

the GREMLIN

5p



NEWSPAPER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT STUDENTS' UNION No. 1 - 16th JUNE, 1978



AUTONOMY?

Students of all political persuasions were shocked by the non-response of the NUS Executive to the recent government discussion paper on Student Union financing.

The document, 'The Financing of Student Unions in Universities and Other Institutions of Higher Education and Further Education, was published on May 15th and had been expected by many delegates who attended the NUS Extra conference at Blackpool.

High Learning, ex-National Treasurer of NUS and a former member of the Socialist Students Alliance had outlined in conference the contents of a document which the NUS believed to be a "fundamentally accurate" assessment of the government's proposals. The document in the possession of the NUS had come from an impossible source, he said, and the effects of such proposals being put into practice would be disastrous for all Students' Unions. The Executive's response had many delegates to believe that their leadership were being less than candid. Indeed, Mr Joe Sigmans, retiring NUS President, went so far as to make a personal attack on Learning via MAILMAIL immediately after conference, while denying that the government had any intention of having such proposals. Today, one month after the Department of Education and Science published the document, the response of the NUS Executive has been felt to many to be lamentable.

was followed. To do this and to submit a resolution for the Executive meeting of May 24th 1978, would be to see that the majority of the National Executive would support the resolution without actually discussing it. Sigmans is hoping the whole issue at the July conference. One would look no further than his statements at the National Executive the 1977 conference for this purpose. It is also clear that she is keeping the Broad Left in line by portraying the NUS as a radical democracy who cannot accept the inevitability of change.

The NUS however, is not prepared to allow Sigmans to be involved by stand in the way of the candidate NUS response to these proposals. We have approached Trevor Phillips, the National Organisation of Labour Students, N.O.L.S., and the Communist Party. Despite our political differences on this subject which should and will be argued, the need for a response is clear and the method by which it is devised must not become a political football.

Campbell's analysis of the attitude of the National Executive seems to be borne out by the current Executive edition of National Student which is freely available on campus. The editorial, 'This is Britain in its 1970s' is full more than a collection of well-worn clichés and platitudes.

Major Robert, the NUS/DU Delegation Leader to the Extra conference seems also to share the Union President's criticisms of Mr. Sigmans. "I can only refer you to the appendix of the conference report which deals with this report," he said. "That was taken mainly from an NUS document, and I am a member of it. For the sake of Conservative Students."

UACSA are sending several people to the briefing conference in Leeds. They were called for a private response to these proposals, included in the delegation was the following list: the Sub-Editors (Ed), the Treasurer, the EC Finance, and the President.

POOR RESPONSE

A Briefing Conference to discuss the real issues from the approach has been called by NUS Sigmans for Saturday June 17th. The tone of Mr Sigmans's extended invitation does not imply that the delegates are campaign being necessary to counter the proposals.

Dear President, As soon known, the NUS/DU have now published their proposals on the basis of Student Union funding. In view of the policy issues raised, and the variety of practical problems likely to derive from such a new scheme of Union financing, NUS invites you to attend a briefing conference...

Yours sincerely, Joe Sigmans, President

SELL-OUT!

Only six years have passed since Maggie Thatcher, Secretary of State for Education and Science, first described an article on the activities of students' unions - an article which was widely distributed by the mass actions of students. Can we do it again? Although the present proposals on financing have a somewhat similar title 'The Financing of Student Unions', it is based with fundamentally different material contents.

The most crucial difference between 1972 and the present is that today we are faced with the active collusion of the NUS leadership in the government's attack.

MOTIVE

Two people attending the current attitude is a student representative to the NUS, Trevor Phillips, President of the NUS, and Terry Phillips, President of the NUS, and a former member of the Communist Party. Despite our political differences on this subject which should and will be argued, the need for a response is clear and the method by which it is devised must not become a political football.

Whether our wings are clipped depends on how politically astute we are. If we are stupid we shall have the same old story of our unions continually and helplessly, we are stronger than ever before. Whether 'The British Road to Socialism' will benefit the CPGB is debatable. It certainly will not benefit the NUS.

Trevor Phillips, on the other hand, is the Marxist-revolutionary. He is a former member of the Communist Party. He does, he claims, originally to start debate and then discuss. He hopes his analysis on the knowledge that the government is not an omnipotent entity of its own right and that the government would not take it on for itself. Trevor may appear the hero of the gagging being more advantageous to the party proposal than is the necessary reply to stop the cut - should we? Certainly he is correct in the assumption that we are weaker now than in 1972, and he should have -- the result of the period to have remained part of a broad left dominated Executive which has orchestrated the weakness. Thus Sigmans and Phillips have been party to information and private material discussion on the question of financing prior to the briefing conference 1977, that much is obvious when the documents they produced for that conference, and which are compared with the 1978 document filed. At no time was the membership informed of the true contents behind the strategy.

The mass of 1972 news will have gone by now, but Sigmans (and Phillips) will have given us the present attack to be discussed by delegates and party leadership.

Whether Sigmans will allow the government proposals were published the said in the Times.

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Snippets

The Southbank Show

Rabbit Warren?

Spence Court, on London Road in Canterbury, the first official 'annexe' of the campus, has now been operating for more than eight months. The twenty or so residents seem to have been able to develop this converted hotel into the sort of community which it is not possible to knit on the campus.

An insider, resident there since last October, told **The Gremlin** that perhaps the first noticeable thing about the place was that unlike college, the floors were mixed with women and men living comfortably as neighbours. This has encouraged better relations between all concerned and there have been no incidents of discourtesy to justify a return to single-sex arrangement of accommodation.

CATERING

The second noticeable thing is that the students of Spence Court, physically off campus, are tied to the catering scheme on the same basic terms as residents proper of the parent college Keynes. Students who were on courses which did not require them to come up to the campus as often as others, soon realised that they were losing money in the scheme from which they could not opt out. The self-catering facilities in Spence Court are generally recognised to be adequate for those who wish not to eat up on the hill, but the contractual system which governs the residents makes self-catering uneconomical. The students soon discovered that they could not consider themselves simply an appendage of college social life. It was impracticable for them to regard the campus as the social centre of their lives. Spence Court is closer geographically to the town centre with its pubs, restaurants, etc. It would be silly to pretend it was simply the 'far end' of the campus.

CUBES

Another aspect of Spence Court life which separates it from ordinary student-in-college-room life is the fact that the building was not purpose-built. The house had stood since 1882 and consequently the rooms are not uniform. This, of course, tends to encourage individuality in any community, and is far more 'comfortable' than the 'utility cubes' of the campus. However, these social advantages have to be seen beside problems specific to the Spence Court set-up. For example, the fact that some rooms are too small for adequate study space, desks, etc., means that study space is shared, with all the problems of personality clashes that this will lead to.

Perhaps it is worthwhile noting that a reluctance on the part of certain students in Spence Court to regard themselves as part of a community, but simply occupiers of a 'different' college room, has encouraged the postponement of the development of an identity among the twenty who live there.

That they share the same roof automatically gives Spence Court residents common interests. As it reaches the end of its first academic year in existence, those interests are making themselves apparent. The contractual nature of the catering scheme which prevents the fullest use of resources. The general level of facilities, particularly the slowness of the maintenance service. The third thing that Spence Court needs is recognition by students and administration alike, of its status as an independent community.

The students' Union has discovered the great outdoors and your reported was there to capture the occasion. At last week's Junior College Council, the fact that the upper senate chamber in which these meetings are usually held was not available, led to the fifty or so representatives of the assorted committees looking for a place to hold their fortnightly gathering.

The first choice, the committee room in the union office was abandoned as sections of Rutherford JC(R)C began to pop out of the open windows under the unending pressure of those trying to get through the door behind them. The solution was simple, so simple that it was only necessary to vote three times in order to carry it out. They escaped the restrictive confines of bricks and mortar and plumped instead for a roll in the sweet smells of new mown hay. All fifty of them!

The scenario was impressive: the executive surrounded by the massed ranks of the college representatives, lined up on the grassy banks, notebooks at the ready, while far below them and at a desk brought out especially to allow some retention of procedural dignity, presided Colin Campbell and Mike Blundell. Oh what fun and games would now be had!

Of course the whole thing was set up. The seriousness of the main item of the agenda had been dramatically heightened by the ploy of contrasting it with the absurdity of the surroundings. Though certain people,

who had better remain anonymous for the sake of the electorate, took the attitude that this was to be an occasion reminiscent of the wilder of school sports-days, it soon became clear that the tabled discussion of the rules and constitution of the proposed new Student Representative Council on which all of these august persons would soon be sitting, was the most serious thing they had ever discussed on JCC.

I was astounded at the speed with which the regular business of the meeting was gone through with ne'er a hint of the characteristic niggling and feet-dragging that has long been a part of JCC.

And so, with Campbell and Blundell, their backs to the pond, facing the rest, their backs to the wall (apart from one humberstone person who insisted on chasing dryads with a hunting horn...) the meeting proper began.

