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OUR new Prime Minister tells us that the government will have to make deep cuts in government spending, which will 'affect our economy, our society, our whole way of life.'

We expect spending reductions. £200 million is scheduled to be saved in the higher education budget by 'efficiencies', that is reduction in posts. We do not as yet know where they will fall, and what we have to expect in future years. We can expect higher fees but must wait to see what leeway they will allow and whether or rather

how much the Treasury will claw them back. Financial support for students will change, but it will not be easy to move to a radically different system. Higher education is the largest employer in many British cities; rolling it back will have relatively the greatest impact on areas outside London and the South East. Is there any sign that government and its advisers have considered the indirect and unintended consequences of their economic policies? We must hope so.

How will Oxford fare? We are not as well positioned to deal with the consequences as we were in the 1980s. Oxford (and OUP) survived the Thatcher cuts thanks to the indirect support of posts and previous direct transfers by wealthier colleges. This may not be forthcoming in present financial circumstances. The balance of spending on established academic posts has shifted away from the colleges towards the University. It will not be easy to reclaim it. As Robin Briggs argued in *Oxford Magazine*, No. 300, the Humanities Division, which has been hard hit by the fiscal rules that followed the RAE, may need to postpone its ambitious building plans to save money for posts, and to fund its deficit. Many of the substantial sums raised by the University Appeal are tied to particular centres and institutes, and not transferable

to our 'core business', learning, research and teaching.

What would we like from the new government? Recognising the value of our contributions to knowledge and understanding, and to the economic welfare, of our own society and internationally; and recognising the values of intellectual commitment and integrity, which underpin these contributions. This would require a change of direction away from the commercialisation of knowledge, most recently directed

by the proclamations of Lord Mandelson as minister for (almost) everything. It is unlikely that this is the change in our 'whole way of life' for which the Prime Minister is preparing us. *Higher Ambitions* (see *Oxford Magazine*, No. 296) remains on the website. It could give way to a new 'Vision', but is more likely to survive the change of government, with or without a new name. The Department of Business, Innovations and Skills survives, with 'higher education' tucked in behind. However, the Minister of State for Universities and Science, David Willetts, M.P., will attend Cabinet meetings. He has already expressed his scepticism about the REF. Can he take a wider view of the nature and purposes of higher education than Lord Denham, his predecessor in that position, was allowed to do?

Government can make an important change in the context in which academics carry out their research, and even teaching, by reforming the law of libel, Britain's particular contribution to suppressing freedom of speech and publication in the U.K. and abroad. This won't cost government money, though it will be resisted by their old and renewed corporate friends, not to mention libel lawyers.

An current legal case against Peter Wilmshurst was

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The Oxford Hanseatic Scholarships

HARTMUT POGGE VON-STRANDMANN

THE April number of the monthly journal *Standpoint* contains a strongly worded invective against the Hamburg merchant Alfred Toepfer, who died in 1993 and who set up a well-known, middle-sized philanthropic foundation. Under the journal's rather misleading cover title "A Nazi shadow over Oxford" Michael Pinto-Duschinsky has published a lengthy, wide-ranging accusation against Toepfer because of his dealings with Nazi Germany. However, there is no Nazi shadow over Oxford, there never has been one and fortunately there never will be one. In his article Michael Pinto-Duschinsky also criticized the foundation for its alleged "trivialisation of the Holocaust implicit in the foundation's accounts of its founder's career." The foundation has strongly rejected this accusation by pointing to its openness, transparency and objectivity when dealing with its founder. The foundation has also published two critical biographical studies in 2000 and 2008 which have made extensive use of the available archive material.

The Hamburg foundation is best known for its generous support of the arts through various prizes in Germany and other European countries. In Britain it provided annually in the post-war period from 1967 until 2006 the now defunct Shakespeare Prize for British artists. Among the 40 recipients were Doris Lessing, David Hockney and Bryn Terfel, to name but a few. As if the Shakespeare Prize was not generous enough, Alfred Toepfer also gave to Oxford University the Hanseatic Scholarships which allowed two Oxford students – to which a few years ago candidates from Cambridge were added – the chance to study in Germany. These scholarships had been introduced a couple of years before the Second World War. Then after a long interval they were recreated in 1970 in grateful response to the readmission of German students as Rhodes Scholars in Oxford. Harald Mandt, himself a Rhodes Scholar between 1908 and 1912, had been instrumental in persuading Toepfer to re-offer the Hanseatic Scholarships to Oxford. So from 1970 until 2010 nearly eighty students have been elected as Hanseatic Scholars to study in an academic field of their choice for up to two years. The scholarships were open to undergraduates in their final year and to graduate students. Initially the scholars had to study in Hamburg for their first year before they could move to another German university. This was changed later and they now can spend one or two years at any German university or research institution.

The large majority selected have been research students aiming for a D.Phil. Their excellent academic record as undergraduates as well as their outstanding research projects qualified them to be chosen. The greatest number of candidates have presented themselves in the fields of modern German literature and German history in the 19th and 20th centuries. Other subjects have included physics, geology, engineering, law, music and Chinese studies. What has repeatedly impressed the selection committee has been the candidates' high academic quality, their commitment to their intended work

and their keenness to learn more about living in Germany. Most of the candidates have been linguistically well equipped, but some have had insufficient knowledge of German. In such cases the Hamburg foundation had been willing to help by paying for language courses. In any case after their return from Germany their reading and speaking abilities and their knowledge of Germany has, as one would have expected, vastly improved. The scholarship scheme has proved its value over and over again. It needs to be mentioned here that the Hanseatic Scholarships are not the only studentships the foundation finances. All in all there are on average forty scholarships the foundation manages per year, most of these scholars coming from Eastern Europe.

In addition the foundation agreed several years ago to offer the German History Prize to Oxford, another sign of Toepfer's largesse. The prize ran for a few years. Undergraduates and graduates in their first year competed to answer over three hours a question paper; topics covered most aspects of modern German history, including the Third Reich. The aim of the prize was to alert young students to the possibilities of undertaking graduate work in German history. The examiners were the author and Hugh Trevor Roper. When Trevor Roper moved to Cambridge, Michael John, a former Hanseatic Scholar and History Fellow at Magdalen took over as second examiner.

Initially the foundation in Hamburg did not undertake much of a social programme for the Hanseatic Scholars, but this has changed and the foundation has extended its cultural programme to include all their scholars. During their time in Germany the graduate scholars report back to their Oxford and Cambridge supervisors about their academic progress and submit at the end of their time in Germany a report to the foundation. Neither the selection committee nor the Hamburg foundation influences the choice of topic the scholars want to pursue nor the progress of their work nor any of the results. Academic freedom has been and is paramount. How could it be otherwise? In this connection Pinto-Duschinsky asks whether the teaching of the Holocaust at Oxford is "affected by the university's sources of funding." This question does not make sense. First of all the Hamburg foundation does not transfer any funds to the University directly and secondly the History Faculty plans its syllabus independently from any outside interference.

The first selection committee was chaired by Sir Noel Hall, Principal of Brasenose College. The link to Brasenose was due to the fact that the above mentioned Harald Mandt had been an undergraduate there before the First World War and had kept in touch with his old College. After Sir Noel Hall's retirement the chairmanship passed on to Sir Edgar Williams, for many years Secretary to the Rhodes Trust and Warden of Rhodes House. The committee's meetings continued to take place in Brasenose until his retirement. When Barry Nicholas, Professor of Roman Law, became Principal of Brasenose

and Chair, the meetings were moved to University College and have been held there ever since.

After the Hanseatic Scholarships had run for ten years, a re-union took place in Rhodes House to which Alfred Toepfer was invited. He had flown in from Moscow where he had been on business and where he had also organised some cultural exchanges. He was *persona grata* in the Soviet Union.

