

# Controversy over student voting fraud on campus

By Toby Green  
NEWS DEPUTY

YORK UNIVERSITY students could have voted illegally in last week's general election, casting two votes without fear of being caught.

No system has been implemented to prevent students committing fraud, tarnishing Labour's historic third term win. One student, who wished to remain anonymous, disclosed that she had illegally used both her votes. "I had sent off my postal vote for my home constituency a few days earlier, so when poll day came round I thought I might as well use my vote here as well since there's nothing to stop me."

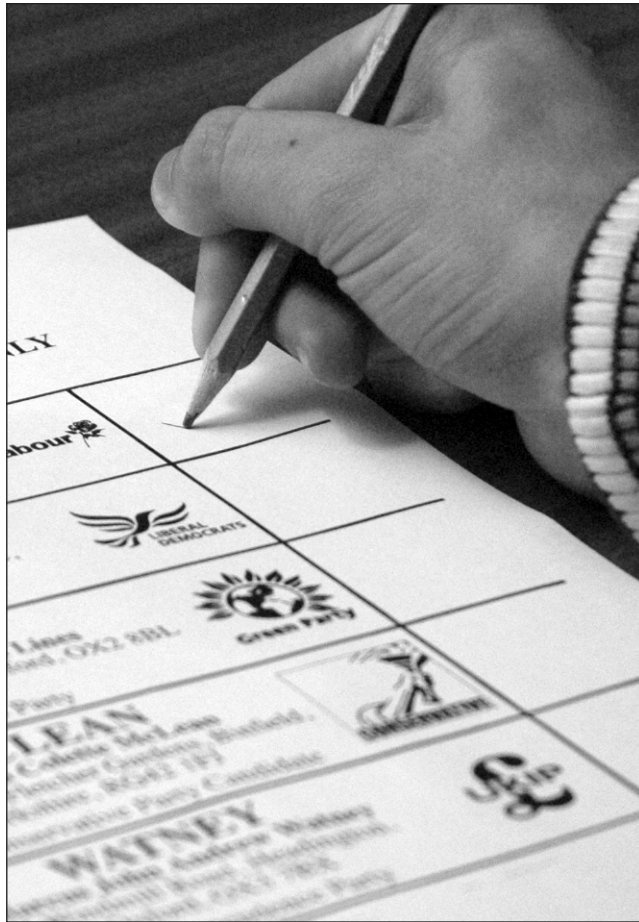
Students are automatically registered by the University to vote in the Selby constituency, despite many already being registered at home. Receiving polling cards from each constituency, many students use the opportunity to vote twice.

Students' Union President, James Alexander, fronted a campus campaign try to persuade more students to vote, in which he warned that "You can only vote here OR at home, to do both is illegal."

However, Gemma Crossland from the Electoral Commission, an independent body that regulates elections, admitted that although "it's not lawful to vote twice... there's little to stop people. It does concern us."

The problem lies in the way the electoral register works. There is no centralised list of where people are registered, and who has a polling card. Instead it is done locally, in individual constituencies.

A lack of communication means no-one can tell if someone has registered or has voted in two constituencies.



A student casts their postal vote before the elections

The Electoral Reform Society has pushed for changes in the voting system and has been vocal in its attack on how it currently works, running a campaign entitled 'Make This The Last Unjust Election'. Even before the election they were predicting that many MPs victories could be challenged on their legitimacy.

As well as campaigning for a national electoral register, they have also called for a system of proportional representation. Electoral Reforms' press officer, Alex Folkes, said "that there is nothing wrong with students being registered in both

constituencies but we do need some sort of system to make sure double voting won't happen. At the moment it's all based on honesty".

He also revealed that since 2001 they have been calling for the government to make changes, something supported by Crossland who said "the Electoral Commission has told the Government that there has to be a national electoral register. It is an old issue that needs sorting out."

The Conservative Party, who narrowly lost the Selby seat by 467 votes to the Labour MP, John Grogan, have reacted

angrily to the lack of action by Tony Blair over voting reform.

An anonymous member of the University Conservative Society attacked the Labour government for not addressing the problem, accusing them of "not dealing with a situation that could possibly have affected vital seats, such as Selby. This is obviously a deeply serious issue, which I cannot believe has not been sorted out yet."

Dr. Liam Fox, co-chairman of the Conservative Party, had already made a more general attack on the voting system, stating: "The electoral practices of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such as intimidation and fraud, risk becoming the hallmark of the twenty-first century."

Although the Electoral Reform Society, speaking before the election, commented that fraud "would not affect who is the Prime Minister", they agreed "that it will lead to disputes over some seats."

These new revelations have come at the end of a campaign dogged by allegations of voting fraud, specifically postal voting. A judge exposed postal vote fraud as "widespread" in the 2004 local elections in Birmingham after the results of six Labour seats were challenged by Liberal Democrat opposition.

Recently two men have been arrested in Bradford after allegations against the Conservative candidate Jamshed Khan that thirteen people applied for postal votes at his address.

At the time of going to print the NUS was unable to comment on whether they felt that the student vote was potentially fraudulent.

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# Baldwin inquest confirms unlawful killing in Rome

By Toby Green  
NEWS DEPUTY

THE BRITISH inquest into the death of Sally Baldwin, a popular York University Professor, has confirmed a case of unlawful killing.

Baldwin, a Sociology lecturer, died after falling through a hole in a Rome train station moving walkway on 28th October 2004. She sustained fatal, multiple injuries after being crushed, and was killed instantly, the first person ever to be killed by a moving people carrier.

Two workmen, who were conducting maintenance work at the time, have already been convicted of manslaughter in Italy and received suspended sentences after submitting plea bargains.

The York coroner, Donald Coverdale, blamed the men were to blame for numerous examples of negligence. They had left the walkway in neutral, meaning the emergency brake could not be implemented to prevent Baldwin from being crushed

and had failed to construct barriers around the area to prevent passengers from using the walkway. The workers had previously denied the charges, saying that the walkway was cordoned off, but were contradicted by several witnesses to the accident.

The incident received substantial coverage in Italy after a fellow passenger, Vincenzo Practico, was awarded the Golden Medal for Civil Merit for attempting to save Professor Baldwin, suffering serious leg injuries in the process. The lecturer's family continue to press for damages and the conviction of two directors from OCS, the maintenance firm, for negligence and manslaughter.

Sally Baldwin spent thirty years at York University after completing her diploma in Social Administration here in 1973, and instantly became part of the new Social Policy Research Unit. She became director in 1987 and Professor in 1990. She was also a keen supporter of women's rights on campus, specifically supporting the Centre for Women's Studies.

# Students to live on a 'dollar a day' diet

By Simon Davis  
NEWS EDITOR

A GROUP of York students are to try and live on a dollar a day to raise money to support the Make Poverty History campaign.

Members of 'Speak', a Christian group which campaigns for social justice, will join the ranks of half the world's population and try and live on a dollars worth of food a day, which is roughly equivalent to fifty pence.

The five day challenge will take place this week, from Monday to Friday, and they hope this will help them to empathise with people caught in the poverty trap.

This comes at the same time as People and Planet are planning a UGM motion in week three to get the Student Union to support the Make Poverty History Campaign. They are asking for as many students as possible to attend.

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General election analysis in full. See Politics

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Grimston House (V/X/010)  
Vanbrugh College  
University of York  
Heslington  
York  
YO10 5DD

Tel: 01904 434425  
Email: nouse@york.ac.uk

EDITOR:  
Lauren Carter

DEPUTY EDITORS:  
Elliot Taylor  
Heloise Wood

PRODUCTION MANAGER:  
Toby Hall

MANAGING DIRECTOR:  
Jonathan McCarthy

ADVERTISING MANAGER:  
Stefan Wojtulewicz

NEWS EDITOR:  
Simon Davis

NEWS DEPUTY:  
Toby Green

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