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## UNIVERSITIES FOR SALE? THE INFLUENCE OF THE ARMS, FOSSIL FUELS AND OTHER INDUSTRIES

### ABSTRACTS AND SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

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#### MILITARISING ACADEMIA: ARMS CORPORATIONS AND UK UNIVERSITIES

**Dr Stuart Parkinson, Executive Director, Scientists for Global Responsibility**

Arms corporations have a long history of working with UK universities, especially in engineering, computer science and physics. Indeed, it is rare to find a university which receives no funding from these businesses. With the recent increase in armed conflict in many parts of the world, coupled with the rise of new military technologies (such as armed drones) and the expansion of military interests into the civilian policing sector, the arms industry is finding new justifications for working with academia. Meanwhile, the government is strongly pushing universities to collaborate more with industry to help fuel economic growth. The result is that ethical issues are being marginalised and research which helps to tackle the root causes of conflict is often overlooked in favour of that which could lead to profitable new military technologies.

This presentation will summarise a range of recent investigations into arms industry involvement at UK universities. It will also discuss detrimental effects of this involvement, as well as highlighting alternatives and the ways in which this situation is being challenged.

**Stuart Parkinson** has been Executive Director of Scientists for Global Responsibility since 2003 and co-ordinates the organisation's work on the militarisation of science and technology. He is lead author of the in-depth SGR report, *Offensive Insecurity: The role of science and technology in UK security strategies*, as well as editor/ co-author of numerous other SGR reports including *Soldiers in the Laboratory* and *Science and the Corporate Agenda*. He began his career as an electronic engineer working in the military industrial sector, before ethical concerns led to a change in direction. He has since worked in academia and non-governmental organisations on a range of science and technology issues.

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#### INVESTIGATING FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY FUNDING IN ACADEMIA

**Maeve McClenaghan, Senior Investigator, Greenpeace UK**

This talk will summarise a 2015 investigation by Greenpeace UK into fossil fuel funding of research and teaching in academia. The investigation was based on scores of freedom of information requests to universities across the UK, as well as digging into statistics published by research councils and talking to science policy analysts. 39 universities admitted to receiving funding from oil and gas companies, including 80% of the elite Russell Group, several of which have committed to divesting.

**Maeve McClenaghan** is a Senior Investigator in Greenpeace UK's investigations team where she has worked on investigations that have made waves around the world, including an undercover sting on climate sceptic academics. She also works as a freelance investigative journalist and regularly produces investigations for UK publications including the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, the Independent, the Observer and Vice News. In 2014 Maeve was part of a team that won the Bar Council's Legal Reporting award for an investigation into the UK law of joint enterprise. In the past Maeve has worked for a range of media outlets and NGOs.

## **HE WHO PAYS THE PIPER: UNIVERSITIES, THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY, AND FRACKING**

**David K Smythe, Emeritus Professor of Geophysics, University of Glasgow**

University research in many areas with a commercial application has been 'for sale' in the past few decades. Is this necessarily a bad thing? How corrosive is this corporate influence on scholarship? I shall discuss the earth sciences, where the oil industry has long had a pervasive influence in geology departments. There is huge pressure to bring in industrial research money, because the research funding available for so-called curiosity-driven research has dwindled relative to the demand. The principal funding agency, the Natural Environment Research Council, also funds strategic (target-driven) research. In one such field - risks and consequences of fracking - research funding is controlled by a hegemony of mainly industry-funded academics, who are simultaneously accessing public funds and advising government. Dissenting research may be vigorously suppressed. One may legitimately question whether the resulting peer-reviewed research is completely independent of industry and/or government pressure, and declarations of interest are not adequate to allay suspicion.

**David Smythe** trained as a geophysicist. He worked initially at the British Geological Survey in Edinburgh, then became Professor of Geophysics at Glasgow University until his early retirement in 1998. He moved to France in 2003, and intermittently consulted for the oil industry. He pioneered marine deep crustal seismic imaging in the 1980s, and led a multinational geophysical experiment at the world's deepest borehole, in Arctic Russia. His many papers and public lectures on West Cumbria, from 2007 on, helped to persuade Cumbria County Council to veto the development of a nuclear waste repository in 2013. His prototype of a new patented 3D medical ultrasound scanner based on geophysical principles has proved the concept, applicable to novel areas like bone strength and intracranial pressure measurement. After Fukushima, he published a new objective scale for estimating the magnitude of nuclear accidents, which is becoming recognised as superior to the 'official' scale. Recently he has assisted many local UK groups opposed to fracking, by providing expert reviews.

