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THE 1977 OUSA LECTURE

(GIVEN BY SIR HAROLD WILSON)

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DURATION

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MURMUR OF CROWD

ANNOUNCER:

Good evening and welcome to the Central Hall here at York University. Where you can see a large audience of Open University students and staff and distinguished guests are assembling for this year's USA Lecture given by Sir Harold Wilson. This is the fourth OUSA Lecture which traditionally opens the National Conference Weekend. You may recall in the past lectures by Sir Lionel Russell, the late Lord Vic Feather and last year at Bristol by William Van Strabenzky. And each of them spoke on a topic of Higher Education. Well tonight the President of OUSA Don Shaw is going to present Sir Harold Wilson to us.

APPLAUSE:

DON:

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the fourth OUSA Lecture. We do have amongst us tonight some very distinguished people who have graced us with their presence. My Lord Archbishop, Your Worship and distinguished citizens of York, Vice Chancellor, fellow presidents and honoured guests. Our guest speaker tonight is er I think unquestionably one of the most eminent politicians of our age. He has, for more than a quarter of a century, been in the front ranks of the Labour Party and for half that its leader. He has a record I think unparalleled in modern times. Four times Prime Minister. Its a sad trait perhaps that er posterity seldom accords to its past political leaders muc credit for their achievements. A fact that was er recognised so Shakespeare would have us believe by Mark Anthony amongst others. But I'm sure we will remember him in years to come and be grateful to him for his crucial and decisive role in the formation of the Open University. Without further ado I will introduce our speaker, Sir Harold Wilson.

APPLAUSE

SIR HAROLD:

Mr. Chairman, Your Grace, friends. When I accepted the invitation to speak here and it was indeed accepted just before I left No. 10 I think, er I then suggested that I would expatiate on the birth, and indeed the not as interesting ante-natal history of the Open University. It has struck me since then that it is totally inappropriate thing to talk about because since then we have heard the authoratative history ~~written by the Vice-chancellor. And as I don't propose to read that~~ out to you (LAUGHTER) for the next two or three hours KAUGHTER or even attempt to summarize it I thought what I would do was speak first on the history of its foundation - er though I've been asked so many questions tonight that I might get er it might be more than a little while and if there's any time left I might try and widen the subject.

SIR HAROLD:

There are of course a number of claimants or those who said they founded the Open University. I can only give you the facts. LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE That wasn't meant to be funny - I don't know MORE LAUGHTER or but I wrote it anyway. I was in fact working on the idea before I was elected leader of my party and Leader of the Opposition in February 1963. It was thought of strangely or because I was interested in the number of visits to the Soviet Union after my Trade Agreement with them of 1947 in some of their own arrangements, for Higher Education. But I hasten to add that the Open University is not based on what they do. Indeed on my sort of State Visit there in February 1975 I spent some time with or Mr. Kosygin telling him about the O.U. here how it functioned, its purpose and what I thought they ought to learn from it before they got left behind in the rush of other countries picking it up. It was at the Bolshoi Ballet - they have a custom there if one of the top or Russians is there that or between acts you go behind and you have a complete meal I mean divided into the number of intervals there are into two or three. And you tend to get talking, eating and drinking, you go back and you get a very ironic clap from the audience who've been waiting forty minutes for the next thing. LAUGHTER And it was on one of these occasions at the Bolshoi that night that I told him about the O.U. and I said I would like formally to invite him formally to send his Minister of Higher Education over to see what we had created and this occurred and the Minister in fact did come over and I saw him. And the main ideas were beginning to form in my own mind - 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 just germinating in various peoples' minds for various forms of non-full time Higher Education. There were of course a number of things functioning, there were worker's education movement, some local authorities and many other things. I was perhaps as concerned as anything with the visual side. I was perhaps too concerned with the content of television and of radio. Or I felt the correspondence side wouldn't be all that difficult to to work out. And um I hadn't got as far as thinking about what would happen or for arrangements for examining or rewarding Degrees. Now I had a great friend in those days - in the United States - ex-Senator Bill Benton. Bill Benton was Vice chair was principal of Chicago University when he was twenty nine, helped to raise a lot of money for them - then or bought for them Encyclopaedia Britannica when it was broke and then in the end he took it on and managed it and gave them a third of the shares and when they were short of money for a building project rang him up and said Can we have our money back and he sent

