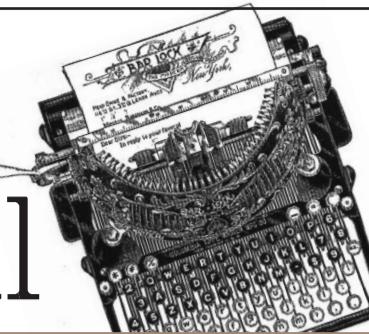


Letters & Editorial



Editorial

In retrospect

Made in Dagenham is in our cinemas, celebrating the women who fought for the Equal Pay Act in 1970, and on page 19 of *The Mancunion*, our literature section is taking a look back at Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*, one of the most influential books of its time. But what was its time? It certainly doesn't seem to be our time, what with *The Noughtie Girl's Guide to Feminism* (shame on the editor that let that title get published) and as we seem to have started looking back at Feminism with rose tinted glasses.

It's all very well to be celebrating women's achievements in the fight for equal rights, but should we really be doing it nostalgically? Gender inequality is hardly some twee little phase that we passed though decades ago, that now should be put on a shelf in a Past Times shop. A few battles might have been won, but it's an ongoing war - and it's a bloodbath.

I find this sort of 'Oh what a lovely war' attitude to women's oppression all a bit odd. It seems like just another way to demean and diminish the battle for equality; dressing it up in retro gar; watching women with beehives parade around with little placards so we can think how quaint it all looked.

I'm not saying the true battle of the female workers in the Dagenham Ford factories was in any way quaint, it's more our handling of it now. I don't particularly think repeatedly showing clips of Jamie Winstone in her underwear every time someone gives an interview about the film is exactly what the real Ford workers had in mind when they were protesting. Writing 'Equal Pay' across your body is a strong statement, but doing it with frilly underwear and a cheeky wink just jars somehow.

I'm not saying Feminism has to all be doom and gloom, the hairy legs and biker boots stereotype has been used as a weapon against feminists for too long as it is. And as I write this editorial, I am planning on going on a protest in Manchester this weekend, A Million Women Rise, and I'm perfectly happy to go in biker boots or stilettos, whatever I feel like wearing when I wake up on Sunday. So the Ford workers could have worn pink or frills or whatever the hell they wanted, but it just feels like the cinematic representation is a lot more cartoony than the real guts and grit that goes into a fight against 'The Man'.

I've been getting a worrying feeling about 'retro' lately, it's all very well to emulate style gone by, but we don't have to bring old attitudes back into fashion as well. About ten years ago, Beyoncé was singing about independent women, and everyone thought, "Right, she is sexy and powerful". Her last couple of music videos have been confused, hypocritical and well, just a bit desperate.

I'm sure she'd insist that her '40s style clothing in the 'Why don't you love me?' video was just another Sasha Fierce style persona, and, hey, I'm as fond of vintage styles as the next Oldham road shopper. However, I don't think that when you whack a vintage headscarf or a corset on, you necessarily need the vintage attitude, getting your arse out for the camera for attention (or bizarrely start dressing as a French Maid?). We get it Beyoncé - you're sexy, you didn't have to have to dust off a misogynistic '40s pin-up girl attitude to match your outfit.

Feminism is a complicated subject, and something I am so passionate about, it's hard not to tie yourself up in knots. That's why such clean cut representations of it seem so strange to me. Airbrushed posters of stunning actresses as the only representation of the women's lib movement; twenty year old glamour models stripping off for the theatre production of *Calendar Girls*; bib-and-braces child star Dakota Fanning attempting to portray Cherie Currie - it's just all a bit too Disney for my liking.

I don't know. Hopefully some of the issues we raised in this week's issue will get you thinking about the women's movement, and there is loads going on at the Union all week as well. Just make sure we aren't bringing back vintage attitudes with our vintage clobber, and don't let Feminism become 'retro', pigeon holed, or tucked away in our History books - especially not accompanied by some airbrushed photo.

6% is not enough

Dear *Mancunion*,

Having both read the news item 'Student assaulted in Withington', my housemate and I engaged in a discussion about the piece. They commented how it was quite gory in its detail, before my housemate commented how he felt the girl in question had been quite silly in getting out of the taxi and walking home alone. My response was that the girl was not at all to blame, regardless of whether she got a taxi, walked or crawled home and that the blame lay solely with the perpetrator, that women should have the right to walk the streets at night without the fear of rape.

I then read the letter from Josh Carroll about the reporting of rape in the media

and thought, actually, he had a point. If the story had told us only that a girl had been raped in the Withington area, that the rapist was still at large, and given a description of the perpetrator, as well as highlighting some safety tips, the conversation with my housemate would not have ensued and the woman's 'role' in the rape would never have been questioned. And, maybe if all rapes were reported in a less bloody and

horrendous way, meaning the news ensured it never implicated the woman negatively (even if this wasn't intentional), then perhaps more than 6% of rapes would result in conviction.

