

NOUSE

Est. 1964



Years of resilience dashed

In all likelihood, this is a case of third time lucky for the University. After previous attempts to significantly reduce portering hours were met with irresistible pressure from YUSU, academic staff and angry, passionate students, this year it seems to have got its way. Something has changed.

Granted, circumstances this time around are different. The over-hyped recession looms large, giving weight to such phrases as "tough economic climate" and "belt-tightening conditions". The opening of Heslington East and the new bedrooms and students this provides allows for the University to quote 'like-for-like' statistics and prove annual parity on employment figures. In previous years, however, such rhetoric and wafer-thin arguments were tossed aside by a Union hell-bent on preserving a crucial service.

The words of then-President Tom Scott may well be his and not the Union's, and our current Sabbs may talk about "waiting for the right time" to protest, but the Pirate President's sentiments back in June seem to fit the mood both in YUSU Towers and on campus today.

At the past two Union Council meetings, where in previous years Senior University figures had been summoned to testify and explain the portering cuts, JCRC Chairs and Officers squabble over the right to gain free entry to nightclubs. While Union officials snigger at the pleasing and long-overdue departure of Ken Batten, you can be sure that those in Heslington Hall are also smiling as porters across campus solemnly accept their fate.

The work of Derwent JCRC, with all its passion and effort, was never going to be well-funded or large enough to sway the administration. YUSU, though mocked by many, has won battles like this before by puffing out its chest, but failed to do so on this occasion. Threats of engaging with the local and national media, pledges to cut salaries in order to finance an extended portering service and occupations of administration buildings - all successful YUSU tactics in the past - were ignored. Posters and badges there may be, but the will to succeed there isn't. We elect our representatives to work tirelessly for students, not to search for false positives in University rhetoric.

YUSU has developed a dangerous case of Stockholm Syndrome towards the University, and this deference must stop.

Keep pushing forward

In November 2008, this newspaper criticised the shambolic election process and general management of the Graduate Student Association, stressing the need for attention to be paid to this marginalised group of students. This year's elections successfully saw new officers elected to all paid positions, and passed without any accusations of cheating, with a clear majority candidate elected. These results are a far cry from last year, where two presidential candidates were disqualified for cheating, one President resigned, re-took office and then left the University entirely.

Indeed, in comparison to the GSAs rollercoaster last year, these elections seem to come as something of a pleasant surprise. However, whilst the results might look good, it is important to examine some basics. The turnout in the elections was dismally low, and their new President didn't even turn up to the event itself. The Returning Officer for the elections expressed some scorn as he read out the Presidential result, and indeed he might. There have been some huge improvements in the GSA over the year, with some dedicated individuals devoting time and energy to improving its organisation. However, these results reveal there is still a way to go yet. Such poor levels of attendance show that students are largely still unaware of what the GSA does, and when a President can be elected without even turning up must surely raise some questions.

While we do not doubt that the elections are an improvement, the new officers need to pick up the baton and carry it forward with gusto if it is not to slip back into previous disarray. Like YUSU's, they are paid to represent, and have equally important mandates to fulfil. Let's hope they have turned a page.

No more hot air

In 2007, then YUSU President Anne-Marie Canning condemned the student bar crawl 'Carnage' as "unethical and disrespectful", and the event organisers threatened legal action against the Students' Union. In recent months, the NUS openly criticised the event for encouraging binge drinking. However, on the night that this newspaper went to press, Carnage was taking students on a drink-filled crawl through the city centre way into the small hours.

One has to beg the question, if the NUS and its affiliates are truly against such organised bar crawls, why then are they still travelling the country, selling students overpriced t-shirts and underpriced vodka. A Union exists to protect its members, and hot air is useless unless positive action is taken in the name of its cause. For almost two years YUSU and now the NUS have condemned Carnage and the havoc it wreaks both on students and in the local community. It's high time they put their money where their mouth is and took action to protect their members as they should do.

It is a universal truth that students love a good deal, especially when it involves alcohol, and Carnage understands this better than anybody. If they chose to partake in these events and drink to excess, that is their choice. What is most important however, is to have a representative body that has unity between words and action. The NUS and students' unions need to hold true to their statements and remember their primal function, to protect and represent the needs and rights of its members: students.

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Asbestos aside, bad journalism is not good for our collective health



Sam Tunicliffe

Journalistic sensationalism has been with us since the days of Pulitzer. 'Yellow Journalism' has been characterised by 'scare' headlines and depictions of 'the underdog' against 'the system'. Its lasting presence in the national media - Jan Moir's article providing the most recent furor - has been inseparably chaperoned by calls for increased restrictions on the press. And it seems that sensationalism has even crept gradually into campus journalism.

