

NO VIDEO: SCRIPT ONLY
OPEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

COUNTDOWN TO THE OU
1 1984

NOT TO BE TAKEN
FINAL TRANSCRIPT FROM THE LIBRARY

COSTING NO:
7/FOU F072F

PROGRAMME RECORDING NO:
FOU F072F/771/X

DURATION:
23'02"

1ST TX DATE:
20TH NOVEMBER 1983

SPOOL NO:
HOU4711

C O U N T D O W N T O T H E O U 1
(REMAKE 1983/84)

Producer.....Roger Tucker
Assistant Producer.....Geoff Wheeler

Presented by:
Don Feasey

Commentary by:
Wynne Brindle

TRANSCRIPT OF EDITED PROGRAMME

Opening Title Sequence & Music

5 4 3 2 1 0

COUNTDOWN TO THE OU

Film

MARGARET UDEN

I was about to retire at the age of sixty, and you can imagine that was a very long time since any exam situation for me and I really worried, wondered whether I would take any of it in at all. It was very much a shot in the dark. But I found once I'd got started on the units I was rather relieved to find I could understand what was going on.

PAUL SOUTHEY

It was not as hard as people think it is. The idea that I originally had, I must admit I thought it would be, you know, quite difficult but it isn't.

DICK GLADDY

I think my main worry was whether I'd be able to spare the time to, you know, actually do everything. I was worried about fitting it - I work shifts you know - and I was worried about fitting it in with the shifts, and also whether I'd be able to study at home with the kids and that sort of thing.

ROSA KATAN

I thought the isolation would be a disadvantage, but as I went through the course in the year and meeting students and forming their own study groups, it was a marvelous experience really and it's changed my attitude to lots of things.

OB OU CAMPUS

DON FRASEY
(PRESENTER)

Good morning, and welcome to Countdown to the Open University. Well it was interesting to hear from those students what it felt like to them when they joined the Open University. Countdown is a series of four programmes for people who are getting ready to start as students with the University. Today and in the following three programmes we hope to interest you in the way the Open University works; introduce you to some of the staff including Dr John Horlock, Vice-Chancellor, and give you some idea of what is in store for you, the student. We hope you'll watch all the programmes, but today's programme takes a look at the University itself, its origins, and how it's valued by the outside world. Finally, we take a birdseye view of the University structure, see where the money comes from, how it is spent and how the University serves its students all over the country. But let's start by having a look at how it all began.

Film from "Degree of Success"

WYNNE BRINDLE
(OOV Commentary)

The plans for the Open University were first outlined by Harold Wilson at the 1963 Labour Party Conference in Scarborough.

HAROLD WILSON

And relevant also to these problems are our plans for a University of the air. It's designed to provide an opportunity for those who for one reason or another have not been able to take advantages of higher education, now to do so. With all the T.V. and radio and the state sponsored correspondence course and the facilities of a University for setting and marking papers and conducting examinations and awarding degrees that all these things can provide.

WYNNE BRINDLE
(OOV)

(BACKGROUND CROWD NOISE) When he became Priminister in 1964 few people believed that a University of the air was possible or even necessary. But he was determined to go ahead and the task of putting the idea into practice fell to Jennie Lee.

JENNIE LEE

Now it seemed to me just logic to try to bring the best in higher education within reach of people who felt that they could be advantaged by it. The Priminister made a bargain with me and he kept it; I was Minister for the Arts, and he said for god's sake will you take on this University project because there was nobody in the Department, none of the Ministers, senior, nobody in the Treasury - inside the Cabinet, they either didn't understand what it was about, preoccupied with their own jobs, or actively hostile. And I said, Harold, I'll take it on on the same conditions as they are. That you'll back me where I need money - now he never let me down.

WYNNE BRINDLE
(OOV)

Thirty Eight, Belgrave Square, became her base. Here in 1967 Jennie Lee announced that a Committee had been set up to plan for an Open University. One of its members was Asa Briggs now Chancellor of the O.U.

LORD ASA BRIGGS

I was Chairman of the Curriculum and Courses Committee and we had no models to work on at all. We were starting afresh and we had little experience of the kind of communications long distance learning aspects of education which certainly interested me profoundly. We wanted to be sure that we could get the right combination of materials to enable the student to learn. We also wanted to get a course pattern which would enable him to learn at his own pace. So we devised a building block system with credits, we put a lot of emphasis on foundation courses in the first year and we then thereafter allowed for a great deal of choice.

WYNNE BRINDLE
(OOV)

To create a system and set the standard was the challenge and the personal risk accepted by the first Vice-Chancellor, Walter Perry.

LORD WALTER PERRY

In 1969 when I was recruiting the staff, anyone who came in an atmosphere of scepticism and ridicule and hostility was putting his or her career on the chopping block as it were.

