

OPEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
NOT TO BE TAKEN
FROM THE LIBRARY

D208/06

TRANSCRIPT OF COMPLETED PROGRAMME

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

DECISION MAKING IN BRITAIN

D208/6.

THE MAKING OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Executive Producer	David Seligman
Series Producer	Francis Sealey
Producer	Eleanor Morris
Production Assistant	Julie Todd
Presenter	David Greengrass (OU)
Taking Part	Lord Goodman
	Baroness Jennie Lee
	Rt. Hon. Tony Benn MP
	Lord Perry
	Sir Harold Wilson
	Sir Hugh Greene
	Ralph Toomey
	John Scupham
Recording No.	1/FOU D213X/71/X
Project No.	FOU D213X
Recording Date	22.3.83 (Gallery)
Duration	24'06"

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

TJs from 11.00

Telecine from 11.00 (SO ..)

VT replay from 14.30 (SOVT)

Editec from 14.30

TELEJECTOR SLIDES

A1 Lord Crowther Chancellor OU 1969-72	3a	A7 Academic Consultant David Greengrass	3m
B1 Labour Party Conference	3b	B7 Production Assistant Julie Todd	3n
A2 Sir Harold Wilson Prime Minister 1964-70	3c	A8 Graphic Design Ian Dall	3o
B2 Baroness Lee Minister DES 1965-70	3d	B8 Sound Recordists John Fritchard Barrie Tharby	3p
A3 Ralph Toomey Department of Education & Science 1963-65	3e	A9 Film Cameramen John McGlashan Mike Shepherd Stan Speel	3q
B3 John Soupham Controller of Educational Broadcasting, BBC 1963-65	3f	B9 Film Editor Tony Roscoe	3r
A4 Tony Benn Postmaster-General 1964-66	3g	A10 Executive Producer David Seligman	3s
B4 Lord Perry Vice Chancellor OU 1969-80	3h	B10 Produced by Eleanor Morris	3t
A5 Lord Goodman	3i	A11 A Production for the Open University BBC tv(o) The Open University 1983	3u
B5 Sir Hugh Greene	3j		
A6 David Greengrass Open University	3k		
B6 Charter Ceremony July 1969	3l		

S/B VT

RUN VT

1. VT 1 IN: (vis) Green squares moving SOVT
D208 Generic across screen - music over
,Titles
OUT: (vis) "Decision Making in
Britain" caption over
Houses of Parliament
DUR: 17"
2. TJ A1
The Making of the
Open University

RECORDING BREAK

S/B TK

RUN TK

3. TK 1 GEOFFREY CROWTHER SOTK
Entire Prog.
We will be and we are one of the
great permanent institutions of the
country. And though our nature is
inevitably largely aerial, electronic,
invisible, we must put down a toe on
earth somewhere. The harvest is yet
to come, though it surely is
coming. So perhaps this is an
occasion not so much for thanksgiving
as for dedication. We count it a
great privilege to be able to have
Admiral of the Fleet, Lord
Mountbatten of Burma to perform this
dedication ceremony for us. We are
- 3a. S/I
TJ A1
Lord Crowther
Chancellor, OU 1969-72
(T/O)

SOTK

greatly honoured by his presence.
Lord Mountbatten.

LORD MOUNTBATTEN:

Mr. Chancellor, Mr. Pro Chancellor,
Mr. Vice Chancellor, ladies and
gentlemen. I'm indeed honoured to
have been invited to open the Open
University. It was at first a
puzzle how one could make an Open
University ...

DAVID GREENGRASS V/O:

Setting up an open university, which
many had first seen as a wildly
unrealistic idea, involved a whole
series of decisions - made over a
period of almost six years by
politicians, officials and academics.
Promoting the project had meant a
great deal of bargaining and com-
promise with other interests in order
to over^{come} the general indifference and
scepticism and to get the support
and resources required for a
'University of the Air' as Harold
Wilson had called it back in 1963.

HAROLD WILSON:

/SOTK/

3b. S/I
TJ B1
Labour Party Conference

(T/O)

The important thing is that the Ministry of Higher Education must become one of, must become the focal point of the planning of higher education in this country. And relevant also to these problems are our plans for a University of the Air. I repeat again this is not a substitute for our plans for higher education, for our plans for new universities, for our plans for extending technological education. It's not a substitute it's a supplement to these plans. 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 TV 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. Nor, may I say, do we envisage this merely as a means of providing scientists and technologists, I believe a properly planned University of the Air could

HAROLD WILSON (cont'd:

SOTK

make an immeasurable contribution to the cultural life of our country, to the enrichment of our standard of living.

