



SPECIAL ISSUE: MARCH 2, 2011.

HOW DID IT COME TO THIS?

a summary of recent events.

The question asked, but not answered, at Tuesday's meeting was 'how did we end up in a situation where we are being asked to hold a vote of no confidence in the Council?' Several academic staff made warnings that we were 'sleep-walking into our own destruction', and that in any case the meeting of the members on Thursday is not an appropriate place to air our discontent, as the select group that will be present do not accurately represent the concerns of the School Community. At one point the meeting erupted in a rash of 'I didn't speak up on Friday, but...'s Criticism was levelled directly at Mike Weinstein for having proposed the vote of no confidence.

How quickly we forget. On Friday, this proposal was met with applause and support. All the staff members who spoke against the motion yesterday were also present on Friday and remained silent. Here is an unedited transcription of what happened:

Student: "Will you sign the original contract?"

Brett: "I've already got one I've signed, which—"

Student Chorus: "It's a yes/no question. Yes or no. Answer the question."

Mike: "If you would, you would then open the debate about Director of the association and his future role. You would save the day. You would remove any new confrontation, any of the traditional procedures of the AA of assassination..."

Brett: "What I can tell you is that I will absolutely take this suggestion back to council and see if they would be willing for me to do that. In my mind, I've signed the contract that hands me the directorship of the school, if you think the other title confuses the matter, I would be happy to discuss taking that away and having the kind of discussion suggested... which is, if that were to happen in the future, there should first be a discussion and a debate. It's a good proposition. I can't tell you I will sign the 2005 contract after the review that's gone through because I'm not sure the other party would find that acceptable, but I can certainly take the suggestion back to them."

Carlos: "Would you find it acceptable?"

Brett: "I would find it acceptable, in the sense that—"

Carlos: "That's fine, that's the basis that I voted you back in again... that your current terms were to continue."

Brett: "No, no, I think the principle is a good one, and I certainly don't want to suggest that I wouldn't consider... I would be happy to—"

Mike: "If you would to say to us, which I think you did, but I will ask you to reconfirm it, you will sign the 2005 contract and then we will have all these discussions, we can proceed with perfect faith in you."

Brett: "I would be happy to do that."

Mike: "And you just tell the council on our behalf — or we will — that if they do not accept it, we will dismiss them."

— LONG APPLAUSE —

Mike: "Brett, I'm very pleased you've agreed to tear up the

contract of 2011, sign the contract of 2005. There has been this special meeting called [3rd March] — for the first time, I believe, in something like 40 years, by the members. I believe the last time it was called it was over deciding whether the school should join Imperial College, and the result was the council was dismissed. In order to avoid any of those things and in order that this matter is fully resolved, we would like to hear, from the council, prior to that meeting that they fully accept the demands of the school community on this matter and then there would be no need for a vote of no confidence on Thursday. If not, I personally will put a motion of no confidence in this council as is led by Alex Lifschutz. We would like to hear your commitment to this."

— MURMURS —

Brett: "Uh, My experience of demanding things like that of council is that it can be difficult getting 18 people together in a room. I have scheduled a meeting on Tuesday and have got Alex Lifschutz to come in — this was a point that came up in our student meeting, that they would like very much to understand the council's view."

Mike: "You only need 7 members of council to make this decision. It's not a matter of getting 18 people in a room, its one phone call to Alex. Alex can call his friends, they don't even have to be in the same space. This all has to be done by Monday. What we're concerned about is the technique we've seen applied relentlessly of endless delays. And we all know the dynamics here.

If Alex can get till April we'll all be away, if he can get till June then everyone leaves. The whole point is that we need this commitment that it will be resolved prior to the meeting. We'd like it particularly by Monday.

— APPLAUSE —

I have to notify Kathleen today, as Secretary, that there will be a call from the floor for a vote of no confidence in council and I will confirm that in writing to you. I will withdraw that once I hear the commitment from the council that they will carry out the school's wishes and what are now your wishes. I am saying it openly in front of everyone and I will confirm it in writing. We will then open the debate within the school community about the future of the school, the role of the association, any new Directorships concerned."

Brett: "The only point I would add is that kind of a debate everyone hopes is not just within the school community but across the association. Again, I'm not hired by the school, I have, as Mark points out, some deep obligations to the school and how I work with it, but my employer is that larger association. It always has been. And that's the kind of thing we can talk about. All I'm saying is that by wanting to re-open it and by wanting to address the elected members of that larger association, its got to be part of a larger discussion with all of those members, who will at times take very different views to those within the school. That's fine, everyone's got different views. I think that's one of the things council has tried to take into account.



Image by Valerie Bennett

WEBSITE LAUNCH!
FULCRUM.
 AASCHOOL.AC.UK

In summary of the transcription, far and away from any opinion, these are the facts of Friday's meeting, and how we arrived in this situation:

The discontent of the students was put to Brett regarding the nature of his contract, and the way both his office and Council had handled the affair.

Brett stated the concern and question over Director of Association was a problem concerning the wider Association, and should be discussed in that forum.

Mike stated clearly the conditions of the vote of no confidence, which were not opposed. They were to have a resolution from Council by Monday regarding whether they would re-open Brett's contract.

We are having a members' meeting tomorrow, which has been the suggested forum for discussion about Director of the Association.

The motion of no confidence will be put to the vote, it cannot be withdrawn from the agenda, and in any case the condition

for its withdrawal has not been achieved.

On a more personal note, I asked a question yesterday that brought a volley of opposition, including one student who said it 'was a shameful thing to ask', and 'brought the level of discussion down to that of the Daily Mail.' It was directed at the President of the Council over what I consider to be an unacceptable conflict of interest regarding the AA Space Planning. I did not carry forward the question, and felt browbeaten into silence.

It was condemned as the wrong time to talk about such things. However, I feel these types of concerns are valid and serious, and there has yet to be any structure to our meetings that can determine what content is or is not appropriate.

The first thing to do, it would seem to me, is to reform the way students represent themselves. We must have a coherent voice, elected representatives and a rigid agenda. *J. Self*

Dear Fellow Students,

I felt yesterday's meeting with Brett & the Council fell short of the expectations we set on Friday, which is extremely disappointing. It was an easy way out to outline the solution as 'we should have more communications' etc, although I don't know what are the other ways to do achieve that. I was also angry that we (and Mike) were made to feel responsible for the cause of these events that have unfolded since last week; both the Council & ex-president warned us of possible scenarios should they be ousted (ok, fair enough for them to explain it). On the other hand I think they should have taken more responsibility, this arrived as a result of their own actions too.

My concern now lies with Mike Weinstock, as he was cast in a negative light throughout the meeting, painted as the source who has led to this messy situation. This is very unfair to him

because this issue has arisen ultimately from us students. He is only representing us by voicing it to the school. No senior staff in the school will ever have the guts to do what he has done for us.

I was wondering if it's necessary for us to show our support for Mike, and show we are grateful that he stood up for us? It was quite painful to see him in this position yesterday. The Secretary said that the vote of no confidence will still go ahead this Thursday; I certainly don't understand what 's the big deal for it to be declared annulled (she explained that it has passed the deadline). I am also not sure if it's a tactic they use to blow up the situation of what we did (or what Mike said) on Friday, these are just my wild guesses which can be ignored, but this is another example of how the school is bogged down by unnecessary bureaucratic matters.

*Regards,
 Carrie Lim*