WYNNE BRINDLE
(OOV)

The Charter was granted and the first Chancellor installed in 1969.

Film OPEN FORUM 41

LORD CROWTHER
(The Late)

A most urgent task before us is to cater for the many thousands of people fully capable of a higher education who, for one reason or another do not get it, or do not get as much of it as they can turn to advantage or, as they discover, sometimes too late, that they need. Only in recent years have we come to realise how many such people there are and how large are the gaps in educational provision through which they can fall. The existing system for all its great expansion misses and leaves aside a great unused reservoir of human talent and potential.

WYNNE BRINDLE
(OOV)

Near the tiny village of Milton Keynes in a relatively unknown part of North Buckinghamshire lay the Walton Estate. Its small Manor house had been empty for some time and was badly in need of restoration. The attraction of the obscure location was that it consisted of over 70 acres of undeveloped land in what was to be the new city of Milton Keynes. The development corporation offered it as the site on which the Open University could build its permanent Headquarters. Construction of the first new Campus buildings was quickly started and they were ready for use in Autumn 1969.

OB OU CAMPUS

DON FEASEY
(Presenter)

All that was over 10 years ago, now let's get up to date. Today we're meeting the Vice-Chancellor, Dr John Horlock, and I'm going to talk to him about the present position of the Open University as an academic body. Vice-Chancellor, there are a whole number of new students to the Open University watching this programme, and in a sense it could be said that you're a new Vice-Chancellor, you joined us in 1981, and I wonder if you're finding a disparity between the Open University as an academic institution and, say, a conventional University, the kind from which you came, Salford.

DR JOHN HORLOCK

Well I think the immediate disparity as far as I'm concerned is that I don't see students around the Campus; of course this is a tremendous difference but I think the thing you have to remember is that it's a University just the same as any conventional University up and down the country, and although the balance of instruction is different from the Open University to the other Universities the standards are the same and the degree is comparable with any other University.

DON FEASEY

You can say that with some confidence.

DR JOHN HORLOCK

Yes, I think so. It has to be and I think that this was the very key step that my predecessor took, that the academic standard of the Open University had to be of the highest and this is ensured in the conventional English and Scottish University way in which we obtain external help from other Universities with preparation of our courses, external help from our tutorial staff from other Universities, Polytechnics, and then most importantly of all external help in assessing the standard of the degree through our external examiners.

DON FEASEY

Yes well, looking at it from that angle, I mean, there are other academics working in other Universities; would you say they have a reasonably favourable view of the Open University as an institution.

DR JOHN HORLOCK

Yes, I think so. It was probably viewed I suppose with some suspicion, I would suspect, in the early days, but there are all kinds of ways in which the Open University has become accepted now. I think, for instance, of the numbers of our students who are becoming graduate students in other Universities, I think there are over a thousand who are graduate students elsewhere, so that our first degree is fully accepted by those Universities. I think about the arrangements for credit transfer in which you can move from the O.U. to another University or from another University to us, and get credit for the work you've already done in the first University. So in many ways I think that acceptance is much more, much wider, we're much more widely accepted.

DON FEASEY

And is that sort of a merit in industry, in employment. You say it is the same.....

DR JOHN HORLOCK

I think you have to take in time. I think the other Universities, the University world, recognition there has come probably more quickly and in industry it's coming with perhaps a few years phase lag behind it. But I think more and more now our students are being accepted within industry, within commerce and we see the record of this when we survey our students, we see a lot of them saying that they've got recognition in terms of salary, job promotion, etc., and do their work a lot better within industry.

DON FEASEY

And are we getting any feedback directly from employers and from industry, I mean, has anybody speaking to you very directly from out there.

DR JOHN HORLOCK

Not directly. I suppose through casual acquaintanceship with friends in industry, and of course the thing which is also doing us a great deal of good, I think, is some of the continuing education work which is very widely valued by industry, there's no doubt about that.

DON FEASEY

And, can I just finish with this question of standards because it's quite an interesting one, I mean, the vast majority of students, of course, watching this programme and enrolling in the University are taking degrees. But we're doing a lot of other work in the Open University and are you satisfied that we're maintaining University standards in this field as well.

DR JOHN HORLOCK

Yes, I think that all of us within the University are very conscious of the fact that we must protect the undergraduate programme, we're all very much committed to that, and what over 60 thousand students on the undergraduate programme. But at the same time there are half as many students as that again who are doing other things within the University, so it's a very large programme outside the basic first degree programme.

DON FEASEY

Maybe we could wind up where we started, you know, because you mentioned at the very beginning this problem of not looking at every window and seeing students walking around the Campus and you've also mentioned the fact that they're 60 thousand students in the undergraduate programme and I know there's somewhere in the region of another 20 thousand odd associated with this in different kinds of ways. I mean, as a Vice-Chancellor, do any of them really matter to you, can you be concerned about what's happening to one student somewhere in the British Isles.

DR JOHN HORLOCK

Yes, I think you have to be, if you're an academic you have to be concerned about what the University is doing for each and every one of the students. That's the criterion of performance is how well the student studies, that's the first thing that you must remember. I miss students, but on the other hand I find I have a very happy and easy relationship with the Students Association and I can go to student conferences over weekends, I can go to Summer Schools, so that I do have a student contact perhaps almost as much as I had in the conventional University but perhaps the students don't come and sit in my office quite so often as they did in other Universities.

DON FEASEY

And now, after spending a bit of time necessarily looking at ourselves inside the University, now we're going to take a look at what employers think about Open University students and graduates.

Film "Degree of Success"

BOB GRIFFITHS
Training Manager
Rover Factory

What we're looking for is personality at Rover. We're looking for qualification and we're looking for experience, people who are highly motivated. If they've got the motivation to spend 15 hours a week or more on the Open University degree then they've probably got a lot they can offer the company. However, the person doing the interviewing at the point of the application must be sure that interest is not just pure enjoyment but would be transferred to job interest as well.

OB OPEN FORUM 52

Mr. SMITH

We think that this is really a perfect situation as far as the more mature members of our staff are concerned.

STUDIO OPEN FORUM 29

BARRY SMITH

When you're recruiting an employee you're not just looking for the academic qualifications, you're looking for lots of other characteristics and someone who's done an O.U. degree has really demonstrated an awful lot of things about themselves. A lot of persistence, a lot of drive, a lot of motivation.

STUDIO OPEN FORUM 57

RUPERT BROOKS

With the Open University students, because they are the maturer person, probably in employment anyway, I would have thought one of their best marketing ploys would be to make their own employer aware of what they're doing and say it's up to you to develop me, because after all I am an investment, assuming of course he is in employment, I am an existing investment, exploit me in the nicest way possible.

DON FEASEY
(Presenter)

Well that's the way the employers regard the Open University and its students. Now let's take a look at the students themselves, well with over 70 thousand it's clearly impossible to generalise, but we cover all ages, 21 to 90, we've got graduates in their 70's and 80's but most of you are youngish between 21 and 40, 75% of you, in fact.

Film - Ken Bodfish tutorial

WYNNE BRINDLE
(OOV)

Nearly one of three will be just starting their degree and at the other end of the scale one in ten will have already achieved their six credit degree and will be working towards honours. What do we know about these students? Well, rather less than half, 44% are women whereas in the UK population just over half are women. Still the position is much better now than in 1971 when only just over a quarter were women. It's interesting to note that the foundation choice made by each sex is very different. Women go mainly for arts and social sciences whereas the men choose technology and science. Now let's look at differences in educational background.

Pie chart 1

Some of our students start with very little in the way of previous educational qualifications. A small group, around 7% has no formal qualifications at all; about 24% of our students have nothing higher than GCE O levels. And rather less, about 18%, have A levels. Technical and craft qualifications such as ONC, OND, HNC and HND are held by about 17% of students. Looking at the more well qualified students, 22% have teaching certificates, and 13% already have university diplomas or degrees.

Pie chart 2

Comparing occupational differences is also interesting. Nearly a third of the student intake falls into the category of professional, managerial or technical staff and 21% are in the teaching profession. Housewives account for 18% of new students and routine non-manual group which covers clerical and office workers, shop and personal service staff about 17%. Our group of manual workers is very much smaller than the percentage in the UK population but there is some consolation in the fact that this group continues to increase little by little.

ON OU CAMPUS

DON FEASEY

Well no matter how diverse our students might be they all have one thing in common, they had to pay fees otherwise the University simply wouldn't function. So I talked to University Secretary, Joe Clinch about finance.

JOE CLINCH

The way it works is that the government through the Department of Education and Science funds the University on what they call a cash deficiency grant.

DON FEASEY

What does that mean?

JOE CLINCH

Well, let me explain what it means. A cash deficiency grant; that means the government makes up the difference between their estimate of what we need in the way of expenditure and what they're prepared to provide through a grant which they make available to us, and, of course, the difference are the fees, the student fees. Now technically the University is an autonomous body and fixes it's own fees but of course we're very constrained because government says to us we assume your fee levels will be £120 for a full credit in 1982 and they will then determine our grant on the assumption that we take their advice; in other words it is rather a technical autonomy that we have in the matter of fees.

DON FEASEY

Yes, because you could easily go into the red.

JOE CLINCH

Either go into the red or perhaps another danger is it might be felt that if we didn't have to put up the fees that we already had funds we didn't need.

DON FEASEY

We're talking about funds, I mean, how much money are you talking about, what's the overall budget.

JOE CLINCH

Last year, something like 55 million pounds, a quite substantial sum.

DON FEASEY

Just let me put a question to you. I'm a student and I'm having to pay out this £120 to get cracking and get started, I might turn round and say well I can get a degree cheaper elsewhere, why should I come to the O.U., what are we getting, you know, why are you charging this amount of money when I could go to Wolsey Hall or somebody else.

JOE CLINCH

Well, I think there are a lot of good academic and educational reasons why students come to the Open University, I think probably the most important is our accessibility, we are accessible in all parts of the United Kingdom. We do have our Open Entry policy and we do attempt to provide a very structured teaching that will help the student who perhaps is not well prepared or who's been out of study for a while to get into the system and to be successful. These I think are important academic and educational reasons. I think on the financial side it's true that we have a concern that it does seem that part time study in the Open University is perhaps costing our students rather more than part time study elsewhere.

DON FEASEY

Perhaps now having got some idea of the financial background we can take a look at what the money produces on the ground as it were. Walton Hall itself and its complex of University buildings together with the BBC production centre seems a good place to start.

OB OU CAMPUS

WYNNE BRINDLE
(OOV)

The Campus has come a long way since the restoration of Walton Hall in 1969 but building work still continues in line with the expansion of the University. Its staff of around 2,500 makes the O.U. one of Milton Keynes' biggest employers and buildings like the Jennie Lee Library are open to the public. This library provides an essential backup for the academic staff who produce the courses.

Film Social Science
Course Team

Details are thrashed out by the course team made up of O.U. academic and support staff and BBC producers.

DR DAVID POTTER
(D231 course team
Chairman)

I've asked you around today for initial reactions to the remake of D231. As you know we've got to very shortly to prepare a paper for the faculty on the remake and I need some ideas about how to prepare this and present the case to the faculty. Some weeks ago Frank and Paul and I actually had a very informal discussion about the remake and touched on some of the kinds of ideas that we thought were worth thinking about. Frank could you sort of summarise very briefly what we talked about at that meeting.

FRANK CASTLES
(D231 course team
member)

I think the most definite that came out was the suggestion that possibly the fourth block of the course, the block that's on theory and methodology might be modified so as to put two units at the beginning, a new block at the beginning and a shorter block at the end; both dealing with methodology but the first one now focussing very much on trying to get students to in fact learn something about the nature of comparison by doing it themselves. So that when they came to the later substantive blocks they'd understand a bit better what they were doing, I think that some of the feeling we have of student essays is that they're not quite sure what.....(FADES UNDER)

WYNNE BRINDLE
(OOV)

As the content of the units becomes clearer, it's the job of the design studio to provide an effective layout.

Film

LINDA RODGERS
(Designer Media
Division)

Well in the past Robert what we haven't done is, perhaps in this course, indicated to the student that it was time to stop and think about a question by giving him a coloured rule as an indicator. We've asked a question - given an answer, asked another question - given an answer, and from this last answer gone back into the text again, so it doesn't actually interrupt the flow, it becomes part of the flow.

PAUL LEWIS
(Lecturer in
Government)

I'm a bit worried about this little packaged, packaged chunks of knowledge there, I prefer questions rather at the end of a certain argument or a certain exegesis rather than chopping it up in terribly small chunks, (OVERTALKING) something more like in 333 for example.

LINDA RODGERS

(OVERTALKING) Well yes we have done that we've put all the, we've put all the self assessment questions at the end of a section in D333. We're going through a whole chunk of teaching material and then at the end of it specifically asking a question to check how well the student's gone through the previous text.

ROBERT COOKSON
(Senior Editor
Social Sciences)

Yes. I wonder about the margin, where that might come in here as well. The thing about the margin is we do have a very wide margin in our format and I think some students feel that it's actually rather wasted.

LINDA RODGERS

Well it is hoped that students will use the margin to make their own notes.

Film from OPEN FORUM 69

WYNNE BRINDLE
(COV)

In 1981 the BBC Open University Production Centre left Alexandra Palace and moved to the Campus. It's in these studios that over 200 television programmes are made each year covering the whole range of the University's courses. There are also sound studios which produce not only radio programmes but audio cassettes as well.

In addition to Walton Hall, the University has an office in each of its 13 regions. It's here that records are kept of all the students in the region.

Computer terminals are linked to the University's three main computer centres in Milton Keynes, London and Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

OB OU CAMPUS

DON FEASEY
(Presenter)

Well, I hope we've given you some idea of the University organisation without being too baffling. Next week we'll be taking a look at the teaching and learning side of the University business; the side that concerns you most.

Until then, Goodbye.

Closing Music

Presented by Don Feasey

Commentary by Wynne Brindle

Designer Richard Booth

Assistant Producer Geoff Wheeler

Producer Roge Tucker

A Production for The Open University
BBC tv
c. The Open University MCMLXXXII