

Men's Rights Society was 'a joke from the start'

"I would like it to be known that I have realised how much upset this has caused, and am truly sorry that the group I started got so out of control. I've woken up to the reaction this morning and am truly horrified"



By [Josh Allen](#)

Sunday 12 May 2013



There was a brief furore yesterday evening as an e-mail purportedly sent by Chris West, to Sholto David a third year Biochemist, appeared on Facebook in which West appeared to indicate his support for a Men's Rights Society.

In the e-mail West thanks David for his inquiry and states that 'as far as I am aware the proposed society does not contravene any of the YUSU requirements for ratification...As it stands I cannot personally foresee any obvious difficulties in your society being accepted'.

Pressed by York students, Chris West took to Twitter to strongly deny York has a men's rights society and to reassure people that having checked through all his e-mails that it was 'a complet[e] fake' and he had 'never sent such an e-mail'.

Given the recent controversy over YUSU's refusal to ratify Feminist Society, the appearance of this e-mail created a strong backlash against YUSU. LSE student and member of the Labour Party's National Executive Council, Bex Bailey, tweeted 'Cannot believe that [YUSU] are on the verge of ratify a men's rights society but kicked up a fuss about ratifying a feminist society!'

Concerned activists went to the "York Men's Rights Society" Facebook Group to find out what was going on. Unearthing an e-mail, seemingly, sent earlier on Saturday by David to West outlining the aims of MRSoc and asking whether it contravened any YUSU regulations. Apparently West's "reply" was confirmation that it didn't. However, alarm bells were rung when it was noticed that West's e-mail was dated '06/11/12' and that it referred to the November ratification period last year.

A picture was then circulated on the Men's Rights group of two of the founders in 'Willow' accompanied by a piece of text which concluded 'you got hoaxed'. Making it clear that Men's Right's Society were in some way behind the faked e-mail themselves. The Facebook Group then vanished with Will Broad, a York Biology graduate, who now works for Fujifilm, posting on the FemSoc page 'So it was all a hoax. At least we got people talking about gender issues'.

Speaking to *Nouse*, Sholto David, the founder of MRSoc denied any involvement with the fake e-mail. Stating 'the entire group has been a joke from the start' and that he was 'pursuing ratification to highlight

the unfair decision taken with regards FemSoc ratification'. And that he was surprised 'by just how many people were taken in by the group' because 'my comments on the group were always tongue in cheek'.

Claiming to have not been a page admin for most of the week MRSoc was up, David commented : "I would like it to be known that I have realised how much upset this has caused , and am truly sorry that the group I started got so out of control. I've woken up to the reaction this morning and am truly horrified."

Upon revelation of the hoax, West sent an e-mail to FemSoc stating that he had faced 'a barrage of abuse' and wished 'to reassure' members of the group that he 'could not find any trace of correspondence with [Sholto David]'. And that he would be 'getting expert people to investigate how this has been spoofed when I get to work on Monday".

Reacting to events Alex Wilson, the Chair of FemSoc, said: "My personal reaction to the debacle over the so called 'Men's Rights Society' has been shock, anger and hurt. A large amount of what was posted on the now deleted facebook group were personal attacks on me and my behaviour and attacks on the York Feminist group, something which I have put a huge amount of effort and work into."

"It saddens and angers me that people would be willing to put so much effort into a hoax which has done nothing but upset people. The fact that they were willing to go as far as producing a fraudulent email to maintain their hoax shows that this was more than just "trolling", this was a deliberate attempt to undermine Feminism and Women's issues here at York and to scare and upset everyone involved in them."



26 comments

#1 12 May '13 at 3:37 pm

Anyone that vaguely knows of Sholto, and has seen some of the pranks, trolling, etc, he's pulled before on Facebook would've had high suspicions that this was fake from the start.
Too far this time, Sholto, too far.

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#2 12 May '13 at 3:52 pm

I don't think anyone was that "scared" by Sholto's hoax. In fact, it was friends of femsoc supporters on twitter who were proclaiming Sholto should be killed and saying he should be burned. That isn't the reaction of upset people; that is the reaction of incredulous, OTT outrage.

