

European and External Affairs Committee

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Venue: National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay

Title: International Matters in Relation to NEWI's Education Vision

Madam Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to address you today on international matters in relation to NEWI's educational vision.

Since my arrival at NEWI just over four and a half years ago, this vision has been to create in Wrexham and North East Wales a market led, student centred university of international significance which is open to all

The vision determines the culture of our Institution. It is one which we have reason to believe accords with Welsh Assembly Government Policy and with the wishes of the Welsh Assembly.

Indeed only a few weeks after returning to Wales in January 2001 to take up my position at NEWI, I appeared before a cross party Assembly Committee, Chaired by Cynog Dafis, which was reviewing higher education provision and strategy for the country. During the course of that presentation I quoted from the French philosopher, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who after the Second World War wrote:

The Age of Nations is past. It now remains for us, if we are not to perish, to set aside the ancient prejudices and build the world.

Teilhard's vision, as we all know too well, with for example the Iraqi War, the 2004 and 2005 bombings in Madrid and London and from September 11 2001, has not been realized. Some of the most ancient of prejudices very much exist and the world is in fear of an escalating conflict between the philosophies that the current terrorists espouse and the secular democratic values treasured by the West.

In addition to being the Principal and Chief Executive of NEWI, Madam Chairman, I was recently elected as the Chairman of the UNESCO Committee for Wales. UNESCO is fundamentally concerned about bringing peace to the world through education, science and communication. Its original constitution states,

Since wars begin in the minds of man, It is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must be constructed

UNESCO has however had its problems in the past which led to the UK and USA withdrawal from its membership for a period of a decade or so. But now both the UK and the USA are back and Wales has its own committee. In November I and the Vice Chairman, Dr Liz Hughes from University of Wales Aberystwyth, together with Welsh Assembly Government officials will be visiting Paris to discuss how UNESCO can help Wales and how from Wales we can help the mission of UNESCO. Later in the year the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning is to attend one of the UNESCO Wales Committee meetings at which we hope to present to her our action plan for UNESCO in Wales and Wales in UNESCO as Wales' contribution to the overall UK strategy.

The international work we are undertaking at NEWI and that of the educational, humanitarian, economic and cultural concerns of UNESCO, have to my mind, a particular synergy. More important however is the opportunity we have in Wales, of contributing something significant to the world in terms of the messages we can send out as a country through our elected Assembly and Government. As I recently noted at an event marking the opening of this year's Bryn Terfel Faenol Festival, I believe, we have an unique opportunity in our lifetime to accomplish for Wales something that generations have only dreamed about – the recognition of a country steeped in music, the arts, literature, science and education speaking out to the world and the world listening. That voice of Wales through its Assembly, through its UNESCO Committee, through its system of education and its dedication to the arts has a responsibility to cry out heddwch – peace at a time of great trouble in the world.

I don't have to say to anyone sitting on this committee, that Wales, is going through an unprecedented period in its history. We are as a nation recreating our sense of identity within the UK, Europe and the World. This isn't the concept of a nation in terms of 'the Age of Nations' which Teilhard implicitly condemned, but nationhood and national identity within a corporate European and British spirit.

Within this context higher education of international significance, in Wales is fundamental to our sense of our nation's democracy and identity. A sophisticated and honest democracy depends on the fair, free and just election of its parliament or assembly but it is fed also by the independence of the judiciary, the press, the arts and the University sector.

Universities as part of their responsibility need to protect and cherish the identity, culture and languages of the country, educating its citizens both young and old, but they also have to look outwards. In doing so they have to remind the country that it cannot exist in isolation but more than that, they need to remind all of us that, we as a country, have a responsibility to share our education and knowledge with others and to learn from others as we move forward in our evolution.