Michael read through the new rules governing the SRC as it will be put to the UGM while attempting to clarify what they meant. The Robert McKenzie dialogue between he and Campbell was faultless: 'I know this is all

very new, but most of it's the same as the old one...'. For a few minutes it appeared that the only radical new change was that Keynes would no longer be able to bring about world socialism by a CGM and a referendum. They'd now have to take it to Council and a UGM. The assorted representatives appeared bemused, if not openly suspicious, but all were genuinely eager to get their collective teeth into what was being explained.


Unfortunately this eagerness soon gave way, in some individuals, to the classic misrepresentation of ideas and conflation of proposals that characterises a certain breed of student politician. The soggies arose in their wrath. The most outstanding award must go to the person who forced a twenty-five

minute 'discussion' about the function of Standing Orders Committee which culminated in the Concise Oxford Dictionary definitions of the words 'adjudicate' and 'advise' being solemnly read to the assembled throng.

The ostensible purpose of this meeting of the clans was to decide on the wording of the proposals to be put to the next UGM on the establishing of an SRC. The most striking conclusion this reporter reached after observing the proceedings for more than two hours, was that the next time the JCC decide to congregate on the grass behind the union office, the president would do better to stay indoors and address them from his upstairs window.

Albert Ross.

BE
reAListic
demand
the
impossible.....



sweeney todd's pizza parlour

Have a break from steak!

tel. 53148

← guess what happened to the last person who didn't eat at SWEENEY'S?

Inspected

Following stories in the national press in recent months, a growing number of students have expressed concern with some aspects of Her Majesty's 'security' forces, namely the Special Branch, in relation to students and staff working on many campuses.

Students have for many years had reason to protest at the links between Britain's police and various agencies of foreign governments such as the FBI, SAVAK, BOSS, etc., because of the particularly difficult position overseas students find themselves in whilst at relatively liberal British colleges. Recent press reports, backed up with unquestionably genuine information from a variety of sources, suggest that these days all students should expect some scrutiny of their activity, not just those from countries such as Iran, Chile and India, to name but three.

A little research can indeed uncover a lot of information that was not covered in the Derek Lennard motion on 'Surveillance of Political Activists' passed overwhelmingly by the last Union General Meeting.

Undoubtedly, the publicity given by the unlucky 'Colonel B' to the activities of departments of state not normally known for their eagerness to subject themselves to public scrutiny, has increased general awareness of the 'domestic' surveillance undertaken by the police and other departments for unspecified purposes. The case recently of two members of the Hunt Saboteurs Association arrested and convicted by the National Computer is just one of many examples of information gathered ostensibly for one purpose (a car registration number) being used for a totally different one - namely to implicate two people in a criminal act.

IRELAND

Interestingly enough, the techniques of gathering 'non-specific' information on citizens for computer filing are not new. But they are developed by the British forces in the North of Ireland. Press reports last year indicated that at least ninety per cent of the population of

the six counties have this sort of information (e.g. the colour of their living room wallpaper) noted by army units to be stored away on a computer filing system to which the army and the RUC have unlimited access.

An investigation of other national and local episodes confirms this general trend in Britain today and goes some way to suggest what purposes collecting 'unspecified' information could serve. This is one of the reasons why students are so touchy about the question of police on the campus for whatever reason. Here are some instances:

At the last two NUS conferences delegates and guests of the Union have been forcibly prevented from participating by the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976. This meant that they were not in fact charged with criminal activity. They were not necessarily accused of breaking any law. They were quite simply — and legally — harassed.

EXCUSES

In more recent cases two student unions have discovered that lists of their politically active members have been passed to Special Branch officers. In one case the policeman concerned is said to have derided the list of twenty or so activists passed to him saying that existing files were far more comprehensive.

In another case, when police were told graffiti saying 'I killed Kenneth Singh (the Asian boy stabbed to death in East London a few weeks ago), had been found in toilets near a building used by students from North East London Polytechnic, they used the incident to collect from bar staff a list of left-wing students who drank there.

On this campus too there

have been many incidents to report, apart from the expected ones concerning overseas students' activities being scrutinised by agents of their governments. For several years now, it has been common knowledge that serving police officers are present in the student body, on courses such as law. When actions such as the occupation of university buildings have been taken as part of the various campaigns fought by the union, photographs of those taking part have been passed to the police. Perhaps by the administration, perhaps by those police officially on campus, but most likely by other students who wish to ingratiate themselves by giving such information as has been proved to be the case in other colleges. Individual officers at Kent have confidentially admitted that such offers have been made to them but have not revealed by whom.

In 1976, at the first conference of the Student Movement Campaign on Ireland held at Kent, open to all students an ex-member of the FCS, well-known on campus, stole documents from one delegate's briefcase and passed them to the Special Branch. That student is still here and has a room at Keynes. Later in the year, the house of Pamela Holmes, Union Treasurer and secretary to the campaign, was raided by police from the London Special Branch. They took away (without receipt) documents and books, some of which can be bought in Dillon's!

And of course the activity of the Drugs Squad on this campus is so well known as to be obvious. What is more frightening is that two summers ago, in an attempt to prevent the planned free festival in Broad Oak Valley, police were billeted on this campus in their hundreds with the full collusion of the administration.

And finally, returning to Colonel B for a moment, consider the implications of the fact that much research done on this campus is covered by the Official Secrets Act by virtue of direct or indirect links with the Ministry of Defence.



Hurry it up, Sarge, I've got a seminar at two o'clock . . .

STUDENTS IN ELIOT CALL FOR TAYLOR'S RESIGNATION

On Tuesday June 18th, the day after The Gremlin goes on sale, a no-confidence in the master of Eliot college is being presented by the J.C.C. to their College General Meeting. We hope to be able to bring you a result of that meeting in our stop-press column so look elsewhere in this issue. Many students have scratched their heads and wondered why Eliot's 'now-we're-radical-now-we're-not' Junior College Committee have decided on such a strong move, an action normally reserved for times of generalised strife as in the no-confidence served on Derek Crabtree in the catering campaign.

So what's on their minds? What has this harmless-looking garden gnome done to hurt them? the answer is nothing. Nothing at all. In fact a record of almost total inactivity. Mr Taylor is noticeably quick in disciplinary measures. He's a competent gardener. He's a family man. He's a wino. Beyond that he is thoroughly useless. Let us be more specific:

On March 2nd 1977 Eliot J.C.C. made proposals for easing the problem of the internal posting system in the college. In true form the master left the matter for the J.C.C. to deal with. With no



Eliot JCC's

Martin Humberstone

co-operation behind them it was impossible and the matter took a year to resolve itself. On March 1st it was agreed to look into the feasibility of running the IPS inside. This being agreed upon a quotation was given on March 3rd for re-siting the system. On May 24th Eliot J.C.C. sent a letter enquiring

as to why the IPS was still in its old site. No satisfactory answer was given. Even now the problem is unresolved.

Following a mandate from a C.G.M., the J.C.C. proposals for re-siting corridor kitchens were passed to the master. The whole point was to make them safer and cleaner. Mr Taylor referred the whole question to the safety committee, took no further part in the discussion, and made it clear that his interest in college amenities was to say the least, a passing one.

These two incidents provide a background to the long expressed dissatisfaction felt with Mr Taylor's mastery (sic) in Eliot. No doubt the C.G.M. discussion in which he will doubtless defend himself to the best of his ability, will provide even more information especially to non-Eliot members, concerning his record since he took over from Alec Whitehouse.

New Constitution at U.G.M.

At the UGM this afternoon (4 pm outside Union Office, Wed 14th June) there will be a debate over the proposed changes to the student union's constitution. The amendments were the results of six weeks work, including three meetings of Junior College council, and a working party which sat in almost continuous session for fourteen days. After

every draft was prepared, copies were dispatched to all JC(R)C's and executive members. The junior college Council and working party meetings were advertised as being open and crucial due to the far-reaching nature of the proposed changes. The working party consisted of the President, the president-elect, four JC(R)C chairpersons, Chairperson of SOC,

and any other member of JCC who wished to attend.

Those who attended on a regular basis were: Colin Campbell, President. Roger Smith, president-elect Mike Blundell, Chairperson of SOC. Jakki Hawkes, Union secretary John Preston, president of Darwin JCC. Beth Logan, VP Academic Affairs, and UKK Liberals.

Thus it came as quite a

shock when the UKC Liberals issued a run of 2,000 leaflets, penned by that well-known descendant of George Washington (Dave Vasmer), and ex-Christian Union Person (Beth Logan), which contains such lies and distortions that the rest of the working party were rendered quite speechless. Perhaps it is a new tactic: argue your case through

every available forum, and when you lose, claim there has been no debate.

I do not intend to argue the case fully here, let the UKC Liberals justify their truncated version of democracy to the membership at the UGM.

NOTE: We even moved the UGM to an afternoon slot for those who live out, we intend to debate the constitution

after 5.15 pm in order that part-one students who will have examinations could attend and arranged for at least one dining hall to open later in order that people be not starved. One further point, we had the meeting arranged outside so that even the sun-worshippers could attend without loss. See you there!

