

OPEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY. NOT TO BE TAKEN  
FROM THE LIBRARY

POST-PRODUCTION TRANSCRIPT

COU-I

(INTRODUCTION TO THE OPEN UNIVERSITY)

<u>PROJ. NO.</u>	00525/7100
<u>VT NO:</u>	VTC/6HT/72763
<u>RX DATE:</u>	TUESDAY, 3rd JANUARY 1978
<u>PRODUCER:</u>	ROGER TUCKER
<u>ASSISTANT:</u>	ROSE HIKARDA
<u>DESIGNER:</u>	MICHAEL RICHARDSON
<u>GRAPHICS:</u>	JUDY JOHNSON
<u>T.M.</u>	TONY POWELL
<u>F.M.</u>	PETER MONTIER
<u>SOUND SUPERVISOR</u>	MARTIN WARD

TRANSMISSION

SUNDAY, 8th JANUARY '78 - 1030 - BBC.2  
THURSDAY, 12th " " 1835 - "

DURATION

24'33"

MUSIC:

COU-I

FANFARE:

(COUNTDOWN-I)

By the Authority of the Royal Charter I hereby install you Gerald, Baron Gardiner of Kittesford, Chancellor of the Open University.

EFFECT OF COURSES

We had to design and produce Courses of Study that could be undertaken at home in isolation and in the hours that could be spared from work and family. Courses moreover that made intellectual demands at least as searching as those of the Courses of any other University. And we came up with what is undoubtedly the most difficult way of obtaining a degree yet devised by the wit of man.

MIKE:

Welcome to Walton Hall. For the first of our four Countdown programmes in which we're going to show you your way around the Open University, we've come here to Walton Hall at the heart of the Open University's campus and its Headquarters at Milton Keynes. It's here that we'll be able to meet some of the key people. The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, the Pro-Vice Chancellor for academic policy and the Vice Chancellor himself.

His office is here in Walton Hall. This part of the house dates from the 1830's - the last private owners were the Earl Family until it was taken over by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation. The University moved here in 1969. Now I'm going to go and ask the Vice Chancellor some of the questions which will be in your own minds as you begin to approach your University career. Good morning Vice Chancellor.

VICE CHAN:

Good morning Mike.

MIKE:

I'm going to ask you some of the questions that will be uppermost in the minds of those students who'll shortly be joining us for the first time. I think what's in the minds of probably almost all of them is just what kind of an organisation have I joined? How do you estimate we stand now in the educational world and particularly in the view of other Universities?

VICE CHAN:

I think that's an easy one. I think we've become part of the Establishment. I think in the Educational world it's now recognised that the standard of the O.U. Degree is the equivalent to that of any other University. The content is very different. The nature of the degree is different but the standard is the same. Anything else would have been a disaster - I mean to offer a second-rate degree to students would be to do them harm. Why should they bother getting a second rate degree and that's been uppermost in the minds of all of us who've been concerned with developing the University.

MIKE: We heard you say at the beginning of this programme that to acquire an Open University Degree was to get a degree by the hardest way yet devised by the wit of man. Now how do you square that kind of judgement with our commitment as an Institution to being generally open and accessible to particularly those who haven't got the formal educational qualifications usual for University entry?

VICE CHAN: It's difficult to reconcile the two and yet both are true. I think we are Open - we don't have any entrance qualifications - anybody can start - at the same time its also true that its a very difficult way and a much more difficult way of getting a Degree than going to a regular University. I think um many people including myself have referred to the loneliness of the Long Distance Learner and I think its a very real thing. You see if there's a difficult thing to comprehend and you're all by yourself you don't know whether it's you that's stupid or whether it is really a very difficult thing to comprehend. If you're working with a bunch of other people in the same position you get an immediate feedback and know if they're all finding it easy or whether it's your fault. If they're all finding it difficult then there's a real problem of getting down to it and working hard at it. And this is absent to a large extent when you're all by yourself. So it's a very difficult route. It also of course involves a long haul - it takes a long time and people doing it are in full employment usually and have a job to do to earn their salaries and they have to fit this in so it requires a lot of motivation and determination to make the Grade.

MIKE: As another generation of students enter the University how would you describe to them the main features of the opportunity that lies ahead of them?