A few years ago when I was Pro Vice Chancellor of an English university I had to go to South Africa, where the university had a Postgraduate Study Centre just outside Johannesburg. When I got there I was told that most of the centre's employees had experienced some form of physical violence within the previous 12 months. The most recent example was that one employee had been held at gun point in the Centre's car park. Later I talked with the black driver of our minibus about the poverty and violence in South Africa at the time. I asked him what the solution to the violence might be. He answered

immediately: not the police or the army but education and a good health service and he, a relatively poor man, thanked my university for establishing an educational centre in his country.

There has been much talk recently in the press about UK Universities' international policies. The Government in Westminster, as well as in Wales, sees international recruitment and international development through higher education as essential income streams for the university sector. Universities are exporting higher education to the Middle East, India, China, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam and to South America and Africa. Only last week the University of Nottingham opened the first British university campus in China. It already has an international campus in Malaysia. Ten years ago I went on a DTI mission to help establish British Higher Education in Thailand and at my last university I had for sometime responsibility for the De Montfort University overseas policy. We had centres in Indonesia, Malaysia, South Africa and Bulgaria as well as reciprocal arrangements with universities in the USA, China, Japan and the European Community.

NEWI in recreating itself in the context of Wales', particularly of North Wales', economic and social development policy over the last four years, has been developing an international strategy in line with Government expectations. NEWI has a long tradition of working with partners across the European Union including France and Spain where our partnership at home with Airbus attracts a throughput of students to us at undergraduate and particularly postgraduate levels. We also enjoy strong relationships in Silesia and in Scandinavia. But a further focus of attention recently has been to develop relationships in India and in China. Ostensibly of course, we wish for a financial return to NEWI and the North Wales economy from our international activity. This year we will be teaching between 100 and 130 international students in NEWI and through a new arrangement with the University of Wales, we will be teaching a further 65 students at Renmin University in China and 60 students at the Women's Polytechnic in New Delhi, India. The courses in Renmin and New Delhi are in Business Studies and/or Digital Media. The courses being taught at NEWI are mainly in Business and Technology. In addition we have recently signed agreements with the South West University of Nationalities (SWUN) Chengdu and the Southwest China Normal University (SWNU) in Chongqing. Twelve Professors from SWUN studied at NEWI last year and a further 12 are expected to arrive for a three month programme starting this week. Around Easter we will also be teaching some short courses at Indian and Chinese Universities particularly in English Language. In particular we have forged relationships with Rajigiri College, St Paul's and St Albert's Colleges in Cochin; with DSI College in Bangalore and with the Techno Group of Colleges in Kolkata. By the end of the last academic year, 629 international students and 652 European students had attended NEWI courses either in Wales or in their home country. The studies ranged from short education programmes to research for PhDs.

As we have been developing our international policy we have been prudent in our financial expectations. The revenue this year coming to NEWI from international students could approach three quarters of a million pounds if our targets are realised, the investment in preparation for these programmes will be a little over a quarter of a million pounds. As we become more established in the market, the surplus should increase. But the policy is not only about financial revenue. It is about communications between people of different nations and of different creeds. In this NEWI is attempting to fulfil a tenet enshrined within UNESCO which:

"Works to create the conditions for true dialogue, based upon respect for commonly shared values and the dignity of each civilization and culture"

As UNESCO has stated in 2005:

"This role is critical, particularly in the face of terrorism, which constitutes an attack against humanity. The world urgently requires global visions of sustainable development based upon observances of human rights, mutual respect and the alleviation of poverty, all of which lie at the heart of UNESCO's mission and activities".

This year NEWI will teach Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, Jews and Christians and people of no religious belief, working within the community of learning by which we define our proposed new university. NEWI is catering for the various religious beliefs of our students and their cultural expectations as well as familiarizing them with our own expectations. We are very much aware of the cultural and pedagogic and pastoral demands which will be made by a diverse student body. Development strategies to help staff help students have been devised and implemented. Similarly local services: the local Council, the North Wales Police, the Health Service have been made aware of the international student intake and we have had discussions about the challenges this might bring within the region. But national and international students mixing together should be advantageous to everyone, as enshrined within the context of the UNESCO philosophy. There will be some problems of course, but the benefits of communication between students of different nationalities and the undertaking of differing cultures are so great as to place any problem we may encounter into perspective. We will therefore find solutions to problems as they occur, but the priority has already been to anticipate and therefore prevent difficulties before they arise.

