The Briggs Lecture 2016
Asa Briggs
Lord Briggs of Lewes
1921 -2016

1960s: Open University Planning Committee
1980s: Towards a Commonwealth of Learning
1989-1993: Chair, COL Board of Governors
All Souls
Langham Place

4 October, 2016

‘The BBC Church’
Keighley, Yorkshire 1900
'One always sensed that there were never less than three balls in the air though usually only one of them was visible'.

College Record
"both in quantity and in quality – the two do not always go together – his output in the written word, and in broadcasts and lectures, was awesome. It is doubtful whether Briggs ever spent a truly idle moment in his life".

The Independent
Re-drawing the map of learning

The Briggs Lecture 2016
Open as to:

- People
- Places
- Methods
- Ideas
Asa Briggs
Born 1921 to William and Jane Briggs

"We were not straight working class, but very near to it"
STUDENT
Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge University
The youngest undergraduate since Oliver Cromwell
The youngest undergraduate since Oliver Cromwell

“You’re only a baby Briggs - but since we are sure there is going to be a war, we would like you to complete your degree before you are called up for military service".
Asa Briggs

Cambridge:
Firsts in both parts of the History Tripos

London School of Economics:
First in Economics
Open to Methods

“I actually did some marking of scripts for the University Correspondence College when I was a very young new Cambridge graduate in 1941”
Open to Methods

“I actually did some marking of scripts for the University Correspondence College when I was a very young new Cambridge graduate in 1941”

“I took the two degrees in parallel, the London one called ‘external’. I did not dare tell my Cambridge supervisor in Sidney Sussex College what I was doing or I would have been forbidden to do it”
Open to Methods

“He turned to the UCC for courses and in talking to him about his studies I had the benefit of sharing them without paying for them”
Open to Methods

“He turned to the UCC for courses and in talking to him about his studies I had the benefit of sharing them without paying for them”

“When I told this three years later to an able and enterprising man working for the UCC, who asked me to mark scripts and pass on guidance to the UCC students, he considered sensibly that this was a great advantage.”
SOLDIER
Open to Methods & Ideas

Bletchley Park, 1943
Code-breaking at Bletchley Park
Lord Asa Briggs on his book 'Secret Days - Code-Breaking at Bletchley Park'

CODE-BREAKING IN BLETCHLEY
Alan Turing

“whom we all deferred to because he was clearly a genius”
TEACHER & SCHOLAR
Fellow of Worcester College, initially teaching philosophy, politics and economics rather than modern history.
A SOCIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND

ASA BRIGGS
Open to People

Workers’ Educational Association
President 1960 -1969

“Asa had a deep understanding of those denied the experience of education generally and higher education particularly”

Raj Dhanarajan
“Broadcasting is in the forefront of social and cultural changes which it both registers and influences…

To write the history of broadcasting is, in a sense, to write the history of everything else”
University of Sussex 1960
VICE-CHANCELLOR & CHANCELLOR
Dany le Rouge
"If you continue to interrupt me, I will stop lecturing forthwith. If you desist, I shall take questions at the end of the lecture on France and Prussia, and any other matter, particularly including the running and governance of the University of Sussex".

A lecture on the Franco-Prussian War
Open to an Open University

1967: Member, OU Planning Committee

- Multi-disciplinary foundation courses
- Liberal modular system
- 'the University as a whole should be responsible for the nature, content and teaching of each Course offered by the University – not individual academics or departments
Open to an Open University

1967: Member, OU Planning Committee

- Multi-disciplinary foundation courses
- Liberal modular system
- 'the University as a whole should be responsible for the nature, content and teaching of each Course offered by the University – not individual academics or departments
- Partnership with the BBC
Chancellor of the Open University
1978-1994
“I am unhappy if I ever write fewer than 1,000 words a day”
"Briggs reminds one of one of those tramps who can often be seen rummaging in municipal dustbins, carefully smoothing, folding and packing away things that they find. His books are always overweight, stuffed with minutiae, which any self-respecting graduate student would throw away. And that is their glory!"
1980s – Decline in student mobility

- So why not move the courses to the students instead of the other way around?

- The Briggs Group: ‘to report on the potential for Commonwealth co-operation in distance education.’
"Asa demonstrated his well-honed skills in drawing out ideas from a diverse international group, his mastery as a writer, and his willingness to take on too much"

Hilary Perraton
TOWARDS A COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

A proposal to create the University of the Commonwealth for Co-operation in Distance Education

Commonwealth Secretariat
'any learner anywhere in the Commonwealth shall be able to study any distance teaching programme available from any *bona fide* college or university in the Commonwealth'
1987

CHOGM Vancouver

Francophonie
Québec
Putting proposals for using communications technology for ODL to both the CHOGM and Francophonie summit meetings

Brian Mulroney
TOWARDS A COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

A proposal to create the University of the Commonwealth for Co-operation in Distance Education

Commonwealth Secretariat

Rajiv Gandhi
Reflections on Ten Years of
The Commonwealth of Learning

Tan Sri Dato' Prof. Dr. Gajaraj Dhanarajan
2001
From Approval to Memorandum of Understanding

Give a man a fish to feed him for a day...
Teach a man to fish to feed him for a lifetime.
Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.

Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.

Create a good tutorial and he can teach himself how to fish.
Chair, Board of Governors, 1989-1993
After his 90th birthday he completed three books and ... two weeks before his death his greatest regret was that he would not be able to finish the book that he was then writing!
“Being part of the creation of The Open University was the most interesting thing I ever did”
Asa’s legacy

Open as to:

• People
• Places
• Methods
• Ideas
The 1960s

‘The golden age of the don’
Open to People

Workers’ Educational Association
President 1960 -1969

“Asa had a deep understanding of those denied the experience of education generally and higher education particularly”

Raj Dhanarajan
Open to Places
Open to Places
The Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth
Open to Methods
Open to Ideas
"In retrospect how timid the innovations of the new universities look, how traditional the spread of subjects and how marginal the institutional change that substituted schools of study for departments".
Re-drawing the map of learning
- Multi-disciplinary foundation courses
- Course teams
Re-drawing the map of learning

The Briggs Lecture 2016

Text & slides at: www.sirjohn.ca