



# **termly reports**

**michaelmas 2002**

# OUSU Sabbatical Officers

**Will Straw**

**President**

Following a fairly relaxed summer familiarizing myself with the job and the committees I have responsibility for, this term has been a steep learning curve. Having taken a 'sabbatical' from student politics following my election, in order to focus on my degree, I had somewhat forgotten quite how many stakeholders there are in the student union. As a result I may, at times, have upset some people by being too open about my personal views. For the record I believe in a campaigning student union. I believe that it is most effective when it concentrates on issues that directly affect students such as top up fees. Nonetheless I will always carry out any mandates bestowed on me by Council. I also believe that the student union is fantastic at welfare and service provision. These are two things that it has learnt to do incredibly well over the years. It is for this reason that we are the largest student publisher in Europe, have an envied Student Advice Service and one of the most visited student websites in the UK (*the most visited on the oncampus network*). I also believe that OUSU should attempt to reach out to more and more students. This is done both through active campaigning, but is also the reason why I have been so keen to increase OUSU entz, increase the charity and community aspect of our work, and help us to move to more accessible and central offices.

When not distracted by internal wrangling of one kind or another, I have been able to concentrate on my responsibilities and manifesto commitments. I hope that at the end of the year I will be judged on my actions and not my words, no matter how unpopular those words may be to some within the student union. I feel it appropriate to update OUSU members on my progress so far.

## Job Description:

1. To liaise with OUSU's constituent and associate organisations, maintaining channels of communication between them and OUSU.

I have now visited nearly half of Oxford University's Common Rooms and been to several of them on more than one occasion. These meetings have proved very constructive for gauging the differing views of different colleges especially when I am held to account through question and answer sessions.

2. To enable and organise co-ordination between such organisations as requested by the organisations.

I have attended all but one OUSU Reps Meeting and every Presidents' Committee meeting. These forums are very useful for passing on information on OUSU's campaigns and services and also for hearing people's concerns about OUSU and its structures. Contrary to a current strand of thought, I do not consider JCR Presidents to be thuggish. They all live incredibly busy lives and cope with the pressures tremendously well. Presidents' Committee is an incredibly useful forum for JCR Presidents to bounce ideas off each other in a confidential environment. I feel it is unfortunate that those who have never attended make assertions, which they have no way of verifying.

This year I have also set up an entzlist which joins OUSU Reps list and prelist as email lists which enable Common Room entz reps / officers to liaise with one another. It has proved useful for drawing entz reps / officers' attention to special offers for OUSU members and has enabled them to communicate with each other.

3. To provide support, information and training for constituent/associate organisation Presidents and OUSU reps.

Much of this work is done through Presidents' Committee and OUSU Reps Committee. However, I hope to use the NUS' training events to a much greater extent. They are in a better position to provide training for JCR Presidents and OUSU Reps and seem delighted to take on the challenge. I hope to introduce this next term.

4. *To liaise with and represent OUSU and its members to committees of the University and other external groups, including those relevant groups working at a local authority level.*

I have now sat on University Council on four occasions. I have been vocal, to the Vice Chancellor's obvious discomfort, on both the University Police and on Top-Up Fees. I have also presented a series of papers to the Joint Committee of Council with Student Members (JCC) including the paper, which allowed us to make the relevant constitutional changes to provide for the Vice President (Charities and Community). I have also enjoyed repeated meetings with the Registrar, the Proctors and the Assessor.

I have represented OUSU's view in meetings with the local Area Committee. I have been in email contact with Cllrs Mary Clarkson, Tony Brett, Paul Sargent and Mike Woodin on a range of issues.

5. *To deal with all enquiries from the media, and OUSU's response to them.*

This has taken up a large amount of time, and quite rightly. In addition to speaking to the *Oxford Student* and *Cherwell* newspapers on a Tuesday and Wednesday evening (often interrupting an evening with friends), I have written articles for *The Sunday Times* and *The Mail on Sunday*. I have appeared on *Channel 4 News*, *The Nicky Campbell Show* on Radio 5 Live, and on *PM* on Radio 4. I have also appeared repeatedly on local television and radio. Nationally this has mainly been on the topic of top-up fees, but the abolition of the University Police also proved a popular topic.

6. *To co-ordinate campaigns relating to areas such as student finance (along with the relevant committees), and co-ordinate OUSU's general campaigns strategy.*

For those of us who believe in active campaigning for students as students, it is important that we make sure that such campaigns are effective and organized. Our main focus has, and quite rightly given the current climate, been student funding and fees (more of which in a moment). However, I have also lobbied hard to get as much money from the University as possible for the move to Thomas Hull House. The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is an increasing concern and I hope to address it more fully once the National Demo has passed. It is also important that we continue to push the University for greater attention to the equality of its students. This includes making the necessary structural changes under the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act (SEND), but also in the area of College Inequality, which undermines Oxford's claim that all students have an equal experience regardless of college – I look forward to the results of second report. Finally, it is essential that we work towards a more efficient and fairer system of applications. The reconvening of the Admissions Working Party is a very positive move, which alongside the Student Charter, monitoring of Stint Reform and campaign to amend library-opening hours makes you wonder how OUSU ever coped without a Vice President (Access & Academic Affairs).

7. *To liaise with relevant OUSU Committees, including Finance and Funding Campaigns Committee, NUS Committee and Oxford Student Scholarship Committee, and to liaise with graduate officers about graduate affairs.*

I believe that this term has seen a tremendous revival in the Finance and Funding Campaign. Meetings have been consistently highly attended by people from many colleges and (a)political persuasions. Gone are the days when half the meeting would stroll in five minutes late in matching trench coats and steely gazes. The ideas thrown up at the meetings have been innovative and effective. I have been pleased to be associated with them, but could at times have done with a little extra help in executing these initiatives, which include:

1. A petition against top-up fees and signed by over 2500 students (and counting)
2. A letter to every SCR member in the University containing a statement against top-up fees. We have received over 50 signed statements, which highlight Senior Member discontent with the direction of policy.

3. A mandate to ask the Vice Chancellor for a statement on Top Up Fees which he released in the form of an *Oxford Gazette*. It makes interesting reading and, crucially, does not rule out top up fees.
4. Drafting motions for Common Rooms
5. Drafting letters that students can send to their MPs.
6. Encouraging Common Rooms to pass Joint Statements against fees with their SCRs.
7. A campaign encouraging the alumni to pledge only to donate to student hardship funds until top-up fees are categorically ruled out. This will go on-line as soon as oncampus have sorted out the software.
8. Publicising the NUS National Demonstration that looks set to be the best attended ever by students from Oxford University.

NUS Committee traditionally remains quiet in Michaelmas Term but under the stewardship of Edd Southerden (Exec member) a report has been produced which we hope will pave the way for a reduction in subscription rates for common rooms in exchange for a reduction in unnecessary resources, which are aimed at Student Unions rather than JCRs.

The Oxford Student Scholarship Committee is meeting this week to wade through over 150 applications from students from developing countries. We will produce a shortlist for colleges to consider.

Environment Committee is incredibly self-sufficient but I hope to maintain momentum throughout the year as the co-chairs change. I am determined to ensure that the City Council provides recycling facilities for all colleges as promised and that OUSU begins to recycle its waste.

I have left much of the Graduate work to the Vice President (Graduates) who is doing a tremendous job. I hope to take a more active interest in this area of my job next term.

*8. To organise OUSU Council meetings and other general meetings, and ensure publicity for them.*

This has perhaps not been as well managed as I would have liked, but Council has been consistently well attended. Hats off to Conor O'Neill (Chair of Council) who has been a rock and is, I feel, respected by everyone.

*9. To liaise with the NUS and with individual student unions across the country (including Oxford Brookes University S.U. and CUSU).*

I have been heavily involved in the Aldwych Group, which represents Student Unions of Russell Group Universities. I was instrumental in drafting a report against top-up fees, which was presented to Margaret Hodge MP (Minister for Lifelong Learning and Higher Education). I have attended an NUS Regional Conference and the NUS National Lobby in Parliament.

I have also worked closely with CUSU President, Paul Lewis, who has similar ideas on the importance of the campaign against top-up fees and its direction. The sabbaticals visit to Cambridge proved tremendously useful for swapping ideas and comparing best practice.

*10. To liaise with the International Office in the organisation of the Oxford Student Scholarship Scheme.*

This has been ongoing as mentioned above.

*11. To deal with constitutional business, including making presidential rules of interpretation when required.*

I have not had to make a presidential rule of interpretation but have updated the Constitution, Standing Orders and Policy Book as well as ensuring that relevant positions on University Committees are filled by OUSU members.

#### Additional points and manifesto achievements:

In addition I have pushed on with the incorporation of the Raise and Give (RAG) sabbatical into OUSU's constitution. We are also now tackling popular and, with luck, money spinning events. I spent two days on my feet at Freshers' Fair introducing OUSU to as many freshers as

possible. I have also taken some of the burden of the Vice President (Finance) in terms of maintaining the OUSU website. I sit on the Board of Oxford Student Services Ltd and am determined to ensure that the OUSU Shop continues to provide value for money for students. I have also worked on Election's Committee, which proved good fun if slightly grueling on Election Day itself. Finally, I am pleased to announce that the web-based housing bank should be up and running by the end of the academic year.

**Sean Sullivan**

**V-P (Finance)**

This has been a very busy term and quite a learning curve. I've enjoyed the wide range of challenges that this position has thrown at me and I am proud of the job I have done and the work that the Student Union is doing for the benefit of our members. My sabbatical colleagues are doing superb jobs, seldom as appreciated as they should be, and as a sab team we have simply grown stronger over this term.

Publications – the Freshers' Guide was delivered in good time to all Freshers' home addresses (unless they lived abroad in which case we sent them to their pigeon holes) and in talking to Freshers I have had nothing but a positive and favourable response to this publication.

The Careers Handbook has been distributed to all final and penultimate year graduates and undergraduates.

The LGB Handbook has been sent out and looks quite glorious.

The Survival Guide has been printed and awaits distribution. This will hopefully be complete by the end of this term.

The Oxford Handbook was distributed at Freshers' Fair and again we have had nothing but a positive response from Freshers.

We distributed a very smart looking term planner.

The Graduate Guide is currently with the printers.

The SWD Handbook, Directory, Careers for Queers and Ethnic Minorities Handbook are all in a printing schedule and yet to be sent to our printers.

We are planning for production of the Living Out Guide at the end of this term and for a new term planner and an Alternative Prospectus during next term.

Finances – OUSU's financial year ended before term began, but due to the time official accounts seem to take we have no formal record of what our exact financial position is. However I hope the following summary is fair. Last year's budget and amended budget are not accurate records of our financial position. One budget heading was set to make a £1,000 profit and can now be shown to have made a £17,000 loss. Despite our exact financial picture being unclear, these indications suggest that last year we will have made a significant loss. This leaves us in a difficult situation. The Amended Budget of 2001/2002 not having been adhered to means that the figures which our current 2002/2003 budget are founded on are unreliable. Having discussed this matter with the General Manager, our Accounts Staff, the sabs and the exec I shall be endeavouring to present an early amended budget in 1<sup>st</sup> week of next term.

Advertising is down this year. I leave any detailed explanation of this to the Business Manager's report. It should be noted however that she has worked hard to fight this trend and it is to her credit that we don't seem to be as badly affected as some other organisations. That said this is a significant source of revenue that has been restricted. I am encouraged by our efforts to find other sources of money such as grants from the university or other bodies for specific projects in OUSU, but we have to be aware that we cannot suffer this sort of loss in revenue and expect to carry on as we always have done. In reviewing the budget we will have to be serious and sensible about what we have the resources to do and what needs to be prioritised.

Our commitment to moving to Thomas Hull House (THH) involves around £60,000 from our reserves. This is roughly half of our total reserves and although, obviously, the move to THH is

worth this amount considering the corresponding money the university are offering and the advantages we gain in position, disabled access and more space, we have to note we are left in a more fragile position financial with half of our normal reserves at our disposal.

THH – I have done quite a bit of work this term meeting members of the Surveyor's office with Will and discussing the practicalities of the move. I have met with the university's outside contractors and negotiated with them as to what we can move across from Little Clarendon Street to make use of in THH. Over the vacation and at the beginning of next term I will be giving serious consideration to how to move our server and computers over as well.

Election – as with any sab's Michaelmas our Statutory Annual Elections took up a great deal of my time. I acted as a member of Elections Committee. I organised the printing of the ballot papers, dealt with the publishing of the Joint Manifesto Booklet (JMB), assisted the RO in candidates' meetings and at the count, and prepared, delivered and returned to the Town Hall the 28 and a few more ballot boxes that we made use of on the day. I would congratulate the RO for his professionalism in his running of the election and also the College Returning Officers who were to a man and woman absolutely superb.

I should make just a few points which are worth mentioning now, but which I will of course raise when we come to review our election regulations. First, it is illogical to not allow cross-slating beyond 10 shared activists and then not require activists to be registered. Second, producing the JMB costs OUSU a small fortune. No longer requiring candidates to pay a small amount for their entry upon submitting it will make the cost almost unbearable for us and this provision should be changes as a matter of urgency. Finally, Tribunal should not meet in the room next door to the count.

As a general point elections committee is made up mostly of sabs. We are impartial in that role. People get very excited during elections and need to see others as with them or against them and I'm sure it is difficult for them not having the present trustees of the Student Union on one side or the other. However that just has to be dealt with and obsessing about the impartiality or not of members of elections committee is of no help to anyone in what is a stressful time anyway.

Oxford Student Services Ltd – as I have reported previously the Shop Manager John Potter resigned towards the beginning of this term. We also lost a part-time member of the shop staff. This inevitably and unfortunately led to us having to close an hour early in the afternoon. The trustees have now allowed for the appointment of a temporary manager until we officially advertise for the position during January. This position was taken up on Monday of 7<sup>th</sup> week and the new manager is working hard on a new catalogue for college shops and common room officers.

The turnover of the shop is down on previous years and student numbers attending it are falling. However it is the view of the trustees that we should guard this service and seek to improve it rather than wind it down. The buying consortium for college shops continues and should be taken advantage of by all constituent bodies for its value for money.

Oxford Student – I have had many a late Tuesday night/ Wednesday morning acting as publisher of the Oxford Student. I have been mightily impressed by the high standards of the OxStu staff and in particular their editor whose professionalism has made my job as publisher so much easier and more enjoyable. On a separate point I have every confidence that Digo will be one of the best VPFs OUSU has ever had and we should be glad that he won his monumental battle against RON.

The paper is of a higher quality as to content and production than our major rival and although advertising here is down too with a review of printing costs this should still be a profitable year for the OxStu.

Ultra Vires – contrary to what some people may think I do not relish the prospect of having to deal with UV issues. However a good deal of my term, including a large number of hours in exec meetings, has been dedicated to this matter.

I have come under considerable attack both personally and professionally as to this particular aspect of my job and it is worth me clarify some points here. First, as a sab of this Student Union I am bound by its policy and I act according to policy. Therefore if asked what our policy is on UV I respond that the Student Union opposes those laws and wants them repealed. Moreover, along with the President, I have written letters to Evan Harris MP, Andrew Smith MP and the Secretary of State for Education expressing those same sentiments. Second, when OUSU adheres to the law, policy cannot bind our actions. That means that if we as an organisation have to ensure we remain intra vires in what we do then we must do that despite opposing the law that we are having to adhere to. Third, as VPF I am the sab responsible for ensuring we adhere to UV law. By doing this I am not contravening policy, in fact I am obeying our constitution and standing orders which require this of me. Fourth, in making my decisions on UV I have either sought legal advice or applied legal advice OUSU has received in the past. Fifth, allegations that I act on personal bias in these matters are therefore hurtful and untrue. Sixth, it is not for executive officers to mandate me as to the actions I should take on UV. Only council can do that and an exec that attempts to do so would be acting undemocratically. So in all I want to make clear that I have better things to do than deal with UV points. If I have to deal with them then I follow OUSU procedure, I look at legal advice we have received and I make a decision on what I think the law does and does not let us do. I hope that certain people can appreciate that now a little bit more than they have in the past.

Computers – due to sheer workload this term I have felt unable to keep up with the improvements and repairs that are required concerning our computing facilities. I intend to turn my attention to this over the vac.

Subscriptions – we have had a very good response from common rooms in re-affiliating and paying their subscriptions. I have also dealt with membership matters with the Oxford Institute of Legal Practice, Kellogg and Continuing Education.

Website – I continue to add clubs and societies and encourage others to take pages on our website. It just seems to be growing and growing. I have also discussed with OnCampusUK a plan to be able to offer all common rooms their own specially designed websites that would be provided free by the company and which then CR officers could add and edit content on as they wished.

General – I have moved many a box, delivered many a publication and, I think found a number of muscles that I didn't know I had. I have been authorising expenditure and assisting outside publications learn Quark. I've driven the NightBus for various reasons and the van for numerous reasons. I have spoken on OUSU's behalf in Teddy Hall, Somerville and St. John's and have attended exec meetings and councils.

Maria, Sue and Barbara have given me huge amounts of support in doing my job – thank you. To the outgoing exec and Duncan, thank you for all your work and good luck with whatever you are going on to do. In particular I'd like to mention the two exec members I've worked the closest with during my involvement in the Student Union, from the days I was an exec officer and they were co-chairs: Phil and Rachel, whose dedication to OUSU is unquestioned and whose lesser presence here will be our loss.

**Andrew Copson**

**V-P (Welfare)**

Okay, before the review of the term just gone, here's some of what I've been up to since last Council:

I attended the **Committee for Student Health and Welfare** where we reviewed the Counselling Service and the peer support training scheme – a number of colleges have been unhappy about the way it is currently run but the University seems to be taking this on board and is reviewing the system with a view to reporting next term. I pressed for a reconsideration of the University's position on college bar prices and succeeded so that the policy of pressing colleges to be no cheaper than 20% compared with the closest public bars should hopefully soon be reconsidered. The **Stonewall focus group** on employment rights for LGBT graduates was a success (thanks to Melanie for filling my gap there) and I met again with the editor of the LIP to discuss the launch of his magazine in Diversity Week. The co-chairs of **Queer Rights** ran (very well) the OUSU end of sexual health week with very attractive flyers and I met with various welfare officers to discuss, amongst other things, living out which I am speaking on in a number of common rooms in the coming week. The OUSU Living Out Guide will be produced for the beginning of Hilary. The Vice President (Access and Academic Affairs) and I began working to collate best practice in freshers' weeks from a welfare and study skills perspective with a view to disseminating this in Trinity when next year's are planned. I attended meetings of the **College Inequality Committee**, for which I have been gathering data on number of students living out in various colleges and the Oxford Pride committee – an event for which the OUSU side of things will begin to be planned in Queer Rights next week. **Disabilities Action** met to discuss the poster campaign and Diversity Week events for next term. Elections week was a busy time (obviously) with tribunal and other work on the day but I would like to thank all the candidates for their conduct during that period – if all the students of the university could be aware of how you all handled yourselves at such a difficult time, they would be prouder of our union than they sometimes are.

The main purpose of these reports, however, is to review the term and it *has* been quite a term. I came into this job in the summer with a pile of publications to complete – some of them were completed more easily than others and I'd like to thank Digo, Kat and James Kettle for helping to make the work run more smoothly. Settling into a new job is hard and it didn't help that our computers kept exploding and our email kept disappearing but I'm happy with the way that our sabbatical team has begun to work together in a cohesive manner.

Anti-racism dominated a lot of my thinking time over the term – it was a committee that didn't really exist when I took office and it slid even more into nothing throughout the term – it was unable to decide its own direction and there was no consistency of attendance or core membership. The new co-chairs, which we found a week ago, however, seem likely to rejuvenate the group and Diversity week will hopefully act as a springboard for that.

Queer Rights is still strong and proceeding well but we need to involve common room LGB reps a lot more – this is definitely a big project for next term and I'm pleased that the co-chairs are showing the initiative here.

Disabilities Action exists and functions but could be conducted on a larger scale – like AR it must clarify its role.

I sit on 8 different University committees and have enjoyed them all to varying degrees. I have found the large majority of University officials constructive and cooperative and would especially wish to thank the Proctors and Assessor for all their help – it is by working with and through them that we are ensuring change in the University.

I have met many common room welfare officers over the term but intend to make an effort to meet even more next term. It's clear to me that communication between them and OUSU is often difficult and that if we want to ensure that our publicity gets through to them and their input reaches us, we must try to meet more often and ensure that the avenues of communication are always open.

Thanks to Annily for student advice, Andrew for Sex, Drugs and Student Safety, to Phil and Sarah for extreme competence and enthusiasm, to Jack and Zakir for stepping in to revive Anti-

Racism at (the very ) last minute, to Penny and Nancy for a real campaigning spirit and to Nicky and Rosie for all their work and support. Thanks, finally, to all of the OUSU executive, both sabbatical full-timers and the part-timers who have worked so hard this term.

**Melanie Marshall**

**V-P (Women)**

The elections dominated 6<sup>th</sup> week quite comprehensively, which meant that the time since my last report has been filled with a great deal more Vice-Presidential work than Women work. May I congratulate all the candidates on a highly successful and closely fought election for all positions. I was tremendously heartened by the energy of the campaigns and the strong mandate derived from opposed elections, not to mention the excellent turn-out for the executive and delegate elections (the highest in my time here). I wish all the successful candidates the very best for their time in office, and hope that the unsuccessful candidates will feel that they still have much to gain from, and contribute to, OUSU. Particular thanks to everyone who watched us count votes: it's important to the democratic process that the counting should be carefully observed, and staying awake until 9am isn't easy, especially when you're hallucinating about bits of pink and blue paper.

The elections are a tremendous drain on sab time and energy, not to mention that of everyone else involved, and I hope that others and I fulfilled students' expectations of how the elections should be conducted. Please let us know what could be done differently or better next year. That said I am of that curious genus that enjoys elections and have rather thrived on the 6<sup>th</sup> week MT diet of sleep deprivation, empty calories and stress.

#### Ethics

The report on Esso/ExxonMobil is now complete. I hope Council will find it useful in their deliberations on the proposed ban. I cannot commend Chris Hanretty and Katriona Higgins highly enough for their dedication to this project; indeed, working with Chris has been a highlight of the term.

The GATS issue has been moved forward at an extremely useful meeting with campaigners from People and Planet. The President and Ethics Committee are now in a position to use their extensive resources on this matter, which could be invaluable to future campaigns.

In all I am happy with the progress of ethics committee. Attendance is not among the world-beating figures for OUSU committees but our internal ethical procedures are likely to be and remain a reasonably minority interest. There has been interest expressed in the vacant co-chair position, so all looks satisfactory for next term.

#### Nightbus

Injured again, yet more sabbatical time will be required to have her mended and yet more money poured into doing so. I see little other option, however, given that the service continues as popular as ever, and hope this justifies the inordinate amount of energy I devote to it. It has been without a doubt the single biggest drain on my time this term, and I do not anticipate any downturn in this level of activity. I think this will have to be borne heavily in mind when considering my projections for extending the scheme.

May I remind Council that she is available for hire to clubs, societies, CRs and anyone else wanting her for "university business" (loosely interpreted). This is a valuable source of funding for the Nightbus, so please consider using it if you can. There has been some lucrative private hire this term: thanks to Vinca for driving when required.

#### Promoting Choice

The Unplanned Pregnancy: Your Options booklet has now been distributed to women's officers and other CR officials who asked for them. Please email [women@ousu.org](mailto:women@ousu.org) if you want some,

and remember that it can be found on [www.ousu.org/main/advice/pregnancy](http://www.ousu.org/main/advice/pregnancy). Some applications have already been received for co-chairs, and close on Friday of 7<sup>th</sup> week (for interview at 8<sup>th</sup> week exec). Please do get in touch if you'd like to help with this committee: some startling statistics have reached me about women's ignorance of their rights in law on this matter, which I hope the newly formed committee will be able to tackle next term. I know that this committee (or at least its business) has often been controversial and I perfectly understand my predecessor's reasons for giving it a low profile. However, I feel I would not be doing my duty in either a welfare or a campaigning capacity if I didn't give some prominence to what is a common and (obviously) intensely gendered problem within the Oxford student body.

### Women's Campaign

The co-chairs will elaborate in more detail, for it is their remit. Briefly, however, the term has been dominated by the issue of women's representation in OUSU, rather to the detriment of the campaign on health we had wished to conduct. Nevertheless, there has been much to celebrate. The pornography event last week was excellent, though rather consensual: a dissenting voice would have been nice. Women's Campaign has always been a welcoming forum of mixed views; I hope it will continue to be so. The event to mark International Day Against Violence Against Women was really eye-opening – anyone who would like any more information about domestic and sexual assault should feel free to contact me. Liz Chare will be a sore loss as executive officer, and I wish her the very best for her studies whatever she may be undertaking on leaving the exec.

More generally, women's campaign and the women who run and attend it have been among the most enjoyable aspects of my job this term, and I thank them for their energy and their support. I continue to have every confidence that next and subsequent terms will be fantastic, not least because of the initiative of the co-chairs in looking into ways to up attendance etc.

It has been, I need hardly point out, a stressful term. The issue of female representation and the way in which it was handled put an enormous strain on me professionally and personally, and I am only too glad to have it taken out of my hands. Nevertheless, I am as surprised as I am delighted to be able to end the term with increased confidence in my fellow sabs and others with whom I have worked in OUSU, and in my prospects for a worthwhile and productive year ahead.

May I take this opportunity to thank the rest of the exec of their work over the last term. I have felt very encouraged not only by their dedication to their portfolios but also by their willingness to challenge and question all levels of OUSU's administration. I know that I, as an executive officer in 2000-01, was far less able and robust in this aspect of my duties than they have been and I really feel that OUSU is the stronger for it. I hope I have always been receptive to suggestions and criticisms, and that the new executive officers will continue the good work of bringing as many perspectives as possible to the running of their Students Union.

<b>Andy Garlick</b>	<b>V-P (Graduates)</b>
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Now being a quarter of the way into my sabbatical I thought I would take this opportunity to review my successes and failures so far. Arriving in September with no experience of OUSU structures, no handover period and two months later than the rest of the sabbatical team was guaranteed to make the start of my term of office difficult. However, I should point out that not being an "insider" can have advantages in being able to look at things with fresh eyes, the disadvantages being getting used to how the committee structures function etc. With respect to handover, it is imperative that this happens at the end of my term of office, as this is the only way the new VP can take over with maximum efficiency. The question of handover time was debated in Council last year, and although unfortunate as it reduces sabbatical bonding, I think in fairness to all those on one-year courses, the time of handover must remain in September.

The role of VP (Graduates) is quite different from that of the other sabs, predominantly as I have contact with a very different group of students with distinct needs. The VP (Graduates) has representation on more committees than any other sabbatical officer and a lot of my time is spent preparing for and attending meetings. Whilst having representation on all these committees is desirable, it is often difficult to gauge graduate opinions. Whilst e-mails for information are a means of making contact, it is often difficult to get cross campus responses to questions. The solution to this problem is unclear. MCR attendance at Council is relatively low compared to JCRs and Postgraduate Assembly has been either inquorate or at a minimum quorum this term. Furthermore it has not been possible to find student representatives for all University Committees. Whilst certain MCR presidents have made overwhelming efforts to find volunteers in their colleges, I find myself looking for new ways to seek the opinions of and gain active involvement of graduates in OUSU. Given the level of representation and voice we have in the University it seems imperative that we use it. Over the next term I must focus my attentions on developing greater communication networks with graduates to be able to be confident that I am a representative voice to the University. I have successfully gained representation on the Graduate Panel of the Education Policy and Standards Committee, which will be discussing major changes to graduate life at Oxford, with a review of graduate admissions and the university-college relationship being high on the agenda. To be able to make a difference I have to be in the position where I know what graduates think. Over the Christmas vacation I now have to come up with ways to develop greater links with MCRs and any suggestions over and above the conventional methods would be greatly appreciated.

My portfolio committees are international students and mature students. The international students committee (ISC) has been led by two very competent co-chairs and has found new direction and motivation this term. My own involvement has dwindled over the past few weeks due to constant clashes with other meetings, such as Tutor for Graduates Standing Committee and meetings of the Elections Committee. However, I remain confident that this committee is both functional and active and look forward to becoming more involved again next term. The mature students committee has been inactive for the past five years and is proving difficult to resurrect. One problem is a matter of contacts as I have mentioned in previous reports. I am still waiting for the definitive list of mature students from the University Records Office. This will at least show where mature students are. One of the greatest problems appears to be isolation, but without information from the University this is difficult to resolve. I have edited and prepared a survey for mature students, and have requested input from mature students from within HMC, the obvious first port of call on mature student issues. Hopefully by the end of the Christmas vacation I shall have the information necessary to launch this survey, and then work can begin on assessing the priority needs for mature students. To this end however, it will be necessary to find co-chairs for the mature students committee and I hope that volunteers will come forward. I have of late had some enquiries about the positions and will hopefully be able to find co-chairs in the near future.

The graduate student-supervisor survey has been prepared for some time but is now lodged in the University Offices. It is important that this survey is seen as "fair" and is in a form that can be used for the institutional audit in 2004, to which OUSU has to make a submission. It is for this reason I am not sending the survey out until I am convinced it has been approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) so that the work does not have to be repeated by a very similar and yet "fairer" survey. The next step following this survey will be to move on to the role of the college adviser, which seems to be very varied and poorly defined. The Tutors for Graduates Committee is also planning to look at this position and so I feel an independent student assessment is essential. Therefore this will be a project for Hilary term.

I have been involved in various pieces of casework through the Student Advice Service this term and have also trained as a University harassment adviser. I think this reflects OUSU at its very best. Although I cannot comment on individual cases, it immediately becomes apparent that there are students in the University who encounter difficulties which they cannot resolve alone,

whether it be through lack of knowledge of procedures available or through the simple need to feel that someone is prepared to listen. The Student Advice Service can give support and hope to students whose lives at University are hampered and unpleasant. The use of my sabbatical time advising and supporting students in these positions is, I believe, one of the best uses of my time.

In my attendance of Sabbatical, Executive and Council meetings it has become clear this term that there is a wide and diverse political spectrum within OUSU, and although having been personally determined to run from a politically independent perspective, politics inevitably becomes an issue. The lengthening of OUSU council this term is in itself an area of huge concern to me. As I work towards encouraging more graduates to attend Council, I fear that the overwhelming increase in procedural motions, and continual debates on issues such as UV can only be detrimental. If I had been attending Council for my first time in the last few weeks, I have no doubt it would have been my last also. I cannot offer easy solutions. OUSU has a great potential to do good and be of support and benefit to its members. The politics of individuals are of course deeply personal and must be respected, but at the same time it seems essential that we must also be thinking as a collective body to ensure that we, as a student union, are constantly working to improve the lives of students within the University, whether that be through welfare, social or academic developments.

In conclusion, the first three months have been informative and instructive but have also shown that there is much more work to be done. For the next term, I have clear objectives, and some of the groundwork is in place to start to achieve them. Other problems still remain and over the vacation I must develop ideas on how to tackle them. I look forward to working with the new executive and to the appointment of new graduate executive officers. I see 2003 as a challenging year for OUSU but remain hopeful that it can move on in a constructive and positive direction to provide the best possible support for its members.

**Sonia Sodha**

**V-P (AcAff)**

Much of my time over the last two weeks has been concerned with running elections – attending/chairing the last of the hustings, preparing ballot boxes and papers for election day, ensuring the election ran smoothly on the day and last, but not least, counting votes.

Academic affairs committee has met for the last time this term, for what was a very productive and useful meeting. Amongst things we discussed were possible ways in which AcAff Committee can support AcAff officers further. Some of the things we will be doing next term will include designing an academic questionnaire for JCRs to distribute themselves.

I helped to run a focus group for the university and HEFCE on a National Student Satisfaction Survey on Monday of 7<sup>th</sup> week, which was very interesting – many thanks to those who gave up their time to take part.

I had a meeting with Paul Ashwin at the Institute for the Advancement of University Learning about the new Student Experience Questionnaire which is being piloted in 17 colleges this Hilary, and the whole university the year after. This questionnaire will assess student perceptions of their academic and learning context. I have asked the IAUL to put a question about perceptions of tutorial/class teaching on the questionnaire, and this should help to get a better idea of what the student experience of class teaching is.

I have held a meeting with Andy Garlick for undergrad/grad divisional board reps to help them in their role and give them the names of the relevant JCC chairs (now that we finally have most of them!). I want to ensure that divisional/faculty academic representation is given a big push next term onwards. I will be holding an open forum for JCC reps and div board reps early next term

so we can find out how OUSU can better support JCCs, and things on the agenda will include stint reform, the student charter and minimum teaching provisions for each faculty.

A considerable amount of time has been spent preparing the HEFCE Widening Participation bids for Target Schools. The extra money I have bid for should hopefully help Target Schools to carry out an additional number of projects over the next year. I have also spent time researching and booking the conference venues for the Target Schools regional conferences next Easter; this year we will be expanding even further, having three instead of two: one in Birmingham on Thursday of 9<sup>th</sup> week, one in Belfast on Monday of 11<sup>th</sup>, and one in Colerain on Tuesday of 11<sup>th</sup>.

I will have held an open forum on Thursday of 7<sup>th</sup> for those JCR officers who run/are responsible for liaison in the interview period in colleges, which will hopefully have been useful in encouraging the dissemination of best practice.

I have had meetings with John Fox, the member of the university Department of Education who coordinates the NMPP Mentoring project, to discuss recruitment next year. I also attended a really good reception organised by John for this year's mentors.

I attended the Admissions Working Party, which was a productive and encouraging meeting in which we finalised a draft Code of Practice for Admissions.

In terms of a termly overview, I feel pleased with what I've achieved in my portfolio areas. In terms of academic affairs, I've concentrated on the Student Charter and stint reform. Starting the Writing Workshops was a positive step for study skills in the university, and it's something I hope to be able to push the university to provide. My main focus for next term will be strengthening representation at the faculty/divisional level, which I am in a much better position to do next term, and working on library opening hours of the Bod – hopefully the motion to Council today is a step in the right direction.

I'm also happy with the way Target Schools has developed this term. I think we've been able to take a step back and think about how things are done, and I'm grateful to people who've attended the committee and questioned how we do things. I'm very positive about how this year will develop with extra money that I've bid for from HEFCE. I'm also really looking forward to holding the Admissions Working Party next term and getting some up to date policy on controversial admissions issues – I think it's going to be very interesting.

One of the best bits of the job, I've found (maybe perversely) is sitting on university committees. I really enjoy being able to represent student views on academic affairs and admissions to senior people in the university. What can be frustrating in this job is the sometimes limited amount of time you have to spend on your portfolio areas. This is why the progress I've made hasn't been as fast as it could have been. However, the vice presidential duties such as helping to run elections are incredibly important, and I would never sacrifice them.

Thank you to everyone who ran in the elections – and congratulations to the new exec officers and the new team of sabs-elect. I look forward to working with the new exec next term.

I'd like to thank everyone who I've worked with this term. Huge thanks must go to Eleanor Thompson, who is a star and has chaired AcAff Committee alone this term. Thanks also to Phil, the Exec officer with responsibility for AcAff. I would also like to express my thanks to the Target Schools co-chairs and Exec officer, who have been absolutely brilliant this term, so thanks Alison, Sian, Linsey, Chris C and Chris H. I'd also like to thank everyone who takes part

in the mentoring scheme – I think it’s fantastic that so many people give up their time for such a worthy scheme. Thank you to the OUSU Exec for their hard work. Huge thanks to Maria who is great, and the rest of the office staff in OUSU. And last but not least thanks to my fellow sabbaticals – I don’t agree with all of you all the time but you’ve been a great set of people to work with.

**Katherine Wheatley**  
**Manager**

**Business**

As was to be expected, the bulk of my time has been spent in the weekly cycle of the Oxford Student; canvassing on a Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and then setting on the Monday and Tuesday. This is not ideal, and has left little time to maintain other areas of the Business Manager’s job (invoicing, canvassing for other publications etc.) and whilst these have been overcome, I would recommend the deadline for other summer publications be set earlier over the vac, leaving time for the bulk of the graduate recruitment advertising to be done before term. This is still a market that continues to fund OUSU in great measure, and whilst there has been a decline (continuing from last year), we should not believe that we are not still heavily dependent on it.

The difference between the two student papers continues fairly unabated, with the Cherwell opting for ‘careers specials’, with the OxStu working towards promoting recruitment events. These different options have resulted in a different appearance to the papers and, subjective as my opinion may be, I feel the Oxford Student will continue to retain many of its high level clients because of this approach. Because of some heavy advertising weeks, the paper’s size has had to be enlarged, with our ‘bumper’ 36 page special being the highlight.

Other projects have as I mentioned fallen sadly by the wayside, but are certainly not forgotten; the Living Out Guide, Diversity Week, and the Alternative Prospectus (watch this space) are all due for completion in the coming weeks and months, and canvassing on my part, the sabbaticals concerned’s part and the university’s part will continue up until they are finished.

Also, having served my time on elections committee, I must say thank you to all candidates, especially those who made my job as the individual responsible for the technical aspects of setting the JMB much easier. You know who you are. It was a beautiful evening one Tuesday night/Wednesday morning when that Booklet was set, and after much blood sweat and tears, it was finally achieved. The VP (Finance) also must take a huge amount of credit for his patience regarding this and other Oxford Student nights, when for some reason something always had to break.

## **OUSU Executive Officers**

**Rosie Buckland**

Queer Rights campaign

Queer Rights has been a fantastic committee and considering it had, at times, an attendance of myself and the VP(welfare) when I first joined exec, I am really proud of it. This is largely down to the co-chairs, current and former; Vinca, Patrick, Phil and Sarah. The campaign has achieved some great stuff during my time as exec and I feel confident that it will continue to do so under Sarah and Phil. This term we’ve held Pink Politics, in conjunction with all four major political parties and such involvement is, for me, what ousu is all about—people who’d never been to an ousu event came to Pink Politics, which is wonderful. We’ve also held a letter writing event in conjunction with Amnesty International, since Amnesty are currently running an lgbt rights campaign nationally. More recently, there was condom stuffing in the castle tavern and a focus

on sexual health, in preparation for World Aids Day. Due to the election, my involvement has been less of that than in the two previous terms, for which I apologise. I do believe, however, QR will be able to build on much work that has been started—stuff in the pipeline includes holding gay weddings, with a reception at the northgate, as part of a partnership rights campaign begun last term with a talk by Peter Purton from the TUC. There is also scope for a blood service campaign, coupled with the blood service publicity that is in most colleges at the moment. I would also like to see the mentoring scheme in conjunction with local schools that was floated last term when Mike Bunney, a local teacher came to speak to QR, moving forward. I am very pleased that QR has been discussing ousu council's agenda this term and the QR vote has been consistently taken up at council.

#### Disabilities Action campaign

Disabilities Action has struggled consistently with attendance, which is a shame, since there is much that it can, and needs to, achieve. Its Diversity Week event with a Brookes student, an SCR member and representatives from various community groups was one of the most successful things it has done since I've been exec and more involvement is definitely the way forward. This term I attended a target schools meeting and spoke about some issues affecting students with disabilities related to access. This was wonderful since I don't think many people had considered the issues until I raised them, but once I had,

people were really concerned about what they, and target schools could do, to the effect that disabled access in colleges where open days are to be held was considered and schools will now be sent a letter with specific reference to students with disabilities. Workshops for students with disabilities, at open days, were also considered. Most recently I contacted Tom Shakespeare to see if he would speak to us, after the campaign decided we needed more high profile events, and although he said it was unlikely in the near future, he suggested some names, whom I have since followed up and am waiting on replies. An entz event is also in the pipeline, entz provision for disabled students often being woefully forgotten, perhaps in conjunction with the comedy society, since we were thinking of trying to get Francesca Martinez. Again, DA has, when it has met, discussed ousu council's agenda and the DA vote has been consistently taken up in council. I would like to thank the VP(Welfare) for all his support as a colleague and hard work with regards to both DA and QR.

#### General Exec stuff

I have remained a dedicated and reliable exec member this term, as I have done previously; I have attended and worked during my duty mornings, attended and contributed to my committees and exec meetings and done general OUSU stuff, like distribute the term planner in college. I have not been perfect by any means, but I have tried to do my best and make a difference where I can. Since I became involved in OUSU it has meant, and continues to mean so much to me; it is a student union I have seen at its best and at its worst and one in which I want to continue working, simply because I believe in it. It is therefore, not lightly, but with much sadness and regret, that I have reached the decision to resign, with effect from Friday of 8<sup>th</sup> week. There are general and structural issues that I feel often hinder OUSU's work, particularly that of the committees. Issues such as committee co-chairs not being trained in the use of quark and therefore unable to make publicity; people still not knowing what OUSU is or why it's there; general apathy; the direction, or lack of, of some of the committees. Also that OUSU council is dominated by OUSU insiders in the main, many of these jcr presidents. But these are issues which I want to stay on and tackle, with others. They are issues which I feel can and will be dealt with through sheer hard work.

