

Interviewed by Andrew Dawson, University of Greenwich, 14 February 2011

*Okay Roy first of all could you give me your date of birth please?*

Fifteenth of August 1939. Almost the day that war broke out.

*Ah. And if you could start really right at the beginning. Family background, parents, siblings, where were you born?*

Mm, I was born in Croydon, south London. My Dad was a plumber, mm, but he was in the Army throughout the, from almost the time I was born until about 1945 so I hardly ever saw him. Mm, my Mum was very able, was very intelligent and had an ordinary elementary school education. She worked in factories, she worked in the new mass production factories which were beginning to expand in the 1930s, the accounting and tabulation factories and things of that kind. Worked in a watch factory, did that sort of work. Was very good at what she did and invariably got, got promotions, mm, and positions of responsibility in terms of that. Mm, my Dad too eventually, because he was very good, very able, a very competent man. Once again had he had another kind of education there were no limits to what I think he could have achieved. However he was very good, he was a very good plumber and he was very good technically and eventually he got involved in the early days of polythene piping for nuclear installations, for laboratories, for industrial plants, for that sort of thing, extractive piping and became a manager in a big chemical piping firm which is where he spent the rest of his, his life. That was maybe from about, I don't know, the late Fifties onwards that's what he was doing but prior to that he was a plumber.

Mm, we lived on a council estate in Croydon, The Waddon Estate, which was a big estate which was built in the 1930s when there was a major expansion of population and when they knocked the slums down in Croydon. There was a big slum area called Banghole of which, which someone has written a learned criminological work on, mm, and that was demolished and they had to have somewhere, somewhere to put all these people and they

built this enormous new estate on the chalk downland around where the Croydon Airport was, near to the Croydon Airport, next to Croydon Airport. So there's a huge, a huge estate there and they built that with pubs and schools and things so it was a, a de novo estate. And it was a nice place. It was very mixed, it was very socially mixed.

And I went to school there, I went to school, there was a big recreation park near us which had been kept open by, by public protest at the end of the Nineteenth century called Duppas Hill and my schools were all next to that really. Waddon Infants, Waddon Juniors. Although I started, I was evacuated in the war so I started school in Doncaster in Yorkshire, mm, but then I came back and I was at Waddon Infants which was a kind of a stone's throw from where I lived, then Waddon Juniors. Then I went, I failed the eleven plus and I went to senior school there, secondary modern, and then when I was about twelve or thirteen I passed the scholarship to go to a technical school, which was called [Laughter] The Croydon School of Building it was called, which is colloquially known as the 'brickbashers', mm, where I learnt, mm, I learnt carpentry and bricklaying, a bit of elementary plumbing, welding, draughtmanship *et cetera*, mm, bits and pieces of that sort of thing. I mean it wasn't really an academic school in any way, mm, and then I left. I left, I left when I was fifteen actually, I was only fifteen when I left and I, my aunt was a bookbinder, my Aunt Doll was a bookbinder and she worked in Croydon in an old printers in Croydon called Heywoods and she was instrumental in getting me an apprenticeship as a compositor in the printing works in Croydon. So that, so I started as an apprentice compositor under a proper apprenticeship scheme in which my union at the time, which I'm immensely proud of was, The London Society of Compositors. It was just like a kind of, you know, before all of the amalgamations a small elite body and it's all been downhill for them ever since really, since that disappeared. No that's a joke.

Mm, however so joined them. It was very interesting, I admit it was a really extraordinary six year, it was a six year education, but because it was an union apprenticeship you got a day off a week at college and you got, and I did voluntarily, I had to do one night but I did two nights a week at night school as well. So and that, that was really, and I became very interested in a whole set of things which weren't simply the technical aspects of

what we did. Became interested in the history of typography, the private press movement, the social impact of printing, the things of that kind interested me enormously. Mm, so, and the history of design, you know, it's a massive amount of interesting material. So I was very enthusiastic, I really enjoyed that and it was kind of lifelong learning really because that's where I really developed more in terms of learning and enthusiasm for scholarship and for learning while I was an apprentice than I had before. And I was also while I was an apprentice I became active in the union in as much as you could be active in the union because they had severe disabilities against apprentices being too uppity, mm, in the union. But I did, I mean I went to some apprentice schools and wrote a couple of articles for the union journal on things I'd done and schools that I'd attended and became, and while that was happening I was becoming kind of active, the union was active at work and there was a big strike in Fifty-nine and the apprentices had to work and the men were out on strike and there were a sort of a friction, it was a difficult time. However so that, that was a kind of radicalising experience. Mm, but that whole thing was. And at the same time I'd become involved in politics, become involved in the Young Socialists, become very much involved in CND, the New Left Movement after Suez and Hungary so I'd got very much engaged with politics and, mm, trade unionism. But I loved the work, I loved being a printer and I liked, I liked being a printer. They have a tradition of kind of radicalism and scholarship and independence in, among composers. Historically they've been an important group politically, and so, you know, and all of that kind of spilled over.

So by the time... And women as well, you know, entering into relationships with women which, which was delightful. Mm, but, and people then started saying to me because I was whatever I was, Chair of The Young Socialists, Chair of CND and so on people were saying... And I'd always known people you see who'd been involved in education. Since I'd left school at fifteen and never had been kind of offered GCEs or anything I'd always assumed, somehow I assumed anybody who got 'O' Levels had to be really brilliant. And then I met some of the people who had 'O' Levels and I was thinking [Laughter] 'well, there's not a lot to write home about here'. Then I thought there must be 'A' Levels, 'A' Levels must be the thing. And then I met a few people who had got 'A' Levels, and like

one or two of them were bright but I mean, you know, nothing, you know, it wasn't like the universe. Then I met a few people who'd been to university and then it really sunk home that actually, you know, these weren't kind of demi gods, you know, that these weren't, you know, extraordinarily able, talented, super-intelligent people. Well, they're just normal Joes, and I knew that I'd worked with people who were, who were brighter than the people who were going to university.

So I, that changed my view about education really and formal education and, mm... Oh sorry I should say... So, and largely through the women in my life really, mm, they and they were saying 'you should think about going to university, you should think about it'. And there was Ruskin College, Ruskin College which was a Labour movement college in Oxford which was intended for people who'd been active in the trade union movement and you could go there and do an Oxford diploma in a number of subjects but notably in Politics and Economics, which was really I think a postgraduate qualification but it was an available qualification which you could do without having all the GCE and paraphernalia which one normally had to have to get entry to an university. So, and it was a, a famous institution in Oxford. So anyway, so a lot of people saying you should apply, you should do this, you should do that. And I was coming to the end of my, my apprenticeship, I was twenty-one, and I thought 'well, I'll do that. I'll apply'. And so I did apply and I got a, the TUC had scholarships there that you could, well, a couple of scholarships and I applied for one. Much to my surprise I got it, I got the Addy Hopkinson Scholarship, and I went to Ruskin.

*What year was that?*

Oh that would have been about, mm [Pause] Sixty-one, Sixty-one, Sixty-one. So that I went to Ruskin. The other thing to say though is that I talked earlier about lifelong learning and what I learned in printing. What I did was, I mean I, [Laughter] I was a special factor really. I'd become very left wing and well, comparatively left wing, very left wing, and I didn't want to do National Service. I didn't because at that time we had our soldiers were out shooting people in Cyprus and, you know, and Tanganyika and

Kenya, and it was a kind of like the British Army wasn't distinguishing itself by its, its noble [Laughter] work in my view so the last thing I wanted to do was to join the Army, and I was eligible to join of course, as soon as I was eighteen. But if you were doing an apprenticeship you see and you were studying you didn't have to go in the Army [0:10:00] you got deferments so I literally became the best qualified apprentice in south London because I was, I had to keep studying because if I'd stopped studying I would have to go and go in the Army and, you know, I'd be shooting people in Cyprus. So I didn't go in the Army. I'm sorry now, I wish I had done now, however, that's, that's water under the bridge so I didn't, but I did become extraordinarily well qualified, I got a Full Technological Certificate in Printing, you know, a City and Guilds Full Tech. They had Intermediate, Final Certificate and a Full Technological Certificate. So I got all of that and that was kind of about studying too and about learning the disciplines of study and working and all that. So by the time I was applied for Ruskin I had all that kind of under my belt, I'd done all of that so I was, you know, I was ready as it were. But that lifelong learning thing was really important to me, you know, studying while I was an apprentice and studying for qualifications and all of that I mean. And it was only really [Laughter] very much later in life I, whenever everybody was talking about lifelong learning I was involved in training and arguing for that and suddenly I realised I was an example of it [Laughter] and it had never occurred to me before, you know, that that's what had actually happened to me.

However, so there was all of that and that was, mm, very important that was. And then after I'd, so I went to Ruskin and did two years there. Mm, did reasonably, I enjoyed, enjoyed it. Well, I mean I'd worked in a factory for six years, you know, and after that Oxford was like a holiday camp really, you know what I mean, I mean it was unbelievably pleasant, I think every adult should have the opportunity to go to Oxford, you know. And so I did that. Mm, did reasonably well and then the Principal of the college came to me, Billy Hughes who was the ex, had been the Labour's Minister of Education in the 1945 Government and was then the Principal. And he called me in his office and said 'Roy I think you ought to apply for an Oxford college to do a degree'. So I said 'oh really Bill', I was thinking of going back to the tools you see and, you know, to

go back to comping because I thought I owed the unions something, they'd sent me to Oxford, they'd paid, you know, they'd paid for me, I'd, you know, and I thought I should if I derived any benefit somehow I should take it back and offer it to the lads as it were. Mm, [Laughter] they later said, there's funny stories there. Anyway I mustn't keep going off on tangents. But so I said 'fair enough' and I went and I had an interview at Wadham I think it was and, mm, had an interview and met the academic staff there and they said yes, they'd be happy to accept me as a, mm, mature student, which, which meant that I did a three year degree course in two years and I didn't have to do the first year on the basis of the, the, mm, Politics and Economics Diploma which I'd earned at Ruskin. So I was there, mm.

*So what year did you graduate?*

Sixty-five I think. I think so, [Pause] I think Sixty-five, yes, yes, yes. So I did that. So, so then I came back and then after that I came, I came back to, mm, I went back to the tools for a while. I'd just got married, mm, and I went back to the tools. I was a, I was the FOC at HMSO, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, I was the father of the chapel there, the shop steward there in no time at all. And, mm, and I was reasonably happy there. I was working there, I was earning good money, mm, I was and enjoying it and active in the union. There was, there was a lot of, a lot of difficulties and problems in industrial negotiation there that I quite enjoyed. But my wife at the time would say 'oh, you know, you should use your, you should use your degree, you should use your education more effectively somewhere else'. And she kept, and she was always looking out for, for jobs and the job came up of a journal editor and research officer in ACTT, so I applied and was kind of [Laughter] interviewed by the entire Executive which was odd, I mean the only thing it really tested, the interview, was your ability to handle a mass meeting really because there was like thirty-five people in a room shouting at you, you know. And well, I could do that because I'd been doing meetings for a long time. So anyway so, so I got that and I started as the journal editor and...

