

EST. 1964

NOUSE



Mixed greetings

Welcome to York! For some that sentiment may ring hollower than others, as yet again freshers are facing disruption on their first day at our University. You'd think that the powers that be would at least have waited a few weeks before disillusioning this year's latest intake, but unfinished buildings and sparse kitchens have greeted some members of Derwent and Goodricke.

Considering last year's highly publicised debacle in Alcuin, where freshers arrived to find their accommodation buildings uncomplete, you'd have thought that, this year, efforts would have been made to ensure the accommodation students have already paid for would be in place. Granted, health and safety laws are strict and no one is pretending that it would have been better for them to have been ignored. However, it remains a shame than when embarking upon the "biggest week of their life" they won't be able to eat more than toast and a pot noodle. Nonetheless, it is a sincere welcome to this year's freshers, and you are becoming part of a great institution. You'll find everything you need for a highly enjoyable three years (even the chance to join some award-winning media societies...) Now when does the work on a Union bar start...

Lebanon horror stories

For many, we watched the scenes of bombing in Lebanon on the news with horror and sorrow for those involved. However, it is the sad case with major conflicts that you only really get touched when you hear the individual stories of those involved. For the York students trapped in the city of Beirut, the terror must have been unimaginable. Thankfully, they were luckier than some. Being stuck in the middle of a battle that became headline news around the world must have felt like a nightmare. Whatever the politics of the rights and the wrongs of the situations, it is stories like these that are the only way to expose the horror of war.

Nouse continues rise

On a lighter note, congratulations to all members of Nouse, past and present, for their help in gaining Guardian Student Media Awards nominations for best student newspaper and best student publication design. This is only the second time we've ever been nominated in the best newspaper category, and the first for design, so well done to everyone involved.



SU
President
**Rich
Croker**

Hello and welcome (back) to York! If you're new to York, welcome to the beginning of the best time of your life! Your time at York will provide all the thrills, frills and spills that you could want from a Uni life! Over the coming years YUSU will be here to help you have a fun filled and action packed life at University. We'll be here to provide support for any problems you may have, any clubs or societies you want to get involved in and for those nights when you just want to let your hair down and have a good time!

Some of you may wonder what I do with my time in the YUSU office... well it's a good question... some people suggest I just swan around to University meetings and dinners letting everyone else get on with the work... well that's half true, thankfully. My main roles lie in representing the student views to the University, and other bodies to ensure it gets heard and considered. I also try and ensure all the areas inside the Union work together

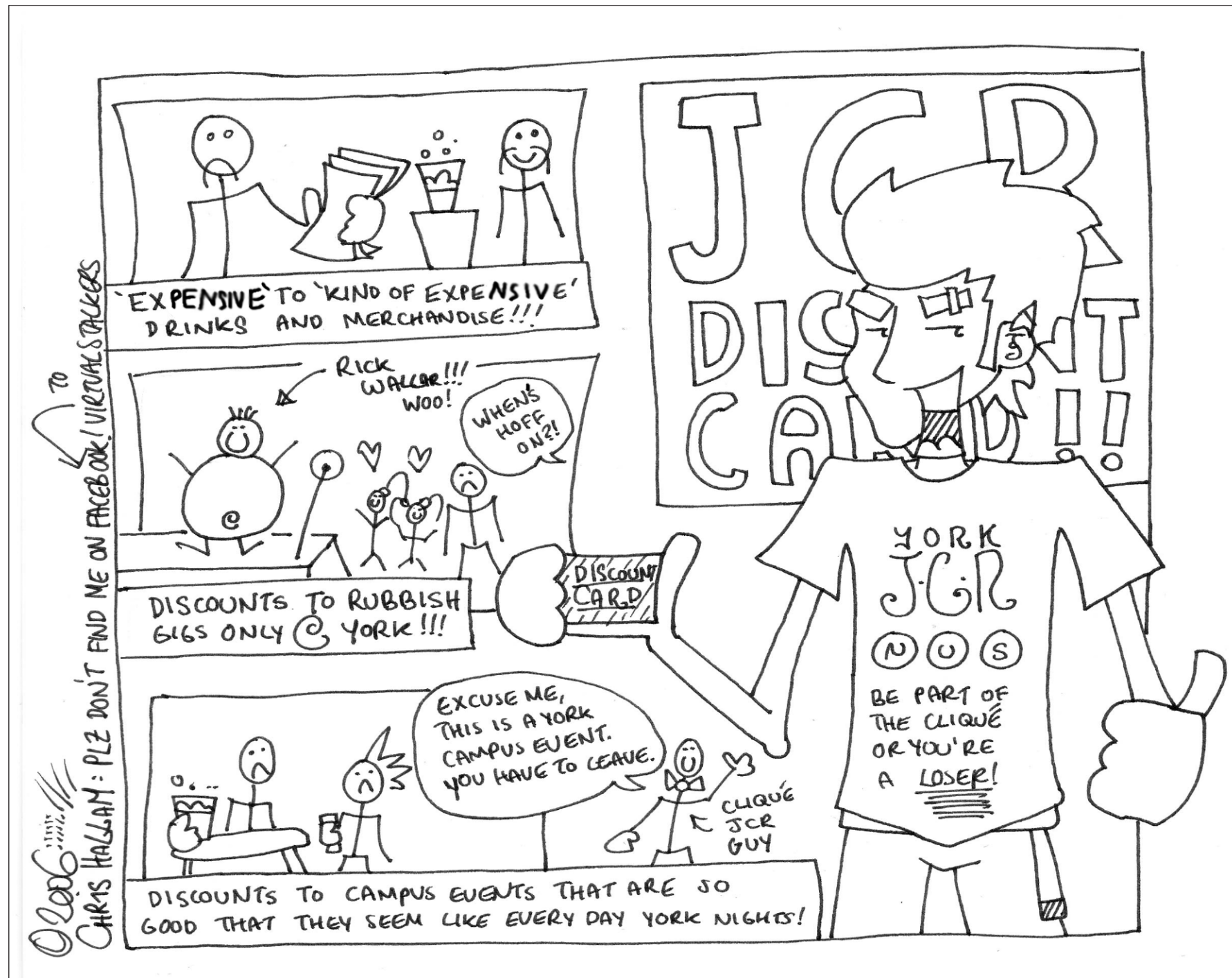
effectively to ensure no one treats on anyone else's toes. Check out the blogs on the YUSU website to find out what all the officers have been up to recently.

