

Imperial College Union

**President's Report
Incorporating the Executive Report**

A note by John Collins, IC Union President

Freshers' Week Trading

I am delighted to report that in stark contrast to recent trends, income from our commercial outlets during freshers' week rose ~1% in South Kensington and ~10% in Charing Cross (figures have been adjusted for inflation). Wye's detailed results are not yet available but they are believed to have broken all known records for Wye trading over one week. The South Kensington figures are very encouraging given that the recently introduced smoking ban and disruptive building works could have deterred students from using these facilities. The Charing Cross figures are no doubt a wonderful reward for the Medic Executive's hard work in refurbishing the Reynolds Bar this summer and a clear "thumbs up" to a successful medic freshers' week events programme. The Wye reports seem to suggest that the Union was right to invest time, effort and money into the Wye Union Building and I am delighted to see that everybody's hard work has paid off. I would like to thank all of the dedicated staff and students who worked at our venues during the first week of term to make freshers' week such a great success.

Aldwych Group Developments

Imperial College Union was proud to host the second Aldwych Group meeting of the academic year last Friday (20th October). The Aldwych Group is an association of the student unions of the Russell Group Universities and it meets on a monthly basis to discuss national higher education matters, particularly those pertinent to the Russell Group universities. This group has the potential to be an effective campaigning and lobbying body but it presently seems to lack enough resources to make an impact on most Higher Education debates. On Friday it was proposed that the group should employ a part-time staff member, based at either Birmingham or Manchester, to research and lobby on the behalf of the Aldwych group.

Whilst it is clearly too early to comment on this matter with any certainty, both Ben (DPEW) and I believe that this is an initiative that ICU should support. It is anticipated that this staff member would monitor the activities of the Russell Group and analysis each institution's position on a range of higher education issues. Knowledge is power, and this staff member would almost certainly increase the corporate knowledge of the Aldwych Group unions. This would give us more political ammo that could come in handy should we find ourselves taking a position against our parent institution.

The downside of this initiative is that employing a researcher would cost money, however I believe that ICU would be able to commit at least £1000 to this project if it were to be implemented this year.

Beit Building Masterplan

We have instructed our architects to prepare a cost estimate for the next stage of the Beit redevelopment programme. This stage will be heavily influenced by two key constraints: firstly we need to install infrastructure to a) accommodate new water, sewerage and heating pipes and b) refurbish our ailing electrical circuits, which have

been unreliable of later. Secondly, the capital expenditure that has been set aside for this stage by the Harlington and IC Trust funds restricts us to investing only in student activities facilities. Hence, a hybrid form of the original West wing refurbishment phase, coupled with the installation of new service ducts in the core of the building, is emerging as the most feasible option. Once a viable cost estimate has been prepared, a decision paper recommending the next course of action will be presented to the Executive Committee and Council.

Other matters

NUS: I have received a petition and the Executive has called for a referendum on the question of affiliation to the NUS. More details are provided in an accompanying paper.

Disciplinary matters: Have taken up some of my time this month.

Centenary: We have started preparations for the Centenary Ball and Shiv (ICSMSU President) is working with Eric (DPCS) to prepare a Centenary pack for all of the Union's clubs and societies.

Governance Review: Phase I is being presented to this Council. I intend to invite a couple of new students to attend the next working group meeting (which will be held within the next two weeks) to discuss the next step.

Top up fees: A national demonstration against the proposed increase in top-up fees is taking place in London this Sunday and Ben and I will be promoting this event to the student body this week. Please see Ben's paper for more details.

College Meetings: I attended the Residences Committee and University of London Withdrawal meetings last week (nothing particularly exciting happened). I have met with several College officials recently and discussed a range of issues such as careers fairs, governance and the centenary.

Elections: Interest in this term's elections has been somewhat disappointing so far. A few teething problems have emerged with the new constituency based electoral system and I intend to arrange a post-mortem meeting to discuss how we can improve our procedures as soon as these elections have finished. On the plus side, the JCR hustings seemed to draw more students' attention than recent events (although the Reynolds Bar event had to be called off due to a lack of interest) and we have managed to fill almost every position on Council.