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## **REGULATORY 'UNDERSIGHT': POLICING INTEGRITY AT THE UNIVERSITY-INDUSTRIAL INTERFACE IN MEDICINE**

**Dr Aubrey Blumsohn, previously Senior Lecturer, University of Sheffield**

Effective medicine requires honest science, transparent analysis of data and complete transmission of research findings. Pharmaceutical companies and medical device manufacturers sell products under the banner of science, usually with a veneer of university credibility. A large number of recent incidents have involved the collusion of university academics in the generation and propagation of false or misleading research. The consequent 'scandals' have been associated with many hundreds of thousands of deaths. A variety of statutory, scientific and professional regulatory bodies are interspersed in the relationship between industry and academia. The supposed remit of these bodies is to safeguard integrity. In many cases these bodies have failed to understand or support the scientific process, or have colluded with misconduct. This talk will focus on the nature of incidents which have arisen, and the extent to which government and regulators collude with scientific fraud or misconduct at the university-industrial interface.

Until March 2006, **Aubrey Blumsohn** was Senior Lecturer at the University of Sheffield with research expertise in skeletal disease. In September 2005 he was suspended from his academic position for communicating serious concerns about scientific integrity to the media. His interests include the rights and obligations of scientific authors, the right of access to data, the nature of 'data' in science, the meaning of 'confidentiality' in research, and the role of an academic institution.

## UNIVERSITIES, DEMOCRACY AND SCIENCE: THE CHALLENGE OF THE NEW NEO-LIBERAL KNOWLEDGE REGIME

**John Holmwood, Professor of Sociology, University of Nottingham**

This talk will set out the key elements of the neo-liberal knowledge regime that is being brought to completion by the Government's recent Higher Education and Research Bill. This is designed to subject universities to market disciplines, including the possibility of failure, and facilitates the entry of for-profit providers. Education is valued as an investment in human capital, and research is to be directed toward commercial ends as an engine of economic growth. Yet investment in research and development in the UK is among the lowest of OECD countries and neo-liberal policies encourage short-term orientations toward profit. The talk will outline an alternative conception of the university and the economy, one associated with democratic knowledge and inclusive economic benefits.

**John Holmwood** is Professor of Sociology at the University of Nottingham. His research interests are in social inequality and the political economy of welfare. He is a former President of the British Sociological Association and Member of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton (academic year 2014-15). He is co-founder of the Campaign for the Public University and a co-editor of the free monthly online magazine of social research, commentary and policy analysis, *Discover Society*.

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## DO UNIVERSITIES BETRAY REASON AND HUMANITY? THE URGENT NEED FOR AN ACADEMIC REVOLUTION

**Dr Nicholas Maxwell, Emeritus Reader, University College London**

We face grave global problems. One might think universities are doing all they can to help solve these problems. But universities, in successfully pursuing scientific knowledge and technological know-how in a way that is dissociated from a more fundamental concern with problems of living, have actually made possible the genesis of all our current global problems. Modern science and technology have led to modern industry and agriculture, modern medicine and hygiene, modern armaments, which in turn have led to habitat destruction, mass extinction of species, overpopulation, antibiotic resistance, the highly lethal character of modern war, and the impending disasters of climate change. We urgently need to bring about a revolution in universities so that they put problems of living at the heart of the academic enterprise and take, as their basic task, to help humanity learn how to make progress towards as good a world as possible.

**Nicholas Maxwell** is Emeritus Reader at University College London, where he taught philosophy of science for thirty years. He has published numerous papers and eight books arguing for a revolution in academic inquiry, including: *What's Wrong With Science?*, Bran's Head Books 1976, *From Knowledge to Wisdom*, Blackwell 1984, *The Comprehensibility of the Universe*, OUP 1998, *Is Science Neurotic?*, Imperial College 2004, and *How Universities Can Help Create a Wiser World: The Urgent Need for an Academic Revolution*, Imprint Academic, 2014. In the Spring of 2017 he is bringing out *In Praise of Natural Philosophy: A Revolution for Thought and Life* (McGill-Queen's University Press), and *Understanding Scientific Progress* (Paragon House). He founded Friends of Wisdom in 2003: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/friends-of-wisdom>. His website URL is: [www.ucl.ac.uk/from-knowledge-to-wisdom](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/from-knowledge-to-wisdom)

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