

Consultation on petition P-03-262 Wales Peace Institute
Response from M. Islwyn Lake

I believe that it is genuinely important that our Assembly establishes a peace institute similar to the Flemish Peace Institute, for the following reasons:

1. The Assembly has no voice at all on the United Kingdom's foreign affairs, even though these decisions generally have a great impact on our people. A peace institute would at least ensure that subjects relating to peace and war are debated from a Welsh perspective. It would ensure that the policy of military intervention in other countries would not be evaluated from a militaristic and British perspective.
2. A peace institute would also ensure that any plans on the part of the UK Government to establish or expand military bases on Welsh soil would be debated openly and in detail. Each case in which this has not happened underlines the importance of responsible debate and consistent vigilance by a body such as a peace institute. No opinion was expressed on the significance of developments such as the following:
 - Shortly after the second world war, soldiers from Germany were permitted to attend tank manoeuvres in Pembrokeshire, despite the concerns of many.
 - The army was allowed to claim the wide expanse of Epynt during the wartime crisis. Even though that crisis has long since passed, the army has held on to the land in spite of a commitment that it would be released.
 - When a decision was made to establish Britain's principal military training centre in St Athan, there was no debate on the significance of this in terms of the outlook for world peace. The scheme would have meant that Wales, with its peaceful traditions, would have become a place to learn about war, even for foreign soldiers. No attention was paid to that aspect of the plan.
 - Airspace was given to unpiloted drones in Aberporth for their flights across the country to Epynt. No attention was paid to the risks for residents of the region, and questions relating to the morality of using these sophisticated new weapons were not considered.
3. To close, there is a genuine need for a Government-level forum that would weigh up all military issues and provide leadership to the Assembly and to the people of Wales. It could help our people to see things more clearly, not just from a Welsh perspective but also in an international context.

In sum, it would boost the culture of peace, in accordance with the peaceful traditions of Henry Richards and his ilk.

M. Islwyn Lake