Economically I see the international dimension at NEWI as beneficial. I value equally, however, the cultural, educational and communication benefits that form an intrinsic part of a university's international policy. But there is also another dimension. This relates to knowledge transfer. Through our contracts with Bielsko College in Silesia, where we validate and monitor on behalf of the University of Wales, an MA programme in Animation, we are able to link a commercial and artistic expertise in Welsh and Silesian Universities with the ever growing international media industry. We are particularly happy to do this with Bielsko since Silesia is one of the Assembly Government's preferred East European partners. But we are going further. NEWI is a relatively small Institution with around 6,500 students, although it is growing significantly. This year we have increased full time admissions by around 25%. But as a relatively small Institution we are able to react rapidly to market demands. For example, NEWI has been in discussion with an international company concerning the development of hybrid lightweight motor vehicle manufacturing. We have been able to broker a relationship between this company and the Welsh Development Agency/Welsh Assembly Government. If a policy materializes to establish some of this industrial work in Wales, then NEWI with its educational partners particularly in the FE sector will develop the necessary education and training programmes to support the industrial initiative. NEWI is currently doing the same with another major European manufacturer to

develop technical programmes to support its manufacturing processes in the Far East. One of this company's executives addressed the NEWI Board in London earlier this week and in November I am to address the company's Board in a major European city. Another example is that NEWI is working with colleagues at the Bauman State Technical University in Moscow concerning the realization of Russian technology in relation to developments we might enhance in the opto-electronic and other industries in North Wales including those concerned with composite materials.

Some of these initiatives will be realized, some will not but these are just three examples of the way a new modern university – institution is undertaking a role of educational/industrial broker for the benefit of the Welsh economy.

So the international policy brings together cultural exchange, educational opportunity, financial benefit and knowledge transfer. But if you recall the Vision Statement of NEWI you will remember too that we claim that we are 'open to all'. In providing higher education we do not wish people to feel excluded on the grounds of poverty, disability, race or discrimination of any kind. This doesn't mean to say we dumb down standards. "Open to all", means that we make our facilities and culture available irrespective of creed or colour or wealth. In Kolkata this year I saw desperate poverty. In Mumbai in early summer, some of NEWI's staff teaching short courses, witnessed bodies floating in the streets during the appalling floods that got comparatively little attention in the UK press. The developed world has a responsibility to help in such circumstances. Wales as a relatively small nation, like NEWI as a relatively small Institution, can provide targeted help in places where there is real need. I hope that in the discussions that the UNESCO Wales Committee is to have with the Government in Wales, that the country will be able to focus on two or three significant projects where, as Wales, we can help disseminate the values and objectives of UNESCO and so give benefit to others, whilst receiving in return benefits ourselves. That is what internationalism in education is about, a two way exchange, real world partnerships based on the commitment of understanding others whatever beliefs we hold or national cultures we treasure. We are all human beings living in a complex, sometimes cruel world in the 21st Century. As such, we still need to set aside "the ancient prejudices and build the world" as Teilhard de Chardin envisaged. To do so, we don't have to be a big university; we don't have to be a super power. We can just be the people of Wales - unafraid to promote education within and outside our country; eager to share our values to the mutual benefit of our own nation and of other nations as, in co-operation through education, we strive for respect, understanding and peace across the world. If we embrace such philosophies in Wales we will contribute as much if not more to the world than any great power however large it might be. I believe that the voice of Wales can be heard internationally and that NEWI has a responsibility not only to itself but to the country, to continue to embrace internationalism as being fundamental to its core educational, social and cultural mission. I am grateful therefore to you for giving me the opportunity to discuss these issues with you today.

Diolch, Thank you,

Professor Michael Scott

Principal and Chief Executive