Press Release: 3rd May 2016

REBECCA NICHOLSON SPEAKS AT THE CAMBRIDGE UNION

“VICE is there to tell the stories of those who fall through the cracks”

On the 3rd May 2016, the Cambridge Union Society welcomed the Editor-in-Chief of VICE UK, Rebecca Nicholson. Ms. Nicholson spoke of VICE’s efforts to provide an alternative viewpoint from the mainstream media, of her experiences as a journalist and of the difficulties of being a woman in journalism.

Ms. Nicholson began with a trailer of one of VICE’s latest documentary films, Rule Britannia, which follows one of Britain’s most brutal debt collectors. The video was shocking in how it was uncensored in its portrayal of the violence and lawlessness of those who “fall through the cracks” of society, and led to a member of the floor asking how VICE is able to film amongst violent offenders such as this. Ms. Nicholson explained that “it’s a trust thing”, and that VICE’s reputation as being outside the established mainstream media accounts for a significant part of its ability to gain intimate access to parts of society that would not be accessible to the more mainstream media.

The rejection of the establishment featured heavily in Ms. Nicholson’s address to the Union. As being made up largely of young people, Nicholson stated that VICE was able to ‘tap into’ a growing sentiment amongst today’s youth. She argued that there was a misconception of young people as being apathetic in their approach to current affairs and politics in particular, but that this was in fact not a general apathy, but a symptom of their frustration at and rejection of mainstream politics and media. The makeup of VICE, she stated, means that it is able to avoid this without a patronising and artificial attempt to reach young people, an expression with which she repeatedly stated she was uncomfortable.

Finally, Ms. Nicholson was questioned on her experience as a woman in the media, particularly during her period working for the Guardian. She said that while she had not experienced major discrimination herself, there was always a problem with men being unhappy “with the fact that you [as a woman] have an opinion”, no matter what that opinion was.

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