And now for the wanton ramblings that I will fill these pages with over the coming year... I hope you enjoy them...

This year was the first time I've ever spent the full summer in York - admittedly it was working from the YUSU Office rather than as a student free to wile away the summer months lying in the sun. For a while it appears nothing has changed - students are still around going to the same old bars in town, kids' campers leave with the same anticipation and return with the same looks of joy as ever, the same people facebook you to find out how life is.

Then the summer nights draw in and the updates from friends start coming... it slowly dawns upon you - the people you have spent the last few years with have gone - many round the world, others into the real world of work for the first time - some wonder how they were so lucky... others wonder where it all went wrong. Most would look upon you, the York student of 2006/7, with an envious smile and desire to swap places for one last Club D or Ziggy's. But the truth is we all know we will have to leave some time.

There is no doubting the time



you spend at York will be the time of your life, something that you look back on in years and smile with fond memories. Somehow, though, looking back so soon you can't help but wonder where the time went, who you will see again - whether you will ever be so careless and free again.

If you throw yourself into life at York you will reap the benefits. Sometimes life isn't easy at University, but your time spent here is what you make of it. I lost my first Junior Common Room Committee (JCRC) election and yet went on to become Chair of Derwent. The opportunities are out there for you if you want to find them - just believe in yourself and what you want to do. Think of your time at Uni as an opportunity rather than your right.

Don't stand back and watch your time at Uni pass you by. Don't be stood on the train platform in three years time with a piece of paper, no matter what it says on it, as your only reward for three years at York. Do what makes you happy whilst you are here - don't feel forced into or not do something just because that's what your room mates do. Try new things, expand your boundaries - spend your time at York living, not just existing. Stand on that platform in three years time and look back with a wry smile on your face and be able to say 'job done, no regrets'.



Local MP
**John
Grogan**

As students return from summer to tough questions this autumn, so too do MPs. One of the first of these will be what exactly is a charity? While the aims of charities such as the Make Poverty History Campaign, the Royal British Legion and York University Students' Union are different, what they share is their impact on everyday lives, often providing services that the state cannot.

The Charities Bill will provide a legal definition of 'charity' and 'charitable purpose', and introduce a test for charities to prove their public benefit. One area of controversy surrounds the Bill. Charitable status brings significant tax advantages, for example the introduction of Gift Aid enables charitable organisations to claim the tax back from donations.

Up until now independent schools have enjoyed charitable status but will now have to prove public benefit. Both the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Charity Commission are lobbying

for more guidance in law as to how the "public benefit test" should be applied. I have put down an amendment to the Bill on their behalf. This would mean that the independent school sector which currently gets £100 million from the taxpayer would put something back into the local community.

I think the most substantial contribution independent schools could make to our communities is to address inequalities between state and privately educated pupils. The University of York is the only leading UK University to exceed Government benchmarks for accepting state school applicants. A study by the Sutton Trust revealed that there are 3000 state pupils annually who achieve A level grades high enough to attend a leading university, but - for one reason or another - don't. This is not a question of lowering standards, but of improving access.

Whilst the Chancellor's recent pledge to raise state school spending should be welcomed, we should also look to tap into the resources of those institutions receiving the benefits of charitable status. One way that private schools might prove their public benefit is to share facilities and teaching time with local state schools. The social mixing this would encourage would be beneficial to all.