VICE CHAN: Well I meet a lot of students especially at Graduation time. I think one of the main features that doesn't often get talked about is the emancipation, the feeling that life has opened up in a new way. You get it especially with disabled students, students in Institutions, people like this who could never envisage getting a Higher Education until we came along and offered a different method, and I think it extends to all the others as well in a sense I think that's one thing to look forward to with joy - there are things to look forward to with more apprehension and that is its a hard a hard grind, its a long time - it has - you've got to stick with it, you've got to be determined. I think students of the Open University have shown this characteristic in a very marked degree and it will come to be recognised as one of the of the major features of an Open University Degree. So I think when they come in as many of them are coming in in the near future there are both joys and problems to contend with and all I can say is I wish them all the very best of luck.

MIKE:

Well there may seem to be many more immediately important things to those of you who are new students than the early history of the University. But the O.U. is still relatively young and its unique. The background to its Foundation is woven from strands which are still very important to education today. The original concept of the University as conceived by Harold Wilson was of a University of the Air. So right from the start the medium of broadcasting was considered a key component in its teaching system. The television and radio programmes are the only important elements in our Courses which are not produced here at Walton Hall. An educational partnership was created with the BBC for this purpose, and since 1970 the production Centre for making our programmes has been at the BBC Studios at Alexandra Palace., which stands on one of the highest points of North London on Muswell Hill and its from there that Brian Groombridge - who was a member of the original Planning Committee for the University is going to sketch in the early history.

BRIAN:

This is really rather an appropriate place to talk about the origins of the Open University because when the Victorians built this Alexandra Palace they intended it to be a Centre for Popular Education. And it was the place from which the first television programmes were transmitted in 1936 so it symbolises in a way the whole idea of the University of the Air. But its very hard for us to recall how difficult it was less than ten years ago for an adult, for a mature person who'd left school for some years actually to study for a degree. And even more difficult to realise that the facilities that existed - the opportunities that existed at that time were regarded as wholly appropriate. You could either take a London External Degree - and that was an extremely hard route - you probably had to study on your own by Correspondence or if you were in London you could go to Birkbeck College for a part-time course and literally a handful of people were allowed into the other Universities to be mature students. The great thing about the University of the Air was that the University came to you through your television screens, through your radio and of course through your letter-box. But ten years ago the idea seemed silly or outrageous, but when something is a success, as this obviously has been, then there's going to be no lack of claimants for paternity. Um as when Sir Harold Wilson retired from being Prime Minister he said that this was his finest achievement. He first proposed it in an electioneering speech in Glasgow in in 1963 and here he is putting the record straight as he sees it.

SIR HAROLD:

I consulted nobody in Britain at all - though of course it is a fact - and this is a reason for the many claims - that there were various schemes germinating in various people's minds for various forms of non-full-time Higher Education. There were of course already a number of things functioning - the Workers' Education Movement or some Local Authorities and many other things. I was perhaps as concerned as anything with the visual

SIR HAROLD: side - I was perhaps too concerned with the concept of television and of radio. Er I felt the Correspondence side wouldn't be all that difficult to work out and um I hadn't got as far as thinking about what would happen er for arrangements for examining or awarding Degrees.

BRIAN: Visits to the Soviet Union and the United States where he'd seen various forms of distance teaching in action had helped to shape the idea in Harold Wilson's mind. But like a great many other inventions - including television er others were on the same track. Michael Young for instance, the Sociologist who founded the Consumers' Association wrote a very important article in 1962 on the idea and there was a pioneering electrical engineer Doctor R.C.T. Williams who was advocating what he called the Tele Varsity and as fact: as long ago as 1926 when the BBC first became a Corporation somebody sent a memo to the D.G. John Reith suggesting that there should be a wireless University with listeners learning Latin. We have an Open University because the Prime Minister of the day believed in it and because he backed an exceptionally tough and determined politician um as Minister responsible - Jenny Lee. They pushed it through without too much reference to the Labour Party or the Cabinet or Parliament and its worth listening to Harold Wilson as he describes the fights that went on, behind the scenes.

