



Red brick

From bad to worse

It may come as a shock to those of you who have actively protested against tuition fees that instead of rethinking the issue, the Universities are now planning to triple the top-up fee burden - again. Also in this issue of Redbrick is the revelation that University access will be thrown wide open to the 'working class', and - from the other side of the fence - the announcement that yet another fees march is on the cards.

The point that everyone seems to be neglecting in this crazy farce, where it seems everyone's shouting at the top of their voices with no-one to hear, is that University should be nothing to do with what 'class' you come from: it should be based on your interests and abilities. The Government should stop cramming the younger generation into an increasingly commodified education system that needs money pumped into it in much the same way as the bottomless pit of the NHS. There should be fewer people at University, entry procedures should be more rigorous, and it should be free.

We're already a nation dominated by the tertiary industries, and with an entire generation getting trained up in 'transferable skills' rather than flat out useful ones, in ten years time we'll need to import our own 'working class' to fill all the gaps. This isn't an advocacy of Capitalism - for all I know, the wheels are oiled with the blood of the workers, and we should all be raised in community centres - but as far as my limited understanding of class politics stretches, without people to produce and manufacture the raw materials of our country the thousands of people with a telemarketing qualification will have nothing to sell.

Flip-side to Selly Oak

Thanks to Mike Flower and Matt Marshall for letting us know that Selly Oak is in fact more than a filth-strewn sofa showroom. Being the 'worst' suburb is obviously ambiguous: I for one would rather live amongst rubbish bags than get knifed every night.

Someone's got a free fridge

Congratulations to **Carina El-Salhani** for having her name plucked out of a decent haul of entries this week: we'll be in touch when the chilly critter arrives. Please email us with your postal address...

Selly 'sensationalism'

Dear Editor,

Recent Redbrick articles have highlighted what seems to be an alarming decline in living standards in Selly Oak. Excessive rubbish fills the streets, sex shops have sprung up on every corner, and relations between students and residents are at breaking point.

However sadly for sensationalists this is not an accurate portrayal. While there are always ongoing issues in any community, the Guild of Students, headed by the volunteering department Involvement, and the Guild Executive, which includes a dedicated Community Liaison Officer, have been making

real headway in improving the local area.

For example the week commencing 20th October is Make A Difference Week, an annual event where student volunteers go out into the local community and make a difference to the area. The 'Involve' team are granting the wishes of local charities by matchmaking them with staff departments and student groups to help out with projects ranging from painting rooms to recycling mobile phones. Thursday sees the 'Clean Up Selly Oak' campaign when students and residents work alongside each other to tackle the problems of litter and flyposting. It has been recognised that by

Letters

Fighting fees

Dear Editor,

On Sunday 26th of October, tens of thousands of students will be marching in London to protest against the introduction of £3000 a year top-up fees for university education. I am going to be one of those students.

We are going to be marching on a Sunday afternoon because we are angry.

Angry at the hardship students are facing, angry at the long hours of part time work they are forced into, and angry that these governments proposals will triple student debt. If you have a brother or sister who is 14 or 15 now, he or she is likely to leave university with debts of around £30,000.

This could be more debt than their families have ever had to face in their lives.

We know that fear of debt is already putting poorer students off going to university. These proposals will just make the matters worse, and this is why we must act now. This is a fight which we must win, this is a fight that we can win and this is a fight that we are winning. Already, we have well over 100 Labour back-benchers promising to vote against these proposals when they are put to Parliament.

These MPs are facing a lot of pressure from government whips to back down. We need to come out in force on the 26th to show them how much we really care about this issue and that they should persevere in defeating the government.

Clarke and Blair are running scared. It is important to ensure they keep on running.

This year could be students' finest moment. But, if we fail, if we don't turn up in great numbers on the 26th, if we don't lobby our MPs, if we lose the vote in the house of commons then I am not sure I will be able to look my 14-year-old cousin in the face when he is forced to choose between doing the best degree he can at a university like Birmingham, or doing a course somewhere else because it is cheaper and will mean less debt.

There is still time to book a seat on the coach down to London. Just ask at the box office, or email Fees@Bugs.bham.ac.uk . There is still time to email your MP from the www.stopfeesnow.com . There is still time to earn your legacy.

Yours sincerely,

Ade Bradley
Certificate in Counselling Skills I (Campaigns Convener, West Midlands Area NUS)

Give Arnie a chance

Reading the "Stars in their lies" article in this week's Redbrick (Issue 1233) I felt moved to provide fodder for your letters page.

Ms Sharples' comment that the governor-elect "judging by his televised debates and media comments has based his whole campaign on outdated, lame lines from his ..." begs the question did she actually watch the debate. I did, and while he was by no means the best performer, he showed himself to have a good understanding of the problems and ideas about how to put them right. One of the reasons perhaps that his poll ratings shot up and Bustamante's fell. Ms Sharples' comment was

cheap and simply wrong.

My main point in contacting you however is to complain in the strongest possible terms about the allegation contained in her first paragraph. While the allegations of groping women have been all but admitted, the allegation of supporting Hitler was strenuously denied by the chwarzenegger campaign. This denial was strongly supported by various people who knew the governor-elect before he was even famous as a body builder. When this denial and the supporting statements were made, G O V E R N O R - E L E C T Schwarzenegger's opponents and their supporters in the media quietly dropped the

allegation. It is therefore utterly disgusting that such a foul rumour is portrayed as fact. While I doubt that anyone associated with the governor-elect will have read this article, I still look forward to seeing an apology printed in the next issue.

Yours,
Pete Wass

Pete, Pete, Pete. It's been a long summer break but already we've got a bite with only a morsel of controversy. I believe our News Editor has already offered you a column? Anyway, the issue at hand: yes, of course we retract any unproven allegations misrepresented as fact. We await Arnie's sweeping coup of the White House with bated breath.

To say relations between residents and students are strained is not altogether accurate. Mike Flower, the Guild Executive Officer in charge of Community Liaison, is constantly liaising with Involve to build bridges with local residents and find ways of working together for the good of the whole community. As well as running campaigns to highlight problem areas such as litter, excess noise and crime, Mike has taken on the role of Vice-Chair of TARA, the Bournbrook Community Neighbourhood Forum. TARA and the Guild work closely with residents not only to find practical solutions to such problems but also to show that students do care. The fact that the Guild is hosting the next TARA meeting shows just how much

relations have improved between students and residents.

If you are interested in helping to make the community a better place for all, contact Involve either by going down to the Basement, e-mailing involve@bugs.bham.ac.uk or by coming to TARA meetings - the next one being right here in the Guild Council Chamber on Wednesday 29th October at 7:15pm. Mike Flower, Community Liaison Officer, can be contacted via e-mail at clo@bugs.bham.ac.uk, at the ARC between 1pm and 1:30pm on Thursdays or found in the Exec Office on the second floor of the Guild of Students.

Mike Flower (Residences Liaison Officer) and Matt Marshall (Guild Users Officer)

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Contrary to last week's revelation, Sarah has assured us that she doesn't in fact like to garden after all. Sorry about that.

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