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CORRECTED VERSION
(Embargoes Sidelined)

THIS TRANSCRIPT WAS TYPED FROM AN RTU RECORDING AND NOT COPIED FROM AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT. BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF MISHEARING AND THE DIFFICULTY IN SOME CASES OF IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL SPEAKERS THE BBC CANNOT VOUCH FOR ITS COMPLETE ACCURACY.

RECORDING SERVICES (RADIO)
Tape Transcript by Radio Transcribing Unit

Frank Gillard and John Arkell in conversation.
Reels 1, 2, 3, 4
CASSETTES SUPPLIED

GILLARD: The date is the 18th of December, 1984; this is Frank Gillard recording a conversation for the Oral History of the BBC. I'm spending the day with Mr. John Arkell (A-R-K-E-L-L), at Mr. Arkell's home near Henley. And Mr. Arkell will be contributing during the day his reminiscences of his years in the BBC. And we're going to start the conversation right now.

I wonder if you'd tell us first of all about the post you held. You came in about 1948 or '49?

ARKELL: '49, and I came in as Controller of Staff Administrations - CSA - and I retained that post until 1958 when it was, so to speak, upgraded and I was given a seat on the board, and I was known then - the Board of Management - and I was known then as DSA - Director of Staff Administration - which I held until 1960, and then I was appointed Director of Administration which I held until 1970 when I retired.

GILLARD: And where did you come from to take up this post?

ARKELL: Well I came immediately from J. Lyons and Company where I was Personnel Manager. But perhaps it would be sensible to go back very briefly over my career, perhaps it has some significance to what I tried to bring to the BBC. After leaving Oxford... in fact while I was still at Oxford, I took a job in the City, I don't think this has ever been done before or since. I was still at Christchurch, Christ Church, and the money was

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getting rather low and I didn't want to depend on my father more than I could help. Also there was a very remunerative job suddenly offered to me in the City. Although I didn't really want to go in the City ultimately, I thought it would be useful in training for anything. So I took a job in the City being trained for the National Citibank of New York, and for a job in an investment trust, private investment trust called the Mikaliss Trust. And I did a daily journey from Oxford, read for my degree in the train, could afford a first class carriage and I found that I could work pretty well in the corner of a first class carriage. And my day, for instance in the summer, started with a run round meadows at 6.30 in the morning; breakfast; 8.32 train to London, working in the train; work during the day; took a lift back in the coach of the 8th fast Mercedes Benz from the City; got down in time for an outing rowing at 6 o'clock; rowed for practice eight - I was in the first Christchurch Eight; and then dinner, then a bit more work, then to bed, then up again the next morning. So that was... I think that's only relevant in that I've developed all my life I think, perhaps it would be too strong to say it's a mania, but I hate wasting time. I was influenced by Pliny I think, who you may remember had his slave to read to him when he had a bath, and I always felt that... I just hate wasting any sort of time, and this was part of the training for that I think.

GILLARD: Makes you sound like a very enterprising man. Did you actually apply for this job with the BBC or were you approached? I'm asking because it's unusual for the BBC to bring in somebody from the outside world at such a high level as controller.

ARKELL: Well just to resume after that, I... well to answer your particular question it was advertised and so I applied for it. And I was at that time Personnel Manager of J. Lyons and Company, and I eventually got shortlisted, and the BBC was extremely slow in bringing me to an interview. I'd forgotten all about it by the time, I think, some months afterwards I came for an interview with Sir Norman Bottomley first, and then with the Board of Management, and then, I think, for the Board of Governors. But just continuing very very briefly. After the job in the City, I took... after five years of

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that, I took a job as assistant secretary for the Council for the Protection of Rural England. Then I was a territorial in the army so I was whisked out of that at the beginning of 1939, and after army service I came back and I went to this Personnel Manager job in Lyons for five years, which was fascinating actually because it was a huge job really and I hadn't been in industry before. Very lucky to get it. And that was for four or five years, there was ~~8,000~~ were 35,000 staff or more. And then as I say I saw this job in the BBC and I applied for it. And perhaps it would be right to say here really why I wanted to change from Lyons because Lyons ~~was~~ really had a great future, and shortly before I left Lyons they made it clear that they wanted me to get from the personnel side - which I didn't really want to do - onto the selling side and the economic side and the business side. And I think I should have made a lot of money if I'd remained there, but I wanted to change over and try and bring what expertise I could to the BBC largely because of its influence to the nation as a whole. I think I could perhaps put it this way: it wasn't just that I wanted to do another personnel manager's job in another organisation; it was that I particularly wanted to get into broadcasting, and not to be too serious about it, but one's seen the enormous importance of an informed and educated public in a democracy. Things needed doing in this country, I felt at that time, and always do of course, which could not be done until the public as a whole had been persuaded that it was necessary to do them. A particular example which I came across just before the war when I was in the CPRE, and I think this is just a little relevant to this, was national parks in connection with the protection of the countryside. We were told in the CPRE that we should have to get the public persuaded that national parks were important in the interests of the protection of the countryside before they could get a bill through. And it seemed to me - and we tried to do this and were successful in the end - but it seemed to me that to have an informed public on big, important matters, quite apart from all the other side of broadcasting which fascinated me - the way it could bring happiness into the homes and so on - was of enormous importance to the nation, it's partly really that - sounds very serious - but it was really that which made me attracted

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so much by transferring my qualities and capabilities such as they were to broadcasting, rather than continuing in, say, industry. But nevertheless, when it came to actually being appointed in the BBC, I had very much second thoughts, for two reasons really. The most important reason at the time, I think, was that Lyons were so extremely nice, the Salmons and Glucksteins never actually tried to dissuade me from going but made it so clear they didn't want me to go. And I got so attached to the firm and to the people there that I did have second thoughts about it. But the other reason was that I - this is less important because it never really affected me all that much but it made me think - was that quite a number of people warned me off going into the BBC. They seemed to think it was a rather... rather biased organisation, not very well run, and I was told in fact that it was Communist in many of its outlooks. I couldn't really believe this but it was particularly interesting to find when I got there what I thought about that. And I'll tell you that now if you like.

GILLARD: Yes please.

ARKELL: Well I was very pleasantly surprised when I got into the BBC. I never saw a trace of this Communist influence, and I was in a position later on in the BBC to know how true that was. I was very impressed when I got into the BBC with the care, enormous care which the heads of programmes, the controllers, the regions took in the output in the programme content, which itself fascinated me, and I was more than happy to be serving an organisation which was producing these sort of programmes. I was very impressed with the philosophy and the seriousness with which the heads of the BBC - and it seemed to me this permeated down in the organisation - took their jobs. I was greatly impressed by these meetings we had under William Haley, the Director General, in the Council Chamber of all the regional controllers and other heads of the BBC. I've forgotten what they used to be called, those meetings ... liaison meetings, that's right. I was very impressed with the discussions there. Of course it was coming, I admit, from an industrial organisation and therefore one would be naturally rather interested in something so different.

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But even so, the warnings which I was given about the BBC just weren't justified at all in my opinion.

GILLARD: What did you make of the BBC staff administration and it's policies and so forth?

ARKELL: Well, again, I was impressed with the legacy which I'd been left by St.John Pym. He had obviously introduced a very good set of staff regulations and had made many innovations which were basically right, I thought, and in line with the sort of things that I was trying to introduce into J. Lyons, and some of them were very similar. I think perhaps one should at this stage mention the grading system because very soon after I arrived, David Hay who was in charge of that, and in fact he came into the BBC from the air force, from the RAF, and introduced this grading system which was a system of job evaluation and still to some extent, I think, is, which extended into all the professions in the BBC which is most unusual. I mean every single post virtually, including even to some extent manual staff, were graded: programme staff, engineering staff, and they all were related to eachother. Now this concept was somewhat imperfectly excecuted at the time when I came into the BBC, but it was a most interesting concept which was applied more widely in the BBC with its terrific variety of professions, more widely I think than in any organisation in this country. A tremendous task, but it has the great advantage that for instance when a team of - for a programme, say an outside broadcast or something - went to work, each member of that team knew that he was paid in relation to the importance and responsibility of the job he was doing, and that there was a relationship between his job and the job of the producer and so on. So that this grading scheme, which, as I say, was somewhat naturally rather imperfect at the time and needed a great deal of change and improvement which I hope I've tried to bring about, was, I think, a very important aspect. It was of course criticised a lot; it tended, I think, to limit to some extent, obviously, the heads of the programme departments because it reduced their freedom, but you can't have it both ways. If you have a grading system and if you have this policy of interelating the

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responsibilities in pay terms throughout an organisation like the BBC, and if you accept those advantages which are enormous - enormous too from the point of view of negotiations with unions - then I think you must accept the disadvantages of - and those were considerable too - of limiting the initiative of the heads of programmes and controllers in being able to reward their staff in the way they wanted to. And I did do something about that which I think to some extent changed that situation. But basically I think the grading system was an extremely important part of the BBC administration, and of course made for unity in the BBC because of this system.

GILLARD: You said that you took over a well organised system. Had you any aspirations or intentions towards improving it?

ARKELL: Oh very much so, very much so. I think perhaps we could deal with the grading system to start with. I felt that it was too rigid, that there was nothing like enough flexibility to reward merit within the grading system; there was just the occasional, very occasional personal grade given. But apart from that there was complete rigidity, and fairly soon I wanted to change that. And I took some advice from various different people, including the Civil Service, who were rather against the introduction of any form of recognition of merit in the form of pay. They warned me that once you started that it would result, perhaps rather like proficiency pay in the army that went, as far as I recall, first up to 50% and then they had to give it to everyone, 100%. It's rather interesting this because the Civil Service has quite recently, so I was reading, decided to introduce, after all these years, a form of merit pay. And when Fullton was implemented into the Civil Service and I was a member of an informal ministerial committee to help introduce parts of Fullton into the BBC, this was recommended also...(CUT)

GILLARD: Tape 2. At the end of tape 1 there was a little slip. Mr. Arkell said that he was a member of an informal group that worked on the introduction of the Fullton proposals into the BBC; he meant into the Civil Service. So we're going to repeat that again and then carry straight on.

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ARKELL: I was a member of an informal ministerial committee to advise on the implementation of the Fullton Committee's reports for the Civil Service into the Civil Service, and one of those recommendations was to bring some flexibility into the very rigid grading system in the Civil Service, in the form really of the sort of thing we had in the BBC. In fact I think I probably fed this particular suggestion into the Fullton Committee at one time. But it never actually was implemented. It was only recently, at last, that they are doing this. In the last few days I read it in the news paper. I think that the Civil... it's interesting that the Civil Service recommendation to me when I asked them about this, and I asked various other people to get the wisdom of those who had introduced flexibility into scales, was that, as I was saying earlier, it would run away with the system, and it was a useful bit of wisdom which they gave me because I was most careful when I introduced it into the BBC to ensure that didn't happen. And by never arranging quotas for the number of special awards in this scale and personal grades, which I increased greatly, but never arranging quotas, but nevertheless making it very clear that you had to have a standard of sustained outstanding service over a period before this flexibility could be applied. And in that way and with the co-operation - I think the great co-operation - of the controllers and heads of departments over this in the long term, who, in the end, gave these awards themselves, and there was only post-hoc examination of them afterwards. I think through all that, we have always managed to - while I was in the BBC anyway - to contain this flexibility, and it's proved of enormous importance. Perhaps later on we can refer to it again when we come to the question of retaining staff who wanted to go to ITV.

GILLARD: Before you go on to another point that I know you wanted to make about opening up the BBC, I want to ask you since you've mentioned the Civil Service, to what extent was there Civil Service control of the BBC administration or staff administration? Any at all?

ARKELL: None at all, except there was an arrangement in the Appointments Committee - Appointments Department - that for posts above

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a certain level a Civil Service representative used to attend the appointments board, and he was of course purely advisory. He was just a member of the board. The chairman of the board who was always a member of Appointments Department operated just the same whether he was there or not. But he was quite useful, but after a time, after a few years, I felt that we could manage on our own perfectly well, and I think the Civil Service felt the same, and so we dispensed with him.

GILLARD: Well let's go on then. You also were going to talk about opening up.

ARKELL: Well there were a number of other things which I wanted to change with the help of my staff, and after a great deal of discussion with not only my own personal staff, my own staff administration staff, but of course the administrative staff throughout the BBC - television, external services, sound broadcasting and so on. We had a great deal of liaison. A number of changes I wanted to make. I think one was to encourage much greater attendance at conferences organised by such bodies as the Institute of Personnel Management, the Industrial Society, the British Institute of Management. Not only to gain experience and wisdom from such attendance, but also to contribute to them, because as I implied earlier I think the BBC had a very high standard on the whole in the administration, staff administration particularly of which I can speak since I was the CSA to start with, and there were a lot of matters which I think we could contribute and help other industrial and other firms. So that... and I think on the whole this had been discouraged before I arrived, so I encouraged it and the BBC started sending staff all over the place to various conferences, two, three-day conferences, a week, two-week conferences, sometimes even a day conference, which widened their outlook and caused them to be in touch with people doing sort of similar jobs in other organisations. And also not only conferences, but I encouraged people to go to the staff college for instance, at Henley-on-Thames - Ashridge - on a number of administrative courses which I think enormously opeened their eyes, and prevented them being too much in an ivory tower which one always has to do I think in an organisation like the

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BBC. That I think was extremely important and it was much, I think, welcomed by administrators throughout the Corporation. But the other thing perhaps which I wanted to change was I wanted the BBC to be run much more like a business from the point of view of its administration, than like a Civil Service. It was in any case a sort of mixture of the two, and there were some parts of the Civil Service administration which of course one wanted to retain - of the Civil Service type of administration I mean. But equally I wanted to reduce the bureaucracy and to speed decisions up. This seemed to me extremely important. The bureaucracy was far too great in my opinion. I remember one particular file on which I was asked to give a decision. Quite remarkable. It was a very thick file and it was entirely concerned with whether Sir Ian Jacob, when he went, I think it was, to Africa or some warm country abroad, should under allowance regulations be allowed to buy a free a pair of tropical trousers. And this file was presented to me by a Mr. Rose Troop who was a meticulous and very excellent allowances officer in many ways, but it was quite absurd that so much time should be spent on this one decision. And I waded through this - it took me hours. Of course I said he could have them without any trouble at all, and of course the contrast between that and personnel management in Lyons was fantastic. The idea of any of the directors of Salmons or Glucksteins asking my permission as to whether they should have a free pair of tropical trousers. So that this was an illustration I think of far too meticulous - using meticulous in a derogatory sense - way of operating the administration. And the other thing related to that was to speed decisions up. It was most vital. If you've got... especially if you've got a negative decision to give it's very important to give it as quickly as possible; it makes it much worse if you say no after a long interval.

GILLARD: Can I now talk to you - or get you to talk to me - about some of the leading BBC figures of that period. We're talking about now the late forties and fifties aren't we? What about this notorious Chairman Lord Simon, Chairman of the Board, this monstrous character. Did you have dealings with him?

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ARKELL: Yes. I wonder if I could just say one more thing before doing that, on the previous point. And that is in connection with speeding up administration. And that is the running of meetings. I felt that the chairing of meetings was far too slow in the BBC, if one could generalise, especially on the administrative side, and I was very keen that meetings should be chaired so that people coming to meetings knew that they wouldn't waste their time, they knew they'd get away perhaps even before they'd anticipated it, and this is the question of how to chair a meeting briskly, how to get through the sort of formal business very quickly, and spend plenty of time on the strategic matters that really do need ~~fleshing~~ thrashing out. And I managed I think to quicken up a lot of administrative meetings which people I think said they enjoyed so much more because of it. Now getting down to Lord Simon, I didn't have a lot of contact with him. But there is a rather amusing story that happened to me with Lord Simon which I think exemplifies one of his traits - not necessarily a bad one. But he had a habit - I think this may have been mentioned before - of writing down on masses of little bits of paper little notes to remind him of ~~what~~ whom he'd been talking to... what he'd been talking about to any member of staff. And apparently he used to get these bits of paper confused a bit, because I think it was in the first week that I went to see him, and I had a very pleasant conversation about various things, and he in fact was either related to or knew one of my personnel staff in J. Lyons and Company, with whom, incidentally, he checked up before I was appointed into the BBC. But after that meeting, what he apparently did was to mix the bit of paper up that he'd written down on when talking to me, with another bit of paper when he was talking to somebody who said that it was high time that Sir Norman Bottomley - who happened to be my boss, the Director of Administration - retired. And he got this mixed up and apparently he said to Sir William Haley, the Director General, that: I was talking to Mr.,Arkell, and he was saying (and this is my first week, remember, in the BBC) he was saying that he thought it was time that the Director of Administration retired. And William Haley, very tactfully as a matter of fact, said something to me

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when I first saw him after that, to the effect that he's not against ambition but it's unusual for a CSA to come in in the very first week to suggest that his boss should retire. I'm so glad that Sir William did in fact mention this to me otherwise it would have been very bad if it hadn't been corrected. It's the last thing I would do of course. But so that is perhaps an indication of Simon's tremendous keenness. I mean he went into every sort of detail, made little notes of it, and of course I was impressed with his care about people and all that he'd done in Withinshaw. And so I mean I wouldn't like to say that I could say much about Simon except that I liked him and was impressed with the care he took.

GILLARD: Would you say that he intervened too much though in the executive side of the BBC's affairs?

ARKELL: I can quite imagine that could be so because of his interest in so much detail, but I wouldn't like to say that I suffered from it myself.

GILLARD: What about some of these other people you've mentioned. Let's take Sir Norman Bottomley first. I mean he was Director of Administration, he was your boss, he was Air Chief Marshal.

ARKELL: Yes he was. Well looking back on Sir Norman's time when I was there and getting it into perspective, I think he did a very good job. I must admit that I - somewhat naturally I suppose, being very enthusiastic and keen at that time - found that he didn't respond as quickly as I would have liked to things that I wanted to get done. And I think he found me too persistent. In fact he actually said so in one of my annual reports which I didn't see because under our system as you know, inherent adverse comments need not be passed on, and I think he regarded this persistence of mine as inherent, so that I was never told of it until Hugh Greene took over as Director of Administration, and told me about it and said he disagreed with it partly because he thought persistence was an extremely good quality anyway and he was going to strike it from my report. But getting back to Sir Norman, I think he found me perhaps too persistent, too keen, and I found him perhaps

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a little slow in responding - but maybe I was too much wanting to change things - responding to me on these matters. But looking back I think he was, first of all he was an awfully nice person, I was very fond of him. He'd done a wonderful job in the BBC I think, on the whole. I know that Sir William Haley thought extremely highly of him, and that alone is important. So by and large I think he did a good job, and of course, in passing, he was a wonderful storyteller, most amusing.

GILLARD: But do these retired service people come into the BBC with different ideas of discipline and that sort of thing. The BBC is not a disciplined body really is it? It's... far from it.

ARKELL: I think that when they come in from the services at that level, they're wise enough, clever enough and experienced enough not to want to bring in wholesale the kind of discipline that they experienced in their service. And I wouldn't say that Sir Norman really was too hidebound in that sort of discipline. I think he... I think really he co-operated and went... I mean I wasn't there when he arrived, but I would say he was already a BBC person when I was working to him.

GILLARD: Let's go on then to Haley - you've mentioned Haley several times, and obviously you have a high opinion of him.

ARKELL: Yes, I have a high opinion of Haley. I, of course, came in towards the end of his - towards the end of his - Director Generalship, and therefore can't speak with such detail as so many others can. But just to give my impressions as somebody coming into the BBC I was most impressed with his high-mindedness and his perception of truth which I see that Tracey, in his book on Hugh Greene, derides to some extent. It impressed me enormously, this, especially coming - you can understand - from a firm like J. Lyons and Company where we were dealing obviously in other matters, to find Haley standing up for such high ideals, and I felt that he was much looked up to, and I think to have somebody at the head of an organisation which in those sort of ways... who in those sort of ways was looked up to must be a good thing. I can see that...

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GILLARD: This is tape 3, and he was speaking about Sir William Haley (H A L E Y).

