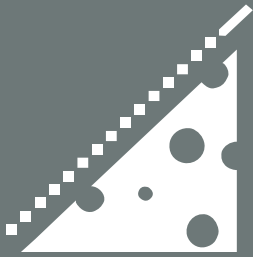


The Cheese Grater

The Other Student Magazine of University College London Union

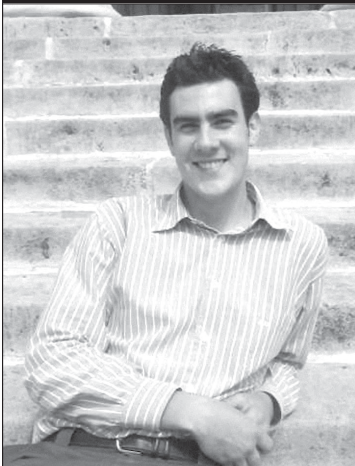


No. 9 Supplement
July 2006



**This little sabby broke the
Constitution (and thinks she
didn't)**

**This little sabby supports the
Provost instead of students**



**And this little sabby cried 'No-
one nominated me for HLM!'
before nominating himself**

Welcome to The Cheese Grater's

**SOCIAL
COLOUR
SUPPLEMENT**



Filthy Colours

UCL Union's Social Colours awards are presented annually to students who contribute above and beyond the norm to enriching the UCL community – or at least this is the logic. The fact is that the honours system is outdated, corrupt and in dire need of reform. Dex Torricke-Barton reports

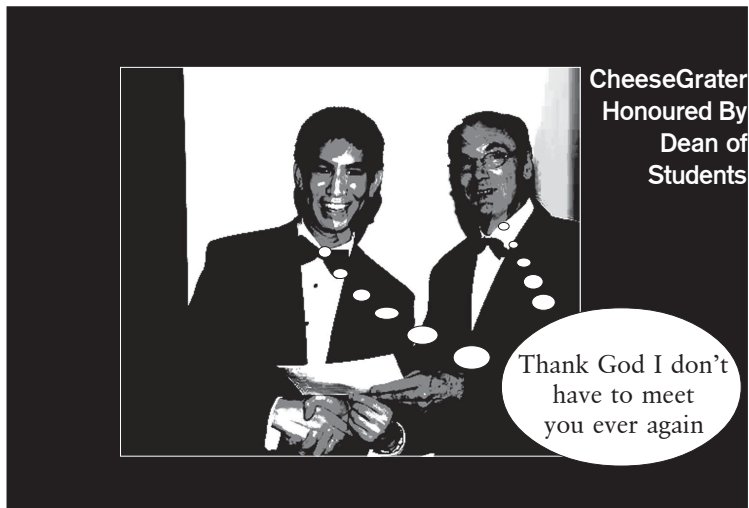
THERE ARE few subjects which excite such passions in the peculiar world of UCL Union student politics as Social Colours awards. The annual ceremony, this year held on 30 May, was intended to recognise the achievements of extraordinary individuals who have "contributed to the student community of UCL." But despite this noble objective, an intense debate rages amongst student hacks, society officers and general busybodies like me over the extent to which this is actually the case.

Despite growing criticisms, there has rarely (or ever) been a simple, coherent critique of the flaws in this system – and consequently, this has impeded the search for new solutions or proposals for its reform. In this article I will attempt to address both of these areas. After three years engaged with student politics, this is my parting shot [*Honest, no more - Ed.*].

Social Colours are corrupt. They reward union insiders for actions which often merely fit inside their specified job descriptions – and often do not even get as far as that.. Union politicians feel a sense of entitlement to awards, and although student representation is ostensibly all about serving the community, it already possesses a plethora of its own rewards, not least the CV points. Honours should not be

handed out for performing the jobs that people willingly take on – they should be for extraordinary actions, for amazing deeds. Student politicians almost always cannot place their deeds within the context of their own lofty honours criteria; and yet they receive them by virtue of dominating Social Colours Committee, which decides the recipients of all awards and makes recommendations to Union Council for Honorary Life Membership (HLM).

Social Colours denigrate real achievement and exclude too many students. Until this spring, students could only be recognised for activities which took place via union societies and institutions – such parameters being used absurdly to prevent the butt-kicking University Challenge finalists of UCL from being recognised in 2005. But even though the rules were relaxed in the spring of 2006 to recognise contributions to the "student community" at UCL, this continues to ignore individuals who have performed outstanding services in other communities – ULU, London, or spheres of volunteering activity. Why should accomplishment end at the borders of Bloomsbury? On top of this, an arbitrary distinction is made between awards to arts societies and sports teams, resulting in the issuing of far too many awards to preserve their



The Enigma of HLM

René Lavanchy
WHY DO PEOPLE want Honorary Life Membership so much? Perhaps it makes up for deficiencies in other areas; famed genius and master of diplomacy Steven Healer nearly exploded when deprived of the *legitimate* right to one – which he never got back. The rules for HLM state quite clearly that 'examples of high levels of dedication to the student community of UCL over at least three years must be shown'. This is usually observed – except when it comes to sab-batical officers.