SIR HAROLD: I had no support whatsoever from the Ministry of Education er whether departmentally or ministerially - only opposition - and from the Treasury. And that really remained true until Ted Short - who himself had studied externally er became the Minister in 1968 but by that time we were over the hump and the thing was going ahead except for the efforts of the Chancellor every year to cancel it to save money. But er the um they set up a Departmental Working Party which was just about to produce a report to say it wasn't feasible - it wouldn't work - it wasn't necessary and why have it anyway - it would cost too much. And so at that point I wound up the Working Party (LAUGHTER)

BRIAN: Meanwhile Jenny Lee was also doing battle with almost the whole of the Educational Establishment. The Universities in Britain had a better Adult Education record than most but they never thought it necessary to offer on mature people opportunities to study for Degrees. Um so when the Open University was proposed it was dismissed as a philistine gimmick or it was said that it was not at all necessary or it was said that if there was that kind of money about it ought to be re-allocated to the existing extra mural departments so they could do new Courses on old foundations, or again it was said that if we were to invest in expensive means of communication then they should be used not to help a few thousand people get degrees but to set up a College of the air. Um I felt that at the time and a good many other people did. But I became convinced otherwise at meetings of the Planning Committee where one saw the determination of Jenny Lee to drive this thing through to make a success of it. This is how she reasoned about it at a lecture she gave at Walton Hall.

- JENNY: There was understandably enormous pressure inside our own Movement of 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.
- BRIAN: The Robbins Report had said that Britain had to increase the number of University places for young people if it was to hold its place in the world and the number of Universities doubled, but that simply enlarged the number of opportunities for young school leavers and what Jenny Lee wanted to do was to strike a blow for adult equality by making it possible for adults also to have this kind of opportunity, and she wanted to do this at a level which had the greatest prestige.
- JENNY: We we we resented deeply the idea of anything second class. That's why I would not have it a Working Man's University - a Black Man's University or a White Man's University - you've heard me on this theme before. It was established by a Labour Government but you don't see a University established under a Tory Government as a Tory University - that wasn't the purpose. The purpose was quite austere to use the mass media.
- BRIAN: Although it's no longer called "The University of the Air" broadcasting is still an important component in the whole process, and the success of the Open University's largely based on the fact that it was built on a tradition of educational broadcasting. The BBC's had a commitment to Adult Education ever since its foundation and a great deal of experience and in the 1960's a number of Independent Television Companies experimented with projects which began to show how in practice that tradition could be developed. The Open University have borrowed from Scotland and from America the Credit idea, the idea that you can acquire a Degree by instalments as it were and from the most original of the other British Universities its developed some of its best ideas on curriculum development.
- MIKE: These twin strands of tradition and innovation continue to the point where the University finally received its own Royal Charter in 1969. The Charter Ceremony took place at the Royal Society in London and was attended by, amongst others, the late Lord Crowther, who was then installed as the first Chancellor of the University and its titular head. Early discussions of the academic programme led the University to confirm its commitment to a Degree pattern that was based on the credit system. Professor Len Haynes - Professor of Chemistry - is doing a turn of duty as one of the five Pro-Vice Chancellors who give direct support to the Vice Chancellor in specific areas of his own responsibility. Len Haynes' present role is as Pro-Vice-Chancellor responsible for academic policy.

PROF. LEN:

As you know the requirement for the B.A. Degree is that you should satisfactorily complete six credits. The only limitation on your choice of course is that two of your credits must be in Foundation Courses. This freedom of choice means you can construct your degree to meet your own particular requirements - a tailor-made Degree to fit your own needs and interests. It's one of the features of a University whose students are adults with widely varying backgrounds. And so if your work is mainly in, say, Science but you also have a particular interest in the 19th Century Novel then you can combine the two in your Degree to make it suit your own special needs. Of course since the Open University is currently offering more than a hundred Under-graduate courses this freedom of choice can be somewhat alarming and so it's worth spending a minute or two talking about how to make your choices. Of course for those of you who are just starting your first Foundation course the most important advice is don't rush. You don't need to make any choice until May. We'll tell you more about this in Countdown 4. After all you're taking a Foundation Course which is designed to introduce you to a number of different fields of study, some of which you've probably not met before - so keep your options open for as long as possible. Think about your degree - why do you want it? Is it to help you in your present job, or to help you get a better job - or is it nothing to do with your job but to help you develop and explore one of your particular interests? Don't forget to make use of your Tutor Counsellor - they know a great deal about the O.U. system and from their contact with other students through the years they'll be able to tell you which Courses will and will not fit your particular requirements. Where do you find the hard information? Well it's in this book the Courses Handbook - this is the 1976 Edition but you'll have a later edition. The main part of the Courses Handbook consists of brief descriptions of the Courses available and from these you should be able to see if the Course will fit your particular needs. But don't restrict yourself to the accounts in the Courses Handbook. Make a point of viewing some of the television programmes and listening to the radio programmes which are part of the Courses in which you're interested. And remember that your Study Centre or local library will be able to get copies of the Course texts for you to see and perhaps to borrow. Another O.U. publication which you will find useful is the Interest Courses Index which will be sent out at the end of April. This is a new publication based on a preliminary exercise carried out in 1977. It's really a list of possible interests and the O.U. Courses that relate to them. We hope it will be a useful guide but I would emphasise that it is only a guide and that you will need to examine systematically all the information that you can get about any course that you propose to take.

