

## **WEAPONS OF MASS DECEPTION.**

**When we think of Blair his record as a war criminal tends to dominate. In 2011 he and George W Bush were unanimously found guilty by the Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Commission (KLWCC). No defence was offered. The charge only related to Iraq. Unfortunately the Tribunal established by the Commission had no power to send either of them to the Tower of London.**

For me, however, the evidence against Blair includes his general approach to government. Politics is about values. For Blair the discussion of policy was not inclusive: it was exclusive. And consent was obtained by manipulation. He decided the value of a policy and we, the people, were held accountable for its implementation.

Text books on Government and Politics included chapters on Accountability, but that was about holding governments to account. Blair stood that concept on its head.

His approach to evidence reinforced this way of working. He would take a view: Saddam Hussein is a baddy. What is needed next is evidence. The solid evidence was that he had no weapons of mass destruction. Ah but, there was some evidence, dodgy evidence, that he had. Enough, he told himself, we shall take action.

Remember the death of David Kelly? A 70 year embargo was placed on information regarding his death. Why?

Let me provide one personal experience of how his government operated in the field of education.

In 2003 Charles Clarke as Secretary of State for Education made a speech that demonstrated a view of Higher Education that seemed to echo Brideshead Revisited. He showed no knowledge or understanding of what the 93 UK universities providing education programmes were really doing. The Chief Executive of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers wrote asking for a meeting with him. He agreed. I wrote the briefing paper for the meeting, making sure to use lots of big bold print. I had dealt with politicians before!

When we arrived I was relieved to see that Clarke had also invited the last civil servant left in the building who understood the issues. Upstairs we went. Clarke had the briefing paper in his hand.

I went through the paper point by point. Each time he acknowledged the validity of those points. He offered no arguments against any of them. And then we heard the most wonderful words.

"I am learning so much from losing arguments that I need more of these meetings."

I was not recording anything so that is from a very embedded memory.

With Keith, the civil servant, we arranged a series of meetings. Keith let us know how positive the meeting had been. And gosh, I thought, all those years of teaching and examining Government and Politics have paid off.

Blair then moved Clarke and appointed Ruth Kelly. She cancelled all the meetings and we spent the rest of the Blair years tumbling over ourselves as White Paper after White Paper and initiative after initiative were thrown at us with no opportunity for professional input.

From Blair you would never hear those words of Clarke. "Learning from losing arguments".

When Blair became a Catholic he would probably have undergone an old fashioned one-to-one type confession. Those confessions begin with the words, "Bless me father for I have sinned." They end with, "For these and all the sins of my past life I am truly sorry".

What, we may wonder, was said between those statements? Was there a queue outside while Blair took up most of the day?

**Cliff Jones, 4/08/2022**

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