ARKELL: This... what I've just said I think one must dilute it with the shyness which Sir William Haley had which I think was a great disadvantage from the point of view of staff. I think staff respected him enormously but of course they never really got to know him very well. I think it's rather like the two glass eyes that J.B. Priestly used to talk about. He was a very shy man, and I think found it very difficult to make really friendly contact with individual staff. As a matter of fact, the only time I really saw him come out of his shell was at a THIRD PROGRAMME party where there were some drinks going, and I guess he had a few drinks - I don't know - because he was most affable and friendly and I remember him talking to myself and my wife in the most delightful manner - quite free and warm - he was warm then. But on the whole he wasn't a warm personality, although I think he was basically a warm character but it couldn't seem to come out. And I think this was a disadvantage when... in connection with staff. And there's an old story that when he left the BBC he wanted to sort of go round some of the offices to say goodbye to staff, and he went into various offices and they thought he was the new Director General coming in, not the old one going. But that was because he, I think, as I say, he was very shy, and he had an enormous load on his plate.

GILLARD: What about... have you anything to say briefly about Sir Basil Nichols, 'Benjy' as everybody called him?

ARKELL: Yes. I... again I was very fond of Benjy. He was always very nice to me. I found him very able, quick, and of course with enormous sound broadcasting experience. But I think he was rather slow to recognise the importance of television development. I think - and here we're talking about William Haley as well I think - I think both Benjy and William Haley could have treated Norman Collins rather differently. I think the whole history of the BBC - certainly of commercial television - might have been different if that had happened. And I don't think they saw quite the growing

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point that television obviously was becoming. And I strangely enough, I think, sensed this rather quickly, coming from the outside - perhaps more easily - I wasn't so steeped in sound radio as so many people in the BBC. And coming from business where you always give high priority to the growing product - I mean particularly in J. Lyons we gave enormous, and so did I give enormous priority administratively to frozen food which was the thing in those days. And similarly, when I got to the BBC I visited Alexandra Palace pretty quickly and I saw Pulling - Martin Pulling - an excellent person I thought, Norman Collins and Jack Knott. And I found almost a revolt going on; I found I think a notice on the board which was quite disloyal to the BBC as a whole - I can't remember its details now. And I made up my mind that here was something new growing that should have had top priority, and so I told my administrators always to try and give quick answers, particularly to television because it was a growing orgnaisation. Now I don't think that Sir William Haley or Benjy really appreciated the importance of this..

GILLARD: But Benjy in those days was the senior controller was he? Or at any rate he was in charge of both radio and television wasn't he?

ARKELL: Yes he was. He was first of all DSB wasn't he - Director of Sound Broadcast - and then became Director of Programmes was he, of all programmes. As you say it spread over into television. He was certainly responsible for development of television I think fairly soon after I arrived. There was something about Benjy which made him a delightful person to be with, and I very much warmed to him in many ways. There was also something which somehow prevented it from being... prevented him from being a really great man, something... it's awfully indefinable, some quality of - I wouldn't like to say not total reliability or consistency but something just bordering on that which, I think, prevented him from... well perhaps prevented him from becoming Director-General of the BBC, I don't know.

GILLARD: Of course he was acting DG for a while.

ARKELL: Yes he was, I remember.

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GILLARD: Can you tell us anything about Thomas Lockhead?

ARKELL: Yes. I liked Thomas Lockhead very much. He was a very canny, quiet Scot who I think probably did financial work extremely well. A person who was difficult to get to know, but he seemed to me a man of total integrity and reliability from the point of the finance of the Corporation.

GILLARD: In your own particular empire as controller of staff administration, what about the people you had there - Crutwell, Campbell, and that crowd?

ARKELL: Well, as I implied earlier, I inherited on the whole first class staff in staff administration, whether in my own particular division or whether those doing staff administration and establishment work in the BBC, various programme and engineering and other divisions. In my own particular division one of the outstanding people I think was John Campbell who had come into the BBC after being a lieutenant-colonel in the one of the infantry battalions. He was a delightful person to work with, very competent. Then there was D.H. Clarke who had been with the BBC a long time as appointments officer, who did a very good job. You could say that having been in the post so long perhaps he wasn't as imaginative to embrace new ideas as you might think, but that's more conjecture than anything else; I can't say I found him in practice being obstinate about anything. There was Miss Lewis who was absolutely first class in every sort of way and did a wonderful job with the sort of minutae of administration in the BBC. There was General Sir Guy Williams who was doing work in connection with appointments on a part time basis, who was very sound. Penny Thorne-Hughes who did the - with great flair and aplomb I think - did the staff training. Later on I brought into staff administration, one or two others, paticularly S.G. Williams who was doing a first class administrative post in External Services, and I was impressed with him soon after I arrived in the BBC, and always really wanted him to get into the centre in staff administration because I knew he'd bring experience from the divisions from, in this case, the External Services. And he proved to be... he became

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really my chief lieutenant eventually, and he proved to be an excellent administrator, very quick indeed; wonderful power of assimilating quickly complicated documents, he had a great power of decision, totally loyal; I find it difficult to speak too highly of S.G. Williams. I think he and Campbell in their slightly different ways - in the end I did promote him above Campbell, although I found that difficult to do because Campbell had done such a good job - were two outstanding people. Then I would also mention another outstanding person who came into staff administration at one time - Michael Cinchin-Smith. I brought him in myself because I happened to know him. When I say I brought him in, he went through the normal procedures of course and wouldn't have been elected if he hadn't been selected by a proper appointments board. But he was training in ICI. I knew him when he and I were working on a community centre settlement down in South-East London in connection with Christchurch. And he proved to be a first class administrator in the BBC, eventually becoming - having gone to the television service for experience, and having served quite a long time in staff administration first - eventually becoming CSA working for me when I was DA. And then there's John Rowley who was in the central establishment office who was a very warm-hearted, very popular administrator, who was also CSA working to me at one time, and eventually of course went to as Controller of Wales. Perhaps I'll say a little more about that later on in connection with Baverstock. But there were of course many others - there's Major Hawt I can think of who was in allowances who was first class too - very upright, much respected person, who, incidentally, I came across strangely enough, in the army because he gave me a distinguished. He was running a course and gave me a distinguished on a sig... infantry signalling course before I met him again in the BBC. There was Cutwell and David Hay. Now again, and if I appear too eulogistic about some of my staff it's because they really were such decent conscientious, effective good people. Cutwell also was, but he was rather slow. I was particularly anxious to speed everything up because I think the BBC particularly needed this in staff administration - staff administration had been criticised for being too slow. And so I did suggest that Cutwell

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should resign,and it speaks extremely highly of him that he took it extremely well,and in fact came back... he went out of the BBC with fairly, I think, good financial terms, and came back - I think this speaks a lot for him - came back as an administrator in finance division doing a job after he'd retired and did it extremely well. I know that in finance, Lockhead was very pleased with him, and Francis who succeeded Lockhead. Then there's David Hay who was the only other person in the end I felt had done his work in the BBC long enough. He one must give credit to for really bringing in the grading system. And one of the first things that I had to do when I came into the BBC was to decide whether one should continue with the grading system because it had been much attacked, and a decision had to be taken, and Sir Norman Bottomley wanted me to take it or to recommend it, as to whether we should continue the grading system. And having looked into this very carefully, and knowing the sort of system that we had in some parts of J. Lyons and Company and how effective it could be, I came down quite firmly on retaining the grading system, and it certainly proved right because it had an enormous effect on the unity of the BBC, and on fair pay, and indeed on the unions negotiations and which was extremely helpful there. But Hay, having worn the... having borne the wear and tear of introducing the grading system and defending it, became perhaps almost possibly too stereotyped in it, and in the end I felt that he could do perhaps better work of different kinds outside the BBC. But I remember giving him a farewell talk at a farewell party, and I praised him very much for what he'd done, and one or two people said that it was justified; some people said well how on earth can you speak so extremely highly of a person you're prepared to let go. But he did a wonderful job, but I'm sure it was right for him to move into other fields. Harry Ginn was another person who was superb as adviser on industrial relations.

GILLARD: How far did your writ run over union matters? When you were CSA what unions were you concerned with?

ARKELL: Well, first of all it was only the staff association run by Littlewood. But very soon after that we had to consider

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the introduction of outside unions, and there were various discussions with TUC council members, DA and even Haley. We got round a table in the board room and discussed the recognition of outside unions. I felt convinced that this was coming sooner or later, and that the thing to do was to ensure that when they came in they came in under the right conditions. And gradually we formed, I think, conditions which proved quite invaluable later on, which were roughly that they must work together with other unions - this was vital; that they must recognise the grading system, and, broadly, the conditions of service in the BBC. Now those conditions proved of enormous value when we recognised other unions beyond the first one which was the ETU. We recognised the ETU under those conditions. They jibbed enormously; it took us a long time to get them to agree those conditions, but they did in the end agree the conditions. And then when the next union came - I think it was the NUJ - they also jibbed, but seeing that the first union had recognised the conditions they also recognised the conditions. And then I had a telegram from Sir Tom O'Brien of NATKE, saying unless I recognise them I think it was the next day, they'd go on strike. I got hold of Tom, who became a great friend of mine, and I said don't be so silly, but come and see me, and they eventually - they of course were the film manual staff - and they were recognised, again under the same conditions. And the ACTT wanted to be recognised, but I think fortunately they wouldn't accept the conditions. Oh and the other condition of course I should have mentioned was - there was another condition - which was that there should be a percentage of membership, paid up membership I insited on, I think it was 40% - I can't quite remember - before recognition could be considered. And the ACTT was never able to get that 40% in the group concern, and we...

GILLARD: Tape 4. Mr. Arkell was talking about dealings with the various unions working in the BBC.

ARKELL: In connection with the ACTT, they made a lot of attempts to try and get it recognised. I was extremely glad that they did not meet the conditions because they were a disruptive sort of union, and the BBC gained enormously in the economic use of manpower in the television

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service for years and years by not having to recognise the ACTT who insisted upon maximum crews and so on, which the commercial television had to comply with. They made many attempts, and I remember one occasion they insisted upon seeing the Director General - they wouldn't take no from me again this time. And so we all went down at one period to see Hugh Greene - happened to be at Christmas time. And Hugh Greene was absolutely splendid. I mean the way he backed me up in those sort of things were excellent. And he was quite firm but very pleasant, and ended up by saying no very firmly, and giving an ashtray to the leader of the ACTT who was the predecessor of Sapper, with a very quiet, seraphic smile, and this struck, I think, the sense of humour of the person concerned, and also slightly his anger, and he gave one or two rather amusing accounts in the press afterwards that all he got was an ashtray for his pains.

GILLARD: What about ~~Fuchs~~ Foulkes?

ARKELL: Well ~~Fuchs~~ Foulkes of course was the Communist president of the ETU, and one of the first things I did, I think it must have been after the ETU was recognised - might have been just before - was to ask him to lunch. And I'd never met him before, and I found out what he liked to eat and I laid on a marvellous lunch in my office, and he came along and enjoyed the lunch very much and enjoyed his whisky, and we had a most interesting conversation during lunch about the First World War, when he was evidently a patriot and a sniper - it was only later that he became a Communist. And I really enjoyed listening to him, and there was something rather attractive about Frank ~~Fuchs~~ Foulkes, although he I know rigged votes in the ETU afterwards and fell very badly. And at the end, about 2 o'clock, he said well now Mr. Arkell, let's get down to business. And I said well I have no business, what about you? And he said well you asked me to lunch. So I said well I know but I wanted to get to know you. I've got nothing I want to talk with you on business. And he couldn't believe this and at about half past two he thumped the table and said now I really want to know what you want me for. And I said nothing, Mr. Fuchs. I hope you've enjoyed the lunch. And at about half past three, steaming tea came in, and we went on talking, he went on drinking whisky,

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and eventually he really tumbled to it that I simply wanted to talk to him. And incidentally I'm sure this is the way to start relations with union leaders, not to just get them along when you need something. I mean I remember very vividly about 5 o'clock he staggered out - I don't mean he was drunk - but he went out into the corridor and shook hands with me most warmly, and said, now Mr. Arkell, I've enjoyed my lunch, I've enjoyed meeting you very much. If there's ever anything, he said, that I can do for you in the future you know where to get me, and walked out. And that proved most useful in the future because other organisers like Chappell of the ETU, and Bachelor who was a great character, they all knew that I had a certain relationship with their chief, and this did help relations and negotiations considerably. But there was a period, however, when Frank ~~Fuchs~~ Foulkes rang me up during the PANORAMA programmes when Woodrow Wilde Wyatt was exposing the Communist fudging of the figures in the voting, and he said something to the effect that Mr. Arkell, unless you stop this programme going out on Monday, all the good relations you and I have been... have built up between the BBC and the ETU will go for a burton. And I said something to the effect.. I said in reply, Mr. Fuchs, I'm not even going to report that up to the Director General or to anyone else, I'm going to take no notice of it, and rang off. And in fact he didn't carry out his threat, the relations weren't affected. But it's interesting that he was wanting to try and influence programmes which is of course the last thing that one could allow.

GILLARD: This was a programme of course about his own union wasn't it?

ARKELL: Indeed it was. About his own union and about the fudging of votes, and there were several PANORAMAS, one after the other, in which this was being exposed. And of course interestingly, Frank Chappell who succeeded, or one of the people who succeeded - he didn't succeed Frank ~~Fuchs~~ Foulkes directly - but he ~~himself~~, who ~~of course~~ was converted and became more right wing ~~having~~ than he was left before.. with all the sort of extremism of a person who has been converted, I was most impressed. And I don't think this is entirely

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irrelevant

~~relevant~~ with the fact that Frank Chappell - who became a very personal friend of mine - I was lunching with him not long ago - actually was asked a question on PANORAMA a few years ago: " did you ever engage in the fudging of votes in favour of the Communists? " And Chappell confessed, said " yes I did, but I've changed a lot recently. " Incidentally, when I last lunched with Frank Chappell - and this is relevant because it concerns the BBC - he said " did you know that you had a hell of a tough reputation outside the BBC for being a very tough negotiator? " And I was awfully pleased when I heard that. I said I didn't know.

GILLARD: What about the TUC?

ARKELL: Well that's another thing which I felt we ought to do, particularly now that outside unions were being recognised, and that was to attend the TUC Congress every year, and I always used to go down there. And this was also attended sometimes by some of the governors, particularly Anne Godwin, and after a time each year we held a BBC drinks party which was most successful - this was Anne Godwin who really arranged this with me, and she and I were the joint hosts. And we had all the main TUC leaders coming to get to know us from the BBC, and this again helped enormously in our relations. I must say at this point that I'm really very happy to look back on the, I think one could say wonderful relations I had with the TU... with the union leaders, both the staff unions and later on - which we can cover later - the unions representing the artists. And one of the nicest parties I had when I left the BBC was one I gave myself in Television Centre when I had all the union leaders I'd dealt with on both sides to dinner and it gave me enormous pleasure. And I believe, while I'm on this, although I haven't had it confirmed, but I believe - I hope this is not being too egotistic - that after I left the Musician's Union sent a deputation to Charles Curran the Director General, asking - absurdly of course - asking whether they could continue to negotiate with me on union matters. I'm told this is true, I don't know if it's true, but of course Curran obviously quite rightly refused. But I mention this because it's rather from... I'm not in any way trying to extol myself on this, but I feel so strongly that one should build up the best

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possible relations with one's opposite numbers in the unions, and you have to do it, I think, by making yourself like the individuals, and there is usually something that you can like in almost anyone, and friendly relations, particularly getting them interested in the importance of the BBC and what they're trying to do. And Hugh Greene was awfully good at this with Littlewood and with the staff association. He had these regular meetings which he and I and Michael Kinchin-Smith and others always used to come to - I think they were called union liaison meetings or staff association liaison meetings - when matters were discussed, not negotiations at all - it was a more a joint consultation - and information from the DG to the union leaders, to the staff association leaders (it usually didn't include the outside union) on what was happening in the BBC in the future, and the charter and in fact quite a lot when the Pilkington Committee was in session and so on.

GILLARD: Tell us about your dealings with the staff association with the ABS.

ARKELL: Well I felt that Littlewood was... had very wide views and was really just right for the BBC for many years. I found at the end that he, or perhaps it was Rees in the staff association, became more difficult to deal with than the outside unions. And this was interesting because Vic Feather made the point when he was considering recognising outside unions, so strongly - and I knew this likely to be true - that if you have just have one union you're in a dangerous position. If you have several unions they can dilute the effect and it's much better for the employer. Well you don't want too many unions, and that's one of the bugbears of British industry at the moment as opposed, for instance, to Germany. But I think it was a danger to just have one staff association only, and this I think was exemplified towards the end of my time when they became more and more difficult - much more so than the outside unions. But for most of the time that I was dealing with Littlewood and the staff association, I found them constructive, they understood the importance of conditions of service; they even were persuaded - and this we can come to later again - but they were even persuaded to accept flexibility

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in the grading system which... and merit awards and so on - which is very difficult for a union to accept because it wouldn't be they who would decide who should get the higher salary, therefore it wouldn't be a subject for negotiation. So they were really responsible on the whole, and I think the staff association did the BBC a great deal of good, and it was inevitable that the other unions should come in and work with staff association and under the conditions they had to.

GILLARD: I always felt that it was the people who had either been disappointed or embittered in the course of their careers in the BBC who became members of the general council or the staff association and took office in the staff association, and the best staff really either didn't belong to the union or ignored it. What's your comment on that?

ARKELL: I think what you say is probably generally true of unions, not just the staff association. I think that it's obviously an outlet for someone who is a bit frustrated to get some sort of influence by joining the committees of a union. I don't think that's altogether wrong because they can get satisfaction from that and they can perhaps be quite useful. I think your point is probably right, and of course the people who are really dedicated on their jobs, in their jobs in the BBC would look to their jobs more than to unions. But nevertheless, you must remember that the staff association had at least half the staff in union membership, so that there was quite a participation by the staff in the staff association.

GILLARD: Let's get on now to some of the things that you introduced and the innovations that you introduced during your term as ESA - I'm thinking for instance about the management training conferences. Perhaps you'd say a word about those first.

ARKELL: Well, I can't remember exactly when it was, but I felt for a long time that it was important to do much more training in management. The excellent BBC staff on programmes and various other spheres were not always necessarily good managers. This, I think, applied to some extent particularly to programme staff, perhaps they wouldn't be such good

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programme staff if they were good administrators and managers. And it also strangely enough applied a lot in the engineering division. It's not for me to say that engineers don't make good managers; they can make good managers, and they certainly did make good managers, and I think that the management training which we started in the BBC and sustained, probably helped quite a lot in that direction. What happened was - and this was I remember under Jacob's Director-Generalship - was that I really started, I recommended the introduction of a residential management training conferences, for which the BBC was quite particularly suited because of the enormous variety of profession in the BBC. I mean there was potentially a fascinating conference to have with people from programmes, the engineers, the administrators, the journalists and so on. And this I remember was agreed and Jacob was in favour of it. Harmon Grisewood was a great help in urging for it too with me and supporting me. And we arranged it first of all in Dunfold I think it was, or somewhere in that direction in Surrey or Sussex, but later on we went to Uplands near High Wycombe which was an excellent conference centre. And this entailed most meticulous preparation because it was quite essential for the first one or two to be absolutley first class. First class in the management of it; in the whole arrangements of feeding; the punctuality; the whole thing had to be absolutely.. the variation of practical work with discussions and lectures and so on. It simply, if we were going to do it at all, had to be first class so that people went to the first two or three, came back and said well you really must go to Uplands. And this is what happened. And in fact after some time, people used to apply and want to go to Uplands; they didn't feel that they... it was something that was concerned with their prestige and possibly their future promotion that they must go to Uplands, and it became a very popular and frightfully useful, I think, training.

GILLARD: How long did the courses last? ,

ARKELL: They lasted two weeks, residential, and as I say it was punctuated by - the lectures were punctuated by - a variety of different practical exercises, and croquet sometimes, and working... actual

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Reels 5,6,7,8

working on papers and case method and so on./ These courses had they were drawn from almost every profession in the BBC. There were about 25 on any one course divided into syndicates. Lectures were from both inside the corporation - people at the head of various divisions; outside, people like Alf Robins from the coal board and other industrialists, other professional people in the broadcasting world, in the world of the arts and so on. And they were run mostly by Oliver Whitley who did a superb job when he was CSTA.

GILLARD: CSTA means?

ARKELL: Controller of Staff Training and Appointments. And the input was fairly various but always directed to the improvement of the management of the particular job that the people attending the course were doing and it ranged from report writing, medical side, programme organisation, administration to the actual professional work that they were doing and was particularly ~~interested~~ concerned all the time in the managing of resources. One other thing I would like to say about this and I'm quite sure that it's more than anything else one could have done from a purely central administration, it encouraged unity in the BBC. And this I feel so strongly about. The ...I had a number of comments all the time to say...from engineers...from even television people saying well they never really realised what the Corporation was like as a whole before and they felt part of a much wider enormously important organisation through these conferences.

GILLARD: Although time is pressing on us a little bit I'm bound to introduce a little diversion here. One of your speakers at Uplands sometimes was the great Lord Reith.

ARKELL: Yes Oh yes, well Lord Reith was..well I brought him in just at the end usually of a conference to simply sit there and answer questions and he was..provided immense interest to everyone, he was most amusing about himself and was a tremendous success doing it. I must tell one story which I always enjoy. Loby was a member...of the conference.

GILLARD: Stop a minute, start again and say de Lotbinière will you.

ARKELL: de Lotbinière was a member of the Conference

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I cannot remember Frank whether you were there, but certainly you used to lecture at the Conference I remember and Loby under questions.. said to Lord Reith, 'well Lord Reith can you tell me why you asked such extraordinary questions when you recruited staff to the BBC?' And Reith said rather gruffly, 'what sort of Questions?' And Loby said 'well I can give you an example, when I first came into see you at Broadcasting House I hadn't really got far inside your office before you said 'hello Mr de Lotbiniere - do you believe in the after life?' And Reith like a flash at the conference said 'well did you?'. Collapse of Loby!

GILLARD: But although of course Reith had long since gone when you joined the BBC, you knew him quite well.

ARKELL: I knew him really remarkably well and I was very pleased to know him. He had mellowed by that time a great deal - in fact I used to have lunch with him perhaps every two or three months; for years he always came down once a year to have dinner at Lyander Club when I got a lot of local friends in, different people. I discussed philosophy, the BBC, I was the only person at one time whom he would see in the BBC because he had quarrelled with almost everyone else but I think Hugh Greene was very happy that at least one person was providing a tenuous thread to him. I could say a lot more about Lord Reith, which perhaps is relevant but he still took an enormous interest in the BBC. He many times used to say to me, I feel so strongly about something I want to make a row, I want to expose Hugh Green or whoever it was. But I won't if you tell me not to and I always used to say, well please don't. But I used to discuss religion with him and I could say a lot about that but possibly it would be irrelevant.

GILLARD: Let's go back to the innovations ..you've told us about Uplands, what about the general trainee scheme?

ARKELL: Well that's another thing which I think the BBC obviously was lacking and that was briefly the kind of thing which many firms do .. a training scheme to bring in first class material, high intellect,

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general all round ability, from the Universities, not necessarily Oxbridge but particularly Oxford and Cambridge and they came in really roughly for a year or twos training throughout the BBC and then they would be put into or they would really compete for a job because we didn't impose them on people. Compete for a job under the normal train...appointments system and this I think proved very successful indeed, I don't know where we'd be without it really now because there are quite a number of people who became...who progressed right up to the top of the BBC, the present Director General, Alasdair Milne, was our first general trainee as a matter of fact and I selected him myself as Chairman of a particular appointments board. I think this not only was of enormous ~~interest~~ value to the BBC but from the public relations point of view it was right that universities should know that there is a way of getting into the BBC and being trained and so on. There are many other entries into the BBC, like the programme operations and so on, but this particular one has proved of great value to us.

GILLARD: How did you resolve the conflict between the necessity for career training, career planning...career planning, and the open application system..I mean.

ARKELL: That's a very interesting question, there was of course conflict obviously betwen the open appointments system, appointments boards, anyone being able to apply and career planning. First of all, can I say that on balance, I feel that the ability of anyone in the BBC to feel that he can apply for any job in the BBC - totally free to apply is an enormous advantage to staff, but as you rightly indicate it does conflict with career planning to some extent. Well I got over that to some extent and you can't entirely get over it, if you have the advantage of one, you have to suffer to some extent ~~on~~ the disadvantage of the other, but to some extent by having secondments ~~in~~ on quite a big scale, of people who were doing a jolly good job, and whom you felt could be trained to do something more important, to be promoted, to second themself into the sort of division they might give most ~~into~~ to, for perhaps six months or a year to learn more about it, so when they did apply your short list was enriched

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by having people already trained in this. That plus the watching over of future appointments and training, and planning by Oliver Whitley the CSTA and this is partly the reason why I combined appointments and training under a controller; Who was Oliver Whitley who could always have an eye to this and when senior appointments were made right at the top of the BBC, heads of drama, heads of wherever...outfit deparmentments, important senior administrative posts, even controllers. He and I used to get together and discuss the candidates and being as fair as we possibly could, because we hadn't got to advertise under our arrangements of the staff association and posts of that level. Put up a short list and sometimes we refer them to D.G., sometimes we didn't need to and occasionally it had to be referred to the governors. But on your point, there were those measures which I think did a good deal to put right the disadvantages of a system of free application which itself was so important.

GILLARD: Well perhaps another way of putting it is..got the best of both worlds.

ARKELL: I think it tended to get the best of both worlds.

GILLARD: John of course you must have had a very big headache in the mid-50's when commercial television was introduced into Britain and the newly formed commercial companies of course looked to the BBC for their staff. The BBC was the only place they could look.

ARKELL: I think there were two ways of trying to tackle that, one was to make it clear to staff as a whole the advantages of remaining in the BBC from the point of programme integrity and the freedom to run their own programmes which was so much encouraged by the CG and rightly so. The devlolution point. And the other was to try to retain them through a special contract under which they get a salary for a period of say 2 or 3 years; they would be promoted financially, on the understandig that they would stay with the BBC during that period. But that was incise and invidious, it had its disadvantages because it in a way, set aside certain staff as key staff and therefore there was a feeling

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on the part of those not asked, that they might not be key staff and the morale is so important in this respect, that people should feel they are doing a good job, the sort of self-fulfilment angle to us. So that was the dark side of it and there were certain disadvantages but on balance I think it is defintely ~~could~~ good ...~~put~~ and got us through that rather difficult period ~~and helped us get through it....~~ was

GILLARD: It must have racked wrecked the grading scheme though in some ways.

ARKELL: Well it did but not entirely because you see it was really a matter of saying well for... the disadvantage of not being able to leave the BBC for the outside world, you could ~~put~~ she say two or three increments or even a personal grade higher than the one ..the job dictated..for that disadvantage and so that really the grading system as such wasn't really affected.

GILLARD: Now all this happened during the reign of Sir Ian Jacob as D.G. and you were in a very senior position right through his regime, what did you make of Ian?

ARKELL: I have a tremendous regard for Ian Jacob, he was I think a man with wide interests of course and tremendous past experience very high principles, like Haley, I think people felt they could trust him. He may not have been as impressive as other Director Generals - but he had it all there and I don't mean intelligence because that was obvious, but I mean he had the qualities, the strategic qualities all there. A most likeable person and I think he was extremely good for the BBC during his period; he made all sorts of innovations, I can think of one straight away like This is the BBC - the film by Richard Cawston,I think it was he who had that made, which was a thing that was a tremendous success. There are so many other things that he did in the BBC including I think the introduction of BBC 2 didn't he.

GILLARD: Well that he laid the ground work for it because it didn't come in until later, till Hugh Greene's time. Now it was during, towards the end of course, of ..of..Sir Ian Jacob's time as Director

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General, that you were raised to the purple, so to speak, that you became a you were no longer CSA you were DSA.

ARKELL: Yes that is true.

GILLARD: 1958 you say.

ARKELL: 1958 yes that's right yes.

GILLARD: Was that anything more than a change of title?

ARKELL: Oh yes very much so because one became a member of the Board of Manage~~rs~~ment and instead of specialising almost entirely in staff administration I had just the same say on matters which came up for Board of Management, fascinating important matters, as anyone else on the board of management. And I hope that I was able to bring to bear (PHONE)...and in addition I was able to bring the staff relations, union and other points of view, immediately on a problem, if it was relevant to do so. And I think this is important in most organisations, to have somebody who is doing the staff job, act as a member of the Board of Directors.

GILLARD: Then of course, two or so years later you became DA which embraced DSA. You became overall Director of Administration. This is on the Departure of Tahoo Hol(PH) under something of a cloud wasn't it?

ARKELL: Well yes, I suppose it was.

GILLARD: He was DA?

ARKELL: Yes, he was D.A. It is perhaps fair to say that my own relations with Tahoo were very good, he was DA when I was DSA and we got on...no sorry he was DA when I was DSA and we got on extremely well He was a very likeable character in so many ways. Very warm and friendly and amusing, extremely amusing, I can quite see that he was far too long winded and too...too...almost obstinate, he was so firm on his views on news and centralisation of news and so on. But I would not like people to ...not to think of Tahoo as a very engaging nice pleasant colleague as far as I was concerned.

GILLARD: Now as DA of course, you had premises and

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all sorts of other departments.

ARKELL: Yes, of course, I then had finance with .....as you say Premises, which was really essential central services then. I had CSA personnel, legal, copyright, programme contracts, security...the security service of course, which was preparing for possible hostilities and managment services, which I you know..established.

GILLARD: Tape 6. Mr Arkell has just given us a run down of the additional responsibilities which came to him when he became director of administration. And perhaps we could hear something about some of the people who now were working with you on these new jobs.

ARKELL: Well, just before that, perhaps I could elaborate a little in that when I became director of administration, Hugh Greene really devolved the running of the entire BBC on to my shoulders. From the business and administrative point of view. This is where I think Hugh Greene is a sort of great person to work to. He devolved so completely and with the result that many people I think and particular I remember J. Cook from on the Board of Governors, regarded me really as the Managing Director of the BBC with Hugh Greene as the chairman of the Board of Directors. And so I had a fascinating job when this wider job came and of course I concentrated particularly knowing that I had a very good staff administration built up and a very good CSA. I concentrated particularly on the economic use of resources in the BBC. Now on the individuals, of course I had another lot of marvellous and I can say that because they were so impressive, as they were when I was CSA or DSA. A marvellous lot of staff, for instance Edgar Robbins who's the legal advisor and Roche the solicitor, Andrews who succeeded Peter Florence as head of the .....central services, and Haycock also there, Francis was the Controller of Staff and of course one mustn't forget that it is not just one's own staff that one was involved in but the almost more important or equally important were the staff in the various ...the administrative staff in the various divisions. Such as Lesley Page, first class in the television service and others in all these services, whom one had to bring in very closely into one's purview. So

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that of course too many people were reporting to me on the whole and I cut that down a bit, but I was then really, I felt right into the not only the guts of the BBC but also dealing with future strategy more than ever, which I found extremely satisfying.

GILLARD: Did you find any problem in the fact that there were you a Director of Administration centrally responsible for the BBC's organisation and administration, but yet you had directors who were your colleagues on the Board of Management, in charge of television, radio and external services, who also had administrative offices working to them.

ARKELL: Well I don't think really I did find any great problems but I think on the whole there was a great co-operation. There could have been problems - the set up really was as you know, that these others administrators both on staff and ~~just~~ more general administration, they had immediate responsibility, quite rightly to their director and a dotted line responsibility to me. And we got over this possible difficulty by having very close liasons with the various outlying establishment offices and administrators with me on a dotted line, advisory basis. You see the DA job like the CSA in many ways is a mixture of advisory executive and that is really the extremely important side of it. And a few things definitely executive, such as for instance finance, DG's meeting, pensions, the salaries. And certain things like that. I think you have to have a mixture. I mean some people say, I'm reverting now to the CSA job, some people say well the personnel chief must be totally advisory. In practice it can't be like that, he has to be responsible for certain things like appointments and some of the others I mentioned but however, the flavour of it should be that he is advising because you need ~~so~~ ...I feel so strongly about this you need to give the responsibity as much as you possibly can to those in the outlying divisions, who are doing the basic job and it is they who are the sort of people who are going to make a success or failure on the programmes.

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GILLARD: You now of course had even more union responsiblities.

ARKELL: Yes.

GILLARD: What were they?

ARKELL: Yes there was the musicians' union, there was Equity and those were the two main unions concerned. And as you will rmember yourself Frank, you got involved in quite a lot of the negotiations here and I used to chair really the final meetings on those two fronts of negotations... myself. I think that we had really superb relations on the whole with these outside artists unions. I'd particularly like to say a word or two about the musicians union, because fortunately, there was something in Hardy Radcliffe as General Secretary of the MU which appealed to me, very much as a person. And, that makes such a difference and we became great friends. He was I suppose, some people said he was a communist, but he had very idealistic views about so many things, I got to know him very well. And this was so important I think to the BBC because I can give you two illustrations really when we are absolutely in head on collision and you certainly remember one if not both. And that relationship I had with Hardy Radcliff really saved the day. The first one was about needle time, and we seemed to be particularly stuck and Hardy Radcliff really was, I've no doubt about this because I knew him well enough to know, really preparing for a big strike on this issue. And I dealt with it in this way: I rang up Hardy at the end of one week and I said Hardy we simply must not let this happen. We are not going to let this happen, you and I ought to be able to get over this somehow, we have got enough in common, we understand each other, I suggest you come into my office on Monday Morning and spend the entire week there, and I'll put everthing else aside and we will not depart from each other until we have settled it somehow. And this is what happened he said 'right' and came in on Monday morning and he sat in my

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office and towards the end of the week we'd resolved the situation and not by giving too much away....in fact I think really during those negotiations I don't know what you feel but I think the corporation in a sense could almost be said to have got away with murder because we had very favourable results. Now the other occasion when we were absolutely on head-on collision was after a very long negotiation which has gone on for weeks about the whole new pay structure fee structure for musicians. And it was a very complicated negotiations, highly difficult to understand really and we had gone on and on and on with very large meetings in the Board room, they used to bring a lot of members. I had all the advisors, I'm sure you must have been there some of the time and we felt we ~~are~~ were absolutely up against it in every sort of direction. And finally when.... we were again facing a strike, (and I don't think that they were too quick on strike threats, nowadays people tend to almost at the beginning of discussions threaten strike) and there were a good few BBC representatives present - both on the staff side and on the artists side. There was a good understanding that that was the absolute last resort but we had got to that last resort and I remember saying to Hardy, " look I said I've been chairing these meetings, let's get another chairman. Let's get an outside Chairman, whom we'll both sit under. " And Hardy said " there is no Chairman whom you can suggest John whom I would be prepared to sit under. " And I had one name .....up my sleeve. Although I hadn't even approached him, I said what about Lord Goodman and Hardy smiled and said " you have mentioned the one person in the whole ..... of Great Britain I'd sit under. " I said 'wait' and I dashed round to Goodman - in his solicitors' office and I persuaded him to come and do this for the BBC. And he did it superbly, he grasped this extremely complicated business. It was a matter that went on, it wasn't finally resolved .....Oh yes it was....yes we did finally resolve it when I was there, it was a later date that he was called in again. Eventually after weeks we did resolve it, again highly favourably I think to the BBC. I was very surprised how favourable this was. And it had a big effect on the money concerned. And we had meetings at midnight, we had meetings on Saturday, we went on and on at it. And on one famous occasion I must just mention when he had a horse running in

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races on Saturday, and he persuaded us all to put money - unions and administrators on his horse and we watched on Saturday afternoon on his television set in his flat in London, this horse and it fell at the first fence and we all lost our money. And yet the relations were still good after, so I mean I look back with enormous pleasure on the relations with the musicians union, and with Hardy and the others. And I think they were both...a very great benefit to both the musicians and the BBC. There is one interesting other matter which I think I ought perhaps to mention. I can't remember the full details of it but it is illustrative I think of the importance of integrity with unions and also perhaps illustrative of the enormous freedom which I was given as Director of Administration. It concerned some pay of fees which would have definitely given by the BBC but for the pay policy and the Government refused to let us give it and they definitely deserved it and earned it and in my opinion they should have had it but it wasn't possible. They got very near giving them every thing they needed. But then things changed - months later and it was possible to give it retrospectively, it would have cost something like £30,000 and I felt that this was the right thing to do even though the thing had been dropped I could have got away with not giving it at all. But I opened up discussions and I said I was prepared to do this, since we could now do it, it was reserved at the time; and I gave it. And this so impressed the musicians' union - the sort of honesty of this, because the corporation needn't have done it. That I'm quite sure we saved in the future, very much more than £50,000...by the relations that act built up. It is just a small anecdote.

GILLARD: It was a retrospective payment.

ARKELL: It was a retrospective payment but needn't have been given at all.

GILLARD: Now taking your union relations overall did you have to go through strikes at all in your rank?

ARKELL: Well honestly I'm glad to say I don't think we had a single strike except right at the end on the ABS front which Michael

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Cinchin-Smith dealt with because I was in the States at the time, or I was just going to the States at the time. Very nearly decided not to go, but I did go but that was the only strike throughout ~~the~~ my entire time in the BBC - ~~25~~ 21 years I think it was, ~~and I was in the BBC 23 years, that there was ever a strike~~.

GILLARD: Now you saw a big revolution in British broadcasting which came about of course with the introduction of television. It started in a small way and became so massive after the great Coronation broadcast and so on. How did you think that affected the BBC as a whole? I mean this brings in your great corporate thesis doesn't it?

ARKELL: Well it really was of course extremely stimulating for the BBC....and of course especially when commercial television came on, was created, it was another competitor and although we I think, rightly argued very strongly against commercial television coming in at all, because of the public service angle, it was an extremely good thing for staff because it gave them an outlet to go elsewhere if they wanted and also it was competitive and highly invigorating. In the same way I think inside the BBC when television came again after the war - it was again invigorating - it was essential I think in my opinion to keep the grading system during that period, in a way which I fear it is not kept at the moment because of the point I have already made about the unity of the BBC and the ~~effect the allowance....the~~ way in which the grading system allowed people to move around the corporation from sound to television from the regions to television, from the regions to London on condition of service and rates of pay which were ~~comparison.~~.comparative and fair. I think that was a very important element when television started. I think that the ...as I think I said earlier, I think that some of the sound people were slow to recognise the importance of television, but that didn't last very long. It wasn't every one there was just a few I think.

GILLARD: What about some of the leading people in television, I mean there are a few names here...what about Barnes, how did you get on with him?

ARKELL: Well very well I mean I respected his

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intellect and his .....his outward calmness, I suspect it wasn't always there but one felt it when one was with him. ~~I'm sorry~~ I always regard him as a very good BBC director.Cecil McGivern, of course I was very fond of as a person, brilliant I think in his way. Gerald Beadle, admirable, personal great friend and great administrator. And there of course are others, I admire the way the television service produced such I think, on the whole, such exciting programmes and this was all part and parcel of the policy of devolution to programme controllers and the programme side, which I was entirely in favour of - very much a devlolver myself in all sorts of directions. I was entirely in favour of it, provided it was monitored and there was a sort of check back which perhaps did fail a bit ~~I think in...if we compli...did fail a bit~~ in the ~~TWE~~ programmes.

GILLARD: Tape 7. While we are talking about people could we have a word about some of the other major figures of the 50's outside the television service.

ARKELL: Certainly, yes. Which ones do you feel?

GILLARD: Well, what about Wellington and Clark and some people?

ARKELL: Well again you see, I think the standards of executives and programme executives was so high in the BBC that it is perhaps difficult not to be too eulogistic about all of them. I mean Lindsay Wellington was such a superb person I thought and both as a friend and individual and it seemed to me he was doing an excellent job as director of sound. Very musical very qualified I thought artistically and I think he...he was a good administrator ~~he was a very good I think~~...I think ~~administrator~~ of his province. J.B. Clark I knew ~~the~~ person very well, it would be difficult for me to comment much on his his ...performance as Head of the External Services but I always found him a very obliging, helpful and erudite person. There was Harold Bishop of course who was again another friend of mine, who seemed to me to run the Engineering Division extremely well and a big man really. There is yourself of course Frank who was....yes you come in later. I'd like to say something if I may if it is

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not too embarrassing. Any others you wish to.

GILLARD: Yes the other one I want you to talk about now is of course the big one - Hugh Greene.

ARKELL: Hugh Greene.

GILLARD: Now Hugh Greene I suppose, you probably didn't know much about Hugh Greene until he became a DNCA in 1958.

ARKELL: Well, I did know him a bit when he was in external services, and funnily enough I attended his first wedding to Helga because I was a great friend of the Guinnesses. (Whom he apparently disliked, according to the book by...by Tracey). But I found them...that's irrelevant, but I found Sam and ~~Alfhild~~ Alfhild truly Guinness a delightful couple.

GILLARD: Well now tell us about Hugh Greene.

ARKELL: Sorry to diverge...I think that and I do find, let me tell you, it awfully difficult to talk frankly about people I've reported to or colleagues of mine and especially those of course who are not alive any longer to answer back. My..I would like to say this that my usual code is not to speak derogatively about people at all. But I do see the importance here from the point of view of archives and history, of being as frank as possible. I think that Hugh Greene, I think that those who, like Roberty Lusty, praise Hugh Greene a 100% and those who are his detractors really are both right, because there were two different periods in Hugh Greene's director generalship, as I saw it. The first perhaps six years and the last few. And during those first 6 years I have got a very high opinion of Hugh Greene's director generalship. In so many ways I think he was what one could say was a big man, he had stature, he was persuasive in a quiet way, he was in many ways a delight to work to, particularly from the point of view of devolution. I mean he said to me really in effect, look (when I was D.A)..you run the BBC I'll do the editorial and the strategic and the Government and everything else but you run the BBC and it was in that way I had a job which had great self fulfilment. He was a superb devolver...and in that way got the best out of staff and we all know he was a great devolver to...on the programme side. And I agreed with that on balance

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very much, because you get the best work through giving people the fun and the enjoyment and the responsibility of running their own shows and untrammeled from above. And he did the same, do you see, on the administrative side, he devolved almost completely to me, on the whole field until towards the end when everything I think went a bit wrong. So that I thought he was..and of course he was very attractive in so many ways, Hugh was. The serenity ... he...almost impossible to un..to ruffle him up...except very occasionally, and this was awfully interesting to see, and when he occasionally was brought into the union negotiations and discussions. And so I give him very high praise as a great D.G. for major part of his office. Unfortuantely, and this is where I think his detractors are right, things did deteriorate it seemed to me, towards the end. And he seemed to be almost'obsessed'if that is not too strong a word, with opening the windows and with this idea of complete freedom - to say almost anything, however objectionable it might be on the air. I mean take this THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS programme. I was in favour of that too, and if I hadn't been I could hardly have remained on the Board of Management, but I was. I think it was an effort to bring an interesting type of programme - a new type of programme - particularly appealling to the young and it certainly did that. And I think it was a good innovation, but it went wrong in my opinion in just perhaps only one percent of its output and we all know the bad in reputation so often drives out the good and the BBC suffered tremendously through just less than one percent of its total output, in reputation over the whole of its output. And I cannot believe myself, and I did write to Hugh Greene and I see in reading this ~~Mercer~~ Tracey book that I think this was reported almost verbatim (about a part of the TWTW programme) I cannot conceive that it would not have been possible, to avoid those few that when they became very bad, mistakes of taste on that programme and others which followed it, I cannot believe that one could not have had the best of both worlds, if it had been more carefully controlled and obviously the point of devolution seems to me to devolve only when you have got confidence in the people you're devolving to. And I would like to say a word about devolution in

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general here, because it is an administrative point in a way and I feel an interest in it and it certainly concerns what we're talking about. I think there is such a thing as structural devolution, which means that written into the post of the powers it has, and it is important to write a mansize job into the posts, of importance. And then there is, it seems to me, the art of delegation on top of that and it is the art of delegation which is so important, you have got your structure, but the art of delegation surely means that you delegate in proportion to the confidence you have in the person you are delegating to. And whereas it was right for Hugh to delegate so much to the programme producers, it was clearly not so, it seems to me, in this particular case. You have to vary the amount and measure of delegation, depending upon the individual in the case. And I cannot believe that we couldn't have had all the benefits of this new programme without most of its bad points of taste.

GILLARD: We did have plenty of opportunities at Board of Management to say all this of course.

ARKELL: Yes, well of course, that is perfectly true, but it was post hoc and it never...it never seemed to be put right. And this it...I don't like to criticise any particular individuals here because I think we were all involved but I think it was probably true to say that Kenneth perhaps could have had a much more important part in putting it right. I think here another tenet of mine...administratively..again this is not irrelevant. Is accountability. If you had to point to any single concept of management and I hope I'm not being too boring on this ~~adminstering~~ administrative matter, of management, which can lift administration and management right up to efficiency, it's a concept of accountability; ~~that~~ I don't mean financial accountability, necessarily but every person is fully accountable for what happens, what goes wrong, what goes right, upwards to the person he is responsible to. Fully accountable and must always take that accountability and I felt very much occasionally in the board of management and this was a case in point, that the director of television, should have taken that role on and been fully accountable. It was no good him coming to say well this happened because such and such.....such and such a person did this and that and the other.

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He's got to say I'm afraid this went wrong, and it happens that the reason is — but that is my responsibility, I'll see that it doesn't go wrong again. That I think is the importance of this theory of concept...of accountability. If you're accountable you jolly well see that it doesn't go wrong in the future - and I'm quite sure myself as I said earlier that this...a lot of this could have been avoided, and getting back to Hugh Greene I think he seemed rather obsessed towards the latter part (when he had this enormous responsiblity throughout the BBC on so many fronts and which he did so superbly well before hand and still to some extent of course), obsessed with taking so much care and trouble over this TWTW programme and other which he would call forward looking programmes. And I think too that it really is necessary to take the output of the BBC as a whole - I think it is rather difficult to divide it up into 10 years of perhaps rather staid output, 10 years of innovations, 10 years of something else. Because it is only in a relatively few fields of programmes that you get these changes and all the time, all the programmes of the BBC by the programme makers were going on in a very high standard, throughout the whole 20 or 30 years period we're talking about.....(CUT)....The connection of this programme, I mean I think the way it could have been put right is through greater appreciation of what satire can do in a constructive way. I feel that satire has, as well as the amusement side, which is frightfully important, it has also a constructive side, that you can satirize something so that you can improve it. And take Christmas for instance which was the subject of satirical programmes on TW3 as far as I recall. You can satirize the tinsel values of Christmas and make them most amusing but with the constructive result that people can take the more serious side of Christmas more seriously. That is just an example of a way I think that the TW3 programme should have been improved. I also felt that finally on Greene, good as he was, during the first 6 years, towards the end, I felt that he, having been such a great supporter of his staff, I felt that he didn't altogether continue with that certainly as far as I was concerned. Then it is perhaps relevant to say, that I'm very glad that Arthur Ford and he struck up such a great rapport because I think it was productive. It is interesting perhaps to note that Arthur

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1 year
Embargoed until after Sir Hugh Greene's death.

Afforde
~~Ford~~ probably had certain reservations occasionally. I don't want to put too much into this because it just may have been a sudden thought on his part, but when I was with Sir Arthur, I think it was some time around this period of the TW3, he had a letter in front of him from Sir James Duff, which was evidently about Hugh Greene, although I didn't read it of course; and he suddenly turned to me and in a moment of very great apprehension and said 'John, have I made a terrible mistake in appointing Hugh Greene as Director General?' And I thought for a moment, and it was a very delicate point for me obviously, and remembering all that he had done, remembering particularly his great powers of devolution, which so benefitted the post of DA and so on, I immediately replied 'No you haven't.' And I think he was reassured, but it does show an interesting side to Ford, that ~~at least~~ he had at least one moment of slight doubt about this. I'm not suggesting he should have had any more, I'm not suggesting that this great partnership should have been any different but I just thought it was worth recording that.

GILLARD:
I think we should add of course, that Sir Arthur Ford was the Chairman of the Governors of the BBC...Chairman of the Board...

ARKELL: Certainly.

GILLARD: And also was an outstanding Christian and a man of deep religious beliefs.

ARKELL: Very much so, very much so.

GILLARD So no doubt he was anxious about TW3 as much more than most people.

ARKELL: Exactly. Exactly. I think another point which is worth mentioning ~~about the~~ concerns certain difficulties which I see have already been published in ~~Mercer~~ the Tracey book so that I don't feel this is at all confidential really; ~~but that I think in certain~~ certain difficulties over the appointments of senior staff, whereas usually he and I absolutely were together on senior appointments, and therefore this is probably the exception more than anything else. And credit should be given I think for the co-operation and for the care he took to take my views into account which he nearly always agreed with on senior appointments, ~~But~~ in one case it

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worried me very much when Baverstock was being considered for Controller of Wales because I liked Baverstock, he was a member of the Saville Club and I used to talk to him there occasionally and as a person I must say I find him a congenial interesting person but I felt that he was so clearly a programme person and not really suitable for the high echelons of administration and I was almost certain really that he would have been a disaster if appointed to the Controller Wales.

GILLARD: When Mr Arkell says the Mercer book he means the Michael Tracey book. that's just a footnote. It is the end of this tape.

ARKELL: Part of my job was to have my ears close to the ground as possible and in this case is was John Rowley largely who was then CSA who warned me so strongly that if Baverstock was appointed to Controller Wales that there would be almost a walk out of the staff. So that again as well as the points I've already made, did influence me in feeling very strongly that this would have been a very seriously bad mistake. But I was never consulted very early about this by Hugh Greene. I don't know why. But one or two other people were, including Oliver ~~Whitkin~~ Whitley (PH). I'm sorry that Oliver, when he was consulted didn't ask me first because the procedure was that on Senior appointments, Hugh and I would get together and he never did in this case and so I was put in rather an awkward position, because I understand that Oliver was supporting Baverstock. And I don't know whether Hugh ever forgave me on this but I did very, very, strongly urge that ~~an estate~~ a mistake would be made here and eventually of course, as is known, he didn't perform very well at the Governors meeting to see whether he would be suitable. I feel sure ~~that~~ myself still that with all his great brilliant programme qualities, he would not have been successful ~~at~~ ..as Controller Wales.

GILLARD: Did you feel that this had an adverse effect then on your relationship with Hugh Greene because you advised him strongly that something he wanted to do was a mistake?

ARKELL: Well, perhaps I talked too ~~widely~~ strongly about it and did too much to try and prevent this happening. I feel that something

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affected my relationship with Hugh Greene in the last few years, and I've always attributed to that...but I've never discussed it with Hugh Greene afterwards and I just don't know for certain.

GILLARD: Well, let's move on. You I think were a member of the board of management longer than anybody else at all. Whether the record has been beaten since by anybody, I'm not aware but you had what.....

ARKELL: I had from 1958 until 1970 as member of the Board of management.

GILLARD: Beyond 1970 wasn't it?

ARKELL: No, I retired in May...in May or June 1970.

GILLARD: So you had 12 years.

ARKELL Yes 12 years. Which I enjoyed enormously and certainly was I think...I don't know if it is still a record. Certainly was then I think.

GILLARD: Of course in the light of your seniority when Hugh Greene was away you took the chair.

ARKELL Yes, I took the chair and I incidentally was chairing the Board of management although notbody seems to remember this, when the famous decision of ...about the War Games was taken and this had been contradicted since but I'm absolutely dead certain the decision was taken at the Board of Management when Hugh was away and I remember it occurring very very clearly and there was general opinion round the table that it would be unwise to show THE WAR GAME. it was then I think ratified by either Hugh or Oliver Whitkin taking it to Norman Brook (PH). But I did chair this meeting and strangely enough there was a report in either THE TIMES or TELEGRAPH saying that I'd chaired the meeting which took this decision. But everyone seems to have forgotten this, I don't know why.

GILLARD: Well, part of the reason may well be that we were all in New Zealand at the time, at a Commonwealth broadcasting conference.

ARKELL: That was it yes.

GILLARD: So I think that you know we all had our second in command at your Board of Management meeting and they have probably never

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been asked.

ARKELL: Well, I did actually ask ...discuss this with Hugh Greene at one time when we were trying to recollect and he says my memory is at fault and that the minutes don't show it. I have no idea if the the minutes show it, I can't remember but I'm absolutely certain...not that this matters very much, that I was chairing it and I am absolutely certain that I remember seeing this recorded in one of the papers afterwards. I always remember Hugh Greene looking at me very straight faced, sometime afterwards across his desk and saying, I'm sure we made a mistake about that. But that's another matter.

GILLARD: Let's talk about Board of Management for a minute or two, what did you regard as the function of the board?

ARKELL: Well I think it had two functions, one was to bring all the executive directors responsible for their various divisions together so that co-ordination could take place. Enormous importance and the other function was a really high level, far seeing, strategic, function. Concerning the whole corporate BBC. And I often used to feel that it would be a good idea if one could almost ring a bell at a certain stage in the Board of Management's deliberations and say 'Now we're going away from the sort of specialised divisional approach, when each person had something to say about his own division and we're going to look at the corporation with different eyes, very high level view and consider the future and the strategy. Because sometimes and this happens in so many boards that I've been concerned with, especially since the BBC, is sometimes you get a sort of minutia ....dealing with small nitty, gritty things which are important and have got to be dealt with by co-ordination. And then you need to sort of lift your eyes to something much wider and bigger, and unless you sort of give yourself a jolt, you sometimes don't start thinking in a sort of bigger vein so to speak.. I'm not saying that the Board of Management failed in that way I'm just saying that it had this difficult task of, it seems to me, both roles.

GILLARD: Let me put it to you this way, Hugh Greene

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often talked about the Board of Management as the Cabinet of the BBC, he used that expression frequently. on the other hand, Charles Curran who succeeded him used to talk about Board of management as ...and he used to say, it is no more than an advisory committee to me. Now which of the two roles did you regard the Board of Management as being?

ARKELL: Well I think that...if I could say this..I think that so to speak constitutionally, Curran is right, in that the Director General hasn't got to go by the majority decision of the Directors on the Board of Management. But from practical terms I think Hugh Greene was right because it is far better to discuss and thrash these things out and get a corporate decision involving everyone and participation of everyone than just that the various directors should purely advise the Director General. And it was very rarely (I think I can probably remember one case or two cases) that Hugh Greene didn't attract, reach a corporate decision with us all and acted on it. So I would say that much the better way of running a Board of Management was the way Hugh Greene ran it. I don't...I remember serving under Charles Curran for a bit and I dare say his change hadn't really fully developed by the time I left.

GILLARD: Did you feel that the Board of management really was effective as a management instrument in the BBC. Was it known about and respected down below, so to speak?

ARKELL Well I..I think it was on the whole a very good instrument and tool, I don't know how you could have done without it. And a lot of other organisations followed it, and have the same sort of arrangement at the moment, incidentally the National Trust has just started something similar. So that I think it is a good arrangement but I think that on your second point there about whether the staff on the whole understood it and realised its importance I think that this is part of communications on which I have very strong views actually. We did start arrangements for communications downwards. The idea was that each director should, after a board of management pass on the thinking and decisions and so on orally to his chief subordinate staff and

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as necessary they should pass them down the line, management command. And I think when this started and was done, fairly extensively, this helped a lot to make staff understand the importance of this cabinet.

GILLARD: I always remember that you hammered away at this...hammered away at the director of television, and director of radio aobut this point. I often wanted to say across the table, what do you do in your directorate about this. (LAUGHTER)

ARKELL: I had a policy meeting regularly with all my people who reported to me and I passed on various points from the B.O. and other matters. So I did follow out my own ~~preset~~ precept. GILLARD: I've leant something to day John.

GILLARD: Now there were other very important meetings that you were responsible for - there was this thing called the D.G.'s meeting but it was really your meeting wasn't it?

ARKELL: Yes, you see the DG in the old Haley days Was a D.G. who used to take this financial meetings, financial expenditure above a certain limit had to be agreed at that level. It was a budgetary control, part of a budgetary control system and I think Jacob occasionally for some time did...but I can't quite remember but later on either ~~Jager War~~ Jan Jacob (PH) or Hugh Greene asked the DA to do it and possibly Bottomley took it, anyrate I took it and I'm not sure whether I was the first DA to take it, I may have been, and so I was acting for DG in this respect ~~and green or not~~ deciding on the various proposals which were put up. It is a kind of unpopular job because if you wanted to try and economise and make the best use of resources, it often means that you had to modify or turn down applications, simply because of the budgetary situation. But that was one of my jobs, until at the end when there was a separate finance division, I mean there is always a finance division but I mean the Controller of Finance became a Director and ~~Wen~~ went on the board - then of course he took it alone but he was always present as controller of Finance, when I took it and a very important aspect of it too, part of it when I took the DG meetings.

GILLARD: Did you have problems in restricting BBC

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extravagance?

ARKELL: Yes I think I did and my I think my chief way of dealing with this was to try and put the responsibility onto the other directors as much as possible and the DG meeting would then be a sort of final check that that was happening properly. Rather than try and do it at the last moment, and causing a disturbance by turning it down. That is much the best place for it to start, is in the various directorates. And the way I did that or tried to do that, was through the creation of a management services division and this is worth just explaining for a moment. You see the Central establishment office, did the grading and the O & M and under the change which I made on the management services, the management services was an advisory service to the Directorates on economic use of resources. And it comprehended computers, and everything, any operational research there might have been, anything on the economic side. And therefore the grading side I separated off as something different and made it responsible to the CSA because obviously it concerned posts and salaries and staff and so on. Before that, this was also an interesting point, with some validity Hay always felt that the grading and the...organisation and methods should go together, because otherwise you get duplication and it is true that if you are examining something for grading, it is useful to examine it at the same time for organisation methods and efficiency and change of structure but over-weighting that I think was the extremely important point of the management services being advisory to the directorates and you can't have that if you include in the management services, the grading, which can't be advisory to the directorates and so I made that change and I think that was an extremely important change because it enabled one to say to outward directorates and all the other directorates: Look, here is this management service, you've got some expert people. Lionel Gregory was running it and he was very good indeed and there was John Dolton still there after a period for some time and there were some excellent people there. and if you want to try and economise, try and bring them in yourself. Get them to do a research or economic examination and get them to report to you.

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They needn't report to anyone else at all. And this I think had a great effect because, in the past, this organisation because it had a job evaluation included in it, it always had to report back upwards to the centre. It could now, management services, report and serve the actual directorate. And by the same token the computer is important here because, how should the computers be organised in the BBC? And I brought in - on the advice of Lionel Gregory, Erwig Debold (PH) to ...with specific terms of reference to just tell us how the computers should be organised in the BBC and they came up with something that was very much akin to what I've been trying to say on this question of devolution of the management services. It came up ...and I was very glad they did...with the answer that computers should be centralised from the point of view of the equipment but the project use should be devolved. And so we did and so the television service had the excitement and the interest and incentive of having their own computer to advise them on the best time to and most economic time to put out programmes, which is a very interesting application of the computer. And the whole of the other directorates could call in themselves, not have it imposed on them as some inspectorate but call in themselves, services to help them be more economic, and so you say how did I try and restrain extravagance I tried to make D.G. meeting something which was a sort of final go-ahead - the actual economy measures of having been taken on the advice where necessary, at the instigation of the outward directorates.

GILLARD: There does though on the face of it seem to be ...does seem to be room for conflict between the Director of Administration and the output directors, director of television, director of radio and so forth, where the output director wishes to do something for specific programme reasons and the DA has to come back on him and say well I'm afraid you can't have the resources to do it. Did you ever have cases of conflict? I can't remember that I ever fell out with you but did television?

ARKELL: No, no I think there were times when this

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Reels 9 and 10

obviously did occur, but I think they were minimised by this economy aspect having been gone through at an earlier stage. You see this is what I'm getting at, that I think they were minimised. I do remember in engineering division for instance, having to turn down quite a lot of the applications in because of perfectionism ~~because it~~ which died hard in engineering...the ~~Tudgesby~~ Tudsberry attitude of everything being belt and braces and the absolute highest quality and so that one had to do quite a lot from that front but with them too they sort of gradually I think learnt - I don't want to sound patronising here but they gradually learnt there were other ways of being more economical.

GILLARD: The oral history of the BBC, the contribution by Mr John Arkell on the 18th December 1984. This is tape 9 and we were talking about the various committees over which Mr Arkell presided when he was the Director of Administration - that is the DA of the BBC, and he will have more to say about that now and lead on into the BBC and computers.

ARKELL: There are two financial points on this question of restraining extravagence and getting the output and all directorates to the more economic use of resources, one is of course budgetary control, which was gradually developed in the BBC as something of a very good weapon and of course when the output directorates themselves had their own proper budgets, this was the incentive which they had for being as economic as possible because the more economic they were, the more money they would have for programmes. And this budget~~ing~~ary control in all levels of the BBC was a very successful operation and a very important one. The other financial point was use of cost accounancy which again was gradually developed and I was very anxious in connection with what I was saying about the use by directorates of maagement services division. I was very anxious that they should make full use of cost accountancy, which really meant that they could use cost accountants, either their own or the central ones, to give them comparative costs of various different methods of action so they could choose the best and if possible the least expensive. In that connection of course, there was this computer which I've hinted at which was started in the television service and to which Lashmar was transferred from the financial

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services group and did a very good job there. This particular computer and I don't know what the situation there is now but it was being developed when I retired in such a way that and incidentally provided a lot of interest outside the BBC in such a way that by pressing a button the television service could find out the most economic and inexpensive time, month, day....time of day...to say.. repeat a particular programme or have a drama series - ~~taking~~...because the computer worked it all out in a flash and took into account things like overtime, number of staff and various other variable factors which pointed the way to what would be the most economic time to have a particular programme. Now at first the television service jibbed a bit because they thought this was control of programmes by computer until we persuaded them that far from it, the decision is entirely theirs. It is merely to expose to them economies which they might want to make in order to use the money somewhere else by changing varying times of output so it was really a tool which they could sometimes use, sometimes not, they were totally independent still. It also assisted in the levelling out of output and in avoiding peaks and troughs which were extravagant - especially when it meant that you had idle staff hanging around.

GILLARD: You made some use of outside consultants I believe, this was at your discretion of course.

ARKELL: Well very largely it was at my discretion except the last consultants which I'll refer to in a moment. But the last consultant when I was there, which was MacKenzie (McKinsey) but, I...I've got rather strong feelings about consultants and I tried to apply these and I hope successfully in the BBC. They are roughly that you...you should be very careful before you bring in consultants at all, you need to bring them in when you haven't got the resources inside the organisation, there is no point in bringing them in if you have got your own resources and they are good enough, you have got the staff. Or you might want to bring them in conceivably if you have got your own resources but as a check on a solution and sometimes of course as a face saver to show that

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we are economically run, perhaps to persuade the government to increase the licence fee, but I don't think that the last two are anything like as valid as really bringing consultancy in when you have got a lack of a particular expertise which you want to use. And then when you decide to bring in consultants, I think you have got to.....another very important thing about consultants is to give them clear terms of reference - you want to make it absolutely exact what you want from them so that they won't try and extend it and for any wavey lines the chances are a consultant will want to extend the work for his own benefit - you want to be very strict about that and finally, and I'm saying all this because it had an application in the BBC and therefore it is history really. Finally, I think that you need to actually see not the perhaps rather person who may be in charge of the whole operation of consultancy in England or whereever, who is going to sell you the idea. But you need to ask to see both the written record if possible and actually in person the people who are going to work on the job in your own organisation. For so often the consultants who come have not had very much experience, they are all theoretical and it sounds awfully good when the person who is selling it comes in but he is a top chap and you need therefore to see who is going to do the job and I tried to carry this out. We had one or two successful applications. I think I mentioned how important were on the actual computerisation in the BBC and how they recommended devolved project use and centralisation of equipment which was exactly what we needed. We brought in (PH) too at an earlier stage and originally too Sir Norman Bottomley brought in engineering to look at our music department and I rather think that Sir Norman had in mind that this would test them because an industrial consultant might not really know much about music and I think he had a little twinkle in his eye when he brought them in and so it proved, that they weren't really able to make many suggestions.

GILLARD: You were very good indeed and renowned for your breadth of contacts in the great world of management and even of industry and how far were you able to keep the outsdie world appraised of what the BBC was doing in its way because this was leadership in a way wasn't it?

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ARKELL: Well, I hope we benefitted from this both ways, I hope we got a lot of information and expertise from the contacts with the outside world and also that we gave in return. I was in touch very closely with British Institute of Management, of which I eventually became Chairman after leaving the BBC and of course the Institute of Personnel Management, the Industrial Society and the Civil Service because the Civil Service had quite a lot to offer in their way. Greenlands you know the ~~Ministry of~~ Administrative Staff College, I was not only in touch with personally a lot but of course we sent quite a lot of our staff there on courses. Ashridge, was another place. ~~and~~ And another way I did it, which I think was invaluable although I hope it never looked like sort of swanning around for enjoyment because it certainly wasn't, I paid regular trips to the United States of America to examine what was happening there, and I think in those days particularly, America in many ways was in advance of the BBC, I'm not so sure they are now....of Great Britain I mean, I am not so sure they are now...it is very difficult to generalise but certainly so many of the new techniques and ideas about management did come from America and I admit that quite a lot of it was dressing up old ideas in new clothes but that was no bad thing in itself. Because it put a new angle on to something like communications say, and dressed it in a different way and created enthusiasm. But ~~I went~~ always when I went - and I think I made four trips to America doing this - ~~to~~ visit of Harvard business school and got the latest ideas from them. MIT of course, which both...you Frank must have been to, ~~both of those~~. And the university business schools like Stamford on the west coast where I spent a week with the faculty and especially firms like Boeing, General Electric, Standard Oil New Jersey and also Networks - the television networks, which couldn't offer much actually in the way of management expertise. And I think I gave more to them than they gave to me in that way. But other organsiations which had some parallel with the BBC like Time and Life and so on and a lot I think came out. Apart from the fact that I wrote fairly detailed reports each time which went up to the Governors and the Board of management and I hope the Directors ~~sort of~~ took note of some of the things, but also quite a lot of innovations came about as a result directly or indirectly of these American visits. One of them was medical checks for senior staff. In the very early days

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I found this working fairly successfully in a number of American firms and I think this was a very useful innovation - I won't go into detail but I could give you examples of how it I think enabled the BBC sometimes to move somebody before stress had taken its toll and I know a number of cases where illnesses which appeared, such as deafness, which appeared to be not curable, became curable. And we introduced this for about 100 senior staff and then in the BBC we extended it to Television producers and other staff, I think nearly 200 were checked every year and of course it had to be entirely voluntary and it had to be arranged so that no information about them need go to the BBC itself, unless they gave their permission, unless the staff gave them permission, but that wasn't very difficult. And these medical checks on producers in the BBC, especially in the television...television producers that we felt were under a great strain and it was interesting that really the level of health amongst television producers was extremely high. And I put that down to the fact that they had such an interesting output job, that strain and stress ~~which~~ was counter...manded by the tremendous interest of it. Whereas if you looked at for instance the amount of absenteeism there was in the accounts department, ~~is~~ it was about the highest in the whole of the BBC and ~~there was~~ I think that probably signified that the dullness of an accounts job - unless you are a very sophisticated accountant, but just the ordinary routine, led to flu and so on because they just weren't so interested in the job. And ~~the other~~ a few other things came out. Another one, you may say it is a small one but I think it is a rather important one and that is the telephones. I was so impressed as everyone else is in America with the standard of the telephone in operation and so I went and studied this at Standard Telephones near New York. And I got their training manuals and I brought them back and I told Andrews, Head of Central Services, to start an intensive course of training for telephone operators in the BBC so we can improve the whole operation of answering the phone, politeness, quickness, speed and so on. And I felt this was so important and I think it improved the operation becase of course in a way the telephone operation is one of the public relations part of the BBC to do it efficiently. ~~Especially~~ Then on selection methods: I mean I studied those pretty thoroughly in America and I introduced

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changes in our appointments system, the importance of one to one interviews as well as a board interview for outside candidates which came both from America and also from the civil service. I studied the civil service selection procedures and later on actually became a member of the final selection board of the civil service after I'd...Civil Service Commission after I had left the BBC - but that is just to note...I say that is just to note ~~that~~ in view of my great interest in this question of selection because nobody solved this selection problem, it is gradually getting better generally I think in this country and elsewhere but there is no foolproof way of selecting the right person but you can do a great deal to minimise your mistakes - I won't go into too much detail ~~and business training~~ but, certainly things like the in tray test, which I got from America ~~which~~ is quite an interesting test of likely business ability. The General Electric Company had some most intresting...I'm sorry it wasn't it was the Standard oil of New Jersey, where I studied quite a lot on this and they had some most interesting experiments which I won't go into in detail but which had some sort of significance in the general improvement of the actual ability to select staff. In which incidentally I haven't mentioned it before, Nick Furze was such an expert in the way he chaired appointments boards and was so often in demand by the ~~other~~ various directorates ~~as they are for other directorates~~. The sickness rate of course since I mentioned this just now on the whole is very low in the BBC and also the turn over rate amongst the monthly paid staff was incredibly low, something like 2 or 3 percent a year. Unbelievably low compared to other organisations and I often think that a lot of this is due to the inate interest inherent interest of work in the BBC. I mean I used to think when I used to travel up to London from Henly on Thames, frequently, every day really, unless I was staying in London, and watch other people who were going up to their jobs and I always used to work in the train solid, both ways, and I used to think that really how incredibly lucky one is to be working in the BBC with such a fascinating job to do and often thought that people in the BBC didn't quite realise how lucky they were and I think it was the inate interest of broadcasting

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both the fact that it was thoroughly worth while ~~that~~ people ~~thought~~ ~~and I think this was a very important aspect of it~~ and also it was just fascinating from the point of view of art and the actual programme.

GILLARD: There was a touch of glamour to it.

ARKELL: There's a touch of glamour to it and this made such a difference. And I'm sure this had an enormous effect on health. In connection with health, although this is something quite different, in a way, I did two things in Broadcasting House .....

GILLARD: Tape 10.

ARKELL: I was just saying...about to say that in connection with this health question, I did two things in Broadcasting House itself which I'm very glad I did, one was to establish a roof garden on the flat roof in Broadcasting House and one rather cynical member of staff when they saw it being prepared said to another one, 'Oh I bet this is for the management' and I was glad to let it be known that it certainly wasn't. It was for staff as a whole and until I left I don't know what the situation now is...it was enormously well patronised ..with people on sunny days, and ~~sure~~ good for ~~the~~ health, ~~goes~~ to have their lunch out there and sit out there and it was really very big and it was beautifully done, plants and trees and everything else and not really very expensive and I think it increased...I mean you never can tell but I mean I think it probably paid for itself in that you have got a better work out of staff, simply through the roof garden, it can make a lot of difference. The other thing was not so much health but it was a management - special management mess, so to speak, it was a room, two or three rooms...I think very nicely decorated under the design actually chosen by Judy Hutchinson who was a person working for ~~Arnold Gryswood~~ (PH) and I got hold of her because she was a very good contact person in public relations, and she did the design of this dining room, which was conventional and traditional and very attractive I think and the food was awfully good and fairly inexpensive and it did enable managers, heads of departments and especially people visiting from television centre and Bush House who wanted to come and discuss something with somebody in Broadcasting House. I'm sure it

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facilitated discussion in a quiet atmosphere, they had to pay for their food but it wasn't very expensive and the design ~~incidentally,~~ in my opinion was attractive, ~~I didn't I mean~~ Hugh Greene knew I was doing this, but I went ahead and did the whole thing and it was only when it was finished that I took him along to see it and I was thinking how much he would like it when he rather threw up his hands when he saw it, it wasn't anything like modern enough for his taste and he thought ~~it was~~ a bad design had been chosen. So we used to go there occasionally.

GILLARD: You can't win them all can you. No...Let's now talk about some of the people you were associated with in this last 10 years or so when you were D.A. You've mentioned Arthur ~~Ford~~ ffordе as Chairman have you anything more to say about Arthur ~~Ford~~ ffordе?

ARKELL: Yes coming back to Arthur, can I just finish off two things from a previous paragraph so to speak. When I was expressing the importance of getting round and liaising with other organisations and my going to America and so on, I was very anxious that at all levels of administrative staff, I think I have mentioned this to some extent already but it was terribly important that people not only in staff administration but all round the place can try and glean the best possible wisdom that can be got to apply when necessary in the BBC and perhaps it is interesting just to mention that there was so much talk in the last 20 years or so about behavioural sciences, and I think it is very important and I think behavioural scientists have indicated how to get staff in any big organisation to feel a sense of fulfilment and therefore increase efficiency. I thought it might be just interesting to mention that on my very first trip to the States in the early 50s I came across the originator of so much of this behavioural science thinking which was Rothlesberger at the Harvard business school, and gained a great deal from long discussions with him, some of which resulted in changes of staff administration policy in the BBC.

GILLARD: Now on Arthur Ford, he was Chairman of the Board when you became a Director I take it he must have been?

ARKELL: Yes he was, I think he was yes. ~~Well I was I think really that...I mean~~ perhaps comparisons are odious but I think that

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for my money Arthur Ford was the best Chairman of the BBC that I experienced. I think Normanbrook, ran him a close second, perhaps you could say equally good. But ~~he~~ Sir Arthur was so...so stable and his deep and very genuine Christianity, was an enormous asset ..an enormous asset to us all. He had this amusing way of talking obliquely so that if you...if he said something, quite often you had to start trying to answer and then suddenly the meaning came to you. And you had to somehow bring the conversation round to show that you...that you had understood the words, you know...which is rather attractive in its way, because it has its penetrating shafts this oblique method of talking - and he was a most delightful person to be with, and had the best possible idea of broadcasting and some of his papers of course as high minded (if I don't like the phrase, I can't think of a better one) as Haley's and if you could distil the practical wisdom for application, in various ways in the BBC from what he said and wrote I think it undoubtedly added indirectly to the quality of the programmes.

GILLARD: Wouldn't you say it was a very odd paradox is the word that he and Hugh Greene who was in many ways at the other extreme of the spectrum, made such a marvellous pair. I mean there never was a happier Chairman/DG relationship.

ARKELL: No I think that is a remarkable thing and it could be just that one is the compliment of the other I think that - I'm just guessing now but perhaps Arthur ~~Ford~~ Hugh saw in Hugh Greene's mischievousness and so on something perhaps which wasn't very pronounced in himself conceivably and I'm sure Hugh Greene saw and respected enormously the deep religious convicition which Hugh unfortunately through no fault of his own hadn't got, in Sir Arthur.

GILLARD: And what about Lord Normanbrook who succeeded...

ARKELL: Well I found Lord Normanbrook very much after my own heart because he understood very well the job I was trying to do in broadcasting, you see one or two other civil servants..before I went into the BBC and while I was in the BBC in the beginning - used to come round and see me and they were so interested because they thought that you couldn't bring really

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proper law and order in the adminstration of an organisation like the BBC, but Pym ..... proved before me that you could and I as you know, went largely on the basis of what Pym had done but I hope improved it and extended it and did all sorts of things to it. But efficient administration in broadcasting was more than possible because in fact, the opposite is true, i.e. from the more order you have in administration and orgaisation the more freedom do you give to the artistic side, I'm certain of that, in fact there is no freedom without law as we all know and so that this was of enormous importance. Now Normanbrook was such a support to me because he understood the difficulty, he understood what I was trying to do and in fact he looked upon me almost like a minister looks upon a permanent secretary. And he expected me to do a lot of things like that and I found him a tremendous support and for that reason I think Normanbrook was perhaps as helpful to me as Arthur Ford was.

GILLARD: What about the Normanbrook Greene relationship did you have an insight on that?

ARKELL: Yes, I thought that it was rather good. And there was one occasion I remember when I disagreed with Greene on something and I said I would like to see Normanbrook about it and Normanbrook did it quite openly, and Greene didn't seem to mind, and I discussed it with Normanbrook and Normanbrook in the end agreed with me and Greene took it in extremely good heart and didn't seem to mind..... the fact that I'd gone not over his head because he knew all about it, so that seemed to indicate a fairly good relationship, the fact that Greene didn't get his way on this and didn't seem to take umbridge about it and took it from Normanbrook that what I'd suggested was the right thing. So I mean I can't say more than I thought that there was a good relationship, I think there was as you were indicating a very special relationship between Hugh Greene and Arthur Ford and I think the relationship between Hugh Greene and Normanbrook was pretty good too.

GILLARD: Now some Governors, I'd particularly like to ask you about the two TUC ladies if I can call them that - Dame Ann Godwin and Dame Florence Hancock because they must have been very important members

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of the Board from your point of view.

ARKELL: Absolutely from the union point of view. Well I found them both absolutely delightful, very level headed, enormous support Dame Ann Godwin used to come of course to the TUC congresses whenever I went and I went every year and it was she I think who hosted with me the TUC party that the BBC gave, and we obviously both Florence Hancock and her we had this tremendous thing in common which was the Unions and how they should operate in the BBC and of course it was in a period when we had really tremendous co-operation with the unions and really I can honestly say that we never had an explosion, we never had a strike except right at the end as I told you earlier. So it was really something like 25 years without a strike. And they were very informed, middle of the road, one or two of them had been already chairman of the...I can't rememeber whether both had...

GILLARD: Both had.

ARKELL Both had...Chairmen of the TUC Congress and so they knew the people and I've no doubt that occasionally they actually talked to some of the union, although I don't know for certain, some of the union leaders who we dealt with, maybe to help us out of difficulty, that I can't quite rememeber but certainly the fact I think that they were there too, was a help to my relations with unions - because they knew of them and they were highly respected and part of the governors and so they were great - I owe a lot to both of them.

GILLARD: Extraordinary situation that two dyed in the wool trade union people because they were both devoted trade unionists weren't they

ARKELL: Yes they were.

GILLARD: Should become - should find themselves as an integral part of the management of one of the country's major institutions and have to..and have to deal with the employment terms and conditions and salaries and so forth of a staff of what 25 -30,000 people. They worked it though.

ARKELL: Oh yes well of course it wasn't actually

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quite 25,000 in my day, I think it was nearer topping twenty or just under twenty but they .....of course they didn't go into the detail of it - you see I mean all this was devolved in my day mostly and on to me and Hugh Greene and me and my staff and so that they were there as a sort of background - goodwill background on the board of governors but except when papers went up to them, such as papers for increases in salaries and papers about staff and that sort of thing, they didn't run the BBC after all and ...not in those days and not in a detailed way at all.

GILLARD: They thought that the staff were not getting fair treatment...they were in a position to make a lot of trouble.

ARKELL: Oh they certainly were but then I think...

GILLARD: And, they never did.

ARKELL: Well I think the point was the BBC staff were...always did get good treatment more of less I really do. I mean I was talking to one or two of the I was talking to Michael Cinchin-Smith not so long ago who did such a good job as CSA, an excellent person, and he was saying really that he thought that in those years that staff administration (and this is relevant to your point because it would be on the staff side that they would were as you say making a fuss if they weren't satisfied) - I think he thought and I rather agree that it really was a success story, the administration of staff during those years; that we did everything we could. We extracted what we could from other organisations ~~we extracted what we could from those others~~ and, it was all designed to create conditions of work in every way from the top of the organisation down to the most junior commissionaire or what have you or cleaner, so that each member of staff at his own particular level and on ~~its~~ his own particular expertise could give of his best. And that therefore ~~its~~ in morale and building up of morale it is the feeling especially in the middle and higher ranks the feeling of self fulfilment that they have got an important a job to do, ~~they won't ...~~ that matters; it was an untramelled job, they weren't going to be interefered with except when necessary and that they had the same pension schemes the same both for the manual and ~~the~~ staff, ~~got the same pension schemes~~ - I made that change in the BBC - ~~brought the pensions into line with everyone~~ and they were

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good pensions - we improved the pension scheme a great deal - ~~whatever it was~~ the range also common they had ~~the same pension schemes~~, ~~they~~ had ~~the same~~ opportunities for promotion. They had the same sort of policy for their salaries and the grading and they had facilities for special salarites and special promotion and this was extremely important for the production staff and I was prepared because we had such a basis of sound grading structure ~~that I was prepared~~ to sanction very high increases for particular producers and particular highly skilled artistic people and way above the actual salaries and ~~this~~ it didn't matter in my opinon ~~of~~ in certain circumstances if the head of department who is repsonsible for his work receives a lower salary than the specialist. It is ~~because it is~~ like C.B. Cochran ~~C.V. Cocrit (PH)~~ famous in the way he got better and better as far as I understand as a producer and a very senior one in the end and ~~it is~~ in the same way ~~that~~ I tried to arrange that the top producer could be paid a very high salary and be thought of as important as a member or a controller or even a member of the Board of Directors. And so even in that flexibility ~~I mean~~ the BBC I think had ~~I think it was a~~ a success story to tell; although I say it who shouldn't but I'm using I think a phrase which was used to me the other day on the telephone, I think ~~it was during a period~~ really if you look at the way other organisations were managed, ~~I think~~ the BBC staff management was really - again I must confess ~~I should say~~, I shouldn't say this but I do think it was absolutely first class, looking back. The only think I have come across anything like as good ~~and this is not really as good~~ was ~~because~~ when I became a director of the Boots company after leaving the BBC and I found the same spirit, stemming partly really from the founder of Boots Jessie Boot, ~~and the same spirit~~...~~which~~ and the whole point is ~~to I mean~~ it is right anyway to treat staff well because as I have often said, the man is not just a means to an end but an end in ~~itself~~ himself. It is right to treat ~~them~~ staff right but it is also economic to do so because they give their best work.