S/I

3c. TJ A2

Sir Harold Wilson
Prime Minister 1964-70

(T/O)

I'd been thinking about it before I was even leader of the party, leader of the Opposition. And I used to go every year to Chicago to give a course of lectures and on this occasion I said can I spend a couple of, just a couple of nights lecturing, I want to spend the rest of the time looking into what they do about I think they called it 'Distance Learning' or something, sort of night school work. And while I was there, Hugh, I heard that Hugh Gaitskell was very ill, came back and by this time I was leader of the party, elected leader of the party. But I still went on with this idea, but there was so much to do as leader and we had to formulate policy ready for what looked like an early election. And I didn't, in fact, announce my ideas, which I made purely personal until several months later.

HAROLD WILSON (cont'd):

SOTK

... where Her Majesty invited me to form an administration. And I should like to take this first opportunity of pledging my colleagues and myself to do everything we can to the fullest extent of our abilities in the interests of this country and our people. We are facing at this time very great problems but I feel there is nothing that we cannot do together. Thank you very much.

I became Prime Minister the first time and, of course, we had been out of office for 14 years and I was the only one who had sat in a Cabinet before. I was anxious to bring Jennie into the picture because I'd always felt, and K'ye Bevan always felt, that she'd been overshadowed by him and that was why she'd not been a Minister before. And I put her, at first, in Education and gave her a free hand. The Education Department didn't want to know about this idea.

JENNIE LEE:

/SOTK/

He said for god's sake take this on. I can get no help, no response from either the ministers or the senior officials in the Department of Education and Science. And I said, well, Harold, I shall do it but on the same terms as promoting the Arts which was although de jure I was a Junior Minister, de facto I dealt directly only with the Prime Minister and the Treasury. We made the same arrangement about the Open University - there'd never have been an Open University if we had gone along conventional channels.

RALPH TOOMEY:

There was at first, I think, in the Department a great deal of of scepticism about the Jennie Lee project for an open university. And, there's no good denying it, a sort of lack of enthusiasm. I don't think, it wasn't because the, the Department didn't see the increasing importance of radio and television for educational purposes because they'd been working on a scheme themselves for some years, and the

S/I

3d.

TJ B2

Baroness Lee
Minister, DES 1965-70

(T/O)

S/I

3e.

TJ A3

Ralph Toomey
Department of Education & Science
1963-78

(T/O)

RALPH TOOMEY (cont'd):

SOTK

idea of this scheme was to launch an experimental service of educational television. But when Jennie Lee arrived in the Department, I mean she simply scrapped existing schemes, she told everyone to throw them away and start again.

JENNIE LEE:

My first step was to engage a table for two on a side wall in the Members Guest Room in the House of Commons and I picked off one by one the people who I wanted to be on my original Advisory Committee. And I knew, afterall I'd been through the mill, I'd taken my arts degree and my law degree and all the little bits and prizes. I knew, I knew the racket and so I was quite certain that if we were going to have a university that didn't insult people, that made no compromise on standards, I would have to out snob snobs.

DAVID GREENGRASS V/O:

Jennie Lee herself chaired the Advisory Committee and John Scupham was one of the original members.

JOHN SCUPHAM:

SOTK

3f. S/I
TJ B3
John Scupham
Controller of Educational
Broadcasting, BBC 1963-65

I remember at our very first meeting one of us had the temerity to say 'and may we take it that we're looking at this project with an open mind, Miss Lee?', she said 'you may not. If I'd thought you had an open mind about it I shouldn't have asked you to come here today.' So, we knew where we were. We were there to give body and some practical working plans to an intention that had already been formed.

JENNIE LEE:

The Prime Minister was always on my side. But he couldn't press a button, ^{be} there had to/consensus around the table and it's to the great credit of my colleagues at that time, each fighting for their own Departments, that I got away with it. But mind you if, I wasn't asking for money to build a Trident. I was asking for an extra five million or ten million, that kind of sum.

DAVID GREENGRASS V/O:

Ralph Toomey and Jennie Lee operated

DAVID GREENGRASS V/O (cont'd):

SOTK

in a kind of enclave within a rather sceptical Department of Education.

RALPH TOOMEY:

Well, it was certainly unique, I mean in my experience, and I have never been in a situation like this since. In effect, as I said earlier, it was a very small team. It was Jennie Lee and myself working very closely together. Jennie Lee reporting from time to time to the Secretary of State and, of course, with her 'direct link' with the Prime Minister, with Harold Wilson. In my own case all that I was expected to do from time to time was to keep my Permanent Secretary informed, let him know how things were going and, of course, from time to time he would send for me and he'd want to know how things were going.

HAROLD WILSON:

As I say the education officials were against it and also remember Cabinet Ministers are very very anxious to get the money they feel

HAROLD WILSON (cont'd):

SOTK

they need for their own Department and they don't want to see an entirely new system of expenditure, new vehicle for expenditure starting up. A vehicle which might run to very much greater expenditure than anyone had forecast - as indeed this one did.

RALPH TOOMEY:

Well our our greatest problem was with the Post Office and you've got to remember that we're talking now about sort of 1965, 1966 and in those days the Department's line was this. If you're going to launch the Open University with maximum impact and if you're going to have programmes broadcast at peak viewing hours, well you've got to secure the use of the fourth television channel - I mean all of it or a bit of it. And that was our line. Now the Post Office, quite understandably, were entirely opposed to this. They said they saw no justification in pre-empting what was a national television service for a specialised purpose. They saw it as as highly specialised thing

RALPH TOOMEY (cont'd):

SOTK

in educational service. So they were strongly opposed to it.

DAVID GREENGRASS:

Mr. Benn, the status of the Post Office has obviously changed since the 1960's. Could you tell us what its broad responsibility was for broadcasting at that time?

TONY BENN

The Postmaster General was the prime, had the prime responsibility in Cabinet for broadcasting policy as such. So that my responsibilities during that period were really to provide an outlet for the University of the Air and the Department of Education, Jennie Lee, had to provide the university which would then use those broadcasting outlets.

DAVID GREENGRASS V/O:

But finding those outlets was to prove quite a problem for Jennie Lee. Her ideas about access to a fourth television channel conflicted directly with Post Office interests. And a behind the scenes compromise seemed to be needed.

3g. S/I
TJ A4
Tony Benn
Postmaster-General 1964-66

LORD PERRY:

SOTK

3.h. S/I
TJ B4
Lord Perry
Vice Chancellor, OU 1969-80

Well all I know is that right up to the day before they had a meeting at Chequers, Jennie Lee had been insisting on the fourth channel being made available for the OU. And it was immediately after the Chequers meeting that the, that the agreement to have 30 hours of time on BBC 2 television was announced.

The Chequers meeting was, of course, not a meeting just of the Cabinet - it, Jennie Lee and the other Junior Ministers were there - so there was a chance I suppose at a meeting of that sort to have a much fuller discussion of of the implications. But what the background to the change of heart is, I've never been able to discover.

LORD GOODMAN:

3i. S/I
TJ A5
Lord Goodman

I had negotiations both with the ^{with} BBC and/ the independent broadcasting people. I had long talks with Hugh Greene who I think to a very large extent could be regarded as one of the major architects of the Open University, because he received the

LORD GOODMAN (cont'd):

SOTK

suggestion with a considerable degree of enthusiasm where I think there was a rather marked lack of enthusiasm amongst some of his colleagues who saw their promotion of independent productions being reduced by the imposition of an academic institution, which was not unnatural they shouldn't be enthusiastic. But the IT, but the ITV's reaction was very simple, that they hadn't a moment of time for it. Their revenue depended upon advertisements and they didn't see discussions about geometry producing a very large advertising response. So on that footing I reluctantly abandoned any approach to independent television and concentrated on the BBC and on Hugh Greene.

SIR HUGH GREENE:

I think it was in February 1966 I had what turned out to be a long and rather fateful interview about the possibilities with Lord Goodman.

DAVID GREENGRASS:

Did you go into those discussions

3j.

S/I
TJB5

Sir Hugh Greene
Director General,
BBC 1960-69

DAVID GREENGRASS (cont'd):

SOTK

being fairly enthusiastic about the idea of co-operating if you could then?

SIR HUGH GREENE:

I went in I think with some scepticism, but with the thought that if this was going to come off, and one hoped that it would succeed, that it was a duty of the BBC to be involved whatever the difficulties might be.

