

London Conference on Intelligence exposes link between academic promotion of eugenics and Conservative right

Thomas Scripps
31 January 2018

The exposure of Toby Young's attendance at a London eugenics conference, on the day of his forced resignation from the newly created Office for Students, has provoked widespread and justified outrage.

An investigation by the *London Student* newspaper revealed Young's attendance and was the likely tipping point for his resignation amid a scandal over innumerable misogynistic and anti-working-class comments. Young, who occupies a position on the right of the Conservative Party, has urged the use of "progressive eugenics" to encourage below-average IQ parents not to have children.

The conference was attended by a mixture of fascists, pseudo-scientists and social reactionaries—including an individual who has advocated sex with sleeping children as a "compromise" solution to paedophilia. Its exposure has blown the lid on the foul discussions held by the Conservative right.

Held last May at the prestigious University College London (UCL), the London Conference on Intelligence was organised and hosted by honorary UCL professor James Thompson and has been held four times since 2014. UCL's insignia appeared on conference documents and featured in the logo of its YouTube channel—which has since been closed.

Despite claims that its room booking procedure was breached, there is no reason to take seriously the university's claim that it had no idea what one of its professors was doing on its premises over several years. UCL has now suspended Thompson's approval for hosting future events and politely contacted him for an explanation, commenting, "We are an institution that is committed to free speech but also to combating racism and sexism in all forms."

Thompson, a lecturer at the university for 32 years, did not hide his scientific interests and political views. His latest academic paper is titled "The cognitive competences of immigrant and native students across the world: an analysis of gaps, possible causes and impact." A 2011 paper he co-authored, "Cognitive capitalism: the effect of cognitive ability on wealth, as mediated through scientific achievement and economic freedom," argued that global economic inequalities are the product of different mental capacities across populations.

In articles for the website *Unz Review*, Thompson told readers that US Republicans are more intelligent than Democrats and therefore the most rational political choice; that women are innately less intelligent than men; that "[s]ome ethnic groups contribute relatively little" to the UK; and that African-Caribbean and black African populations are more likely to be psychotic than the white British population. "So,

screen Africans who are psychotic or manic, particularly those on cannabis or other drugs, unemployed, not compliant with treatment, and showing any threatening behaviours, and get them treated as quickly as possible."

Thompson's professional and public Twitter account follows white supremacist and alt-rightists Richard Spencer, Virginia Dare, American Renaissance and Brett Stevens. Spencer follows Thompson's account.

Thompson invited Emil Kirkegaard to his London conference. Kirkegaard has posted a picture of himself receiving the "Heil Hitler" salute, with his own caption, "there will be an heir to the Fuhrer," alongside numerous far-right videos. He is popular with the neo-Nazi forum Stormfront.

Kirkegaard holds a BA in Linguistics, which he uses to run OpenPsych—a website for psychology papers that have not been peer reviewed. The most prominent contributor is Kevin MacDonald, who has referred to the fascist mass murderer Anders Breivik as a "serious political thinker with a great many insights and some good practical ideas on strategy."

On his blog, Kirkegaard has suggested that paedophiles could "[have] sex with a sleeping child without them knowing it (so, using sleeping medicine.) If they don't notice it is difficult to see how they could be harmed, even if it is rape."

The central figure of the conference, who has previously praised Kirkegaard for his "brilliant work identifying the genes responsible for race differences in intelligence," was Richard Lynn.

Lynn is President of the Ulster Institute for Social Research (UISR), financially backed by his own Pioneer Fund—founded by Nazi sympathisers and listed as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The UISR publishes *Mankind Quarterly*, whose founders and board members include leading personalities in the Hitler and Mussolini regimes.

In a past interview with the fascist magazine *Right NOW!* Lynn stated, "I believe ... predominantly white states should declare independence and secede from the Union [the United States]. They would then enforce strict border controls and provide minimum welfare, which would be limited to citizens. If this were done, white civilisation would survive within this handful of states."

He has written in favour of the "phasing out" of the "populations of incompetent cultures" across the world.

Lynn has held significant positions in academia, sitting on the editorial boards of the journals *Personality and Individual Differences* and *Intelligence*, both published by Elsevier, publisher of the *Lancet*

and *Cell* journals.

The views of Thompson, Lynn and Kirkegaard are those of undiluted racism and fascism. There is not a shred of credibility in attempts to use genetics as a “proof” for sweeping racial distinctions. As Adam Rutherford, 10-year editor of the journal *Nature* commented after a look at Thompson’s Unz articles, the arguments are a “pseudo-scientific front for bog-standard, old-school racism.”