Yet, at the moment, I feel the student union I was elected to a year ago is not the student union I am a part of now. I have recently, at times, felt it is one in which my opinions are not valued and I am not treated with the respect that I, and every single member of OUSU, deserves. I have felt intimidated and been frustrated time and again. This is not simply a case of differences of opinion, I'd love it if it were, since I believe the only way forward for OUSU is greater inclusivity; it can be, and must be, a broad church, committed to students. It also can be both a campaigning

and a service providing union. It can be neither of these things if executive meetings are intimidatory places, if the executive aren't consulted before decisions are made and acted upon, or made and the press informed. This term I have been angered and upset at the way in which the opinions of the executive have either not been sought or been sought and ignored. The cock-ups that have occurred have not been the usual OUSU cock-ups; they have made people feel truly alienated, myself included, not simply because people have disagreed with policy passed, but because debate has been stifled and council and exec have often been unpleasant places to be. Female representation, delegates, Savannah, UV, the central hust, the conduct of council, currently characterised by continual calls for a 'move to a vote', have all upset people unnecessarily, simply by they manner in which they were, or were perceived to have been, handled. I am not tendering my resignation on the issues, that would make no sense, I am doing so on the basis of the manner in which the executive as a whole, and myself as a member of the exec, have been treated throughout the term. Not to resign, would, I feel, send a message to the incoming exec and sabs that to feel intimidated, to not enjoy being on the exec, to be ignored and to not feel able to work effectively, is all ok.

OUSU cannot afford to split into two camps; I will always believe in the abolition of UV laws and I'd imagine there are people who will always believe them to be purposeful, but this is not the issue and mustn't and needn't be. OUSU is not untenable when people disagree; it becomes untenable when the democratic forums of exec meetings and OUSU council are disregarded and their united front not respected. OUSU policy, standing orders and election regs must also be treated with respect and all exec and sabs have a duty to uphold them. This has not been happening enough this term, but I believe and hope OUSU can move forward. I wish the incoming executive all the best; they must not be scared to do their jobs well, work hard and hold the sabbaticals to account. I will be available to give advice to them if they want it, especially those with my portfolios. Final thanks to everyone I've worked with; it's been an experience and mostly, and until recently, a fun one. All the sabs for all their hard work, particularly that which goes on behind the scenes. To Julia for simply being Julia, and to Ros for being Ros. To all those who've. most recently, had the integrity to be honest and open with themselves and exec- I respect you all immensely. To Maria, without whom the general office would cease to function.. And of course, The Executive, who are and have been, truly wonderful.

## **Julia Buckley**

This term has seen me changing committees, and as a result not having been able to get as much done as I might have liked. After two terms of seeing F&F grow stagnant, with countless discussions on how to prevent this but no progress actually being made, I had been hoping that this term, with a new president and the imminence of top up fees, might be the one to counteract that. But having left the campaign in about 3rd week, I can't really comment on whether that was done. All I can see from the outside is that certain decisions, which could have been great, have been organised so as to risk jeopardising the campaign. The recent mailing to tutors, for example, sent in the week when they were processing UCAS entries, seems mistimed in the extreme.

I have always had a problem with being the Exec member for F&F, partly because of the time when I was assigned the portfolio. I had already had the thankless and ridicule-incurring job of F&F rep for Christ Church for a couple of terms, but my rift last Michaelmas with Trotgimp International meant that when I took on the portfolio, well over half its meagre attendees either weren't speaking to me, were being offensive to me, or just keeping me out of decisions. The fact that I was seen as being appointed as this year's Sean to Andrew's Heenal didn't help either. As a result, I felt very left out of the committee. I knew nothing about the naked gold apes' display of pot belly, for example. Sacha and the Ismailites did their very best to make me feel unwanted and, as a result, I lost interest.

I am very willing to take responsibility for some of the problems I have had with the F&F campaign. I admit that, for the reasons above, I wasn't the first member of the team to volunteer to make posters, or distribute petitions, or take off my clothes and squeal when union bouncers led me out of the hijacked debate. Neither was I particularly up for a "Wall of Debt" painted on some big piece of board to be painted as a bricked wall, wheeled into Broad Street and propped up. I thought that would make us look silly, just like the stunt in the Union. I also thought some other ideas which were suggested - a Laura Santana calendar, for example, or an F&F play starring the great unwashed and of course Sacha - rather risked us looking like cocks to those not in the know. I would have liked an occupation, but only if the time had been right - if we had had a venue, a guaranteed number of people, and an element of surprise, rather than -as was actually suggested - Ruth Hunt agreeing with the authorities what we could occupy and when. Given that Pete Morton had the only way of ensuring attendance - an enforced occupation by locking readers in the Rad Cam with gold ribbon round the door handles - I think this was, this year, probably a bit of a non-starter. To be honest, I found last year's underpopulated F&F become something of an embarrassment, attended only by sabbatical hopefuls, troublemakers of the trotgimp/jcr president variety, and not even all of the co-chairs/exec/sab responsible. Having become so disillusioned with the campaign, I jumped at the chance to switch to Environment Committee this term.

Despite only going to a handful of their meetings, I have been immensely impressed with Environment Committee. Luke Haywood and Ailsa Gibson's tireless enthusiasm and commitment has put me, and I would think, most members of the Executive, to shame. It sports better attendance than F&F and a far more hardened attitude to campaigning. I have been nothing less than amazed and in awe at the letters constantly going out about recycling, the non-stop haranguing of the Council into providing recycling facilities to colleges, the innovative ideas expressed for college compost heaps and piles of rubbish as art for the forthcoming Environment Day. If only our campaigning against UV were as fruitful. As far as I can see, the committee seems to be largely autonomous, with minimal involvement/interest from OUSU - yet it does a fantastic job, with very little praise in return. I wish I had taken on the portfolio earlier, to be able to help a little. As it is, I can only apologise for not doing as much as might have been liked, and not sorting the email list. Luke and Ailsa deserve a big up for getting on with it when it seemed like no one cared, and for making notoriously slow wheels turn when others might have left them to rust over. I wish the committee all the success it deserves in the future, and hope that Luke finds another co-chair as focused as Ailsa. They have done a fantastic job - I only wish I'd helped them longer to be able to say more nice things about them. I hope that the new vp cac is worthy of them, as they really deserve some more sab time and input, and I think president is currently the wrong role to have been assigned them, as it seems so different from the other presidential responsibilities. I'm very glad Council voted to change this anomaly, and I hope this switch shows the potential of Council - since it seemed to be truly a debate in which all sides were considered, and few had arrived with minds already made up. They also (apparently) buy their fair trade biscuits from the Quaker Centre, which perfects them even more. May I suggest a free dinner at Savannah to celebrate their greatness.

OUSU Reps was never going to be the committee that set the Thames on fire - nevertheless, I think it has been one of the most important committees, and well working ones around lately. I think it is crucial that there is a forum for OUSU reps to sit down together, bridging the gaps between colleges and OUSU, between OUSU Reps of different political persuasions, and between the colleges themselves, which seem to vary greatly on the "OUSU is a pile of wank" scale of JCR politics. Some OUSU Reps are of the Red variety, some don't give a flying fuck, and others turn up dutifully to represent their college every fortnight. It has been interesting, nay fascinating, to see that, nevertheless, they all get on perfectly well and are admirably able to communicate with each other without resorting to insult and intimidation. I find it a great shame that this tradition cannot be carried over to Council, where the clash of egos and general thuggishness seems to overrule rational discussion. I sincerely hope that this attitude extends to

Prescom as well, though I fear the worst, having heard just a fraction of the comments thrown around there. I have every confidence in the OUSU reps, and am sure that when I return from Italy, it will not be to come to Council and hear "We discussed this motion at OUSU reps last week, and we decided there to vote against it, on the grounds that it seemed irrelevant to all fifteen of us." To sum up, even though OUSU Reps has at times been a little tedious, even though drunk lookers-on in the Turf have been rude, even though it is very cold sitting outside, I think it is a vital committee. The only problem is that it isn't well enough attended, but that is one of those problems which will only be solved if the general image of OUSU across the University is improved. I would like to thank Sarah Livermore and Josh Goodman for chairing it last year, and send lots of luck to the lovely Ollie Kempton and the rest of the crew for the forthcoming year. Now on to the unpleasant bit...

I know I've changed a lot since I've been here, from the first year passed out in the corner who'd never heard of OUSU, to the second year in the corner on the computer, trying to make readers actually care about the latest Union scandal, to the third year on the Executive trying to whip up excitement about the Diversity Week march. But I also think that OUSU has changed, since I first knew it. The attitude from within, and the attacks from without, have worsened. Council has become a stalemate, where people from both sides of the spectrum harangue each other in the hope of winning votes that were, for a large part, decided the previous week in Prescom. Even the atmosphere right within the structure has changed dramatically. It is for this reason, and with great sadness, that I am resigning from the Executive, effective Friday of 8th Week. Obviously this is largely symbolic, rather than practical, as I am already reaching the end of my term of office, and won't even be in the country next term. But I have reached the opinion that resignation is the only way I can make it clear how unhappy I am with OUSU at the moment, and just how untenable I believe my position on the Executive to be.

I am deeply unhappy with the direction Council has taken this term. Every two weeks, we are presented with a barrage of procedural motions to waste time, or to stall debate. Writing the minutes has only made me more aware of how a call to a Move to a Vote is requested constantly by certain members of Council, how many procedural motions are put forward as delaying tactics. In addition, I think Council this term has developed a particularly unpleasant, personal, and vitriolic atmosphere, and this is coming from someone who usually says nothing. It is only because I know many of the people involved, and because I don't really care if certain JCR presidents wish to send a lynch mob after me, that I am continuing to go, to vote, and to speak as I wish. If I were a first year who had sat through 3rd Week Council, I'm not at all sure I would ever have wanted to go again.

I also believe that a member of the Executive, a co-chair of an OUSU committee, or indeed any member of Council, has the right to perform their duties without fear of intimidation. I have been deeply unhappy by the bullying attitude displayed by certain members of Prescom this term. Even outside of Council, this behaviour has continued. I find the way that the Co-Chair of Disabilities Action has been treated in response to their genuine queries regarding students with disabilities, their involvement in OUSU and in Entz, by certain sabbatical officers of our Student Union, utterly unacceptable. I find it equally concerning that I myself have come under fire for my voting record in Council. Since I proposed a motion in 5th week Council I have been told by several different sources that certain JCR presidents have declared themselves "out to get" me. I was told they were overheard plotting to bring a motion of no confidence, for the simple reason that they had disagreed with me. I was told that they admitted wanting to get rid of me "one way or another". If I didn't find these comments as hilarious as I do pathetic, I might well be upset. As it is, although I am not personally bothered, I worry for who they might also be saying this about, and whether that person might take their jibes more personally. It must be made clear, before the new Execs start, that this kind of intimidation is not to be tolerated.

Sadly, the unacceptable behaviour I have witnessed on the past term has not just come from JCR Presidents, but from certain sabbaticals. The main reason why I am resigning from the Executive is because I do not feel I can work properly with two in particular. Working on the Exec, in my

view, implies some kind of mutual cooperation and trust, and I am very sorry to say that I no longer feel I can trust the VP Finance and the President enough to be able to cooperate with them.

The atmosphere within Exec meetings at the moment is, at best, not particularly nice, and I feel sab meetings must be equally acrimonious, as I hear they are now having to be chaired by the Student Advisor. I do not want to sit on an Executive anymore in which agreements are reached and then disregarded in Council; where to disagree with the VPF is to risk being told "You can just sit back - you're ill" or "I can't help laughing at you, you're ridiculous", or words to that effect. I cannot work with a VP Finance who insults the people with whom he works, who seems not to have any regard for the OxStu team, and proves unwilling to fulfill his duties as publisher for distribution, who claims that no argument in Council could possibly sway him from his decision over whether a motion is UV or not.

I am sorry to say that I have also come to the conclusion that I want, ideally, a very different Student Union from the one which the President would, ideally, like to run. I believe that OUSU should be inclusive, should exist to serve and facilitate everyone, not just those we deem "cool" or "normal looking". I do not think the way to achieve this is by setting up a hierarchy of students, of "VIPs" and "influencers" classed above normal students. The idea that we should officially endorse such a structure to get some lucky people free or discounted meals at Savannah is completely out of tune with this, and I find it shocking that anyone could have considered it. Equally, I find it disappointing in the extreme that the OUSU President should suggest holding Prescom in the Randolph. Again, I can laugh at these things but cannot believe they are actually being said. Remarks made in Hilda's have also disappointed and disillusioned me.

I am, more importantly, deeply unhappy with what I see as the culture of backtracking, covering up and even outright lying being perpetrated by certain sabbatical officers. It has never been clarified exactly why the President told the OxStu that he "certainly wouldn't have said" the comments he made in St Hilda's, and then admitted in Council and to the Cherwell that he had indeed said them. Having seen how two previous years of sabs worked with/against the student papers, I can honestly say that in my opinion no other has used them to leak information to or to deny speaking to, in quite the same way as this one. The backtracking this term has been genuinely astonishing. When Ruth Hunt told Cherwell at the beginning of Trinity that she was going to abolish VP Women, introduce VP Charities and find a CSV, she apologised to Exec for doing so and admitted her mistake. This term, in my opinion, we have seen a sab team lie about their involvement with articles. As far as is possible I know - and I certainly believe - that particular members of the sab team collaborated with the OxStu on their story about the abolition of VP Women in 0th week - yet when questioned in Exec, nobody was prepared to admit any conversation with the paper. I also have very good reason to believe that a story which was run in Cherwell, and denied vehemently by the President, was in fact true. I do not wish to go into more detail because I do not wish to break other people's trust - but as far as I am concerned it is true, and I simply cannot continue working with people who, I believe, are lying to their Executive, or trying to mislead them. I also cannot work with sabs who, again in my eyes, attempt to dissuade people from putting motions, whether by outright lying or more subtle persuasion - both of which methods I have witnessed this term. I cannot work with sabs who have so little respect for the will of Council that they attempt to withdraw a motion when it becomes clear that it is going to be passed in a way they don't approve of, or then promise their support to the new proposers if they make an amendment, and then go back on their word no sooner has this been done. Finally, I cannot work with sabs who go directly against OUSU Policy when speaking in a professional capacity, who put their personal beliefs over their job descriptions, or who write in a press release "I want to focus on students, not stunts: OUSU President affirms opposition to irrelevant motions". I believe that certain sabbatical officers are making public assumptions about matters which should be left to the individual to decide.

I believe that all these instances or trends have led to a situation where I feel that my position is untenable. When the sabbatical officers cancel the Council Hust, they give the impression that even they don't think it important to decide who runs OUSU next year - and I believe this can only be detrimental to our Student Union. I like OUSU a lot - I think it does a lot of good work, and I have been proud to serve on the Exec for nearly a year - but I have reached the point now where I am so disillusioned that I do not have the will to defend it against criticism when criticism is levelled. Each time problems have been brought up in Exec meetings, problems have either been brushed over or ignored in one way or another. When it gets to the point where some individuals are taking it so seriously that we can no longer have sensible conversations with each other, where meetings have to be broken off because people refuse to stay in the same room, and where agreements in Exec are broken in Council, I feel the only way to register my complaints, where they will not simply be swept under the carpet, is through resignation. I wish the new Exec the best of luck, and hope that our resignation now will act as a warning to those who, at the moment, are doing so much harm to the sab/exec relationship. I hope that they will find it easier to hold the sabbaticals to account. It is for this reason that I feel I cannot stay on any longer, but I wish OUSU and those who hold positions within the best of luck for the future. I desperately hope that things can be turned around. I desperately hope that the OUSU I come back to next year will be one of which I can be proud to serve.

Finally I want to thank Maria - OUSU's lynchpin - and the rest of this Exec who, despite political differences, have held together for almost the full year. You've all been supportive and great, and thanks for the ride - especially to Rosie for being another outsider from the start but still making it in the end; to Phil for always being there and for some fantastic Monday nights; and lately to the Menace, for making me look more reasonable, and some much appreciated support over the election. Thank you also to Eleanor for bringing me on last year, for encouragement, support and solidarity; to Ros for finally being my friend; and to the ubiquitous and luscious Daniel Harkin, for being thigh-rubbingly gorgeous. Best of luck to the new Exec and sabs; I hope I can look forward to being proud of a decent Student Union once again.

## **Nicky Ellis**

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is rather long. You might want to stick with it.

Somewhere within you will find a little innuendo, a resignation, and possibly a high score phrase for Council Bingo. To the chase. In fifth week I went to my first Health and Welfare meeting, after an eleventh hour portfolio swap. I suspect it was the most constructive meeting I've been to during my year on exec. In some ways it was a little patronising; its effects linger. I had to help put a condom on an aubergine. I'll never view either in quite the same light again, and I may sue OUSU for the consequences. It's lucky it happened this term; during the summer I lived on aubergine for a week, and had the timing been different, I might have starved.

But that aside, I could see the point of the committee. This was refreshing. For a year I feel as though I've been battling with a sea of problems with my committees. One world and Pro choice I'll mention but briefly, as current policy coupled with U.V law serves essentially to cripple them. Perhaps there should have been call to abolish them, but in their latent state they seemed to do no damage, and I was always hopeful that a mind more ingenious or circumstances more favourable might in time rescue them; it seemed unfair to debar that possibility. Few people who aren't involved know about them; they sit quietly and do no harm.

Anti-racism worried me more. Despite contributions from various committed and talented people, it never seemed to get going. For a while we've been all but co-chairless; we've just reappointed; in the light of that and what I will go on to say, a few points. First, that I believe in a campaigning student union, but that this does not justify every OUSU committee and every good cause; secondly that before we can do anything properly we need to identify what we are trying to do, and with what premises. There is a danger that in the cause of diversity and equality we become too unwilling to criticise, too scared of correctness to have proper debate

and too lax in identifying when what we are doing is detrimental. I never felt that anti-racism committee could decide whether it wanted a diverse and segregated society, in which one had to accept without question the rights of peoples to maintain their own practices, or a diverse but integrated society, working towards a common and inclusive culture; I felt people were scared of the debate. Unfortunately, without establishing so basic a thing, it is hard to do anything coherent.

The student movement has played an important role in countering racism, and so it should. Oxford clearly has a long way to go before anyone can claim that racism is dwindling, or that there is satisfactory equality. It seems likely that the university as an institution, whilst not necessarily being racist, perpetuates certain practices and clings to certain ideas that do not well lend themselves to equality; this is linked with all the access and image problems we are so aware of but often feel hard pressed to tackle.

There may be a call for organising a term of speaker meetings around the theme of cultural diversity, but we must be careful; if we smack too much of Sunday afternoon liberalism we alienate more people than we attract, and alienate those people who have most real experience and often most to contribute.

I very much believe that a student union should campaign, but I am also very often driven towards the opposite camp by some of OUSU's current campaigns. We need to be stronger, sharper, cleverer, and less frightened to criticise. The people who came along to the anti-racism lunch recently, called as a death bed attempt to resurrect our committee, seemed justifiably bemused as to what we were doing. Much of that may come to my failing as an exec member, but some at least to the structure within which I was working. There were people there with talent and people who instantly saw the problems; I hope and believe that the new co-chairs and those few others besides can make something of it, but they will need to keep criticising and start demanding of OUSU as a whole.

There are problems over which we have less control; those who turned up did so because of our advertising; our advertising was severely limited by the failure of most college officers to put up our posters. That's unfortunate; had posters gone up in every college that committee meeting would have been five times as large at least, based on the ratio of those that did turn up. It's a problem we need to take in to account; we can't keep pursuing an advertising strategy that isn't working; it's infuriating that posters don't go up, but we need to ask and appreciate the reasons why common room officers can't be bothered, why they feel disinterested and alienated.

On our own turf we need to identify the overlaps with other committees, identify the methods by which we could work with the university and support the hard Sabbatical work that too often goes unnoticed behind the scenes. Those incoming also need to be prepared to define the acceptable limits of diversity, to decide what levels of fundamentalism we will tolerate in the name of equality, and not to feel that they need to defend everything in the name of this equality. If there is anyway I can be of assistance or provide support in this, please ask.

I would say in mitigation that none of my committees have been such that provides support for those who attend, and those who for one reason or another feel isolated across the wider university. Anti-racism could fulfil this capacity, though hasn't this year. Hence my view is in part limited; I can see the value of this sort of support and the benefits of providing it through a committee/campaign based system.

However, Diversity Week epitomises the problem that has finally overcome me. Hard work, good ideas and much planning went into that week. The university at large either didn't notice, didn't understand or laughed, and wandered off. The week was built on the concept of publicising the campaigns, almost I think of having a week in which students could realise what we had been doing and why. Unfortunately, if a concept is not entirely sound it simply screams when magnified that much. Committees dealing with very serious concerns which originally occur ad hoc and then formalise into a continuous mass that has to address something whatever the circumstances of the moment had to turn these concerns into events. Some this worked for;

some it didn't; I firmly believe we put off as many people as we encouraged. Diversity is an odd thing, still a new thing. There's a place for grand gesture, and a place for shouting about what we are. Many of the people I know outside OUSU are not yet fully acclimatised to themselves and their own 'diversity', whatever that may be, and sometimes they need to be supported quietly and allowed to hold themselves as they will. Ideally, an organisational structure such as OUSU should ensure that there is an environment in which diversity flourishes, be it quietly and in shadows, or vibrantly and in self celebration. Sometimes, and with some committees, it's appropriate to try to push this forward, but once again, we need to ensure that we don't seem naïve and insular and exclusive, and that in doing so we don't appear to create a set and limited idea of equality; we need to aim for a quiet, fundamental, universal equality.

Having come so near to the end of my year, I am resigning from Exec. This is in many ways a symbolic resignation, as I have so little time left to serve. I want OUSU to wake up and take notice, because it's alienating people, it's being consistently ineffective, and it's drowning its achievements in bad press and antiquated structures. The problems that beset committees like anti-racism have been there the entire year; I've tried, I've failed to sort them out, in part because of the structure, in part because I've become too cynical. However, the committee will go on, and I think it better if I say this and thereby a few people get worried and start talking, and work to make it in to something I'd be pleased to recruit for and pleased to take people along to. That alone would not have been enough. This term I have seen council get longer and more fruitless, not because of the type of things discussed but because of the manner, and the refusal of certain individuals to work to facilitate proper debate. U.V is difficult; I respect arguments on both sides of the somewhat misleadingly named 'students as students' debate, and sometimes veer between the two. But it seems fruitless to try to obstruct a constitutionally established order and practice of debate with reference to U.V.

In my opinion, the only acceptable way to try to limit the discussion of motions not affecting students as students would be a by a constitutional motion to remove our constitutional facility for discussing them. I would personally vote against such a motion, but uphold if it passed and proved to be the democratic will, and I would facilitate its debate. But I cannot work with a council that tries to do that every time such a motion comes up in a manner which makes no constitutional sense and alienates the vast majority of students, not through the content of the discussions but through the all but incomprehensible and nonsensical procedure that surrounds them. It also seems to me that we have polarised the debate in a simplistic and unhelpful fashion. We ought to ask about the relevance of the campaign that results from a motion, not the relevance of the motion. There will still be certain people who disagree out and out, but the debate will make sense, and will have matured. The extension of the so-called 'ultra vires' laws governing student unions' expenditure by the Thatcher government shows that there was a genuine and serious threat from student action; that is why these complex and time consuming laws were put through to limit that action. Wherever we stand on the appropriateness of such action, we need to be able to assess its probable effectiveness. I am happy for us to pass motions which pertain to the real and the outside world in circumstances where they may have a constructive effect; sometimes it is relevant and right to lend our voice to an international movement; a handful of people shouting and isolated sometimes has a detrimental effect. We need to be realistic in our assessment of the situations arising; then we can start to be effective. I also feel I can no longer serve on an exec that includes the current VP (finance). It is not possible to make a statement such as this without causing resentment and perhaps distress; neither is it easy to do. I want to make it absolutely clear that in the following I am not alleging electoral malpractice but inappropriate behaviour; these are two very different things. I was working with The VP (finance) in election's term; therefore many of the situations arising had an electoral backdrop; that this should be so seems to me all but inevitable given the timing. Cumulative happenings have led me to believe that the VP (finance) is not paying sufficient and effective attention to the manner in which he treats people whilst carrying out his duties. I will give some examples. During fifth week exec I saw the discussion break down to such an extent

that I felt compelled to leave the meeting until a suitable atmosphere be resumed; I believe this was due to the manner in which the VP(finance) responded to disagreement and criticism. This alone would not have been a matter for resignation, but the more I see of his conduct the more I realise that I cannot work with him as he currently seems fit to behave. During the course of the elections, this mounted. At the St Hugh's hust, whilst chairing, he directed two audible snide remarks towards people standing on my slate, saying to one 'well done, another forty five second speech' and to the other 'well, isn't that nice', or words very similar; it's been a little too long to be sure that I'm quoting verbatim. The most damaging thing was the tone; it seems to me completely inappropriate for an OUSU official to risk making comments like these, even if they were intended humorously. At the time I raised this informally within the relevant OUSU Channels; I didn't and haven't put in a formal complaint; it seemed then that the remarks had been a misjudgement, but one that the VP (finance) would hopefully have the sense not to repeat; we all know that elections are stressful. Unfortunately, I saw no change in his behaviour. On Election Day, he again made comments which I feel it was not acceptable for an OUSU Official to make. The first about which I am particularly concerned involved telling a first year on my slate, then standing on a lodge within the hearing of other people, certain observations of his about the way we had chosen to run the elections, in circumstances and manner that I feel to have been completely inappropriate, and in such a way that his behaviour could well cause intimidation, especially given that the first year in question was one of those to whom he had already addressed remark to at the St Hugh's hust. Then in the count he again addressed a remark to her, and I consider the content of that remark to have been seriously misjudged; it was of a personal nature, and out of respect to her I am not detailing it here. I can understand that many of these comments were not intended to cause offence; however the crucial point is that the nature of a sabbatical position cannot allow for repeated and serious misjudgements of this type;

remarks made in public when acting in an official capacity carry far more weight than off the cuff remarks made in private, and it has become an ongoing problem so that I am no longer prepared to write individual incidents off as unintentional or merely naïve. I hope that the VP (finance) can make efforts to consider the likely effect of his behaviour and his comments ahead of time next term, and stop allowing his manner to obstruct his fulfilment of office and his contribution to discussions. All these things start to mount. The conduct of these elections past has not been brilliant, beyond things mentioned in the last paragraph. The failure to organise the advertised hust in council was but one thing; I begin to fail to understand the workings of an institution that feels that it is inappropriate to hust candidates for the sabbatical posts of the executive in a meeting of its sovereign body; at the time, though grumpy, I came to believe that this had been an avoidable but overlookable admin cock-up; when the matter was raised in the following exec meeting it became apparent that the president had not been convinced that it was appropriate to hold husts in council at all. The reasoning is initially compelling: amongst other things, husts in council take ages. If we're not looning then we're bored. But that is not good enough. The subsequent debate highlighted a significant lack of understanding of the perception of OUSU and its relation to the student body. To argue that anyone can attend one of the specifically arranged husts is naïve in the extreme; they can, but they don't, and won't, and until we understand why, we fail to understand why OUSU isn't working in so many areas, and why its good work is getting obscured. I was Oscar's campaign manager; some of you know that; I'm saying it now for the sake of honesty. I want to make it clear that I would have resigned had he won; indeed the decision to do so would have been by far easier and less loaded. I believe wholeheartedly in the manifesto on which he stood, but I also think the president elect has the capacity to make an excellent president, and wish her all luck and support in the task. I also want to make it clear that I have no criticism of her conduct in the elections; it is much to their credit and worth noting that both candidates remained friendly and supportive of each other throughout. In summary, I am resigning because I think my current role on exec is untenable; we need to begin a radical overhaul of our thinking and our practice from here on in, from day to

day behaviour through to underlying concept, so that the new sabbatical team take over a sound and functioning institution, and so that the incoming exec don't face a weekly battle ground and committee work for which they lack framework to judge and criticise. Wake up OUSU. Please. You're important and I'm fond of you

### Chris Hanretty

"Target Schools is one of the best things OUSU does. But that shouldn't stop us from looking at ways in which to make it better". This term, I am confident that Target Schools has got better. Towards the end of last term, I became concerned that Target Schools had become less exciting and less active: not in what it set out to do, but in the manner of its deciding what to do. Because there is a large degree of consensus on what Target Schools does and ought to do, it often appears less like student-led campaigning and more like student-led administration. Certainly, administration can be fun when accompanied by copious amounts of pizza (cf. Target Schools' envelope stuffing extravaganza in Hilary term), but it tends to do poorly in terms of attracting people to a committee and keeping it vibrant.

This term, however, has shown an improvement. Sian, Linsey, Alison and Chris have been, without exception, excellent. They have, as they are supposed to, chaired meetings (instead of the V-P) and engaged people at those meetings. Target Schools has even had some disagreement over ends, not just means: over the past few meetings we have discussed a plan to include corporate sponsorship in Target Schools handbooks. There was concern voiced that such sponsorship might contribute further to Oxford's image problem, and I'm glad that there was genuine debate on what we ought to be doing. In a personal capacity, I remain cautiously optimistic about the scheme, and the possibility for Target Schools sponsorship to cross-subsidise other areas of OUSU.

My other committee, Ethics committee, has been involved in a great many new areas this term. The GATS report, which is now available on the OUSU website ([http://www.ousu.org/main/campaigns/ethics/gats\\_report](http://www.ousu.org/main/campaigns/ethics/gats_report)), was a useful exercise, if still little understood. The report on the proposed advertising ban on Esso will, I hope, contribute to today's debate.

Unfortunately, Ethics committee still needs more people along. So far it's been kept going by two fantastically hyperactive co-chairs (thanks to Jung-ui and Katy!), but if there's no larger base to keep it going, Ethics will only do a fraction of what it's capable of.

It is the final responsibility of an Executive Officer - that of overseeing the sabbatical team - about which I feel the least optimistic. In particular, I am extremely disappointed with the way that Exec meetings have gone. They have been characterised by argument, and not of a very productive kind. I agree with the general feeling that OUSU spends too much time discussing what it ought to discuss, not discussing those actual issues. More than this, I feel that Executive Officers have done well to try and resolve these issues in exec meetings.

However, I feel that these attempts at resolution, once made, were consistently thwarted once they were raised in Exec. On the specific issue of ultra vires, I saw what I took to be an informal agreement made between Exec broken in council. I heard in an Exec meeting that there was no reasoned debate in Council such that it could make the V-P Finance change his mind on whether a specific motion was ultra vires or not. In that same Exec meeting, the atmosphere became so bad that the meeting had to be stopped for five minutes.

On the issue of women's representation, I feel that the sabbatical team has handled things badly. As if with one voice, they attempted to withdraw their own motion once they saw they had been outvoted in Council. (It is also worth note that the post of co-chair for the consultation process on female representation has not, at the time of writing, been advertised yet).

In both of these issues, it is important to note that it is not the position of the sab team that I (necessarily) disagree with, but their behaviour in putting forward that position. I disagree with the vie that conflicts between exec and sabbaticals are the result of some grand left-right

conflict. Agreements in Exec were broken in order to further a position. A motion to council was withdrawn once it seemed that Council would vote against the sabbatical team. These are perhaps the clearest examples of why I feel that the existing structures are not sufficient to hold the sabbaticals properly to account. I feel I have exhausted the options available to me: I cannot be sure that an agreement in exec will be followed, in letter or in spirit. It is for this reason that I am resigning from exec, with effect from Friday of 8th week. It is a great shame that it has come to this, but I hope by resigning to draw attention to the manner in which my last term in exec has been made difficult.

By all of this, I intend, of course, no disrespect to the wonderful people that work for OUSU, doing testing jobs for little or no pay. Best wishes to the sabbatical team for next year: Helena, Digo, Rosie, Cat and Louise. Shouts go out to my co-chairs throughout the year: Jack, Jo, Jon and (J)amber, Katy and Jung-ui, Alison, Linsey, Sian and Chris; my fellow exec officers, all of them, and a warm personal thanks to all of the sabs this year and last: you do a difficult job well with little reward. Keep it real.

## Rachel Logan

This year has certainly been interesting. It is difficult to assess it in a whole, as each term has been very different. Overall, it's been a very valuable experience and I hope the new exec enjoy it as much as I have.

Committee work:

My first committees were health and welfare and entz, both of which I really enjoyed. H&W does hugely important things, and attendance is decent, although it rises and falls depending on the week and topic. James Rowlands' changes to its structure were very positive, and college reps seemed receptive to the more individualized training idea with fewer, more specific forums once a fortnight. This is a committee which ousu does really well, and I greatly enjoyed attending and helping.

Entz is a trickier one. The lack of CSV makes it difficult to get proper entz going here, and everyone recognizes this. Entz-list, however, which I helped to set up, has been a really useful thing ousu can do to help college reps and other oxford entz providers, giving them a forum to discuss ideas and problems. Its use is increasing vastly. Ruth championed the idea of a college entz reps handbook, and nick and nabeel as two dedicated co-chairs have done lots of work towards this although we need to pick it up again. College support is something OUSU does well and can do better.

This term has been somewhat different in terms of committees. I asked to move to One World from H&W, as I felt this was an area I knew a lot about and really wanted to help rejuvenate itself. My illness at the start of term and then the inevitable elections chaos have somewhat obstructed this aim, although the dormant committee is now slowly waking up as people discuss what is the best way to proceed to help those who are interested in these issues. I believe Helena's emphasis on helping clubs and societies will have a really big role to play here, and I look forward to seeing the results. I hope that this committee will not be hamstrung by UV laws, as this would be a great shame. Digo has suggested looking into a UV fund which will help not only council but this committee to fulfil its mandate, and I look forward once again to seeing the results of his investigations. With entz, Will has been the guiding force. This is an area in which unlike previous presidents, Will is not just really committed and enthusiastic but also knows a lot of people who have been able to help us. It is a shame that his summer festival idea never got off the ground, as I believe it would have been a great success and a lot of effort on his part and his team's went into preparing the plans. The city council should've listened! Hopefully they will be more receptive another time. The Bridge night on Thursday is a fantastic idea in terms of OUSU having a weekly club night, and Balreick has been really helpful with organizing, as he was last term to me and Ruth. However, we need to look at what it is actually achieving. The purpose of OUSU entz should be to provide decent nights at a cheap rate, and to get lots

of oxford students along together. I agree that joint ventures with existing promoters are the only way to get the expertise and practical resources to do this properly. I am not sure whether a deal in which we get little in terms of publicity or actual money off is necessarily the most productive one. I would like to see this looked at carefully again. I also think concerns raised about the attitude of the club managers need to be addressed, as OUSU must not allow nights it is involved in to contravene the principles of respect and support for diversity which we hold dear.

The fresher's night, which Ruth and I planned with Will last term, was a great success, and I believe an excellent introduction to ousu for many students. It should be repeated. Ousu does not have the expertise to run these events ourselves, and Rockstudent have been really helpful with this. Again, the financial value needs closer discussion, although in this case I believe we got a good deal for two great nights. All in all, my personal committee work has been more limited than other exec, but I do feel the overall system needs an overhaul. Some committees work amazingly well, others are fairly useless. Some have gone dormant because of general malaise; others may have deeper problems. Again-food for thought.

General exec-y things:

I think I have performed adequately in my general exec duties, I have done most of my duty afternoons and all that I did not have a valid reason to miss, even if I am usually a little on the late side (sorry Maria!) and enjoyed the discussions and chance to meet people who come and make use of our facilities. These could be better advertised, and we need to think about all of this in the move to Thomas hull house.

This move should be a really positive thing for ousu and give us the chance to get more people aware of our services and using them. I have seen this term especially the importance of the student advisor and even the mundane photocopying to many individuals and clubs and societies, and I think we can build on this.

Exec-meetings...a tricky one here. The first term, as is the case for most exec, I found the job of holding the sabs to account my most difficult one. Still fairly shy of the big boss people, I didn't want to upset people by questioning them too much. This was overcome swiftly as Ruth and her team encouraged us all to please god start using our positions, and I think we became very good at this as a team. The executive are able to hold sabs to account in a friendly and professional manner, and it is a crucial function, as even we tend to not know stuff going on behind the scenes on occasion and it is impossible for the ordinary council member to do so. I think we all achieved a good balance last term, with the VP grads issues being cleanly resolved and other problems and disagreements dealt with in a friendly and open manner.

This term it has been slightly different, as it is always hard to adjust to a new Sab/exec combination. Disagreements have tended to get too intense, and too personal. I do have concerns, and am raising them with those involved.

However, I believe we can all deal with these issues rationally and sensibly, as I truly think every member of the exec, Sab and grad team wants the best for OUSU, even if we have long and repetitive fights on what that is.

This brings me to the crucial question which has dogged us all year-what is ousu? A federation of JCRs/A campaigning union/a service provider? This is a debate and occasionally battle that can never be won by any side or individual and is frankly very dull. We need to accept that ousu can be a combination of all these different conceptions quite comfortably and efficiently, so long as we stop arguing about it all the time. Ousu should and always will concentrate on the fantastic services and support it provides to all its members in all their capacities, from Joe bloggs as the boat club captain to Joe bloggs as a member of 'x' JCR to Joe bloggs as a person who sits on environment committee or has a problem with his tutor. We need to stop arguing about what ousu is, and get on with doing it, like many other student unions. The endless debate and dispute, the factions and accusations are unnecessary, and I think we can change this with little fuss. Let's just accept that many different people get involved in ousu for different reasons, and all deserve equal support for the sterling work they do, and equal respect for their ideas and

abilities. This entails support for the right of any student to bring any motion to council, and the encouragement of people to address motions on their merits, vote actively against something if they don't agree with it and also not be too scared to vote for it if they do. Procedural rubbish makes council far too long, and is totally unnecessary. UV, agree or disagree with its aims, and I passionately disagree, is also a procedural matter, and we shouldn't let it obstruct our work. As Copson once said, why if someone is beating you with a big stick to stop you acting freely, would you beg for more? Equally, we shouldn't be focusing on these issues to the exclusion of others. Top-up fees are the biggest threat in the recent history of this student union, and we all need to get on with the fight against them which Will has so successfully highlighted in the national press. Campaigns need better promotion and targeting, and we need to think about stronger action.

OUSU is a truly valuable institution, and the sooner we let go of our narrow conceptions of what it should be, the better people will realize that and respect our existence and usefulness.

Rant over. So-thanks for a really worthwhile experience go to the usual crowd - Ruth for her total dedication and passion for OUSU, and for being my port in every storm. Antonia for determination, and John Craig for always providing scarily intelligent reason and rationality. Copson for not getting too cross when I scarpered from H&W, and for caring. Mel for her incessant sensibleness, and Will for too much enthusiasm in and outside of OUSU. Sean for ice cream. My exec-y partners, for so much dedication and a lot of laughs, especially Chris and Nicky who keep me sane and crazy at the same time and Edd for finally joining us. Not to mention Philfreak (daaarling). All those people who work so hard behind the scenes and get little recognition - Maria being the mother of all of these, and Kat for the lube on the arse of capitalism. Bex for getting sucked in, and Rob for not.

### **Anatole Pang**

My report is going to be thankfully short in the context of all this other business. I must admit that I too have been somewhat "fruitless and unproductive", though in my case I can't really blame the sabs or anyone else, apart from perhaps Mr. Stoneham. Anyway, Exec this year has been an interesting experience for me; and I look forward to my good work - in broadening the political perspective of OUSU - being carried on by a new generation of right-thinking people. International students was quite interesting, too, as was OSS. Er, did I miss anything ... ?

### **Edd Southerden**

Welcome to my report. Seeing as I've been doing the job for approximately 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the time of my exec colleagues, I'll try and make my report 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the length.

Try.

I took over from Duncan Weldon in 1<sup>st</sup> week of this term, after he resigned for personal reasons, and was thrown in at the deep end. As an old self-styled trot-gimp, however, I knew the ropes, and think I've done an OK job thus far.

My committees were assigned after a rather bizarre period of shuffling, to NUS, College Inequality and Accommodation. It is in NUS that I feel I have done the most work. NUS committee doesn't really sit at the moment, for one reason or another, but should, I hope, get going next term with the prospect of a Blackpool break for NUS conference coming round again. I wrote, in consultation with The OUSU President, the report into Oxford and NUS, which I hope will prove useful one way or another, if only for yet again another example of what a nice font Gill Sans is. I urge my successor to be ambitious in the rethink of our relationship with the residents of Nelson Mandela House (not Del and Rodney): it's got to be worth it, and I've got finals for god's sake. Thanks to Will for his support in this, and for all the ideas.

College Inequality is a pleasure to be a part of, and not only for the bureaucratic thrill of writing minutes. This is what OUSU committees, of the non-political kind, should be about: driven,

motivated and committed people working as efficiently as possible. This year's report should be excellent. You know it's working when Bursars from around the city are sending you rather perturbed emails. I would say, however, that the most important part is going to be implementing the radical proposals which, I hope, the report will recommend, and there it's going to need a very motivated team. Good luck with this guys.

Accommodation committee isn't functional at the moment. The idea of it is a very odd: several people rock up in an *ad-hoc* fashion and moan about their houses? I think it should come back under the already over-worked VP Welfare's auspices, who can delegate out duties either to interested parties or a particular exec member. It should do some important things. At the moment it doesn't.

Oh, and I'm not resigning. I knew exactly what I was getting into when I took on the job at the beginning of term, having been in OUSU all the summer, and hence was perfectly prepared for what other members of exec have had a nasty shock about. OUSU's got problems, always has had and probably always will, but I don't feel sufficiently disillusioned to throw in the towel. There are specific problems with this administration however: certain sabbaticals' blatant disregard for other perfectly valid convictions, and a foolish tendency to assume that they command automatic authority, has made some things very difficult. I hope that the dissatisfaction registered by the members of exec by their resignations will make the Sabs sit up and take note that there's isn't the best way to behave. I rather doubt it, but I suppose it's worth a try. For my part, I quite like the occasional battle, and am looking forward to teaching the new Exec a thing or two about being a pain in the arse. Seriously, I feel that the best way to make things change is to fight. For all its eccentricities and frustrations, I love OUSU, and feel it my duty to make sure it doesn't turn into a cheap beer consortium for the now much maligned JCR presidents. I actually quite like council at the moment and I think we do some good stuff, as long as the essentially meaningless phrase '*students as students*' is banned. I could go on, but those who are interested in my opinions already know them by now.