No-one has yet managed to give a satisfactory explanation, or anything approaching a satisfactory explanation, as to why sabbs get HLM with deathly inevitability, regardless of whether they have even been a UCL student for three years or not (Alex Coles and Nigel Harris being examples). The fact that a sabb runs the Social Colours process doesn't help. And those who have been around for long enough haven't all served the Union for three years. Even Ben Williamson had a bit of a strug-

gle pretending that Alan Gardner fitted this description when it came up for discussion.

None of this would matter if the contribution of sabbs was truly extraordinary. But it generally isn't. HLM guidelines also state that "only individuals who can demonstrate commitment over and above any specified job description will be considered." Not only do sabbs often have trouble even meeting their job description (see previous CGs and below *ad nauseam*); not only do they get paid for doing their jobs, unlike people who slave away part-time for many years; but as CG readers know, it is the official line of Williamson, as the chair of Social Colours Committee (SCC), that sabbs should get HLM automatically, no matter what – in flagrant defiance of the rule above. Never mind that the likes of David Renton can get away with doing fuck-all. Never mind that Alexandra Walsh could barely write her own name, never mind edit *Pi*. And never mind that Mary-Beth Young's broken the constitution with infantile abandon (see below).

UCL Union Cheese Grater Magazine Society

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Student Publication Of The Year - UCL Union Arts Awards 2006

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value. And this is all without even raising the possibility that maybe a few intellectual – even academic – achievements might be celebrated in the same forum as Social Colours.

How many more brilliant, awe-inspiring students could we pay tribute to with a broadened – but not slackened – definition of achievement?

Here's the thing, though. Until now, criticism of Social Colours has been largely confined to the usual suspects. People like me. People who are known cynics of union process-

es, "union haters" as one sabb dubs myself and fellow writers at this dear publication. And there has been a tendency amongst this group, well-intentioned and well aware of the genuine disgrace of Social Colours, to attack not only the institution but the awardees as well. Sometimes this is a justified attack upon the granting of awards to particular individuals. Occasionally, it takes the form of self-flagellation, when recipients of awards turn these down in a bid to prevent legitimisation of the system.

Whilst the former activity may be fine, I would argue that the latter obscures the real problems with Social Colours and prevents the search for effective solutions. The vast majority of those who receive awards outside of the spheres of student representation are eminently deserving of recognition. The real issue is those students who are not represented at all. Critics should be content to receive their honours, even as they demand better for the deserving absentees.

Numerous proposals have been kicking around for years on

how to reform the system. Suggestions to limit the number of union hacks able to receive awards have been made, perhaps simply having a single 'student politician of the year' award. People on the awarding committee could be limited from receiving awards, and certainly the composition of this committee could be made diverse, perhaps bringing in volunteering officials and even faculty members to assist in the selection process. These ideas must be discussed within the institutions of UCL Union, and within individual societies, the student media, and amongst ordinary students.

The criticisms of Social Colours I have made are obvious. The critics of the system need to make a better stab at articulating them. And if they're even partially effective at this process, then they'll have made a major step towards recognising greater achievement on our campus – and will certainly be able to step up and receive their laurels without any shame.

Some Honourable Mentions

It's impossible to catch up with everyone who's got a question mark hanging over their Social Colours award. Here is just a tiny selection this year, with special attention paid to the supreme honour of the Union...

Holly Falconer

WHAT HAVE WE got against Holly Falconer, Student Editor of *Pisspoor Magazine* from December 2004 to December 2005? Everyone who has met her says she's a nice girl, in a slightly patronising tone. But, as her dim and dismal record shows, she is stupid and incompetent, perhaps too much so to notice. In that case she can be forgiving for not resigning - but not for asking for Centenary Colours to compound the offence.

Holly's nomination form was a comedic high point of the SCC meeting. She was 'proposed' for Colours by Alan Gardner but in fact wrote the proposal herself; Lucy Gould reportedly called it the worst piece of writing she'd ever read, and it's not hard to see why. "From the

start of UCL," it begins, "I have been highly involved in Pi." We were unaware that either *Pi* or Holly existed back in 1826, but never mind. "By my second term I was features editor," the plea continues. Appointing a first year in their second term suggests either great talent or desperation; guess which. "During this time, my section was always entertaining and organised," she says feebly. But perhaps the funniest feature is the 'I' count. Holly uses the word 'I' 17 times among 350 words, making the word constitute just under 5% of the entire statement.

SCC decided to downgrade Falconer to Social Colours. But given her record - a magazine that continued to look dreadful (under her rule, even columns of text were not always justified), random boring point-

less articles, an embarrassment of typos, crap writing (especially her own), no apparent editorial direction, the worst cartoons in recorded history, the inspiration of *Pi* staff to start leaking to us, the inspiration of *Pi* staff to move to *London Student* and the use of Scrapbook to gratify the egos of a handful of *Pi* staff - she doesn't even deserve that.

P.S. Holly is going to City University to study journalism, to prolong the fantasy/agonny. We hope Professor Greenslade has a sense of humour.

Knob 'Simon Dedman' Jockey

THE RECORD of Holly's successor Knob Jockey (see CG 9 for details of naming ceremony) doesn't look too bad next to his predecessor's (whose would?)

He has presided over a mammoth redesign, i.e. most of the columns of text are now justified again (the pressing of the 'justify' button in InDesign must have been exhausting). He has also improved distribution somewhat (again, not saying much – see below on Alan Gardner).

