

A Pre-emptive Lie

Adam Price MP

Last October, the Plaid MP Adam Price moved the motion calling for an inquiry into 'the way in which the responsibilities of Government were discharged in relation to Iraq and all matters relevant thereto, in the period leading up to military action in that country in March 2003 and in its aftermath' (see Spokesman 93). He had earlier helped initiate the campaign to impeach Tony Blair for High Crimes and Misdemeanours in relation to the invasion of Iraq. These excerpts are taken from his address to the People's Assembly, which was organised by the Stop the War Coalition at Westminster Central Hall in March 2007.

Over the road at the moment in Parliament, in the House of Commons, they're debating the abolition of slavery 200 years ago. This is some kind of metaphor for the reason behind today's event. There they are, discussing rather ponderously an injustice that was put right two hundred years ago, while they're refusing to discuss an injustice that is ongoing every day in Iraq and Afghanistan at the moment.

It's rather odd that Tony Blair feels he can say sorry for the wrongs of past generations, but not utter a single word of apology for his own actions himself. A political apology has a time lag of 200 years in this country.

Blair is leaving the political stage as we speak, and not a moment too soon. But look who's queuing up to move in – Gordon Brown and David Cameron – who backed the war and have themselves refused to apologise to the people of this country and to the people of Iraq. They don't want to talk about it

The decision to go to war, they think, is water under the bridge. But how can it be 'water under the bridge', when every day people are still drowning, when every day our presence there in that country is a violent provocation, when every day their silence – Cameron and Brown's – makes a mockery and a sham of democracy in this country.

But there are politicians prepared to speak up. In Spain, rebel members of the Conservative *Partido Popular* have said for the first time that the war was wrong. Michael Ancram, who voted against Trident, has said that we should talk to Hamas, and has called for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Iraq. Michael Ancram! I remember Michael Ancram. He was the Shadow Foreign Secretary who summed up for the Opposition that was no Opposition on the night of the fateful decision to support the war in Iraq. What a Damascene conversion – I know he was summing up because I was heckling him at the time – but he now agrees with us. And the Australian Labour Party once

again has called for the withdrawal of Australian troops from Iraq.

There is movement even in places like Parliament. We heard at the beginning of the day Dennis Kucinich, the US Congressman and anti-war candidate for the Democratic Party Presidential nomination, telling us that this is a moment of decision, and I know that he is right. The decisions that we make today, the action that we fail to take, will cast a long shadow over the rest of this century, and will if we're not careful come back to hurt us and to haunt us.

Firstly, as we heard, our reliance on nuclear weapons, and the vote on Trident, will spawn twenty or thirty new nuclear states. Because the signal we're sending to other nations is that we will pulverise you unless you develop your own weapons of mass destruction. That is the signal we're sending to every repressive regime on the planet.

Secondly, arms exports: our shameful role as the world's second biggest arms exporter means that we are contributing more than most towards sowing the seeds of conflict in this world, and all with the support of a Labour government that thinks that saving jobs is somehow more important than saving lives.

Thirdly, the war on terror. The first war in history that created the very thing it was meant to defeat. The number of terror attacks is up seven times on what they were before the invasion of Iraq.

And finally, look at our record of backing repressive regimes across the world, because it suits our present purpose. That throws up a reservoir of resentment amongst the young people in those countries. Where is our passion for democracy and human rights when we are shoring up the corrupt regime in Saudi Arabia? We have a delegation in Parliament as we speak from Kazakhstan, again a regime with a terrible record in human rights, but a convenient ally in the so-called war on terror.

So what must change? Instead of exporting arms we should convert our military industry to civilian use. We should stop training the armies of human rights abusers, abolish nuclear weapons and use the savings to invest in international aid. We should reform the UN to allow fair representation for poorer countries, and allow ordinary people's voices to be heard so that people's assemblies right across the planet can be heard. We should stop trying to maintain this cruel imperial fiction that we 'punch above our weight'.

Instead of trying to remain a great power, we should become a power for good.

And finally we should support the efforts to have the crime of aggression written into the statute of the International Criminal Court. Why? Because we know that this terrible war in Iraq wasn't a pre-emptive attack to prevent war, it was a pre-emptive lie to promote war, and the man that was responsible needs to answer for his crime.