Thanks to: Copson, for being one of the most peculiar lib-dems I have ever met, Will for treating me like a '*normal*' student, and Wheatley for being a fount of exciting and amusing trivia. The lovely lovely members of exec for their commitment, especially Rachel for getting me out of bed, Laura and the firemen, Eleanor for being SO nice, and all the trotgimps everywhere who attend council every week. Good luck new guys...

## Andrew Thomas

On Monday of 6th week I sat in Balliol College JCR and listened to the hustings for sabbatical and executive offices. I was impressed by the vigour of the exec candidates and how they really believed that they could change OUSU and make a difference to students lives in Oxford. I also remember however, standing last year and feeling just as they feel; I was enthusiastic, I believed that I could sit in exec meetings holding the sabs to account, I had been involved in OUSU campaigns and believed that to help reinvigorate them what was most important was that we should involve as many students as possible.

Over the past year I have lost my belief that there is much chance of OUSU fulfilling its potential and really making a difference to the lives of students in Oxford beyond a small and often petty-minded clique. I have seen dedicated and hard-working people ignored and vilified because their ideas and opinions don't match with those expressed by the majority in PresCom. OUSU's once formidable campaigns have been run into the ground because they are tarnished with that dreadful word 'political' and because (gasp) people who were not ashamed of their political opinions were involved in running them. The idea that executive officers should hold sabbaticals to account has been regarded with fear, suspicion and ridicule. In short, all the things that I hoped to do at the time when I stood for exec, and all the plans I had to improve the way

OUSU helps students have fallen foul of the 'students as students', 'independent of politics' dogma (for that is what it is) to the detriment of the students' union.

#### Finance and Funding

I have been involved in the Finance and Funding Campaign during my year on exec and my experience of this campaign has been utterly demoralising. When I first became involved I wanted to get as many students involved as possible especially as the campaign had stalled during the Michaelmas term of my second year. This was my agenda. I wanted to involve as many students as possible in the campaign and to actually take the fight back to the government and the university - especially at a time when the whole system of student finance was being reviewed. YES, I wanted to see an occupation that would involve as many students as possible and give a real boost to the campaign. I wanted to re establish the F&F reps in colleges to increase the information in colleges through word of mouth. I wanted to do what the campaign had decided were its plans during the first two terms, the wall of debt for instance.

But, time and time again plans were thwarted and intransigence prevailed as attendance dropped off until at the end of the term meetings attendance was one co-chair and myself. Nothing was done until it was decided that students, for some reason unknown to me, didn't know what tuition fees, loans, grants or a graduate tax are. This was the focus during the second term and by the end of Trinity, 2002 the campaign was in all essence dead. It was at this point that I considered resigning as the exec with responsibility for this campaign because I felt that I had nothing to contribute, I had tried, I had fought for action but it became apparent that even trying to establish F&F reps (a minor move) in colleges would not be worked on. Every meeting became a battle with the result, intransigence.

I do not mean to be completely pessimistic about the campaign during my first two terms, there were achievements, but the general trend for the campaign was downwards. Fliers given out in Hilary at a 'union' debate were useful. Also, the 'gold men' were a bit of fun, and to set the record straight these were known about by members of the campaign before the event and the subsequent backlash in the papers.

It is not good enough to blame student apathy for the decline of what was not long ago a campaign which thousands took part in. More than four hundred people visited the occupation of the Divinity School at one time or another, despite the fact that in so doing they were breaking the law. If we are ever to secure a decent and fair higher education funding system then the Finance and Funding campaign needs to draw on the goodwill, ideas and support of those people and the many, many others who hold the same views. That this hasn't been done is the reason for the pitiful state of the campaign.

If OUSU is run by people who think that it should be independent of politics, and who spend a quite inordinate amount of time slagging off people who are opposed to tuition fees because of their political convictions then the Finance and Funding campaign will never recover. Not many students shared Helen Salmon's or Sacha Ismail's political views, but while they ran the campaign it was very active and attracted masses of support.

I do not wish to paint myself as without fault, I have had weaknesses with regard to the campaign but there was nothing for me to do during my first two terms because nothing was really done. This term has seen the campaign as more active with greater opportunities for me to act but during the first two terms my will has been crushed with the effect that I have been not the best executive officer and not as good as I would like to feel that I have been or could have been.

#### Battels

My other portfolio has been battels in which I worked with the Battels Officer Alistair Crosby to update, overhaul the battels guide and to provide numbers to CR's and SU's. I would like to thank Alistair again for his help. He and I really achieved something I think, and showed what OUSU can achieve at its best.

#### New Exec.

Dear new exec. I hope that you retain your energy and achieve all that you want to in OUSU. Each of you stated in the hustings that you would be strong and proactive in holding the sabs to account. In this regard I offer only a few words of advice; information is key. Your ability to hold sabs to account is only as good as the information that you have. I asked Antonia (ex VP Women) whether she felt that she had been adequately held to account by the exec, her answer was essentially no. There are major information asymmetries which mean that you may not always know what the sabs are doing or planning - fight hard to ensure that you get as much information as possible and stand up for what you believe in.

Good luck.

This Term

This term has been a difficult term. I have seen OUSU continually moving in a direction counter to what I think that a students' union is about and in this I include service provision. This term we have seen service provision being cut back, the Oxford Directory is being scrapped - a valuable resource to clubs and societies, the OUSU shops hours have been cut back. We have in the past as a student body elected candidates committed to student services and yet now we find services being cut back.

With regard to the politics of the union I see council moving in a positive direction in which we accept that students as students includes students as members of the world and as members of the community in which we live. We have however, also seen a dramatic change in atmosphere in a negative direction. This is especially true for exec meetings which have become increasingly acrimonious. This term has also seen agreements of procedure made in exec being broken in council which has added to the acrimony of council.

Conclusion (the big ranty bit)

OUSU is at its best when different people with different skills and different political beliefs (and running for election as 'Independent' doesn't mean you don't have political beliefs or that they don't influence the job that you do) work together. The past year has seen a witch-hunt of anyone and everyone who is open about their political views. It might be that this witch-hunt gratifies those sabbatical officers and JCR Presidents who have carried it out, but it is poisoning OUSU and preventing it from serving its members.

Without the people who get involved in OUSU because of their political beliefs it could hardly exist, let alone provide the services and the support to JCRs that it does. If we continue to allow a situation which has got so bad that first-year candidates, eager to participate in their union, are insulted by sabbaticals at the election count there might come a time soon when those people decide that there are better and more rewarding things to do with their time.

There is a very real danger that top-up fees will soon be introduced. If there is to be any hope of preventing that then the leadership of OUSU needs to take action quickly to build a campaign capable of harnessing the talents of all those involved in OUSU.

OUSU doesn't have to be the way it is at the moment. It doesn't have to be the case that lots of first-years don't know what OUSU is, and that the widespread view is that people only get involved in OUSU for the benefit of their ego. The people whom I have worked with as an OUSU exec officer are, for the most part, extraordinarily dedicated, able and hard-working people. OUSU could be a union where its members understand how much it supports the work of the JCR committees, where students act together to make the university and the city a better place, where every student could reap the benefit of a range of services from cheap stationery to advice and support when choosing somewhere to live out, and where OUSU was an integral part in a national campaign which brought about a fair and decent system of funding for higher education.

Unfortunately, I have no confidence that the current leadership has the ability or the inclination to do the things necessary to make this happen; to call off their petty and vindictive crusade, which has lost any justification it could possibly ever have had and to stop beating all the enthusiasm out of those who want to get involved.

As a result I have decided, together with the other members of the current executive, to resign as of Friday, 8th week. My time as exec officer would be nearly up in any case, and there is just a chance that with a change of course OUSU can start doing what it does best - providing services and campaigning. There is no trade-off between the two and the sooner sabbaticals and JCR Presidents realise this and the sooner that they start working with, not against, those who get involved because of their politics, the better for everyone.

Thank you to:

Duncan (who has now left us), Nicky and Rachel for being great Labour Club execs and also to the liberals and the independents.

Antonia, for working on the electoral regs, I hope a real examination of them takes place this year so that they can be evaluated.

## **Phil Thompson**

I will start by saying that I really believe in OUSU and I sadly seem to care about it, enough to care who runs it when I'm not even here. I think this goes for all us retiring execcies. I want OUSU to show its members how good it is; Oxford students really need to feel like they have a dynamic student union again.

The committees:

I like environment committee, which I held for two terms. I spent a lot of time on this committee in Hilary and Trinity setting up a mailing list, putting together a guide for JCR environment reps and generally helping the co-chairs find new direction for the committee. It has certainly done this now, with much thanks to Sally, Kristina, Ailsa and Luke and many other regulars. The great thing about environment committee is its limitless determination to get better and better. And this is why it has become one of the most high profile and effective committees under the OUSU banner this year. I suppose there is always room for improvement however. The one thing that I think could help the committee to get more out of OUSU is if it found a more central place in the student union. There has been a slight sense that this committee is a ghetto, unknown to all but environment reps and Green Party activists. This must be avoided, and I think both the environmentalists and OUSU sabs/execs should try to appreciate each other better. On the whole though, good stuff.

I wouldn't like to know how many hours I have spent at F&F campaign meetings in the last seven terms. I have now seen nine different co-chairs, including myself, all struggle with this sleeping giant of a campaign. Although I wasn't here in the glory days of the anti-fees campaign, I think there has been a noticeable decline in activity even in the last year or so. Direction from the sab in charge is crucial in F&F; it is one of those committees where the biggest input always comes from the President. I think F&F is to some extent a microcosm of OUSU as a whole: the debates that go on there do tend to reflect those at Council. Hence we have an element at F&F determined to moderate and, in my eyes, weaken the campaign for free education with a one-sided campaigning strategy. Now, this is not to say that petitions, letter-writing and speaker meetings do not have an important place, they certainly do. But to use these as a substitute for demos, occupations and other forms of direct action is really badly mistaken. I hope the publication of the government's review of student funding in January is the prelude to a reinvigoration of Oxford student action on this issue. As soon as someone senior in OUSU leads the way – whether through an occupation or some concerted campaign of direct action – others will follow. Unfortunately I'm not convinced that the hunger for that sort of fight is present in OUSU today.

The one committee that I have held all year has been academic affairs. Sonia is to be commended for her work in reviving the committee this term. Before this term I was doubtful about the use of AcAff, but now I can clearly see that it has a huge potential to fulfil its double role – as a support network for JCR officers and as a campaign coordinator. I hope this continues and I hope Sonia finds some energetic new co-chairs to help her. I would urge the

new co-chairs whoever they may be to mobilise students in the fight to preserve Oxford's tutorial system. I would encourage people to apply for this – the next year promises to be a very interesting and active one for AcAff.

The beast that is OUSU:

I'd like to state that I wholly support the actions of my five colleagues who have chosen to resign this week. They all have valid individual reasons for doing so and I share many of their deep concerns about the course the student union is taking. I decided to stay on for two reasons really. First I think it is best that one member from each grouping that got elected onto exec should remain on it, so I want to maintain the Lib Dem voice on exec. For this reason I thought it right to continue, especially to handover to the new exec members. Second, I think that I have not had enough direct experience of OUSU's weaker, more disappointing areas. I know that some of those resigning felt very frustrated with what they were able to achieve, but I feel that on the whole, my committees have been flawed but admirable. Further my view is that OUSU can still be changed; it can be brought back to the middle ground, serving students both as consumers and as members of a community. I know that the 3 new Lib Dems on exec and the 5 new Lib Dem delegates will continue to fight for this balance. We want a balance between OUSU as a major service provider and OUSU as a collective forum unafraid to speak on whatever issues arise. OUSU Council is a democratically representative body and this must be made clearer to everyone. OUSU's leaders need to stop questioning its legitimacy – this only perpetuates its weakness – and start working to ensure it operates better within its current structures.

Lastly I want to state how outraged I am at the way the issue of delegates has been brought up through the usual channel of rumours and leaks to the OxStu. This has not been discussed in executive once. Certain sabbaticals seem not to understand that half the bad feeling there is between exec and sabs wouldn't be there if everything was presented honestly in exec meetings before it was whispered to the press. The delegate issue is one that I hope will soon be discussed openly. When this debate is had, I hope that people remember the relatively small number of cross-campus posts elected in OUSU. Few students would feel represented by a Council made up just of JCR Presidents. The last thing OUSU needs is to allow the parochialism of the college system to gain a greater hand than it has already.

My Vanessa Redgrave impression:

Phew, the fun bit. I've met loads of lovely people being on exec and, just for that reason, I'm glad I stood. Here's a hastily compiled, probably forgetful list of some of the great people. Chris H became the most conscientious voice exec has surely ever seen. Rosie was always genuinely committed to totally genuine welfare provision, and I thank her for that. Rach could be bothered to fight when most of us couldn't, thanks for that and much else. Julia, who has found her true calling taking minutes, just deserves one huge HOH! These guys all made the General Office into the chill-out zone that we never had. Others who were marv as far as I could see: Menace, Nicky, Liz, Edd, Duncan, John, and most of all, Mindy B. To Maria, the reason OUSU ever does anything. Ros, brilliant as women's co-chair, even better in a personal capacity. Thanks to Sean. Best best wishes to Louise, Linsey and Dan and the delegates – the Lib Dem machine has never been stronger. Oh yes, and...

H, for hating it all.

Women's Campaign.

Women's campaign has gone from strength to strength during my time on the exec. I can wholeheartedly attribute this to all of our fantastic co-chairs who this term have been Georgia Toynbee, Ros Dampier and Lesley-Anne Perry and the intelligence and enthusiasm of our VP-Women, Mel Marshall. This term our meetings have been dogged with discussions about female representation and have somewhat disrupted our aim to concentrate on Women's health. Although this changed the focus of the term, the discussions were essential, fruitful and a pleasure to take part in. However, we've still managed to have some great events (which I am sure my co-chairs will elaborate on).