Funding wars should not be the price of progress

Disappointment with Department's research for United States military and the Ministry of Defence



**Julian
Hammerton**
Comment
Editor

In October 2005, *Nouse* started the debate about the University of York's investment in the arms trade. Discovering that the University had over 100 000 shares in the world's fourth largest arms manufacturer, BAE Systems, the paper called for a reassessment of the ethical policy. Despite the University's attempts to atone for its unethical dealings in the past, the Computer Science Department has accepted a £2.6 million pound grant from the United States Army and the Ministry of Defence to fund research into security systems.

Obviously, such an amount of money would be highly attractive to such a cash-craving University (especially given the recent speculation about their spiralling debt).

However, the Computer Science Department is clearly not in dire need of money, as it receives more industrial funding for academic research than any other department in the UK. It was this high level of industrial funding which persuaded me to pick York as my first choice university, as I believed it would help me realise my goal of doing a PhD once I finish my degree.

If I had known my education would be supported, albeit indirectly, by funding for military research, I cannot honestly say that York would still have been my first choice. Whilst I am aware that I have particularly serious objections to investment and involvement in armed conflict, I am also sure that many students are unhappy about the University's apparent disregard for a serious ethical investment policy.

Although it is claimed that the research funded by the US Army and Ministry of Defence will be predominantly into increasing the security and safety of the Armed Forces in conflict zones, it has been suggested that the networks of sensors being

developed could be used to create something called 'magic dust'. Thousands of sensors are dropped in a network which then tracks the movement of people and vehicles within the area without the need for soldiers on the ground or surveillance aircraft above.

Given that recent military tactics have involved too many air strikes and too few ground forces, one would be wise to worry about what the US and UK military services will use the wireless sensor networks developed here for. I am deeply concerned that the work my department will be undertaking should not be used to plan military offensives. It is, however, apparent that the University has little regard for the opinions of myself and many of my fellow students.

With medical issues such as AIDS and malaria needing such urgent attention, the fact that the Computer Science Department has chosen to research military strategy makes me ashamed to be in the department. I understand that the department needs funding, but

immense £1350 then you have already spent £1400. Your student loan isn't feeling too healthy now, is it?

Currently the card which has received the most controversy nationally is the new NUS Extra card which, as Nouse's investigation has revealed, offers little in the way of improved discounts on the free NUS Democracy card. Priced at £10, it is clear that, despite the promises of the National Union of Students to be representative of students, they are in fact taking the money to alleviate their own growing debt problem which has developed from years of mismanagement and bad financial policy. Furthermore, for them to promise students so much more, then not even communicate properly with the relevant companies is an infuriating betrayal of their own values.

Perhaps causing more controversy locally is Halifax and James College's decision to introduce discount cards to their events. For example, Sam Bayley, the President of Halifax thinks that it is a good idea to charge his constituents £30 for the pleasure of a few cheap gimmicks and getting into bar event Xtra for £1. As you poor freshers reading this will soon find, having the pleasure of going to Xtra several times a term is nobody's idea of fun and you will no

doubt feel the need to melt your card into the shape of a Sam Bayley voodoo doll before long.

Despite these new schemes, the gaping hole in your pocket will be undoubtedly formed by the University's new 'MAD' idea (no seriously, it's actually called MAD). The £1350 per year scheme is a complete betrayal of what the University promised prospective students, and whoever thought that the Roger Kirk Centre really does provide you with your five a day is indeed a fool.

For some students, this overpriced joke is actually reality, with many freshers from Derwent, Langwith, Goodricke and Vanbrugh faced with a kitchen crisis of epic proportions. The genius which we associate with our University planners has once again come to the fore as they apparently realised the day before many students arrived back in halls that their planned kitchen refurbishment was not going to be finished.

It is also the problem for many who returned this week of having a kitchen which looks completely normal apart from the small problem of having no fridge, no cooker (or Baby-Belling) and no toaster. If you're lucky you may have been given a plug socket to plug your own appliances into, if not then it looks like you're going for a tasty

chicken burger in the Roger Kirk tonight.

On a more serious note, the truth is none of these cards should be required for you to live a healthy student life. In fact many help you to live a much healthier one. These schemes are simply being introduced to benefit the three organisations which are supposed to uphold your rights as a student. NUS, JCRs and the University are playing a dangerous game by backing students into a corner and it threatens to destroy the trust of many students even at such an early stage in the academic year.

For the situation to improve, all three organisations must realise that, despite their eagerness to solve their short-term financial difficulties, their long-term financial problems will be solved by building a student body which trusts their judgement and what they advertise.

So next time the University tells you that there will be kitchens in your block, that there will really be a place to cook your meals, and the next time NUS promises extra discounts with their £10 card you won't feel that you have been lied to by your very own Students' Union. After all, if they don't stick up for our interests then who will?