Pilgrim's Progress Report

Keynes is quite a nice college — lots of people contentedly pass three years under its mellow portals — there are rumours, some actively like it. It is certainly one of the friendliest of the colleges, welcoming people from all walks of student life, from all political and religious persuasions. But Keynes also is the college containing one of the biggest and most persistent of flaws. That is an almost total disregard of student needs and lack of student services.



Maybe because Keynes tends to be the most 'open' of the colleges its lack of services can be most readily criticised, and not only those of us ruddy-faced from the comforts of home are affected. There have been loud rumblings from the post-graduates.

The Easter vacation saw a new low in services, with long queues in the dining hall, the servery selling very few sandwiches and the shop opening the most erratic hours. Complaints culminated in a petition of over 270 signatures and representations from relevant trades unions pressurised direct executive action from the central college office.

The following measures were pushed for:
(a) The servery and shop should remain open for regular hours and the shop should be open at lunchtimes. Sandwiches and pies should be provided at the servery until it closes in the late afternoon.

(b) The dining Hall should be sufficiently staffed to avoid lengthy queues.

(c) Clear lists of rooms available to members of the University should be made public.

(d) Regular meetings should be held between students and management to settle minor problems and irritations as and when they occur. Easier access to the central colleges officer manager was also sought.

As a result the postgraduates set up a Vacation Action Fund 'which will be used to make non-University members on the campus aware of any severe degradation of services should this occur'.

Of course, a lot of problems referred to are peculiar to the vacation and therefore tend to affect postgraduates most. But even the average three-term student will recognise something in this situation.

The shop prices are deliberately inflated because of the 'captive' custom it

relies on. Its hours are erratic and closing and opening is tailored to the equally erratic bus services.

The Bar — what can one say? No soda water, not much ice, a limited range of beers and licensing hours which do their best to make sure you take the bus down town in drythroated desperation. And if you're lucky to be here when the wooden shutter is up, the chances are you will have to wade through a crowd of fellow students only to be confronted by a student-hating bar-man who thinks Oxbridge is the only 'proper' University.

The coffee bar — the staff are nice as are the sandwich fillings. But everything else is stale. Permanently assaulted by the ravages of 'staff

Students are renowned for their apathy. The usual explanation is 'I came here to get a degree, and anyway it doesn't affect me...' Name one student who ever got a degree without coffee!

So come on, fellow Keynesites, demand proper sarnies and beer, as well as cheaper prices. You have nothing to lose but the queues

'shortage' the hours are erratic, the sandwiches sporadic, and the queues long. The coffee is good but that is not much consolation for the hapless student who is confronted either with a blockade of fellow caffeine addicts of a polite 'shut at 2.00 pm' notice.

MAY BE

We sat there apprehensively. It was what we had all been waiting for — a virgin umbrella — meeting that is. A Chairman nominated himself, as did the secretary — it was a female — a good sexist start. We began by noting how few people had turned up and then fed our power-complexes by deciding we wouldn't give the absent societies anything at all. Apathy shouldn't be subsidised we said. Then, feeling vaguely guilty, we decided we'd better look at their budgets anyway. It all had to be done properly.

That's where the problems started. What were we supposed to be doing anyway? There was an air of eagerness, even willingness, reminiscent of Battersea dogs or Headgirls on Open-Days. But there was also a pervading air of uneasiness. I mean we had read the constitution, and listened attentively to the Treasurer's instructions read out in half-empty rooms, but there was still an overall confusion. Should subscriptions be included? Were Executive dicta guidelines or gospel? How much discretion did we have? Should we have?

The meeting was predictable — a few dominant people



Union Treasurer

Pamela Holmes

(the secretary and the Treasurer), a lot of willing followers, and the genuinely thick who had only gone along under equal measures of pressure and fear. The Budgets were worked through with smug self-effacement; spending Union money had never been a hard choice. Not surprisingly, those societies not present had their allocations somewhat shorn. Those present kindly knocked off a few quid from ample starting points. Well-satisfied we adjourned the meeting after an hour and a half.

So good clean fun was had by all, but the miasma of unease never quite dispersed. The 'umbrellas' are a good idea in theory. They do allow better financial planning by the Executive and Finance Committee, they do force societies to think ahead; they should stop the last minute summer rush for funds. But practice is not always hot on the heels of the theory. There should have been a member of the executive there. Powers should have been properly defined. Discretion should be limited and there should have been a greater sense of urgency and importance. What about those societies who handed in budgets and didn't turn up? What about those who did nothing at all? There was a notable lack of information and publicity, but were these the only reasons people failed to show? Or is the theory that 'everything will work out all right in the end' all-pervading on this campus? Sometimes practice would not be allowed to override policy. It involves sticking by principles and understanding them thoroughly.

Mayibuye (Cultural unit of African National Congress) performing songs and poems of national liberation.

together with speakers from Britain and South Africa, including Ron Hayward, General Secretary of the Labour Party.

Tickets are 20 pence from the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Following this there will be a torchlight procession to 10 Downing Street, where a letter will be presented to the Prime Minister.

Competition



The Duck needs no caption — but he needs a name.

South Africa

A 24-hour vigil will take place outside South Africa House, Square, in memory of the dead of Soweto, from midnight, 16/17th June. The vigil is being organised by the International Anti-Apartheid Year Co-ordinating Committee. Different organisations and groups are taking responsibility for different periods of the day — participants are welcome at all times.

It is very easy for the British student to offer token solidarity with the black majority of South Africa.

Any vaguely aware person will feel outrage and disgust at the treatment of blacks in that

country. Read any newspaper, listen to any radio news, look at the television documentaries, and one need not have any political awareness to identify with the oppressed majority. The white South African is not a politically likeable species. The black freedom fighter is easily romanticized, and we all love a hero (or a heroine, for that matter).

But how many of us go beyond this nebulous feeling of sympathy? How many pass beyond a Times editorial to a real understanding of the political situation in South Africa? Life is not just a white man with the whip, and the black in the bush. In Africa there is a real political struggle

for real political power, and our sympathetic rumblings are just not enough. A struggle for freedom is taking place and we cannot afford to abstain on the sidelines; we are not umpires. We either give active support or we are consciously supporting a repressive regime. We cannot be indecisive. There is no such thing as an impartial viewer of the South African arena.

Friday June 16th is the second anniversary of the Soweto massacre in South Africa. South African police opened fire on a peaceful protest by school children. Over two hundred people were killed. Subsequent events have shown beyond doubt the overwhelming

opposition of the South African black community to the evil policy of apartheid and racial tyranny practised by the Vorster Regime.

Don't commemorate the event in your armchair. Do more than donate a token fifty pence to the 'cause'. Get up and show your solidarity — do something — it's our struggle too! The South African Freedom Rally will take place at 7.30 pm. at Central Hall, Westminster. The programme will combine speeches, music, song and poetry. Among the participants are:

Jubala — playing 'Children of Soweto'.
Peggy Seeger and Ewan McColl

UMBRELLAS' ARE NEEDED

Wednesday sees the last U.G.M. of the academic year and clutching soggy voting papers we tearfully wave farewell to the present sabbaticals. As always (?) the event promises a pot-pourri of scintillating motions but the farewell batch surpasses itself. There is literally something for everyone. The welfare of the student is kept firmly in mind.

ash

Chris Moran looks to our civil welfare with a motion on a local councillor; Pam Holmes to our fundamental rights (especially abroad); Rod McCartney protects us from ourselves and the clutching imperialist hands of the tobacco factories. Not to mention safety from the prospect of Joh Baines vomiting. A helpful breakdown of how to spend your grant on suicide is offered and salvation in the form of an anti-smoking clinic (presumably the occupants don't smoke rather than the erection of a fireproof structure). Rutherford J.C.R. look after our minds by censuring the *Morning Star* and offering the *Guardian* — guaranteed pure by the Kent Area Health Authority.

revered

All call for more publicity, more information and lots more work for next year's sabbaticals. The devil finds work for idle hands, so they say. Maybe that explains the

last two motions — sure to be the highlight of the year. If there is one thing most people will agree on it is that our revered president is well-known. But apparently not well enough honoured. In the wake of renewed interest in the satanic hills of the far north (world cup, drugs, oil and nationalisation) there is move to put our President MacIsmo at the head - nay above the bonny hills of Scotland.

deity

One motion calls for Mr Campbell to be made Emperor, the other that he should have the chance to prove his omnipotence. Both express regret at his being unable to run for the position of God (it being well known He was Jewish). But even an earthly figurehead should get privileges (like vans) and these are catered for.

splash

So all you doubting thomases who feel Colin is incapable of reaching such heights of excellence — come

and pass a motion allowing him to at least get his feet wet trying it. And all you paid up members of the Campbell fan club come and support your leader. Even God has disciples.

"I wish to move a procedural motion"



BOA-CONSTRUCTORS AGAINST THE NAZIS!!



SCRUNCH!!

Anti fetishism?

"HELP! SEND IN THE S.P.G. MONGOOSE!!"

INCANT

HISTORY OF

Back in 1966, when INCANT first appeared, and when the '500' had returned, "on the whole contented with their lot" [INCANT editorial No 2.], the 'independent' newspaper of UKC began to confront the question of whether its role consisted on the one hand in mirroring that contentment, or on the other in criticising and campaigning. For ten years INCANT attempted, with less rather than more success, to negotiate a path between the twin conceptions of investigative journalism and reportage. In more recent years INCANT has come down decisively against any positive role, and in favour of simplistic, and often ill-researched reportage. The overall product now resembles a conglomerate paste up of NATIONAL STUDENT, INTERCOMM and Nigel Dempster writ large, supplemented by teleprinter 'sports coverage' and adjectival reviews. Never an outstanding affair, INCANT is now distinct solely in its aggregate ordinariness...

This much has long been obvious to most students at UKC. The following reproduction is from Incant 108 (March 10th 1976) signed by seventy-two students who were concerned enough about the low level Incant had reached to attempt to inject it with new blood, debating its inadequacies in the pages of the paper itself. More than two years later something more than this 'dialogue' is patently needed. You are holding it in your hand.

Incant's inability to respond in any serious manner to these (valid) criticisms, as evidenced by the reply is indicative of something amiss with the paper above and beyond these specific criticisms. This should have been anticipated by the seventy-two.

The idea that the problem was essentially Jon Longman's vendetta against the left (and vice versa) failed to take into account the history of student journalism on this campus since 1966 and doesn't touch upon the character of Incant as a whole, that is its conception of 'independence' in reporting, a conception which had dogged its development for a decade.

Longman's editorship, following the revival of Incant simply brought to the fore a trend which was already established as the dominant one within the paper. Incant has always lacked consistent presence; students have always read it simply because it's all they have to read beyond their college news-sheets. The faults pointed to in the letter were definitely not specific to Longman's reign, all that he was uniquely responsible for was an open fight with sections of his readership over the question of a constitution and a change of structure for the paper itself.

EARLY DAYS

The reticence of the early Incant is perhaps excusable. Back in the dark days of 1966, with less than a thousand students, confronting an overwhelmingly monolithic and patronising institution which was intent on reproducing a plastic Oxbridge in the hills of Kent, students were content to campaign against the most glaringly debilitating imported anachronisms — the strict canteen system, the farce of formal dining, a total lack of facilities.

As the original vision of Kent University was systema-

tically distorted largely by the total failure of financial provision to keep up with stated intentions, (i.e. seven or more colleges, a million books in the library, etc.) Incant charted the decline of UKC adequately enough, complaining that: 'One of the major criticisms of incant is that it has been far too introverted for a newspaper... the main reason... is undoubtedly because Incant reflects the thoughts and opinions of University students in general: these are introverted...'

'...Current events of a national and local scale feature less and less in the conversation of and thoughts of students, but trivial issues loom up in the mind out of all proportion, excluding more important considerations.

'...If internal affairs are viewed in their correct perspective, in proportion to events taking place outside the University, this educational experience would be more feasible...'

(Incant Editorial Issue No. 3., Feb. 15th 1966.)

This might have prefaced a bright future. Had Incant used its potential as a catalyst to place itself in the vanguard of a search for this broader perspective in student affairs, then it might indeed have fulfilled its early promise. However, having complained of its 'reflective' character Incant always tended to gravitate towards the status quo. Positive suggestions were sacrificed to vague formulas and protestations that something (Incant never did manage to find out what), was missing.

Take John Longman's pitiful schematic psychologising in the issue of Feb. 11th 1976 — exactly a decade later — where he writes: 'Opinions vary as to the solution of number of campus problems. Apathy continues to be rampant. I was chatting to a former UKC student last week. She was telling me that weekends seven and eight years ago were just as dead as they are now. She remarked that on a return visit to the campus last year, she was appalled by the amount of vandalism — a disease that is spreading rapidly across the University.'

Now at this point we might be forgiven for expecting a serious analysis of the causes of vandalism. We leave you to decide whether the following sub-Eysenckian cliché-ridden blurb is serious: 'Times may be hard, and the going tough (sic), bringing out the worst in the human mind. This however, is no excuse for the senseless smashing of windows, machines and beer-glasses which are now becoming a threat to our well-ordered existence. Those guilty of these acts must exercise self-control so as not to ruin the enjoyment of their fellow students.'

'Apathy and vandalism apart, where has all the fun gone? The campus is fast becoming an intolerable place in the eyes of many people... Let's have some enjoyment. After all, life is a form of 'game. and games are supposed to be enjoyable, despite their competitive nature.'

One dripping paragraph later, having positively rejoiced in the well-ordered (if competitive) existence that is this 'game' of life, Longman has the unmitigated gall to announce: 'We (Incant) only appreciate constructive and helpful criticism... we believe in independent thought and also in the right of individuals to have their say...'

That Incant, under Longman, consistently refused any attempt to democratise its structures by working out a constitution, seems not to have in any way contradicted the professed desire for 'independent' thought.

If the Incant of 1966 at least had the excuse of having to make its way through uncharted wasteland, then a decade later, there was no justification for such an abdication of journalistic responsibility. Indeed the backpedalling could hardly have been more marked.

Perhaps most purely expressed, Incant's theory of 'independence' was nothing more than a 'bucket mentality', i.e. you, the students, pour it all in; we, the journalists, pour it all out again for your consumption. Take the following from the Editorial of issue No. 56, June 17th 1970: 'Over the last term or so Incant has received a fair bit of criticism notably through such genuine free Press (sic) periodicals as FUSS (the journal published by the Registry...): "Leftwing and autocratic, irresponsible to its genuine duties of News broadcasting...'

'...The paper is open to anyone to publish his or her views and it has been used to this end. If the majority of articles have been leftish, then one can only assume that this is because the right is inarticulate.'

So Incant wasn't really about playing a positive role in campus life at all. Merely content to mirror the views donated to it by those who for one reason or another contributed, Incant was 'leftish' when the general tone of the contributions was 'leftish' and 'irresponsible' when the view they mirrored was essentially a right-wing one. And how jolly lucky we all were at UKC where things were so hunky dory that this was all a 'balanced' newspaper had to be... It is only natural that in keeping with this principle of reflective rehash that the issues covering that glorious period 1968-70 resemble a shotgun wedding between OZ and the Daily Mail.

REFORMABLE?

INCANT No 108 March 2nd 1976 Independent Viewpoint

Readers of Incant may have noticed that there has been something of a battle occurring between the Incant Editors and what we shall loosely describe as 'the Left'.

In virtually every Incant there occurs everything from direct attacks e.g. 'The extremists on the Executive' (Article re: Morning Star) to attacks on, and attempts to, undermine the most basic ideas and institutions which the left supports e.g. 'NUS splits' or 'JCC's Slam Union Executive'.

At the same time, in virtually every issue there comes a letter which is written purely to correct misinformation and to outline a particular issue as a whole so as to correct the narrow slant which a previous Incant article contained.

This article is not intended to be a reply to the last Incant's misdeeds but to attempt to outline the basic causes of the dispute and to argue why the time has come for a profound change in the way Incant is run. The student body as a whole must be given the final say in Incant's policy and the self-perpetuating clique must be removed once and for all.

On Criticism of the Left and the Union

Over the last five years Incant's attacks have always been most vociferous when there has been a 'left' Student Union Executive.

The only thing which kept Incant from bankruptcy was the finance given by those very Left Executives to Incant. These finances have run into several hundreds of pounds, as the figures below will testify:

14th May, 1973 — £550 grant.

6th June, 1973 — Loan of £132. (Never repaid).

27th Sept. 1973 — Loan of £252, repaid on 9th October.

26th July, 1974 — £400 grant.

1973 — Guaranteed Union advertising.

1975-76 — Guaranteed Union advertising.

At all times these finances were given without any strings attached and without any pressure upon the Editors... with one exception which we shall discuss later.

Secondly the present revival of Incant was initiated by the Left Executive of last June. That Executive with four Left Sabbaticals, actually asked the E.O. for Communications to come back with proposals for a Student Union Newspaper. That proposal gradually changed from a Student Union Newspaper to an Independent Newspaper with Union pages to an independent newspaper with no Union pages.

Not Dictatorship But Democracy

As we have shown it is not a desire to prevent criticism, or to impose a line which has caused the friction between Incant and the Left. Rather we believe that it is the whole concept of Democracy which is at the crux of the dispute.

The one condition which the Union has requested, when Incant has been bailed out, has been, INCANT SHOULD HAVE A CONSTITUTION WHICH ALLOWS, IN SOME FORM, THE PARTICIPATION OF, AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO, THE STUDENT BODY AS A WHOLE.

This has never been done by any Incant Editorial board despite many promises. Incant's whole history has been of a self appointed and self-perpetuating clique.

