

Freedom of press

Some of you may have noticed that there were a few pages missing from Redbrick last week. We almost got away with it: the TV listings started on Tuesday and the Comment page was shifted to this week, but there was more to this case than a simple editorial mistake.

The glorious irony is that, in an issue featuring an article on the Leeds Student's tussles with the law, we had our own scandal-in-miniature - but it was not Tony Blair's character under threat of defamation. Yes, you've guessed it - a certain young entrepreneur almost found another route by which to cripple the Guild of which he was, until recently, a member.

The letters you see on this page were originally set for last week's issue to precede Carnival's ticket sales, and were printed accordingly with a fourth piece from a reader who chose to remain anonymous. However, due to legal complications, we were forced to hold the entire issue from distribution while the Guild Exec very kindly shredded all of the offending pages.

For obvious reasons, we are unable to reveal the details of the complaint, but my point is simple: it seems that someone has a vendetta against the Guild and all of its societies. I'd like to take this opportunity to reiterate Redbrick's support for Carnival, and wish them luck for the forthcoming Carnage - the genuine article.

Carnage UK: amicable solution preferred

Dear Editor,

I am writing to you in relation to matters concerning Carnage organised by the University of Birmingham (Carnival) and CARNAGE UK'S operations.

It has been established that you have concerns regarding confusion between the two operators, more specifically, that students may confuse the two.

I have spent considerable time examining the tape-recording transcript. I have now had the opportunity to discuss matters at length with Mr. Bahia, Mr. Hickley and the other Directors.

It is clear from the meeting between yourselves and our company representatives that there are grave concerns as outlined above. Mr. Bahia did point out in that meeting that we would prefer to reach an amicable solution; this was reiterated by a representative from your University. We believe that we are able to reach a solution as follows:

1. We would be willing to make it explicitly clear on our web page (under the Birmingham city link) that Carnage (Birmingham) is a totally separate event. We would also in this instance advise students to make contact directly with the University of Birmingham for further information.

2. We would offer you a guarantee that CARNAGE UK would not set up our own event in Birmingham to target your students and in essence, challenge your Carnage event.

We believe that we would be able to meet the above criteria, on the proviso that:

1. You refrain from contacting other host universities where we are operating/are looking to operate.

2. You refrain from contacting the bars on our designated route where we are operating/are looking to operate.

Carnage UK have been informed that someone from the University of Birmingham (Guild committee) made direct contact with the Varsity bar on Myrtle Street, Liverpool, urging them not to participate. We do not charge our bars to partake, and as such, a licensed business would not turn away 2,000 paying customers. The behaviour of the Guild representative on this occasion was deemed unacceptable.

We hope that this matter can be resolved as soon as possible so that there is absolutely no confusion between the two separate event operators. It is clear that an amicable solution would be far easier and far cheaper, for both parties.

Carnage UK believe that this is the best possible solution. It clarifies any confusion between the two operators, safeguards Carnival's event in Birmingham from any interference and allows us to move forward with our development plan.

Yours,

Kate Foster
Communications Manager
For & on behalf of,
CARNAGE UK

Letters

As most of you will be aware, issue 1235 led with the clash between Guild charity organisation Carnival and ex-Birmingham student Paul Bahia over rival 'Carnage' pub crawls. It remains a highly sensitive issue on both sides of

the fence: the fairest way to deal with its is to print statements from all involved, and let you make up your own minds.

Bahia rides Carnival success

Dear Redbrick,

I am writing to clarify the position of the Guild in relation to the legal 'threat' to Carnival's Carnage event.

We have been aware of this situation for several weeks, and have worked with Carnival to ensure that the outcome is the best possible one for Carnival, and that they remain in a position to run their most popular event, and generate even more funds for charity for years to come.

Carnival are one of the oldest student groups in the Guild, and each year raise thousands of pounds for local and national charities (around £68,000 in the last year alone!). At a time when students are constantly lambasted for their anti-social behaviour in Selly Oak and elsewhere, it is worth noting that Carnival have won many friends in the community through their charity donations, and are perhaps the finest ambassadors the university have: acting on YOUR behalf to show that students DO have a conscience.

