corporation tax.

But it insists an annual £20bn will eventually be raised by increasing corporation tax from its current 19 per cent rate to 26 per cent by 2021-22. That would more than cover a £5.7bn cash injection for beleaguered English schools, restoring both university maintenance grants and the education maintenance allowance and axing fees on courses for adult learners, Labour says.

Meanwhile, critics of high tuition fees argue they will soon cost the public purse more than before they were tripled, as more students fail to earn enough to pay back their loans.

The write-off costs have topped 45 per cent of the more than £10bn of student loans made each year, all but nullifying any savings to the public purse.

Today, Angela Rayner, the shadow Education Secretary, said "watch this space" when asked if a pledge to axe tuition fees would quickly follow. She "didn't want to give too much of the manifesto away" on a day when Labour was focusing on its plans to spend billions boosting schools and further education.

Labour enjoys 55 per cent support among students, according to a poll last week. The party appears to be succeeding in a voter registration drive. In his speech, Mr McDonnell said scrapping tuition fees would help make Britain "radically fairer, radically more equal", adding: "What do you call that? I call it socialism?"



## ORAL CONCOURS 2017 ANGLAIS - LVII

### **If You Can't Retain Women, Don't Recruit Them**

I am not a whistleblower or a leaker. I did not leave on the fiery coattails of a Twitter rant. Instead, I walked out of the building of a leading tech company on an otherwise unassuming Wednesday afternoon, the agreed-upon last day of my seven-year tenure, and took a deep breath.

I thought I might shed a tear or feel mild panic as I drove away, but instead I felt relieved. I loved that place and my team, but the price I had begun to pay was not worth the perks. And that led me to this next, most ridiculous thought: Silicon Valley should stop recruiting efforts to hire women.

A few years ago, several tech companies, led by Google, valiantly shared demographic data about their employees; if you do not live under a rock or off the grid, you know the numbers were grim. The story they told was accurate, and I call the effort "valiant" because it was the first effort of its kind. It felt like the right thing to do. Women throughout the tech industry applauded; finally, something might happen! The truth was out!

Enter the most overused phrase in the technology industry, the hiring pipeline. The logic at tech companies is, We're already hiring all the best and brightest, now we just have to go find the best and brightest who check all the boxes we're looking for. In order to get the output we want, we have to stack the deck of people flowing into it. Right? Maybe. This is a long-game approach, and it mostly holds true. However.

What worries me, and the reason I posit that leading tech companies should halt these pipeline efforts, is that the leak is not, in fact, at the entry point; the pipe is broken further down the line. Tech company recruiters are novice plumbers patting themselves on the back because they found the problem and patched it, except the real pipe burst is a few years down the line, when the women who were just hired leave.

If companies look at this from a business perspective, they are literally flushing resources down the toilet if the person they recruited, interviewed, hired, on-boarded, and employed for two years quits because the environment is (at best) not a fit or (at worst) blatantly sexist.

That's the real leaky pipe. All of the resources that go into finding and hiring women (and other underrepresented groups, but I can speak to my experience best) should very quickly be rerouted to retention and promotion. I'd like to see Silicon Valley release those numbers next. Those statistics are the canary in the coal mine and tell a story deeper than simply what percentage of whom is currently employed in what areas of the company.

Tech companies should form working groups that function with Special Forces -team like efficiency when a manager, or the individual themselves, sounds the alert on a human capital loss risk; a k a, "My person on my team seems unhappy and I think it's because of our culture." I can point to the first flag I raised, and it was years ago; that incident turned out to be just one of a thousand tiny cuts, as so many women experience. A senior manager started a conversation by saying, "You're in this demographic, let me ask you..." and proceeded to ask a question about promotion (or not), for women in my stage of life, meaning: a mother of young children. On its own, the question was likely not enough to make anyone quit, but certainly enough to give me pause. To put me on alert. Like I said, I am not a whistleblower nor a fiery ranter, but the patterns are there and are being reported.



## ORAL CONCOURS 2017

### ANGLAIS - LVII

**Why it's dangerous to outsource our critical thinking to computers**  
**It is crucial for a resilient democracy that we better understand how Google and Facebook are changing the way we think, interact and behave**

The lack of transparency around the processes of Google's search engine has been a preoccupation among scholars since the company began. Long before Google expanded into self-driving cars, smartphones and ubiquitous email, the company was being asked to explain the principles and ideologies that determine how it presents information to us. And now, 10 years later, the impact of reckless, subjective and inflammatory misinformation served up on the web is being felt like never before in the digital era.

Google responded to negative coverage this week by reluctantly acknowledging and then removing offensive autosuggest results for certain search results. Type "jews are" into Google, for example, and until now the site would autofill "jews are evil" before recommending links to several rightwing anti-Semitic hate sites.

That follows the misinformation debacle that was the US general election. When Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg addressed the issue, he admitted that structural issues lie at the heart of the problem: the site financially rewards the kind of sensationalism and fake news likely to spread rapidly through the social network regardless of its veracity or its impact. The site does not identify bad reporting, or even distinguish fake news from satire.

Facebook is now trying to solve a problem it helped create. Yet instead of using its vast resources to promote media literacy, or encouraging users to think critically and identify potential problems with what they read and share, Facebook is relying on developing algorithmic solutions that can rate the trustworthiness of content. This approach could have detrimental, long-term social consequences.

The scale and power with which Facebook operates means the site would effectively be training users to outsource their judgment to a computerised alternative. And it gives even less opportunity to encourage the kind of 21st-century digital skills – such as reflective judgment about how technology is shaping our beliefs and relationships – that we now see to be perilously lacking.

The engineered environments of Facebook, Google and the rest have increasingly discouraged us from engaging in an intellectually meaningful way. We, the masses, aren't stupid or lazy when we believe fake news; we're primed to continue believing what we're led to believe.

The networked info-media environment that has emerged in the past decade – of which Facebook is an important part – is a space that encourages people to accept what's presented to them without reflection or deliberation, especially if it appears surrounded by credible information or passed on from someone we trust. There's a powerful, implicit value in information shared between friends that Facebook exploits, but it accelerates the spread of misinformation as much as it does good content [...]

We have more information at our disposal than ever before, but we're paralyzed into passive complacency. We're being engineered to be passive, programmable people [...] Platforms overload us with information and encourage us to feed the machine with easy, speedy clicks. The media feeds our susceptibility to filter bubbles and capitalizes on contagious emotions such as anger.

It is crucial for a resilient democracy that we better understand how these powerful, ubiquitous websites are changing the way we think, interact and behave. Democracies don't simply depend on well-informed citizens – they require citizens to be capable of exerting thoughtful, independent judgment.

This capacity is a mental muscle; only repeated use makes it strong. And when we spend a long time in places that deliberately discourage critical thinking, we lose the opportunity to keep building that skill.