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Singh 12 May '13 at 3:53 pm

Sholto didn't actually do much to stir up problems. Whilst it was an elaborate troll, I believe it was born out of the controversy about FemSoc being denied ratification. He himself states it was made to "highlight the unfair decision taken with regards FemSoc ratification". The sourness and vitriol from the "members" of the MRSoc seems as if it was always present, all Sholto did was open the lid to let out the pent up phobia of feminism and fear of the unknown that was lurking in society. Who is the real monster here, Sholto the troll, or the countless fools who believed they were truly part of a "Men's Rights Society"? One thing i would like to point out, however, is that it wasn't just upset that came out of this, something positive blossomed too. Whilst browsing the countless nonsense and idiocy of the group, I noticed many members rallied the notion of a merger with FemSoc, stating that men and women don't exist in a

vacuum, but gender equality should be sought after by both sexes.
Out of the manure comes a flower.

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La la la

12 May '13 at 4:03 pm

More than anything, reading through the comments on the group made me realist how scary feminists are, some of them can really be quite vicious! Maybe they should consider that being so angry constantly just alienates them and pretty much invalidates all their views, even if some of them are quite sensible.

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Anonymous

12 May '13 at 4:05 pm

“getting expert people to investigate how this has been spoofed”
How much can YUSU pay me for investigating this very tricky problem?

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Sholto David

12 May '13 at 4:14 pm

Now that comments are open I'd like to say my piece: People are justifiably angry with me and for the part I played in this and I am sorry. This is quite clearly too little too late, the group should never have been started, and the fake email, which was nothing to do with me, should not have been the trigger to make me take action. Whether people believe the truth behind the reasons for this group is at this point somewhat irrelevant I suppose, and I can't imagine I, or any other member of the Facebook page have a great deal of credibility left, I've caused a lot of upset and there's no justification for that.

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V

12 May '13 at 4:49 pm

all this highlighted was how defensive the York feminists are at 'protecting their patch'. and how they believe in gender equality but then say we all know men have enough rights and how ridiculous a group is that highlights things such as lack of paternity leave etc. I do not identify with 90% of the radical things WomCom and FemSoc claim to be representing me on, and this stunt proved what a joke they are!

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Anonymous

12 May '13 at 5:07 pm

Anyone who actually visited the Mens Rights page will realise that aside from the obvious trolling by a select few people, some of the most inflammatory comments were written by prominent members of the FemSoc.

The attitudes of some of the FemSoc committee are quite frankly disgusting. Banning people from their group whose opinions differ from their own and often only offering ad himinem attacks and straw-men in defence their point of view. If this society becomes ratified, as I believe YUSU has now agreed to, feminists should be embarrassed to be represented by such people.

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Stu

12 May '13 at 5:23 pm

Something good (and surprising to some) happened amidst the chaos of that group. People were discussing why male suicide rates are higher, why male access to healthcare is lower, why a lower percentage of male victims report sexual and domestic abuse than women. People were talking about important issues, in an open and considered way (issues which a genuine 'Men's group' could really help people with, in co-operation with Women's groups). However, when people like Mr. David host groups which cater for homophobes, sexists and 'trolls', it impacts on the credibility of everyone. Feminists have been attacked. Discussion on male gender roles has been made toxic. It was a completely stupid thing to do in terms of debate and discussion. And if the intended purpose was simply to poke fun at people who care about gender issues, which it appears to have been, then the joke could have done with being a lot funnier.

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Eden Marachino

12 May '13 at 5:47 pm

As one of the most vocal contributors to this group, it's a shame that it has been closed, I had a lot of fun.

While I identify as a feminist, I don't think that the idea of a group to talk about men's rights issues is necessarily a bad thing. However that's not what this 'ruse' was about, it was a reactionary attack against feminism in York. A group for people who don't like feminists. It is people like those who were posting on the page (with a few exceptions) that make "Men's Rights" a contentious issue. Instead of talking about issues that affect men they attack feminism. These people, sexists all, ruin the discussion of egalitarianism from a male point of view for everyone.

