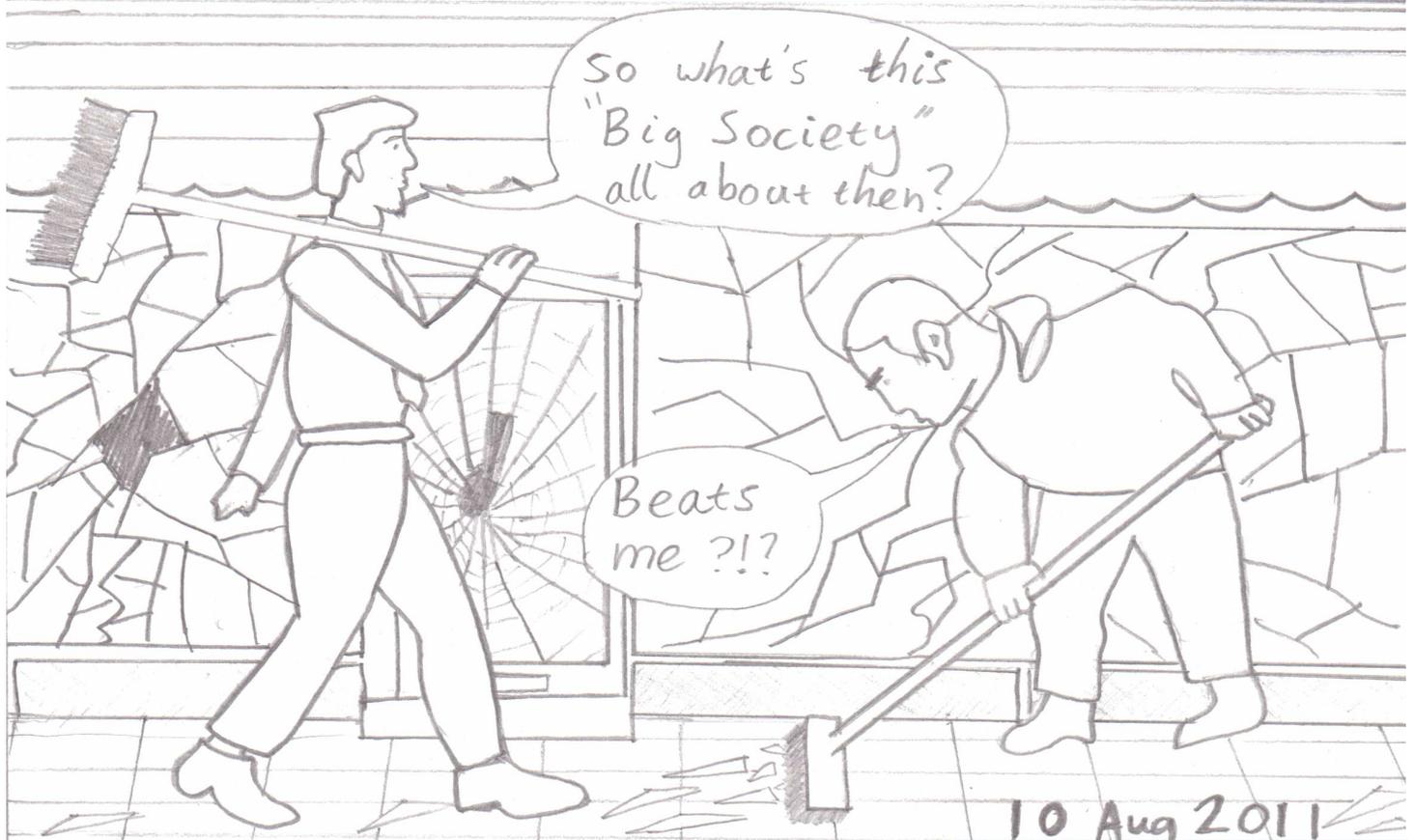


THE CAERULEAN

UCL Conservative Society's voice on campus

Editor: George Pender

October 2011



Welcome from the President

First let me extend a warm welcome to those of you new to London and to student life at UCL. Your life will never be the same again.