Against this must be set the fact that the magazine is hardly in a better state than when Knob Jockey found it last December. The design remains shit, despite having four so-called designers on the staff. The magazine breaks every design rule under the sun. Spelling, grammar and punctuation continue to be a problem, with even headlines weighed down by excess spaces and full stops.

The choice of articles is terrible. Who in their right mind would have wanted to read 'the

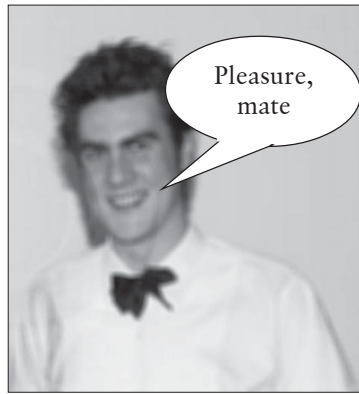
debut novel of Debating Society president Adam Donen' (*Pi* 656, January '06), the impenetrable, tedious and maniacally introspective drivellings of a deranged egomaniac? Or indeed Knob Jockey's own exciting articles about John Kerry and the Tory Reform Group? *Pi* is an excellent example of a student publication that tries to do what the real press do best by covering national and global affairs, and fails... only *Pi* fails more miserably than most. It's not just big stories that aren't worth reading; there are plenty of small ones too. *Pi* continues to be shamefully padded out with stories nobody cares about, despite the demise of such worthless columns as 'Mahatma'. The latest issue's News In Brief includes an item about the new CEMI director at UCL (too boring to explain), headlined 'New CEMI Director appointed at UCLA', thus moving the poor chap to Los Angeles. Knob Jockey's own editorials are no better. If a student wishes to read criticism of Tony Blair, they would be better off buying *Private Eye* or *The Guardian* than reading that the Student Editor of *Pi* has decided, in his wisdom, to call him 'tit face'.

And then there's Devil's Advocate. This godawful column has traditionally been 'as exciting as a cheese sandwich' (CG 4). Knob Jockey has tried to spice it up, and only succeeded it making it stupider than ever. The column seeks to be deliberately controversial. If it did this intelligently it might just have a point. There was nothing intelligent about 'Stop Winging [sic] Woman,' its now-infamous piece on rape published in January, which was roundly condemned in UCL, the University of London and rape victim support groups. It was badly written, inaccurate and wilfully idiotic. Dedman's subsequent editorial, in which he defended his position by comparing *Pi* comment to a Socratic dialogue, is too painful to read.

When an article does have a promising basis, you can trust *Pi* to fuck it up. In February they published a double-page spread with a massive headline proclaiming 'The TRUTH about UCL's arms links' (only four months after *London Student* and three months after us). The next

Pi revealed that the TRUTH had been less than, well, truthful. The article had misattributed to ULU shares actually owned by the UoL.

But perhaps the most worrying aspect of his editorship is



Ben Williamson and friend

the underhand way Knob Jockey has continued to use *Pi* to further the interests of reactionary student politics. Regular readers will be aware that he cheated twice during the executive elections in February to help his candidate Nick Barnard get elected as Media & Communications Officer (CG 9). No real punishment was meted out on the second occasion (Barnard was banned from campaigning for just two hours) and the first time round the matter went completely unpunished. Apparently it doesn't matter that Barnard got elected on the back of cheating. Knob Jockey also opposed the lecturers' strike. Fair enough, you might say; we supported it. But we did not send out emails to our staff instructing them on policy, like he did. We reported the facts, instead of asserting that the pay rises already offered were 'generous' in spite of all the evidence.

Knob Jockey will continue at *Pi* till December. Look out for the inevitable Centenary Colours next year.

Mary-Beth Young

ALONG WITH ALAN Gardner, Mary-Beth is the most inexperienced sabb, not having had previous student hack experience. But inexperience is not an excuse for incompetence; Alex Coles pursued his role as E&W with energy in 2003-04, despite being a first year. Nor is it an excuse for breaking the constitution and exposing yourself to legal action. This Young has done.

None of this is to deny that she has tried to do her job, and she has certainly been approachable and easy to get on with – even her detractors admit this. She has also worked as a mentor this year. Sadly, it's not enough. Everyone makes mistakes, but a couple of Mary-Beth's deserve mention.

Extending library hours to match or better other UoL colleges was, and is, a good idea, but the campaign to extend library hours, incomprehensibly named 'UCL Students Do it 24/7', began to run into difficulties in the first term of this year. Well, one difficulty: the Provost.

failed miserably to get the attention of the person with most power to change things, the campaign turned its guns on those with the least power – the students. Up went the 24/7 banner in the Quad: many saw it, many didn't know what it meant. Bookmarks were printed and distributed, to be signed by students and sent to the Provost. Whether the Provost would listen was another matter. No meeting had been held to make him say so.

What shines out from this is a failure on the sabb's part to hold the Provost to account. As one Exec member said, Mary-Beth "doesn't know when to say 'fuck off'". Another asserts that the sabb's let the Provost set the agenda for when they meet. If telling the Provost to fuck off sounds extreme, it should be noted that the lecturers' unions (now fused into one) are scarcely more courteous in their language... if you read between the lines. And he meets with them all right.

So far, College has not responded to the library campaign.

UCL-speak

College Council

College Council is the supreme governing body of UCL, and is responsible for making policy and managing finances. Its membership numbers about 30, including the Provost, thirteen lay (non-UCL) members, and senior academics. UCL Union's Education & Welfare Officer sits on Council ex officio, and another sabb is elected annually by Union Council to attend. This year it was Lucy Gould.

Last December, Young and Lucy Gould asked the Provost in College Council why he had not agreed to a meeting about library hours. In particular, Young was concerned about the threat to library jobs as a result of cost cuts. His response? Because they had not observed the protocol of going through the Dean of Students! They asked for another meeting, and were brushed off. All they were told was that the libraries had to make savings of 5%, somehow. This is where a hard-nosed approach is necessary, but as Execs will tell you, Mary-Beth does not do hard-nosed. Having

Spot the Strike

We turn now to Mary-Beth Young's handling of the AUT/NATFHE industrial action. The showdown between lecturers and university bosses represented by the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA), together with many whys and wherefores, is covered extensively in CG 9.

It is difficult not to see Union officers' reaction to events as slow. AUT/NATFHE announced their 7 March strike on 20 February. On the 27th it was discussed at Academic Board, whose minutes record the sabb's saying that "Students were being asked to let the sabbatical officers know of any cases where their timetable was disrupted and they were not adequately informed".

UCL-speak

Academic Board

Academic Board reports to College Council. It is much larger: it includes the Provost's 'senior management team' of senior academics, all professors and heads of department, various non-

academic staff, most sabbs and a few other elected students. Its job is to advise Council on academic matters. It does not actually do much, and tends to be a talking shop.

Young was contacted the next day by Sean Wallis, AUT branch secretary for UCL, announcing that a strike was set for 7 March. Wallis wanted to meet to discuss it and the 'action short of a strike' which would threaten marking of coursework and exams if it went ahead. And then... a pause. It was not till 6 March, the day before the strike, that Young contacted Sean Wallis, he claims; it was not till 6 March that she e-mailed students announcing the strike. And if it's true that she copy-and-pasted an e-mail sent as long ago as early 2003 (CG 9), it can't have taken long to compose. The e-mail arrived at 11:30 pm, giving no time to ignorant students to find out about disruptions to their timetable. Thus no meeting between lecturers' and students' union happened before the strike, and many students woke up on Tuesday 7 March totally unaware that anything was happening.

The belated e-mail stated: "UCLU does not support the AUT strikes." Where did this decision come from? As noted in CG 9, the e-mail provoked shock and disgust among members of the part-time executive. One Exec member told us: "Whilst we have spoken briefly in committee about our concerns with the implications of an assessment boycott upon students' work, we never actually came up with a collective position on the strike... This email does not represent my views, nor that of UCL Union as a whole." Since then, yet another member of Exec has agreed with this view. If Council didn't reach a consensus and neither did Exec, it must have been Admin, the meeting of six sabbs and the Union General Manager, which did indeed discuss the action. Young insists that the sabbs formed their own conclusions about the strike, but the tradition of sabbatical groupthink is too old and deep-rooted to dismiss. (And for a far more shocking sabbatical act on the same theme, see below on Lucy Gould.)

Not In My Name

As the exam season approached, it emerged that a number of departments, such as French, would be hit hard by the action short of a strike. In early April Mary-Beth Young struck again: she signed a letter written by Gaston Dolle, President of Bristol University SU, condemning the assessment boycott (Exhibit A). The words were familiar: they supported the lecturers' pay claim, but not the methods on offer. The letter was copied to Bill Rammell, the higher education minister, and many education journalists at national newspapers: it got a lot of media coverage. No letter was sent to the UCEA calling on them to improve their pay offer, but this letter was forwarded to them, as though to boost the university bosses' position (while condemning lecturers' low pay, of course).

Then on 27 April the Union's Annual General Meeting was held, after a previous attempt in January had ended almost before it had started when someone called quorum. An emergency motion had been put together by Kat Lay and friends requiring UCL Union to support the AUT action. It wasn't too well planned – they were hunting for seconds for the motion up to the submission deadline – but the proposers did their best to publicise their motion, producing hundreds of flyers and distributing them. But in the exam season, this AGM was never going to be well attended. A notable presence at the AGM was Richard Bruckdorfer, AUT president for UCL, who successfully defended his union's position with eloquence. Speeches were made pro and con: for the sake of openness, *The Cheese Grater's* editor made an impassioned, if slightly incoherent, speech supporting the motion. It was eventually passed by 14 students. The sabbs all opposed.

Now began the events that would destroy Mary-Beth Young's credibility utterly. The motion resolved "to support the AUT's pay claim" and "industrial action" and mandated Young to "to immediately write to UCEA, copied to the recipients of the April 12 letter that she signed and to the Provost," demanding that UCEA agree to meet with the



AUT and NATFHE, and that they improve their pay offer.

Whatever your view on the AUT action, it is inescapable that Young was now obliged to write to UCEA supporting the AUT action, and any deviation from the motion would constitute a breach of the Union's Constitution.

One person who didn't vote for the motion was Services and Events Officer-elect Zoe Davies. She had popped into the AGM, apropos nothing much, and was surprised to find the motion being put forward. As a finalist in French, she feared for her degree and objected strongly to the AUT action. Davies wrote to Young, and she replied: "I said I was considering saying I did not agree with the strike action," the sabb told *The Cheese Grater*. "I said I'd be willing to include [in the letter the name of] any other student who felt the same way, as in I wouldn't mind including her name. I did not tell her to mass e-mail or anything, which she's completely entitled to do."

Mass e-mailing is exactly what Davies did do. Before long, e-mails demanding to have their names added to the letter began pouring in to the unfortunate Mary-Beth's inbox. Eventually, supporters of the AUT picked up the e-mails, and hit back, sending their own e-mails to Young asking her to add their names too, to state their support for the action. A list of supporters, numbering over 100, was also sent to Young, based on the 'I support the AUT action' group on Facebook. Everyone on the list could be verified as a UCL supporter of the AUT action, since Facebook requires UCL members to have a UCL e-mail address. Initially, Young agreed to add both

groups of e-mailers to her letter. Then Student Affairs Committee decided a few days later that only the opponents of the motion should be included. The letter was sent on 5 May, and correspondents were not informed until the same day or later, giving them no chance to appeal.

Do I Contradict Myself? Very Well...

The letter Mary-Beth wrote is a remarkable read (Exhibit B). First of all, it did not, as the AGM motion required, demand that UCEA allow AUT/NATFHE to come to talks without suspending their industrial action. Secondly, all mention of UCL Union's policy to support the AUT action was hedged and interspersed with statements apparently designed to qualify the demands Young had to make. After noting that the motion was "passed by 14 students", she went on: "The motion was passed despite heavy opposition from the Union's Executive, and is contrary to the consensus of Council; as well as the result of a debate held by UCLU's Debating Society, attended by at least four times as many students who attended the AGM, in which the House overwhelmingly opposed the industrial action [by 25 votes to 15]." And it goes on.

Why did Young write all this, that the motion did not require? "I was honest about what had happened in the Union. I included those names because I'd been asked to by students who didn't agree with what I did write in the letter." Although she didn't include the other lot of students who'd also asked to be

included. "However the point was made that the motion was meant to represent 19,000 students and therefore your support [that of the motion's supporters] is inherent in the passing of the motion. And that a very small percentage of students made a request to say they didn't support the action." She means a very small percentage of 19,000. But Young said that 14 students had passed the motion, not 19,000, and she had attached the names of 106 opponents. Did she not want the UCEA to think that the motion was worthless? She insists that she did not. The use of figures, however, is inescapable. And why did Debating Society get a mention, when they are not an executive meeting of the Union?

And why was a list of names included at all? In a subsequent *London Student* article ('Sack the UCL sabbs: They need the time off so they can learn how to count'), it was stated that over 130 students wanted to have their names attached to the letter. Over 100 of these, as mentioned, did not e-mail Young; they joined a group on Facebook, whence their names were collected. The sabbs have got very shirty indeed about this article, and insist that it is idiotic to use the names of people second-hand. But as mentioned above, because these names were on Facebook, each one had a real person behind it. Actually, what's idiotic is to ignore one set of names. Faced with evidence of a large body of feeling on both sides, Mary-Beth Young opted to include a list of names that could in no way be said to be representative of student opinion as a whole. In this way, the lists of names differ fundamentally from the AGM motion. The AGM had been publicised, and anyone could turn up to support or oppose the motion (some who turned up were finalists, despite exam commitments). The first list of names, however, was accessible only to those in touch with Zoe Davies, who was trying to amass opponents of the motion, and to the people they in turn contacted. All with the same aim in mind: to weaken the meaning of Young's letter. The second list, of supporters, only arose as a reaction to the first, and this list was not open to all

UCL students either, only to those who got e-mailed. Surely if Young had wanted to represent student opinion, she could have called a referendum? Or put out more of those suggestion boxes? "The sabbs didn't feel it was appropriate at the time." Instead, she went for something self-evidently far less representative and fair than a referendum. She could have ignored both lists, and the Debating Society, stuck to the mandate of the motion and avoided all injustice. Mary-Beth did neither. Though Student Affairs Committee (including her) took the decision, this decision should not have been allowed to overrule the spirit of the AGM motion, which it undoubtedly does. An AGM has far superior executive powers under the Constitution than a committee; this hierarchy was ignored. Young, like all sabbs, is entrusted with upholding the Constitution.

We did mention that Young has acted unconstitutionally. The failure to incorporate a demand into the letter has already been noted. Furthermore, the letter Young sent to UCEA was copied to only two people: Sally Hunt of AUT and the Provost. What about Bill Rammell? What about Emily Bell, editor-in-chief of Guardian Unlimited? What, in fact, about the long list of carbon-copy recipients of her earlier (April) letter, whom she'd been mandated to send copies of this letter to? Mary-Beth says she never got the second page of the April letter she signed, even though it clearly runs onto two pages and the AGM motion refers to it going to more than one person. Result? The media were alerted to the April letter opposing the AUT action (which made no reference at all to students being split on the matter), and it got a lot of coverage. The media were not at all alerted to Mary-Beth's May letter (which spent more words referring to a student split on the matter than it did enforcing the motion) and so it cannot have been expected to achieve anything.