*Okay. What, what year was that, what year was that?*

That would have been Sixty-six, perhaps, Sixty-six.

*Okay, 1966. And the, sorry the title of, of your, of your job? What was it, journal, you're journal editor?*

I was the research officer/journal editor, because I knew about print so I mean I could do that stuff and I'd worked on *Isis* in Oxford and I'd done other stuff, you know. Mm, and I was good at design and so on and I could write a bit. So, so I got that and, you know, and that's where, that's my education really, that summarises that sort of stuff. Mm, do you want to go on to career in, in the union or go back to this other...?

*Let's just, mm...*

Or what?

*Yes, we can do, let's, mm...*

Well, looking at what I've said is there anything you want to ask me?

*No, no, I think you've covered, you've covered the ground very well there, and remember there is that other interview presumably that was done by the History Project that people could also consult as well.*

Yes, yes, yes.

*Mm, yes, let's move on to career in, in the union, mm, which as you say begins in Nineteen... in 1966. Just, just outline your career in terms of you started life as, as journal editor and research officer. How did that progress and then we'll, and then we'll look at other issues?*

Well, well, it's very interesting, it was a very interesting union, it was a very political union, and you've mentioned down here somewhere, you know, talking about negotiating pay and conditions, it was about infinitely more than that though I mean it wasn't simply about substantive issues of pay and conditions. They were important but it was a very political union as well. It would have been, it'd been founded really by, by George Elvin and Sid Cole and Ralph Bond, most of whom, not Elvin himself but, mm, Sid Cole and Ralph Bond and people of that kind were Communists. And George was very left wing, George Elvin he was a, left of the Labour Party, and they'd established the union in the 1930s as a quite clearly, and it's quite an interesting contrast just to dwell on for a moment. Left to themselves or without kind of political interventions most other film unions in the world have developed a guild structure because the only allegiance people feel, really feel, yes? is to the people who do the same jobs as them, so maybe. And often it's very narrow, it's not even just all the Camera Department it's just the lighting camera or just, you know, camera operators or just focus pullers, I mean elsewhere. And the same is true about editors, the same is true about Art Department and all of that. So that's, left to itself because it's largely, it was largely well, it's a kind of freelance area. That's the kind of structure which emerges, that's what happened in the States anyway. And it, however, they had a political notion so they said 'we want to build a union and we want everyone to be in the union', which is quite a radical thought really in terms of, you know, the film industry at the time, not only do we want people who are in the film industry though they wanted an industrial base for it. And once again this is a kind of, this is a political concept and they want an industrial base so they said we must organise the Processing Laboratories as well. So they organised, they sought to organise in processing, they sought to organise in shorts and documentaries, in features and they sought to organise overall grades as well. And it was very difficult, very hard for them in the Thirties to build an union, but they stuck at it and they had a hard core of really able and committed people who built it up. And then there was this extraordinary, have you heard the story about the establishment of the ACTT.

*You tell me?*



I mean well, it's just this extraordinary episode when at the beginning of the war in a kind of numskull-ish sort of way the Government said 'we don't need a film industry any more, we'll close the film industry down', you know, that's, that's, that's fine, you know, unlike the Germans, you know, who saw its value. [Laughter] And so there was much, much shouting and banging on tables. And the president of the union then was Anthony Asquith who was a very prominent film maker, he was kind of second only to Hitchcock really as an English director in the Thirties and was very active and of course, he came from that patrician political family the Asquith family so he had friends in high places. He'd been, he played as a child in 10 Downing Street, you know, as the Prime Minister's son. But he was very committed to, to the union. And George Elvin [Pause] and Anthony tap-danced through the corridors of power beautifully and the Government, the Civil Servants then were eventually convinced they ought to keep it but they were saying 'we have this enormous problem, if it's an essential industry then people have to get deferments to work in it, how can we tell who should get a deferment and who shouldn't because if we say just if you're in the film industry everybody will say I'm a film maker'. And it, and then George, George and Asquith [Laughter] had this brilliant idea they said 'oh well, the, the only significant indicator of kind of competence in that world is the union membership card', and the Civil Servants said 'by Jove, that's a good answer' and, [Laughter] kind of it was agreed and overnight the membership of the union soared, you know, everyone joined, you know. And after that, you know, there was now no way back and they, you know, and they grew and they were very powerful and effective. But that's essentially the coup by which the union was kind of established in very difficult circumstances. But they, I mean those guys were giants, they were very smart, you know, they really handled themselves well.

*Okay. Just get back to your career then [0:20:00] in, in the union. How does it, how does it develop then in the, in the Seventies, the Eighties, through into the Nineties?*

Well, what it, what it was I was the kind of research officer as well. Now there were a lot of other things happening [Pause] in and around industry and society in general then. There were things like equal opportunities for example, mm, which the union hadn't

really committed to in any significant way and there was growing pressure inside the union about, inside that. There was growing pressure round about, about training, a whole series of issues, mm, which were kind of emerging and there were also the great battles against Wilson's bills, you know, the, the Anti-Union Bill, mm, things of that kind. Mm, and also huge campaigns which were run by the union importantly, which were about the future of the film industry, which were about the future of television, should we have a second, should the BBC have a second channel, should they have a second channel. What should we do with Channel Four, should we have Channel Four and, you know, political and social and cultural arguments and the union was engaged in all of those sorts of arguments. And indeed I was just thinking about the other, and there were three key things, three key reports which came out from the union in that time which weren't just about pay and conditions but were about all those arguments. One was the Nationalisation Forum where they'd passed a motion and that was in about nationalising the film industry, mm, and there was a, and they'd had a commission to look into it inside the union and they produced a report called *Nationalising The Film Industry*. So that was how political it was, it wasn't wildly popular among the ordinary members but there was a small core who felt it was the answer to all their problems. Mm, there was a TV Commission Report which was about the entire future of TV, mm, which was very well written and very, and well received really.

*And you had a hand, you had a hand in, in researching these things and an input ?*

Mm, yes and, and, and the Equality Report. Yes, sure.

*Yes, yes.*

But, and so no, the point I'm trying to make is that's the kind of union it was. Now also, so that was on the one hand so but in terms of the major issues I did take over the Equality, I started to build a kind of bridgehead of an Equality bridgehead because there right across the union from the labs to the film industry, television and broadcasting, all

of that which the union hadn't done before, a kind of champion of it inside the union really.

*Equality?*

Equality. Yes, equal opportunities.

*What's the, equal opportunities?*

Yes, yes.

*Yes.*

Equal opportunities in terms of employment, pay, training. Beginning to break down, I mean there were whole, whole sectors where there were no women working in them at all, you know what I mean. And alright now, still problems now but I mean there were enormous problems then about women being excluded and leaving, leaving aside people from ethnic and minorities.

*When did you start that kind of work equal opportunities?*

Oh quite early on.

*Yes.*

Quite early on because there were a lot of women in the union who were pursuing it and pushing it so you became as it were their means or a cutting edge for them to make progress in that sort of way. So, so, so then that was one thing, but so those sorts of areas I became involved in, I became very much involved in. I also thought, what was also true was that [Pause] while it wasn't true about telly in which the negotiations were handled very well and very properly and very efficiently because they were permanently

employed, there is a huge problem about representing freelance workers, you know, because clearly they don't have a regular employer, they don't have a regular place of work, they don't have regular pay, you know what I mean, they can be on the job for one day or a month or, you know, on a commercial for a day or a short film for a month or a feature for three months, you know what I mean? But there isn't the continuity, there isn't the joint learning, there isn't the collective strength which comes from working together over a period of time in one place with the same management. That's, and trade unionism in a way is predicated on that, that's, that's, that's how trade unions are built isn't it? But freelancing is a kind of opposite of that, mm, so it's very atomised

So, but by and large what had happened in the union was that a deal had been done I think in the late Forties around, around crewing really, which was about four, four and four, four people on sound, four on camera, four on production, which a lot of the older negotiators were so desperate to keep that they'd, they were determined to keep that crewing at all costs and for them the issue about pay was kind of secondary so as long as they kept that and they thought, you know, the pay would kind of look after itself, which to some extent it did. But it meant that all negotiations in terms of commercials, in terms of feature films, in terms of shorts and documentary were never done I think kind of significantly or well or properly. And because I did all the research for the pay claims and because the organiser wanted it that way I therefore also became a kind of the negotiator as well, you know what I mean? Because, you know, one had done the work, you know, and you fed it in and I ended up negotiating. So I did a, so I became a key negotiator in kind of film and other areas of that kind as well, yes. As well as that I was still editing the journal and so on, you know what I mean, and doing all of that.

So important policy issues, a lot of negotiation, mm, getting that back on track, getting that done seriously *et cetera*. Another really major thing I did while I was there was to develop, I had this whole thing about and opening up the union membership, that was always a battle because it was very tight, it was very restrictive and my feeling was always, I mean to be honest that we should organise everybody who works in the fucking film industry, you know. That we, that's, that's what unions do. Unions don't as it were

spend all of their time looking to see if a membership form has been signed in pencil or pen and if it's been signed in pencil say 'no, you can't join the union because you've not conformed to our rules', you know what I mean? I mean that, and that's a caricature but there were a lot of committees inside the union then who would, who would spend most of their time just looking at membership applications, you know, with a, with the primary motive of, of trying to keep people out. Because, because it was a freelance sector and because there was no way you could regulate the labour market, you know, I mean unions have to do that. There were too many people looking for too few jobs then that has a very adverse affect both on employment and on pay so their response really, and it's, it was quite rational was let's limit the number of people that can work, let's keep a tight closed shop so at least, you know, I mean the work may fluctuate enormously with feast and famine and it did but at least we'll ensure that when the work is there we'll confine it to these, these people, you know. So, so, so it was a way, it was a way of regulating the labour market, it had that justification but I mean I think the arguments against were very strong and a lot of people were very antagonistic to that system who couldn't get in, you know.