UCL Conservatives pride ourselves on providing great social and political events ranging from debating and top guest speakers to drinks and volunteering.

No other UCL society offers such opportunities as being able to hear and meet influential politicians, ministers and passionate activists alike, as well as having the chance to give something back through social

action. In addition, the society will be immersing itself in the upcoming 'Back Boris 2012' campaign, so let us know if you're keen to help out.

That's all for now, and I hope to see you at our Gin and Tonic reception on **Tuesday the 11th October**. If you'd like to know more you can 'like' our Facebook page, 'UCL Union Conservative Society'. Otherwise I'll wish you an amazing start to the new term, despite the spreading Freshers' flu.

Best,
Sam Firth, Society President

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Published on behalf of the UCLU Conservatives by Samuel Firth

Views are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of UCLU or the UCLU Conservative Society.

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Insulting the English, Injuring Scotland

Victoria Miller argues that the Scottish Policy of ‘Fees for the English, Free for the French’ is a divisive, ploy aimed at Manufacturing Nationalism.

The Scotland Act 1998 was a complex piece of legislation, passed by a simple majority but it had profound and complicated consequences for the constitution and make-up of the UK. The Labour party gambled on devolution. We were told it would keep the union together. Instead it could well become the first step in shattering it. The Scottish Government, led by Alex Salmond, has deliberately perpetuated and encouraged the anti-union sentiment in Scotland. One way in which this is being done is through the government’s stance on university fees. Scottish students do not pay any university tuition fees in Scotland, but non-Scottish, UK students are required to pay if they attend a Scottish university. Students from other E.U. countries do not pay fees. The consequences of this stance are wholly unfair, unjust and not in the interests of Scotland, its education, or it’s long term economic health.

The Scottish Government argues that, while the E.U. prohibits students from different countries within Europe being treated differently, there are no such rules which apply within one country. Thus, it argues, it is not contrary to European Law, so long as the union exists. This is, unsurprisingly, being challenged in the Supreme Court. How ironic it is that, were Scotland to become independent from the rest of the U.K., English, Welsh and Northern

Irish students would not pay any fees!

Being a Scottish Conservative (an ever diminishing rarity!), I was schooled in Scotland but chose to spend my university years in England. As much as a free university education in Scotland sounds very appealing, I am totally dumbstruck by the unfairness of the Scottish Government and SNP’s stance on university fees. Why should it be that someone from Berwick-upon-Tweed, a town less than 50 miles from Edinburgh University, has to pay upwards of £36,000 for their education, when another student, just north of the border, can receive it without paying? It is discrimination at its worst. It also discriminates against Scots themselves who live in the U.K., but not in Scotland. A Scot who lives in France will not pay fees, but a Scot living in England does. Where is the logic and fairness in that? The way that the system is run is unfair to many, not just our English, Welsh and Irish neighbours. We must either have everyone pay lower tuition fees to meet the costs of running and maintaining the system, or have no fees at all.

“A Scot living in France will not pay, but a Scot living in England does.”

In the longer term it will also have a detrimental effect on the quality of university education available in Scotland, because students from within the U.K. will not be attracted to Scottish universities. Most courses in Scotland are four years, rather than three, so by charging the same annual fee as English universities intend to, namely

£9,000 p.a., university education in Scotland becomes considerably more expensive than elsewhere in the U.K. It seems that Edinburgh University will be the most expensive in the U.K., with Aberdeen suggesting that the fourth year will be free to all students from within the E.U., including England Wales and Northern Ireland. “Buy three, get the Fourth free!”

“Buy three, get the (Firth-of) Fourth free!”

What is also worrying is that Scotland will increasingly become a place where business and organisations will not be willing to invest. Since devolution, the Scottish economy has shrunk relative to the rest of the UK as well as experiencing far greater turbulence. By alienating non-Scottish UK students, the government is discouraging potential future business growth and investment. This will create a more introverted, parochial and isolated Scotland. That cannot be in the interests of Scotland, or the rest of the United Kingdom. For all that patriotism is a worthy and laudable sentiment, nationalism is divisive and destructive.