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twenty eight million dollars. Which was quite helpful. LAUGHTER
But the point the reason I spoke to Bill - or two reasons - every
year he used to pay my travelling expenses to go and lecture at
Chicago University and any other college to which he was a Governor
from parts of the States and the second thing was I knew that
Ency Brit did a great deal of visual education. That is film film
work er I remember seeing one for example which impressed me although
its not my subject er on how the human heart functions. They had a
model of the heart and it was filmed - it made it clear to me in
seconds something I'd never really understood from anything I might
have read even in his own Encyclopaedia Britannica. Now he was a
great educationist and a very courageous man. He had been Senator
for Connecticut and he'd lost his seat there er because he was the
first Senator to take on the infamous, notorious Senator McCarthy.
And what they did for both American youth with the Encyclopaedia
Britannica and Overseas was to produce these educational films to
teach visually in classrooms. And er so in 1963 being fairly sort
of - getting more and more interested in this - I said "Look Bill -
I'll come to Chicago but can I do just two lectures - I want to spend
my week in Chicago visiting Ency Brit to see about your visual films
and so on. So I went and did my two lectures on economic subjects
University and it was very crowded and there was a sort of scruffy
looking individual - not all that young - I thought he was probably
a research student - might even be a Ph.D. He was heckling me
rather unmercifully as I went on with my economic stuff now if
there's one thing British politicians know about and Americans don't
its how to handle hecklers - you be warned about that LAUGHTER and
this man was heckling me with all kinds of remarks. So I decided
I'd take him apart. I gave him the old stuff you know that we've
all used since we were in our cradles as politicians - it was only
afterwards I learned it was Milton Freedman - LOUD LAUGHTER APPLAUSE
While I was in Chicago I had to go and address the Flight of St.
Louis Missouri - to address the knights of St. Louis or whatever
they're called. And when I arrived there I was met by a consular
general who said Hugh Gaitskell had been ill when I left so I'd been
to see him er was much more seriously ill and I was I'd been in
New York to address the Institute of Foreign Affairs and Adlai
Stevenson was there with me and Bill Benton and I was called about
eight times during dinner from home because of the worsening of
Hugh Gaitskell's position. I then made my speech such as it was in
very difficult conditions - Bill Benton slept right through it -
and he took me back home - he was a great friend of Hugh Gaitskell
he said Hugh is dying isn't he - I said yes he said well you'd better
go back - I said well I've got to lecture at this negro college and

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he said well come another time. Are you going to stand. I said you don't joke about that at a time like this. And he said no - having said that are you going to stand for the leadership and I said yes. I suppose I shall and he said um who's the immediate opposition - I said George Brown and he said look he said this is like a convention isn't it choosing your your er er sort of presidential candidate - I said that's right. He said I'll give you a cheque for ten thousand dollars towards your convention expenses - I said Bill I wouldn't take a penny from you or any other American - it won't cost me ten thousand dollars - he said what will it cost you. I said two bob LAUGHTER and I said er I'll keep an audited account and send it to you - it cost me eight actually - two telephone calls - four old p in those days LAUGHTER to tell Dick Crossman and George Whigg to stop canvassing because it was counter production. LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE

And on the 14th February I was elected Leader of the Party and had a great rush of speeches and broadcasts all over the country and there was no time until Easter to carry on with the work on the Open University. I know you were all wondering when I was coming back to that. LAUGHTER I was in the Isles of Scilly and on Easter Sunday morning er after going to Church Your Grace I I got back and I got one of those writing pads you know foolscap writing pads and I wrote out the whole thing sort of from my own mind as to what I wanted to say. And as I remember it it is extant and one day I'll find it and present it to the University, er I should say there were about eight pages of foolscap and there'd be about a thousand twelve hundred words. And er it was the entire scheme and er looking back on it - compared to what's happened I was extremely timorous. I knew it wasn't going to be all that popular and I knew the whole Establishment would be against it - I didn't realise how much - or how many of them. And er so perhaps I sort of tempered my ideas a little or perhaps I didn't have enough imagination I can't remember - for example I did not suggest the O.U. should be an examining body. That of course has been a fundamental thing in its whole er - in its whole development. And I suggested well no not quite er University of London External degree but I suggested that the other universities should be asked to form a committee to appoint an examining body. One reason was I knew that what I would have to meet would be a lot of criticism that it was inevitably going to be a rather weak standard educationally and the best thing - to head off the criticism would be to make sure there was a dependent externally examining them and if they of course got very good marks and so on we'd all be proved right.

