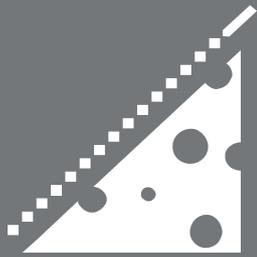


# The Cheese Grater

The Other Student Magazine of University College London Union



Investigative Special  
June 2008

## THIS MONTH

# Lifting the lid

### Dirty Tricks

Who's dicing with the law by blackmailing a sabbatical officer?

► p.2

### Kids in America

Why did three of your sabbs cross the Atlantic for cocktails?

► p.4

### "This Union... takes the piss"

Who is the 'evil ninja' and who is the piece of celery?

► p.4



### We couldn't have put it better ourselves

UNION COUNCIL  
MINUTES 20 MAY:

The Faculty Representative for Arts & Humanities asked whether the motion [see back page] would bring the Union into disrepute.

The Medical Students' & Sites Officer stated that this assumed that a good reputation existed at present...

Calling Holmes, Marple, Morse:  
We need some super-sleuths to  
solve the mysteries at UCL Union...

Reporting by Hannah Hudson and Kat Lay  
Illustrations by Scary Boots, Christina  
Ravinet and René Lavanchy



# Ping! You've got Blackmail!

## An anonymous emailer attempts to intimidate a sabb into voting their way



Fernando's consternation at the blackmail threat

How far would you go to get what you wanted at UCL Union? Kidnap a child? Drown a kitten? Blackmail someone? Before you laugh off the above as actions of a deluded nutter with too much time on their hands, consider that the third option is exactly the action which has been taken by someone at UCLU recently.

### Threatened

The recipient of the blackmail threat was Education and Welfare Officer Andy Fernando, who was told that dire consequences would follow "should you decide to pursue a referendum at Union Executive". Not only was he threatened with losing his Honorary Life Membership (HLM) nomination, but the writer also threatened to "publicize" Fernando's "breach" [sic] of policy at the recent NUS Conference, and to make things difficult for him at subsequent union meeting.

It seems that the email is from someone who really doesn't want a referendum – perhaps a totalitarian political group, or someone wanting to dismantle democracy at UCL union? Erm, not exactly.

Curiously, the email came from the address "SDUCL Source" – SDUCL being the group which was set up to "reassert meaningful democratic control over the Union's activities and governance".

So let's get this straight: someone claiming to represent 'Students for Democracy' at UCL is not only trying to influence the voting decision of a sabbatical officer (a trick similarly used in 'democratic' Zimbabwe) but also to dissuade him from pursuing a referendum – which would give students a forum in which to exercise their democratic right. Bizarre? Very.

### Cowards

SDUCL's website notes that a students' union is meant to politically represent its students, and that "to revive the students

movement... we need to allow every student to take an active role in the union's decision making process directly, and make it easy for them to do so."

Perhaps SDUCL feel that the most effective way for students to take this active role is by making cowardly threats from behind a computer-screen.



Who can be behind the blackmailing email?

## Colour me blue: Sean goes purple in the face over Social Colours snub



"Who loves you baby?"

Poor old Sean. He's been spotted on Facebook recently complaining that he's "the only sabb in about the last six years not to get nominated for union honorary life membership by his co-workers". An achievement in itself, Sean!

### Double-take

But before the tears start running down your legs, take heart – Sean didn't go without

completely; minutes from the Union Council meeting which made the HLM decisions reveal that Sean received eight votes for Social Colours, one for Centenary Colours, and four for HLM, while two voters declared he should get nothing. This voting would seem to indicate that Sean was up for a Social Colours Award – a worthwhile commendation, although admittedly pretty paltry in comparison to the HLMs awarded to all the other sabbs.

Yet at the recent Social Colours ball, Sean didn't make his way up to the stage for a handshake and pin-badge as a Social Colours awardee, but was instead awarded with Centenary Colours (the second highest accolade after an HLM). Forgive our double-take: how exactly did that happen?

The Services and Events Officer, Olivia Alford, explained why Sean ended up with Centenary Colours, despite the majority of votes being for Social Colours. Apparently, the voting calculation is not based on the

number of votes per category (er, why not?) but rather by looking at the cross-section of votes and working out the median. Alford declared that by calculating the result this way, the decision was taken to award Sean with Centenary Colours.

Yet the Committee seems to have forgotten to count the votes which declared that Sean should get nothing. If these are also taken into account, the median falls slightly lower – and into the category of plain old Social Colours. Shall we break it to Sean? Or do you think he already knows...

