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TOBY YOUNG BREEDS CONCEPT ...

AFTER Toby Young's controversial appointment to the board of the Office for Students, comments he had made on Radio 4 about "progressive eugenics" were shared far and wide. But his interest in the area has made him some friends.



Last year Young was invited by psychologist James Thompson to attend a secretive conference at UCL called the London Conference on Intelligence (LCI). "Attendees were only told the venue at the last minute... and asked not to share the information," Young recalled. What he kept to himself was why the conference he attended was so secretive.

Although a request for the invitation-only conference's 2017 programme was declined, LCI 2015 included papers arguing that racial differences in penis length predict different levels of parental care, that racial "admixture" has a negative effect on population quality, that "skin brightness" is a factor in global development, and that country-level differences in the number of Nobel Prizes can be explained by racial differences in male hormone levels.

One paper presented at the 2016 conference argued that "low IQ, high fertility Southern non-Western immigration... threatens the sustainability of European democracy, welfare and civilisation". Another argued that children from working-class households tend to have "aggressive, antisocial" personalities, and that the welfare state promotes this by letting working-class households have children. Three papers, all by men, were presented on the topic of women being innately less intelligent.

The conference serves as a rendezvous for academic racists and their sympathisers. One speaker, Emil Kirkegaard, whom Young follows on Twitter, presented papers at the 2015, 2016 and 2017 conferences. Writing about paedophilia on his website, he argued in 2012 that "a compromise is having sex with a sleeping child without them knowing it (so, using sleeping medicine). If they dont [sic] notice it is difficult to see how they cud [sic] be harmed." He added in April 2017 that he advocated a "frank discussion of pedophilia-related issues".

Another speaker in 2015 and 2016 was Richard Lynn, described by the US non-profit organisation, Southern Poverty Law Center, as a white nationalist and extremist. He has previously called for "incompetent cultures" to be "phased out" and argues that black people have naturally "psychopathic" personalities.

"No idea is shocking. An idea is only something that you investigate whether it is true or not," said LCI organiser James Thompson when asked about some of the views at his conference. After telling a female *Private Eye* reporter at length about gender differences in IQ, Thompson then managed to call the *Eye* back by mistake – and promptly asked for Toby.

Responding to the *Eye*, Young said: "I don't accept that listening to someone express an idea constitutes tacit acceptance or approval of that idea, no matter how unpalatable. That's the kind of reasoning that leads to people being 'no platformed' on university campuses." In the same statement he managed to misname his own lecture, referring to the "Amanda Holden" Memorial Lecture, rather than Constance Holden.

Young himself kept in touch with Thompson and other attendees over Twitter. Speaking alongside them at another conference in Montreal last July, he reminisced that LCI had been "like a meeting of Charter 77 in Václav Havel's flat in Prague in the 1970s". Is this the kind of free speech universities minister Jo Johnson hopes to see more of on university campuses?

AFTER Boris Johnson said Toby Young was "an ideal man for the job" (at least, he was when the *Eye* went to press), reciprocating the support Young had offered in his *Sun* columns when Johnson was London mayor, Michael Gove endorsed that verdict ("Quite right too"). No surprise, as Gove and Young have a long and fond history.

From 2010 until Gove was moved in a reshuffle in 2014, Young regularly defended Gove in his columns, hailing him as "the most radical education secretary since the Second World War".

Then, in June 2016, after David Cameron's resignation, Young talked up Gove's credentials as successor to the prime minister in the *Sun*. "Some have greatness thrust upon them and Gove is looking increasingly as if the crown would fit. You can get 5/1 odds on him becoming the next PM. I've already put down £25." A month later, Gove dropped out of the Conservative leadership race after gaining just 14 percent of the vote in the first round.

JOINING the board of the Office for Students isn't Toby Young's first taxpayer-funded job. In October 2016 he became director of the New Schools Network (NSN), a charity that promotes academies and free schools and relies heavily on government funding.

The NSN's latest accounts, filed in October, show it received £2,126,512 from the Department for Education – 86 percent of its income. The previous year government money made up 89 percent of its income. The NSN pays £90,000-£100,000 to Young, who will also now receive £9,180 a year in his new post, playing "a key role in shaping Office for Students' strategic direction".

Young claims to be a "free market" enthusiast, but his high-profile positions are state-funded and crony-looking. The *Eye* asked him if the NSN – government-funded and running government policy – was more like a quango than a charity. He said the "NSN is a charity, not a quango. I was appointed by the trustees of the charity, not the government. If you look at NSN's income going back to 2009 when it was set up, less than half of it has come from the Department for Education."

THE aim of the Office of Students is "to ensure that every student enjoys a rewarding educational experience and secures the outcomes that they want, whatever their background and whatever their aspirations". So said a government press release last July.

Oddly enough, aspirations and the hopes of enjoying a rewarding educational experience pop up briefly in Toby Young's 2001 memoir, *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People*, when he recalls his infatuation with an undergraduate while studying for a PhD at Cambridge in the late 1980s.

"It was the first day of the academic year and, in keeping with College tradition, me and several other 'mature' students were checking out the latest batch of 'freshettes'," Young frothed. "Not that we had any hope of getting into their knickers... Lusting after first years, and knowing that it would never be reciprocated, was just another exercise in self-flagellation, a favourite post-grad pastime.

"My misery was compounded when she chose a seat directly opposite mine in the College library, making it impossible for me to concentrate on my philosophy books. For the remainder of that academic year, until I abandoned my PhD altogether, I tortured myself by imagining what her nubile, 18-year-old body would look like in the nude."