

Education in England to become more partisan? (19 November 2010)

The BBC carried a report on 22 October 2010 that the UK Deputy Prime Minister had launched a direct attack on a 'leading think tank', the Institute for Fiscal Studies, over its analysis of the government's spending review. As an educational charity IFS could have avoided this attack by publishing its analysis alongside HM Treasury's and then, over the years ahead, reported on how each view of the spending cuts worked out in practice. This is how IPP works with powerful results that the powerful cannot easily challenge.

It should also be noted that the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and previous Prime Minister are, or were, all Patrons of another educational body on the charities register called the Atlantic Council of the United Kingdom. However, the English Court of Appeal made clear in a judgment in 2000, which became the basis of IPP's own registration as a charity, that the Court could not '... recognise as charitable a trust to educate the public to an acceptance that war is best avoided by collective security through the membership of a military alliance – say, NATO'.

Unfortunately IPP had to abandon its legal case to request the Charity Commission to remove the Atlantic Council from the register when the Commission resorted to false and misleading statements which were then adopted by the judge, a party politician, in the IPP case for judicial review! (Full documentation available.)

With respect, and keeping a sense of humour, Ministers should not protest too much at what they see as partisanship in education if they patronise such partisanship themselves.