A motion was put to the last U.G.M. calling upon Incant to adopt a constitution. That motion created some activity from Jon Longman (although the "Editorial board" was not consulted) in that he agreed in principle to have a constitution. However, that constitution would only become operative in 1977 and it would not include any mechanism for student control, such as an elected editorial board.

What we are demanding is that a constitution, based on the principles of democracy and accountability to the student body, be adopted for Incant. It should provide for an editorial board elected in a campus-wide ballot, to collectively run the paper.

The content of the newspaper

A student newspaper should not only be run democratically, it should also reflect the interests of a wide range of students and not those of any clique. We are sure that those who read and write Incant would get more out of it if the high level bickering and intra-committee mud-slinging were replaced by articles and information relevant to campus life.

Why not replace the parochial tibits as well with articles on Community projects; arts and theatre activities, campaign areas etc? A Union page too is essential in a student newspaper, since the Union exists to represent students and should give regular reports of services and activities to its members.

The Future

We who believe in active democracy and who have a record of support for a student Newspaper call for the resignation of those unwilling to involve the ordinary student and who refuse to adopt a democratic constitution for Incant. Furthermore we urge those working within and around Incant to accept such

a constitution, with an editorial board elected from all students to collectively produce a student newspaper. Those who will not accept democracy and who attempt to continue their rule should be deposed.

We call on the Student Union Executive to do what it can to aid the development of a democratic Incant. Part of this would be to refuse any further grants or loans to Incant until a constitution has been implemented and just not promised as before. We do not believe that the Union should cut off guaranteed advertising in Incant at this stage, but it could usefully consider imposing a deadline for the production of a democratic constitution, after which date such sanctions would be carried out. Signed by 72 people who claim to represent campus opinion.

Reply

As members of the Incant staff we feel upset by the way in which this letter treats the many staff and students who have been involved in the paper since it returned to the scene last October.

It should be pointed out that the paper is in no way subsidised and is a self-supporting organisation that does not draw on Union funds though these are always welcome.

Last term the Union took out advertising in Incant, this being at normal rates and being treated in the same manner as local advertisers. Throughout this term we have relied on what we have been able to canvass ourselves and that alone.

Democracy is a welcome facet, however when over 500 man hours are required per issue to produce Incant, it is not the easiest idea to find time to draw up constitutions and the like.

We abhor the comments made about the present Editor, Jon Longman, who's task is far from easy, since the post is extremely time-consuming. Jon is just part of the team.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the foundations of an Incant structure have been under discussion since last October. Outbursts like the opposite only slow the process down. Our main concern is to produce a paper that the campus will buy, after all it is the staff and consumer who make a paper not rigid structures. The output may seem simple, but the back-up of each issue is amazingly complex. Thanks to the hard work of the silent majority we hope to produce three excellent 12 pages issues next term. Make your contributions now.

THE INCANT STAFF

OBVIOUSLY NOT!

AN ERROR

INCANT

Perhaps then we should take seriously the following missive from **Incant** No 25, Dec. 5th 1967: '**Incant** is in no way an official Students' Union Newspaper, and as such we have no monopoly over the relaying of news. But this position cannot last forever, and we are looking forward to the day when we have competition. We are confident that with these principles of independent journalism, we will thrive in the years to come...'

Eleven years later.....

To return to the letter of the seventy-two. They suggest that Longman's personal rightist views and the ensuing conflict between **Incant** and the left executive is a root problem. Looking back on **Incant** in 1970, and again in 1972-3, when the dominant political trend in the paper is 'left', we can see that this is not the case. The paper was 'left' in those periods because it reflected the views that its student contributors held. The 'far-out trendy' issues of 1970, with their full front page photographs, pages of artwork with little or no text, lengthy and (now) incomprehensible reviews of every single cultural happening for miles around, are quite understandable in the framework of this essential negative mentality upon which **Incant** had premised itself from its inception.

Incant has always tail-ended student mentality, and in that sense has never been independent at all. Above all **Incant** has always relied on casual reporting, reviews etc., for the bulk of its work. This relates directly to that 1966 editorial — the idea that students are no longer interested in the big issues, their minds are concentrated on trivia. Even if this was true twelve years ago, it is certainly

not so now and should never have been used as the cover for an abdication of journalistic responsibility which it is.

Another important facet of this whole facade of 'independence' that **Incant** has consistently sheathed itself in, is the way it is organised. It is accountable to no-one but the libel courts as to what it prints. This is not to argue that it should be structurally accountable to the Union, the Registry or anyone else. The point is that the only influence the student body has ever had over its direction is the individual freedom of choice of whether or not to buy the latest issue. In a situation where there is no alternative to it, this amounts to no influence at all.

Incant is printed and published by the **Kent Messenger** group, 'with whom ultimate editorial responsibility rests'. There is no doubt that even if **Incant** cannot be said to be formally censored, self-censorship has certainly characterised the paper. The net result is that **Incant** prints:

- (1) what is contributed (remember that the majority of students having no control over its direction, will never contribute beyond the odd letter protesting misrepresentation in the previous issue).
- (2) what the 'self-appointed and self-perpetuating clique' thinks will sell papers (bearing in mind that what **Incant** has always failed to realise, that the paper is bought and read because, like Mount Everest, it is there!) and
- (3) what the editors know the **Kent Messenger** will have no objection to printing. (**Incant** has always argued that the **KM** censors not. But consider the likelihood of the **KM** agreeing to print and

publish **The Gremlin** at such favourable rates...)

Those of us who in the past fought Jon Longman and his clique over **Incant** fall into two categories. Those who believed he was a 'bad guy' from whose claw **Incant** had to be wrested, and whose rabid moralism had to be curbed by some structural democratisation, a constitution. These were the people most vociferous in their defence of the **Incant** tradition from which Longman was departing — 'independent' journalism. Following from this they believed they could take **Incant** to new heights as soon as Longman departed for his job on the **Yorkshire Post**. They were totally wrong, as we shall see.

The other category was the alliance between 'silent majorityists' and the politicians who were in no sense attached to or involved in **Incant** and preferred to see it die a natural death, but on the other hand were quite happy at the prospect of Longman being 'putsched'.

Both these groups were wrong. The last year of **Incant**, the paper with the democratic constitution, shows that beyond doubt. Jon Longman was no aberration; he didn't depart from the **Incant** tradition of 'independence' at all, he merely took it to one logical conclusion. History always provides its own Napoleons and **Incant** without Longman has not escaped the mentality which gave birth to the Longman era in the first place.

On the other hand, those that argued for the Union to actively campaign against **Incant**, withdrawing all advertising and the like, letting **Incant** pass out of this world unmourned, failed to understand that the only

reason **Incant** exists at all is that nothing else does. It's that rare creature which survives in a vacuum. What the last year has taught us is that for anything to improve on this campus in terms of a true 'independence' in student journalism, **Incant** has to go — not necessarily the people now behind **Incant**, not necessarily the political balance of forces on this campus that it reflects. The tradition and concept that is **Incant** and has been for twelve years has to go. And to be replaced: Hence **The Gremlin**. **Incant** has been dying of misconception since 1966. **The Gremlin** has decided to pull the plug.



**misconceived
1966...**

editorial

What is an independent newspaper and what should its function be? Posed with these two questions, the 'triumvirate' which brought you this edition thought that a practical example was in order. We do not profess to have produced the definitive in journalism, student or otherwise, but we hope to have interested you enough to ask the same questions.

This newspaper was financed by the students' union and yet the executive committee will be aware of its contents only after paying the 5 pence as you have. This was done deliberately, if not from the Executive's point of view, certainly from ours, because the Executive had not only to support the concept of independence, it had to be seen to be supporting it in practice. Be under no illusions, many Executives will, when threatened, attempt to interfere with the editorial policy of a student newspaper. That is why editorial independence must be entrenched. At the same time, however, independence can never be absolute. For example, **Incant's** much vaunted 'independence' is purely dependant on the continuing goodwill of the **Kent Messenger** who could, if they so chose, pull the financial plug which guarantees **Incant's** existence. (This is dealt with more fully elsewhere on this page.) If the **Kent Messenger** were to follow this course of action the readers of **Incant** have no recourse, the reason being that they can put no pressure on the **Kent Messenger**.

This brings us to the second part of the question — what is the function of a campus newspaper? As it is also argued elsewhere, it is not to mindlessly reflect the opinions of the contributors. Unless you, the reader, are

looking for a sixth-form magazine, a newspaper must be critical. And a paper which criticises must be able to pose positive criticism. That is, it must have a policy which is more substantial than stating 'our policy is to have no policies'.

Here the concept of accountability must enter the equation. **Incant** is accountable not to you, but to the **Kent Messenger**. A newspaper must be accountable to its readers. We envisage an editorial board accountable to the membership but not, in any way, to the Executive. They, after all, should be subject to journalistic expression. Thus if the executive 'pull the plug' on the newspaper which the Union finances, then the readership will have recourse to the U.G.M. to discipline the Executive for such behaviour.

