

# Editorial

## Editor's comment

### Destabilising the balance of power

**L**ast week's Redbrick was a hotbed of campus controversy, and in its own way a microcosm of the international scene: the abandoned Israel-Palestine football match was owing directly to the wider conflict abroad, and of course the question of Guild democracy - continued in this week's letters - is an uncomfortable reminder of what happens when this is transferred into the sphere of international politics.

With war seemingly only hours away as I write this, the world's leaders are re-writing what global democracy means, and this is plainly a dangerous line to take. With the capability to launch a direct attack on a country, justified or not, with impunity and without UN backing, we are effectively establishing America and Britain as an autonomous superpower out of the jurisdiction of the United Nations, which is precisely what the council was set up to prevent. How many more steps before this superpower becomes known as Oceania, and Orwell's worst nightmare takes more steps towards becoming reality.

But it's not the question of Iraq that troubles me the most. Saddam is a defiant dictator that the vast majority of the world would like to see removed; if a direct assault is the *only* way to do so, then someone needs to take responsibility for launching it. Of course, as with Vietnam, this is primarily led by the Republican Administration in the US. Further parallels could be drawn with one of history's most fruitless, mindless conflicts were the main offensive to be on the ground, and then perhaps the 10% inaccurate 'smart-bombs' would destroy their own forces just as the Americans bombed their own in Vietnam. However this is not the case: the main drive of the assault, unless I'm mistaken, will be from the air: the only casualties of the 1 in 10 missiles that miss will be the Iraqis themselves, collateral damage that may well be deemed 'unavoidable'.

### Someone must police the International police

All of these objections concern the war itself, but as I say this is not my main concern. If - as public opinion now deems almost unavoidable - we do go to war this week, and Saddam is defeated, and a new democratic government installed in his place, what happens next? North Korea? And after that? The very nature of national democracy is that the President, and the Prime Minister, are elected by the majority of citizens in that country. The right to govern said country is therefore granted. Surely in an International democracy - if that's what we're living in - the same should be true, and a country should act with majority consent only. If America has the freedom to strike at will as the benevolent International police, someone should have the capability to police them in turn. This used to be the UN, but comparisons with the League of Nations are becoming increasingly valid. President Bush governs the U.S.A. and not the planet; he has no god-given or vote-given right to police anyone outside of his own borders.

For my part I can only pray that the looming conflict is over quickly and efficiently, casualties on both sides are kept to a minimum and it doesn't spread into an ugly stain that will blot the history books for centuries.

*This is the last issue for this term; we'll be back with two issues, one either side of the exam period, after Easter. Good luck with revision everyone and keep the opinions coming in!*

## Letters

### Guild democracy did not fail

Dear Editor,

Could I start by congratulating Kirsten Jongberg on her justly won election as President. I'm sure she will do a great job in taking the guild forward.

I'd then like to redress the balance of your front page last week. As I think my campaign highlighted we do need to look at reaching a greater audience as a guild; but we by no means do this from a bad position. Democracy in the guild is in fact improving, with a second successive rise in voter turnout. Student groups are ever expanding. This is espe-

cially apparent in the field of volunteering, with our volunteering department growing to be the largest in the country to support the growth.

The guild has many challenges ahead, which I'm sure Kirsten and the executive will meet. And with the new strategic planning process about to start I'm sure the guild will move into the right position to best serve its students.

Yours,  
**James Anthony  
Nursing III  
Unsuccessful candidate  
for President**

*An unfortunate side-effect of us juxtaposing a criticism of the electoral process with the announcement of Kirsten's victory was that it looked like an editorial criticism of her: I can assure everyone that this was not the case. As I said, in my editorial last week, we are NOT undermining those that made the effort to stand. I do believe however that certain things needed to be said, and it's our role as an independent newspaper to make people aware of them.*

*A real highpoint of this election however is the good sportsmanship of some of the candidates, and you're no exception: I hope many more share your optimism.*

### Letter of the week

Come and collect your ten tickets to RISA!

Dear Redbrick,

When I was a kid, I always used to love reading Aesop's fables. One of them has always stuck in my mind: one day, a man is walking through the park. The sun and the wind spot the man, and the wind proposes a bet: he claims that only he can cause the man to remove his coat. The sun agrees to the bet, and watches as the wind tries to blow the man's cloak off him. Feeling the cold, the

man simply wraps himself up even tighter. Soon the wind, breathless, gives up and the sun steps forward. He smiles and shines, and the man, feeling this warmth and light, gladly takes off his coat.

I was at the proposed "Israel v Palestine" football match during multicultural week. I saw a lot of wind and force, and I felt a cold atmosphere. If only both sides could try and show the other some light and

warmth, then perhaps the cloak of misunderstanding and antagonism that engulfs both sides will begin to be shed. Only then can we even hope to create a brighter future in the Middle East. Let's talk, not walk.

**Anon, History III**

*An idealistic but poetically illustrated point: perhaps the war-mongering governments of the world should read up on their Aesop and save us all more bloodshed.*

### Biting the hand that feeds us

Dear Redbrick,

I was delighted, in a rather maudlin way, to read the headline which graced the front page of Redbrick last week. It could have been so easy for a Guild newspaper to absent-mindedly gloss over the short comings of the Guild elections. But no, Redbrick worthily stood it ground - as it should - to report what took place: hypocrisy and apathy.

It seems that this newspaper is one of the few true bastions of free ideas, speech and democracy because in one issue Redbrick managed to write several interesting and vital articles but failed to link them together for a greater unified argument (maybe it's me making a tenuous bond). But the articles on the elections, the 'Student Life: the Guide', and Editor's Comment all followed a theme. That student life is deteriorating. Yes, it is still true that students "carry on drinking!", get "shit faced" and "very, very drunk" (all quotes from the people we - no not we, only 2000 of us - voted into the Guild Exec) but the University is no longer the "hot bed of politics and agitation" it used to be to our elder brothers, sisters and parents. Sure we'll all get into our combats, get out our banners and slogans and march through London over war, but won't be bothered to take on politics when it is on our doorstep: the Guild elections!

To vote took me two minutes maximum and I voted for those I thought would do the job the best. But I did, as it happened, vote for Re Open Nominations in every category in which one person ran (someone still loves you R.O.N.). For otherwise this - our - Guild will

turn into a tyranny. In doing this I wasn't making comment on those who stood's policies or characters but merely that in the interest of fairness R.O.N should win. We all know students have opinions; sit in Joe's at lunch you can hear them, but how many act upon them? How many students mumble discontent about Guild prices, societies etc. compared to how many who voted? Well, I say if you didn't vote put up and shut up. If you couldn't be bothered to even attempt to influence how things are run, don't moan when things don't go your way. And for those who believe abstaining is making a point, you are right it is, that you are an apathetic moron, doing things for effect and not affect. Student apathy is becoming too commonplace and in these days of golf course management, we take what we have for granted. It is pointed out to us that the NUS seems to be turning out these days to be a springboard into Labour's benches (Stephen Twigg this means you), but aren't we trying to stop the Government making us pay fees? So why is it that those that represented us so short ago are now turning against us? Why have we done nothing to stop this Union becoming such a thing? We are given the opportunity to make changes at the bottom of this house of cards and do nothing. Don't say I didn't tell you things could change if you tried.

But then again, I suppose it is easier to bite the hand that feeds us, it is the closest.

Yours,  
**Ian D.G. Nicholson  
(English/Drama I)**

### Restricting the freedoms of the few to protect the many

Sir,

In your editorial (Issue 1228) you criticise the length of the Discussion on the word 'Uncomfortable' and suggest that it was wrong for this motion to be put before the motion on Israel - Palestine and policy thereon. While it is easy to make cheap comments about discussing the word uncomfortable, it was actually an important discussion to have. Whether the word uncomfortable was included or not actually has far reaching consequences in terms of how far Guild Council was seeking to restrict the freedoms of the few to protect the many, and it was thus entirely appropriate for this to be discussed at length.

The motion on Israel - Palestine Policy was deliberately left until the end precisely because it was so contentious. Had this motion been discussed earlier in the meeting, it is likely that many Guild councillors would have departed early, meaning that the other less controversial,

but no less legitimate, discussions would have taken place with fewer of the representatives of the student body present. I make no apology for the fact that we arranged the agenda to maximise the number of Guild Councillors considering all motions.

In your editorial you say that the discussion of an issue that is "current and relevant was sidelined for pedantic wordplay". Many people would agree with you, but equally there are many who would say that the Guild should be more concerned about its members feeling threatened within their own Guild than about geopolitical issues we cannot hope to solve. The committee of independent chairs doesn't seek to say that any issue is more relevant than any other, we merely act to try and ensure the widest possible of all motions.

Yours

**Pete Wass  
(Independent Chair of  
Guild Council)**

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Why have we gone yellow this week...?

# DISABILITY AWARENESS WEEK 2003