### No guilt

Not that the awards really matter anyway. The sabbs who were 'awarded' HLMs at the Social Colours Ball are still waiting to have it confirmed by union council. Members of the council (many of whom are also members of SDUCL) seem to be putting their collective feet down; as Alford says, "SDUCL doesn't like us" and seems to want to make things difficult for

the sabbs who they see as being in cohorts with the controversial figure Jim Hunkin. (see CG 17)

In Sean's case, it seems that the snub is a good excuse for the way he can conduct his last couple of months in office. As he also noted on a friend's Facebook wall, the decision not to award him an HLM means that: "I no longer feel guilty about leaving work early". Going above and beyond the call of duty, as always.



Sean has exhibited dignity, poise and grace during his time as a sabb at UCLU

# Disappearances in Gordon St.



Left: Jimmy's Got a Gun! Do you have confidence in this man?  
Above: Godwin makes yet another decree

## The Bermuda Triangle ain't got nothing on UCL Union HQ...

### The mystery of the disappearing motion of no confidence

Whatever happened to the motion of no confidence in Jim 'leader of the rightwing [sic] conspiracy' Hunkin, reported in the last issue of *The Cheese Grater*?

#### Vanishing Trick

As usual in Gordon Street, chaos reigns. Usually, the Finance & Administration Officer would handle motions of no confidence. But nobody was quite sure who should deal with a motion of no confidence in the F&A Officer himself. So... nobody really informed Hunkin he was facing the motion – the only reason he knew was that he had happened to be in the sabbatical suite when it was handed in. Oops.

It was agreed to hold the EGM needed to consider the motion after the Easter break, with the controversial Chair of governance committee, Samantha Godwin, given the task of organising and publicising it. And then? Well, then the motion pulled off its vanishing trick.

#### Withdrawn

The day that the EGM was supposed to take place, Godwin still hadn't publicised the meeting

(or replied to emails asking her to organise it). Hunkin turned up to governance committee to ask what was going on. Turns out that Jo Casserly, fervent proposer of the motion, had... er, decided to withdraw it, not wanting it to be considered in exam term. So why hadn't Hunkin been told? Indeed, why had *nobody* been told? A real mystery...

### Referenda Mindbender

The referendum on the controversial military ban as promised on the front page of the *London Student* before last looks like it's disappeared as well. Has the (thinly veiled) hand of SDUCL struck again?

Although the motion calling for a referendum was passed by Union Executive committee, Godwin pushed a ruling through Governance Committee saying it couldn't happen because it had violated standing orders.

To make a decision at Exec you need three sabbs and five non-sabbatical officers to be there. Governance Committee decided that Hunkin wasn't a sabbatical officer for this occasion (see 'How UCL Union works'), and – thanks to some beautiful mathematical

gymnastics – that even if he *had* counted as a sabb, there *still* wouldn't have been enough people at the meeting to make its decisions binding: Godwin, although in the room, was refusing to participate. Of course, this numbers-problem could have been quite easily solved if the other sabbs, Sean, Olivia and Jules, had actually turned up to the meeting they're paid to attend...

### Voices in the wilderness

The ruling also decided that the Exec couldn't call a referendum on an issue that

might end up reversing Union policy – which officers are supposed to uphold. It's a rather contrived point – given the outcry from the general student body over the ban, one might think officers were best serving their constituents by, erm, letting them have a voice?

To top it all off, you could question whether Governance Committee even *has* the power to overrule Exec like this, when within the Union's committee structure they're on the same level. Sadly, in UCLU politics, it's now the boring technicalities which count, even if they're what's crippling true democratic representation.

### How UCL Union Works

"The Chair stated that the Acting Finance & Administration Officer had been treated as a sabbatical officer and this was demonstrated by the general duties for sabbatical officers which had been undertaken."

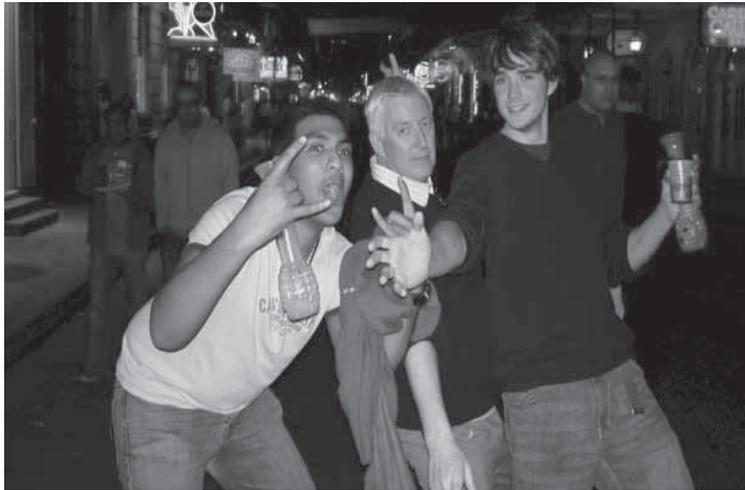
– Draft minutes for governance committee meeting when SDUCL members wanted to no-confidence Hunkin using the procedures for sabbatical officers, 19/03/08

"There was a dispute as to whether the non-Sabbatical Acting F&A officer should be counted as a sabbatical or a non-sabbatical. The Chair ruled that the non-Sabbatical Acting F&A did not contribute to the sabbatical officer quorum count."

– Ruling, accepted by governance committee and written by Sam Godwin rejecting calls for a referendum on military recruitment at UCL, 23/04/08

# Magical mystery tour?

In which three sabbatical officers fly across the Atlantic to, um, do, something...



Boys on tour: Andy Fernando, Steve Whittle, and their chaperone

## Kids in America!

Yet another mystery down your union: just why did sabbs Andy, Steve and Sean travel to

the USA in early March?

It feels like an age since Finance and Administration officer Dominic Tarn resigned, leaving

*The Cheese Grater* broken hearted. (See CG 14) But it seems the salary he left behind has brought a lot of joy to the three lucky lads, who trotted off to America – at UCL’s expense – to attend an international conference of student unions.

Why? Andy has openly admitted that he didn’t find the event that useful, because it concentrated on student services rather than his own areas of responsibility: education and welfare. The question of why he didn’t check the conference’s programme before jetting halfway around the globe – not quite in keeping with the Union’s environmentally friendly policies – has yet to be answered.

He has, though, proffered one suggestion from the confer-

ence: a shuttle bus between campus and Camden. Just like they have in the distant lands of, erm, Warwick, Southampton, Hertfordshire... and which are useful on campus sites, but would seem rather redundant alongside TFL.

## Cock-tales

But surely Sean and Steve have come up with a long list of proposals based on the best examples of unions worldwide? Um, no. Indeed, the nearest thing UCL Union’s members have seen to a report on the jolly, sorry, conference are the photos Sean was uploading onto Facebook while he was still out there. It looks like there was a lot of research into exotic drinks: perhaps Phineas will offer a NY-style cocktail selection next year?

## After months of wrangling and bureaucracy, UCL Union once again descends into farce. Below are extracts from a genuine motion submitted to UCLU council:

“THIS UNION NOTES: That... the General Secretary, Samantha “Krang” Godwin, and her footsoldiers, “Bebop” and “Rocksteady”, overturned the decision of the Executive Committee to call a referendum on student military groups and NUS affiliation.”

### “THIS UNION BELIEVES:

1. That Jeremy Bentham would want us to call a referendum to ensure the “the greatest happiness of the greatest number”.
2. That some members of the Union have engaged in witchcraft to prevent the Executive Committee from functioning properly.
3. That the General Secretary has the management skills of a piece of celery.
4. That point 3 in “This Union Believes” breaches the celery’s equal opportunities.
5. That people that stand on a “political platform” should be pushed off it from a great height.
6. That Jeremy Bentham would beat the Phineas soldier in a fight.
7. That the General Secretary lives in the “Technodrome” and is from “Dimension X”.
8. That if this really serious motion is still being discussed Union Council must still be quorate! A miracle! Whoop!

### THIS UNION RESOLVES:

1. To rename the General Secretary the “Evil Ninja” and rename the Finance and Administration Officer the “Good Ninja” for the remainder of this academic year.
2. That the “Good Ninja” shall win all battles against the “Evil Ninja”.
3. To ban the General Secretary from writing disjointed rants to members of the students’ union for the remainder of the academic year.
4. That Jim “Leonardo” Hunkin is to all intents and purposes a part-time Union Sabbatical Officer.
5. To ensure that no celery stick receives “less favourable treatment” than the General Secretary (Standing Orders, Section 1, III, B).
6. To viciously stab with Nunchakus the next person who calls quorum especially if we don’t like them.

UCL Union Cheese Grater Magazine Society

[www.cheesegratermagazine.org](http://www.cheesegratermagazine.org)

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Publication of the Year - UCL Union Arts Awards 2006, 2007, 2008

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