GILLARD What's called enlightened self interest.

ARKELL: Well it is yes it is but it has a moral ~~attitude~~ element as well.

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Reels 11 + 12

Editor: There must be some omission here of what Frank Gillard had to say to Gerry Coke. JHarwood

them, especially Gerry Coke, (incidentally his name is spelt C O K E though it's pronounced Cook). He was a very artistic man wasn't he?

ARKELL: Very artistic and so level-headed, absolutely charming person. I think he was popular with everyone, and he had a... he was held in enormous respect by people that knew him at all. And his great love of music was opera - just the right sort of person to have as a governor of the BBC, took an enormous interest in the music output. And also the staff. He was a tremendous supporter of mine all through, and I really could not speak more warmly about Gerry Coke whom I've still more or less kept up with. I could hardly speak warmly enough about Gerry Coke as a governor, and I feel sure that wherever he went that he was held in the same sort of respect - a balanced, unselfish, not seeking his own interest in any sort of way - excellent person for the BBC.

GILLARD: The very best kind of governor in other words.

ARKELL: Absolutely, the very best.

GILLARD: Which you would not say about the next man, Sir Robert Bellinger.

ARKELL: Well yes, you've put it into my mouth. Of course he was Lord Mayor wasn't he at one time I think.

GILLARD: Lord Mayor of London.

ARKELL: Lord Mayor of London yes. I think one of the troubles I found with him - and you can relate this to the policy of Hill I suppose - was that he wanted to delve into the minutiae of administration under the various committees which the governors formed under Hill, which was so intrusive that instead of in my opinion increasing efficiency and reducing extravagance, it did exactly the opposite. In my opinion it took away from the staff, such as the engineering division and the, no doubt the head of building committee, and certainly Andrews, head of Central Services - took away the keenness and pride in doing the best possible job. In fact it's the reverse of this important principle of devolution which I've mentioned earlier,

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with the result that they got sick of it and they didn't get praised for anything and they did less good work - I tried to prevent it - but less good work than they otherwise would have done. So it had in my opinion this intrusion into the Executive by the Board of which Robert Bellinger was one of the prime movers I think, certainly was one of the biggest, the longest... one of the speakers on it who came a lot, who I think had the absolute opposite effect from that intended.

GILLARD: He was Chairman of the Board's Finance Committee wasn't he?

ARKELL: Yes I remember now, of course he was. I don't think that helped at all, and as I say I think it took away the really expertise job that was being done and blunted it. I found Sir Robert Bellinger a strange character. I'm sure he had qualities; in some ways I enjoyed meeting him and he used to ask me occasionally to watch football with him but I was never able to go. But I did get upset once, and perhaps I shouldn't have been, but it's perhaps worth mentioning, when he rang me up about something and I can't remember what it was, but he made the astonishing statement of something to the effect that, well you know, Mr. Arkell, he said, it never pays not to... it never pays to decieve, or not... never pays not to be a... not to have 100% integrity, or something frightfully rude like that, he said, it seemed to me. Because if anything... I mean you can accuse me of many things, but you cannot accuse me I'm quite sure of a lack of integrity. And the sort of... the kind of lack of sensitivity that caused him to put this to me is unbelieveable it seemed to me. And I actually at the time I didn't say anything at all, but funnily enough, a year or two ago I met him at a cocktail party given by Lord MacAlpine - at Christmas - and I tackled him with it just for a joke. We got talking and I said you offended me very greatly, I don't know if you remember - and he didn't remember. So I told him exactly to his face what he'd said and how I'd reacted to that, and to do himself justice - and this was the right remark I must say - he said well look you should have told me about this, you should have told me you felt like this, and I think he was probably right,

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perhaps I should. But I think there was a certain lack of sensitivity on his part which went in tune I think with this intrusiveness of the governors into the execution of the work in the BBC which didn't make for economy; I'm quite sure it did the reverse.

GILLARD: Now we come to a man for whom you had very deep feelings indeed, Sir James Duff who was vice-chairman and indeed acting chairman for a short time.

ARKELL: Yes, yes.

GILLARD: And he was vice-chancellor of the University of Durham wasn't he?

ARKELL: He was. Well here again I have a deep attachment to Sir James. In fact I have a photograph as you saw on my mantlepiece in the sitting room of him. He epitomised I think a man who had, while having a lovely sense of humour he had a very very serious side to him and he took broadcasting very seriously indeed, and he had I think the deepest of philosophic, I think probably Christian qualities. And there was something enormously appealing about him with his deep voice and his absolute straightness, and I got to know him very well. And in fact we used to have what we used to call a pilgrimage every year up to the Yorkshire Dales, and I used to go and stay with him and his sister. I still go and stay with his sister now that he's died, and we go up Swaledale and we talk about the old times we used to... when he was alive. I'm trying to think of something informative about his BBC governorship. I think you could say that he was absolutely staunch in his views; nothing could shift him, rightly, if he thought he was convinced of something important. He felt strongly of course about some of the output which in my opinion I think was going a bit wrong under TW3, and he was very upset about some of that which as I said earlier I don't think need have happened. And I think that he was a very great influence for good in the governors, judging by what he said at the times I attended the...

GILLARD: How often did you in fact attend?

ARKELL: Well that was I think very well done.

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I mean before I was DA I was brought in occasionally ~~under~~ as the CSA on some very important staff matter, and whenever I was DA I always came in on finance and on unions and on other matters where there was any staff implication or any administrative implication. And I felt that the arrangements which were made by Hugh I presume - Hugh Greene - and the governors, ~~was~~ were just about right. One was brought in when one felt one should be there.

GILLARD: In an institution like the BBC there must be a great temptation on the Board to be almost seduced by the glamour of the output side, by the programmes in other words, and to let the rather less fascinating administrative and routine details look after themselves. Did you ever feel it was run that way? Did you feel that you were the poor relation in fact in the Board's eyes?

ARKELL: Well I don't think I did to be honest. I felt at any rate I was less happy with the Board of Governors that gradually came into being after Lord Hill's arrival. I think the whole spirit changed and they were much less confident about the staff in the BBC; they'd been led to believe in some way that the staff perhaps weren't all that good. And therefore one felt quite different, and of course nothing is so bad as for people to feel that they haven't got the confidence of the people above, and this spreads right down in an organisation very very quickly. And it ~~was~~ is by the same token, nothing is so good as real encouragement to people if it's deserved, and so often people forget what a tremendous incentive it is to a conscientious person to be encouraged if they deserve it. And I felt that the Board were lacking in the right sort of spirit; the whole atmosphere seemed to gradually change so that to answer your question, for the first major part of my time as both CSA and DA, I felt that they took a remarkable interest really in both the staff and the administration, they seemed really genuinely interested and they didn't, I don't think, fall for this possible trap that you mention. I'm not sure really I can analyse ~~that particular point~~ the position in this respect later on except to say that I didn't feel when I used to go to the Board of Governors that I was particularly welcomed, or indeed, looking back, that I was held

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in the same very high repute I think I can say I was held in on the earlier days.

GILLARD: I used to feel that the bouquets handed out by the Board which were always reported to us at Board of Management meetings by our chairman, the DG, ran as follows: 95% to television; 4% to radio; 1% to everybody else.

ARKELL: Well of course there's a lot in that. Of course television was the new thing and the people watching it, audience, were so much bigger than on sound. But of course in the administration there were a lot of people on administration who had been attached to and perhaps working in the sound for a long time, and I felt that the sound broadcasting was held in extremely high repute by any thinking person, and... so that I think if you... On the surface that was I'm sure true, the interest prevailed and was on television more because it was a growing theme and because the audience was so much greater. But if you talked to somebody like Gerry Coke of course, who enormously enjoyed the music, and if you talk to others on their own when the governors were a good lot, in my opinion, so to speak, in the early days - and I'm not saying anything really against any individual later on - I think you would find that their appreciation was very different than the sort of collective appreciation in the percentages that you make, that you suggest.

GILLARD: Well I'm sure the Board would give you a bonus if we still there for that remark, John. We've been talking about your relations as the Director of Administration with the Board. Let's turn to the relations between your directorate administration and the programme directorates. I mean was it a happy relationship. And what were your feelings about it generally, and what were your... the feelings of your people about the programmes? Did we justify all the hard grind that you put in to make our lives possible?

ARKELL: Yes. Well that's a very nice way of putting it, and I wish you'd - perhaps you did - put it when you were... years ago, because I think that's what we were trying to do . We were trying in

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administration to do everything we could as I said earlier to improve and help facilitate the best possible output. I think it... when you're running a unified organisation, as I felt the BBC needed to be, I felt it basically had to be a unit, although maximum devolution on all matters ~~if~~ That you possibly can. It does mean that you occasionally have to sort of say no as Director of Administration, or to ask for more economies or perhaps not agree to an appointment, although one seldom did that ~~if~~ easily... and one never hoisted anyone on somebody else. I mean the department always had the power of veto. But I think there must be occasions if the unity is going to be preserved, of perhaps having to say no from a... from what appears a central position. And the directorates, the output directorates particularly must sometimes feel how the hell does he know? ~~and~~ but they don't ~~k~~now really all the implications and... or the bigger picture which I'm in, and they must sometimes feel that it's nonsense. And I suppose from that point of view I may have been - I don't know - I may have been looked upon perhaps as a bit too stern. All I can say is that my actual personal relations with everyone if I can remember, seemed to be excellent, and I always tried to make myself open to any sort of, any sort of suggestion of any different thing. And once during the first week that I came into the BBC as CSA, I saw that - I think it was the first week or perhaps the first month - and I saw that Val Gielgud's request for somebody to have a personal grade I think it was, was turned down, and somehow I got hold of this and I made the point of going straight down to ~~p~~ Val... - perhaps this was probably passing over the administrative side in sound ..... which I shouldn't have done, but as a friendly gesture I just wandered in and talked to him about it. And I just mention that as an example that ~~I'm~~ I was terribly keen not to be a kind of dragon, but wanted to be as helpful as I could. But one had to be firm sometimes for the sake of fairness on other people.

GILLARD: Did you feel though that your people viewed administration particularly in a progressive outfit like the BBC, where you were in fact establishing standards of administration that were admired throughout the country. Did you feel that they viewed administration as an

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end in itself or were they really dedicated to the programme cause?

ARKELL: Well I very much hope the latter, I mean I really do, because what does it exist for? I mean people used to make a joke that of course administration would be much easier if there weren't any programmes. But that was only a joke, and I very much hope that... could be that one made a mistake, could be that one wasn't getting around enough. I mean I was particularly anxious to get around, but I don't suppose - like so many people - I don't suppose I got around anything like enough. I went to the regions a lot. I do remember for instance in the television service asking to see a programme right through from its conception right to the end of it, and I went and had a most fascinating time watching the first meeting ever to discuss in the television service what the next Minstrel Show would be - BLACK AND WHITE MINSTREL. And I went to all the rehearsals to the last day, and they gave me a Black and White Minstrel tie afterwards, which I still have to this day - which I wear with great pride! But one could have done much more of that, and I regret in a way I didn't get around more than I did, but there was such a terrific pressure of work, and I had so many departments to operate. But I'm sure people could call for improvement on general liaison. Basically I think that the, certainly my staff realised - and we are always talking on conferences and so on in terms of always having the objective in mind - now what are we after - it's the programmes. I certainly hope that impression was conveyed but you may have a contrary view, Frank.

GILLARD: No. ... Tape 12. I was going to ask you about the annual report system which is so highly developed in the BBC. Every member of staff has an annual report written on his year's work, and this is revealed to him by his boss and discussed with him. Did you inherit this, and how did you develop it?

ARKELL: The report is also endorsed of course by the one higher up of the boss who writes the report. No, this was already in the BBC in a form, but I did change a lot of it, and I hope improve it, and had new forms which were more comprehensive and more conducive, I think,

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to getting the real opinion of the immediate head of staff. I think there are a lot of things one can say about this. Perhaps the first is that nobody knows so much about the work of an individual as his immediate boss, and therefore this is something which must be taken into account all the time in the assessment of people for promotion, and therefore the annual reporting system from all sorts of points of view, not only the satisfaction of the individual and to get him to improve - this is one of the constructive things about it, to get him to improve his work - not only is that important, but it's very important from the point of view of movement inside the BBC to a suitable post and promotion. One point, I think, which I'd like to stress and which I did stress a lot in the BBC, is the sensitivity which is necessary in passing over the report itself. As you know there are certain regulations about how much of the report do you pass over - do you hand the whole thing over? And there are all sorts of pros and cons for the various different ways of doing it, and the Services all do it differently ~~and~~ one from the ~~and~~ another. But we had a sort of compromise in the BBC system under which you did pass over either the whole report to read, or you could read out bits of it, ~~or you could~~... but you had to pass over any adverse ~~reports~~ comments which were ~~not~~ remediable. If something was inherent, somebody had a stutter, you hadn't got to put that down, but if there was something that was remedial and that's the whole point in a way - one of the big points in the reporting system is to improve - then you had to pass that over. But what absolutely can kill an annual report system and make it best not to have one is lack of sensitivity on the part of the individual who's giving the report to the individual. It is really a question of sensitivity because I've forgotten the phrase but I think it is ~~you~~ criticism can so easily take caterpillars as well as blossoms from ~~a~~ the tree, ~~and you can~~ - if that's the right expression, but I think you know what I mean: it's so easy to do harm as well as good. Most people are very sensitive - most people - about their own work, and if you've got an adverse criticism which you want to say in order to improve it, especially if it's a rather difficult one, you have to think out how to do it, and I think a pretty good rule is to tell him his good points first, and make ~~it~~ them with the greatest

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sincerity and genuinely mean it. And then perhaps get on to help him for the future by telling him that as you see it, it seems to me that such and such could be improved, what do you think? I think it's terribly important to do it sensitively so that you don't lower the morale and he doesn't feel that he can not carry on so effectively in the job. So it's a sensitivity of passing on annual reports which is one of the most important parts of the report system.

GILLARD: Of course the staff have a right of appeal.

ARKELL: Yes, they do, as they do on anything in connection with conditions of service. But they very seldom did appeal against an annual report as far as I recall. There were occasionally appeals. But that was a good thing because you see there is such a thing as malice unfortunately, and malice exists in any organisation and it certainly exists in the BBC - not overmuch - but so that somebody could be quite pernicious in annual reports. And if there was malice the only thing... getting rid of it in a particular case was to appeal. And I think it quite often got put right.

GILLARD: But of course the annual report was important in relation to new appointments.

ARKELL: Well that's what I was about to say, as I said to start with and now I'd like to come back to that. It's extremely important and the interpretation of it is so important, interpretation of reports. You see when you're making an appointment - I tried to change this quite a lot so that it was a little bit more like what they would do for instance in General Electric or Standard Oil in New Jersey in America, and what they did in the British Civil Service although not so ~~much~~ extensively as in the Civil Service. You have the ~~SIS B(?)~~ CISBE and so on - the practical day or two tests. But what I felt was so important in appointments - and this has to do with an annual report - was not to just concentrate on the final appointment board; when if you did you could get so led astray by the actual impression that the chap may give on the day, and important as that impression is, it's not sometimes as important as what is in the man's mind, what sort of quality of mind he has. I mean

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take the talks producer in sound, you need a very high quality of mind. It doesn't matter so terribly if you're a talks producer perhaps, if you haven't got a salesman type, you know, you don't necessarily want it. So you've got to consider what you're looking for. And the important thing I think is to take into account - and here's where the assessment form comes in - take into account the opinion of the immediate boss, which is the only man who really knows, and the immediate bosses before him where he's been in other places; take that into account, take all other factors that you know into account, and then to wrap it all up and make your final decision with all the facts and the factors in mind, and not just concentrate purely on whether a man makes a good impression. And this is... I was at pains to try and change this evaluation in order to try and assess the best person. And of course the assessment forms if they're well filled in are useful, are a very important aspect. As far as outside candidates go, of course you haven't got an assessment form, and you didn't have a track record inside the BBC, and that was why I instituted more thorough investigation including a one to one interview as well as a board interview, so that you really get to know the person outside. And my own advice always was that, if you can, get on a telephone with somebody who could speak for the outside person, where the candidate has given permission, and really talk on the telephone because you can really get an opinion on the telephone so much more frankly than if they have to write it.

GILLARD: Yes. Now one would gather from everything that's been said between us today that morale on the whole was pretty good in the BBC in your time. Would you agree with that?

ARKELL: I really think so. I mean of course I really think it was very high. If you compare it to any other organisation; I can't think of an organisation where there was a higher morale. I mean you may have got a bit of a rat race in the BBC, but so you do in so many organisations. I think that the morale was high was due to the intrinsic interest of the job and what we were doing; it was due to the public service angle and people thought they were doing something worthwhile - it sounds very, perhaps

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rather pompous and priggish, but an enormous number of people did enormously value the fact that they were doing something of national importance. I think this all helped morale. I think it was high because I think on the whole you had some extremely good people who were in charge of departments, and controllers, in their various ways educated, very civilised people, so that on the whole they treated their staff very well in the various divisions. And it was high also because of the enormous efforts of staff administration to create these conditions under which everyone can give of his or her best.

GILLARD: Yes. You, as you've told us, had a wide range of contacts in the great outside world. How was the BBC viewed by the big institutions and business firms and so on in the country, and the professional firms and companies? Was the BBC admired? Was it respected?

ARKELL: I think that until I had, so to speak, in some ways put them - this sounds rather like self-praise and I don't mean it to - but in some ways had put the BBC on the map in the outside organisations, industry and so on, not much was known of the BBC, and I think quite a lot of people thought of it as a very small organisation which put out programmes perhaps with a few thousand staff or something, totally forgetting all the engineers and the regions and everything else. But gradually, when our BBC staff participated in such large numbers - not just myself, but the staff in all these ~~organisations~~ conferences etc. & when outside organisations, were able to hear what the BBC were doing, I think gradually the opinion of the outside world ~~went~~ was very high and I was ~~awfully~~ pleased that they wanted me to take such a part in the British Insititute of Management when I was in the BBC; I never asked to do so but they approached me and I think they must have done that because they thought that here was an organisation which had got a very high standard ~~of it~~...

GILLARD: But we're setting an example.

ARKELL: We're setting an example. So gradually I think the opinion outside became higher and higher.

GILLARD: That of course is very important for the long term future of the BBC. How did you get on during your term with

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the... with government officials concerned with broadcasting - the Permananent Secretary and his assitants. I mean Peter Lillicrap wasn't it, and Dennis Lawrence, and perhaps others.

ARKELL: Yes yes. I got on I think very well. I can't remember any difficulties. We had difficulties over sometimes when we wanted to increase salaries and that sort of thing, and the government policy was not. I think there were some difficulties but we had never had rows or anything. I didn't see an awful lot of them. I think a lot of this was done by Hugh Greene, or ~~other... or the~~ The next Director General and perhaps the Secretary. But in my own field of staff and administration for the context I have, I can remember nothing but good. I did have of course quite a lot to do with the Civil Service Commission and right at the beginning because of them having a representative there - ..... as I've already mentioned. And they took an interest, and I... And later on of course, after I left the BBC I ~~became on~~ was appointed to the Final Selection Board of the Civil Service Commission, which again perhaps was a compliment to the BBC in that they wanted somebody who'd been involved in this sort of thing in the BBC. And there was quite a lot to learn in the Civil Service Commission, the way they did things which I did try to introduce into the BBC. I think my relations such as they were - and I didn't see an awful lot of these government officials - were pretty good.

GILLARD: Let's now talk about Lord Hill. You've mentioned him about 20 times in the course of the day's proceedings here. But of course his arrival as Chairman of the Board was electrifying for us wasn't it?

ARKELL: Yes it was for us all.

GILLARD: Yes. Well many people have told the story about the announcement of his appointment. I'd like you to tell us how you knew in advance that he was going to be appointed.

ARKELL: Well I apparently - I can't remember this very clearly, but I see from this book on Hugh Greene that I apparently - and it's beginning to come back slightly - there was some cocktail party

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which you say was where?

GILLARD: Lancaster Gate.