Every student paper acts as if they're fighting single-handedly against 'the man' whenever any cuts occur to student services. But typically, there exists a legitimate aim to such antagonism, such as reinstatement of 24-hour portering services.

It was when an exposé concerning one of York's familiar spectres - asbestos - appeared in one of the campus' newspapers a few weeks ago, that I was forced to recognise the familiar aimlessness of scare stories - usually found lurking in the *Daily Mail* - on campus. Apparently, students' health was suddenly in grave danger, and the

University is harbouring secrets which, if revealed, could relieve this hysterical condition. Brilliant. I was just looking for someone to ease my mortal despair.

It's true that the student population know little to nothing about asbestos, but that's hardly a revelation. The average student is more

"The powers that be are right not to hand out details concerning mortality to students"

proficient at telling a Domino's pizza from an Efes than identifying airborne silicate minerals.

Mere knowledge of the location of asbestos on campus would certainly not change the reality of its presence. If you bash open your ceiling, tell the porters! That is, if you can find one.

As much as it may offend the 'democratic taste' of the press, the Powers That Be are right not to hand out details concerning a matter of mortality to student organisations. They have only proved that they might use such details to alarm the student population in a cynical attempt to further their own ends. Freedom of speech is great - if bound with responsibility.

The University officials suppress these things because they actually want new students! And it is upon the quality of these students that York's reputation depends. I'm not saying that the Uni look out for students' interests at every turn, but their asbestos policy is undoubtedly intended for our benefit.

But the good news is that the head of the FOIA Centre, Mark Watts, is still around twenty years after his time at asbestos infested York. He's even sufficiently healthy to provide soundbytes on university secrecy, giving budding journalists material to write articles that might bolster the vague possibility of employment when they graduate - and in a recession! Splendid.

Liv Evans

Deputy Comment Editor



RAG needs its flagship event to stay afloat

I'll be upfront about this: I don't do much for charity. Of course, I'm all for improving the lives of cute kids and perhaps even re-homing a sad looking dog with huge eyes, but I'll never be found outside in the pouring rain shaking a can at people, imploring them to save the world or else face mortal peril. We're in York. It's November. I'd much rather be at home with a cup of tea watching re-runs of 'The Thick of It', thank you very much.

But despite this, the news that YUSU want to cancel Woodstock still came as a surprise. For the uninitiated, Woodstock is RAG's flagship event, which takes place annually in the Summer Term. RAG runs loads of events throughout the year, but Woodstock is probably the event which "average" students are most likely to be involved in. Lots of people perform, you may want to go and see your friend make a prat out of themselves on stage, or just have a distraction from the inevitable revision on a Saturday in June. Cancelling it would essentially be taking away RAG's biggest opportunity to engage with the student community en masse. This hardly seems fair.

However, there has been talk that it may not be scrapped altogether, but run under "the YUSU umbrella". Quite apart from sounding extremely unlikely to protect you in a thunderstorm, this means that all proceeds would just go to them instead. You'd have to be pretty clueless not to deduce that this may have something to do with the relative unpopularity of the Summer Ball, held around the same

time. But surely this is more to do with the ridiculous ticket prices, lousy venue and rubbish acts? We're students; it's not as if we only go out once a term (although I may have changed my mind about this by the end of third year). By the end of the year, even the most over-enthusiastic fresher has become a bit disillusioned with uni events: without the peer pressure of "OMG it's Freshers' Week, we like so have to go to everything", the gloss soon wears off. The lack of success of the Summer Ball is less to do with other events and more to do with its own fundamental failings.