Mm, so we started and we did a lot of stuff with training and at first and arguments about whether people from The National Film School, graduates [Laughter] from The National Film School should be able to join the union. Mm, and we were only arguing, you know, thank God. And, and there were other arguments of that kind, you know. So that was important but there were also these other groups who were kind of small independent radical groups, that's it, you know, workshops, black and black and ethnic workshops, women's workshops, animation workshops, regional groups, left groups, you know what I mean, all over the country who were, who weren't in the union and thought they could never get in the union because they weren't earning the rate and they weren't doing this and they and, you know, and they weren't doing and they were filling the forms in in pencil or whatever it was, you know. And I always thought then that was a problem and some of them came to see me and we talked about it. And I'd always, I mean my notion was always to build the membership of the union, you know. Better to have them in the union under an agreement than to have them outside the union sniping at us, you know.

*What year's this? Roughly was it Seventies or...?*

Oh, oh no. That would be before the formation of Channel Four really, about kind of Eighty-two, Eighty-one something. But I mean these pressures had been building up, you know. Mm, so at the end of the day anyway with, with a lot of kicking and shoving we got established what we called the Workshop Declaration which you may have heard of and, you know, we negotiated that into existence. We built alliances across. We had to be, I eventually supported the Regional Arts Associations, supported Channel Four, supported it and we again [Laughter] encompassed everyone. At the end of the day there was nobody left to, to oppose it and at its peak it was kind of, it took Thatcher to smash it really, you know, much later on. But at its peak it was kind of pulling in seven million quid a year.

*Yes.*

And they were turning out a lot of very interesting work and we had agreements they could get it on to network television, all of that. Everyone earned the same salary. It was only a socialist model really, everyone earning the same salary and they were all, there was inter, interchangeability between grades, you didn't have to be a specific grade to work in a particular job, you know. So it was a very flexible open agreement and the union membership grew quite significantly.

*Yes.*

In consequence. So that kind of stuff too, yes. So, but I mean in terms of the...

*That takes us through to the late Eighties doesn't it or to, to the 1980s but, but ACTT goes through, mm, a merger doesn't it?*

*Yes.*

*In the, in the early Nineties?*

Yes, after several false starts, yes, yes.

*What's, what was your activities connected with that, what's your impressions?*

Well, I was always very pro... Well, there were, obviously there were different schools of opinion in the union, I was always very positively in favour of amalgamation, I was a, I argued for it, [0:30:00] I argued for it everywhere in the union and outside the union, everywhere in the press you know, in the journal. I was always very actively in support because it was absurd, you know, we were, we had sort of three unions and we'd be arguing about the same, the same people in the same job on the same shoot, in the same place, you know we'd have three unions arguing separately. You know, ludicrous. You know, actually I was in NATKE and BETA and so on. So as well as that there were kind of economies of scale and sometimes, sometimes the arguments were done well, sometimes they weren't, you know. But you're dealing with redundancies, you know, you'd have three different unions in there arguing, you know. Or dealing with pay claims in ITV, you'd have different unions arguing differently over that. And it was absurd, you know, that we didn't have a common position and argue a common, a common position.

*Those three unions though had different traditions they came out of slightly different traditions?*

Yes, absolutely, of course, they did, yes.

*How would you sort of, you know, in, you know, in brief, briefly kind of describe those different traditions and, and where you positioned yourself?*

Well, tricky, this is tricky, this is tricky because it's, you know, it's a sensitive, it's still a kind of a sensitive area in some ways.

*Yes.*

ACTTs tradition was to be a kind of small, fast, quick on its feet fast moving union. Very political, very left wing, mm, prepared to take on a fight if it had to, you know what I mean, mm, that kind of thing. Fairly high profile but, mm, and kind of both industrial in terms of laboratories and permanently employed people in broadcasting in ITV mainly and a lot of freelancers in the film industry, so three quite different sectors. BETA, or what was BETA at that time was really was an ex staff association, it had been a staff association and it still carried part of that and their major employment was always at the BBC and the BBC had always kind of recognised them and in a sense to some extent had kind of institutionalised them. So the BBC had this enormous book of regs. and you could kind of always find, if you could find your way through the book of regs. you know what I mean? And they had a lot of bargaining and argument around the regs. and what the regs. were and the regs. weren't and so on. I'm not saying there weren't, they weren't important in terms of arguing about substantial, substantive issues but they were quite different from us, you know. And by and large where, I mean BETA and ACTT had gone nose to nose to try to organise ITV and ACTT won, you know what I mean, and we organised it eventually, we got recognition everywhere and they didn't, and by and large... So there was kind of animosity there as well, we'd always been trying to organise in the BBC, we always had members in the BBC but we never got recognition in the BBC we didn't have enough but we had certain areas in which we were very well represented, not least the film areas because obviously working in film in the BBC and thinking 'well, one day I might want to get out of here and work elsewhere so I'll need a ticket', you know what I mean. So, so there were those areas of friction and there was some friction in commercial radio a bit but it wasn't very, very significant so that's what they were like. And NATKE was really, what was NATKE? NATKE was really just [Pause] was very, very old, it was kind of an old craft union is what it was. You see they organised the staffs in cinemas and organised staffing in theatres really and they organised craftsmen in television and film so that it was very much a craft union in that sense, you know, painters, carpenters, plasterers, riggers, you know, that, those sorts of



grades. Mm, and that's what they were and they were the... But structurally I mean too, structurally the BETA was, was much more a command structure, you know, was built quite carefully like that, you know, and there was a General Secretary and an Executive and they would kind of that's the way it went, you know what I mean, that was the authority as well. ACTT was much more free ranging than that, was much looser, was much more flexible, which was both a strength and a weakness, you know. So we had this thing called the General Council kind of every, every two months to which any shop steward could come so it was a kind of like the union was run by a kind of a levy en masse, it wasn't run by the Executive it was run by this mass meeting [Laughter] every, every two months when the great political arguments would rage and it was kind of like extraordinary. So it had a great energy but it also was a real problem and I mean it's a difficulty, you can't really run an organisation on the basis of a bimonthly mass meeting, you know, which is what we sought to do and it was also quite expensive, you know.

*What, what comes out, BECTU obviously comes out of the merger but what came out of it as far as, how would you characterise that? You know which grouping within the, the three unions, mm, tended to dominate in the new BECTU structure?*

Mm, well, we had joint General, General Secretaries initially. We had, mm, Tony Hearn and Sapper and they retained some areas of autonomy initially. And that by and large went well, mm, that, that was okay. Then when Sapper went Hearn was the surviving General Secretary and he took over and I became Deputy General Secretary of the joint union. Mm, so I was always there and I think the old ACTT members saw me as their kind of, kind of spokesperson and clearly the BETA people saw Tony Hearn. There wasn't really a senior because NATKE had also come in but NATKE didn't really have a senior person at the top as it were but we had a number of organisers from NATKE who were, mm, involved. So I don't know it's, it's difficult to say, it would depend because it was a very democratic union, you know, it's a, it's, BECTU was a democratic union. So in terms of who's in control it was the members who were in control really, they had their own meetings to define their pay strategy, define their industrial strategy, define what they wanted to do about holidays and pensions *et cetera* and they defined it and they kind

of went to the Executive and the Executive by and large said ‘fine, do it’, you know, unless there were terrible kind of knock-on affects. So it wasn’t a case of an Executive with a clear central notion of what was legitimate and what wasn’t legitimate imposing that on the membership, it was, it was other than that, it was a different dynamic. I’m not saying that there wasn’t any tension there because I think, I think there was. But that was a key defining characteristic.

So I didn’t think, I mean people would moan and say ‘oh dear not the spirit of the old ACTT’ and that kind of stuff but in reality it wasn’t lost, it was still there and they still had their autonomy and they still and they were still effective, you know what I mean? I think the old ACTT people found, found the BETA style a bit boring that’s all, I mean they never did any kind of...

*Well, I noticed some, some differences and some, some tensions even after twenty years, after twenty years?*

I’m being very, I’m being very careful here I hope you understand.

*I wonder if we can Roy move on to having a look at, mm, your association with the BECTU History Project while you’re still with BECTU, still working as a full-time official with BECTU. Roughly when did you clock on to this History Project?*

Well, I, I mean I, I was, well, I was the official for the Producer Directors, I was their official, and I knew Roy well, you know what I mean. We’ve known each other and he sent a memo to me the other day and then we had a fierce argument about what he’d written for *The Cinema Veteran*. As we’ve said we’ve known each other for forty years. I thought ‘Jesus Christ that’s a fright, that’s frightening’. However, mm, so I knew Roy, you know, and I knew the PDs and I knew Bob Dunbar I knew really well, mm, and Manny Yospa old Communist. Yes, I mean all the guys who were there at the heart of the project. I didn’t know Alan Lawson quite so well but I certainly knew Roy and I knew Bob. Bob was an interesting man, mm, and I’d run stuff in the journal because I was the

journal editor as well and they were both very prolific writers, you know, Roy was always writing.

*You'd known them, you'd known them largely because of their union con, you know, their active involvement in the union?*

Oh yes, yes, yes, I'd known them as their active involvement through the union. Both through the journal.

*Yes.*

Which I edited and through my running of the Producer Directors Section and I was also involved with copyright and issues of that kind which affected them *et cetera* and we were doing negotiations for PDs. And we did a lot of international stuff for directors as well with The Directors' Guild of America, The Directors' Guild of Canada, you know, there is a big Directors international. And there was always a lot of friction between Directors' Guild which established itself in this country and us and I was a kind of spokesperson for the union interest in Producers. So I was very much involved with Producers Directors and so were Roy and Bob, they were kind of both, mm, fairly active in the Producer Directors Section. So I knew them all, you know what I mean. I mean I knew them all and when they'd had their boozy lunch and had, mm, had concluded they'd kind of had this moment of revelation that an enormous amount of history was being lost, and they kind of, you know, chatted it over, Roy then came to see me. I was his contact inside the union.

*Yes.*

And said 'well, look that's what we're thinking about doing, we think it would be good if we could get something together', you know, 'to actually institute a programme of recording practitioners in the industry before they're all lost', you know, 'before all of this history is lost. What do you reckon'? So I said, because I'd always been very

interested in history, you know, I mean interested in history *per se* just interested in history because I'd kind of studied it. But it's, but also other people in the union too, old Ralph Bond, he'd had in his time, he was a significant, he was a... I mentioned him before. Ralph Bond was a documentarian, he came out of the documentary movement but he was an old Communist and had been the First Secretary, of the Secretary of The British Communist Party was a man called Inkpen and Ralph [0:40:00] had kind of actually worked with him with real utterly committed CP-er, you know, but, but smart, smart, you know, no mug. And it's incidentally it was Ralph Bond who ran ACTT Films which produced twenty or thirty feature films in the 1940s because they were, you know, at a time of very low employment in the industry after the war the union put together a production company and they made twenty odd or thirty features, you know, into quite late in the day. They made *The Kitchen* by Arnold Wesker and things of that kind. *Man Upstairs*, *Final Test*, you know I mean. Some quite significant... Anyway that's beside the point, but it's another indication of how wide the union was, you know, I mean it had its own production company and made films itself. However once so, so, so I knew Ralph, and Ralph himself had done, oh I don't know, ten maybe, ten interviews on tape on our old enormous old Grundig tape recorder of prominent trade unionists at the time, you know. Mm, [Pause] and I know those... So, so there had been an interest, you know, he had been involved in doing, in taping interviews.