However much Sholto can claim it was a joke (I think he's lying, I think his idea just failed), the unpleasant views of many people (looking at you Timmy <3) were exposed and there was a small amount of interesting discussion, so it's not all bad!

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Eden Marachino

12 May '13 at 5:51 pm

Also, Sholto can say that his comments were "tongue in cheek" but if you have read his quite extensive replies it becomes pretty obvious that this is not the case.

He is just trying to cover his ass.

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James Meade

12 May '13 at 6:26 pm

As another one of the more prolific posters, there were those of us who did take it seriously, and conclusions as to how the rights of both men and women in society could be improved were drawn. If anything, the real shame of this whole incident is that it has made a frank and useful debate on those matters toxic. Hopefully, the poisonous aspects of the whole incident will be forgotten soon, allowing for the better discussions to be continued on.

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Stu

12 May '13 at 6:28 pm

Bring on a genuine, rational, helpful Men's issues discussion group I say, in co-operation with the Women's groups!

(Although a more elegant name may be possible).

:)

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Anonymous

12 May '13 at 7:49 pm

Is Timothy Lygo real, or a troll FB account by Sholto and Darren?

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Laura Parker

12 May '13 at 9:10 pm

I also posted on the group fairly often, and I'm a bit surprised that people didn't pick up on it being a troll sooner. To be honest that was always my impression... Sholto used over the top words like "plight" (seriously, nobody says that if they want to be taken seriously) and was generally overly dramatic in most of his comments (not that he actually got all that involved in the debates) - I honestly thought it should be obvious to people that it was either a joke or a social experiment.

Secondly, whilst there were quite a few comments/ posts that were pretty ignorant toward feminism and what it stands for, let's not forget that a couple of the people from femsoc who posted in the group were downright savage. It's a shame since I know that they make up a minority; most of the people in femsoc are more than capable of having a rational balanced discussion: unfortunately the most reactionary, over the top members seemed to be some of the loudest.

Bit amused at just how hysterical people got over the email; even that was a blatant fake. We're at university, guys... take a closer look at things before you start going mental. Honestly.

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Anon

12 May '13 at 9:39 pm

I'm taken back by the lack of comments about the forgery itself.

Imitating Chris West like that and causing him serious trouble in the (global) media, leading to potential implications on his future career is a horrendous crime.

I hope that YUSU can(/will) track down the creator of the forgery; there are only a few methods by which it could have been created and all of which will contain large fingerprints to the perpetrator.

Does anyone have links towards the original posting?

To the person who created the hoax, fuck you.

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Sholto David

12 May '13 at 9:50 pm

The email as I understand it was initially uploaded with the comment "Look what I just received from "Christ" West. The creator of the screen grab has already already emailed Chris to apologize and claim responsibility.

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Simon O'Brien

12 May '13 at 10:12 pm

Now I'm just confused... Why was I banned from a troll society for "trolling"

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Eden Marachino

13 May '13 at 10:14 am

@Timmy

Hit me up babycakes, I'm ready when you are ;)

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Mr Duck

13 May '13 at 11:03 pm

Quack... Quack quack quack... Quackity quack. Quack quack quack, quack! Quack quack.

[▲ Report](#)

Anonymous

14 May '13 at 12:59 am

You win this round Mr. Duck!

[▲ Report](#)

Anonymous

15 May '13 at 2:01 am

So does this mean we are not allowed to have a serious MRA/Masculinist fb group? I am genuinely confused. I'd like to know before I create one.

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Katie

15 May '13 at 2:19 am

"expert people" to work it out? Seriously West, never heard of photoshop?

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Anonymous

15 May '13 at 1:08 pm

Hi, anonymous, in resonse to the MenSoc thing someone created a serious gender equality group named YEGS, York Equality in Gender Society, if you would like to join.

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Holona Herton

19 May '13 at 3:54 pm

What's this all about? I just saw this article in Most Read and my name isn't mentioned once!? I don't want to hear about Men's Soc. More on FemSoc and me please! I'm growing forever more pale outside of the limelight!!

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Joshua Throbson

23 May '13 at 9:12 pm

As a born again feminist, I am OUTRAGED by this.

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