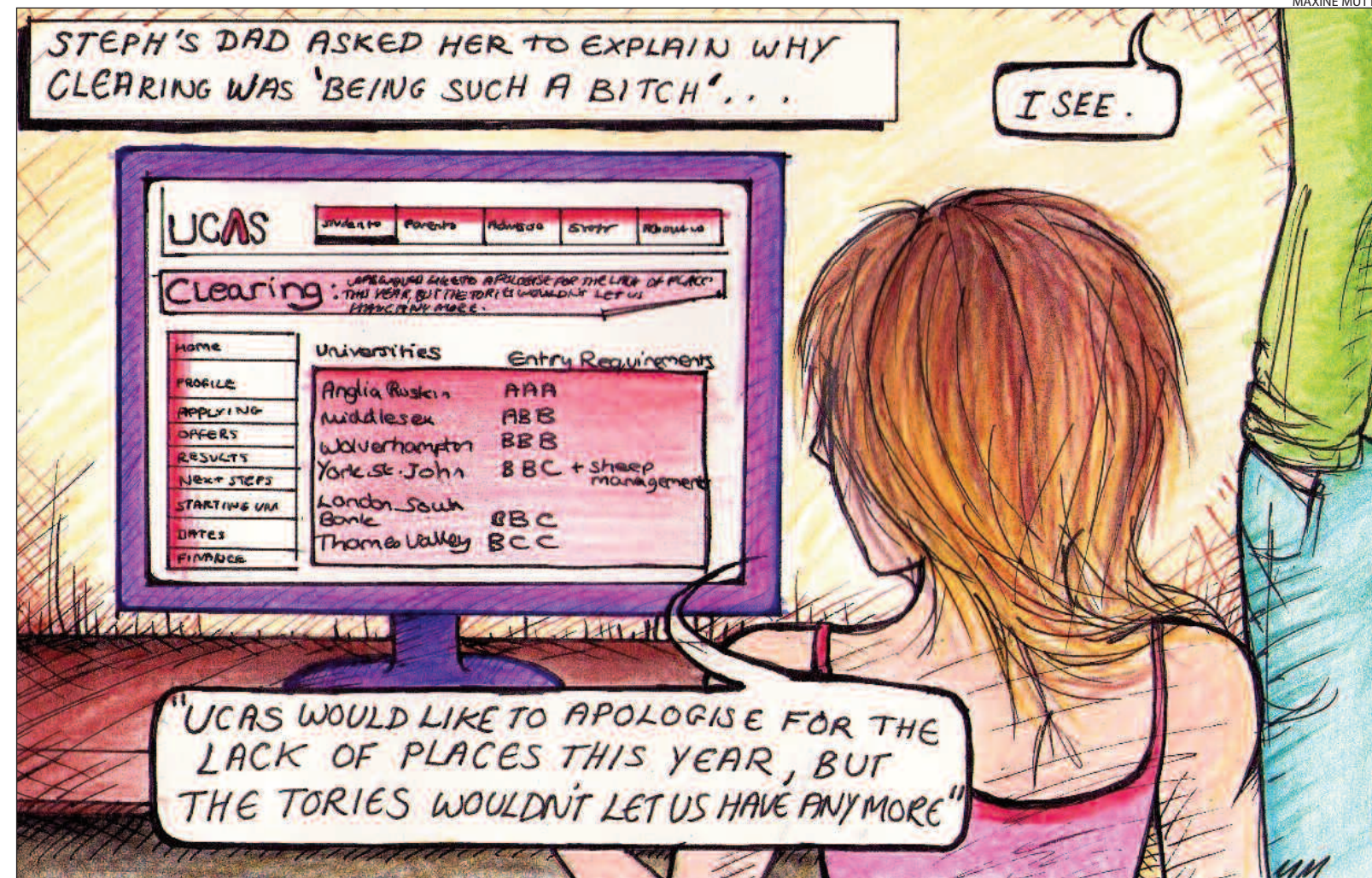
What makes things even worse for RAG is the recently implemented ultra vires regulations (if anyone has the patience to get their head round it completely). All money raised for charity has to go to one of the RAG beneficiaries. If you missed the recent elections (which is quite plausible; I doubt if the average Halifaxer has managed to

figure out where Alcuin East Wing is, let alone understand complicated nuances of YUSU policy), the chance to choose which charity you raise money for has already gone. If you desperately want a society to support, officially at least, The Sanctuary for Diabetic Donkeys or some other obscure venture, tough luck. But even for those chosen, without RAG's biggest event, will there be many chances to raise substantial amounts of money? It seems unlikely.

The solution is to improve uni-wide events rather than poaching what is deemed to be successful. The vagueness of the statement given suggests that YUSU know this won't be a popular move. It hardly sends out a positive message if those who supposedly represent the students consistently go against popular opinion. The year's only half a term old, but it seems that a trend has already been set. And things look pretty bleak.



HARRIET ARSCOTT



Hannah Ellis-Petersen



Cuts in funding are inevitable but they are unlikely to have an impact on the university experience as a whole

Keep calm and carry on: debt must not lead to disaster

The funny thing about the recession is that we, as students, find it difficult to get worked up about it.

Yes, we know that when we leave this educational bubble it will be near impossible to find a worthwhile job or a place to live. It appears we will supposedly be paying off our parents' debt for years to come, but still it seems separate from the world we occupy within the university walls.

How wrong we all are. The University of York is in a considerable amount of debt, which in this economic climate essentially means it is pretty much financially doomed. We have already seen a shocking number of porters and cleaners cut, and in conjunction with the rise in meal prices this term, it seems the University is fixated and insistent on boosting its finances, seemingly at the cost of the student body.