*These were trade unionists, these were in. in...?*

These were national trade unionists. Not people in the industry, in our industry.

*Right, and this is different as they were in other industries?*

Yes, yes, sure, sure.

*Okay.*

You know, the leaders of The Miners Union, The Engineering Union and all of that. So I mean there was an awareness on the part of people inside the union that recording these histories was significant and was important, you know what I mean.

*Yes.*

Mm, so it was aware. I don't think, I mean all of us were aware, you know, I mean oral histories weren't, weren't a strange area everyone was aware that oral history was taking place and I was particularly aware that kind of a lot of trade union history had kind of ended up in skips outside union offices, you know, minute books, these kind of hundred year old minute books being chucked away and that kind of thing, you know, like that kind of casual thing. And I have to say that the General Secretary at the time, Roger Bolton, had really almost kind of no respect for history or for historical artifacts so you always had, you had to, you know what I mean, I was always running up against him, you know what I mean, wanting to save stuff, look after stuff as he was, as far as he was concerned 'what's, what's the fucking point of keeping this? Let's move on, let's move up', you know what I mean. So he wasn't that interested at the time but he was, when he was General Secretary I was Deputy General Secretary and, mm, so, you know, we had some run-ins there. I mean but he wasn't actively pledged in that union history but he wasn't sympathetic, you know, and he didn't care much about it and he didn't want to spend any money on it, didn't want to do much about it. So anyway, so but, but I was and I was quite interested in, you know, I, I agree with Roy and Bob in terms of their analysis of, of what we needed to do. And they knew me and they knew I was a kind of, mm, was able to get things done inside the union at kind of Executive and General Council level so they came, so Roy came to me and just said like 'this is what we're interested in doing', and they, his version of events is that I said 'well, okay I'll support you as long as you do all the work yourself and don't ask us for any money'. That's what, is that what he told you? I don't know.

*And, no, but that's interesting isn't it?*

Yes, yes.

*Just at that point can I...?*

So, and so I did and so I argued for it and we got, got it started.

*Okay. Let's, let's pause it in the sort of, we're in the mid Eighties aren't we?*

Is this any good to you? I mean is, am I kind of...?

*Absolutely, it's absolutely wonderful. We're in the mid Eighties. Now Roy comes to you and you've got people like...*

Have some more coffee. I'm still listening. What, sorry.

*You've got people like... Okay Roy. We're in the mid 1980s and, mm, Roy Fowler's come to you, he wants to start this new organisation but you know at least, you know, people like Roger Bolton and perhaps others within the union are going to say 'what's', you know, 'what's the use of this, mm, of this organisation'? I wonder if you could take us through the debates going on within the union and how different groups or different individuals responded to this new BECTU History Project?*

Well, I don't actually think there was a major debate about it, you know. I think it was broadly recognised as being a good idea, a sensible idea and something which the union should identify with and should proceed with as it were for as long as, as it were they kept their noses clean, didn't become a nuisance, you know, didn't frighten the horses. That, that, mm, and that, that was my, my memory of it. I think people involved in the union and people at Executive level were intelligent people I mean and they weren't people who would see the construction of history as being kind of a problem or a difficulty or something unions shouldn't be involved with. Mm, so I think they were for it and rather liked the idea in some sense that the union was, would have a History Project,

you know, felt, thought it was kind of appropriate for a union like, mm, like ACTT. So I don't remember any great difficulties. The more, the problems were, [Pause] mm, that doesn't mean however that they would prioritise it or say 'this is really important, really significant and that we must do everything we can', they were prepared to 'oh', you know, 'crack on and do it'.

*Yes.*

But like if there was ever a problem, if anything ever got in the way like the History Project had booked a room and then somebody else needed it for a negotiation or for a committee meeting then there was kind of 'that fucking History Project, [Laughter] fuck that History Project', you know, 'this comes first', you know what I mean. So, so there was that sense of, mm, of, and it wasn't overwhelming but a sense that like the union had its proper business to do, yes?

*Mm.*

And it was okay and the History Project could do as long as it didn't get in the way, you know, and was kind of, and a slight sense of that 'another bloody History Project meeting', more documents to do because it, what we did was, well, the arrangement that I'd come to with, with the History Project was that we would actually, we would provide a place to store all the tapes, you know, the master tapes. That we would provide them with all the documentation they needed in terms of the production of documents. We would mail all the documents and provide them with accommodation for meetings and provide them with accommodation so, so...

*Well, this is a cost, this is a cost isn't it?*

Oh sure, but it's, it's, it's a below the line cost and nobody ever worked out, [Laughter] you know, the below the line cost of hiring out a meeting room or, or sat and worked out what the postage costs were or how much paper had been used, you know. I mean had we

said to them ‘we want you to give five thousand pounds to the History Project’ they would have said ‘oh yes, next business’, you know what I mean. Or had we said ‘we want to employ somebody to do it’ or ‘we want five thousand pound from you to do this, that or the other’, I mean if we’d asked for money up front. However, there was this sense that kind of the union was a machine that turned over and kind of undertaking those activities, yes?

*Mm.*

Wasn’t a difficulty such as it didn’t involve new money, you know, it just involved using the machine to cover that and the costs of the machine were covered in that, of course, they weren’t entirely or totally or anything like it. However that’s the way it was seen and it wasn’t seen as a problem.

*So the intention of the members of the BECTU History Project would put pressure on the union and say ‘look you’re just not preserving this particular, mm, set of documents’ or ‘you’re not looking after it or really this should be sent away to be’, you know, ‘archived’ and, and in a sense put, you know, moral pressure on the union, which of course, could result in a direct cost for the union.*

Yes, yes. Well, I mean I don’t, I think that was true. I mean there were, but the History Project was never, wasn’t really about documentation, it wasn’t about keeping documentation that wasn’t it’s...

*No but occasionally that cropped, that cropped up in the minutes.*

It’s, it’s priority. Yes, that, that, that kind of stuff emerges and I was probably I mean as responsible as anybody else for actually saying ‘look have you ever seen this fucking item that is going how about you saying something?’ or something. So, so yes. I mean there were, yes, they would express a view, mm, but it wasn’t... And sometimes it, mm, I don’t know. By and large I won the arguments about archiving stuff, you know, but there



were sometimes arguments about archiving stuff like ‘where are we going to store it, what’s it going to cost, do we need it?’ you know and so on. But I mean we, we did end up saving an enormous amount of stuff like membership, there were great rows about things like membership applications. Like, which are quite interesting in themselves as raw data, who was in the union, who wasn’t, and all the information about the member and their activities and the films they’d worked on were in that membership data, but we did have an enormous amount of them, you know. So I think finally some terrible compromise was reached whereby we kept them only up to a given time and then we didn’t save them after that or something. So there were debates around that and they were about resources and they were about practical issues and practical questions. But it wasn’t, those arguments were never, it wasn’t ever only the History Project that would make those arguments, I mean other people were also making them. And it was never enough to kind of, for anyone to say, you know, ‘do we really need the History Project?’ or ‘these people are becoming an aggravation’, you know, mm, that it, it was... And in my recollection it was along time ago now but I mean I don’t recollect that. Mm, it was, there was on the part of some people, people who worked in, in head office a kind of minor irritation, ‘oh not you in again’, you know what I mean, there was that, that sort of thing, but never anything serious. It is a kind of, there’s a kind of arrogance about full-time officials who think that it’s only what they do that really matters, you know.

*Can, can I...?*

Is that alright. I don’t know. I mean that’s my recollection of it anyway. [0:50:00]

*Can I take you into a slightly different ground here now Roy and, and that is, mm, what’s your understanding. Now cast your mind back to the mid Eighties, but what’s your understanding of what Oral History was about and doing and what was its agenda?*

You mean as a whole? You mean across the nation or inside the union?

*Well, you know, primarily inside the union, or you could, yes, mm, the Oral History movement if you want?*

Yes, yes.

*What was, what was it up to as far as you, you saw it in the mid Nineteen... in the mid Eighties?*

Well, I had always thought. Well, in terms of trade unions, with the exception of commissioning academics to write union histories, sympathetic academics, there was really not much concern about trade union history at all and my feeling was always that an immense amount was being lost. The notion that not only should we address the question of what needs to be saved, you know, in terms of documentation and other materials of that kind. Mm, I remember once saying to the General Secretary something about we had a lot of old portraits of ex General Secretaries, photographs and so on. And I would say 'look we've got all these', you know, and we put them up. He said 'why do we need photographs on the walls of old General Secretaries'? And you had to say 'but it's, it's part of our history'. 'Oh it isn't fucking needed' you know what I mean. That sort of dismissive thing.

However, my feeling was always, I've always been very clear in my own mind that one:- the trade unions generally needed to do a great deal more, it, even in the most basic terms about saving their history leaving aside oral histories. Secondly that there was an enormously important history which was going unrecorded in terms of the trade union movement. Other people were doing oral, oral histories I knew, I'd been obviously people in the History Workshop and so on, mm, which, which I knew about, mm, because that was Oxford based as well, mm, but like as it was being done. My notion was that certainly that we should extend that, this new, new tool, and because it was as it were it wasn't the remit of the specialist as it were, this was something which ordinary members could do, you know what I mean, this was something which retired members could do, it didn't require a degree to do it, it didn't, you probably, [Laughter] you've got

a closed, closed shop so yes, it does. However, [Laughter] it, it didn't. Mm, and I liked that notion, I liked that notion of kind of harnessing that enthusiasm to record like not merely to save documents but to record actual histories. Because I've always thought that, been very clear in my own mind that there isn't a kind of unpro single line of history. I mean there's an economic history, there's a political history, there's a cultural history, there's a history of human chemistry. There's a kind of, there are a number of histories which kind of interlock and come together, mm, and interact. And it's, it's a very rich history. I mean so one man's might not see that in his own work but it's there and it's there and it's ever present. You see I was interviewing Daryl actually as a, and that was the point about cultural history. I mean I hadn't no idea. I'd, I'd always thought like, you know, a quick thumbnail that by and large the [Pause] that it was the theatre which had really been the context for the real cultural revolution, the early cultural revolution in this country after the war in the Fifties. New writers, new designers, new theatre projects, you know what I mean. Then later television became radicalised and finally as it were film, you know, belatedly, yes? But talking to Daryl it was really interesting because he was saying, because I, I was interviewing him and I got quite excited about it because he was saying that he was involved in the, in the Art Department. He's a Vice, Vice-Chair I think now and he was involved in the Art Department in the BBC. Like he used to come on home in uniform from the RAF and, mm, and go to work in the BBC, and he was saying that some of the people he worked with when, when they were doing sets inside the BBC he worked with Sean Kelly. Now I'd always thought Sean Kelly as being a purely theatre designer, I'd never seen, thought of him there. But then there was, I mean there was a cross-fertilisation between the kind of Art Department and scenery design, you know, in broadcasting at that time and Sean Kelly who was the most radical designer who could be imagined. Now I didn't know about that and that really interested me because it covers kind of, it's another angle on what was a rather simplistic model in my own mind about that cultural history and how it had worked and what had worked in compartments. So it's that kind of stuff isn't it that, that's, well, that's the kind of stuff that interests me anyway.

*Okay. You're talking about, mm, your experiences. You knew about History Workshop. The History, History Workshop journal movement?*

Yes.

*Did, what else, what did, what did that kind of mean to you in, in the, in the mid Nineteen... in the mid 1980s?*

Well, I thought it, well, what did it mean to me? Mm, I mean going to opinion myself here. It, it, to me it was an important activity to undertake. It was an important part of our obligation and responsibility as trade unionists to make sure that history wasn't lost.

*Okay.*

That, that's what it was.

*Did you envisage the BECTU History Project as being a history of trade unionism?*

No, I saw it as being a history of, of BECTU really, I mean of individuals in BECTU and the sectors in which BECTU, BECTU organised really, that's, that's how I saw it, not a history of the entire thing. I had always hoped that the kind of the model we had built might be adopted elsewhere and might, might be seen elsewhere and used elsewhere, you know, but there was no way we could with our resources and our expertise assume a kind of, [Laughter] a kind of, you know, a responsibility of that kind to be responsible for oral recording across the entire trade union movement.

*But one of the things that you, you noted was that, that very little had been written on, mm, trade unionism?*

Yes.

*That here was presumably with the History Project a chance that, mm, trade unionists' lives were going to be recorded?*

Yes, yes.

*And presumably others or they, mm, could have a hand in writing up the, the history, the history of the union. So it seems to be a very important component part of, of what you see as one, one of the goals of the History Project.*

Yes. It was the engagement of members too, I think that interested, you know, that was important.

Yes, yes.

It, it was to engage them in this work, you know, I mean to harness their enthusiasm and generate that enthusiasm for doing, for doing work of that kind.

*Did you, did 'History from the Bottom Up', you know, that slogan of, well, of the 1970s but also of the 1980s, to what extent did that sort of inform, inflect, mm, the BECTU History Project people especially the pioneers, and of course, you knew all of the pioneers of the Project?*

I don't, I, I don't know to what extent. [Laughter] It was a very English project. I mean it wasn't a kind of European theoretical Marxist project, you know, I mean it was two, it was two old boys sitting in a restaurant, you know, drinking too much wine, chatting about past times and getting a bit...

*Sentimental?*

So it was in part it was a kind, it was a kind of nostalgia there I think of a kind, you know, and that was no bad thing because that kind of lit that fuse. But they were serious,

I mean Roy was very rigorous in terms of the work he did, he was a real, he was a scholar, he'd written books about the film industry right, you know, when he was seventeen. So he was quite rigorous. Bob [Dunbar], Bob too, Bob was more kind of avuncular and sort of gentler but had enormous experience. He'd worked with H G [Orson] Welles, he'd been in Moscow in the war shooting pictures, you know what I mean, was a very interesting man. So, but no it was slightly that. So I mean I'm not sure that, you know, they sat down and said 'we have a mission here and our mission is' [Laughter]...

Yes.

'To convert the entire trade union movement to his view from the bottom up'. So it was partly about drinking wine together, partly about getting pissed, partly about nostalgia but also a profound sense of loss.

Yes.

A real sense of loss of kind of the value, people who'd worked in this and understanding the value of what that experience was.

Yes.

And the value of recording it.

*No, I understand Roy'd, Roy Fowler, his, his position, but yours comes from a slightly different background doesn't it and you have a connection with History Workshop?*

Yes.

*And History Workshop did talk about history from the bottom up?*

Yes, yes.

*And was informed by that whole sort of Seventies, Eighties movement?*

Yes.

*That is found in Oral History, and I just wondered if, if you...*

No, I wouldn't have regarded, I didn't regard my...

*You're more nostalgia wing or you're...*

Oh no, I'm on the...

*Or you're, you're on the manifesto wing?*

Yes. No, I would be more, I would be more, [Laughter] I would be more, and I'm not on the nostalgia wing not really. I, you know, I mean there's a kind of delight two old boys sitting in a room talking about the past, you know, which is kind of a pleasure but it's not, it's not what the thing, the History Project is all about and you have to watch it you have to be careful and one of your questions is is it too sentimental and I don't, I don't think it is and I think it is rigorous and I think it is, it is quite careful but it's always, mm, it can always be a slight problem. No, I mean no, no, no, I'm not on that wing. But I wouldn't say that I was an ideologue or, or a kind of committed ideologue who brought to it all this baggage, mm, what I'm talking about are just the way I feel about Oral History. But I mean I didn't go around getting hold of people in pubs and saying 'have you ever thought about history from the bottom, bottom up?' you know.

*Okay. Were there any people in the BECTU History Project that might sort of [1:00:00] use these ideas of history from the bottom up?*

Not I think that, well... [Pause]

*Any names?*

[Pause] Oh. No, because, the stuff Ralph had done had had really been from the top down, you know, his, his interviewing had truly been that. No, I think, no I think there was a notion that, there was a notion that it wasn't just about stars, it wasn't just about directors, it wasn't just about lighting camera, it just wasn't about kind of actors and people like this, that it was about people who were at the bottom, that the industry was as much about, it was a democratic impulse to it and I think that's always been there that democratic impulse. Mm, so that was there. Now, you know, it wasn't, it wasn't kind of, it was never kind of assertively or proudly elitist. It might have actually, the results might have actually turned out to look a bit like that but that was never the intention, you know, but that's just the kind of the very organic way in which the interviews are made, decided, pushed, you know. You never get someone in the meeting who says 'let's interview blah', and someone else says 'no, I don't think that's important, I think we should be interviewing black film makers in the regions, that's where we need to be', no it doesn't happen. Somebody said, everybody says 'fine do it, go ahead', you know. So, so it's not, so there's not a kind of a filter which filters out things which, which, which, which don't fit our criteria. Most people if you have an argument with them would accept we should record more women, we should have caught, record more people from black and ethnic minorities, we should record more people from the regions, we should record, we should record people from the new sectors like games and so on. And I mean all, that's self-evident we should do that and they wouldn't argue about it. It's just that they [Laughter] in terms of their contacts and people that they know the routes they go on don't go that way, you know. But they don't think, go down the black and ethnic avenue or the...

*Okay.*

Or the regional film maker avenue.



*Well, I think we've, we've explored...*

Do you understand what I'm saying?

*I do, I do. I think we've explored the underpinning to the, to, to the early years of the BECTU History Project.*

Yes.

*And perhaps that's a philosophy that still informs the project now?*

Yes. Well, I have to say my secretary did all of the work for it, you know, too. You know, she did the minutes, she did the documents.

Yes.

She did all that.

*Can I just, can we just turn attention to the, mm, administrations if you like of the, of two early Chairs of the BECTU History Project, mm, Roy Fowler and then John Sealey and I just wondered if you could say something?*

[Laughter]

*Because you've known them in their capacities as Chairs?*

Yes.

*What do you think they brought firstly, mm, Roy Fowler?*

What did Roy say about John Sealey.

*Mm, we can talk about this off, you know...*

Well, fair enough. What's, what, what did...?

*What did, what did Roy contribute and...?*

Well, Roy contributed, [Pause] I've got to be careful here, you know, I mean in terms of I could speak frankly or I could speak more carefully and I think I ought to speak more carefully. I think the Project was very, very important to Roy, you know, I think it was an important part of his life so I think he prioritised it and put a lot of energy and effort into it and I think he was very proud of what he'd done and, [Pause] and felt that his contribution should be properly and publicly acknowledged, that, that's what I think he felt. I think he worked [Pause] very hard. But Roy has a certain style and it's a certain, [Pause] what is it? It's a certain kind of slightly disdainful patrician style he has which is rather dismissive of some things and dismissive of others, you know what I mean. Mm, but I mean measured against what he did and measured against what he contributed I don't think that's, mm, a significant shortcoming in any way really. He's, and he worked well with all of those people who were there, he did build confidence, he ran an organisation which recorded a lot of significant people. Mm, he had a really good idea in relation to 'Read My Lips', that big event that we ran which was his original idea of doing that I think. Mm, so all of that was, no he was very, you know I mean, what can you say? He founded the Project. He built it, he was there for a long time, they made, recorded a lot of interviews, they did a lot, a lot of work, mm, it was very significant. Mm, he was a very significant figure and it should not be, he should properly be acknowledged as the father of the Project. I mean I think there were other people however, who were also important like Bob Dunbar, Manny Yospa who, mm, [Pause] who...

*Unfortunately neither of those two are alive are they?*

Yes. Well, Manny was an old Communist, you know, mm, and he was a sound recordist Manny. And, mm, but he was there, he was there, he was involved, he thought history was important and he retired and he was in but... Mm, neither well, neither I think neither Bob nor Manny really was, was as concerned perhaps as Roy has been about the recognition of their role in the Project. But, mm, Roy has been and he's very sensitive about it, mm. So, mm, but however his achievement's there, I mean you can see what Roy's achievement is, it's very clear. There were, [Pause] I think in part because the Project was so important to Roy that things perhaps for other people might not have been as significant as they were for Roy, kind of made him unhappy about some things, you know. He was, mm, [Pause] unhappy about some things about the Project. Materially really I suppose that Roy, most of us were quite confident about the relationship between the Project and the union. Roy was I think was less, less comfortable one with that but the rest of us were comfortable with that, we saw it as being indispensable because we didn't have any source of income, mm, and we also saw it as being indispensable in terms of that. All of the technical advice we could get, we could get advice from accountants, from copyright lawyers, from lawyers to write out contracts, do all of that work which we couldn't conceivably have undertaken ourselves. And they did all the work for us, they did the mailing and they did the infrastructure stuff, had we not had the union we would have been like some other voluntary organisations we would have been spending most of our time fundraising in order to kind of exist. And the union had never been a problem for us, had never been problematic. We were also, it was very important because we were starting to get into contracts with people and you have to be a legal entity to enter into a contract, you have to be kind of recognised as a legal entity. And we weren't, all we were was history with this kind of nebulous constitution situated somewhere inside that. So that notion of recognising the union as providing a corporate structure with which and through which we could undertake those relationships was very useful, was very practical and worked for us, it worked well for us. And in addition to the fact that the union had never attempted to manipulate us or control us or, or, or tell us what to do or how we should do it, you know, it's, you know, you know what I mean. I mean there was a well, inevitably in twenty-five years or however long it is we've been in existence there's been

a bit of bumping and scraping from time to time but it, it's never been significant, there's never been a significant challenge in any way to what the Project's wanted to do or how it's wanted to do it, so in all of those senses. But all of us were quite fairly relaxed about that, Roy I think, perhaps I may be wrong, was less comfortable with that than we are, mm...