Even if you are a sabbatical officer, you can understand that it is possible to remove meaning from what you say by adding enough words. The letter Mary-Beth wrote is a cardinal example. A generous observer would conclude that, in trying

desperately to represent student opinion, Young has failed to uphold some of the letter, and all of the spirit, of the motion passed at the Union AGM. A less generous observer would declare that, out of a mixture of incompetence and mindless hostility to the very idea of supporting the lecturers' action, grounded in a tradition of sabbatical inertia and reluctance to annoy the Provost, Mary-Beth Young has produced an incoherent, half-baked page of crazed dithering which does nobody any good whatsoever and which clearly violates the AGM motion and thereby the Constitution. In doing so, she has – sadly – let down every single student of UCL. Contrary to Young's insistence, she is clearly and unambiguously liable to legal action in her position as a trustee of UCL Union's charitable status. The facts speak for themselves.

Now click here
<http://www.uclunion.org/discuss/index.php?showtopic=795>

The motion supporting the AUT Action: worth reading in full

Immanuel Wolf

THIS intrepid student (French, despite his name) studies in the German department, where he founded the German Society last year. The society has done a lot: talks, discussions (including that heartstopping one on the enlargement of the EU) and films, as well as the usual pub crawls. It won Non-Grant Society of the Year this year. In her nomination form for Wolf's Centenary Colours, Prof Susanne Kord said the society "has already distinguished itself, particularly in the areas of event organisation". Which is why it's so funny that the one event Wolf couldn't organize to save his life was his society's AGM.

The AGM took place on 22 March in the German/Scandinavian common room. The meeting was scheduled for 5pm sharp and Wolf turned up at 5:35pm sharp. Perhaps he'd read the helpful e-mail, which said "meet behind the German society". He appeared with wine but without ballots or a ballot box. Wolf says he booked this room and a second one. What the sec-



***Yes, Immanuel, we know the French for AGM is AGA. We are taking the piss out of you.**

ond was for he didn't say, but was it no bigger? By the time he turned up, there were about 60 people in a room hardly bigger than the CSC meeting room... whose capacity is 20. There could not have been room to swing a cat and it was a clear health and safety issue.

The meeting proceeded... slowly. There was no clear agenda and Wolf needed constant prompting as to what came next throughout, despite the fact that the Union's club & society handbook contains a basic AGM agenda. Given that, had anyone actually tried to submit an agenda item of their own, it seems unlikely Wolf would have remembered it.

The committee asked if everyone had paper and a pen to vote. They handed out torn sheets of notepaper to everyone who didn't. How could they be sure that only members voted in such a large society where not everyone knows everyone else? The electors were told to write their *names* on the scraps of paper. When they complained, they were fobbed off with "Don't worry guys, it'll be strictly confidential!". (*Lache nicht. Es ist wahr – Ed.*) They continued to complain until someone suggested circulating an attendance sheet. The wine crate was appropriated as a ballot box. Could everyone vote? Wolf insists they could: "Persons having their Society cards could vote. Those that did not all had UCL ID cards and I had of course a membership list... Anyway most people had both cards and nobody has the right to come on campus with-

out ID card.” Actually, some people had neither card (contrary to Wolf’s insistence, you don’t need a card to enter the UCL ‘campus’, as if there was such a thing), and may not have been able to vote. Voting was done without transferable votes and without an option to RON (Re-Open Nominations), despite this being best practice. The vote may not have been very secret, but the count more than made up for this. Wolf and treasurer Babur Yusupov walked out with the crate and counted the votes... in secret. This is particularly worrying as there is clearly some opposition among German Soc’s members to Wolf’s methods... or why would all this get reported? 20 minutes later, they returned. The election for treasurer was, somehow, we know not how, ‘too close to call’ and had to be referred to the Union. Wolf was warned that he wasn’t prepared for the AGM, but ignored the warning.

If Wolf’s organisational skills are so hopeless, was he really responsible for German Soc’s more successful events this year? Anyway, the society can look forward to a bright future next year. Without him.

Mustafa Arif

WILL MAD Mustafa never leave university? He’s been at Imperial for six years and now has spent a seventh at its would-be breakfast, sorry, bride. As a union president for two colourful years, and now president of the Postgraduate Association at UCLU, his will to serve students is clear, but for a winner of *Social Colours*, his ethics leave something to be desired. No UCL student seems to have displayed quite as much affection for the arms trade as him.

The gory details of how the arms trade works can be found on the Campaign Against the Arms Trade’s website, www.caat.org.uk, so read them if you’re not convinced of the need to oppose it. *London Student* has been campaigning for colleges to withdraw their investment in companies linked to the arms trade, and appear to have scored a hit with SOAS selling their investments in Smiths Group and military aircraft firm Cobham. Following this, when the subject was discussed at ULU

Council in December, Arif told *LS* editor Patrick Ward that “the arms trade benefited students on certain courses,” according to minutes. He declined to mention how the arms trade benefits citizens of countries with poor human rights records where the arms, by hook or by crook, get sold.

On 27 February, Arif struck another blow for arms dealers: he helped defeat a motion to UCL Union Council on UCL’s arms shares. While unable to attend Council, he sent an e-mail stating his opposition, which was then read out. The motion, proposed by Environment and Ethics officer Louise Broadbent, fell. Not to be deterred, she presented another motion to Council on 20 March. The motion resolved to lobby College to sell its shares in arms companies (UCL holds nearly 35,000 shares in Cobham, valued at the time at over £60,000). This time, Arif was present: he objected to the notion of UCL selling shares in companies it worked with, and apparently thought doing nothing a much better option. He also objected to arms firms being targeted as a group “rather than those companies guilty of malpractice”, despite the fact that Cobham had already been indicted in the motion. The motion eventually passed – stripped of all references to arms firms.