ARKELL: Lancaster Gate, yes, where I was at. And I think now I'm just trying to piece it together ~~it together~~ in my mind but I think I must have talked to some permanent secretary or could it have been? I don't know, some official, whom I must have known, I think, rather well personally, and who told me, but he didn't tell me confidentially or anything as far as I can recall, that Hill was a likely candidate. And I mentioned it to DG because it struck me as something that ~~she~~ he (sic) ought to perhaps know about, and he didn't just believe it at all, and wouldn't sort of take any notice of it and laughed about it. And I think I seem to remember now - it's coming back to me a bit - but I thought to hell with this, I believe it's probably true, so I think I brought him along to see this man, I said look, you talk to him yourself. Then I suppose the man - whoever he was - must have thought well perhaps I'd better be rather careful because maybe I'm letting out some things I shouldn't be letting out, so he pretended that he was pulling my leg but of course he wasn't. And so that's how I first heard of it. As far as Hill in the BBC goes, I think there were a lot of... I mean it was a terrific shock to have someone from the commercial television of course, and he was a different sort of person to lead the BBC as chairman from Arthur Ford and ~~Norman Brooke~~ Normanbrook, and indeed from Simon in a way too. I think that he, however, grasped the importance of public service broadcasting and championed it very quickly. And those who say that shows how superficial he can be I think it's unfair. I think that if he is doing a job in a commercial television - and what's wrong with commercial television - and then is suddenly called upon to do a job in public service broadcasting, I don't think it's superficiality to change quickly over - you're taking another job. I've taken many jobs as you know in my life, and you throw yourself into it, and he threw himself into it, saw how important public service broadcasting was and championed it. And I don't criticise him for that, I praise him for that. Another thing I praise him for is a small thing, but perhaps it's a thing which I praise him for because

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I'm not frightfully good at it myself. I love talking to staff, I'm intensely interested in people, but I always get terribly tired when I stand up at cocktail parties and things and have to sort of talk, ~~to lecture the staff~~ - it's just one of my weaknesses I think. He was frightfully good at that. I mean I used to see him at the BBC club days at Motspur Park. He used to spend hours talking to people over beer and that sort of thing, and that's a great quality because it's tiring and I think he must have enjoyed it and that's a great quality to have. So there are quite... and of course he had a lovely sense of humour ~~which is true~~, but he wasn't the right man for the BBC at that time, and he of course must have been responsible for this intrusiveness from the Board downwards which I think did so much harm in the administrative field. The programme field I can't so easily talk about, and as you know I felt worried about the extent that the programmes like TW 3 had become such an obsession, and so that maybe that some change... Well as I said earlier I think that the TW 3 and that sort of programme could have been handled quite differently.

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THE ORAL HISTORY OF THE BBC
Frank Gillard interviewing John Arkell
Reel 13

CASSETTE SUPPLIED 8th November

IDENTIFICATION:
The Oral History of the BBC, Mr John Arkell's contribution. Tape 13. Mr Arkell was talking about Lord Hill, who was Chairman of the Board of the BBC from 1967 onwards.

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ARKELL: I think I was just about to say, if I wasn't saying it already, that the trouble I thought about Lord Hill's Chairmanship was that he and the whole of the Board of Governors became much too intrusive, and the Board of Governors became too executive. Hill himself was much too executive as a Chairman, instead of being a non-executive Chairman. And of course, that would have been fine if the organisation had needed something of this kind. I mean if the expertise below.. below the Board and below Hill was in need of a lot of change, but I feel that both on the programme side and on the administrative side, that the level of competence was extremely high, and therefore it did nothing but harm to try and question it and intrude in that way. It's this

question of self-fulfilment - that you get the best out of a person if you give them a free rein if you possibly can. It's this question of the art of delegation, which I mentioned earlier on. And that is what was so blunt in this way that the interference took place. Now that I think is a big mistake in the BBC. And how do you train future leaders if you aren't able to devolve right down? And of course if you don't devolve from the Board to the top executives, the top executives can't devolve down below them, and so it goes right down the whole line of command. And you'll find in the BBC, if you continue this, that you are not training your middle management or your young people to take the higher offices. So I think this was a very serious mistake, and that's where I feel that Lord Hill was nothing like so successful as his previous Chairman. But in many ways he was a very convivial person, and strangely enough I met him not so long ago at a Boys' Club Dinner, and he couldn't have been warmer or nicer to me - although I don't know what he really felt of my work inside the BBC, I just don't know.

GILLARD: Um...Hughe Greene and he worked together for a year or so. Did you... were you surprised when Hughe Greene announced that he was going? Did you feel that that partnership could continue indefinitely?

ARKELL: Er.. no, I must confess I wasn't altogether surprised. I think it was probably bound to end. That's all I can say on that: I wasn't surprised.

GILLARD: Hill and the Manchester

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headquarters - talk about that.

ARKELL: Well, um.. there again, the detail I can't remember, but I do remember certain things which concerned me at the time. I'd been given.. giving various assurances to Manchester, not only Manchester staff but also the local authorities up there, and having done that, because it was at my level then, with the DG's agreement and so on, ~~but~~ and it was the kind of thing that was discussed at Building Committee ~~II,~~ too. Having made those commitments it seems to me that you've got to finish a job properly at that level in order to keep faith, and if then after that Hill wanted to change the level at which final decisions are taken, then you must start on something new. Therefore I had the impression that I was.. that it was taken out of my hands and that certain commitments that I had made were gone into reverse by Hill, which I don't think he had any right to do, because I made them on the.. on behalf of the Corporation, and therefore I think the good name of the Corporation was at stake. Now I feel, without as I say recalling any details, that this was a very awkward time, and I'm not at all sure that the change was justified. I don't.. can't remember the economics of it for the moment, but I don't believe we saved any money this way, may have perhaps reduced the size of it or something, but it.. I think was very embarrassing. I think this is what happens when you get a top level non-executive Board suddenly becoming executive.

GILLARD: I.. if I can throw in my little bit there (YES) on the Manchester headquarters. (YES)

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I remember that I was the member of Board of Management who went up to Manchester to appear before the Planning Committee Enquiry,..(YES YES...WELL THERE YOU ARE, YES) because we were seeking in fact to.. we were seeking to acquire and to demolish 49 properties. Little houses, little shops, even a pub I remember on the site. (YES) Remember this was called the All Saints' Site?

ARKELL: Yes it.. of course it was, yes.

GILLARD: And I made a big pitch about the BBC needed all this space for its.. the great thing we were going to build there and all the operations that were to be conducted.

ARKELL: Exactly.

GILLARD: And.. and we.. on the basis of this we got our planning approval (mm) and then of course the whole thing, within a matter of months, we scaled it down by about half.

ARKELL: Yes, well this is the kind of thing that I mean. And..but during the course of this I feel that there were literally one or two cases of going back on our word which had been firmly given. And I think the only way of going back on your word, and I think this applies just as much to institutions as it does to people, is you must go to the person you've given your word to, and say look we.. we're terribly sorry we want to change, can we? You've got to.. you've got to deal with it that way, (YES, YES, YES) and not do it in an authoritarian way.

GILLARD: Because the reason why we were

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scaling it down was.. was of course because the government (YES) was cutting, was demanding cuts in capital expenditure at the time.

ARKELL: Well, in fairness you could say that Hill had to do this, but I remain a bit uneasy about...

GILLARD: It's the approach, yes. What about the engineering division, did you have much to do with it or....?

ARKELL: Oh a tremendous lot to do with it, yes. A tremendous lot, both in training at.. at the Uplands and in promotions of course and at Board of Management and at DG's meeting particularly. And I have nothing but praise for the engineering division. I think that.. you know, the contacts I had I enjoyed enormously. I certainly think that Tudsbury's influence took a long time to die, about having absolutely too expensive arrangements. I certainly think that the average engineer, because he's trained in a technical.. in technical matters particularly, and the early training of engineers I don't think is wide enough, speaking of the country as a whole, and therefore I think that the engineers both found it more difficult to manage, and by the same token derived the most benefit from the Management Training Courses and Conferences in Uplands. I think there seems to be a weakness amongst engineers, and I've heard this in industry mentioned widely, about taking the role of manager. And it doesn't mean that intrinsically and hereditarily that the engineer is incapable of it. It simply means that their training has

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not included this, and many of them, of course, became excellent managers. And I believe that the courses they went on, and Henley and Uplands and so on, did help, because even two weeks at Uplands can set something in motion in a person's mind, if he hasn't thought about these things before, which is much more beneficial than just the two weeks that you may be doing this. It sets something in motion, which perhaps in a year or two starts blossoming out in ways which you don't imagine at the time. It's a sort of process of development this.. this sort of training. And I think engineers benefit enormously from that, but on the whole my relations, I.. and I hope they thought the same, were extremely good..(mm) hope so anyway.

GILLARD: Well, now let's get on then to yet another topic. The BBC in 1968 (COUGH) decided to call in the MacKinsey Company to hold a large scale enquiry into the BBC's operations and how it spent its money, and.. and allied topics. On the.. on the argument that it was necessary to be able to show the government that an independent inquiry would prove that the BBC was being run properly and economically. This was right, wasn't it?

ARKELL: Yes.

GILLARD: I suppose you were responsible for calling MacKinsey's, were you?

ARKELL: No, far from it. (LAUGH) Far from it. I.. as you say, I suppose it really was a white-washing effort in order to get the licence fee. I had nothing to do with calling in MacKinsey. It was done right over my head. I don't know how far Hughe Greene had to

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do with it. It was a.. Hill operation. I regretted MacKinsey for a number of reasons - not just because they were an American firm and there were many very good English consultants. But because they were brought in um.. in far too wholesale a fashion. I think I said earlier that the terms of reference are so important in the way any consultant is brought in. And they had the widest possible terms of reference that I can possibly imagined, which could have kept them in the BBC about three or four years. In fact, it nearly did keep them in about two years, I think, or even more. And I should think it would be very.. it was difficult to get ..I remember it was difficult to get rid of them. So they had far too wide a terms of reference, that's thefirst thing. The second thing is that they... the people who did the work, nobody did.. interviewed them. The only people who had been interviewed, as far as I know, was this very nice man, Parker, delightful person, almost.. you could almost say a friend of mine now, who was the sort of frontman in ~~the~~ MacKinsey, American. And Morrison, who was a nice man, but.. and Morrison's staff, and I can't remember the name of the staff, but I'm pretty sure I'm right in saying that not even Morrison, and certainly not the other members of staff that I recall of MacKinsey's had had any line management or practically no industrial management experience in themselves at all. So it was entirely theoretical, what they were trying to bring. Theoretical, plus, of course, the knowledge they got from other firms that they went to examine. A lot

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of people say, of course, the MacKinsey operation was a disaster. I don't think it was a disaster from the point of view the um.. report which they gave to influence the government and to show we were operating efficiently - I think that side of it was probably covered alright, but at a tremendous cost, because they seemed to me to make recommendations which I think the BBC are still suffering from, although it's difficult to say in which direction exactly now, because I don't know enough about the BBC as it is at the moment. But of course the.. MacKinsey's had had a trail of disasters. I mean you can go to quite a number of institutions, public concerns particularly, and they'll say the same thing, that well of course MacKinsey left a trail of disaster. A trail of wreckage behind them. And I think it comes from tremendous keenness on the part of Americans to - and I like the Americans enormously, don't misunderstand me - but the same sort of drive that they bring to their industry, they bring to their consultants, and the terrific keenness to achieve something. And if there is... if an organisation is rather centralised, then de-centralise. If it's de-centralised, then centralise it. You know, there was a bit of that. And I was told that.. some papers were found rather on those lines. How to argue for centralisation; how to argue for de-centralisation, amongst some of the researchers who were on the job. I think their main... I think they spent a vast amount of money. I don't believe their analysis was based enough on a broadcasting organisation - it's totally

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different from any other management really. I mean the tenets of management of course are the same, but the material you're managing, the resources, and also the people, are different. They have different aspirations, and I don't somehow think that they took that enough into... into account. If you asked me what actual recommendations seemed to be so wrong, um... I'd have to think back rather carefully now. One concerned myself, of course, which they suggested that while I should remain Director of Administration until I retired, that the finance (COUGH) should have a Director and be taken away from my jurisdiction, and that after I left there should be an appointment of a Director of Staff and a Director of Finance. I think I should say here that I think the Director... that staff should be headed up by a Director on the Board of Directors, as a principle. However, one exception to that, I think, although this is perhaps personal and egotisical, but I think one exception to it is that if the Director of Administration has in fact been a CSA, has been a Chief Staff Administration man, then I think it's perfectly alright to combine the ~~thing in~~ two. And that is why when the DG said to me ~~I~~... before he made me Director of Administration, I'm afraid this is against your principles - I was then Director of Staff - but I want you to take both jobs on, I thought about it and said yes I'd like to do it because I felt that I could supply that immediate reaction concerning staff relations and staff matters and unions at the Board of Management, because of my previous experience as CSA.

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But I must admit that I think that after I'd left, (and I think they should have waited until after I'd left before doing any of these things, because it was in my opinion operating at that time extremely effectively, although I say it (INAUD).) who shouldn't After I'd left I think it was probably right to have a separate Director of Staff, and of course you could certainly argue that you needed a separate Director of Finance on the Board of Management. And yet it needs thinking over very carefully as to how you do it. Because, of course, it was done in rather in an odd sort of way.They, after I left, what they did I think was to take the various bits and pieces, and they were very big bits and pieces, like Management Services and Central Services and all the other things I was responsible for, the legal and so on. They sort of divided ~~it~~ Them up, I think, between either the Director of Personnel or the Director of Finance, (COUGH) and I'm not sure whether from an administrative point of view, and I do think that administration is extremely important in the BBC, for the very reason that I said earlier, that without law and order, without smooth administration, the actual programme staff, who are the people that matter, can't really give of their best. Freedom exists in a certain amount of discipline. And so that I'm not sure that the combined operation of Director of Staff and Director of Finance, (and it's... other people can say this because I've not been there for the last twelve years or more,) is as influential.. at Board of Management and the Direction of the BBC as one rather super, so to speak, I don't mean on a personal basis, DA, who has got a great deal of prestige

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and.. and responsibility over the whole field. It... and so I'm just trying to think in terms of the possibility of the future, it could be and it has a relationship to the history of the past, could be that you must have your Director of Personnel, and maybe you can have a Director of Administration who is a financier, who has the big high prestige of being the real expert businessman that is needed on a Board of Management. So, I don't feel the present um...present structure is really right yet.

GILLARD: We felt that we taught MacKinsey's more than they taught us, speaking as an output director. They really didn't know anything about radio or about broadcasting, and they asked the most stupid questions.

(YEAH)

END OF REEL

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REEL 14

IDENTIFICATION:

Tape 14, and we're talking about the MacKinsey Enquiry of 1968 to 1970.

ARKELL: Another of their recommendations was of course to make Managing Directors of various output divisions, and this of course affected me in a way very much, because I was looked upon by many people as the Managing Director of the BBC as a whole, but I.. I can look at it quite objectively, and I think quite apart from the effect on my own position, which of course didn't really make a lot of difference because I was going fairly soon. There were pros and cons to this recommendation. You can say that to make.. make Managing Directors of the output divisions, which were really what the whole of broadcasting is about, is so to speak adding another King to the draught board, which is giving more effect to the decisions and to the freedom and so on of the Managing Directors, and to that extent you could say that was the right thing to do. For other reasons I was worried about it because of the unity of the BBC, and I'm sure it made it more difficult to keep that unity, because obviously, especially say in television, which in any case was rather trying to get independence to some extent, it added, it added a great deal to the effort to become almost a part.. separate part of the BBC, instead of part of the whole. And for reasons which I've said earlier on, I won't go into them now again, I think it's quite vital myself that the unity of the BBC should be kept as much as possible, for all sorts of reasons,

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including efficiency over the whole service. And therefore, to that extent it could have been a mistake to make Managing Directors of these various output divisions. Now I think that you could have got the same result by greater devolution and not necessarily caused them.. called them Managing Directors. I don't know that the semantics were all that important here. And if, for instance, ~~once~~ one of the advantages was that the output divisions (COUGH) could have more say over the engineering aspects of their work, well surely that can be done simply by the terms of reference. And I was aware, of course, while I was in the BBC of the need for the output dvisions to have control over the engineers, when they... when they're on a programme. And it's.. I mean clearly it seems to me that the engineers must run their own division, because they have.. they have a special technological expertise and knowledge, and they know how to get the best possible out of that. But they are a service, and they are a service to programmes, just as administration is a service to programmes. And just as in administration there are occasional things which you have to centralise because.. such as pensions and other things I've mentioned, job evaluation and so on, as a service, you centralise it as a service, so in engineering there are certain engineering things which should clearly belong to the engineering division, and they have to say at times that such and such a thing is technically impossible. But subject to that, it seems to me that you could get the complete subservience, in the right sense of the word, of .. as

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a service of engineers, to the output divisions at any level whether the top or at the level of an outside broadcast - where at sometime in the past I seem to remember a difference of opinion as to who was running the programme, the programme producer or the engineer, and quite clearly... and I came across this in the first few days in the BBC, quite clearly it seems.. seemed to me that the programme producer must be the man in charge. So I think that the unity could have been preserved more, and yet the advantages of the devolution by creating Managing Directors could have been obtained by greater clarification of roles. On balance, therefore, I am inclined to think that since I feel the unity of the BBC is so important, that this was one of their mistaken recommendations. I'm surprised too at the way MacKinsey worked. Although they were in close touch from time to time, quite rightly, with ~~the..~~ Lionel Gregory, ~~the Central...~~ the Management Services Group Chief, who, of course, reported to me, they were very seldom in touch with me, and it was the day before this announcement was going to be made about Managing Directors that Morrison came to see me in my.. at my office, and it seems quite incredible to me that a.. such a far reaching change, not because it involved myself, but because it involved what I've just described, the unity of the Corporation, should be made without getting the wisdom, such as it was, of the Director of Administration, who had to handle so much of these delicate relations as.. as between divisions and so on in the BBC. So this alone, it seems to me.. is a.. had a measure of the inefficiency of the way MacKinsey operated. Of course, they put backs

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up everywhere, or seemed to ~~be~~ everywhere. Maybe they didn't put backs up in the television service, who stood to gain by various things, I don't know. But certainly I heard very little good about them, and I think it was because they were partly inexperienced. They seemed to be in the job for the money - I mean this is unfair perhaps, but they did get a tremendous fee for this. And it was this sort of American..mind you, let me tell you, I think that they were nice people. I think that Morrison was a very nice guy. But I don't think he was quite up to the job. I mean he wouldn't have come to see me at that late stage on these recommendations (COUGH) if he had been. And so that really I think that it was a fantastic operation just to try to assure the government or any other person that we were efficiently run. So I was very worried really about the .. the effect of the MacKinsey operation.

GILLARD: I suppose though it achieved that objective. (YES) I mean that clearly the government did accept the findings.

ARKELL: Oh yes, it certainly gave a good report of the way we were run (YES) and the efficiency of the operation...

GILLARD: Well I hope you..

ARKELL: ..which I was very pleased about, of course.

GILLARD: I was going to say, I hope you felt that was some vindication of all your work.

ARKELL: Well, I did, yes I did. And I was very pleased about that side of it.

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GILLARD: Well now, by the end of that enquiry, we were at a sort of watershed because Hughe Greene was about to leave the BBC, (YES) and his successor was Charles Curran, and you worked with Charles for a year or two before you retired. How did you get on with him? What did you make of him?