“As soon as you begin to speak about black people and IQ you have a problem, because genetically-speaking ‘black people’ aren’t one homogeneous group,” Rutherford said. “Any two people of recent African descent are likely to be more genetically distinct from each other than either of them is to anyone else in the world.”

The attendees at the London Conference of Intelligence represent, in a more politically vicious form, the continuation of ideas raised in Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein’s 1994 book *The Bell Curve*. The book generated immense controversy when published because of its racial explanation of intelligence.

As explained in the 1996 lecture, “Equality, the Rights of Man and the Birth of Socialism” by David North, “Notwithstanding their own lame denials, the authors certainly did write a racist tract. But, as a matter of fact, the racist arguments are introduced in support of a broader, utterly reactionary defense of social inequality.”

Ultimately, North notes, Murray and Herrnstein worked to suggest “that social inequality is the natural and legitimate expression and product of genetically-determined mental capacities.” The (in their argument, White or Asian) rich were rich because they had superior genes, and the poor were poor because of their inferior stock.

By the time these arguments were applied to the UK, the question had quite clearly become one of class: more specifically, of a genetically prescribed “underclass.”

This has worked its way through to its fascistic conclusions today in the work of Adam Perkins, a professor at King’s College London and a speaker at the 2016 London Conference on Intelligence. He was recently forced by a petition of several hundred students to apologise for tweeting his opinion that Trump’s travel ban “makes sense in human capital terms.” Originally challenged on Twitter for having used data outside the US to make claims about banned nationalities’ crime rates, he responded, “Somalians don’t perform well either side of the Atlantic.”

Perkins demonstrated the sincerity of his apology by making an appearance on the far-right “The Reality Calls Show” shortly afterwards. The talk show, which has hosted Kirkegaard, was previously banned from iTunes’s podcast service for a “vehemently racist” and “anti-Semitic” video, “White Genocide,” which included claims of a Zionist conspiracy to cause mass migration, and featured numerous, unexplained clips of violence by Muslims and black people.

In 2015, Perkins published a book titled *The Welfare Trait*, arguing that the welfare state is a “production line for damaged kids.” He wrote, “There are some problematic links between the welfare state and personality, and the welfare state can proliferate employment resistance,” essentially arguing that welfare dependency could be bred out if benefits payments were reduced until there was a birth rate decline in out-of-work households. Both the *Daily Mail* and the *Spectator* weighed in to defend him from criticism.

Another of the professor’s studies calculated that an “extra” 98,040 people were “created by the welfare state” over 15 years due to a rise in welfare spending, representing an “ever-greater burden on the more functional citizens.” He estimated the “cost” of these individuals to

the state at £12,000 per head in welfare payments and the expected crime they would commit.

Among his influences, Perkins lists the US behavioural geneticist David Lykken. In 1998, Lykken suggested that people should be forced to apply for a license to have children: disqualifying factors were to include being unmarried, unemployed, or having a debilitating illness or other disability.

Under the thin guise of pseudo-scientific research, Perkins and others are launching an ideological assault on state welfare. His calculation of the cost of “extra” people is wholly reminiscent of Nazi posters raging against the cost of caring for “cripples.”

Just a few days after Young’s resignation, Ben Bradley, recently appointed the Conservative Party’s Vice-Chair for Youth, was found to have urged sterilisation of the unemployed. Speaking in defence of Tory cuts to child benefits, Bradley tweeted in 2012, “Sorry but how many children you have is a choice; if you can’t afford them, stop having them! Vasectomies are free ... Families who have never worked a day in their lives having four or five kids and the rest of us having one or two means it’s not long before we’re drowning in a vast sea of unemployed wasters that we pay to keep!”

Four years ago, Dominic Cummings, the education adviser to then Education Secretary Michael Gove, produced a 250-page paper in support of the academisation of state schools. He argued that a well-rounded education for working class children is a waste of money. He claimed that children’s academic performance was mainly determined by their genetics and IQ.

There is widespread hostility among students and academics to the promotion of such regressive ideas on campus. But a fight against them cannot be waged through rational argument alone. Eugenics is being advanced within academia and politics because it serves definite social interests; the fight against its proponents is therefore necessarily a social struggle. In this struggle, students and academics must turn to the working class: the only revolutionary force in society and hence the only force capable of taking forward the struggle for human equality and freedom.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact