

Editorial

Editor's comment

Free speech

We find ourselves at a crossroads: it's between the opposite extremes of subversive activism that refuses to listen to reason, and trigger-happy institutionalisation with too much power and not enough foresight. At least that's what each side would have us believe about the other. So in an increasingly volatile political climate where the institutional targets range from a relatively humble Guild of Students to the government of the world's one remaining superpower, is this Hobson's choice, or is there a middle road?

I for one believe that without a degree of censorship, we would descend into anarchy. Racism, sexism and other extreme forms of prejudice are being clouded by the increasingly neurotic fog of political correctness that blankets everything we read, say and do. From one perspective, this is a good thing: no-one wants views that make minority groups feel threatened openly displayed in the public eye. However clouding the issue does not necessarily make it go away. Just as prejudice can be dangerous and make people "uncomfortable", if the PC culture blinds us too much we'll eventually lose sight of genuinely free choice (if there is such a thing) and become little more than puppets of a top-down society.

But all of this is too abstract: the dust has still not settled from the BUST the War saga. Speaking as someone directly involved, I honestly believe that the situation has got out-of-hand. I fail to see how the censorship compromised the main drive of the advert, which was (I assume) to draw students' attention to George Galloway's speech. While the decision was out of my hands - Redbrick is responsible for editorial, not advertising content - I understand that the thought behind the censorship was to avoid provoking further tension between J-Soc and P-Soc, already at boiling point, by removing substantive views from a publication that strives to remain impartial.

The principle of it, of course, runs deeper for BUST the War - extreme views that they believe in and condone have been cut by an institution that may not have the constitutional right to do so and thus, BUST the War interpret, they are abusing their power.

For me to important thing is that Galloway's speech took place and views had a chance to be aired. Redbrick is a forum for debate but not a soapbox for individual societies to exploit for their own ends - we will willingly publish reasonable letters, and encourage anyone with strong views on this issue to write in to us.

Culture crash

Surely worthy of a mention. As the whines of 'Brummie-bashing' die away, it's clear that Birmingham simply wasn't what the judges were looking for for Capital of Culture. We assumed that the title would go to the most cultured, diverse and cosmopolitan city, but this wasn't the case. I'm a born-and-bred Southerner and have only lived in Birmingham for two years, but I believe it's a highly diverse city, possibly the most diverse in the country. Not having lived in Liverpool I can't confirm this, but it is clear that here in Brum we have several very different, vibrant cultures blended together in a continually regenerated environment. But now we know the key reason why we didn't take the title: apparently, a 'lack of striking architecture'. Come on, Birmingham, you simply haven't done enough: I suggest you stop taking so long building the new Bullring and regenerating the second biggest city in England. What we need is a chart-topping band from forty years ago and a pretty bride or two over the river we don't have.

Redbrick online



The site as we go to press

Here at Redbrick we have a summer project, and we'd like to ask for your help.

Redbrick Online is our brand new website, currently under development. When it goes live it will keep you up-to-date with the latest developments after we've gone to press, as well as providing a full online

version of the paper to browse through and download.

All we'd like you to do is tell us what you think - how user-friendly is it, does it look ok, is there anything else we could include and so on. It's currently online at:

<http://students.bugs.bham.ac.uk/redbrick/new> Thanks

Letters

Correction

We printed a light-hearted letter last issue (1230) allegedly by a Mr Stephen Bates, POLSIS, about Kylie Minogue's breasts. The real Stephen Bates has since been down to the office to assure us that he is a respectable PhD student who currently lectures on Feminism,

and that to credit his name to such a letter constitutes defamation of character.

Redbrick would like everyone who read the letter to know that he was not the genuine author of the letter, and apologise for any offense it may have caused.

We're also interested in finding out the identity of the pun-happy tit-maniac who made the

effort to set up a email account in Stephen's name. Audacity duly credited, but next time put your real name on it please.

