

VARSLITY

INTERVIEW

Michael Moore:
the only interview he
gave in Cambridge
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NEW CROSSWORD

Pit your wits against Varsity's new
cryptic puzzler

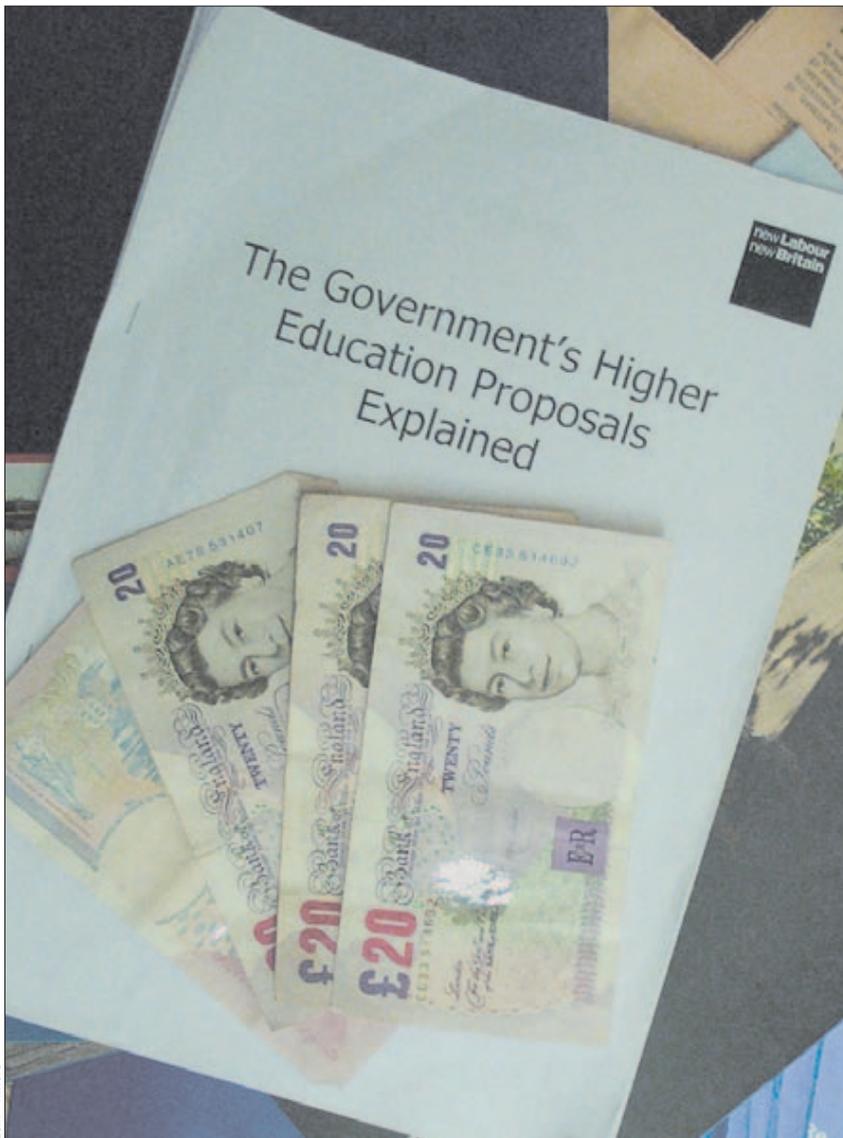
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STYLE

The Mods
come to
town
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Money, money, money



Tom Walters

- **Poorest students will get £9,000 to live on**
- **Bursaries could become top-up smokescreen**
- **Ben Brinded denounces scheme as "gimmick"**

Brian Little

Varsity has learned that the University is planning to announce a new system of bursaries that could transform access to Cambridge and give the poorest students £4,000 a year. However, CUSU President Ben Brinded fears the scheme may be used as a "headline-grabbing gimmick" to justify top-up fees.

The proposals will quadruple the support given by the University to the least well-off. Those whose parents earn less than £15,200 a year will get £4,000 in addition to a £1,000 grant from the Government. They will also be eligible for a £4,000 student loan to be repayed after graduation, bringing the total to £9,000. Cambridge living costs are estimated at £5,800.

However, it is notable that the University is planning to announce their proposals to coincide with the Queen's speech. The speech is set to announce legislation to introduce top-up fees. Apparently, although members of University Council have labelled Government proposals to water down the principle of free education as "distinctly unaromatic", they are scared to turn their noses up at the offer of more cash.

Brinded argues "The University are

being used by the Government to sweeten the bitter pill of top-up fees. There will be a bitter aftertaste.

"While we are thrilled by the idea of bursaries they are completely separate from top-up fees. The Government have the University over a barrel. The University needs money for access and education but why should it come from fees?"

The extra costs for the scheme will be £7.9m per annum and be funded by about a third of the revenue from top-up fees. For every pound the University gives out in new bursaries the Government will take three pounds in fees. Brinded commented, "This is a good scheme for maintenance of students whilst they are at University-but that is all. Students still have to pay up afterwards."