One can hope anyway.
Jennie O'Hara

Cheap as chips. But better than chips.

Dear *Mancunion*,

I must congratulate the Students' Union on the recent addition of vegan food to its outlet "Biko's Cafe". At £1.80 the "Falafel and Spinach Burger" (salad included) offers a filling meal at an astounding price. The arrival of cheap vegan food heralds a new age of prosperity for those used to

failing to find a sandwich paying £2 for a small plate of hummus

and leaving hungry.

It is a shame, perhaps, that this entirely plant-based meal is not marked as such on the paper signs which advertise its sale, but I trust our elected and esteemed leaders will ensure its proper labelling in due course. Herbivores on campus rejoice! The revolution is here.

An anonymous (but not hungry) student

Harsh words

Dear *Mancunion*,

In the wake of Fresher's Week being given the long-called for and most definitely overdue makeover into Welcome Week, I would like to suggest another small change. The term 'Students' has become synonymous with

drinking, drugs and general debauchery; may I suggest a change to 'Seekers of Higher Intellect Through Education', or S.H.I.T.Es for short.

Yours in hope,
Anne Gree

Here's looking at you, Hooky

Dear *Mancunion*,

Sorry to rant, but Elbow and I am Kloot aside, your list of Manchester bands is living in the past, covering all the artists that have dogged Manchester's reputation for exciting new music for the last fifteen years (I'm looking at you, Hooky).

If you were looking for a chart-selling megastar band with real talent (on their first two albums anyway), you missed The Verve, and for true originality? One word: OCEANSIZE.

Alex Lynham, 3rd Year Modern History with Economics
P.S. Loving The Mancunion this year, great stuff!

Got a letter?

Send your thoughts to the editor. Post your comments online @ www.mancunion.com or email letters@mancunion.com

Silence is not golden

Dear *Mancunion*,

After an on-going legal tussle with my almost-landlord, my waning determination was given a much needed boost by this article. I never stepped foot in the over-priced house in question, but am still owed almost five hundred pounds despite his promises and what is stated in his contract. In anticipation of said landlord being 'awkward' I contacted Legal Aid.

This was last March and,

surprise surprise, still no brass. However, I am in regular contact with the Legal Aid agency and progress is being made, albeit very slowly. But this simply proves that perseverance does pay off and students should not be beaten into submission by the prospect of a laboured battle nor by the myth that youth equals inferiority.

Charlotte Roberts,
Second Year

Two cents

Dear *Mancunion*,

I feel it necessary to respond to allegations made against Manchester Labour Students in last issues' article 'Miliband event marred with controversy'.

Firstly I want to address the issue of MLS "banning students" from our event. The room we booked for our event has a capacity of 285. We were told that University Security would be on hand to enforce this limit. We asked those interested in coming to email us. Far more than 285 people sent us their details.

We gave priority to students who would have the greatest interest in the aims of the MLS Society. Our decision was not about discriminating against groups of students but about giving those who want become enthused about our society the opportunity to do so.

The Mancunion's coverage stated that the event was partially "UMSU organised".

No Sense

Dear *Mancunion* readers,

In response to Andrew Campbell's letter.

The Mancunion article did not suggest that MLS had banned students. In fact, the article stated that control was taken away from the MLS by Ed Miliband's campaign team. We have spoken to numerous people to confirm this fact.

Furthermore, Mike Joslin, of Miliband's campaign team, confirmed that certain students were banned not because of overcrowding, but because they were considered a "political risk" and could cause problems and public embarrassment for Miliband.

Considering that Miliband will be taking part in PMQs and answering questions from the media, I find it foolish to have banned these students from the event. Mo Saqib and Will Stobart [Chairs of Liberal Youth and Conservative Future respectively] are rational, intelligent people and, if they had asked a question of Ed Miliband, he would have been perfectly capable of answering.

As far as priority being given to "students who would have the greatest interest in the aims of the MLS," is concerned, surely the chair of opposition societies would fall into this category.

As Jeremy Buck stated in the article, the event was UMSU affiliated and this is irrefutable. As such, it should be open to all students.

Quite frankly, the 'allegations' in article in question are far from unfounded, they are backed up with evidence not only from the Executive, but also from Ed Miliband's campaign team and members of the MLS themselves.

The letter from Mr Campbell, reads as if from someone who has disregarded all the evidence and statements we collected.

However, what is more worrying is that the letter makes no mention of the MLS member who quit following the problems at the event.

This person was verbally abused into withdrawing their statement to us. This person quit because fair discussion and free speech was being stifled, even though the victims were members of opposition parties. By resigning, they have made a bold statement and showed a level of integrity and honesty that is lacking among members of the MLS, Ed Miliband's team and politics itself.

Regards,
Adam Farnell, News Editor
The Mancunion