Can we please ask all future letter writers to include their student ID number and a contact phone number so this can't happen again. Cheers.

More yellow fever

Dear Sir,

I am delighted that my letter has been published at the top of the letters page in the first Redbrick of the new term. It is brilliant that you hear what I'm saying, but are you listening?

The issue has now been raised, you brought it to our attention and now as consumers we want to see it acted on. 'REDBRICK in YELLOW' you hear me call, and I know I don't call it alone.

It is pure tokenism if we don't act on what we know and parade as best practice. Surely we just belittle disability issues if we fob them off with one week when the

services they fund are accessible to them!

I'm sure you are working, as I write, to act on such proposals for the long run. I look forward to reading it once again in yellow in light of all the facts I presented in my last letter.

Many thanks, yours ever,

Richard Angell

I'm looking into the issue - hopefully we can see colour a permanent feature of next year's Redbrick. One of the problems with it is that we can't print large areas of colour as the paper is thinner, so we'd need to look

into the repercussions.

Issue 1229 was part of a drive by the Guild to draw attention to the fact that they are required to be able to reproduce all media distributed by them in different formats, such as coloured paper, braille or large text. Therefore if a reader of the paper requires it to be printed on coloured paper, the Guild is required to do so: as it stands individual pages can be printed on demand.

I do see your point and agree that as we've proven it's possible to go to press with coloured paper, it seems irresponsible not to continue doing so, and I'll keep the issue in mind for the future.

If you'd like further information on the Guild's policy on this issue please contact the VPIA.

One angry Aussie

Dear Redbrick,

As an Australian living in England I find it amusing and rather bizarre that many English people visit Australisa for no more than a year, stay in roughly the same region, (notably where all the backpackers go and so rarely meet Australian citizens) and then come back to England either claiming to be Australian or claiming to know everything about Australian culture. It appears Joy Fillingham has done the latter. From questioning the laws on owning dingos as pets, (despite the fact that dingos are vicious hunters who have been known to take babies) to stating most Australian women spend all their free time in beauty parlours. (I'm sure Germaine Greer would find that amusing!) there was no holding back on making unsupported sweeping claims. What the arti-

cle missed out was that despite claims of racism towards anyone who is not the 'right shade of white' there was no mention of the integrated Japanese, Chinese, Greek and Italian communities (notably in Melbourne). While I agree Aboriginies are victims of widespread racial discrimination there was no mention of the fact that Aboriginies get more dole money than any whites due to unemployment problems and the government is trying ways to integrate Aboriginies into mainstream Australia whilst keeping their own culture alive. I would also like to state that although Joy claimed she was fed up with social inequalities and failing public services' in England, she did not mention significant facts about our welfare state such as everyone eraning over a certain amount of money has to pay contributions to health services. This creates better

health services for people on the poverty line and ensures our health service is not overloaded like the NUS. I am not stating Australia does not have social problems and is not entitled to fair criticism but article like the one printed last week is nothing more than an example of pathetic journalism and gives an unfair image of my home country to those who haven't visited it.

Kate Scott, English I

Obviously it's impossible for a non-Australian writer to encapsulate everything about the culture of a country as big as yours in one feature; the article is based on the experience of one individual and should be treated as such. If the it made sweeping and innacurate statements then thanks for setting us right - perhaps you could write a more balanced piece - but there's really no need to resort to personal insult: correcting Joy's observations from an insider's perspective would have been sufficient.

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New website design
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Alton Towers

The Redbrick office was literally flooded with entries for the 5 free pairs of tickets to Alton Towers. For those of you who guessed correctly the answer was of course:

Oblivion

Congratulations to:

- Holly Crossbie
- Jennifer Bluston
- Saroja Gunatilleke
- Clare Sivey
- Nancy Sun

The office will be shut for the summer so if the winners above could email a postal address to redbrick@guild.bham.ac.uk we'll send you tickets to you in the next week or so. Have a good time at Alton from us.