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STUDIO SCRIPT

TUESDAY, 11th FEBRUARY 1975

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STUDIO 'A', A.P.

VT NUMBER: VTM/6HT/71744

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

OPEN FORUM 2

Director	Roger Tucker
Producer's Assistant	Tricia Kidger
Designer	David Hitchcock
Graphics Designer	Victor Chinn
Vision Mixer	Rachel Blayney
T.M.	Eric Furze
Sound Supervisor	Martin Ward

Taking Part (on VT)

BARONESS LEE OF ASHERIDGE
VICE-CHANCELLOR (Sir Walter Perry)
ANASTASIOS CHRISTODOULOU (University Secretary)
PETER THORNTON-PETT (Archives Officer)
IAN LOWE (Lecturer in Technology)

Schedule

REHEARSAL 1400 - 1500
(VT insert from 1430)
RECORD 1615 - 1715

TK from 1400

pmk
11.2.75

TELEJECTOR SLIDES

1 BARONESS LEE OF ASHERIDGE

1 THE VICE-CHANCELLOR (Sir Walter Perry)

2 ANASTASIOS CHRISTODOULOU University Secretary

PETER THORNTON-PETT Archives Officer

IAN LOWE Lecturer in Technology

Production
ROGER TUCKER

BBC tv production for
The Open University

OPEN FORUM 2STANDBY TK/& VTRUN TKCLOCK ON

1. TK (16 mm) SIG. TUNE: DANSES CONCERTANTES S.O.TK
ANIMATED TITLES (STRAVINSKY)

RUN VT

OUT SHOT: IRISING IN TO AN
 O.U. SYMBOL

DUR: 00'15"

CROSS-FADE
 MUSIC TO

2. MIX TO
VT (SPOOL AP 6981) APPLAUSE
WS AUDIENCE
APPLAUDING

S.O.VT

VICE-CHANCELLOR
 SPEAKS

S/I
 TJ

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR
Sir Walter Perry

VICE-CHANCELLOR: Good evening./
 It's fatuous of course for me with
 an audience, especially this
 audience, to do anything to introduce
 Jennie Lee, who is known by
 reputation and by name by everybody,
 and as a friend and ally by many
 of us. It was the initiative of
 the Club and the Lecture Theatre
 Committee that brought her here
 tonight. And it's always an
 enormous pleasure to welcome her.
 And I will say no more than say that
 we're looking forward to her being
 indiscreet.

(MCU JENNIE LEE)

S/I

TJ

BARONESS LEE OF ASHERIDGE

LADY LEE:

I wonder just how far I could, without behaving improperly, tell you something of the inside story. We always start, it's a kind of hallowed beginning, about a speech made by the Leader of the Opposition then, Mr. Harold Wilson on September 8th 1963 in Glasgow. Well, I think I'll say Harold. I've either got to make up my mind it's going to be the Prime Minister or Leader of the Opposition, so we'll stick to Harold.

Well, you know, he wasn't so ingenuous as to think when he made that speech that he was inventing the mass media. A great deal of educational work had been done at all levels - at all the lower levels. For infancy, say for the younger years, adult education and the rest of it and done in very many parts of the world. But in 1963 we were ~~leading up to the 1964 General~~ Election, and he was very much at that time in love with the concept of the technical revolution, that we were all going to become richer and happier and life made easier for us by a more intelligent use of modern techniques.

LADY LEE (CONTD.):

And in that mood, he visited Moscow and Chicago. And there he was inspired by the concept of using the mass media, radio, television, films, the cassettes coming on and all the rest of it, in order to make available to an immensely wide public, the higher levels of education. No compromise, no academic compromise on the university stage.

Now you may wonder why, as he cared so much for this project, and yet a junior Minister, because Minister of State sounds very grand, that a Minister of State in the Ministry of Education and Science, is a Junior Minister, why I was asked to carry through this project.

Particularly as I was already a cuckoo in the nest in the D.E.S. - not welcomed at all, because they felt they had enough children before I arrived ... and I was not doing any straight-forward work of an Under-Secretary. I was totally ... engaged at the beginning to promote the Arts.

(contd.) ...

LADY LEE (CONTD.):

And I was able to survive only because I negotiated my money directly with the Treasury and I dealt only with the Prime Minister. Now, I mention that because it was a lead in to what followed.

Now, when Harold Wilson made his speech in '63, then formed his government in '64, he was very keen to promote this concept of an Open University. But he found that he could get no response at all from either the Senior Officials or Ministers in the Department of Education and Science. He found he couldn't get a kind look from either the senior officials or the Ministers in the Treasury. He found that among his cabinet colleagues that he himself had appointed, that there was either total indifference or a rather supercilious hostility. And the curious thing about this ... hostility, was that it did not follow the normal left-right divisions inside the Labour Party.