TONY BENN:

Now in the end the BBC came round to the idea, and had to accept the idea that BBC 2 would be used. And the Director General wrote a long letter to Lord Goodman, after discussion, and Lord Goodman conveyed that in a private letter to the Prime Minister. And it was about the Spring of '66 that that arrangement was finally settled - that BBC 2 would be used.

SIR HUGH GREENE:

My feeling was that it was the duty of the BBC to co-operate and sometimes

SIR HUGH GREENE (cont'd):

SOTK

the Director General has to over-rule those beneath him.

DAVID GREENGRASS:

And was that, was that a very protracted process then, sort of winning acceptance from that level below you in the Corporation?

SIR HUGH GREENE:

I don't think I tried to win acceptance, I said thus will it be.

DAVID GREENGRASS V/O:

Some say that the British policy process accommodates interests wherever possible - that divisions and conflicts are settled in very pragmatic ways and that there are ground-rules for this so-called 'game'. Maybe there are signs of accommodation and pragmatism in this case. Although the broadcasting problem had been solved, the project still needed both general government support and an allocation of other essential resources - but was the backing of the Prime Minister himself important?

HAROLD WILSON:

SOTK

Well they knew I was determined on it. I'd already announced to the House that I was going to, that we were setting it up. And there wasn't any difficulty particularly since I was getting strong support from one or two Ministers who had more experience of education than others.

JENNIE LEE:

Remember my great asset was that I had the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson was at the height of his powers then. We'd been out of office for so many years and all our idea it was to make the best of the arts and the best of education more widely available. And he kept his word to me, I disagreed with him on many other things but I must say that when I was fighting the Treasury and couldn't get enough money, and then I had to go before the full Cabinet, the Treasury Ministers, poor devils, would be against me because they have to do the addition sums.

TONY BENN:

SOTK

When a Prime Minister decides he wants something done it is done. I mean what's amazing looking back on it and comparing it with the Falklands where the Prime Minister was able to commit 1,600 million pounds, that the Prime Minister of those days would have patted himself on the back for being able to carry through a very very minor project, gives you an idea really of how Prime Minister's power's underestimated. But once Wilson had decided he wanted it and he did, he had to pause a little bit and fit it into the pattern of public expenditure.

HAROLD WILSON:

If there was anything of a deal it was my deal with the Treasury. They knew I was determined to have it. The Chancellor was against it, but I was, of course/^{also} First Lord of the Treasury as well as Prime Minister and they knew I was going to have it and I think they really shrugged their shoulders and said 'all right, so and so will have to have it in that case

HAROLD WILSON (cont'd):

SOTK

we'll hope he'll back us on cutting down and keeping the defence expenditure and all the other Departments' expenditure down to a minimum'.

LORD GOODMAN:

No one except a prophet could have seen the shape it was ultimately going to take. On the basis that it was 30 hours of broadcasting and a certain amount of material to be published and advertisements for students and so forth, we estimated I think a total cost of something in the region of five or five and a half million, that is my recollection. Of course that has turned out to be a very dramatic underestimate.

TONY BENN:

I think a great deal of work had to be done by the Department of Education to get the university funded because remember we were talking not only about a technical outlet, but about a real live educational organisation and Lord Goodman had been negotiating.

LORD GOODMAN:

SOTK

And I think the Cabinet received with enthusiasm an estimate that they were able to square with their conscience and at the same time regard as extremely economical. As it turned out it was a very, it was a very substantial underestimate but I've, I feel no special shame about it. I mean, had it been more accurate, and I strive for accuracy, I doubt if we'd have had an Open University.

LORD PERRY:

But it still was, was not official Government policy as you say for another year and it took all that time, I think, to gradually work the whole Parliamentary party into a mood to to agree to set up a Planning Committee. I think it was popularly held and correctly held that once a Planning Committee was set up that was a commitment out of which they couldn't get. In other words that was the critical point in deciding that there would be an institution.

RALPH TOOMEY:

SOTK

If you want to pinpoint a time when the, there was a crucial commitment by a Government to the Open University it was, in fact, when the decision was taken to set up the Planning Committee, this is the Venables Committee, because at the same time money had to be allocated to support the work of the Committee in the first place. But also I mean to prepare the initial stages of the, of the University to appoint staff, to get the preliminary buildings done and that kind of thing.

JENNIE LEE:

Sir Peter Venables was the Chairman of the Planning Committee and he looked square like this, and he stood square like this and he was pushed and pushed and promelled in order to reduce standards of adult education, to do this and that and he just stuck to his guns. He said my instructions are to establish a university making no confessions, making no concessions on standards. And with Peter in the Chair, and then of course, here's the Planning Committee

JENNIE LEE (cont'd):

SOTK

here. I was out of it now, remember that the political minister stands back.

DAVID GREENGRASS V/O:

Much of the Planning Committee's work was done here at the University's first headquarters - at Belgrave Square in London. Until now the decision making had been characterised largely by conflict inside Westminster and Whitehall. Mostly there'd been governmental interests involved. But later there was reaction too from interests outside the government sector - much of it unfavourable.

LORD PERRY:

Every meeting that we had of the Planning Committee with, with outside groups they they were, they exhibited both scepticism and sometimes hostility. In that first year, that first six months even, the second six months of '68, I went round, I've forgotten, 17 or 18 universities at their invitation to talk. And as I said I think in my book, you could

LORD PERRY (cont'd):

SOTK

^{cut}
have/the atmosphere only with an ice pick, I mean it really was frigid. After the lecture it would ease a bit because they realised that some of the, of the crazy ideas that they had in their own minds about what it would be I had I had told them it wasn't going to be like that at all, but they were still sceptical.

HAROLD WILSON:

I didn't interfere in details at all. And indeed I mean the scheme for the Open University that finally emerged was something far better than anything I could have thought of. Thanks, I think, to this sort of interim committee we set up.

DAVID GREENGRASS:

Government acceptance of the Planning Committee report was effectively the final go-ahead for the University. Nine months later came the move from Belgrave Square here to Walton Hall and the University would soon be well under way. All those determined efforts to win acceptance for the idea had gradually

3k. S/I
TJ A6

David Greengrass
Open University

(T/O)

DAVID GREENGRASS: (cont'd):

SOTK

paid off and by bargaining and compromise access to television and to the other important resources needed had eventually been secured.

In any complex decision making process, it's always difficult to determine the crucially important stage.

LORD PERRY: (v/o)

It wouldn't have happened if Harold Wilson hadn't made that speech and decided to do it. It wouldn't have happened if Jennie Lee hadn't been appointed to make it happen. It wouldn't have happened if they, if they hadn't got an agreement with the BBC. It wouldn't have happened if they had not set up a Planning Committee. It probably wouldn't have happened in the same way if they hadn't appointed Peter Vennables. And I suspect it would have happened quite differently if they'd got somebody different from me. So that you have five or six critical points in the, in the path and at each one it was a vital

S/I

31. TJ B6

Charter Ceremony
July 1969

(T/O)

LORD PERRY (cont'd):

SOTK

decision. It wasn't a single, a single one that that proved critical, I think.

TONY BENN:

Oh I think once the Prime Minister had espoused it, it was unstoppable. And remember this was a period when Wilson was riding high, it was probably the one good thing he did in his long period as Prime Minister. He was riding high, this was the use of technology for the advancement of knowledge, this was the white heat, this was the expansion of education. It had a real political drive behind it because people were very well aware of the importance of expanding education. It was also socialist in character in the sense that you didn't have to have been through a Grammar school and get three 'A' levels before you could do a university degree. It had everything going for it and I think that was the dominant consideration. And, of course, we did have the unused capacity to do it on our broadcasting network and we used it

TONY BENN (cont'd):

SOTK

and it has been a tremendous
success. Of that there is
absolutely no doubt.

Music

20"
dur.

- 3m. S/I
TJ A7
Academic Consultant
David Greengrass
- 3n. S/I
TJ B7
Production Assistant
Julie Todd
- 3o. S/I
TJ A8
Graphic Design
Ian Dall
- 3p. S/I
TJ B8
Sound Recordists
John Pritchard
Barrie Tharby
- 3q. S/I
TJ A9
Film Cameramen:
John McGlashan
Mike Shepherd
Stan Speel
- 3r. S/I
TJ B9
Film Editor
Tony Roscoe
- 3s. S/I
TJ A10
Executive Producer
David Seligman
- 3t. S/I
TJ B10
Produced by
Eleanor Morris
- 3u. S/I (on black)
TJ A11
A Production for the Open University
BBC tv (c) The Open University 1983

FADE SOUND & VISION