The problem was when to announce this. Er as I say I had a rush of speeches and there were great arguments going on and there was a lot of possibility there might be an Election and every time I was going

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to speak I had to rely on something else or reply to something else and when I got to about June I thought I'm not going to do it before the Summer Holidays because its no good making a major pronouncement in July - June or July - it was just sort of er er float away on the summer air and a lot of people would be on holiday. All going on holiday and it. . . .well when Confuscius said a week is a long time in politics let me tell you the summer holiday is much longer and the longest week in politics is Christmas. And so I decided to postpone it and it happened I was doing a major speech in Glasgow on September 9th. Now if you speak in Glasgow - there will be some Scots here and I won't say anything offensive whatsoever LAUGHTER but the Scottish Press will expect you to make a speech on Scottish affairs and they will print it very faithfully and accurately and at considerable length er but you must have a handout for South of the Border as well. Cos they won't print that. So I had my speech in two parts, one was my Scottish piece and the other was the Open University. And it got er fairly fairly fully and very honestly reported but I might say it got quite an absolutely filthy press. It was either ignored in comment - well actually some papers didn't even refer to the speech. Or it was knocked and this was a crazy idea and a gimmick and all the rest of it and so on - anything new in this country is always a gimmick. And er there was just one paper that welcomed it and that was the Economist and its rather interesting of course that the first Chancellor of the University was Geoffrey Crowther. Er I'd done this entirely on my own - I suppose I was young and brash had I been more experienced I'd have taken it to the National Executive of the Labour Party LAUGHTER and yes the Labour Party would still be discussing it here in 1977

LOUD LAUGHTER & APPLAUSE

And well I just announced it that the Labour Government if elected will do this. Er it wasn't in the Manifesto - so it wasn't worth having an argument about. And er er actually I did refer something to the National Executive - that was the Ombudsman, I wanted to announce an Ombudsman. It took them eight months and at the end of it the Committee divided four four. Four in favour and four against so I'm very glad I didn't waste any time on this one. It was not in the manifesto as I say but it was party policies as far as I was concerned and that's all I could be concerned with at that time.

Well we were elected er to form a government - we had a majority of four but it was soon reduced to two because er Patrick Gordon Walker lost his seat and I had to form an absolutely new Government. Only two of them had ever sat in a Cabinet before. One was young Griffiths who I appointed Secretary of State to Wales a kind of Charter Mayor Charter Secretary of State - he was 74 and a grand man

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man in every way but he obviously wasn't going to stay long, he was just going to be the first and the other was Patrick Gordon Walker as I said who disappeared in three months. But the advantage was I had a Cabinet who didn't know the conventions of cabinet - I mean if you look at my book that I'm not here to plug tonight LAUGHTER of course the Governments of Britain you will find some accounts about how they all wanted things - their positions reserved in the Minutes and I said I couldn't possibly agree to a thing like that and in fact it had all been done before but you can change the rules slightly if you've got enough people there who don't LAUGHTER object. Er but then we um there was the Queen's speech - no reference to the Open University - I suspect half the Cabinet hadn't heard about it and certain of the Opposition hadn't - that helped too. Um then I went ahead and I said I'm going to do this. First of all I appointed Jennie Lee - a mistake on my part - not to appoint her but I appointed her - I appointed a Minister of the Arts. Cos we had to save the London Orchestras. Um two were going under immediately. And so I set up an enquiry under Lord Goodman - Mr. Goodman as he then was - one-man enquiry and they said they must be saved and how it should be done - well he brought it to my attention two or three months before and he wrote and he wrote this piece and he came to me and I said right I'll send it to the new Chairman of the Arts council and you and he will read it with care. I'd appointed him that night actually he was Chairman of the Arts Council and so that helped as well. And so with him and Jennie we had something going on the Arts for the first time. There'd never been a Minister of the Arts but I put I put in the Ministry of works for some reason - well she got concerned with the ^{architecture} of the Guards' Barracks at Knightsbridge. I then realised of course what I should do so I moved her sideways er that is at Under Secretary level to the Department of Education and I said Jennie you are taking charge of the Open University because if you don't I shan't have anybody to help me at all. 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 er we set up a departmental working party which was just about to produce a report to say it wasn't feasible that it wouldn't work, it wasn't necessary so why have it anyway it would cost too much. And so at that point I wound up the working party - seem to remember something about Cromwell you know LAUGH ER

