

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: **Alan Carr**

Interviewed by: **Pat Jess**

Date of interview: **24/04/2013**

Important

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Clip title: A Surprise Meeting with Open University Graduates

Duration: 00:01:39

Clip start point in full interview: 00:27:57

Clip end point in full interview: 00:29:35

Interview identifier: 070_T

Description:

Alan Carr, an Open University member of staff, describes a meeting with Sinn Féin higher education spokes people and political advisers, finding they were Open University graduates who had studied in the prisons.

Transcript:

...the current power sharing assembly began to take shape in Northern Ireland and in my capacity as, I think it was Regional Chair of UCU, the University and College Union at that time, we arranged a series of briefing meetings with the Higher Education spokespeople for all of the parties represented in the Assembly and I can recall at one of those meetings with the Sinn Féin higher education spokes people and he was surrounded by three or four political advisers and when we introduced ourselves at the beginning of the meeting, I said I was working for The Open University and each of them in turn recited The Open University experiences they had had and how many degrees they had, all of them had at least one and I responded to that probably undiplomatically by saying something like, "No prizes for guessing where you guys spent a large chunk of your lives" And fortunately they all had a sense of humour. But it is I think, a real illustration of the way in which people from, this is in danger of sounding a bit condescending, but people who came from clearly what had been a very rough political background they had been involved, to put it mildly, in a very rough political conflict, had gone through a process of thinking their way out of that and I think the fact that they were doing things that engaged the brain, like doing Open University courses and acquiring Open University degrees was a significant part of that process.