Brinded is especially wary of the dangers for "the student in the middle". The bursary scheme would provide full support for 955 current students but "official figures from the DfES show these proposals could still cause a 'poverty trap' for more than 2,000 students whose parents earn between £15,000 and £30,000."

He continues, "Top-up fees cause many problems. These bursaries only cover up the most ugly of them. They only act as a sticking plaster when a vaccine is needed."

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Tim Stanley on why booze is better than drugs PAGE 06

"Its exact location remains a mystery"

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Got a story?

Email news@varsity.co.uk or ring 01223 337575 if you have a story or meet us in The Bath House (hogshead) in Bene't Streeton Sunday at 7pm

So you think you're tolerant?

Benjamin Bland

Most Cambridge students consider themselves open-minded and liberal, but a survey has revealed that two-thirds of LGBT students have encountered homophobia.

'Attitudes to Sexuality', an online survey carried out by CUSU's LesBiGay Campaign, received 1500 responses, of which over 1000 were from straight students.

Although over half of LGBT respondents said that they did not feel that the University is homophobic, a similar number of non-LGBT respondents indicated that they had witnessed abuse based on sexual orientation. Only 30% of gay students were able to say that they had never encountered any homophobic abuse.

According to Campaigns Officer, Tom Clarke, the purpose of the survey was "to find out what issues affect the non-straight community and to foster a greater awareness amongst the straight community".

While the survey indicates that terms of social events, CUSU is catering well for the LGBT community,



LGBT survey shows Cambridge is more tolerant than you might think

only a quarter of LGBT students feel that they go out on the 'scene'. Nonetheless, the first LesBiGay 'Unique' club night this term saw some 500 students turn up to Life. This contrasts sharply with universities, such as Bristol whose first LGBT scene event of the term, organised jointly with UWE, drew a crowd of only 50.

The survey also gauged attitudes

to wider issues, and it was here that the greatest disparity between gay and non-gay responses was evident. Nearly four-fifths of LGBT students said that gay couples should be allowed to adopt, whereas this view was supported by less than half of straight people.

Half of the LGBT students surveyed have some form of religious be-

lief, with 1 in 4 describing themselves as Christians. Of those that consider themselves religious, three-quarters do not perceive any conflict between their beliefs and their sexuality.

Full results from the survey will be posted online soon at www.lbg.cusu.cam.ac.uk.

Additional reporting by Katie Boswell and Tom Ready

Union scandal: Mak the knifed

Jonathan Wood

The Ents Officer of the Cambridge Union resigned this week and was forced to pull out of a presidential campaign amid claims of financial misconduct. A vote of no confidence was passed by eight votes to one by the Union's standing committee in Alan Mak after he was accused of filing a false invoice. Mak strongly denies the claim saying it was an "innocent mistake" and believes it was used as an excuse to stop him running for president.

Mak has presided over a successful term of ents but it was a speed-dating event held at the Union that led to claims of a conflict of interests and fraud. Mak submitted an allegedly self-penned invoice asking for £100 to be paid by the Union to himself.

Union president Will Gallagher said, "I don't think you forge an invoice by mistake, there is no place for corruption in the Union." He added that it is possible this is not the end of the matter, "We are going back and looking at all the expenses; there are still issues to be resolved." Mak had been a presidential candidate in the elections held on Wednesday but his bid was declared ineligible.

Mak was also accused of attempting to bribe Union members to vote for him in an MSN Messenger conversation. Mak denies the claim, saying he believed he was talking to a friend when in fact it was someone on his presidential rival's slate, "it was a sham designed to frame me." Gallagher himself was embroiled in an alleged vote-buying scandal when running for chairman of CUCA, the

Cambridge University Conservative Association two years ago.

Mak claims the invoice was an "innocent mistake" which he believed was correct procedure as he was "rushed" and that "because there was a political element... because I was the leading presidential candidate... it was the excuse to get me out... Will Gallagher never liked me". Believing the allegations to be an attempt to discredit him as a candidate, he claimed that "they didn't want me to get anywhere near the ballot box", "they know that if I was allowed to stand, I would have won".

Gallagher said that claims this was all an attempt to ensure Mak didn't win were ridiculous and that it "goes against everything I've said and done as president. If when we try to act against corruption we are ourselves

accused of being corrupt, can the Union ever get it right?"

There have also been claims that the Union's returning officers have acted unconstitutionally, failing to announce the names of candidates in this term's election and circulate manifestos. If true this is in breach of a constitution that was adopted last term to guard against corruption.

The director of the speed-dating company has issued a statement saying, "I think he [Mak] is someone of good and honest character and I do not feel that there was any wilful attempt on Alan's part to mislead or defraud the Cambridge Union". Mak is determined to fight the allegations or otherwise he'll be "tarnished forever", claiming he would "go to the proctors, or whoever it takes, to clear my name".



Alex Mair

TOP 5 UNION SCANDALS