PROF. LEN:  
(CONT'D)

Well now, I've spent some time in giving you some advice and you'll find that there's no shortage of people to give you advice in the O.U. So let me finish by saying enjoy your Course. It'll be hard work - it wouldn't be worth doing if it were a doddle but give it all you've got. And then enjoy it.

MIKE:

Well we've been looking briefly at some of the historical and academic aspects of our early development. But what kind of a community of students are we? Certainly we're a very large community, as there are more than sixty thousand Open University students studying in the United Kingdom as of now. But size of course is by no means the whole story. Naomi Mackintosh, who is both the <sup>present</sup> Pro-Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and also the Head of the University's Survey Research Department, part of who's job it is to collect statistical data about students, is probably uniquely placed to answer more specific questions about the nature of our student population.

NAOMI:

Okay - goodbye then. TELEPHONE Well as you know the University was set up for mature students and officially this means that the lower age limit is 21. In practical terms it means that the sky's the limit and you've got students of all ages. This first chart shows you separately for men and women the proportions of students in each of these age groups. I haven't made them even and so the bars are slightly misleading but you'll see that the largest group is twenty six to thirty - that would throw up for statisticians the mode age group. An arithmetic mean I think would be meaningless - it would come out at thirty two but it wouldn't really give you a picture of who we've got. In fact we've got quite a large number of students studying right into their seventies and we've even had a graduate of over eighty. Another important question or particularly in this day and age is that of sex. A lot of people I think at the beginning thought that the University would simply be taken over as a haven for housebound housewives. In fact the opposite was the case. This didn't happen at all and as you can see from the second chart we really had a disappointingly small number of women at the beginning - it crept up steadily all the way up to 1977 when women formed 40% of the total student population. In fact that's higher than all conventional Universities and this year for the very first year they're even in the majority in one region - London - where they've made over 50%. But these are very simple categorisations - another thing we ask you to do is tell us what your occupation is again in fairly broad terms and we try to make some interpretation. Or from this about who you are and what your needs are or and you'll see again from the next chart the increase in women shows up a bit here with the fact that housewives have increased over these years. Teachers made the news a lot at the beginning because they were such a large group and they have been dropping or continually until 1977. I've grouped the other two groups roughly into



NAOMI:

what you might call Middle Class and you might call Working Class but its not the time to discuss it. And whereas the Middle Class is remaining pretty static the Working Class group is now increasing although not a very great amount. You see the changes perhaps more clearly um if you look at people's backgrounds in a different way and if you look at what their educational qualifications were before they arrived at the University and in this final chart I've divided people up into three groups according to what they arrived at us with. So you'll see quite a substantial number of people who came to the University with less than the qualifications than you would need to go to normal University - about a quarter at the beginning and that's up to now over a third. Er and that's quite an important challenge for particularly for the academics as they re-write the Foundation Courses. In the middle there are a substantial group of people who've got some educational qualifications - very often in Science they may have gone to the Tech or done some part time O.N.C. or something like that and they've got something but not enough and then again you've got the block of people with teachers and quite a lot of people who seem to want a second degree so these are some of the ways we use information you give us and some of it you give us on Registration forms and some of it on the application forms and some of it we have to ask you to send us on questionnaires or ask you to be interviewed by us so when we write to you and ask you to help us with information, with questionnaires we do need it for our planning so please don't throw them away - do send them back to us, they will get used.

MIKE:

Well we've been hearing from Naomi Mackintosh a number of the global, national statistics about the shape of our student population, and now I'm sitting here in the Students' record office in Walton Hall where all the manual records about our students are held, and from which there's direct access onto the student main file.

In the next Countdown Programme we shall be going out from here into the University's Regional structure to have a look at the kind of records that are kept there - the kind of support services that are available to students in the Regions.

MUSIC: