CUSU Council (Extraordinary Easter) 

Friday 14th June 2019, 6pm

CUSU Lounge

AGENDA

1. Objections to the order of items on the agenda
2. Matters arising from the minutes of the last Council Meeting
3. Announcements by Committees, Campaign Teams and the Executive
4. Discussions
5. Ordinary Policy Motions from Previous Council
	1. **Motion to support abortion law reform in Northern Ireland**
6. Proposed Ordinary Action Motions
7. Proposed Ordinary Policy Motions
	1. **Motion to mandate CUSU to continue working with the GU on consultation on and development of proposals for a new single union**
8. Any other business

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

# OBJECTIONS TO THE ORDER OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

# MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

* Minutes can be accessed via the CUSU council page at [www.cusu.co.uk](http://www.cusu.co.uk), email links or the folder shared on Facebook.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS BY COMMITTEES, CAMPAIGN TEAMS AND THE EXECUTIVE

* For updates from Sabbatical officers, please see accountability documents
* Liberation Campaigns and Ethical Affairs will update at Council.

# DISCUSSIONS

# ORDINARY POLICY MOTIONS FROM PREVIOUS COUNCIL

Policy requires approval at two consecutive Councils. The approval of the ‘starred’ motion at the second Council will be deemed to be automatic unless this ‘star’ is removed by a single member at the second Council wanting to revisit the motion for further discussion.

Please find the starred policy motions that were passed at the last Council listed below:

**5A. Motion to Support Abortion Law Reform in Northern Ireland**

**Submitted by:**

Amanda-Rose O’Halloran (aro25@cam.ac.uk)

**Seconded by:**

Michelle Woods (mcw63@cam.ac.uk)

**CUSU Notes:**

1. That Northern Ireland is currently the only country in the United Kingdom where abortion is still illegal and that Northern Ireland has the harshest criminal penalty for abortion anywhere in Europe under laws dating back to the Offences against the Person Act 1861, passed at a time when women did not even have the vote yet. The maximum sentence for those who have an abortion in Northern Ireland is life in prison. As a result, abortion is only permitted when there is a risk to the life of the pregnant person, or a serious risk to the pregnant person’s physical or mental health exists but these cases are very rare. CUSU notes that Cambridge students from NI are affected by this;
2. That in 2015, the High Court in Belfast ruled that Northern Ireland’s law on abortion was not compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights - specifically as it lacks provision for cases of fatal foetal abnormality, or where the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. In June 2018, the UK Supreme Court found the law to breach the European Convention on Human Rights. Moreover, in February 2018, officials from a UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women concluded from a confidential inquiry that “the situation in Northern Ireland constitutes violence against women that may amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.” They noted that the “denial of abortion and criminalisation of abortion amounts to discrimination against women because it is a denial of a service that only women need. And it puts women in horrific situations.”;
3. That the law does not prevent abortion, but only makes it unsafe and more difficult to access. The majority of women and pregnant people seeking an abortion travel to other parts of the UK and now the Republic of Ireland, which overturned its ban on abortion in May 2018. Every week, an average of 28 pregnant people travel abroad to access what should simply be considered basic healthcare;
4. That there have also been growing calls across Ireland and the UK for a change in the law, particularly after a referendum in the Republic of Ireland. A YouGov poll carried out in October 2018 found that 75 per cent of people in Northern Ireland want the abortion law to change, with 65 per cent agreeing that abortion should not be a crime;
5. That in the absence of a Northern Ireland Assembly the UK government must act. 66 per cent of people thought that Westminster should legislate to reform the law. The NUS-USI (National Union of Students – Union of Students in Ireland) have also launched their campaign Trust Us, which calls on Westminster to legislate for free, safe, legal and local abortion services in Northern Ireland immediately. They are campaigning for the decriminalisation of abortion in the North of Ireland and not the extension of the 1967 Abortion Act. Also, just in February of 2019, Amnesty International handed in a petition with over 62,000 names to the UK government calling for urgent action on Northern Ireland’s ban on abortion.
6. This Motion is supported by MPhil students Chloe Sariego, Roberto Zedillo-Ortega, Vera Chapiro, Sarah Troedsson, and academic staff Professor Sarah Franklin, Dr Lucy van de Weil, Dr Katie Dow, Dr Marcin Smientas, and Dr Robert Pralat. Alliance for Choice, an activist organisation that campaigns for abortion rights in Northern Ireland, and the London-Irish Abortion Rights Campaign, a London-based group that campaigns for access to free, safe, legal abortion across the island of Ireland, also both support our motion.