With a degree in Information Systems Engineering and another one in Spacecraft Technology & Satellite Communications, perhaps Mustafa will single-handedly help George Bush resurrect Star Wars one day.

P.S. So unpleasant is Arif at ULU Council that he was one of the people who provoked a motion on ‘common courtesy and respect’ to be put to the fifth Council in February. Under ‘This Union Believes’, it stated: “That there have been examples of a lack of respect and understanding towards individuals at ULU Council meetings” and “The current atmosphere does not show respect for the mental well being of others”.

Ben Williamson

PITY POOR Benjamin Arthur Williamson. He may think he deserves an HLM on account of his ownership of a

pretty Sabbatical Officer polo shirt, but apparently no-one else does. Because nobody actually nominated him for HLM; and when everyone else’s was voted on at Union Council, he had to admit he’d ‘forgotten’ to submit his own. Which is exactly what he was forced to do at the next Council. Still, he’s made it abundantly clear this year that he thinks he speaks with the voice of the whole of UCL Union (despite moves to no-confidence him last year), so who better to give him an award than his self-beloved self? Let us see what Ben, sorry, the Union, has got in return for its award.

This year Ben has been tackling the age-old problem of Union space, which has got considerably worse after the cut in capacity last year. And it does seem that the Provost, who after all holds the purse strings, takes the issue more seriously now than he did. But neither Malcolm nor Ben seem able to dispel the fancy – now over a decade old – that UCL Union might get control of the ULU building on Malet Street, with its much greater capacity. “One already set-up area which closely resembles the provisions we have for our service space is obviously ULU. It hasn’t been taken off the table,” Ben told *The Cheese Grater*. “The Provost has made no direct attempt to give us ULU or even say that we should take it over, or the space, but it obviously is one area which could possibly be used as a future venue for UCL students.” But sabbs do admit that he has a habit of banging on about ULU, and it would be strange if that was nothing to do with space. Anyway, he can’t “give” us ULU or its space, and ULU’s staff are thought to hope it will stay like that forever. In fact, ULU are not in any discussion with UCL Union to share space.

Ben has also been accused of breaking the Licensing Acts and thus exposing himself to prosecution (see how the sabbs take after each other?) There’s a limit to we can say here, because of the odious, retarded, Stone-Age, worse-than-the-Official-Secrets-Act, perverted dungheap of a fucking cunt of a regulation known as the Staff-Student Protocol, the magic students’ union formula for covering up incom-



petence. But we will say this.

1) Last year, Tommy Michaelis left as Union security manager.

2) Now there is one less security officer at the Union.

3) The Union employs procedures to guard both its bars and the entrance to the premises during licensed evening opening hours of club nights.

4) Under the Licensing Acts, it is illegal for a hypothetical licensed doorman to leave the door unattended while they go and keep an eye on somewhere else.

5) $2+2=$

What of Mike McLeod, the General Manager who has been the toast of *London Student* this year? Given that he left under a cloud (see *LS* passim, despite incorrect protestations of inaccuracy by UCLU sabbs) you’d have thought Ben would distance himself from the overpaid oaf. But no. Criticise the Establishment? Never! We did ask Ben what he thought of the egregious ex-GM, but answer came there none.

Lucy Gould

IT’S ALL too easy to caricature the sabbs as in the Provost’s pocket, isn’t it? They have a hard job, work long hours and have to go between the Provost and the rabble, I mean students. But they do try to stand up for students’ interests. Right? Er, wrong. Exhibit A: Lucy Ann Robertson “Judas” Gould, former SSEES Site President, current Finance & Administration Officer and winner of HLM.

If you cast your mind back once more to the lecturers’ industrial action this year, you will recall that all students’ unions, including UCL Union and the NUS, were unanimous in sup-

porting the lecturers' demands for higher pay (see CG 9 and the pro-AUT motion above for details). Only the methodology (to boycott exams or not) was a real issue. And in her e-mail of 6 March, Mary-Beth Young reiterated this view: "Whilst we recognise that lecturers nationwide are underpaid compared to other professions with similar skills and expertise..." And then again on 12 April, with that letter from Gaston Dolle (above): "Our Students' Unions are supportive of your claims for better pay. We believe that academics have been underpaid for too long and that improving lecturers' pay can only mean better education for our members [i.e. students] in the long term."

This view remains the same regardless of the change in policy Young so faithfully honoured (above). So is there any excuse for a sabbatical officer acting against this long-avowed Union policy, which has remained unchanged over at least four academic years? Because that's just what Gould did, according to ULU. After the lecturers announced their strike in February, ULU sabb Sam Thomas put out a press release saying they supported the lecturers' 20% pay claim (but not the action). Cue phone call to ULU from a disgruntled L. Gould of Bloomsbury, complaining about the press release. Why? Because it would make it harder for her to go to the Provost... and tell him she supported him on lecturers' pay. Even though it was the stated policy of her Union to do the exact opposite! In doing so, Gould puts herself in such august company as Knob Jockey.