In your article you say that in setting up carnageuk as a private company, Paul Bahia is

"only...exploiting a business opportunity". We would strongly argue that Bahia is exploiting the name, reputation and charitable intentions of Carnival's Carnage. By running a competition event in Birmingham under the same name he is competing with an event that offers precious resources to important charities. It would seem that by running as a company he would not be able to match Carnival's commitment of giving every penny raised to charity.

In your article it implies that Paul Bahia has requested an 'amicable solution' to the situation in Birmingham. In fact, it was members of Carnival, the Guild's staff team and Guild Exec who requested this move: We met with him personally and no agreement could be found, despite us presenting him with a strong legal case from the University's solicitors, and one that would point to Bahia losing any legal battle due to carnival's long history of use of the name. The Guild is committed to seeking alternative solutions to ensure this matter is resolved without cost to students by increased prices.

He has suggested he can supply Carnival's T-shirt printing at a cheaper rate, and this forms the basis of his 'amicable solution'. In fact, Carnival's current deal means that the T-shirts are in effect free of charge, so it is incredibly unlikely that he can match this, and of course the choice is Carnival's as to whether or not they wish to change supplier, not Paul Bahia's!

We believe strongly that Carnival have every right to use the name 'Carnage', as they have done for the last five years, and the only solution we can see is that they remain the sole users of this name.

We would therefore urge ALL students to continue to support only those events organised by Carnival, and make sure that in buying a Carnage t-shirt, the money from this purchase is going solely to Carnival, who will as usual be passing ALL of their profits from their events onto local charities on your behalf.

Yours,

Mathilda Branson, Vice-President Student Activities (VPSA)

Carnival: we're sticking to our guns

Dear Editor,

Last week's edition of Redbrick led with an article concerning the current controversy over Carnival and its tri-annual charity bar crawl, Carnage, which has been running at the University since the late 1990s.

Redbrick's article, whilst putting both sides of the story, did seem to suggest that the problems being encountered by this year's Carnival committee were at least partly applicable to the stubbornness of the committee in refusing to use Mr Bahia's firm.

We would like to take this opportunity to justify our decision not to use Mr Bahia's t-shirt company to supply the t-shirts for this term's Carnage event, and also clarify some of the issues raised in your article.

Firstly, and most importantly for your readers, there is absolutely no chance of Carnage not going ahead on the 9th November and all students should rest assured that t-shirts will be on-sale, as usual, in Mermaid Square on Monday 3rd November at 12pm.

Secondly, our aversion to using Mr Bahia's firm, aside from the issue of him having taken the name Carnage in

bad faith for his own commercial gains, is that his suggestion that he is merely trying to save us money on costs is totally untrue.

This term's Carnage t-shirts are being provided by the end club free of charge as a special deal, negotiated by Carnival, to mark the opening of the new Air nightclub.

This is an exceptional state of affairs but even if this wasn't the case, Carnival has a long-standing arrangement with a local screen-printing firm, Print & Promotions, and during that time we have built up a very close working relationship with them.

They have never let us down with an order of t-shirts for any Carnival event, be that Carnage or the Charity Hitch-hikes, despite tight deadlines, and have consistently provided us with the best price and extremely generous discounts. Not only does this money go to the benefit of a local firm, something which we prize very highly at Carnival, but it enables this company to provide discounts to an enormous number of University Societies. The money that this company has saved us in the past few years exceeds by an enormous margin any potential discount that Mr Bahia's firm could offer us for future

Carnage events. We look forward to working with them on the Carnival Hitch-hike and on next year's Carnage events.

We would like to reassure readers that Carnival will do everything in its power to resolve matters amicably, and if possible, without recourse to legal action. We would also like to clarify that Carnival has no legal status in the eyes of the law; we derive that status from the Guild and it is the Guild that would make any decision concerning how any legal action would be funded.

There are already a number of options open that would not bring any raised cost to students in terms of prices. This is an entirely separate issue to the one we now face. We feel that to submit to these kinds of tactics would be to the detriment of Carnival and to the Guild and University as a whole, and, as your editorial suggests, opens the way for a raft of similar cases of exploitation of intellectual property. We feel that the potential cost of a legal battle is far outweighed by the cost to students and to the Guild of losing Carnage as a charity event.

Yours,
Carnival committee

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