

NOUSE

Est. 1964



The perils of expansion

Yet again, government calculations have fallen short. £200 million short to be precise. Whilst the inevitable complications of the credit crunch have to be taken into consideration and sympathised with, these days it seems all too frequent that the government's sums just don't add up. As the demand for University placements is escalating at an alarming rate (last year UCAS reported a 7% increase in online applications), York and many other universities are being forced to close their doors to the ever growing throng of British students.

Unfortunately for York, the 'doors' happen to be the brand new, shiny doors of the £500 million Heslington East development. Whilst officials at the University state the expansion project is "unaffected by the Secretary of State's announcement", what this effectively means is that the new accommodation will be dominated by a majority of postgraduate and foreign students, bearing in mind that the penalties for admitting more home students than originally planned and budgeted for include "changes to the operation of our funding method". Put simply, that means bad behaviour will result in no more pocket money for York.

Arguably just as problematic as this imbalance of incoming students is the fact that it remains difficult to know who to blame. Perhaps the University was a little over zealous in its expansion plans, and should have foreseen a governmental clampdown before signing over huge sums of money, but it's easy to say that in hindsight.

What is now certain is that York faces a difficult and delicate balancing act. With applications across the country at an all time high, it's more important than ever for York to be thorough when offering out the available places left to home students. If departments want to attract the best academic candidates and further the university's reputation, they are going to have to make sure they are not turning away those who deserve places most. Whilst the balance of students and the politics involved in allocating the new space in Heslington East remains something of a question mark, we must not allow the academic future of the University to suffer as a result of bureaucratic incompetence.

A sad case of student apathy

Tom Scott is 'that pirate guy,' and Matt Burton "something to do with Langwith bar," according to students sitting in the Courtyard, not knowing that the £1.80 they paid for that coffee is going to help provide them with free condoms, legal advice, employment protection, and, of course, a campus media to tell them such things. All from their Union.

Within the last year, we've had a bar, and we love it. But we've also had investigations into medical facilities, lobbies for a GUM clinic on campus, pressure to improve sports facilities, a right-to-feedback campaign launched. The list could go on, but how much the average student would be aware of would most likely dwindle as the list grows. And this is YUSU; working to provide us with what we need, and frankly if we as students don't know who these people are, helping to hold the university to account and ensure students receive what help and support they need, then we have no one to blame but ourselves.

We have a pirate for a President, a walking advert for the Union and most of us are aware of him. But what about the other five members of the YUSU elect? And all the staff behind them to ensure that we have our fully functioning bar, our campus events that run seamlessly? Just because they don't wear a prosthetic parrot as they walk through Vanbrugh is no excuse not to know who they are and what they do. If we buy a newspaper in Your:Shop, join a campus society, take part in a volunteer project; it's thanks to those YUSU people who work to make our university experience the best that they can. Maybe we owe it to them to be a little more savvy about campus politics after all.

The C-word

Call them what you like, the well-knowns of campus answered the call of charity with aplomb. Instructed to raise cash for RAG in a star-spangled occasion designed for maximum exposure and profitability, and raise cash they did. Undoubtedly, the chosen eleven certainly drew in the punters - and the wallets. Big D, perhaps, is the only campus event to have sold so many tickets in such a short space of time.

Fusion's draw is a similar story. Expect those attending the upcoming *The Full Monty* production to buy tickets for the sole purpose of viewing certain people's disrobed bodies. *Have I Got News For York* works along the same lines: get familiar faces on stage to sell tickets.

But for this recognition and pulling-power, there must certainly be a resulting downside. The Media Charter must reflect this. Campus figures, who enjoy the limelight thrust upon them by elected positions, popular societies, well-attended performances or simple all-round notoriety, must accept the inevitable backlash that emanates from various quarters. Those involved in campus activities, whether acting, writing, postulating or dancing, must realise they are immune from the safety net afforded to the general masses. It cannot be outspoken critic one week, and poor defenceless student the next.

With relative fame comes consequences. Those willing to stick their necks out for - among other things - their own self-promotion, should expect some flak. But they should be able to take it; they are 'celebrities' after all.

Nouse, Grimston House, University of York, YO10 5DD
editor@nouse.co.uk

Killing debate: Murray, Islam and the 'R' word

Peter Campbell



It was all going so well; each speaker had presented their case, debate had been aroused, feelings stirred, and everyone agreed on the necessity of discussion. Then the bombshell struck. Professor Mohamed El-Gomati, Muslim Councillor for Students, stood up to give a few words of response. In the following moments, all potential for consensus was shattered as he turned to Douglas Murray, and an accusation echoed around the room: "racist".

The three speakers were Guffah Hussein, a former member of Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir, Baroness Haleh Afshar, an Iranian born professor at the University, and Murray, dubbed Britain's "best known neoconservative". Between them, they have an impressive depth of knowledge and expertise on a subject that is phenomenally complicated.

The allegation against Murray not only undercut the authority of all three invited speakers, but also reinforced the perception that some would have had of Muslims as intolerant and thin-skinned. While

the original comments were deliberately inflammatory ("we have to put up with the most intolerable filth about Jews from the Islamic world"), they were designed to illustrate Murray's point that free speech should include total freedom to respond to beliefs, as well as expressing them.

Had El-Gomati stood up and given a reasoned response, people

"Potential for consensus was shattered as the accusation stood bare: 'racist' "

would have left with the view that Muslims were capable of taking criticism and tolerating the viewpoints of those who fundamentally disagree with them. What happened was the reverse.

Whilst no-one will have

warned to Murray due to his obnoxiousness throughout, a good number may well have come away agreeing with his main argument: Freedom of speech is being closed down in the area of Islam for fear of offending Muslims, while criticism is simultaneously allowed in all other areas of life. In this sense, Murray was spot on when he said "we put up with this [intolerable filth], but only as long as we can say what we think about it."

Fortunately the word 'racist' was not uttered from the mouths of the panel guests at any point during the evening, but there was certainly no willingness to concede any ground on the issues from that point on. Maybe it was naive to think that a debate on radical Islam in Britain amongst guests of such varied opinions would produce results, but we could have hoped that it would not degenerate into name calling.

When accused of racism, Murray responded: "Sir, if you said that in public I would sue you in a court of law, and I would win". Perhaps he should consider it.

Emily Kozien



Is the Health Centre immune to manners?

The University Health centre is an innocuous-looking building set on the edge of a tranquil lake, where your health concerns and needs are handled in a soothing atmosphere by a team of capable and concerned staff. Or not.

You have an appointment, having called between 8.30 and 8.34 to successfully secure a place with the grim precision of a military offensive, surely now, you think, you're in the clear. Ailment permitting you hobble, stagger, limp or shuffle into the waiting room to be greeted graciously by a receptionist. You are asked upon arrival if you need a nurse or a doctor. Having stated your preference you are then asked, "What is your appointment concerning?" As in any moment of excruciating awkwardness, time freezes and your paranoid mind is acutely aware of the growing queue behind you whose ears are all cocked to hear your answer.

Jolted out of your embarrassment-induced stupor by the question being repeated in an increasingly loud monotone voice, you must decide whether to invite weighted speculation by requesting to speak in a 'private' room or if you are in fact happy to announce every personal detail in the gaping public space. Decision made, you give a mumbled answer, accompanied perhaps with a bashful smile (which is instantly snubbed), and attempt to take a seat with some semblance of dignity intact.

Bizarrely, on being seen by either doctor or nurse you are immediately asked the same question. If your appointment relates to

a previously documented or familiar illness, and particularly if it regards contraception, you are dealt with in an enthusiastically efficient manner. However, symptoms or worries that are more ambiguous in nature are greeted with a quizzical look.

In the case of a friend who suffered sharp, sudden back pain the solution determined was the prescription of a strong painkiller with innumerable potential side-effects and the, undoubtedly familiar, advice to "come back in a couple of days if you're feeling worse". A physical examination to ascertain the exact cause of her pain was deemed unnecessary.

Another friend was sent home with similarly unsubstantiated advice only to later develop tuberculosis. Incidentally, the later diagnosis of TB was provided at York's walk-in-centre by a nurse who cheerfully chuckled over the number of students arriving there hav-

ing been misdiagnosed or misprescribed medication. Unfortunately, my friend's glands had by then swollen to the extent that his cheeks obscured his eyes, so he was unable to share her wry mirth.

Perhaps, having been informed by an administrator that my friend felt "a bit peaky", medical staff considered any further physical assessment to be redundant.

Furthermore, as I have experienced through the frustrating process of getting a letter of medical approval to permit my return to university after a leave of absence, there is a definite breakdown in staff communication. Or is the right word here in fact, 'consideration', or even 'basic manners'? Indeed, I can imagine the staff, puzzled by my increasingly irate phone calls and surrounded by piles of paperwork, continuing to greet new, discomfited and bewildered victims with the familiar blank stare of contempt.

RHIANNON WILLIAMS



LILY EASTWOOD

Sophie Ann James



As the streets of Paris fill with angry students, should we be doing more to challenge the status quo?

What we can learn from our European cousins

It is nomination time yet again for students, in the hope of filling the numerous vacant positions in YUSU and other student organisations. Yet as they await the unlikely stampede of bright, exuberant and enthusiastic nominees, the majority of the student body cower in the sidelines, retreating to the safe realms of prevailing student apathy.