*Now he, he resigns in November 1996?*

Yes.

*What was your take on that, on that resignation because...?*

I thought it was in part because... [Pause] Well, I don't know, to be frank I think he just thought he'd kind of done enough really, you know what I mean. I mean he'd been, he'd been very active for a long time. Mm, the Project was well under way, we were moving in a slightly different direction because we now had formal recognition inside the union and we'd had to do things like, [Pause] well, we'd had to get ourselves into the Rule Book in order to do that, you know, I'd rewritten the rules *et cetera* to do that. And I think so slightly that and slightly a kind of, [Pause] I think he thought he'd kind of, he'd, he'd achieved enough, he wasn't unpleasant, I mean it wasn't acrimonious in any way he simply decided, you know, that he didn't wanted to be. And I think we did at that point appoint him a kind of lifetime president or something. So it wasn't an acrimonious or a difficult parting of the ways but he did that and then we, mm, we got a new Chair.

*He did say he was withdrawing from the Project at the time. He doesn't and, and remains an active force.*

Yes, yes.

*I, I think it was, it was more, mm, drama to it than, than you're suggesting there.*

Well, it didn't seem to me, well, it didn't seem much....

*I haven't got the resignation letter.*

No.

*Nobody seems to have a copy of the resignation letter so that's the...*

No, no. I didn't see all that. I mean I didn't, I didn't, that wasn't my, my impression that there was drama. I mean he's, [Laughter] [1:10:00] he likes a bit of drama Roy. But it's a kind of a, that wasn't my feeling. I didn't feel that, you know, this was, he found himself in an intolerable position and couldn't go on, you know, that wasn't my, my impression at all.

*Okay. But...*

I mean he may well have, he may well in retrospect see it in that way but it wasn't my feeling. I mean I didn't...

*Now reading the minutes there seems to be, mm, mm a particular flash point and I think it connects with Roger Bolton particularly over some action or, mm, of Roger Bolton's that sparks...*

Oh not the thing about the minute is it?

*Yes. It's...*

Where he's...[Pause] Oh what can I say? I mean the Project was very important to Roy, it was a very important part of his life but it was... [Pause] Oh yes, I don't really want to get in on it. It's, it's so trivial. He had written something in the minutes about somebody being on a freebie. Now this is the union, it's a formal union document and you don't

write 'freebie', you know, because they go out to other people 'oh I see the union's getting freebies'. You don't write that kind of stuff you just say he'd been on a delegation or something. You might well say among yourselves, you know, 'it was a freebie', but I mean they'd, you don't write it down, you know. In the same way you don't characterise your view about someone which may be a commonly held view but you don't repeat it in the minutes. And it was so trivial as to not be, well, it seemed to me at the point I mean to be so, so, so trivial as to be not worth thinking about. And then I, I mean I only, I was only reminded of it, and be careful about what you say about what I'm saying, you know, I mean. But no, I mean I didn't think that that incident which he, which he's repeated subsequently was, was of any significance at all. I mean I just thought Christ almighty if that's the worst thing that happens in twenty-five years we've been doing the union History Project is the General Secretary objects to using the word 'freebie' then you're not really in trouble at all are? You know, God almighty.

*Let's, let's move on from Roy?*

Sorry.

*And let's have a look at John Sealey. What's, what would you say was the major, was there any shift in, remember Roy is the pioneer, he set up the organisation but here we have, here we have John coming in, mm, and, mm, he's Chair from I think 1996 according to the minutes to 2007?*

Yes.

*What would you see as the difference, you know, the new, you know, the new path that John Sealey took?*

What would I see as the new path which John Sealey took? This is a very sensitive area you're going into now, you know what I mean about kind of...

*What, say what you feel that you can that obviously this will be transcribed and it will be presumably available for public record so...*

Sure. [Pause]

*Say what you feel you can.*

Well, I, [Pause] it's very difficult, it's very difficult. Although I have a very clear view about it but it's, it's very difficult to talk about it. Mm, I'll just point out one, one, one, one, one thing. Roy's just, mm, this is not to go in, this is off the record right now what I'm telling you.

*I'm going to start now.*

Okay. [Pause] Well, I think, [Pause] although I think that, [Pause] mm, I think [Pause] there was...

*What did...?*

I think there, there were difficulties between Roy Fowler and John Sealy, I don't think that they, they got on particularly well, mm, that's what I want to say there. Mm, and, but John was there for some time and had been properly elected and I think even, you could check that out. Have, have you got the minutes of, of his election? Have you got who moved him?

*Mm, I could check that up.*

Check it out.

*Yes, I will do.*

Check it out.

*Yes.*

Because I think you might find it was Roy Fowler, which is interesting in itself. However, mm, so they didn't, mm, see eye to eye I don't think in terms of, mm, the Project. But I think it was not so much what they did or didn't do it was more a kind of personal friction there between them which, you know, is unfortunate but these things happen in organisations. So what, what were his achievements? His achievements were he had enormous enthusiasm, he sought to raise the profile of the group, talked about the group all the time, was always inviting people to come to meetings. Was always, he was quite good at hustling, quite good at like talking to Sony and getting Sony to sponsor events and bits of equipment and so on and things of that kind. I think he took great pride in being the Chair of The History Project, I think he was quite proud of it, mm, and may have seemed that. So but he was, but he was, he was just the Chair, that's the point, and there was a strong committee so he was subject to what, what the committee felt and what the committee wanted, you know as, as I am. That's quite proper in an organisation of that kind so he had lots of ideas, some of which worked some which didn't, some of which... [Pause] So, mm, I wouldn't, I think enthusiasm. There's kind of because he came from the film industry, he came from being a producer in the film industry where, [Pause] what you bring to the table is your personality often, what you bring to the table is that kind of enthusiasm, you know, the ability to pitch as it were, and I think that's what he did, I think he pitched for the Project to the best of his ability. And there were some benefits which came from that I think over that time. Mm, I think, you know, but as I've said there was a good committee there in place so I mean what he did was, was subject to what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do it. And, mm, [Pause] the Project didn't fall apart, it continued to operate, we continued to record, members came to meetings. You know, I mean there wasn't, there wasn't a crisis in that time until he resigned.



*Do you think the number of recordings starts to, to decline, the rate of recordings starts to...?*

I haven't checked out the figures, I don't know, no.

*Okay. Let's, mm, do you want to talk about weaknesses for John Sealy? You talked about his strengths.*

Mm, [Pause] well, he could be impulsive I suppose at times, you know, that's... [Pause], Mm, but that's about it. Mm, yes, yes, impulsive. But I mean all of us have, all of us have weaknesses which is why you need a kind of some democratic accountability and that democratic accountability existed there. Mm, but he was, mm... [Pause] No, that's, that's it, I don't really want to dwell on his weaknesses actually.

*Okay. Let's, let's, let's move on now and, mm, let's move to the time in which of course, you take over as Chair in what, you follow John Sealy don't you?*

Yes, yes.

*In 2000, in 2000, in 2007?*

Yes, yes.

*We'll talk about your, mm, because it's still ongoing your, your role as Chair. But I just want to look at some of the other aspects to the BECTU History Project and I'm picking these things up from the minutes.*

Yes.

*The, the committee minutes. And one of the concerns that I pick up in 2000 is from Samuelson?*

Yes.

*I don't know, I haven't got his first name?*

Sydney.

*Sydney Samuelson.*

Sir Sydney Samuelson.

*And, mm, he's, mm, interesting that it should come from him then but, mm, is the Project interviewing too many big names?*

Oh, mm, [Pause] yes, that's a legitimate... And, you know, I mean Sydney is a significant figure in the industry, he's always been a strong supporter of the History Project, Sir Sydney, he would, he was at The, mm, The British Film Commission, he was a senior officer of that and for many years ran a very, very, very successful camera company, a camera hire facility company, so a very well known figure in the industry and very respected and a very nice man. Mm, but no, I mean Syd may, may well have said that, may well have felt that we should be interviewing [Pause] people who weren't quite as well known as the people that we were recording at that time, that seems to me a legitimate point of view and if you're having a discussion a legitimate point of view to express. I mean it's not, it doesn't seem to be startling or amazing all that, you know, I mean it's, if you looked at the list of people who we had all of us that's, that's a legitimate comment to make I think.

Yes.

And I think it's, there is, there is some truth in the fact that we've, because of the way the group has worked in that kind of English organic way we've tended to go for people who

are prominent. I suppose there's a slight sense in which the feeling if you, [Pause] that as it were the potential loss of someone right at the top who has been involved in major events, yes, in the industry could be more significant than somebody else. I don't think that's true but I mean that's [1:20:00] a, that could be a view. But I mean I don't see it as being, I don't see Sydney's remark as kind of indicating a significant critique.

*What about the change in policy in 1999 in which front of camera actors were, were now, it was now possible to, to interview them. Now that, that strikes me as moving the History Project in some ways logically but, but also it's, it's a significant break from the whole inception of the organisation?*

Well, I think the, I think the Project has grown and developed, we interview more writers now for example. Mm, I think actors also were seen. I don't think people saw it as being a kind of hugely significant strategic move for us, it was just felt that actors like John Mills and people of that kind, yes?

*Mm.*

Have had a profound, you know, I mean have had a significant history in terms of film, television, broadcasting, the sector, the cultural sector and that it's worth interviewing them, you know, and better to interview them than not to interview them. Not that as it were I don't think, I think it just extends the focus, I don't think there's a loss of focus.

*Yes.*

I think it's extending it and it seems quite sensible to me, you know what I mean. Because if you listen to his, his interview there's as much of interest in terms of the history of the industry in, in John Mills' interview as there is in the interview with somebody who was a lighting camera person.

*Yes.*

Or a clapper loader.

*Yes. Mm, let's, let's move on now, mm, and if you could kind of draw upon your experiences as Chair or even, even before then, but I just want to explore relations with other organisations. BFI, what do you think has been the, and the BECTU History Project has had quite a close association, what do you think the gains have been from that association?*

What, for us?

*Yes.*

Oh the gains for us have been quite clear. And one is that, [Pause] one is in terms of accommodating copies of our archive, I mean providing accommodation for that which is enormously important. The other is in providing really good facilities for accessing it and for a preparedness to work very closely with us in how that access works. Mm, they've also been quite significant to us in terms of our income because we have contracts with them in place for the use of our material on their website so this has enhanced our, our income. So it's accommodation, it's, it's income, it's access, mm, it's profile, mm, and the expertise of people like David the librarian who has been involved with us, there's a lot of expertise there.

*Yes.*

And that, and it's, it's kind of it's useful to have input of that kind into us. So I mean wholly beneficial and, mm, that relationship has given us a platform from which we've operated and our profile is fairly good because we are a totally voluntary group. Now if we had to organise access to our own archive that would require a lot of work, a lot of organising. You need, they provide us with a kind of infrastructure in a way. Well, the union provides two thirds of the infrastructure and they provide another third. So that

partnership is absolutely crucial and we think and, you know, we like The BFI, we like to work with The BFI. We think they're creative, we think they're sensible, we think they're businesslike and, mm, you know, and they provide an excellent service to the public.

*Yes.*

Mm, and enhanced, everything the BFI does with us enhances our role and, you know, there's a lot of value added if you work with The BFI and I've always thought that. Mm, there is no downside to it, you know.

*You raise the issue of finance and I wonder if we can move on to, to finance. Financial support, mm, has always been in, even though it's a voluntary organisation...*

*Yes.*

*Even though it, it has the support from the union and as you point out links with The BFI nevertheless seeking finance and seeking other means of financial support has been important to the History Project. I wonder if you could sort of outline some of the pressures, concerns, anxieties, goals that the Project has in this area?*

Well, what we have had, and we have generated significant income largely through contracts which we've entered into for the use of the material that's in the archive, mm, The UEA, The BFI, other organisations, and that's been useful and that's regular income because it's an annual income, so that's been useful to us in terms of a, a source of income. Mm, we've, we've had occasional grants from the union, I mean they're smallish sums, we don't go to them often for money we try to raise our own funding if we can. Mm, so all of these things. And we've had sponsorship assistance from people, Sony and so on in terms of equipment and cameras and, and things of that kind. Mm, so we've always raised our own funding and the union by and large has, we have a separate account and the union allows us to use that funding as we want. We have always been

very... Very it's hard to raise money so we're very careful about how we spend the money.

*Yes, yes.*

We, we don't waste money and no one gets paid as I said. Mm, you know, occasionally if you're going to record somebody in Scotland you might pay a train fare but that's as far as it would go. So all of that's important. Now that, but that keeps us... Well, we have an income which allows us to kind of turn over. The last major expenditure we had was something in the region of two thousand pounds for the website which we paid, you know, I mean the union's helped us in some ways in that but we had to pay the on costs for that, now that's a significant sum for us. Mm, but we still have, we still have some cash left. But what we need to do, but there are very significant things which we need to do. One of the most significant is to produce transcripts of our interviews, that's the, that's the overwhelming need that we need now, and we are for the first time going in the immediate future to launch a financial appeal for fifty thousand quid in order to provide a fund for us to transcribe the vast majority of the outstanding 500 interviews which we've got. That will be a huge gain for us if we can do that and opens up all kinds of possibilities.

*Sure.*

In terms of ease of access and so on. So all of that enormously important and that's what we intend, intend to do. We will be going out to the industry and seeking to raise money.

*Is that your main focus the seeking funds from within the industry or in other organisations? I mean obviously you...*

We'll take money off anyone, you know. [Laughter]

*You've had, you've had, you've had experience of National, National Lottery applications?*

Yes, yes. We haven't, we have never been successful, mm, we've never been successful. I think the competition for those things is quite fierce. It may well be that the business plans that we've produced have not been adequate, not been good enough, the documentation hasn't been effective, whatever we haven't succeeded. And some of them we have taken quite seriously and worked quite hard. One of them was a joint application with The BFI. We've done things of that kind, we've sought cash, but by and large it takes a great deal of time to do it and if you're going to, you know, and from a voluntary organisation that's an enormous amount of work to undertake and if you do it without any success it's, it's a, it uses up a lot of resources and time. So we're, we're, we're careful about that, we're careful about that. There are other ways in which we could raise money. I mean that financial appeal though that in itself is going to entail a lot of work for us, it's going to entail a lot of contacts, a lot of hustling, a lot of fronting up, a lot of meeting. You know what I mean it's not going to kind of generate, you know, we're not going to put an advert in the paper and then fifty thousand quid is going to arrive in cheques the next day, it won't be like that. So it will be a, a lot of work and we need also to be now really investigating transcription and the cost of transcription and how we do it.

*Yes.*

You know all of that really effectively. So that's, that's a priority. I mean that's, that's one of the things which we are doing now. We're, we're blessed by having Sue who's a brilliant secretary. We're blessed by having people who are very good in relation to new technology now as well so the work that's been done on, on the website and around the website because I have no expertise in that area at all. That, that's, that's very good and we've moved along way forward on that score, mm, so that's encouraging I think. Mm, in terms of where our priorities are let me just have a look. Mm, [Pause] well, I think, well, I've said money, transcripts. Raising our profile I think is going to be important as much as we can, you know, we need to be, more people need to be aware of us and what

we do and what we have available. We've, we've done work in relation to that and you may well have been influenced by that because we probably wrote to you saying 'look here we exist, we're prepared to work with you please come on board'. And that's been, you know, and that's an example of a major initiative which we took, which, which has been successful and we've got, as you know, a number of projects now have emerged from that. But all of those require our input, you know, all of those from a voluntarist organization, you know, everything generates work, you know. But as I say we're blessed with Sue who's a brilliant secretary.

Mm, what would I like to see? What I would like to see is a really, and to some extent [1:30:00] what happens at The BFI now is going to be quite important really because clearly The BFI is undergoing significant change at the moment, not merely in terms of their absorption of the primary production activities of The Film Council but also because they will be expected to operate in a different way. There'll be expected to I, [Laughter] efficiency savings aren't they called or cuts as they might be called, but they're going to be looking at all of that and there are going to be changes in relation to the Library I think, how the Library operates and where it operates from and what they'll be able to do and we, we're not clear about that yet and we need to be clear about that.

So that's something for the future which we have to, we have to maybe reexamine that relationship and, mm, you know, and hopefully it will continue, hopefully we will find solutions because there's a great deal of goodwill on our part and we'd be happy to do that. But, but that's one of the things we need to do. The other thing is that we're clearly we need to in terms of who we organise we do need now to actually get down to I think where we're beginning to define more clearly those groups which have priority in terms of who we organise, in terms of who we interview, I mean that's self-evident. We haven't done it yet, we've said we need to and they are women, they are ethnic minorities, they're people in the regional cultures and they're people in the new technologies. Well, we call them new they're not bloody new now, you know, they've been around, you know, games have been going on for fifteen years or something.



Yes.

And I don't, I don't think we've interviewed a single person in games. You see what I mean? And so, so there are all of those things I think are very important. In terms of what we do and how we operate I think we've got to and, you know, clearly I mean the committee's only, only too aware of it and been working very hard on it, we have to make the website really effective now and we have to really be effective in terms of something which people know about, people can go to but people can use as well, not people merely go to it to get a phone number to go somewhere else, you know what I mean, but to use the website in terms of accessing material, we, we need to do that. There are problems there and difficulties and, you know, which, which are not easy to resolve but we must do it if we are to move forward. If we don't do that then I think we're going to be, it's a constraint on us and our growth and our profile which will be, which is not tolerable.

Mm, I don't think it's simple to find a solution to those problems about IP and so on but I think we have to, mm, so those are some of them. And I think publications as well very much, we need to get because I have always thought, and perhaps I'm wrong, that the interviews themselves, which you've listened to a lot of them now haven't you, yes? I mean a lot of them contain some fascinating stuff, you know, and either edited versions or not, I mean either feature films in the 1930s or features in the Fifties or the birth of television or film processing in the Twenties or the documentary movement, there's a massive amount there which you could do and subsets of that. And I think that would be profitable, I think that would be useful, I think we could make money out of that and I think it would be useful to spread that information around, you know. So how publishing that stuff, publishing is I think is important, is an important activity which we haven't stressed or worked on yet although we all await your *magnus opus* with, mm, with great interest.

The other thing that we have to do, and I think that's clear too, is that we must raise our level of recordings, we must simply be recording more people so we need more people

doing, doing recording, we need more technical crews and we need a better mechanism for bringing the two together. Well, a better mechanism for choosing people, a better mechanism for identifying the interviewing panels and a better mechanism for putting them together with technical crews. Because what we've done so far in that kind of English and amateur way is that we, you know, we, it continues and the work gets done but it doesn't get done at a very high level but it gets done and a lot of interviews are done each year, we're doing thirty, forty a year or something, you know, which is very good and very useful. But I mean I think we, we need to be doing more, and that's about systems I think, and that's about systems and about recruitment and other stuff of that kind.

*Yes, yes.*

And I don't think that's, it's not easy to resolve in a voluntarist system but it's, that's what we have to do if we're to be effective I think. So, so, so all of that.

*Can I just, can I just pick up on two things there Roy? I mean, mm, first the, mm, the, the volunteers, the people who do the interviews?*

*Yes.*

*Mm, to, to what extent are they trained, you know, trained? To what extent is there a kind of common policy on the kind of questions to ask, the directions of these interviews to, to go in? Mm, because it strikes me that one of the issues that have been raised periodically in, in the committee minutes have been concerns about particular interviews, mm, or particular transcriptions. So you're wanting volunteers to be in the organisation but equally, mm, you're, there's, there may not be a kind of common direction or common policy...*

*Yes.*

*On, on that, on those interviews?*

I think there are, mm, oh I think two things. I think one, no, there isn't any training at all, that's the first point to make and that's something we're thinking about. The second point to make is that there is a level of confidence and trust which people have in the people who come to the group as opposed, in terms of their competence to undertake interviews largely on the basis of the work they've done in the past. So, so there is a level of competence involved which by and large is not challenged, which by and large is not, or is not tested, that assumption is not tested. Mm, so that's to answer your question about how it happens, that's how it happens because of their past they're trusted to do it in the future but there is no training. Thirdly we do have the good documentation which people have, you know, which says in doing an interview you must carry out the following things, do the following things, do your research *et cetera* and work out, you know what I mean, and a kind of structure for how an interview went. So that documentation's available and that documentation's useful, mm, so that's, that's an input which we make. Mm, as to problems about transcriptions, we've had so few done to be honest other than in universities that I don't recall it. There was once a problem about someone who did some transcriptions and there were people who had problems with those but that was kind of fifteen years ago or something, you know, mm, it's, you know, I don't think it's, that's a problem now. Mm, and I think that certainly of the people active on that committee now I'd say and even in terms of the group we're pretty clear as to what a good transcription is and how a transcription should work and how it should be, mm, transcribed. But its a, it's a, transcribing interviews is a skill, you know, i.e. it's not, it's not simple, it's, it's not...

*It's a cost, it's a cost there an skill.*

And problematic.

*And, and...*

Absolutely, it's a... And, and like one of the things, well, I was saying about something much, much earlier about our financial appeal, one of the things we have to do is get that, that organised and get that, you know what I mean.

*Do you see...?*

Is work out the economics of that.

*If, if a, if a priority is in the near future increasing the number of transcriptions?*

Yes.

*Mm, transcriptions can all be put on the Web?*

Yes.

*Would you then, and then the accessibility to the collection changes from the system that we have at the moment where people who are interested often go via the BFI Library, they find out what they want, they have to get permission.*

Yes.

*But if you can have transcriptions up very similar to the University of East Anglia which has that, that selection of transcriptions which are readily available for, for the public to look at.*

Yes.

*Do you see the, mm, Project becoming much more, the transcripts at least becoming much more available to the general public?*

I think they have to be available at the end of the day. I think, as I've said, I think there are problems there about how you do that, how you protect the IPA, you don't because we have to protect that as well, mm, because if you don't want kind of profligate use of it and we don't want profligate use of it without any...

*You don't want commercial use of it I think, is that the crucial...?*

That's right. We, we don't want the material, yes, yes, that's a point. But if someone's going, going to take great slabs of it and put it together in a book, you know, even though it's a book for a charity or something...

*Yes.*

We would still want to know about that and we would still want to say 'wait a minute', you know. Mm, we would want some cash from them. However, so, so I don't...

*So this, this might stop you putting the transcripts up on the Web then?*

No, oh well no, no. Well, I think at the end of the day if we're to be realistic we've got to put the transcripts on the Web and we've got to make them available on the Web in some sense or other. Now they'll need a gateway of some kind there. I'm not, I don't know, I don't have a clear notion of how that gateway would work, whether there would be a password, whether there would, would be, you know, some other way of doing it, whether people would take out a subscription annually to use it or, you know, I've, I've, I don't know how that would work and we would all need to be quite confident that it worked in a proper way, because I don't think we're talking about making them freely available in the way you talked about UEA, I don't think that's on the cards. Mm, but yes, we have to make them available and much more freely available and less problematically available than they are now. But I mean you've got to be careful, we have to be careful because people have vested the copyright for that material in the History Project which is basically which is in the union at the end of the day and we

wouldn't want to be dealing with, you know, the legal implications of people saying to us 'you had the copyright of my material you're allowing anyone to use it [1:40:00] without payment, you know, what the fuck's happening here, why should I let you have my copyright?' you know what I mean. So it's terribly simple 'why am I not making money, I've read about, read my article in four newspapers, [Laughter] why am I not making money from it?' you know what I mean. 'I thought this was for non-profit'. I mean, yes, you there are problems, you know, there are difficulties unless we are careful but at the end the objective must be to make the stuff available, what's the point of doing it unless we, we, we make it available? We can't have it like some sort of golden rabbit that's buried somewhere and you have to kind of go on a treasure trail to find them, you know what I mean.

*Okay. My, this is my second question and this is going to be my final question unless there's things that you want to specifically raise that you haven't raised already and that is, mm, and again cast your mind back to the mid 1980s and perhaps how things have changed but who is the audience for all of this collection. Now we've got nearly six, we've got over 600, over 600 interviews collected. Who is going to be the consumer, the audience, the people who are going to pay attention to this? And obviously now it's on the Website we've got the University of East Anglia material, we've got the material via, via The BFI. But cast your mind back to the mid 1980s. What were people saying, you know, the, the pioneers and, and you when you became involved?*

Well, it's, it's...

*Who was going to be using it?*

Well, no it's...

*In the, in the, I mean, you know, what sort of image did you have of the people who, who would be consulting your interviews?*

I think in the early days I don't, I don't think there was a particular concern about users. I think in the, in the earlier period the major concern was just to get the stuff recorded and saved, it was about conservation [Laughter] rather than kind of access. Mm, they were thinking 'this stuff is being lost now, we don't want it lost any more let's record it'. Later the question came 'now we've recorded it who should have access'?

*When did that start?*

But I, what?

*When did...?*

Oh I...

*When did people start thinking about, mm, well, hey we're now sitting on...?*

Oh, from our early days, I mean from, from the days that we got involved with The BFI.

*Yes.*

However, the initial impulse was more, [Pause ] there's always been a concern to have access, you can't be in the public, in The Library and not have access of some kind to it, that wouldn't make any sense so it was... However, I think the initial priority was let's just get this stuff recorded, let's, let's save it, let's not lose it, let's not see it lost in kind of cemeteries and crematoria, mm, let's do that. Then to another, where are we going to keep the archive? BFI. BFI would say to us 'well', you know, 'you've got to have some access to it, how about this system'? We would have a discussion and we'd say 'yes, that's fine', then we'd cracked on. And assuming that the access system we had was by and large was meeting the needs, our needs, The BFI needs, wasn't involving too much work for too many people and was providing access in a proper and controlled way. And, and those were the assumptions and I don't think anybody was ever saying 'this is a

hopeless system, how can we make them more widely available? We must do this, we must do that, we must open it out' *et cetera*.

*Yes.*

Mm, I don't think that was ever... The feeling was that we had a system in place which was adequate for that but the priority was to get the interviews done and the second priority was to make them, you know, to have an access system. But however, I think now that we've reached a different place, we've come to a different place and clearly all the work we're doing on the website is part of that, you know, which means that we've got to think about making that more widely available, we've got to think about how we do that because I think that's going to be enormously important. And one, and some of the things we want to do, I mean we really, I mean I would love to see our material used although, and it, it sounds obvious enough to me if you say it quickly but it's, it's, it's, there are a lot of difficulties involved which is to see our material used in secondary education, I would love to see it used there, I think it's enormously important, I think kids are very interested in television and film making and how it works and what works and how it used to work and how it might work in the future, I think there's fascination there. And I think there's wonderful history here which could really enhance education and be good for the curriculum and good for our kids. Now I'd like to see that but, mm, that would be as much about making available the audio visual as it would just about making transcripts because of course, kids are not going to be too interested just in ploughing through, through transcripts as such, you know what I mean. If you had a transcript, if you had some audio visual material and a transcript as well for them to work with the students that would be good. But I mean some, but I think if you're going to do that then you, and you were talking to, I don't know, local authorities, education authorities.

*Teachers?*

Whoever, whoever's going to be involved in education in the future and Christ who, who knows what's going to the future of education under this government? However, then you



can't really be saying to those people and like and you can have access, you go in The BFI and sign a note and we'll check it and then you can listen to it. [Laughter] It's, it's not the way to organise, you know, and make an educational initiative is it if you've got that kind of little bottleneck in terms of that? So we, we have to think about opening that up. So that's one of the ways I'd like to see it used. But now I mean I just think we have to be as, as broad as we can. I think the general public are enormously important, I think there's real interest out there just people interested in film and cinema who may come just once in their lives to listen to it or they may come twice or three times.

*This would be mainly the website presumably?*

Yes, yes, yes, sure, sure.

*Yes.*

Sure. But I mean if you're going to have that you need to have some of the audio visual stuff on it as well, you know, it just wouldn't be transcripts, you know what I mean. You'd have to have some stuff on there which people could look at as well and see, you know, even if it's only tasters, but, you know, you're, you're going to need some stuff on there.

*Yes.*

Mm, so that there's FE, there's HE, there's, you know, stuff in education, mm, general public. Film makers, professionals, writers, researchers. All of those, broadcasters.

*Well, they have been, it's researchers via The BFI.*

*Yes.*

*Who are probably the main users up until now.*

Right.

*Would you, would you sort of approve of that?*

Yes, researchers and writers, yes.

*Yes.*

Yes, yes, yes, yes, I'd think so.

*And, and do you think by and...?*

And maybe to do to some extent, I mean I'm not sure we've ever, I don't think I've ever seen any good matrix for the use that's been made of it through the...

*I've seen in the minutes, mm, people...*

Number of visits.

*Mm, requesting access and that being noted in the minutes and they seem to have been...*

Oh individuals, yes.

*Yes.*

No, I just meant the kind of like overall how many in a year.

*Yes.*

What were the occupations of the people, how often did they come to it?

*But they tend to be, they tend to be academics.*

Yes.

*They tend to be or authors or potential authors?*

Yes, yes.

*These are the people. Do you think by and large that relationship has worked at least to the, you know, has worked well up until now?*

Well, yes. I mean I think we've, mm, I don't think we've failed in terms of our obligations in running an archive to make stuff available, we've done the best we can with limited resources. We've worked very hard, we've done an immense amount of work, we've recorded all those interviews, we've made them available as freely as we can. It's, it's difficult to ask us, it's difficult to say 'and you should have done a lot more'. Well, you know, mm...

*But do you feel that, remember one of your concerns is the commercial exploitation, mm, of, of the interview materials?*

Yes.

*Outside of The BECTU History Project. Do you think there have been any examples of this occurring that, you know, would encourage you to be wary in the future?*

Well, no because we've always been quite careful. I mean it's always been our, our policy has always been to, to limit the use of it. People have, no people come, people are aware about IP issues now, people don't steal the stuff quite so much, you know, they try, they attempt to, to come to us. So, so, so I think there is a, there is a concern, there is a

knowledge about IP issues which means that that's less of a problem than it has been. I think there may have been a couple of examples where stuff got used, you know.

*But nobody's trying to rip off the material?*

Illegitimately.

*From the University of East Anglia website which would be relatively easy to, to do if they were going to, if they were going to do that?*

Yes.

*Have they?*

But I mean has the University of East Anglia publicised what it's got available?

[Laughter] Probably not very well. My feeling is the UEA is not the most effective high profile, you know, heavy punching publicity machine which...

*True, true, but if you were keen to...*

Which, which, no you might get it.

*Find that material you would find it?*

You, you, you might do. However, if you were making it very publicly available all this stuff existed on there or they were I think the, the attempted use of it would be greater. I suspect anyway. So...

*Okay Roy thanks very much.*

Right.

*Is there anything else you want to sort of add? I think we, we've, we've been far ranging and we've covered lots and lots of, lots and lots of things.*

Well, have I done everything that you want me to do?

*You certainly have.*

Yes.

*You certainly have.*

Yes.