A campus newspaper is a crucial element in this community. **Incant** continues along its eclectic path by default. It has no contention, just content. If you are happy with this state of affairs, **The Gremlin** will fold, leaving **Incant** to enjoy another decade of mediocrity. We hope however, that this opening salvo will ensure changes — changes which are long overdue.

P.S. If you don't like the name **The Gremlin**, change it....

...stillborn



**12 Years
on**

'Modern Capitalism and its spectacle allot everyone a specific role in a general passivity. The student is no exception to the rule. He has a provisional part to play, a rehearsal for his final role as an element in market society as conservative as the rest. Being a student is a form of initiation. An initiation that echoes the rites of more primitive societies with bizarre precision. It goes on outside of history, cut off from social reality. The student leads a double life, poised between his present status and his future role. The two are absolutely separate, and the journey from one to another is a mechanical event "in the future". Meanwhile he basks in schizophrenic consciousness, withdrawing into his initiation group to hide from that future. Protected from history, the present is a mystic trance.'

(On the poverty of student life — 1st publication by students and members of the INTERNATIONALE SITUATIONISTE at the University of Strasbourg 1966 P92).

YOU LIKE WHAT YOU GET OR, YOU GET WHAT YOU LIKE

Coverage of the 'arts' on campus, that is to say, reporting of the arts in 'INCANT', has always lacked any fundamental unity. A typical arts page seems to be taken as the opportunity for rambling indulgence, mistaken for self-expression (for that which is denied), for a haphazard compendium of innocuous ephemera. Accordingly we are invited to sample from a slight and unchanging menu of 'important' cultural (on campus) events — plays, concerts, etc., plus reviews of the few books or records taken from the platter of enterprising marketing executives (who know their market well). As occasional delicacy there might be a piece on something that somebody just happens to have seen on a weekend jaunt to the metropolis.

The overriding impression, and one we feel sure cannot be far from the truth, is that the arts editor includes just about anything that the legions of aspiring journalists on campus are willing to produce in order to get their names in print. Unremarkably, arts Incant exhibits 'culture' affirmatively, delicately posturing between the sensibility becoming a humanities student, and the journalesque which may be coming.

'This communication of worthless units of knowledge — which would be perfectly alright if the university really were the "primitive society with ownership in common" which its myths describe it to be — can only be described in the terms of alienated symbolic exchange...Where once one might have tried to say that the work of the 'intellectual' or the 'artist' is essentially creative and unalienated, the logistics of the university's lines of production have made him an alienated labourer also. His products — books, papers, "communications", courses, footnotes in other people's products — become the objects of a reified form of symbolic exchange...The units of knowledge may have no use value, but they certainly have exchange value. Thus they are indeed useful — as CURRENCY. Unfortunately this currency was devalued by the inflation of knowledge long ago.' (Anthony Wilden; System and Structure pXXIV).

Accordingly the arts page of Incant sees cultural activity as a series of isolated events and produces a series of atomised responses, each 'complete' in itself. Nowhere is it suggested that this cultural activity is necessarily (or should be) understood in a larger context, both synchronically and diachronically. The lack of an arts policy commensurate with a critical awareness reflects the situation it exists to observe, the division of cultural labour which infects student societies just as much as the bread and butter production of timetabled knowledge. There could and ought at least to be a drive in the opposite direction. The internal structures of union societies seem incapable of anything further than generating diffuse series of one-off affairs, lacking coordination and intent. UKC Dramatics, a case in point, ought to be able to programme its own events but this option is studiously avoided; why? Perhaps both in its production and in its reporting it is still considered politic to stress the myth that 'art' resists analysis, is timeless etc.

BOHEMIAN SOLUTION

Nevertheless, there are careers waiting upon the exploitation of this nonsense. And to back it up, there is still, amazingly, the idea of being above politics, of being a Bohemian. 'The Bohemian solution is hardly viable at the best of times, and the notion that it could be achieved without a complete and final break with the University milieu is ludicrous. But the student Bohemian (and every student likes to pretend that s/he is a Bohemian at heart) clings to her/his false and degraded version of individual revolt'. Thus, in a fashion similar to the fragmented productions of Incant's arts page, UKC Dramatics plays are produced and acted by aspiring 'thespians' (their word) whose concerns are their future careers. A collection of individuals, producers, a selection of cultural commodities.

'The real poverty of the student's everyday life finds its immediate, phantasmic compensation in the opium of cultural commodities. In the cultural spectacle, s/he is allotted her/his habitual role of the dutiful disciple. Although s/he is close to the production point, accession to the sanctuary of thought is forbidden and s/he is obliged to discover 'modern culture' as an admiring spectator. Art is dead but the student is necrophiliac.

KAMPUS KULCHUR

~ a theatre of the absurd

S/he peeks at the corpse in film clubs and theatres, buys its fish fingers from the cultural supermarket. Consuming unreservedly, s/he is in her/his element: s/he is the living proof of all the platitudes of US market research: a conspicuous consumer, complete with induced irrational preference for Brand X (Camus, for example) and irrational prejudice against Brand Y (Sartre perhaps).''

WHEN IS THE ABSURD NOT THE ABSURD

The recent 'Evening of the Absurd', seemingly a joint production by UKC Dramatics and the Faculty of Humanities, exhibits par excellence the above defined tendencies. The substance of the evening consisted of plays by Pinter, Ionesco, Arrabal and Adamov; but the goodies in the chocolate box were less important than the package in which they were presented, and the wrapping in this case was familiar, formulaic and trivial. The innocent spectator had to put up with a concoction of wanderings in fancy dress, naked tailors dummies sitting in the audience and idiotic if not intellectually insulting interpolations between the plays. Shaken but not stirred. Perhaps excusable? The effect was to transform the evening into an hermetic interlude whose only function was to entertain. When is the Absurd not the Absurd? — when it is Entertainment.

This point was made explicit by one of the comperes in a bathetic device that undercut a tirade on the petit-bourgeois attitudes of the audience (who were frankly revelling in it anyway).

When is the Absurd not the Absurd? When Martin Esslin defines it blandly as the striving to "express the sense of the senselessness of the human condition". This view was however lauded both in the programme notes and performance (the latter treated ironically by the compere who read out a piece on Arrabal, but a view of the play which was confirmed in the production that followed). At worst ridiculous, at best arguable. So let's argue a little, just for a change.

It is a good idea to turn to Jean-Paul Sartre to shed some light on the Absurd (if Esslin is bad on the Absurd he is simply gross on Brecht). For both Sartre and Arthur Adamov the function of Absurd theatre is quintessentially ideological. Sartre speaks of three refusals in contemporary playwriting, of psychology, plot and realism.

'In denying psychology they are denying the supremacy of the bourgeoisie, because the psychological theatre is essentially an ideological theatre that believes that humanity is not formed by its (specific) historical and social conditions, but that there is a psychological determinism and certain characteristics of human nature which are always the same. This is what is denied by all these authors, whether they are politically committed or not...they all believe that contact with the public can only be made after a scandal.'

And for this reason they refuse the convenience of having a plot. There are no longer any plots in the sense of little anecdotal stories, more or less well written and developed with a beginning, a middle and an end. These no longer exist because the authors think that to entertain is to turn the audience's attention away from the essential point. Plots are there to give pleasure. They do not want to please. They want a subject, that is to say a whole situation which develops itself, and not formulae which can be used to construct an anecdote inside a story. They do not want the structural elements in a play, but want to build the subject as strongly as possible and the structure they build is based on the temporal nature of the theatre itself. Their purpose is not to tell a little story, but to build a temporal object in which time, by its contradictions and by its own structure will put the theatre into relief in an especially concentrated way which then becomes the subject proper. And then they refuse realism simply because realism is at bottom a whole philosophy of which they want no part.' (Sartre, Politics and Literature pp65-67).

SUBSUMED BY THE SPECTACLE

Thus to entertain is to 'turn the audience away from the essential point', but if there was any essential point to this evening of the Absurd then it was precisely to entertain. But perhaps we should not forget its function as an academic prop to the part one Humanities topic. Absurd theatre, once an innovative form capable of communicating through scandal, was recuperated by bourgeois culture (how long Situationism; or perhaps already?) and stands in relation to dissent, in the here and now, as a token nod, as Monty Python, as the massive Exhibition of Surrealism at the Hayward.

Doubtless this is welcome abstraction to the blue-white collar. UKC Dramatics, by reducing the Absurd to end of term revue have opted for the obviousness of domestication, ironing out all that is contradictory and dynamic in refusing the codes of affirmation. And UKC Dramatics won acceptance for their project.

Entering the theatre we were confronted by a sign imploring us to 'leave your conventions in the cloakroom before entering the theatre'. On one level this underlines what the Absurd has become. Originally an Absurd play would have worked by disrupting audience expectations in the actual performance, challenging immanently. Now we are told to expect the unexpected — "And now for something completely different" — and the performance will be as cosy and reassuring as an episode as an episode of 'Crossroads'. On another level the abandonment of conventions only goes so far. At one point a section of the audience started laughing at a joke amongst themselves. This clearly upset the actors, and served as a reminder that the dominant theatrical convention, that of the audiences general passivity in relation to the on stage spectacle, remains untouched. In the cultural context of the Gulbenkian Theatre the roles allotted to the actors and the audience are clearly demarcated and crossing the thin red line between them is still taboo.