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"You have been too long for any good you can do - in the name of God go" - or whatever it was. However they were quietly wound up and replaced by another one under Jennie. And at this time - oh the Treasury were totally against finding any money - when they realised later that I was going to have it anyway whatever they thought they changed their technique. Er but there was a it was straight blackmail - I mean they were not saying no there mustn't be an Open University but what they did - each year you see when you get these annual public expenditure programmes - which means cutting back on something that a year ago you decided you were going to do two years afterwards - that's next year in the whenever you do that um then the Treasury produce a list of what's got to be cut and then the Cabinet discuss it - there are various techniques of dealing with it and there's been a lot more publicity about these things in the last year or so. Er because er because of their importance. In many directions. What they did was always to put at the top of the list Abandoned scheme for Open University - saving X-million pounds - I can't remember what it was at that time. And er so um of course the Chancellor always came to see me before circulating and I'd say here you can't have that again Roy or whoever it might be and he said well I know its very difficult for you but he's got to add up and of course if we don't cut out some of the frills you see er then we can't really get at old so and so - the Ministry of whatever it was for defence you see. If we're going to go on with this and of course I knew what he was after - he was getting me to say that if he would keep it in the programme would I back him please in his fight with the Ministry of Defence. So a somewhat squalid deal - a constructive arrangement anyway LAUGHTER was worked out which made me happy because he left it in - he didn't even make the decision suggestion and nobody else thought of it and at the same time then of course he got what he wanted in having the Prime Minister with him in some of the Cabinet battles.

In later years, now I'm jumping ahead a bit but I'll come back - in later years the technique was different. The Open University was already announced. It was going to happen, it was well under way so the had been appointed and so the Treasury in this time and we were in great financial difficulties - it was the time of devaluation, it was the time of of er the need for very considerable expenditure cuts - the Treasury technique on this time in the first draft they'd always said Open University - right at the top of the list, ^{you} should be honoured. Er always at the top of the list. Um freeze student membership at five thousand or perhaps seven thousand as we went you know. Inflation. And er so I said no no no its got to go - its Open - it can't be open if you say its firm in

SIR HAROLD:

that way and so well of course its very difficult but if you'll support me onto the Ministry of Defence or something LAUGHTER

At the beginning as I say most of the people in the Higher Education World were opposed to it in principle. They all had and perfectly honourably - I mean I'm not criticising in the slightest they all had their own ideas - their own axes to grind - some of them wanted to develop WEA and all the rest of it and since my uncle had been the founding member of the WEA - asked who that funny curate was Your Grace they said oh he's a future Archbishop of Canterbury but his name's Temple - he was a founder as well at the Foundation Meeting and naturally I wasn't prejudiced against the WEA or but all of them wanted to tax something onto the existing system and not to have what I was still calling and wrongly calling the University of the Air. The phrase Open University never was mine and I only wish I only wish I'd thought of it but or I'll come to that as well. LAUGHTER Now obviously a Prime Minister couldn't take charge of this operation. I put Jennie on it - Prime Minister can't have endless consultations with the educational institutions, local government, the BBC were very important here and professional associations through the then AUI and the then APTI who were by the way on the whole helpful. But I had had this tigress as I've said Jennie Lee. And or I just gave her the and I said if you run in any trouble Jennie you come straight to me. This is not an affair which is controlled by the Department of Education at all you just happen to be there - you've got a desk there - or but any trouble you come and see me about it. You do not have to report to anybody higher in the Department. And to show that I meant business I made her a Minister of State instead of a parliamentary secretary. She did meet a lot of resistance in her department - or and or whenever she met any obstructions if she couldn't get round it herself we'd have a meeting. I hadn't realised how dedicated she was. Nor indeed had I realised what the potentialities to the idea were and what it was going - what one hoped it was going to meet. Mine was a much more limited approach. But on the 6th February 1966 there was a joint meeting at Chequers - I invited the NEC and there was ourselves. The Cabinet. And we discussed - it was a kind of a pre-Manifesto Meeting really because the two bodies - it was obvious to me anyway there was going to be an Election in March - the Press all said it wasn't possible - but in the end we had to sort of or let it be known that they'd better change their minds and or in the afternoon it was just a kind of desoltry discussion - anybody raising any point and Jennie got up. Now this was the fascinating thing about Jennie. Jennie got up and she said "What none of you know and I don't blame you because the Press don't print it is this wonderful idea - its the

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greatest thing that we've ever seen and its the Open University. And she compared it in her own idiosyncratic way with the National Health Service which of course had been the creation of her own husband and one felt that in a way she was sort of being loyal to him. He'd been dead six years. But she was creating something which he would have approved of. I think it was in part that and in part I think it was the fact that you know she'd always been kept down because she was Nai's wife and wasn't appointed a Minister. But now she was so excited about it and I hadn't realised how exciting it was and I must say until she spoke er on this occasion. There were problems. Obviously one was raising the money and er because we hadn't got as far as having an expenditure forecast. The other was the Broadcasting problem. What about the fourth channel. Well it wasn't ready in time and to judge from my friend Lord Annan it still isn't ready. And these are a few years afterwards. I decided myself ^{on} the BBC and er the Chairman - the then Chairman Lord Norman Brooke and the Director General, Hugh Carleton Greene came to see me. They desperately needed money. For er the development of BBC 2 and for Local Broadcasting which I was very keen on. So I said do you know I really think I I hope to find you the money. I said er of course it depends on what you do but I said there is this idea of the University of the Air and I will see how much money eighteen million that's right I said - yes - I said all right I'll do my best to get that money for you provided you will agree to take over all the broadcasting responsibilities of the Open University. Open University - had radio and television - to discuss with you how its going to be done and er suitable times of the day and week and all the rest of it. And then you'll be able to do local broadcasting. When we got out of the room I suddenly realised that this was the sort of thing as a matter of decency I ought to mention to the Chancellor of the Exchequer LAUGHTER Um but um indeed I did and we had problems in raising the money. Er Jennie by this time had run into difficulties practically everywhere so I appointed Lord Goodman to assist her and that was no idle threat LAUGHTER and er he was doing a remarkable job and he rather lost hope that we'd ever get the money on the right terms. We didn't want this old public accounts committee and that sort of thing. And he went off to try and get some private money. He went in fact to er to Washington and New York to meet the big Foundations. He thought he'd got something out of one of the Foundations and then he found he hadn't. It was at that stage that I said go and talk to Bill Benton. He ought to be able to find some money for this. Er even if we have to do some kind of make some sort of understanding with Encyclopaedia Britannica. Benton refused I'm sorry to say it was the only great mistake I ever you

SIR HAROLD:

know knew that he made - strangely when he saw it in being er he just had to a period of two years desperately ill with hepatitis because of the American Health Service or lack of it - if you have to have a blood transfusion the blood is taken from the drug hippies and they want the money for more drugs and he was infected and he had hepatitis so I wasn't able to do much with him during that period except I went to see him. But when he did come over - this was just before his death he was so full of contrition for not having put up the money the first time that when he'd been to Milton Keynes he er endowed er Bill Benton Hall which turned out to be in his memory cos as I say he died. Meanwhile Jennie had been trying to take the scheme out of public contraversey and she had as I say Lord Goodman. Er and Jennie and Goodman were a wonderful combination. So far as the obstructionists were concerned and remember our main problem was not hostility. It was just dull obstruction. It was just playing for time it was just er not having a meeting. It was all that sort of thing. They didn't want to go on. But of course to have her and Goodman together it now meant that they had to face not only the rough but the smooth. And er the smooth operator in this case an idealistic and passionate believer in the Open University was determined to win and they were both determined to win. And between them they conceived the idea of the Venables Committee - one of the highest powered and most dedicated committees or commissions I've known in thirty two years of public life. Er it was so high powered, it was so authoratitive, it was their members were so widely respected that if they came down in favour of the idea and what's more said how it was going to work then it would dismiss a lot of idle or ignorant or fatuous criticism. And as I say its membership was er was extremely well chosen - no-one will be able to impune its authority. I must resist any suggestion that the committee was backed in any way. If it was I didn't know about it - Jennie and Goodman chose it between them. And it was a first class committee, But their report was of course a clear and authoratitive statement of the case for the O.U. and more than that it charted the immediate way ahead. And that was I think one of the great turning points. Less timorous than I had been she and Goodman first and then Venables rejected this idea of a consortium of unive sities the kind of collective London University. External degree concept in favour of making the O.U. its own examining body. In every sense an independent university with its own governing body, its own standards and methods, its own control of its affairs from entrance at the beginning to examinations. The second great turning point er this is my only criticism of Walter Perry's book. The second ^{great} turning point is characteristically underplayed by Walter Perry but at least as significant as Jennie Lee's

SIR HAROLD:

appointment the turning point was the selection of Sir Walter Perry as Vice-chancellor in 1968. Leading of course to the creation of the Senate. And it would be stupid for me to go over all that he has told us in his book - every detail is there - the difficulties - I mean unimaginable difficulties. Didn't even know where it was going to be - which side of London was it going to be. Would he run into one problem after another. But his record of the Planning of the University in a still hostile media - with great doubts about its survival should there be a change in Government - I think its that record that really makes his book historic. Er one of the anxieties supposing he was going to attract good staff from existing universities or other institutions and then there was a change of government and the whole thing was scrapped because unfortunately Edward Boyle in fact and most uncharacteristic of Edward had used some rather rude words about the content ^{when} he was the Shadow Minister of Education. And in any case one didn't know whether Conservative Chancellors pressure would be greater even than ours had been. So um the problems that er Walter describes in recruiting staff would have been much worse as I say if he'd tried to persuade good people to throw up the safety of an established university who were going to be thrown onto the scrap heap if there was a change of government. In fact he said even he was too pessimistic - every post that was advertised was over-subscribed - he had not only in quantity but above all in quality the most superb lists of applicants for these jobs. Then he had all the other problems - estimating the numbers of students - the Christ building programme which was a success, the decision to create foundation courses, the credit system, the widespread regional, educational counselling system which had never been in my scheme at all. The establishment of the principle of open entry with no insistence of prior form of academic qualifications. The creation of the courses themselves, the question what courses they were going to be. The departments, the course teams, the units, the mastery with the BBC of the very formidable broadcasting problem because there were new problems that had never been tackled by the BBC or anyone else. But in fact leading and inspiring himself on all these problems and as I say one can only read them in the book - the Vice-chancellor with the full backing of the Senate and it was a very good senate - insisted on what is the greatest theme of all about the Open University apart from the fact that it is open - and that is that there will be no compromise on standards. Anyone even indirectly in touch with the O.U. and I can only claim to be indirectly - many of you know my elder son, a former Oxford Mathematics Don is an Open University Lecturer - my younger son is just half way through his courses as a student. And anyone like so many here are much closer in touch with

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it than I am will agree with me how that uncompromising principle about standards laid down from the outset has been asserted and maintained. And er I understand from your Chairman, you can pass a motion of censure if he's told me wrong or I've got it wrong - er that no-one is pressing this more than the members of the Association. Of the students themselves. That you do not want to see any. Any any easing of standards. My own view and I'm quite as I say I'm not sufficiently expert but from what I've seen I believe the standards are at least as high as those you get in any other university and in some cases higher. I can only speak about mathematics for the reason I've mentioned. But my own son who after several years as a Don at Oxford says the standard of the mathematics is more modern and up to date more tough more challenging and harder than conventional university mathematic standards and since I understand you've passed this you can confirm that. LAUGHTER I've already generously done so supported me when I mentioned that to the Press. Before - before dinner. And the other thing of course - even if that were not so the system of the course teams - the system of fourteen people - writing the educational programme - whether its for broadcast, whether its for er er sending through the post or whatever it might have to be. Er you have as you know the variance on it but two people have got to produce the fortnight's work. Either of them can draft it - the other pull it to pieces or they may sit down and draft it together and then it is submitted to the judgement of their peers. Of the other twelve mathematicians or chemists or er architectural experts or whatever they may be - er and they can savage it and frequently do so. That is not usual if I may say so in conventional university. Er and indeed in conventional university it is possible I know it doesn't often happen that a chap - suppose I for example I was a don at 21 - suppose I hadn't gone in for other things that you may have read about. LAUGHTER I I'd be there yet. I'd be there still. There's no obvious test of me forty one years afterwards forty years afterwards as to whether as to whether I kept up my reading. When I was still teaching economics I mean of the age of games or Adam Smith or whatever it might have been. There's no real check on the quality of my lectures - I don't have to give very many its very optional in Oxford you know. Er in certain fields of study. And the only way they could really test was if I got too many third class honours or fourth class honours - I think those have gone now used to have them at a certain point the College would say that I really my talents were better occupied on research and make me a senior research fellow. LAUGHTER And um I've seen it happen. Before the war. But in the case - there is a further check on standards and I'm talking here about the quality and the modernity

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and relevance of the programmes and that is of course the five year rule. It was hoped they had four however brilliant however much a particular course has been copied all over the world and many of them are and it appears now the biggest sort of educational publishing house with big exports - you may find universities all over the world stocked up with it - in two years time from now - some of it has been done three years ago - that goes for a Burton and its got to start all over again. So there is a further guarantee of standards. Now um the other thing of course is the fact that it is open. And I'd only commend you - I won't read it out tonight - though I have kept a copy of it and it is available and no doubt most of you know it - that was a moving wonderful opening speech when the Open University was created at the Royal er in the Royal Society when the then Chancellor, the first Chancellor made - explained why the word Open had been chosen. And what it meant and he had that tremendous quotation from the inscription on the Statue of Liberty - and then saying Open and explaining it - if any of you by any chance don't know it make it your business to get a copy and I won't read it out tonight. It is quite long but it is well worth reading.

Er I think the idea has caught on in Britain now - I might say there was almost no reporting the next day after the day of the Foundation. And the Royal Charter being read out. Almost none. Er but it has caught on now and I think it is appreciated more as it were regionally and in local areas than it is shall we say er in the cocktail belt of central London. It is appreciated still more I find abroad. Particularly by educationists and experts. But I'm amazed now whenever I've been for example in the United States - I've been beseeched by University presidents, senators, congressmen and indeed I've had discussions with two successive Presidents. Er who want to know about the Open University. Now one of the most senior American politicians - a friend of mine of twenty five - thirty years now - a man who's held almost the highest rank in the United States - could well have gone higher told me when he was over in London a year ago that he thought his staff had advised him - they'd been doing a study on it for him - that before the middle 1980's there would be an Open University in every state of the Union. Of the United States. And when I went to Israel three years ago Christmas, no 1972 - er as soon as I got there I was taken to meet some educationists - of course now we've got the Everyman - deliberately modelled on the British Open University. One other ~~achievement which it was possible to forecast and was in my opening statements - so much wasn't - and that was the idea that was produced for television here for a single screen, and of course it may all~~

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change a great deal when we can get cheap video or tape recorded cassettes and so on and means of showing them, but what I felt then was that - it was an obvious point - that something that had been prepared for our own television screen could be taken in the third world in a lecture room and shown from an ordinary projector because it is a fact that the Open University does have a very lot of distinguished contributors. Its teams are good. Its directly employed staff are good. But of course the outside interviews that they have with anyone who can tell them anything about the subject the amount of travelling its been doing - some of the really intensive research in North America which they have done or this is a total boon, this is in fact a foreign aid programme - it is a third world programme of an entirely new dimension. Doing more in its - its capable of doing more in fact than UNESCO does. Or at any rate providing a very powerful supplement to UNESCO and um if I might mention um a doctor a professor of medicine - a friend of Walter Perry - asked if he could come and see me. It was when I was still in opposition about 1973 I should think - he'd been appointed or principal of the University of Benin in Nigeria - he knew that I knew the Nigerians fairly well and had been out there - and or he said that he had read this about Open University and projections and he was hoping to do it and or I gave him a letter of introduction to the President or who then said oh yes marvellous - go ahead with it - and the President said what could we do to link Benin with the Open University so the Deans of the only two faculties they had at that time I think it was or arranged to come to the Open University the following Easter and the doctor came back at Christmas and told me all about it - very excited - got full backing - unfortunately he'd already contracted cancer and didn't know and he died within a month - I got a letter from the President saying my dear friend we're sorry about my dear friend dying - in fact I'd only known him two or three months and the link was the Open University. But the links came and the links had been have been built up. Another thing I don't think enough publicity is given to - there's a little of it in Walter's book - Walter's book - not quite enough - but or it is a matter that should be or more in people's mind is or the development that has been done on scientific instruments and students' kits - microscopes and all these other things. For example when I last went to Milton Keynes I was told that they've developed an entirely new method of colour printing. Which can be used of course far outside the realm of the Open University. Many of you who are scientists will know the story of the kits and of the microscopes which the was it the biologists and others had to have or and they found this manufacturer who was making or quite economical one and they re-scheduled it for him and put in plastics here instead of metal

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and all the rest of it and cut it down with mass production and it was incredibly cheap, er figure and of course all this has its side effects in developing exports which have got nothing to do as it were with the main work of the Open University, at all. And er one would like to see this go further. I would like to see, if it doesn't already exist, I haven't asked - a close link between the Open University and the National Research Development Corporation set up in 1948 by the then President of the Board of Trade - yes I am modest about it because it wasn't my idea. It was Stafford Cripps's idea and he was my predecessor and he said Harold the one thing you must do is get this through - you'll find the Treasury against you - the Board of Trade and everybody - we've found em five million pounds - to develop new inventions. The scientists have done something and it was pinched by another country. We'll pay royalties. Not so many cases. So I said all right. We'll do that. We set it up - terrible rows to get it with the House of Commons and the NRDC was in fact er we gave them five million pounds - I'd have been glad to see it all go if we'd got enough of the work back home that had added the technology as it were to the science - in fact its only made 39 million pounds profit for the taxpayer. And its now genuinely seeking work. It advertises for business men and accountants - I'm not sure if they couldn't have a very rewarding - they've got a very minor arrangement with the University of Bradford er as I know but um that's on the research side but with all the research already done by the O.U. I'm just wondering if more couldn't be given than marketing perhaps linking it er with all that.

