CABINET

UNIVERSITY OF THE AIR

Note by the Lord President of the Council

The attached draft White Paper, prepared by the Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Education and Science, (Miss Jennie Lee), and the Report of the Advisory Committee are circulated for discussion by the Cabinet on Tuesday, 8th February.

H.B.

Privy Council Office, S.W.1.

4th February, 1966
The University of the Air

The fourth television network

1. The Government has decided to establish a University of the Air, that is to say, an open university providing special television and radio programmes, reinforced by correspondence courses, residential courses and tutorials, which will enable students to obtain degrees and other technical and professional qualifications. The University will be set up as quickly as possible, and, since it will require a substantial share of a new television service, the Government will authorise the construction of an additional television network - the fourth network. This will be an Ultra High Frequency (UHF) service on the 625-line standard.

2. The Government propose to set up a public corporation which will have responsibility for the management of the fourth network. It will be shared between University of the Air programmes, and other programmes presented by the corporation. The University of the Air will be financed by students' fees and sale of publications, as well as by direct Exchequer grant. It is also hoped to attract endowments as other Universities have done. The network, to the extent that it is not used by the University of the Air, will be financed from advertising revenue.

University of the Air: Scope and functions, and organisation

3. An informally constituted Advisory Committee whose members were experienced in higher education was called together in June, 1965, and asked to consider the educational scope and functions of a University of the Air. The report of this Committee, which is given in Appendix A, was accepted in principle by the Government.

4. The main proposals for the University of the Air are these -

(a) The University of the Air is to be established with its own Vice-Chancellor and Governing Body. It will have its own administrative centre, and a nucleus of television studios, but will work in co-operation with local education authorities, educational bodies and establishments, and the broadcasting organisations.

(b) It will offer primarily courses leading to degrees, but professional, technical, refresher and conversion courses will also be included.
(c) Courses will be so designed that students can obtain intermediate qualifications. "Credits" will be awarded when a part or stage of a course is completed, and will lead to a nationally recognised qualification.

(d) There will be no prescribed entry qualifications. All will be free, under guidance from tutors, to enter for courses, but the final degree qualifications will be of the same standard as that of existing universities.

(e) The television programmes will be broadcast for forty weeks a year at peak viewing time, i.e., in the early or mid-evening on week days, and, to meet the needs of shift workers and others who are not free in the evenings, programmes will also be broadcast during the day, including early morning, and at late night and week-ends.

(f) The framework of the organisation is outlined in Appendix C.

(g) Departmental responsibility for the University of the Air, in view of the fact that its activities will not be confined to degree work, and that other than strictly university functions and arrangements will be involved, will rest with the Department of Education and Science, and not the University Grants Committee. So, too, the financing of the University of the Air will not be subject to advice from the University Grants Committee.

Development of the fourth television network

5. It is estimated that it will take about ten years to develop the fourth television network to the point where it covers all, or practically all, of the United Kingdom. But the first transmissions are expected to start within two years. Sufficient stations to cover the main industrial centres - approximately 70 per cent of the population - could be established within four years for a capital commitment of £8 - £9 million. The proportion of the population within reach of the transmissions will probably build up as follows -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of population covered</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>85%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Costs

6. Excluding studios, the capital cost of the entire fourth network, in terms of additional demand on resources, is estimated at £17 million. This is on the basis that it would form part of the UHF television system shared with BBC 2. The University of the Air would carry part of this cost, depending largely on its share of broadcasting facilities. Capital costs would be spread over ten years.

The total annual costs of the University of the Air, including a share of the operating costs of the fourth network, running costs of its studios, programmes - both on television, and on radio, if local radio stations are established - and supporting services, such as correspondence courses and viewing centres, might build up to £7 million within a few years.

University of the Air Governing Body

7. While discussions are in progress about arrangements for running the fourth network, steps will be taken to secure the establishment of the University of the Air by charter, and, in consultation with educational interests, to set up a Governing Body, which will have control of, and responsibility for, the University.

Conclusion

8. With the establishment of the additional television network, there will be four networks providing programmes of general entertainment. The Government consider it essential that a substantial share of one should be allocated to the University of the Air. This will make a vital contribution to educational and cultural development in this country. Moreover, the University, by providing a wide range of short courses in professional and vocational subjects, will play an important part in the advance of technological studies. The main aim is to improve the educational, cultural, and professional standards of the country as a whole.

4th February, 1966
REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE AIR
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee (Annex B) was called together to advise the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Miss Jennie Lee, on the educational functions and content of the University of the Air, as outlined in the speech made by Mr. Harold Wilson in Glasgow on 8th September, 1963. A number of papers were submitted by members of the Committee. Discussion centred on the type of degree courses that should be offered; the nature of supporting services; and the framework of the organisation required. The Committee completed its deliberations on 4th August, 1965, and broad agreement was reached as follows:

1) The University will require its own administrative centre, and this will be the focal point of activities; but it should make full use of existing agencies, such as the Extra-Mural Departments of Universities, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and local education authorities.

2) The University should offer primarily courses leading to degrees, but professional, technical, refresher and conversion courses should also be included.

3) The degree course should be of general type. Honours level should not be included in the initial stage. It should cover a group of subjects that could be taken at two levels, “minor” (ordinary) and “major” (special).

The degree course might consist of five subjects, two at major level and three at minor level, the major subjects requiring two years’ and the minor subjects one year’s study. The minimum length of this degree course, on the basis that two major subjects would not be attempted at the same time, would be four years, but it could be spread over five years or more. Some members of the Committee preferred a course of four subjects, with a minimum completion time of three years for the major subjects and two years for the minor subjects. Such a course would normally require five years to complete. The main consideration is that arrangements should be flexible, so that some students could qualify in a shorter time if able to do so, and others could take longer if they found it necessary. Moreover, courses in individual subjects need not be restricted to complete years; they could extend over two winter terms, with a summer residential course in between.

It is essential that students should be given the opportunity of obtaining intermediate qualifications which should be nationally recognised. Thus certificates and diplomas should be awarded to mark the successful completion of a part or stage of the course, and “credits” should be awarded for component elements of a course which would cumulatively lead to a recognised qualification.
(4) Degrees should be conferred by the University of the Air in its own right, but in the early stages it may be necessary to operate under the aegis of an existing university or a consortium of universities. The degree should carry a specific designation in the same way as BA (Lond.) or BSc (Leeds), indicating the location of the national centre.

(5) Courses in arts and social sciences present less difficulty than those in pure and applied science, since the latter group involve a considerable amount of practical and laboratory work, and moreover demand a well-defined previous standard of knowledge and attainment on the part of the student. It is, however, important that the University of the Air should make a contribution to scientific and technological education. The subjects offered by the University for the degree course should from the outset include mathematics and the foundations of science; and it should seek, with the co-operation of local education authorities, to extend the range for students with the necessary experience and qualifications to some technological subjects, the practical and laboratory work being carried out in technical colleges on Saturdays and in vacation periods. Shorter courses in engineering, professional, and technological subjects should be provided from the start, and a Working Party should be set up to look into the possibility of establishing courses leading to degrees and other qualifications with a technological element.

(6) The degree courses would include subjects of contemporary social, industrial and commercial importance; basic subjects like English, mathematics and foundations of sciences; and a range of cultural subjects.

It is recognised that it will probably not be practicable to offer a total of more than ten main subjects, and some of the subjects might be grouped together as units of one main subject.

(7) The presentation of courses will variously involve a combination of television, radio (if local stations are established these would be particularly helpful), correspondence courses, programmed instruction, tutorials and practicals, short residential courses, and study and discussions at community viewing or study centres. The main contribution of television will be to bring lecturers of distinction within easy reach of everyone, to build up the corporate feeling of a University, and to illuminate the crucial stages of a course. It will provide an added dimension, and give the University of the Air its unique impact and coverage.

The project requires peak viewing time on a television service with national coverage. On the basis that 10 subjects would require a minimum of 20 half-hour programmes each week for a 40 week year, the television time required would be at least two hours at peak viewing time on five evenings a week, with repeats during the day, early morning, late evening, and at week-ends. Programmes should be recorded for repeats on local closed-circuit television and by other means. Additional time, some of which would also be peak viewing time, would be necessary for the shorter courses mentioned in paragraph (5).
Enrolment as a student of the University should be open to everyone on payment of a registration fee, irrespective of educational qualifications, and no formal entrance requirement should be imposed. It would be necessary to provide an advisory or information service for intending students, which would help them to select suitable courses, for some of which a minimum starting level of qualifications would be advisable.

An estimate of the potential audience can only be guess-work, and it can be assumed that a relatively small proportion of students would complete a full degree course. But the viewing audience would be considerable, and completion of only part of a course and the gaining of an intermediate qualification could be of great benefit to the individual and to the community. If the present rate of technological and cultural advance is to be sustained, it will depend not only on those who have reached the highest educational level, but on a population that is generally literate and well-informed.

The University should arrange for regular surveys to assess the effectiveness of courses, and the size and type of audiences following them.

The University will require a substantial administrative centre, with a staff of about 40-50 of professional calibre.

The following organisational framework is suggested:

(a) The University of the Air should have its own Vice-Chancellor, and a Governing Body or Council, meeting two or three times a year. The Governing Body would be drawn largely from universities and other establishments of higher education, local education authorities, extra-mural and adult education organisations, and would include representatives of the broadcasting organisations.

(b) The policy-making bodies would be an Academic Board and an Examining Board. In addition, it might be advisable to have an Academic Assembly, where those working in the field could express their views.

(c) The University will require, at the senior level, a Director of Studies who would be responsible for the co-ordination of all the various teaching approaches that were used; a Registrar, who would also be responsible for an advisory service to students; Heads of various departments, e.g., Correspondence, Research and Assessment, Publications, and Operations (television, radio, films); and a group of highly qualified Heads of Faculties, who would be responsible for the planning of courses in their own subjects and for the selection of lecturers and tutors. They will, of course, require the support of efficient administrative machinery.

(d) While the University will need a number of regional centres, and will make use of existing agencies, including local education authorities, the WEA and Extra-Mural
Departments, it will not be enough to co-ordinate the activities of a number of separate agencies. It is hoped that existing educational institutions will co-operate in the production of courses and lend staff when needed, but the University will best achieve its aims by firm central control of a fully integrated operation.

The central authority will require a nucleus of production facilities, including studios, which will be entirely at its disposal for the production of programmes; but many of the programmes will be made elsewhere. The central organisation should deal directly with outside agencies, and retain final responsibility for the planning and presentation of programmes and courses.

Tutors will be employed by the central organisation and correspondence will be centrally organised and monitored.

(e) The regional centres will be responsible for liaison with universities, colleges, extra-mural departments, etc., in their areas and for making arrangements for facilities such as libraries, laboratories, and viewing/listening posts.

(13) Departmental responsibility for the University of the Air, in view of the fact that its activities would not be confined to degree work, and that other than strictly university functions and arrangements would be involved, should rest with the Department of Education and Science, rather than with the University Grants Committee.

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE AIR ADVISORY
COMMITTEE MEMBERS

MISS JENNIE LEE, M.P. (Chairman), Joint Parliamentary Under-
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PROFESSOR H. WILTSHIRE, Professor of Adult Education, University
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UNIVERSITY OF THE AIR. DIAGRAM OF POSSIBLE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

GOVERNING BODY

Academic Board | Academic Assembly | Examining Board

Academic Direction | Administration | Operational | Correspondence and tutorial | Publications | Research and assessment

(Director of Studies) | (Registrar) | | | |

Functions:
- Co-ordination of various teaching media; academic aspects of production; responsibility for individual subjects and group of subjects.
- Central staff; relations with outside agencies; liaison with regional centres.
- Production of programmes on television, radio, film.
- Marking; examinations; recording of students' progress; recruitment of tutors, organisation of residential courses and of laboratory facilities. Advice to students.
- Production of pamphlets and reading lists.
- Research into and assessment of size and type of audience, and effectiveness of courses.

REGIONAL CENTRES

Functions—under the direction of the national centre—provision of local and regional facilities, e.g., closed circuit television, local radio (when established), community viewing centres, laboratories, libraries, etc.