A second sign in the foyer reminded the audience to pick up their conventions again before leaving. So just in case you ain't twigged it yet mate this is not going to mean one damn thing, carry on wity your bio-solvent washing powder Mrs Robinson!

ART AS COMMODITY

To transport an Absurd evening in the theatre to advert-land is to emasculate desire and call consumption by its name. G, as John Berger remarked, is for Glamour, the commodity with a difference. Glamour is the lie which replaces the product as effect of relations or production, whether we are talking about that new Triumph sports car or an Evening of the Absurd, with the product as 'natural' fact. It is only through an understanding of artistic process as relations of production in the concrete social, and an active understanding of this, that we will be rid of such sly manoeuvres. But then 'Art is a very glamorous word. Can we afford it?

'Student passivity is only the most obvious symptom of a general state of affairs, for each sector of social life has been subdued by a similar imperialism...For her/him there is only one real alienation; her/his own. S/he is a full time and happy consumer of that commodity hoping to arouse at least our pity since s/he cannot claim our interest. By the logic of modern capitalism, most students can only become petits cadres (with the same function as the skilled worker had in the nineteenth century economy). The student knows how miserable will be that golden future which is supposed to make up for the shameful poverty of the present. In the fact of that knowledge s/he prefers to dote on the present and invent an imaginary prestige for her/himself. After all there will be no magical compensation for present drabness; tomorrow will be like yesterday, lighting these fools the way to dusty death. Not unnaturally s/he takes refuge in an unreal present.'

LYN GARDNER
STEPHEN HIPKIN
DAVE RIMMER

"art is dead but the student is necrophiliac"

ELIOT'S ffffun'n humour

Fun and Humour are not things you can sell to an audience without professionalism as the two most successful acts showed Eliot's end of term outing to the smoke-filled J.C.R. for an evening of jolly audience-participation ended the year with a whimper.

The poor advertising and unsubtle lighting meant that the audience, only half as large as was anticipated, never really felt part of the proceedings. The exception was the Punch and Judy show where they could, at least, slip easily into the role of pre-pubescent at the seaside for a few minutes.

Credit is due to all those who took part. The Professionals — the Punch and Judy man, Rhubarb the Clown, the omnipresent folk-club personnel represented by Graham Lever, Paul, Patrick and Dave, Bill White and compere Sue Brighthouse. Nick 'ol' red-eyes is back! Wilton held the evening together with some good timing and some desperate esoteric hooklines and audience prompting.

Unfortunately, the closure of the bar at 11.15, coinciding with the demise of public transport depleted the ranks of the audience even further. Musa, with his Soul and Blues singing was well received but by the time the closing act took the stage the effervescence had gone out of the proceedings.

Gustav Holst and the Planet Sweets have now a reputation to live up to especially on their own territory. The combination of an over-imbibing of the good things of life and the fact that the PA appeared to be out of control, led Martin and Simon to walk off and declare the 'happening' over after only two numbers.

A disappointment for those who are leaving soon and need something to remember Eliot by. But for next year's organisers some useful lessons. The Clown and the Puppeteer were very successful. Publicity is crucial to an event like this, next year must get more in, even if it ceases to be a 'college' do in the process.

Do We know What We Really Want?



"You bourgeois, middle-class, self-satisfied sophisticates . . ." Or words to that effect. We groan having heard that sort of thing before. I could almost hear the woman sitting beside me asking herself, "Is it too much to expect to be able to go out to the theatre without having to suffer insult?" If they could have heard her, I'm sure the majority of the audience who had come to see 'An Evening of The Absurd' at the Gulbenkian last week, would have agreed.

From what I could gauge, the rapturous audience reaction to the actor who turned to them at the end of one particularly absurd piece, to say, "I entirely agree with you, Ladies and Gentlemen, this is quite idiotic", seemed to indicate that at last something sensible had been said. It is not that I didn't enjoy the evening, not a bit of it: I thought it was great entertainment, but entertainment, as with most art, at a price. It struck me that most of the audience, although they wanted entertainment, were not willing to pay the price: they were not prepared to accept the 'insults', they were not prepared to have their own lives cross-examined like those of the characters in the plays.

Why should they? In a very real sense, the lady beside me was right. We have paid our money and we should have our choice — without further obligation. There is something of a dilemma facing those who choose our entertainments: should we provide highly select material which is going to interest only a few of those 'self-satisfied sophisticates' or should we go for the big-time bit which will be a sell-out? This dilemma was well publicised last year in the controversy of the Larry Coryell gig.

As things stand at the minute, we have a variety of different groups — UKC Dramatics, Films Soc.,

the Students' Union itself, providing entertainment with a reasonable compromise between the popular and the esoteric, and on the basis of a vague accountability to the student body through Union finance, and sheer public opinion. On the other hand, we have various institutions — the Faculty of Humanities, the Cornwallis film theatre, the Director of the Gulbenkian Theatre, the Director of Music — which are responsible only to the appropriate authorities of the University, and are in no way accountable for their offerings to those who, for the most part, patronize them: that is to say, us.

Would it not represent a substantial improvement to set up an overall structure for entertainment at the University, or, failing that, at least to open some practical means of communication between those groups which provide entertainment, at present isolated and autonomous, so as to better ensure that the punters get what they want. It may be said that democracy and art do not get on well together, but it is in the nature of the taste to be individual, and this fact alone must mean that entertainment presented within such a structure will not sink to the level of the lowest common denominator. Room for improvement is ample, if not copious, for at the moment, it is a question of the punters taking what they can get. Andy

decoding adverts

...And Talking Of The Absurd!

The sublime were the Infested and Secret Fashion. The ridiculous were most of the rest. We started off with the creche fete — a very worthy cause — but you wouldn't have guessed so from the quality of the music, since most of the folkies who paraded their goods did so in a way guaranteed to send us into a state of glorious somnambulinity (sic).

Opposition, first on, saw the energy he had created rapidly dissipated by the anaemic and insipid (though musically OK) offerings of those who followed him. Saturday evening saw a parade of UKC rock bands who made **The Vomits** (Brighton's most inept new-wave combo) sound like **The Clash**. And the professional headliners, **Mechanical Horsetrough**, should go and stick their head in one and activate the mechanism.

A bigger bunch of rustic ratbags it would be harder to find outside **Melody Maker**; they were so bad they made

my testicles shrink. And so to Sunday.

More sleepy fold for the sleepy hippie folk — if you're going to San Francisco, be sure to kick some hippies on the way. And the **Pump and Fuck**, sorry, **Pluck Band**, got ten of the flower people to dance in a circle in front of the stage — a wet activity if ever there was one — give me a good pogo any day.

At six o'clock the first decent band took to the stage: Tony, Paul, Don and Tig — **The Infested** — the fantastic schoolkid rockers/SKAN activists/NF-haters. Bloody fantastic. But the vast

majority of the audience were such apathetic Zomboid Syphilised wankers that the response was virtually nil. Only the kids from downtown, could get going. Not surprising: **The Infested** appear far too advanced for the vast majority of student creeps in this hole. They want to sit in their rooms and listen to **ABBA**. Or so it seems, I sure hope I'm wrong but I don't think so. Next on were **Gong** or **Here and Now Band** or **Longhaired Acidhead Wankers**. They were even worse than **Mechanical Horsetrough**.

Then **ATV**. They were even worse than the **Here and Now Band**. Stick to sniffin' glue, Mark, you're good at that. (...I'm completely lost. Ed.)

At last from the ridiculous to the sublime. **Secret Fashion** were magic. Starting off with

a **Velvet's** classis **White Light/White Heat**, through an **Opposition** composition, **Your days are numbered**, **Iggy Pop's Lust for Life**, **Loudon Wainwright's Swimming Song**, and a host of **Ian's** compositions, finishing with **Complete Control**, and the incredible, mind-blowing, **You're so Vile**: 'When I saw you walking down the street I was nearly sick all over my feet 'cos you're so vile...'. And for the encore, **Complete Control** again. Altogether a brilliant set, despite **Opposition's** hoarseness, **Bob's** bad leg, and a PA which wasn't loud enough.

And to round off a very mixed weekend; **Tennis Shoes**. I won't slag them off 'cos after all they did lend us their PA. **Anony Mouse**

A.K.A. John Opposition.
A.K.A. John Baine



THE RÔLE OF THE WEST IN AFRICA..