And the only other thing I really have taken all my time on this now so I'll spare you this a second speech but um er the other thing that has impressed me is the links between this and broadcasting. Many of you including those of you who are employed by the O.U. will know a great deal more than I do about this - but when I went to Alexandra Palace - because its a totally separate unit - the O.U. unit as many of you know - I was interested there at the sort of total dedication of the people who are running it from the top man downwards who's somebody I've known for many years and their ingenuity and their experimentation - there is as much research and research development going on in the BBC's O.U. section as there is in the O.U. itself. In the sense that they are looking for new methods - discussing new methods and of course the the as it were the originator of the programme - put it that way er from the Open University who discusses it with the BBC on an entirely intimate basis and they're both scratching their heads how to get that point across better. The first thing I saw there - many of you have seen it on the screen - many of you would certainly understand it - I don't - it was the kind of

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structure of a molecule and this molecule was going round and we've got new methods of presentation. Now there's going to be a spin off from this into ordinary home broadcasting - there's going to be a spin off in my view to Overseas broadcasting and um it is also of course a magnificent training ground for young people for the BBC. That was one of the things I think I put in my original statement of 1963 - certainly something I said to the BBC when we did the first Concordat on the matter that um and of course BBC producers - who are very experienced - and expert - they are willing to listen to new ideas. They're willing to have the challenge. The challenge is given to them but that's all very well but we've got some very complicated molecule this time whatever the programme might be. Er now how are you, the BBC - going to find a way of projecting this and as I said then they all go away and think about it and all the time I think there's a great fertility of invention. Now I think therefore - I end with this - I believe that the O.U. has been a tremendous success going far beyond my hopes for it. Er far beyond my own very limited er schemes. The only thing I suggested which they haven't done is to have modern language courses er but that was a very obvious thing to suggest, in 1963 but they have in fact as I say - it has gone better than forecast and my greatest anxiety has not happened. My greatest anxiety was that there would be a very large number of students dropping out in the first year. And then the enemies would have their time and there'd be rather serious er looks on the face of chortling Treasury or Department of Education officials and of course we'd have liked it to have been a success Prime Minister but of course you've got to take account of this very heavy loss and all the rest of it - and it was a great anxiety. Now I was told - again by Bill Benton when he came and saw and was converted - I was told by him that the drop out rate for the er prime correspondence - private correspondence course in America is 70% in the first year. Every year. And of course that was the beginning of an extremely expensive loss for us and I was at the time I went - mentioned this to some of you - at the time I went to have lunch at one of those monthly meetings that they used to have between the principle officers - the the um Chancellor, the Vice-chancellor, the Registrar and the Treasurer - Paul Chambers in those days and I met them and I was heartbroken and I thought they would be because of that postal strike. But as they said no its marvellous because everybody's now going to the localwho might have gone on a year six months a year or longer without ever knowing that they existed or a bit shy about going to them. They've no other means of getting their material back to the O.U. or getting material from the O.U. And I think all the histories will show that this was in the end something of great

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benefit even if it meant councillors asking us - acting as kind of post officers for that period. But it did help to bring us together and I would guess - you can tell me if I'm wrong - I would guess that the success of many of your local associations really started from that time when people through the agency of the Council began to meet one another and of course they have been at least in those areas where I've seen them a great source of strength.

Well there is the best I can do about the birth and ante-natal history as I said of the Open University. Its a faithful account as far as I can remember it - I have kept some documents. Er not as many as I would like - I don't think anything I've said in any way conflicts with the official history written by the er Chancellor. And I just want to congratulate everybody here who's been involved in this great operation on their achievement and not least the students, who have got the hard work to do. It couldn't function without them and they are really having the most difficult problem of anyone in doing it and I want to wish all of you the very best of luck for the completion of your existing degree courses - not to mention of course equal luck and satisfaction in any extension of them for honours or different subjects or different degrees that you may have in mind. Thank you.

APPLAUSE