Dick Crossman on the left was just as unimpressed, to put it gently
(LAUGHTER)

as Roy Jenkins and Tony Crosland on the right.

LADY LEE (CONTD.):

So here was your poor Prime Minister anxious to go ahead with a scheme which he deeply believed in, but how was he going to, how could he set about it? So, I was a kind of last resort. So he comes to me and says, "For God's sake, get this thing going." And I said, "Right, Harold, but on the same terms as we worked together in promoting the Arts. That I deal only with you and I negotiate directly for the money with the Treasury, and you help."
(LAUGHTER)

And fair's fair, both in the Open University and before that on the Arts side, he never let me down. But I'm only showing you the difficulties, there's no such thing, you know, as a Prime Minister being able simply to press a button and get his own way. Because whenever public expenditure is involved then it has got to go,

and it's got to have the sanction of Cabinet. And if there was a consensus of opinion on his side in Cabinet, well, you can go ahead. But if there's not a consensus of opinion, Prime Ministers are not dictators in this country. My White Paper came out in February 1966. And I had to go before the Cabinet where it was cold comfort farm.

(LAUGHTER)

For absolute, proper and understandable reasons, as you're sitting around the Cabinet table, every Minister there has got first loyalties to his or her own department, they're short of money, the last thing they want is a new recruit that's going to make some further demands on the Treasury. And so I'd been able to set out in the original White Paper what was for me of first importance, and that is that if we were going to have a University there must be no compromise on academic standards.

As you all know, that's been my theme song from beginning to end. And therefore on that first White Paper I was careful to put in what we could do for poorer countries, because I knew I had some friends round that table who were very concerned about those poorer countries.

So I thought that might help!

(LAUGHTER)

LADY LEE (CONTD.):

And then I, you'll find I've got a good paragraph in that first White Paper referring to those working in the field of adult education. Because adult education was always a special concern for understandable reasons, of the Labour Party and the Labour movement. And I got very cross with them sometimes because I didn't think they were ambitious enough. In fact, I said in the House of Commons in the first speech I made on this subject was that they'd got so used to a patch on the backside of their trousers that they felt undressed without one.

(LAUGHTER)

Because as you know many, you're so experienced, that adult education was apt to be the poor relation in the Ministry, got the crumbs from the rich man's table, and it could never make any progress. And they were a little bit glum. They said, "Why are you trying to establish a University when we need more money, more support in building up at the lower levels?" Now, it's quite true that more money was needed at the lower levels. But that's not the job I was asked to do. I was asked by the Prime Minister to establish an independent, that is, an autonomous University making no compromise on standards.

Perfectly properly they wanted to know how much all this was going to cost. And I couldn't tell them. I hadn't a clue. And neither had anyone else. Because you know whether it's a tank or a Concorde or that, there's a lot of wild guessing often in the early stages. That there's a kind of ritual you've got to go through. So the Prime Minister saved the situation. He said, "Well, we'll have the cost looked into." Then he said, "I suggest that Lord Goodman might be asked to do a study on this for us." So we got through that one without disaster!

So my Lord Goodman was asked to do two things. One to go to America and see the Ford Foundation people and a few others - the Prime Minister had some friends over there, he had I had. And sometimes they were very good indeed at giving money to start new projects. So off Arnold goes to the United States of America to see, to use a vulgar phrase, if he could raise the wind.

LADY LEE (CONTD.):

In other words, if we could side-track any need to go to a very harrassed Treasury. I'm afraid we weren't very successful there. We got a tiny bit of money later on but that part of it didn't work. But what helped me enormously was that he did go to Chicago and he saw what the Prime Minister had thought of as a University of the Air. But remember when a Leader of the Opposition or a Prime Minister is travelling and travelling rapidly, they're apt to get the broad concept without having time to study in depth. And therefore Lord Goodman brought out a report in which he supported what I had already told the Prime Minister, that the Chicago experiment, they were splendid fellows, but they were merely short-circuiting the first two years of the Chicago degree and it was nothing like what I had now set my heart on, the type of complete project. And then I'd gone to Chicago and as the Prime Minister had asked me to. And then I went to Moscow. Because he'd been very much impressed in Moscow when he was told that more than half their engineers had got University of the Air degrees. In Moscow they were absolutely charming and candid, could not have been more helpful. And, of course, they were using radio and correspondence Colleges. But again, it was nothing like what we had in mind. So I had the moral support of Lord Goodman when he came back from America - on this occasion without any cash - but at least confirming what I'd already said, that we must be very much more ambitious. So the Prime Minister and I had a report from him in May. So he had a more difficult job than that and this was to negotiate with the BBC. Our good fortune was that there was a very great and distinguished man there, Sir Hugh Greene, at that time. It might have been much, much, it would have been much, much harder for us if he hadn't been there. Because a lot of the junior men disliked the idea of having to give any of their good time to what were going of course to be minority programmes.

So my good fortune was, ~~first the Prime Minister, then~~ my Lord Goodman, Sir Hugh Greene was invaluable working things out. And then there's a fourth figure comes along and this one took me wholly by surprise.

LADY LEE (CONTD.):

He was about the only man I was after that I hadn't courted. I'd gone after the others one by one. I had a little side-table in the Strangers' Dining Room in the House of Commons - a table for two.

(LAUGHTER)

And one by one they came along. Sir Hugh, Sir Eric Ashby, Roy Shaw - oh dear, there's a long list of them, but I went after them one by one, because with a new concept it gives you a quiet opportunity to explain what you wanted to do. But this was Sir William Armstrong, and I thought, good! There's not a single Permanent Secretary would give me a kind look. And I was interested, not only in the Permanent Secretary in the D.E.S. but also in the Treasury, the Board of Trade as it then was, the Post Office Communications, the technological, now why was I interested in all those departments? Because, in addition to being concerned about the academic standards, I was concerned that any profits that would come from the sale of literature, or the equipment that would be needed in all the local Study Centres - that profits from that should come to enrich the University or the public purse, should not be there for private exploitation.

So I took advantage of Sir William calling. He came, his first concern was whether the University might be able to do some course he was interested in for Civil Servants.

So I said, "What am I to do about those Permanent Secretaries?" He said, "Oh, well, give them a dinner."

(LAUGHTER)

I said, "Right, I'll give the dinner." And then I reported this to the incredible, invaluable link-man, Lord Goodman. He said, "I'll give the dinner."

And this was what I called, crudely, a 'teach-in'. I saw one or two people wilting round the table, so I quickly changed, I said, "Let's call it a second reading debate." ~~So it, but it was an opportunity.~~ And again, remember that every Permanent Secretary is preoccupied with his own Department, and to have to spare thought or energy for a new concept is not easy at all.

LADY LEE (CONTD.):

But that this was an extraordinary valuable help to me because it did ^{mean} that right from the outset when there was so much opposition, when the Press, when the Opposition in Parliament was on the whole opposed, when the Press was sneering, you know, about a Prime Minister's gimmick, that I had, as you can see, not only a lot of criticism, but I'd a lot of valuable allies. And my supreme good fortune was that when we finished our job and the first White Paper was out and they were given consent for the Planning Committee to go ahead, my supreme good fortune was that I could have Sir Peter Venables as the Chairman. Because Peter was there absolutely four-square. And when any of the weaker brethren wanted to divert its purpose and say, "Oh, well, don't let's be so ambitious, don't do this or don't do that," he was there absolutely four-square. He said, "It's not our function to decide what to do, we must decide how to do it. These are the instructions from the Prime Minister, from the Cabinet, and it's to this that we've got to give our minds." There are so many other people who helped marvellously. We got our Charter. And you know, there were some of you who criticised and said, "Why are you going through all this old-fashioned paraphernalia?" People like ritual, you know, and they like ceremony. And as I'd started out-snobbing the snobs I thought I'd better go on with it.

(LAUGHTER)

Because what mattered at the end of the day were the students that you attracted and, as I said, the quality of the staff.

So you can see that long before your present Vice-Chancellor came into the picture, that Chris, who's sitting here - Christodoulou, what a hell of a name to spell!

(LAUGHTER)

It really would be really shocking of me to try to tell you how they sustained and what they meant.

LADY LEE (CONTD):

Now, I'm out of it, because it's a cardinal principle that political Ministers whether past, present or future, must not interfere with the work of an autonomous University. But I hope that everyone who has its responsibility will give thanks to the people who made it possible and the warmest possible thanks to those of you who today are carrying on the tradition, and who I'm sure are just as determined as we were at the outset to see that this is a first-class University; that it's a pace maker and a trendsetter and that the reputation that it's already got all over the world shall go on from strength to strength.

(APPLAUSE)

VICE-CHANCELLOR:

Lady Lee has said she's very willing to answer questions if she can, she didn't say that I did ...

LADY LEE:

If she can, if she can!

