



columnist@gairhydd.com

MICKELODEON

Warning: from next week Andrew Mickel will be replaced by a branch of Tesco

Strike one

Lecturers have a pretty tough lot in life. Instead of joining the fun of the real world, they have to watch countless numbers of nubile new students come in every year, underlining how old and saggy life has become. Now, to add insult to injury, no one can be bothered to give them a decent pay increase. Plus it peed down last week on the first day of strike action, which I'm reading as a sign that God isn't on their side.

There's little to dispute with the fact that lecturers do get something of a raw deal. They were promised that their wages would be increased when extra government cash came through for the university, and the pitiful amount that many are paid is a disgrace. I don't know about you, but I feel slightly uncomfortable making a shopping trip to Lidl with any of my lecturers.

It's certainly exacerbated by the data released last week that showed our Vice-Chancellor, being the modest fellow he is, took a pay increase of 61% last year. So, in short, I for one don't have a problem with them having a strike. Hell, it just means I don't have to feel bad for missing lectures on that particular Tuesday.

I feel slightly uncomfortable making a shopping trip to Lidl with my lecturers

But that doesn't excuse certain aspects of the current actions taken by the AUT. If you look at the union's website (www.aut.org.uk) the organisers seem more concerned in getting positively orgasmic over how much they've been able to disrupt things, rather than aiming for any actual positive outcome from the action.

Some individual members have also started to get a little too involved in the excitement. Whilst many lecturers who support the action in general are sickened by the idea of boycotting assessment that would actually affect any student's graduation, others are less concerned about the very reason they are here in the first place.

One AUT member told me last week that I should put my own selfish interests aside. Yeah, that would be my own selfish interest in graduating, which I've spent four years here working towards. It's the same problem with the AUT's attitude as an organisation as a whole: if they do give a toss about the fact we've had to pay a lot of



STRIKING LECTURERS: Well, almost. Also, when did they get STA Travel in the Ukraine?

money to be here and deserve to graduate, they're certainly keeping it pretty quiet.

The whole issue is seriously exacerbated by the lack of information given out. The university has provided next to no information, with AUT strike details hidden away on the website. My department only sent out one e-mail, the day before the strike.

AUT members, meanwhile, seem to be largely in disarray as to what is happening. Whilst one lecturer has happily given marked coursework back, another is holding on to it on the grounds of an assessment boycott. Given the marks I'm getting back this may not be a bad thing. But, at the very least, the idea of a united front in terms of action is complete fiction.

If most lecturers do decide to mark exam scripts and coursework by the end of the year, then the Uni just has to hold its nerve. Given how quickly the strikers threw in the towel two years ago then hopefully all we should have to do is wait. But considering the mixed messages that have been given out by the AUT so far there's no guarantee that it will turn out that way.

At the very least, the broad support from students that lecturers had for the first strike seems likely to vanish faster than a striking lecturer in a rainstorm when it becomes clear what the outcome of the boycott will be.

If the selfish elements amongst the AUT could be reined in, and a clear roadmap be made to reassure students what is going to happen, they could win back support for the actions. As it is, the union is just going to back itself into a corner with no support from anyone, and the underpaid will still be stuck with the raw deal they have now.

Electile dysfunction

One of the biggest events in the Union year is the election of a new Executive, but you won't read anything about it in the *gair rhydd*. Thanks to the absurdities of the Union's constitution we can't write anything about individual candidates during the election.

This has obviously been set up with the thinking that we can't promote one candidate more than another. Other papers don't have this problem; the *Oxford Student* can even pick their favourites. For us it means that the candidates, as they have done this year, can construct them from

solid gold guff and there's nothing we can say about it. If a candidate proposed banning all chairs from the Union, then we could only dutifully report this fact, and that would be the end of that.

I'll return to the topic once the polls are shut, but in the meantime, make sure you ask the candidates how on Earth they plan on doing many of their policies. If it's an impressive-sounding claim, then in many cases it means that plans are already in motion by the Union and will be in place by the time the candidate is in office.



MICHAEL GAMBON: As good as Nana Moon. Fact.

DRUG TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS

THE VICTIMS of the drug trial that has gone horribly wrong in London this week should have a special resonance for students.

As a means of earning a few grand for taking a couple weeks off, kicking back in a drug trial centre and having everything done for you, I know plenty of people who've taken part in them and bankrolled a fair chunk of the year off the back of it.

Of course, last week shows how things can go awry, but it's so notable because of the very fact that this sort of thing doesn't happen every day.

I know that I wouldn't do a drugs trial. Not that my body's a temple; it's more a synagogue in the West Bank.

But this one example shouldn't suddenly put people off the idea of making money the easy way.



I LOVE YOU

PEOPLE HAVE been accusing Mickelodeon of being negative, rude and angry. Well balls to you, you fat sack of crap: like Julie Andrews on crack, here are a few wonderful things in the world to cheer your day.

Southend-on-Sea XFM limescale Czechs Krishnan Guru-Murphy toucans labradors *ER* santa costumes laundry baskets the look of grim determination on the faces of people looking at ambulances speeding to emergencies the East London line shipping forecasts making it safely across the bridge next to the Union £1 corner shop cake trays Hungry Horse pubs Annie Mac ~~strike~~through fire escapes the woman who signs on Points West the word 'tabernacle' Lakeside the Shortwave Set One Hit Wonder Weekends on VH1 Susan Kennedy a book my Grandma knitted me

LWT

NOISE: Unfathomable love

garden centre coffee shops hearing about Moldova pea fields hats passports isle of man pound coins the Salisbury Road Post Office **The Tavistock TOTP Reloaded Invader Zim** pizza pie pizza pie **Michael Gambon** the fact that, like *The Day Today*, *ABC News* now uses square globes the post grad bar properly applied speech marks **Cineworld** the LWT theme tune **Mint Royale** the idents they play before films at Vue that lifts made by **Schindler** are 'Schindler's lifts' free newspapers **Nana Moon (RIP)** the letter W