

Comment & Analysis

The voice of the electorate demands more from YUSU

Liam O'Brien
 MUSE Editor



YUSU have failed to support students' protest against portering cuts and we deserve proper representation

Over the past few weeks we have seen the student body's awareness of the portering crisis escalate. Night-long protests in colleges robbed of their principal point of contact, the removal of furniture from Derwent bar and the efforts of journalistic outlets mean students are regaling stories about their favourite porters everywhere you look.

We are already treating porters like a memory, and this attitude has discoloured the noises made by students. Take the protest in Vanbrugh: grabbing any opportunity to have someone wave a placard, my housemate, who turned up to the protest at 4am in the throes of post-Ziggys incapacitation, can be viewed on Facebook bearing a sign begging to have the porters back.

Back in 2002, students occupied Heslington Hall until the situation was redressed, and in 2007, the considerable involvement of alumni and academic staff meant that portering hours were returned to a satisfactory level: all colleges, all hours. The recurrence of the problem shows that the wheels were in motion a long time ago. It's just that the university has been granted the recession, a weapon with more concrete oomph, with which to pummel any hopes of tangible student satisfaction.

The recent protests are a last gasp against desolate colleges, populated fleetingly by the impersonal security forces while they do their rounds. The students behind them, hopelessly trying to motivate the masses, shouldn't be too harshly criticised. As a last gasp they're doing alright: the universi-

ty knows we're unhappy, and we've been enlightened with what are apparently good reasons as to why a reduction in portering hours is an inevitability.

We've learnt during our time here that having our say is good, but that what we say will be discarded. In our lectures we learn about the freedom that having a real, effective voice engenders. And yet, we have also been drilled in the futility of protest. The protracted inaction on bridges, essential for mobility for disabled students, was an absolute joke. So too is the clampdown on spheres of social interaction. If anyone truly believes they have helped to save the remaining college bars they should speak to the managers and ask for how long they think they will remain employed. Meanwhile,

the golden goose of Hes East continues to have money ploughed into its distant coffers. The majority of the work to save the porters is being carried out by JCR committee members who will, largely, have left by the end of the year.

This needs to change. The campaign needs to gain greater reach and must be directed by YUSU. We have seen green posters bearing the "Save Our Porters" logo. Indeed, I applaud their designer who has done a good job of getting the message across.

Any study of the current sabb team will reveal the new sheen on a dying organisation is the most meritorious component of New-SU. It needs to remember that it is a union, and not a stopgap in a graduate's early career. It needs to fully represent the students'

protest, not make idle Facebook groups only to wholeheartedly surrender its authority in meetings with top brass.

The work YUSU is doing to give colleges back their porters is the bare minimum. We are constantly told that being a sabb is a hard job. This is a fallacy. They are in a vulnerable but privileged position, buoyed by the popularity amongst the student body that elected them.

Your electorate is speaking, and wants proper representation. Your job involves working with the University, and this relationship will continue regardless of whether you embarrass your masters by protesting. Your's will be the year when porters, and the students they looked after, were irreparably cast aside.

RHIANNON WILLIAMS



Jess Haines



Living the cliché, and loving it

Freshers Week. Freshers Fortnight. In Australia; Orientation. In the US, we're called 'freshmen'. York seems fond of the term 'STYCllets'. Oink oink.

I said it wouldn't happen but since the Friday of Week One I'm just another Fresher Fluer. Statistics, that's all we are. The truth is that being this sociable and nocturnal was always going to end in tears. I'm not cut out for it. But a Facebook feed hailing from Cardiff tells me my friend's in the same schtick. "Man up fresher" is a comment on her icky status. That's right. Aren't we supposed to be this indestructible tour de force, work hard/play hard movement?

Forgive me, but there are 300 students doing English. We've not had a single lecture yet where our poor lecturer's been able to keep a straight face. It's not funny! We're dying here! Who knew how tricky it was to hold a cough in until you're in a cleverly-acoustically-minded lecture theatre?

Also, food's been a bit of a car crash so far. I suppose I just didn't give the 'kitchen' situation much thought. Maybe one of the first conversations we had was on where we were going to stow away our kitchen tools. "You know, like your cutlery and bowls and chopping boards and things". Oh. I forgot about that kind of stuff. But I

brought a milk frother. The kind where you heat it up in the microwave then froth until you're all set for incredible cappuccinos.

"There is an overwhelming sense that the second years can spot us a mile off"

But Starbucks won't help me now. Not when first floor are cooking roast dinners every Sunday.

And although Special K packets recommend it, living off cereal really isn't an ideal move. Things are looking up though. Mummy Haines took pity on me following our first catch-up phone call and the porter had post for me that second weekend: 16 pieces of pink stripy Tesco cutlery. "Crikey, I'll never use them all", I thought. Then came the Ben and Jerry's/Anchorman evening. £1.90 tubs of Cookie Dough excellence between 10 of us? Beautiful.

When do we reach simple 'first-year' status, I wonder? Or is the whole year a fresher-filled rite of passage? There is an overwhelming sense that the second

and third years can spot us a mile off with our wide-eyed 'this is all new' features. I like to think our fresher's crew isn't such a cliché though. We've already got a play on the college chant going strong: "Langwith till I leave". You know, that kid of apathetic, too cool for school vibe. None of this talk of allegiances to the death.

And the next step? Let's put this STYCllet vibe to bed and get ourselves on the 'visit day' list. We get £15 an afternoon and the opportunity to show people round and to finally be in a position where we know what we're doing. What a novel concept. And so the fresher cycle continues.