JUST TO MAKE YOU THINK.



the
GREMLIN;

courtesy of

Colin Campbell

Lawrence Conway

Steve Hipkin and

Robert Richards

with

Jaqui Grill,
 Dave Rimmer,
 Lyn Gardner,
 Tidge & mini,
 the Elmsted
 crowd, and
 Keith (for
 a lovely cup
 of coffee,
 plus Martin
 Humberstone,
 Stuart, and
 Uncle Chris.



all pics by *tony hancock*

The Back Page

SPORT'S FED. caught out

Five members of the Sports Federation Executive attended the emergency meeting held in Eliot Lecture Theatre Two on June 7th. Other parties present included a couple of rugby players, Paul Box-Grainger, (ex-Union President and renowned cricketing type), the peripatetic Beth Logan, Dave Vasmer, and the interested parties of the day — the two candidates for SF Sabbatical — Marian O'Neill and Chris Moran.

Answering queries from the floor, the Sport's Fed's Finance Officer, Mr Graham Costa, told the meeting that he was responsible for calling it. He had done so, he said, after receiving complaints about the Executive's action in proposing that constitutional changes be put to a referendum of Sports Club members, before any discussion.

Specific objections raised included the clause concerning the eligibility of candidates for the sabbatical post. Other sections, it was argued, needed updating or redrafting, and it was felt that the amendments should be presented as separate items in the referendum. In response to a question as to why the Executive had failed to call a meeting earlier to discuss these points, Mr Costa replied that it had been 'overlooked'.

Two members of the Executive said they distinctly remembered being told that the 'eligibility' clause would be on the same lines as that covering the Union's rules for sabbatical elections, but they had never been shown the appropriate section. Members pointed out that the new clause was in fact quite different and drew the inference that the Sports Federation Executive had been misled by those charged with drafting the changes.

Paul Box-Grainger then proposed that the 'eligibility' section be redrafted. The existing draft excluded candidates who had held sabbatical office for less than seven months in a previous term, and those who had held a position for more than seven months. After some discussion as to wording it was agreed unanimously to delete the offending sentences. Paul then moved that provision be made in the constitution to allow postal votes in all elections and referenda. This was also agreed after referring to rule 37 of the Students' Union constitution.

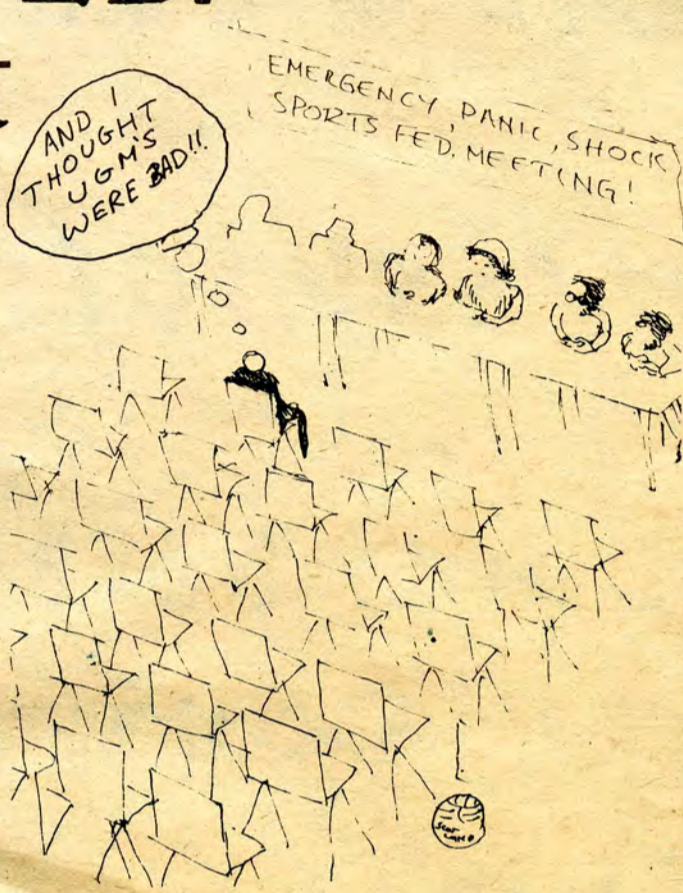
Paul's next proposal was that a clause be inserted ensuring that any constitutional changes which had to be put to a referendum had first to be passed by a General Meeting of Sports Fed. This too was accepted. He then proposed the deletion of the clause which made the sabbatical accountable to the Executive, arguing that only the membership should mandate the officers. The Executive argued that membership could mandate the Executive to mandate the sabbatical. Paul's point being made, the matter was not pursued.

Finally, Mr Box-Grainger suggested that on the referendum ballot forms each separate item should have a 'yes/no' box to allow members to express their views on a particular clause without being forced to vote against the whole. Graham Costa began to argue that the only point to be taken as a separate question was the admission of the Judo and Hang-Gliding Clubs into the Sports Federation. Paul quickly pointed out that no executive should dictate what parts the membership should be allowed to vote separately on.

The referendum on these constitutional proposals was held the following day, Thursday 8th. Of the 700+ members of Sports Federation, 61 cast their vote. Everything proposed was carried, but the low turnout, lower for example,

than the percentage of the electorate which votes in the average Union by-election, perhaps suggests that the Sports Federation would be wise to involve its members in discussions as well as formal decision-making about its future.

On Friday, less than twenty-four hours after the referendum results were announced, the polls opened for the election of Sports Fed.'s first sabbatical officer. Only 114 people voted, but it was enough to give the victory to Marian O'Neill who polled 82 votes to Chris Moran's 25.



cricket NEWS

This two-a-side cricket tournament ended at 10.00 pm with the final still to play. Paul Box-Grainger looks like having his name on the tankard for the third time in four years. It is doubly amusing in that he bought the tankard in the first place.

Games were supposed to commence at 11.30 and players should have been there at 11.00. Paul Box-Grainger set a bad example by turning up at 12.00. By 12.15, when only 19 players had been put into the draw, there were even suggestions that I might end up playing. Fortunately though, A. Gregory was able to round up Haydyn Jaffer, an enthusiastic if unorthodox bowler and a cunning batsman. The draw was as follows:

Group 1: A. S. Bell and Don Massey, B. P. Cohen and Thomas, C. D. Fellows-Smith and A. Culligan, D. Ian Shepherd and S. Russell, E. A. Gregory and Haydyn Jaffer.

Group 2: F. G. Harding and Richard Godfrey, G. J. Barrow and A. Dogshon, H. R. Beech and D. Roberts, I. D. McIsaac and R. Smyth, J. Paul Box-Grainger and Pete Smith.

Some excellent bowling by Don Massey, plus poor batting by P. Cohen and Thomas had them out for 4-2. To save time, the matches were played in sets of two and so D. Fellows-Smith and A. Culligan came on and scored 18 without loss in their four overs. In the reverse side of this fixture team A. scored five for the loss of S. Bell and Ian Shepherd and S. Russell scored 20 without loss. The latter were helped by D. Fellows-Smith trying to bowl too fast. 8 matches were completed by 3.00 pm, when lunch was taken. At this stage group 1 looked to be sewn up with Don Massey and S. Bell winning their first two matches and Don bowling impressively. Group 2 looked less easy to predict. Beech and Paul Box-Grainger had both scored exciting 23 not outs in different matches and Barrow and Dogshon had come back from throwing away a match to Harding and Godfrey when all that had seemed necessary was to wait for the Godfrey full-toss and send it away for four. Harding was making a

name for himself by running out Godfrey three times in two matches.

After lunch, things started again and an exciting game was had between team C and team A. C scored 15-2 and A came in and lost Simon Bell. D. Fellows-Smith then gave his usual exhibition of pure dislike for any opponent by winding himself up like a latter-day Dennis Lillee. At 12, Massey's wicket fell and Fellows-Smith leapt into the air with joy.

Paul Box-Grainger's team then came in and could only score 21 for the loss of Paul. Paul set a close field and gave away four runs off the first two overs. This was mainly achieved, however, by the less than gentlemanly use of leg-side pace. Few batsmen can hit down balls outside the leg-stump when they are sent down with pace and pitch. But then only someone like Paul could have the panache to do this and then act as if he were surprised that anyone could complain.

After this, as a result of it getting late, the number of overs was cut down to 2 8-ball overs. Ian Shepherd and S. Russell raced to 23-1, but this was overhauled by a score of 24-0 by Cohen and Thomas.

Paul Box-Grainger and Pete Smith scored 21-1 and then contained Beech and Roberts to 20-0. Harding and Godfrey surprisingly beat McIsaac and Smyth by 15-0 to 12-2. At the end of all this, Cohen and Thomas topped group 1 whilst Shepherd and Russell were second on average runs for each wicket, having won two games.

In group 2, Paul Box-Grainger's team had won all their games and Roberts and Beech had come second on runs per wicket.

The semi-finals were complicated by the fielders being virtually unable to see the ball. Both team J and team B, the group winners, had elected to bat first and by the time their opponents had come in to bat, it was impossible to see the ball and hence the task was too great.

Paul Box-Grainger and Pete Smith therefore meet Cohen and Thomas in the final, to be played after the next 1st XI game. Hopefully the game shall be played in more pleasant conditions than those of Saturday.

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