In 1976 he had been awarded a CBE at the suggestion of Keith Jeffrey – not Edward Heath as suggested by Pinto-Duschinsky – who was a member of the board of curators of the Shakespeare Prize. As *The Times* noted, when Toepfer was handed the prize at a ceremony in the British Embassy in Bonn in November of that year, he was given the prize “for his work as the head of a foundation in Hamburg which presents prizes for work in promoting European unity and also a Shakespeare prize for British cultural achievement.” To what extent Toepfer’s candidacy for the award was vetted is not yet clear.

Among the next chairmen of the selection committee were Sir Julian Bullard, former British Ambassador to West Germany and Fellow of All Souls, John Fleming, Warden of Wadham and Jim Reed, Professor of German Literature and for many years editor of the *Oxford Magazine*. During the chairmanship of Sir Julian the Hanseatic Committee began to hold joint selection meetings with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) which organised the Theodor Heuss Fellowship and the Michael Foster Memorial Scholarship. In this way unnecessary competition between the two scholarship schemes was avoided. As the cooperation between the two schemes seemed to be working well, Jim Reed became the first joint chairman for all four scholarships offering academic study in Germany. There has been one disadvantage to this arrangement: that the combined selection committee has become rather large. However it is hoped its size will help to avoid any mistakes. The joint committee continues to adhere to the principle of choosing the best candidates. There are some committee members who can vote for both schemes and some who only represent either the DAAD or the Hanseatic Scholarships. This article’s author, who has been involved in the selection of Hanseatic Scholars as Secretary since the beginning of 1970, followed Jim Reed as Chair for two years. He was in turn succeeded by Professor Jonathan Wright, Christ Church, and Professor Nigel Palmer, St. Edmund Hall.

The work of the two selection committees is beyond reproach. Their members undertake not only excellent work for the DAAD and the Hamburg foundations, but also for the University and its student candidates. The cooperation with the foundation would not work if there were any suggestion that the Hamburg foundation was

involved in any alleged “grey washing” and not facing up to the realities of the Third Reich.

What about the scholars themselves? Nearly all of them have finished their research work and passed their advanced degrees, mostly doctorates. Most of them have landed very good jobs either in academia, in the civil service or in the business world. They have all made their way and have achieved a great deal. The University and the Hamburg foundation can be proud of them. Among former scholars are Richard Evans, now Regius Professor in History at Cambridge and head of Wolfson College there, Niall Ferguson and Michael Rosen, both now Professors at Harvard, of History and Philosophy respectively. In Oxford there are at the moment five Hanseatic Scholars in academic positions in German literature: Tom Kuhn, Fellow at St. Hugh’s, Professor Karen Leeder at New College, Georgina Paul, Fellow at St. Hilda’s, Robert Vilain, college lecturer at Christ Church, about to move to a professorial position in Bristol, and Kirstin Gwyer, JRF at Merton.

To suggest that the money for the scholarships “is severely tainted” is disingenuous to say the least. Neither old Toepfer nor the foundation have ever attached any strings to them. The foundation has done fantastic work for the arts in general and students in particular. Where would the money have come from if the cultural links between Oxford and Cambridge and Germany had been restricted to the state sector? The fact that old Toepfer employed some convicted Nazis after the war does not make him a war criminal, however much his association with these men is difficult to understand. And the foundation today is very critical of Toepfer’s engagement with the Third Reich. Toepfer’s past has been the subject of the two recent critical accounts which have been referred to above and which provided most of the material for Michael Pinto-Duschinsky’s article. What emerges is that Toepfer was not a member of the Nazi Party nor a member of the SS. He was not a perpetrator. In business terms he was a small fish until his rise in the 1950s and 1960s which was when he made his fortune. If the University’s sub-committee is to recommend that its association with the Toepfer Foundation be terminated - and this is obviously the purpose of Pinto-Duschinsky’s article - then the University would need to rethink seriously its links with the Rhodes Trust whose founder’s brutal deeds and policies make him morally a difficult benefactor. But then the Rhodes Trust has done fantastic and generous things for its scholars as has, on a smaller scale, the Toepfer foundation. The same is true for the Volkswagen-, Fiat-, Thyssen-, Krupp-, Henkel- and Deutsche Bank Foundations without whose massive financial injections, the world of research in Europe and the US would have suffered on a large scale.