



7th Week Hilary Term, 2003.

OUSU Council, 7th Week Hilary Term 2003.

a. I. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising.

Minutes of OUSU Council, Week 5, Hilary Term 2003 are presented.

Lotte Tregear (ChCh): The reference should be to 'Thong Day' not 'Song Day'

Josefa Henry-Bochan (Wadham): I'm from Wadham not Magdalen.

Any other business advertised a female co-chair for Queer Rights.

Daniel Rees (Merton): The first question for Council delegate was me.

Ros Dampier (St. Hilda's): My question should not read "As VP of the Student Union will you try to represent the views of students? What are your views on the UV laws?" but instead "You would be a VP of the Student Union. What are your views on UV laws, etc.?"

g. Emergency Motions.

g.I. St. Hilda's Single Sex Campaign

Penny Berrill (St. Hilda's): We had to scramble together a referendum on this. We'd like as much support for this campaign as possible; even if you don't agree with our position, support the view of our JCR.

Short Factual Questions.

Daniel Rees (Merton): Students voted 'no'?

Penny Burrill (St. Hilda's): Nos were 57%, 43% voted 'yes'. Turnout was 311.

Hinesh Rajani (Merton): Is there any precedent for OUSU's press officer being used by JCRs?

Penny Burrill (St. Hilda's): I'm not sure. That's why I'm asking Council for its permission.

Will Straw (New): A Student Union should obviously use its resources to support students.

Daniel Rees (Merton): In resolves (2), we allow the use of the press officer by Hilda's. In terms of equality, should we not allow other JCRs to use also?

Penny Burrill (St. Hilda's): We can allow for other people's views, but this is the position of my JCR.

Tom Goodhead (Magdalen): Do you think you're being unfair in the greatest...

Paul Afshar (St. John's) (Chair): No, that's not a SFQ. I'm ruling that question out of order.

Point of Order: Move to debate.

Move to debate passes without opposition.

Melanie Marshall (ChCh): Whether this is long-term clever or not... that's not a matter for us now. Hilda's have taken that into account. All this motion is doing is asking us to back students who have taken a position on something.

Point of Order: Call for a move to a vote.

Ali Richardson (SEH): This is relatively uncontroversial. I'm just asking for the Student Union to make resources available for students with a mandate.

Torsten Henriksen Bell (Mansfield): No, this is interesting. Let's carry on

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Move to a vote:

For: 51

Move to a vote passes.

Penny Burrill (St. Hilda's): No matter what you think of our policy, please support fellow students.

Sean Sullivan (SEH): I reject the argument that just because a JCR votes in a certain way OUSU should support it. Also, Hilda's is divided on this issue.

Vote takes place.

Paul Afshar (St. John's) (Chair): Yes, that passes.

On a point of Order: Call for a recount.

Recounted votes:

For: 51

Against: 17

Abstentions: 5

Motion passes.

Passage of motions

m.1. A Suivre: Learning for a Second Chance

Ali Richardson (SEH): This has a heavy involvement from Teddy Hall students. The charity encourages students to teach Senegal's young adults who haven't had an education. People with ability but without opportunity. It allows them to earn formal qualifications.

Hinesh Rajani (Merton): What is meant by "OUSU's official support"?

Ali Richardson (SEH): We go "yey!". And give them the banner if they want it.

No opposition – motion passes nem con

m.2. Diversity Fund

Mel Marshall (Christ Church): Procedural motion that this motion not be put because changes in the University structures make the motion obsolete.

Procedural Motion Passes: Motion not put

[OUSU Council suspended at entrance of Sandi Toksvig]

Will Straw (New) takes the Chair.

Sandi Toksvig: Hello.

[Applause]

Sandi Toksvig: "Last time I spoke in Oxford I was playing the Virgin Mary a long time ago. The other day I went to the NUS lobby and the Times interviewed me. They said "Everything's against you. You're a Tab, and a young female". So I said "Then why interview me?" and the interviewer replied "because of those things." If no-one had stood up, then no-one would have mentioned top-up fees.

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[Applause]

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The job of Chancellor is to be an ambassador for one of the greatest universities in the world. I want to highlight the problems of Higher Education, but no-one's actually talking about them. Higher Education is in a mess, but the mess is being caused by the people who had a free education in the first place. There are other ways to pay for an education. It's about meritocracy. In the time Blair has been Prime Minister, applications from poorer applicants have halved. This is the beginning of an American system. I want this talked about – but there are of course other issues as well. There is a great 'Brain Drain' across the Atlantic that is particularly worrying – someone needs to talk about it. After hundreds of years of nice 70-year-old men I fancied a change. I may not win, but I want my children... I want to be able to tell them to choose their university not based on financial considerations. I'm coming with you tomorrow to march and I was delighted to have signed the statement. I have always fought for equality issues, and this is an important one."

Laura West (St. Cats): What is your opinion of compulsory sub-fusc for examinations?

ST: We had to wear gowns over in the Other Place. It's not something I was hugely in favour of. At school in New York you were lucky if people turned up in clothes. I also support St. Hilda's attempt to remain single sex.

Ali Richardson (SEH): What's your position on a progressive graduate tax?

ST: Progressive taxation, yes, but not a graduate tax. Not in favour of it at all. People should be able to choose their career based upon what you want to do, not economic reasons. Anyone that earns over £100,000 should be able to pay 50p in the pound. One way in which American universities have been successful is in their huge endowments. Oxford has a fantastic reputation, but it needs to show it's progressive to attract that sort of thing. A woman candidate would be a start.

Peter Morton (Somerville): What do you think about the war in Iraq?

ST: I present a radio program and I've asked many people their opinion. From Widdecome to Benn, I've asked why they think it's happening and what's going on. They all reply that Tony Blair is passionate about what he's doing, it's just that no-one knows where this belief has come from. Whatever we feel about Saddam Hussein – and clearly he is not a good man – I cannot condone on the basis of international law... I cannot be in favour of a war. The morale of the troops is going to be low, there are going to be significant humanitarian costs.

Sean Sullivan (SEH): The Liberal Democrats back your candidature. Do you regret the fact that they are making a party political point and have sold out on their manifesto?

Sandi Toksvig: It's naïve to think that political parties don't make political points. They haven't sold out in Scotland. I have no regrets about being backed by the only party not putting up one of their elderly peers.

Andy Garlick (ChCh): What is your opinion of colleges overruling university policy, and specifically admissions policy?

Sandi Toksvig: I have huge concerns about social engineering – what's happening in Bristol etc. I would like to consult with colleges, graduates. I do need to know more though.

Joe Taylor (St. Hugh's): Do you think a lack of political profile is a disadvantage for getting donations/lobbying etc?

Sandi Toksvig: I have met lots of different people in my job. I am not fearful about meeting anyone. If I see Frank Dobson I'll say "Dobbo! How the devil are you?!" I always approach everyone on equal ground. I have no political points to score, and no line to take. It's really not a problem – it's in my favour that I don't have those ties. I've met lots of people – it's important that whoever's in charge can listen.

Dominic Curran (St. Hugh's): What's your reaction to the push for 50% participation in higher education? What do you think its impact will be on funding?

Sandi Toksvig: Targets seem to be a government obsession. I think they're unhelpful. Increasing access is terrific, but we also should look at vocational training – two year courses nearer to home that teach plumbing, etc. This may make the 50% that don't go on to Higher Education feel like failures. All access is valuable, and this seems to be a negative target. We need to ensure that everyone has equal access to the courses that suit their abilities best.

Hinesh Rajani (Merton): What are your thoughts on the Access Regulator?

Sandi Toksvig: That depends on who it's going to be. I'm concerned about what's happening at Bristol. It's ducking the issue.

Penny Burrill (St. Hilda's): Would you support more student representatives on committees?

Sandi Toksvig: Absolutely. You're part of the university. When a College at Cambridge decided to let in female undergraduates, they decided to enact their decision only after five years to allow them to build up a white wine stock. The point being that the

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F: What's your opinion of UCAS putting economic background on their forms? Your opinion of how background should influence admissions?

Sandi Toksvig: There shouldn't just be exams. The interview is important in finding out specific circumstances. It's a matter of how these things are done. Postcode lotteries just seem bizarre.

Tom Hart (Univ): Is it social engineering or positive discrimination?

Sandi Toksvig: Public schools prepare their children well for interview. They have confidence, public speaking and preparation on their side. State schools should do the same. It shouldn't be necessary to discriminate at all if the interview system works. 10 A grades can be irrelevant, so positive discrimination has been happening for years in the form of interviews. State schools must teach public speaking.

Melanie Marshall (ChCh): Only a fifth of the fellows are women. How do we attract more?

Sandi Toksvig: Well, a woman Chancellor would be a nice start. Women are still being discriminated against in jobs. It is also important to consider discrimination against ethnic minorities. It's the same in every profession.

Stacey Smith (St. Hilda's) If elected Chancellor would your appearances on Call My Bluff suffer?

Sandi Toksvig: Unfortunately I'm not doing that any more. I've moved to news and current affairs which is thoroughly enjoyable.

Ali Richardson (SEH): What could be done about the negative press coverage of Oxford?

Sandi Toksvig: All other candidates standing for this position are perfectly eminent but they hardly represent a move forward. I would show the press an image of progression and I'm media friendly. I would also look carefully at public relations.

Unrecorded Person: What are your thoughts on the hierarchy of degrees and scrapping certain degrees?

Sandi Toksvig: I've always thought that education for its own sake is a wonderful thing, and very important. Training as a lawyer taught me how to look at arguments. There is no such thing as a useless degree. We shouldn't just think in monetary terms.

[Round of applause as Sandi Toksvig leaves]

[Council reconvenes]

g. Emergency Motions

g.2. Chancellor Candidate Endorsement

Proposed by Will Straw (New)

Debate ensues

Motion passed

n. Any Other Business

Dominic Curran (St. Hugh's): Requests a show of hands of scientists in the room.
17/75 are finalists.

[Minutes end]

1775 are finalists.

[Minutes end]

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