CHRISTODOULOU:

Lady Lee, may I take up your last point, which in my own words went something like this: the politicians had done what needed to be done; the institution was established. It was then up to us, and it wasn't for the politicians to interfere. And I think in a sense that you meant that, I perfectly accept the academic work and the teaching systems work of the University has got to be devised by those members of the University. But I think many of us are feeling after six years' experience, that the political act of establishing was not enough in itself to tackle the social problems within which the institution has to work.

S/I

TJ

ANASTASIOS CHRISTODOULOU
(University Secretary)

CHRISTODOULOU (CONTD.):

To put it in more simple language, there are hosts of obstacles for adult students in terms of making or having a genuine opportunity to take the opportunity. It may be grants, it may be the ability of people to get off work in order to effectively study. It may be all kinds of things which some other countries, when one travels around, seem to be tackling much more energetically in terms of social engineering than we seem to be.

Wouldn't you agree that perhaps we need the continued assistance of another Jennie Lee and another Harold Wilson in getting these kinds of things accepted as things to be changed, if the opportunity for part-time study for the community at large is really going to be a proper one?

LADY LEE:

Yes, well, you know, I mentioned the name of Sir William Alexander, God Bless my Soul, he's coming into the Lords too, I mean the place is getting so common.

(LAUGHTER)

But, you know, he was a great help to me in explaining to Local Authorities what this was about and why you must not have political Ministers interfering, you know, with the curriculum or anything like that. That must be left to the academics. There was quite a lot of pressure being put, you know, on Counties, you know when I was a member for Staffordshire, I was very anxious to see that Staffordshire County, you know, would give grants to students, I could get no progress when it was under Tory control, but you know we were hoping. What's now at the moment, the Local Authorities are caught with this enormously high rates and therefore anything, the Arts for instance, anything which is optional are apt to suffer. But the work is going on, we are very well aware that you have different practices in different parts of the country.

LADY LEE (CONTD.):

It depends on the quality of the Local Education Authority, some are more sympathetic than others. And we believe there ought to be a general rule, there's all sorts, now that is a perfectly legitimate field for continuing political interests, that end of it.

S/I

TJ

PETER THORNTON-PETT
(Archives Officer)

PETER THORNTON-PETT:

Lady Lee, I speak regretfully as one of the non-pioneers here, but I have heard or read somewhere that we might have finished up with a College of the Air, but that it is thanks to you that we in fact did finish up as a University. Could you throw a little light on that?

LADY LEE:

Yes. You see, there was understandably enormous pressure inside our own movement, the people who said, "Now what we're concerned about is the boy and girl who left school at fourteen or fifteen. And I said, "Well, you've got your local schools, night schools, you've got your Technical Colleges. I was absolutely convinced that we could never strengthen that part of the educational segment working from below up. But as the Vice-Chancellor has already said and written and many others, that once you had established your status as an independent University, with your degree accepted by other Universities and the rest of it, then out of strength, provided you were given the resources, you could give a

LADY LEE (CONTD.):

helping hand to those who were not able to start at an undergraduate level. And that is what, of course, is now happening.

IAN LOWE:

Lady Lee, you were presumably aware when trying to persuade people of the need for an Open University, that the percentage of young people who go to University in England is much lower than in many comparable countries, roughly half that of a lot of other English-speaking countries, or vaguely English-speaking countries ...

(LAUGHTER)

I think it's fair to say that the Open University has shown that the English aren't intrinsically less intelligent than, say, Australians and ...

(LAUGHTER)

that the same percentage could presumably benefit from University education. Do you think that the, what the Open University has shown offers any chance of expanding access to other existing institutions of Higher Education to provide British young people with opportunities rather more like what they could expect in other developed countries?

LADY LEE:

There's a great deal of inter-communication with the other Universities and Colleges and the rest of it.

S/I

TJ

IAN LOWE
(Lecturer in Technology)

LADY LEE (CONTD.):

And you see the point about the Open University is that it's doing a number of different jobs; doing more for some of the disabled, for instance. It's, one of the finest schoolmasters I know who was in his late middle years, said, "I'm going to be the first to join, I'm going to get all the books, I'm going to follow the radio and television but no exams for me. Now that man, I suppose, would be one of your failures; someone who wouldn't register - ; but then, the refreshment that it's brought, some of the letters I receive are absolutely marvellous.

1
CAP.

(WS AUDIENCE)

S/I

IJ

PRODUCTION
ROGER TUCKER

T/O SUPER

MIX

TJ

A BBC tv PRODUCTION
FOR THE
OPEN UNIVERSITY