

British MPs feign indignation over university links to warmongers

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An early day parliamentary motion was presented last November by half a dozen Labour MPs along with George Galloway of the Respect-Unity coalition. It protested former Prime Minister Tony Blair's inaugural speech at a university-aligned think tank, the Institute for Security and Resilience Studies (ISRS).

The six state they were "appalled at University College London (UCL) opening the Institute for Security and Resilience Studies on its premises; notes that this is in partnership with weapons manufacturers, Ultra Electronics and European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company both of which supplied weapons used for the bombing of Iraq."

The motion noted that the institute "is dominated by arms manufacturers and politicians who promoted the war against Iraq, including former Prime Minister Tony Blair; and calls on UCL to reconsider its position in hosting this institution and instead protect its own academic independence."

This is not merely a case of closing the door after the horse has bolted, but doing so after it has retired from the race and gone on to greener (more financially lucrative) pastures.

The pro-forma protest made was in the first instance an attempt to distance the Labour Party from the war crimes of the Blair government and their part in enabling them to take place. It is, in addition, of a piece with ongoing attempts to assert that Labour has turned left in the "post-Blair" period and especially under the "clean-hands" leadership of Ed Miliband.

The ISRS was in fact first mooted by former Defence Secretary and Home Secretary John Reid as long ago as 2008, when Labour was still in government. Reid, an arch-Blairite and former Stalinist, established the think-tank shortly after resigning from the cabinet in light of Blair's resignation.

UCL was an enthusiastic backer, describing the ISRS as "ground-breaking" in providing a "unique opportunity for students and academics to join with experts and practitioners from commerce, industry, government and diplomacy to help developing democracies, and established nation-states, find solutions to the many new security challenges being faced in today's world."

Reid was billed as chairman of the institute, as well being appointed as an honorary professor of the university.

The pose of outrage over the infringing on the UCL's academic independence carries no real weight and is made with even less conviction. Malcolm Grant, UCL president and provost, said the initiative "fits well with UCL's approach to developing a solutions-based focus to research."

All the major universities now have extensive ties with business and not a few with the arms industry and the security services. This made UCL a natural home for the ISRS, which is funded by EADS UK, the British section of the pan-European aerospace and defence corporation. It is being investigated by the Serious Fraud Office over whether one of its subsidiaries, Ultra Electronics, bribed Saudi Arabian officials.

Ultra Electronics is a UK defence and security company with a major stake in the American Predator drone program of extra judicial killings. Ultra Electronics delivered a \$2 billion contract to the US military to enable drones to fly further and faster than those using traditional batteries. It also manufactures interface equipment utilised by drone controllers. In the UK, in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence, Ultra are involved in the development of "loitering munitions", capable of staying airborne for hours, waiting for their prey to show, before executing their

deadly mission.

Regardless of the faux naivety of the Labour MPs, in tandem with the devastating illegal wars waged against Iraq and Afghanistan waged by their party was the broad assault on democratic rights made necessary by Labour's warmongering and pro-business policies that impacted on the livelihoods of millions.

The ISRS is an effort spearheaded by EADS UK to keep together figures that for a long time occupied the highest echelons of the state. It has an 11-person "advisory board" which the *Guardian* pointed out "includes figures associated with some of the most controversial foreign policy and security episodes of the post-9/11 international landscape and New Labour's time in power."

These are the people who governed the UK for years while the state committed one crime after another in Northern Ireland, Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere.

From the party itself, the Director of Programmes at the ISRS is Jamie MacIntosh, a special adviser to Reid during his time as home secretary. MacIntosh was previously chief of research and assessment with the Defence Academy of the UK. Directors at the ISRS also include Chief Executive Simon Gillespie, a former military adviser to Reid when serving in the cabinet and Rees Aronson, who acted as the Labour's finance director in the period preceding their 2001 general election victory.

From the state apparatus, there is Ronnie Flanagan, now a strategic adviser to the police force in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and the former chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, when it colluded with Unionist paramilitary death squads in Northern Ireland. He sits alongside Lady Manningham-Buller, a former director general of British Intelligence at MI5 between 2002 and 2007 and Michael Boyce, the chief of the UK defence staff (2001-2003) who advised the Blair Government on the deployment of troops for the invasion of Iraq.

Reflecting Labour's connection with the US is the presence of men like Prof Philip Bobbitt, former director at the US National Security Council for President Clinton and a vocal supporter of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and Michael Chertoff, a secretary of Homeland Security under President Bush.

From the arms industry, there is Douglas Caster, chairman of Ultra Electronics and Len Tyler, who leads

the ISRS's research promotion on "cyber security and cyber doctrine" and who used to be the head of business development for Cassidian Systems, also part of EADS UK.

What lesson should be drawn from the formation of the ISRS? It is this: Regardless of who is elected into government and its formal political coloration, behind the scenes politicians from all parties, the security services and military are engaged in a continual conspiracy against the interests of the British public—abetted in this instance by corporate arms manufacturers and sections of academia. ISRS is just one example of how bourgeois rule operates—as a cabal dedicated to developing the means of prosecuting future wars and the persecution of social and political discontent at home.



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