In 1997 John Major cryptically stated that Scottish devolution would end ‘1000 years of British history’. The SNP are fulfilling that prophecy through their wholly unfair policy on tuition fees. Pushing away prospective non-Scottish UK students, while bribing Scots to stay. This could result in a more economically, socially and politically fragmented UK, an unfortunate situation but perfect for Alex Salmond’s plans for an independent Scotland.



Change for Change's Sake in the Lords

Mathew Corner - An Elected Upper House would pointlessly duplicate the Commons.

The House of Lords Reform Bill was introduced to parliament this year. Reform has split the Conservative party, with many backbenchers continuing to support the status quo.

Since the Parliament Acts, the Lords has been weaker than the Commons but still of great importance. Its current strengths include the ability to lend great expertise to the legislative process, as members are experienced, distinguished in their field, more independent and less partisan than elected MPs.

The Lords boasts one of the largest bodies of independent legislators in the world, the Crossbenchers. Brandon Lewis MP rightly argues that *"there are those with successful careers in the arts, business and science...[whose]... opinions and expertise enrich the political debate...In a wholly elected chamber, we could lose their talents"*.

Changing the appointed nature of the house will remove those from outside politics and replace them with, as Nigel Lawson states; "second-rate but, more realistically, third or fourth-rate politicians."

The House of Lords has a role as a revising chamber to enhance Parliament's ability to perform its function; to debate and pass legislation. In the proposals the Lords would pointlessly duplicate the elected Commons creating conflict of mandate. Both Houses

could argue that they have greater democratic legitimacy - as occurs in America, due to the federal nature of government and the separation of the legislature and the executive.

After mid-term elections a government can be paralysed by the resurgent popularity of their opponents. This would not suit the Westminster system, which has,

"Changing our ancient Institutions to please the feckless modernisers"

for centuries, been built on a delicate balance, requiring that a government, with a Commons majority, satisfy two, different, chambers.

Many people, in and outside parliament, remain unconvinced by the proposals and there is certainly no overwhelming appetite for elections to the Lords amongst the electorate. So who they are they trying to please?

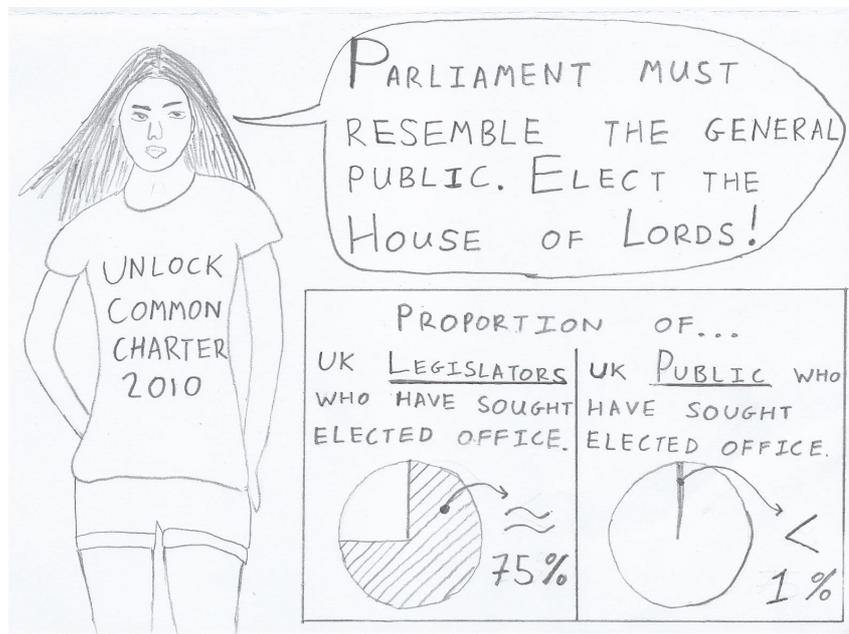
Support amongst party members is

ebbing with a poll showing that *"only 16% support a full-elected Lords. 77% do not"*

As Conservatives we should not be changing our most ancient institutions simply to please the feckless "modernisers" within the Liberal Democrats. A party which ludicrously seeks to restore trust in politics by creating even more elected representatives, each paid a salary, working full-time, leaving parliament even more susceptible to corruption.