It is unfortunately about to get even worse. Come next May, we are undoubtedly going to be greeted by the grinning face of David Cameron as he moves his furniture into 10 Downing Street. And as we all know, a Conservative government can mean only one thing: a radical cut in public spending.

The consequences of even a small cut in the University's income will have a serious impact on both present and future students. It would mean even more international students being accepted as a way to boost cash flow, and could lead to the number of students, and courses, being cut.

Join the debate at
nouse.co.uk/comment

Unlike other universities that are several centuries old, York doesn't have many old, aristocratic alumni who continue to donate millions, even after they've died. As a relatively new university, it is only due to very careful spending that it has progressed into one of the top universities in the country, a position that is becoming increasingly precarious.

It may seem far too early in the term for such apocalyptic pronouncements, especially coming from

"It is tough times like this that help define the history of an institution such as York"

the mouth of a naïve and rosy cheeked fresher, but if we are already feeling the impact now, how will it be in a year's time?

As a university, York is renowned for the quality of its research, topping the field in areas from English to Psychology, but without the funding needed, how can such a position be maintained? We may soon find ourselves having to paddle across the toxic, poisonous lake to get to the Exhibition Centre as there is no funding to maintain the bridges, or strapping on our scuba gear in a crumbling Central Hall as it slowly sinks into the murky water.

What is most worrying is that as the University's income gets less, they start charging us more. A rise in tuition fees is already on the cards, and with a new Conservative government waiting in the wings, it may come sooner than we all expect. Come this time next year and we may find ourselves in more debt than the University.

Nonetheless, there is no need to start tearing our hair out just yet. For a non-red brick University that has been around for less than half a century, its high status in teaching and research is all the more impressive. It shows a true resilience and strength that could help York weather the storm of the financial crisis, and come out all the better for it. You could even argue that it is tough times like these that help define the history and values that an institution such as York represents.

Cuts are certainly inevitable, but as students we are all used to a bit of hardship, so it is nothing we can't all handle. And the truth is, as dramatic as these dour financial predictions sound, it is unlikely they will have any real impact on the university experience as a whole.

Yes, we may need to stop splashing out on that tempting Wispa Gold every time we pass Costcutter and pasta may have to feature more regularly in our meals than we would like, but the likelihood is you will still leave this place with the greatest friends and memories of your life. And that is what they call a silver lining.

Freshers' fun: STYCs are not the villains

Mia de Graaf



Generally the rule is, as put by the Halifax Provost: "don't fuck a fresher". But even then: (a) there are clear violations of this rule, if the scandalous whisperings through the grapevine are anything to go by, and (b) does it really matter?

What aspect of this relationship do we object to? Is it the age gap? To my mind this can't be given as argument alone. This is understandable in the case of schools, where the majority of students are 'underage', but a one or two year age gap can't be viewed as a "terrible thing... abuse of power... irresponsible" when we are all adults.

Or is it the pressure we see clued-up, horny STYCs as putting on naïve first years? In terms of pressure, STYC or not, sex without consent is not right. End of. And although we are as yet not used to university in terms of sharing a kitchen with 10 people or going to lectures etc., how naïve can you be? We may be new but we can still recognise when someone wants a shag.

The main objection put forward is the question of power and trust integral to the position of a STYC. In James, for example, STYCs are Mums and Dads, outlining the job description clearly: to look after their children and not to commit incest. It somehow appears just that little bit more shocking to overhear that "oh, I know a girl who hooked up with both of her dads". Perhaps James were aiming at an intervention through inflicting the psychological difficulties freshers may have in hooking up with one's parent.

But, again, this is because it is assumed that all STYCs (or parents) will immorally take advantage, and all freshers are unaware. In short, a good STYC is one that helps ease into life here but doesn't ease into us at the same time.

Equally, to pressurise freshers into seeing drinking as the only option to have fun is quite clearly wrong - as demonstrated perfectly by one incident last year, where a STYC claimed to his fresh-faced stylist: "eating's cheating: down it", to the predictable result of her becoming paralytic.

However, this is totally unrelated to the question of whether or not a STYC could have a lengthy and meaningful relationship with a fresher. For all we know, the fledgling relationship is going to be perfectly respectable and they will get married, have a picturesque honeymoon and go on to have 16 photogenic and smiley children.

Clearly it is not the issue of STYCs hooking up with freshers, it is whether or not a STYC is acting responsibly. We can all tell those who are just in it to relive their freshers week. If only we had a system that could as well.