**CUSU Believes:**

1. That the law in Northern Ireland must change. It is outdated, ineffective, and inhumane in line with the High Court, the UK Supreme Court, the UN, the European convention on Human Rights, the NUS and USI, and should be changed to reflect the reality of pregnant people’s lives;
2. That forcing anyone to continue their pregnancy against their will amounts to unjustified state-sanctioned violence.
3. The UK government must ensure that laws are in line with the state’s international human rights obligations. We must add our voices to growing pressure on Westminster to act, we need greater public understanding and support for the decriminalisation of abortion;
4. That we must end the treatment of British and Irish women living in the North of Ireland as second-class citizens, who do not enjoy the same access to healthcare as their counterparts across the UK and the Republic of Ireland;
5. That we must fight for free, safe, legal and local abortion access in Northern Ireland now.;

**CUSU Resolves:**

1. To mandate the CUSU sabbatical officers to campaign for the decriminalisation of abortion throughout the UK, with particular attention to the inaccessibility of abortion in Northern Ireland;
2. To support the Abortion Support Network (ASN) and other organisations providing financial, emotional and logistical support to individuals who cannot access abortion services in their local area. This support should include promoting fundraisers in aid of the Abortion Support Network and Alliance for Choice;
3. To support the NUS-USI ‘Trust Us’ campaign for the decriminalisation of abortion in Northern Ireland and actively engage with NUS-USI to ensure our solidarity is as effective as possible.

# PROPOSED ORDINARY ACTION MOTIONS

# PROPOSED ORDINARY POLICY MOTIONS

**7A. Motion to mandate CUSU to continue working with the GU on consultation on and development of proposals for a new single union**

**CUSU notes:**

1. That 51 undergraduate and 93 postgraduate students responded to our recent survey. 90% of undergraduate respondents supported CUSU and the GU working more closely together and 78% supported the proposal for a single union. Of postgraduate respondents, 86% supported CUSU and the GU working more closely together and 65% supported the proposal for a single union. Between 73 and 75% of postgraduate respondents supported the proposed sabbatical, executive committee and council and forum structures. Between 60 and 75% of undergraduate respondents supported the same proposed structures. Undergraduate respondents were most supportive of the proposed council and forum structures.
2. That whilst there has been broad support, in particular for the full-time BME Officer, concerns have been raised about the proposed combined access and education roles, and the need for an equal postgraduate voice in any new council and forum structures.
3. That more consultation and proposal development are needed, in order to fully respond to areas of concern.

**CUSU believes:**

1. That the initial consultation period has shown broad support for the proposals, but there are a number of areas that need to be explored further, with students and staff, over the summer period.
2. That as postgraduate students make up half the student body, we must develop a union structure that ensures parity.
3. That the incoming CUSU and GU sabbatical teams should continue the current direction of travel and pursue the possibility of developing a single union structure.
4. That following further consultation, students should have a final and direct say on the proposals.

**CUSU resolves:**

1. To continue consultation on the proposals over the summer period.
2. To bring a finalised proposal to the first CUSU Council of Michaelmas term which responds to concerns raised during the consultation period, for further discussion.
3. To hold a referendum at the end of Michaelmas term on whether or not students support the single union proposed.

# ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Emergency business: Approval of the appointment of Alex Russell as student trustee (subject to final approval by the trustee appointment panel)