"Burden of proof for making change is on those who seek to achieve it"

As Geoffrey Howe argues, *"The burden of proof for making such a fundamental change is on those who seek to achieve it... they have not begun to do so to the satisfaction of the people of this country."* Instead of creating this chaos, the Government should seek to answer the question of legitimacy with a transparent appointments commission that commands public confidence.





Letter to the Editor

Submissions: conservative.society@ucl.ac.uk

Sir, Vince Cable again floated his loony idea of a “mansion” tax for properties worth over £1 million at the Lib Dem conference. Two grossly unfair aspects: firstly, due to house prices skyrocketing and pensioners suffering due to inflation, many long term owners

will see their house value go above the threshold, burdening them with a tax not based upon ability to pay. Secondly, you can almost guarantee that the market will be manipulated by those desperate to have their houses valued at less than a million, thus rendering the tax inefficient. If

we don't want homeowners kicked onto the streets and administratively unviable taxation, this must be kicked into the long grass.

Matthew Corner
2nd Year History

Now I come to think of it

Editorial

AV madness in practice

Scottish council by-elections are held using the AV system, rejected by the British people in May this year. The recent result from the City of Edinburgh (City Centre Ward) is a testament to the wisdom of the thirteen million Britons who voted No. The victorious SNP candidate, having been second in every prior round, eventually won with 39.6% of the vote, including fifth choices. Well short of the promised fifty percent.

Bizarrely, had another 120 or so Labour supporters turned out and voted Labour (as first choice) and Conservative (as last choice) the Conservative candidate would almost certainly have won!

Lib Dems bark up wrong tree on drug legalisation

Once again the Liberal Democrats are calling for drug legalisation. The perception will be that this is less about liberal principle and more about appeasing drug users and their “crack-pot” ideas about the harmlessness of drugs. A better approach would be to gradually modify the existing law allowing for the prohibition of new drugs.

Currently new drugs can be banned under secondary legislation, by

order from the Home Secretary, and without consulting parliament.

The Lib Dems should focus on the achievable goal of reclaiming that power for Parliament. This is a measure which might be acceptable to parliament more broadly.

Later the opportunity would arise to make the liberal argument in favor of personal choice, as the bill to ban some new substance is debated. Only then, when the public are used to the distinction between “allowed” and “safe”, will it be possible to contemplate the next step and start to cautiously decriminalize existing illegal drug.

Done in stages this could coincide with a reduction in usage, something which we would all welcome.

Miliband - too weak against party on Civil Liberties

During his leadership campaign Ed Miliband simultaneously claimed to be a champion for civil liberties whilst appeasing his Union paymasters with the promise of a national wealth database!

As leader we have seen knee-jerk calls for more CCTV, and attacks on Conservative plans to delete the DNA records of innocent people.

“The more of this data we hold, the more chance we have of catching rapists.” Miliband, PMQs 22/06/11

The “independence” of the Bank of England is little more than a smoke screen.

Real interest rates are at minus four percent (like 1975-1983), and yet further Quantitative Easing looks more likely than a rate rise. The Bank of England has abandoned its remit of targeting CPI inflation.

Nixon famously told his incoming Federal Reserve Chairman:

“I know there's the myth of the autonomous Fed ... Appearances are going to be important, so you can call Ehrlichman to get messages to me, and he'll call you.”

The Chancellor seems able to hold interest rates down without being held accountable for that decision.

Nevertheless monetary policy remains stuck between the twin dangers of killing short term growth and stoking inflation.

If only there was some way to encourage, sustainable, non-inflationary growth? Perhaps the Chancellor could try to determine which taxes are most economically damaging relative to the amount they raise.