

Time to Think

Open University Journeys in British and Irish prisons during the years of conflict, 1972-2000

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Ian Stevenson**
Interviewed by: **Philip O'Sullivan**
Date of interview: **16/05/2011**

Important

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Clip title: I think that is one of its great strengths

Duration: 00:01:16

Clip start point in full interview: 00:10:14

Clip end point in full interview: 00:11:29

Interview identifier: 062_T_01

Description: Ian Stevenson, Open University Staff Tutor in Technology describes visiting the education hut in the Compounds of the Maze and Long Kesh Prison to take a tutorial. He describes how The Open University was able to separate the education it provided from the divided politics of Northern Ireland.

Transcript:

And when we were going in to see them, the Prison Officer would have taken us into the education hut [Compounds the Maze and Long Kesh Prison] and then the prisoners for those classes would have been brought to you. The huts from my memory were common—

Sorry, by common you mean—?

They weren't segregated according to political party or terrorist unit or whatever. So the OU was always able to keep separate and distinct from the politics of Northern Ireland in general, and the Maze in particular. I think that is one of its great strengths- that it was able to bridge all of the political divide in terms of education, regardless of what the politics of the individual members of staff were.

So the OU, without wishing to put words into your mouth, was it seen as some kind of a neutral party, neutral body?

Yes, that's a good way to put it, yes. But it was of mutual benefit to everyone in there, so I think anybody who would have given us a hard time would have incurred the displeasure of the people in charge of the various compounds and that wouldn't have been nice.