Gould has also failed to represent students' interests on the subject of the Provost's 15% staff cuts. We have known for months that some UCL academics think courses will be lost because of job losses – it is the stated view of the Arts and Humanities faculty board. Gould, however, failed to come out against this policy, and remained resolutely on the fence.

The sabb's people skills are not highly rated. When asked to comment on her manner, one source pointed us to the events of ULU Council in November 2005, when Gould launched an

ad hominem attack on Vicki Slater of Queen Mary College for 'protecting her friends', which sources describe as unwarranted – she was defending her position on the resignation of ULU president Stewart Halforty.

This – coupled with her policies – has provoked a trenchant attack on Gould from fellow sabb Sam Thomas, acting President of ULU:

"I suspect that UCL students have this year gained more from the £300,000 paid to ULU than from the £1.7 million paid to UCL Union. UCL students have consistently shown their appreciation of ULU's campaigns and services, but UCL Union has sadly failed to represent their students' views. Lucy Gould has always put her right-wing politics and subservience to Malcolm Grant ahead of students' interests. When UCL students were threatened with 15% staff cuts, Lucy Gould rushed into a frenzy of inertia [*I prefer 'masterly inactivity' – Ed*]. When the lecturers made their pay claim, she raced to assure Malcolm Grant of her opposition to it, moaning that ULU's support for the pay increase would undermine her. An observer might wonder whether it is UCL's students or UCL's Provost who Lucy Gould has been elected to represent."

In reply, Gould told us: "This is clearly ridiculous. I have upheld Union policy (all of which has been formed through the correct procedure ie. Council, Exec, GMs [Union General Meetings] etc) and what the whole Sabbatical Team felt was in the best interests of the student body at every meeting with College." So sabbs oppose the pay claim, do they? Mary-Beth Young doesn't. And the argument for the pay claim was settled long ago. Gould declined to actually tell us whether the story was true or not, and we confidently assert that it is true.

Maybe caricaturing sabbs isn't so easy after all. Not if they do the job for you.

Alan Gardner

IT SEEMS UNFAIR – Gardner would almost certainly say 'churlish' – to attack a man who gave such a nice speech for *The Cheese Grater* at the Social Colours dinner, and recommended its editor for an award [*which*

I've now rejected, pace Dex – Ed.] But we cannot overlook the flawed governance and poor editorship which has dogged Gardner's year.

The Media and Communications remit has become untenable. The officer is meant to edit the main student magazine, work as a member of each media society (the officer has an *ex officio* position on each society's committee – although Gardner has declined to grace our conferences with his presence) and communicate with the outside world. There is an obvious conflict of interest which has been around since the year dot, and Gardner has done nothing to address this. The M & C cannot act as a mouthpiece for Union policies, often decided only by the executive or even just by sabbs and the General Manager, and be trusted to give *Pi* a free rein. Would you trust the Downing Street press officer to edit a national newspaper? Gardner has not, it seems, tried to rein in *Pi* or this magazine in the way his predecessor did – which amounted to censorship (CG 4). But while the terms of his remit remain the same, the position of M & C will remain open to considerable abuse.

Nor can the officer be trusted not to obstruct the activities of elected members of the media societies. The Union's Standing Orders effectively expect the officer to be a servant to an infinite amount of masters. It is not Gardner's fault that they were written thus when he arrived. It is his fault that they remain thus nearly a year later. Ah, but there's a review of governance underway, isn't there? Not only are the terms of this review somewhat questionable (CG 9) but why must we wait forever for some simple reforms? Gardner, or anyone, could have submitted a motion to Council last year striking out the relevant parts of Standing Orders and replacing them with something more helpful. It would have been easy. Nobody did.

We turn now to *Pi*. As a man who has to attend many important committees, such as Media Management (stop laughing), Gardner's quality control on *Pi* is limited. He can claim credit for the idea of themes for each issue. He can also claim respon-



sibility for when things go wrong. *Pi*'s distribution has traditionally been bad. Of its budget of £20,000 (only 50 times bigger than our budget next year), a large proportion is spent on printing 4,000 hard copies. Many never get read, and in the past have been pulped en masse. In fact, we found an e-mail from Gardner, sent in the autumn term, begging his chums to help him throw away entire boxes of old copies of *Pi* that had not been distributed and were cluttering up the Union building. Untouched boxes of the magazine have also been seen loitering around common rooms. For this *Pi* deserves its fat budget, of which £10,000 is a grant and the rest is pretty well assured every year?

The sheer crapness of *Pi* can be laid at the door of its student editors, and that's what we've done. But if it had a full-time editor who wasn't trying to run part of the Union at the same time, like *London Student* and Imperial's *Felix*, it could be a lot better. Instead, *Pi* has two part-time editors, and just look at the result. Someone did try to reform this state of affairs, but the *Pi* staff apparently preferred to sit in their own excrement (CG 4). Once again Gardner has done nothing to change this. There are, indeed, plans afoot to give *Pi* a full-time editor, but not coming from him, and we doubt they will come to anything.

Staff-student protocol prevents us from saying anything about staffing for the Union's website (also Gardner's responsibility). We ask you to count the number of people who've held the post of webmaster recently, and draw your own conclusions. RL