\* An aside - some thoughts\*

It's not easy being an exec officer as a graduate. DPhil students tend to be treated like they are paid researchers - i.e. it is expected that you work 8 hour days, Monday to Friday. Most researchers start their day between 9 and 10am and leave around 6pm. The same is expected of their DPhil students. The sacrifice that you make if you do not meet these expectations is not only the time you spend away from your work but also the good working relationship with your supervisor. Masters students have similar problems - often since their timetables are full of lectures, and sit exams after one year. Those studying for their PGCE are continually busy from 9am to 5pm every working day (and probably much more besides). In light of this, it is not hard to understand why you see so few graduates attend OUSU council and so few stand for the graduate positions. I hope the current sabbatical team bear these problems in mind when they are planning exec meetings.

Since it is extremely hard for graduates to become involved in OUSU the role of the VP-Graduates is particularly important - especially in terms of representation. I wish Andy the best of luck with the rest of the year.

I am saddened by the news of other exec officers resigning - especially since each of them had contributed an enormous amount to this student union. In my opinion, such a situation could have been avoided had everyone on the exec had made sure that the breakdown in communication that clearly contributed to such a situation, had not occurred. However, I hope the executive bring enough attention to the issues that caused each of them to resign. This is the challenge left for the new executive and for the very capable and dedicated sabbatical team. I wish you all the best of luck.

# OUSU Committees

## Academic Affairs Committee

Academic Affairs Committee appears rejuvenated this term, having held three very well-attended meetings with plenty on the agenda. The renewed interest may well have been in response to the alarming rumours about stint reform, and the Committee has proved itself well placed to accumulate experiences in different colleges and faculties and aggregate the opinions and concerns of students. The Committee should provide the bulwark of opposition to changes in teaching provision for reasons of resource efficiency only. The Student Charter drafted by Wadham Student Union has continued to be adopted in other Common Rooms across the University, and there is now the potential for faculty charters to be introduced as part of a move towards a University-wide contract between students and tutors. The Committee still misses the input from JCC representatives, and Sonia's hard work in compiling a comprehensive list of JCC contacts across the departments will be invaluable in setting up a JCC Forum for next term. Many thanks to all those who have attended the meeting in the past term, and especially to Sonia. The Committee is now in desperate need of co-chair(s) to lavish the time and attention on it which it deserves!

## Disabilities Action

Disabilities Action has met twice this term. We have not needed to meet more frequently as the work which we are undertaking at the moment can often be done by small groups, such as poster distribution and visiting other committees - more of this later. We have planned roughly what we are planning to do this year and have begun researching some of the events we are planning to hold such as a disability in the media and disability in sport forum. We are also looking into having some sort of event, and at the moment, we seem to have settled on comedy. We will also be running a campaign based on challenging people's perceptions that disability is purely about mobility issues, but about issues of signing, lip-reading, large print, hearing loops etc. For Trinity Term, early suggestions have suggested that there should be a 'what model is disability?' discussion, which sounds exciting, particularly if we can get the academics to travel down here.

We have tried working with Target Schools this term over incorporating information for SWD into their literature. Target Schools were really receptive to us and hopefully this will increase the number of applications of SWD in the future. It is very important not to see welfare and equal opportunity campaigns solely as under the remit of the VP Welfare and Equal Opportunities. Whilst there must be strong campaigning work going on within the individual caucus groups, the work must permeate into other portfolios so we can represent all of the students here in Oxford. One day, maybe all committees will have an equality section as a permanent item of business, but until then, I hope that the Sabbatical and Executive officers will fill this gap and ensure the needs of under-represented students are noted at all levels. Suggestions for next term's areas of co-operation have included the area of events and accommodation and working with the local community.

Please, co-chairs are required!! Have a chat with Andrew Copson or myself, Penny, if you are interested. Thanks are due - to Rosie Buckland who now leaves us as the exec officer, to Andrew Copson who has excelled himself in his first term, and to Nancy Mendoza, outgoing SWD officer of Balliol.

## Finance and Funding

In Hilary, at the start of our term as co chairs, it became clear that there was a whole generation of students who were thirteen years old last time there was a maintenance grant. Students assumed that the university fee of £1100 paid for their tutorials. A lot of the work of Hilary and Trinity Terms was about bringing the campaign back to life. F&F's activity had waned during Michaelmas Term, attendance and motivation was low. The stunts we organised in Hilary were not well attended, and though we are willing to take part of the responsibility for that, a lot of it was to do with a change in student attitude. To suggest that an occupation would have worked is ludicrous. Consequently, we spent time re-educating students about the problems of HE funding. We produced fact sheets that are so popular in JCRs that we have been asked for reprints. We organised flyering in two occasions to get information out to students. We had sessions on areas of student funding that are often neglected (international students, graduates, etc). But still attendance was low. In Trinity, the VP Finance failed to recover the F&F maillist, and so we were left with no means of contacting those involved in the campaign.

When we started being co chairs, the government had just admitted that the system of HE funding was flawed, and a whole generation of students placed their faith in the Labour Government. If the left wing party in this country realised that there was something wrong, a solution wouldn't be far away. It has now been a year, and there has been no solution. The Finance and Funding Campaign has worked to mobilise students once more. We recruited a lot of first years at Freshers' Fair, and our meetings are once again well attended. We have organised a petition together with the Aldwych group, and collected signatures both through JCRs and by standing on the street. We have written to every SCR member in the University asking them to sign up to a statement against top up fees, and are receiving more responses every day. We have written to JCR Presidents with model motions to put through their JCRs and model letters to encourage their students to write to their local MPs. We have encouraged JCRs to put joint statements against top up fees to their Governing Bodies. We are organising the Oxford contingent to the NUS demonstration in London. And students are beginning to realise that this is much more serious than it once was. There is now a very real threat of top up fees.

We would also like to point out that under no circumstances will we accept the criticism that has been brandished to suggest that this is a 'dead' campaign because its leadership has failed. Yes, the campaign had a lull last year (as much in Michaelmas as in Hilary and Trinity). But that is because this campaign is intrinsically linked to the developments in the government's policy on HE. Appropriately, we are now very active. Even more, we all have a corporate responsibility to ensure that student finance and funding issues are never forgotten. That responsibility extends directly to the President, the three co-chairs and the executive officers. But it is also the responsibility of every member of this council to pull us up on our duties during the course of our office. It is childish, and even worse, irresponsible to voice criticism but do nothing about it. In the last year we have seen two very different approaches. On the one hand, Ms Hunt pushed and continues to push to ensure that hardship funds are fair and battels negotiations are successful. On the other hand, we now have Mr Straw who will paint himself gold and shiver in the snow in order to get the message across. Both presidents worked very hard with the F&F campaign, in their own style. But this campaign does not have to take one approach at the cost of another. We can do both. And that is what we hope our successors as co chairs will take on.

## **Press**

Having only been appointed recently, myself and my deputy (Josh Bellin, Pembroke) I've been settling into the weekly round of doing press releases, speaking to the press and getting retractions from the Times when they inexplicably write stories that aren't true. Not that much to report really - so far, so good.....

## **TUC**

**Oxford and District TUC** meets on the second Monday of the month, at 7.00 p.m., Town Hall.

The **agenda** was the following:

- apologies
  - minutes of last meeting
  - matters arising
  - affiliations and new delegates
  - treasurer's report
  - executive report
  - branch reports
  - campaigns and activist issues
  - correspondence
  - any other business.
1. A considerable part of the meeting was devoted to **FBU strikes**, a representative from FBU spoke about the current arrangements of the proposed strikes and TUC members discuss their actions in support of FBU (like collecting money on Cornmarket for fire workers).
  2. There was also discussed the need to raise awareness with the public about **privatisation and PFI schemes**, particularly in the health service. No control by NHS, but by private companies instead. There was a debate surrounding the issue of whether to focus should be on Health Service, or a broader area on privatisation and PFI in general.
  3. It was mentioned that the government published the 1<sup>st</sup> draft of the **Flexible Working (Procedural Requirements) Regulations 2002**, made under the employment act 2002. They are intended to come into force on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2003. The regulations can be seen at [www.dti.gov.uk/er/flexdraftregs.pdf](http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/flexdraftregs.pdf)
  4. The following **campaigns and activist issues** were highlighted:
    - **Non-violent Die-in against War and sanctions on Iraq.**  
2 Dec, 10.30 a.m., Whitehall Place SW1.  
Org. by voices and ARROW
    - Die-in Preparation**  
1 Dec, Kingsley Hall, Powis Road, off Bruce Road, London E3. Accommodation available on Saturday night and Sunday night.  
Org. by voices.  
[Voices@viwuk.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:Voices@viwuk.freeserve.co.uk) 0845 458 2564  
[Oxfordpledgers@hotmail.com](mailto:Oxfordpledgers@hotmail.com) 07971 406 180
    - Non-violent Direct Action Training Days**  
Introductory training – 7 Dec 10 am – 5 pm  
Advanced training – 8 Dec 10 am – 5 pm  
Asian Cultural Center, manzil way (off Cowley road), East Oxford  
Org. by Oxford Pledge of Resistance Group  
07796 430 141 – Kathryn, more info and booking

#### **Anti-war Local Demonstration**

30 Nov, starts at 12.30 pm in Manzil Way (off Cowley Road), march to the city centre  
Org. by the Stop the War Coalition and others  
For other events (be a Weapon Inspector for the Day, Mass X-mas card signing, etc)  
check the website: [www.stopwar.org.uk](http://www.stopwar.org.uk) and see telephone numbers above  
[office@stopwar.org.uk](mailto:office@stopwar.org.uk)

02070532155/07951235915

#### **Oxford Network for Global Justice and Peace Meeting**

5 Dec, 7.30 pm, 43 St.Giles

Regular planning meetings held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month at Friends' Meeting House

For other events contact via the e-mail address below

[Oxfordpm@yahoo.com](mailto:Oxfordpm@yahoo.com)

07971496180/0165 725251

### **Anti-war National Demonstration**

as part of a Europe wide day of action

15 Feb 2003

Oxford Demonstration on FBU dispute and low pay income in public sector

7 Dec 2002

Org. by TUC

[set@bodley.ox.ac.uk](mailto:set@bodley.ox.ac.uk)

**Second International Day against Adidas** (number one user of kangaroo skin in the world)

8 Feb 2003

Org. by Viva!

[www.savethekangaroo.com](http://www.savethekangaroo.com)

[claudia@viva.org.uk](mailto:claudia@viva.org.uk)

01273777688

## **Womens' Campaign**

We started this term with plans for a major women's health campaign, incorporating speaker meetings, discussions and events to raise awareness of physical, mental and sexual health issues for women. Unfortunately, though, things did not go according to plan. The focus of our term changed quite drastically, when an article appeared in the first week edition of the OxStu on 'discussions' about female representation in OUSU, and more specifically the post of VP Women- "a motion to get rid of the position is said to be in the pipeline for a midterm OUSU Council meeting". Said by whom, we don't know. None of the Sabs would admit to leaking the story to the OxStu, let alone having any motion planned. When the motion on "female representation in OUSU", proposed by OUSU President Will Straw, did appear on the agenda for 3rd week Council, Women's Campaign's opinions were disregarded. The 'discussions' about female representation had taken place within closed sabbatical meetings; female members of OUSU (for whom Women's Campaign is the official representative forum) had had no say in whether a review of female representation was necessary, or as to what forms such a review should take. Women's Campaign passed internal policy that a full time female sabbatical officer should be retained, and that any review of female representation in OUSU should be carried out solely by women. These views were passed on to the Sabs, who did not take them on board. So, we brought an amendment to the motion changing the consultation constituency to all women, got it passed in Council by a huge majority, and watched the proposers withdraw the motion. If they had had such major concerns about an all female consultation, there had been plenty of opportunity to raise these in the debate on the amendment; withdrawing the motion seemed deconstructive and anti-democratic.

The amended motion, now being proposed by two female members of OUSU, also passed but we are still waiting for the positions of co chairs of the consultative process to be properly advertised, let alone appointed, and given the time-frames specified in the motion this seems to undermine the process. Some people are now questioning whether the process will take place at all.

The under-representation of women at all levels of the university is still present and we must not be complacent about it. This is demonstrated strongly by OUSU Council, which seems this term to be dominated more than ever by JCR Presidents, only 6 out of more than 30 of whom are female. Graduate students are even more under-represented at Council, but the Postgraduate

Assembly can pass its own policy; graduates do not have to get their views ratified by a Council dominated by undergraduates in the way that female OUSU members have to get their policy ratified by a Council dominated by men.

Any questions that there might have been about the need for women's officers, Women's Campaign or the VP Women have in many people's eyes been dispelled by the events of this term. It is obviously still seen as appropriate for the method of female representation in OUSU to be dictated to women by groups dominated by men. Let's look at ways to increase female representation- a proper women's assembly, guaranteed female votes in Council, OUSU actively campaigning on it's policy to support the role of women's officer in colleges and oppose any moves to replace the post with "female welfare" or "equal opportunities" officers. Hopefully the consultation on female representation will provide the women of OUSU an opportunity to improve women's participation and representation in ways that they deem most appropriate.

During the rest of the term, Women's Campaign has held it's regular meetings and has always taken up its vote in OUSU Council. We have also held a highly successful porn event- a film viewing followed by a discussion; a discussion on violence against women for World Day Against Violence Against Women; and we will be having a discussion on mental health followed by a women's curry next week, all women welcome (Monday 8th week, 5pm St John's College Larkin Room).

Special thanks must firstly go of the women who've attended women's campaign and kept it the active and vibrant committee that it should be. Secondly, thanks to all of those who spoke up in Council in favour of Women's Campaign's amendment and so enabled the women of the university to soon have their own say in how they should and could be best represented: Penny Berril (speaking on behalf of her mandate from St.Hilda's JCR), Rodrigo Davies, Catherine Wallis, Eleanor Thompson, Oscar Van Nooijen, Jane MacTaggart, Andrew Thomas, Lesley-Ann Perry, Laura West, Liz Chare.