However, the lack of enthusiasm shown towards elected office sheds light on a larger problem, namely the general lack of responsibility or awareness to political issues shown by the majority of students at York. Only a marginally small number fall under the sphere of being 'politically minded'.

Are we so satisfied with our university experience that we do not feel the need for active participation in the political arena? Maybe we are more career orientated; is being a student protester a bad career move? Maybe we just have it too easy compared to our European counterparts. We wait in the hope that beyond graduation, we will slip happily into the 'real world,' acquiring successful jobs and prosperity. But what if the 'real world' is one of dark instability? At a time of economic adversity, unnecessary violent conflict and environmental crisis, many students are dejected, filled with pessimism over their future.

Things are heating up across Europe, with French students proving that revolutionary attitudes certainly did not expire in the eighteenth century. President Nicolas Sarkozy was forced to postpone con-

troversial education reforms after high school students fought in running battles with police. Authorities enforced blockades at school entrances to curb the outcry of chanting, whilst branding the students as 'anarchists.'

As the availability of graduate jobs spirals to an all time low, que a renewed sense of radicalism from university graduates. The fear is of a European-wide student uprising, following the angry rebellion by unemployed graduates in Greece.

"Many students are dejected, filled with pessimism over their future"

The cost of damage nationwide since December last year has reportedly exceeded \$1.3 billion. Their actions may well be anarchic, but it shows that students on the continent are not afraid to take action.

Back home, demonstrations over the Gaza conflict, which involved twenty universities nationwide, shows the initial sparks of political awareness in England. We ought to also commend the dedication of Tom Daltas, who endured a three day hunger strike here on the York campus last month, highlighting awareness of ecotarianism.

Daltas rignited York's passion for student activism, despite mockery

by some for the method of his campaign.

Now is not the time to be apathetic, but to join the exciting increase in student activism which is evocative of previous decades. The 1968 protests, a result of extreme social change, began primarily on university campuses. Can you imagine today's students storming Heslington Hall and turfing out the Univeristy executives from their swivelling chairs? It happened in '68.

The consequential waves of the '68 generation swept the entire population. It is not good enough to sit and complain; students at York need to give up their time to pursue change. Online campaigning, whilst an invaluable source of the modern age, does not go far enough. I am talking about real action, not merely joining a Facebook group.

Hopefully, York will see a large turn out at Central Hall later this month as students convince the university to adopt an ethical investment policy. The Amnesty demonstration is relying on students to take action and recognise that our tuition fees are funding immoral industries.

All actions are part of a grand vision of student mobilisation; from the extremes of hunger strikes and student rallies, to simply joining your JCR or the GSA. Seemingly small measures can yield big results. Do not be put off by apathetic pessimism. Follow the European vein and let York campus become the frontline battleground for student change.

Keep the handcuffs in the bedroom



Michael Appleton

Now pay attention, I want to talk to you about pornography. Stop sniggering at the back, this is important. You might not have realised it, but on 26th January a new law came into force which made certain kinds of pornography illegal. For most, the new law will cause us very little problem, but for a small minority it could spell disaster for a private hobby, which was until now perfectly legal.

Most of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 is pretty unremarkable; like most Criminal Justice laws, it simply tidies up some loose ends made by previous laws. Section Five, however, leads us into the murky world of 'Extreme Pornography'. Under the law it is an offence to be in possession of an image that "portrays in an explicit and realistic way...an act that threatens a person's life...an act which is likely to result in serious injury to a person's anus, breasts or genitals," or an image that interferes with an animal. The most important part of this is subsection 6 which makes guilt only achievable if the image is decided to be "grossly offensive, disgusting or otherwise of an obscene character".

This new legislation made the statute book after the tireless campaign of Liz Longhurst, the mother of murdered music teacher Jane Longhurst, whose killer was 'addicted' to 'Extreme Pornography'. Liz and her MP Martin Salter campaigned for the new law arguing that there is 'no reason' for this kind of pornography. I commend her conviction, but I do not believe this is the appropriate response.

I should point out that the law will not affect me, I'm no whipping boy, and I strongly believe that horses should be kept in fields, and away from the farmhands. The issue at stake is much wider than a few people getting their rocks off to something that most might not find palatable, it is the legislation of morality. The Wolfenden Committee discussed the enforcement of morality in 1959, and concluded that it should have little bearing on the law. After all, lesbianism had never been a crime, yet many people in the 1950s considered lesbians immoral.

All laws are designed to protect people from harm, and if the people within the 'extreme' images are consenting, who is harmed? Somewhat more eccentrically, many of the acts covered by the new law are legal to commit, yet possessing any photographic evidence of the acts are illegal. It is sad to think of a minority group being criminalised because of a desire to make those with deviant tastes conform to 'acceptable' standards. It's a cheap pun, but here at least, it seems the law is a spanked ass.