ARKELL: Well that's a... that's a jolly difficult question to answer, of course, because you know my reluctance to criticise, and yet it seems to be wrong to say the valuable things about people, without trying to balance it up with the weaknesses, and of course we all have weaknesses, myself included very much so I'm sure. So I suppose it is fair to give an opinion on this, although all sorts of considerations come in mind, including the ~~dei mortuis(PH) and (INAUD)~~ de mortuis nil nisi bonum and so on. He was I think the first administrative trainee, under this scheme of administrative trainees which I think it was I who introduced, just as the present Director General was the first general trainee under the scheme I introduced. And he was in Monitoring Service at the time I think, and I think he, as far as I recall he stood out head and shoulders above... the other internal candidates. (FADES OFF)

ARKELL: And of course his progress in the administrative field, must have come to some extent under my own top supervision for many years, and my impression is that he did exceptionally well as an administrator. He had a very quick mind and a very analytical mind. And I'm sure, for instance, that when he was in External Services' Administration he did the negotiations, the intricate negotiations on the amount of money that they were going

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to get from the government for running the External Services, extremely ably, and was an able administrator. (COUGH) So here is a first class BBC person, who clearly through this administrative trainee scheme got lifted out of Monitoring Service into various avenues and.. and jobs and responsibilities which he did so well that he did the BBC jolly well. To be honest, I think myself that when Charles was made DG, and through no fault of his own, really, he was over.. over promoted. I think that's the right way of putting it. I don't think he had quite the calibre for the DG post. I was only there for two or three years with him as DG, and therefore I could be proved wrong after I left, and there's no way of telling. And I know that, for instance, Swann, the Chairman of the BBC, had a very high opinion, so I always understood, of.. of Charles. So I don't want to speak of his progress after that. But I think that er.. he er.. I mean it's an enormous responsibility for someone of his.. for his.. a person of his training to suddenly take on, this huge post and difficult post. I just think, in a few respects he was not.. not exactly out of his depth, but he was not that kind of big enough person in outlook, really, and in.. in background and so on quite to take on that job - ao it seemed to me. One of his weaknesses it seemed was.. I'm sure that he had a very good temper at times occasional loss of Temper. Sometimes he would, and perhaps this was stress and strain, if so nobody can blame him, but he did I think lose his temper rather, and he hadn't got of course the poise and the serenity of Hughe Greene. And I do remember an occasion when he was really rather rude to me, but I forgave that, and I

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think that was because he was overworked or tense or something. I feel that he was not really the man for the BBC at that.. at that time, but he was a nice enough guy and I'm sure had a lot of qualities which probably I didn't know about very well, and which I'd ~~of~~ have liked very much if I had known him better. I think that's about all I can say about Charles, really.

GILLARD: But he was the only man with Board of Management experience of the right age, wasn't he? That was the trouble. (YES) The planning had gone seriously wrong there some.. somehow.

ARKELL: Yes, well I suppose that's true. You see, yes.

GILLARD: You see it really requires somebody round about 50, doesn't it? 50/51/52.

ARKELL: It does.. yeah.

GILLARD: Charles was still in his mid-40s, but there was nobody with Board of Management experience of that age, and you can't think of putting somebody in as DG without Board of Management experience. (COUGH)

ARKELL: Very difficult, although.. you could of course go and get an absolutely first class outside person, if.. if such existed, and they would have to train him up in a Board of Management. But that was a possible alternative. But I admit.. I admit the difficulties. (YES) They could also put an older person in to hold the fort for a bit, and train somebody up from outside. I mean they could have.. ~~they could have~~ put.. ~~I mean~~ there was some question at one time I believe of...

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this was I think through James Duff, a discussion I had with him and Hill, that if they were going to appoint an internal candidate, they might have appointed myself just for a period of years, so I understood, to hold the gap until I retired. If that was done, or Oliver Whitley or somebody, they could have taken great steps, I think, to get somebody in. Like they did ~~TG~~ with Ian Jacob really, who was ~~to be in~~ brought in as Director of External Service; they could have taken great steps to find an absolutely first class person, it might have been very difficult, to come in and take over. Of course, I don't know, having thought about this, you see I wasn't asked, naturally, who should be the next DG. Maybe as in,.. in my world of Director of administration I should have been thinking more about the next DG in the light of Hughe Greene's possible retirement. But I was about to say that are we sure that there wasn't someone in the BBC? Because you know how.. how strange it is that people have got, once they have ~~a~~ the mantle of higher office upon them, how.. how much some people can develop. Are we sure that there wasn't anyone of sufficient calibre in the BBC? I mean I would have, if I had been advising on it, I would have certainly wanted to look right through the sort of middle and senior ranks just in case.

GILLARD: I think that's a question you and I must leave hanging in the air, John.

ARKELL: I think so, yes.

GILLARD: Because I can't answer it. But after a couple of years with Charles you left. I get the feeling that you were not a happy man when you left?

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ARKELL: Well, I wasn't really. I didn't enjoy it so much as I had done until.. I mean for the first six years or so of my Director of Administration time, I enormously enjoyed the company of people on the Board of Management, and and.. the whole thing was fascinating and stimulating and... I felt there was a different spirit in the Board of Management, and that made such an enormous difference. And therefore in a way I was quite pleased to leave, although grateful in some ways, and I realised that I'd never get such an exciting job again. But, yes, I.. I was not entirely happy. I hope and think that I kept up the standard of work. I never let off, I don't think, at all. I mean I.. I think I can say that. And because I was not very happy, I don't think it affected my work, but I.. it's true I was not very happy in the end. And to my delight when I retired, I was suddenly offered a seat on the Board of the Boots Company, and then I.. having left my friends in the BBC, I was so pleased to be part of another group who were absolutely first class people too, very very nice people, and various other ~~things~~ appointments. So that once I'd left the BBC, I was much happier, it's true, than I was in the BBC in the last two or three years. I all. .. used to discuss this situation a bit with James Duff, I remember, with whom ~~I used.~~ as I told you earlier I used to go and stay with ~~him~~. He was so right when he said really, well you know, John, he said, it's all very well, but you'd never, if you left the BBC - because I was obviously contemplating whether to go or not early, not being altogether happy. He used to say, true you perhaps ought to do something else, but if you.. you'll never get a job so fascinating

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as the one of Director of Administration of the BBC. And of course he in a way was right on that, and....

GILLARD: Right.

END OF REEL

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REEL 15

IDENTIFICATION:
Tape 15. And I think probably the last.

GILLARD: Well, Mr Arkell, you've told us about your career before you joined the BBC. You've taken us through all your BBC years in some detail. What happened after you left the BBC?

ARKELL: Well, I was very lucky in many ways and fortunate, because I was of course, although as I've indicated earlier somewhat dissatisfied with some of the way things were going in the BBC when I left, I was awfully sad to leave it, and my friends in it. But I was very quickly appointed to a number of posts. One was a Director of the Boots Company, which I found fascinating, and I was a non-executive Director, amongst extremely ~~oth.~~ nice other people on the Board of Directors, it was the main Board of Directors, for about ten years. And there I was regarded as the sort of authority on morale in the.. in the Company. And they were an extremely good company... and embraced a great deal of the philosophy which I tried to introduce into the BBC. I also became a Director of the Coates Group of Companies and of the United Kingdom Provident Institution, an Insurance Company. And I was also made a Chairman of the Air Transport and Travel Industry Training Board, which brought me into a completely new industry - the air transport industry, and that wsa a fascinating assignment. I had that for ten years. That was not entirely advisory. It was to some extent executive as well. I worked at the ~~Ministry of~~ Administrative Staff College at Queenlands from time to time and did lectures there and was made a Visiting Fellow, which I still am. And I was

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also made a lay member - which perhaps was the most exciting job of all - a lay member of the National Industrial Relations Court under Sir John Donaldson, who was its President, now Master of the Rolls. And that was really extremely interesting, it was when the... ~~of course~~ concept it was quite new, and I was a lay member for the whole of the duration of the Court, and although it had rather a bad Press it did in fact break very new ground, and one was told that.. by unions who came to the Court, and they came in defence always, that, privately they told me afterwards, and I knew quite a lot of them, that they expected complete justice from Sir John Donaldson, in spite of all that was said openly afterwards. I was member of the Final Selection Board of the Civil Service Commission, which I enjoyed very much. And for two years I.. did a two year stint, which is the stint that you have if you're Chairman, ~~of~~ was the British Institute of Management, which involved really a couple of voluntary, actually, voluntary days a week at the BIM headquarters. And that's of course brought me into touch with an enormous number of industrialists, ~~industrial er.. people~~. And was very much what I enjoyed doing. So that I think that was about all, but it took up quite a lot of time. And I'm now still working in various ways, apart from charitable work. I'm doing a day or two a week as a management consultant with an American international company called the Leo Kramer International. So it.. it was no sinecure when I left the BBC.

GILLARD: It sounds as if you were busier after you left than you were when you were there.

ARKELL: Oh.. hardly that, because I

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was busier in the BBC than I've ever been in my life.

GILLARD: Oh well, I'll take it all back.

ARKELL: (LAUGHTER) No, not at all.

GILLARD: Now we have a number of points that we want to raise with you just to round up as it were. One is about the building committee. You've mentioned it, but I think perhaps you could tell us a bit more about it, because you were responsible for the building of...

ARKELL: Well, yes the Welsh region of course...

GILLARD: ..quite.. quite a number of premises. Tell us.. tell us what they were now.

ARKELL: For Pebble Mill, Welsh Region Headquarters, Television Centre, part of it, of course part of it had already been done, and the All Saints', Manchester. And the point of the building committee, which I inherited, I didn't form the building committee, was to bring together all the people involved in the building. I mean the.. primarily the engineering division, the building committee... the building department representative, the central services who had a lot to do with the building and the services supplied, and er.. of course mainly and most importantly the particular Director or establishment person who wanted the building, I mean the Director of Television or the Director of Sound. I think you yourself came from time to time as Director of Sound. Um.. and it was really a co-ordinating committee to make sure of progress, and instead of leaving it entirely to the engineering division, and this is no reflection on them, it was necessary ~~when it was formed, I think, as I say~~

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~~before I took over as DA,~~ to have this regular meeting to ensure that progress was being made in the lines, on the lines of what was wanted by the actual, so to speak, the consumer division. So that was the building committee.

GILLARD: Then the computer committee.

ARKELL: Well computer committee was a very interesting committee because I can't claim to be a technical authority on computers but I was of course very interested in what they could do, and.. and of course the computers increasingly became important to the BBC, first of all for the ~~no..~~ normal salary and wages, which is a fairly simple application of computers. And then for such things as the television service computer, which I think I've already referred to, which helped the television service to be economical from the point of view of the actual timing of programmes. And this was a very interesting application of computer. What they are doing now I don't really know. But we extended these computers quite considerably, very carefully, and they undoubtedly achieved savings, although it's one of the things you can find it very difficult to actually assess. And we had these regular committees of all those interested, and Preston was a very good computer officer. And I think I've already told.. told you ~~that~~ we eventually decided on a structure which centralised all the computers, the machinery and so on, and devolved the pro.. project use, which immediately made television service and others ~~consi~~ concerned ..keen on the application of computers.

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GILLARD: Now, thanks. Now I want a word from you further about DGs, about Directors General, because you.. you've known six and you've served under four. They were a pretty varied lot one way and another, and yet the BBC still seems to chunter on no matter what man is at the top. What about the qualities and the background and the experience that DGs require. Looking (YES) at your little batch, how do they size up?

ARKELL: Well, I was very interested in this, especially in a controversy, or rather discussion, which took place in some letters to THE TIMES. I think Robert Lusty was one of.. one of the protagonists for instance for a DG being a journalist. And of course we've had very good DGs who were basically journalists, and I think obviously journalism is one.. a suitable background, previous experience. I would perhaps call it editorship rather than journalism. I think it's very important that he.. they should if possible have had experience as an actual editor as well as a journalist. But I don't think that it would be right to say that the DG of the BBC must have a particular background and er.. for instance, the.. the present DG, Alastair Milne, hasn't had a journalistic background. He's been entirely, since he.. he came straight from Winchester and Oxford to the BBC as a general trainee, he's been entirely since then in broadcasting. ~~So I think really,~~ and Hailey for instance was a man ~~of very..~~ highly educated off his own bat, ~~of course,~~ not so much through formal education. An intellectual person and an editor. Jacob ~~with~~ had a military background. Um..Ian Trethowan, a journalist. Curran, a historian. So it.. I don't think one should say ~~this~~ such a such is the background for a DG, but undoubtedly editor, journalism and so on,

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is a very important aspect if possible. I think what matters though is the man, and it's that that counts. And if you get the right man, his background for this huge job of the Director General is less important than the right man, I think. And you might say that a military background hardly seems right for the BBC, but of course you can learn a tremendous lot from the army. I certainly learnt a tremendous lot from having been four or five years in the army during the war, which I applied to some extent in personnel management later. And I think Ian Jacob is an example of that because he was obviously.. he.. although he had never had a lot of service in the field so to speak, he had a tremendously important military background and in a very distinguished form. But you could say, if you... I think you could say that Ian Jacob was the right calibre of man. He was.. he was the right man for that job, even if he hadn't...I'm not saying the military experience is necessarily right. I think it's a good background. But what matters, I think, is.. that. take Ian Jacobs as an example. Ian Jacobs I think was a very sound, really (INAUD) excellent person for whom people had enormous respect. I think those are the sort of qualities and organisation, and ~~mostly with~~ imagination, terribly important. Those are the kind of things one would look for in my opinion.

GILLARD: Well let me just make a couple of comments on that.

ARKELL: Please...

GILLARD: Um.. Alastair Milne, of course, would say that he is a journalist, because his first, what

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ten fifteen years in the BBC was..b.. was broadcast journalism. He was editor of TONIGHT (YES) and Head of Current Affairs (YES) and so on. He'd say that was journalism. (YES...) Jacob, I mean I look on Jacob as a perfect example of the soldier scholar. (YES YES) I mean he's a Camb.. he's a Cambridge graduate. He's a very well read man. He knows his way round the world of literature. He.. he writes beautiful papers.

ARKELL: Yes, beautiful papers, yes.

GILLARD: Even to this day he writes beautiful papers. (YES, YES) And you know he's much more than an ordinary soldier, isn't he?

ARKELL: Oh, much, much more. And I of course entirely agree with you about Alistair Milne, but ~~that~~ one always thinks of a journalist rather as a newspaper journalist, but of course he has had this experience of this particular form of television journalism.

GILLARD: But you're quite right in saying it's the man, and let me as you, now there are six names there before us. You've given us Hailey, you've given us Jacob, you've given us Greene, you've given us Curran, you've given us Trethowan, you've given us Alastair Milne. Out of those six how many were the men? How many measured up to the job? (LAUGHTER) Don't name them, but say how many.

ARKELL: Well, I've already named Jacob.

GILLARD: You are naming them.

ARKELL: No, I've already done that.

GILLARD: Gone on then.

ARKELL: But Hughe Greene, certainly

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for the first part of his Director Generalship. Um.. Hailey undoubtedly was in his way in his search for truth.

GILLARD: Three up and three to go.

ARKELL: (LAUGHTER) Was the right.. was a man of the right sort of calibre. And I.. of course, I don't think really I served under enough of the others to be able.. to be able really to say, you see I haven't served under Alastair Milne, I know Alastair Milne and in fact selected him originally as a ge.. general trainee. And I think he's a.. he seems to be a very able and distinguished person I mean when he came into the BBC, and I'm sure he is still. I don't know Ian Trethowan well enough to be able to say what sort of.. ~~as~~ a Director General, that he was. A very nice guy and I would have thought he ~~had in a way~~ he was the right sort of man ~~I thought~~, but I just couldn't say how he operated. I wasn't there when he was Director General. Curran, I think I've, Charles Curran I've already mentioned. I don't think he was quite.. I think he was slightly over promoted, but looking at him in his earlier jobs.. first class of course.

GILLARD: Mmm That's a very clever wriggle. (LAUGH) That's...so the answer to three is yes. I mean it's yes to the three and the other three I'm not going to tell you. Let me.. let me see if you're going to wriggle on this one. One of the BBC's persistent critics over the years was dear old Mary Whitehouse. What do you make of all that and the BBC's attitude towards her?

ARKELL: Um....

GILLARD: You were a member of the Board

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of Management.

ARKELL: I was indeed, yes. I.. I don't recall being present at the Board of Management when she first wanted to see Arthur Ford, but I was present when she asked to see Norman Brooke, and we did discuss this at Board of Management I remember, and Hughe Greene was very much against, I think most of the others were ...were against, but I can't remember for certain, but I was for it. I thought that it was much better to see a person who feels so strongly about programmes and so on than to keep her or him at arm's length. And often you can make a friend by doing that instead of an enemy. And so I gave my strong recommendation that you know, that we should see, or that the Corporation should see her in the form of Lord ...Norman Brooke or somebody. And with every sort of respect, I would have thought that the subsequent history rather bears out my point that had we been more receptive to her, and her very sincere feelings about programmes, I think we might have um.. perhaps gained a little more and run into less trouble.

GILLARD: Well, fair enough. Now your next point I don't think you ought to make, but I.. this is your occasion.

ARKELL: I insist upon, I asked Frank particularly, who is doing this broadcast with me. I insist upon wanting to make some comment, because Frank is such a modest person and in all these.. in these discussions I bet you he sort of puts himself in the background and I really have felt for a long time that Frank is one of the absolute stalwarts in the.. and I must say it, in the

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BBC. I think, apart from being an enormously popular person, he's been a great friend of mine, and a tremendously able person. He's had extraordinary regional experience as well as Director of Sound, and so on. And I feel that local radio in particular, apart from all his ~~region.. region..~~ regional work ~~and so on~~ and, broadcasting, I think that the way he handled that and got that off the ground, which was remarkable, which is extraordinarily important to the community of these places, although it's broadened now from the towns to the larger areas. And I think he did a tremendous job on that and I feel I must say it.

GILLARD: Well, thank you very much.

ARKELL: I'm sorry (LAUGH) Frank, but you know, I know you didn't want me to do so but...

GILLARD: Blushing as I am.You.. you, there are more examples, are there not, and they're worth quoting, of your work in as it were loosening the rigidity of BBC administration.

ARKELL: Yes I'm.. I'm glad you've mentioned that because there are some other examples. I don't want to take full credit for this because a lot of this came from committees and other peoples' views. But it was in the.. it was in the stream of what I was trying to do, which was to loosen up on a number of these things, without any loss I think to cont... to comparative equalities and.. fairness amongst staff. One is outside activities. I think, you see I feel that the BBC has ipso facto amongst its staff so many people who should make a contribution to the nation as a whole outside the actual work of the BBC, and therefore you shouldn't restrict their outside

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activities too much. And provided it didn't interfere with their work too much, or in any way with the partiality on programmes, I think one should encourage outside activities. In fact, I felt.. and this is something slightly different but relevant, I felt when I left the BBC and went on the Boards of these various companies, ~~I think I mentioned the United Kingdom Provident Institution~~ and ~~er.. perhaps I didn't. I don't think I did.~~ I.. ~~the Boots Company, I should have mentioned the United Kingdom Provident Institution, an insurance company,~~ and also ~~the Cotes~~ Coates Group (INAUD) ~~I was a Director on. And~~ I felt very strongly looking back, (and I nearly went to the BBC ~~and..~~ to talk to Charles Curran about it,) that ~~I felt~~ that it was so broadening to get onto other Boards, after having been on the Board of Management; and I felt that it would be no bad thing if Directors in the BBC could be encouraged to take non-executive Directorships in outside industry, and it would bring industry a bit closer to the BBC, which I think was a.. has always been necessary for a long time. But apart from that, I think contributions could be made as a non-executive Director by BBC Directors and not necessarily Directors but others, so I think that should be encouraged and outside activities of various kind, Parliamentary, fighting Parliamentary seats and so on and.....

END OF REEL

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REEL 16

IDENTIFICATION:

Well number 15 was not the last tape but it's bound to be number 16, because we haven't got anymore. I think Mr Arkell could go on talking not only for 16 but for a 116.

ARKELL: No, I resent that..(LAUGH)

GILLARD: But we're going to leave it at 16.

ARKELL: (INAUD)

GILLARD: But we were talking about various ways in which the administrative rigidity of the BBC was loosened, and when you were talking about the outside activities, the way in which you allowed them to become more extensive. Could you enlarge a little bit on the political side, because up to your time members of staff were not allowed to take part in politics or to stand for Parliament, for example, were they?

ARKELL: Mm No, I don't think they were. Of course they couldn't actually stand ~~still~~ for Parliament even under my regime. They could nurse a constituency and get right up to it but they couldn't be an MP. But I think that we let up ~~on~~ ~~the~~ in my time about nursing a constituency. We made it.. we encouraged people if they wanted to become MPs rather than perhaps before discouraging them. And I can't remember the details, but we did loosen this by way of encouragement, and also by way of promises that if they failed to become elected they could have their job back, that sort of thing which made it much easier.

GILLARD: I think there were some restricted

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categories though, weren't there? (YES) I'm thinking of Current Affairs producers, news people.

ARKELL: Yes, I think that's true. I think still that that was important, that there were restricted categories, quite right. But there were a lot of categories before which were restricted, which were loosened.

GILLARD: Then, then there were other ways.

ARKELL: Well, staff contributions to programmes. You can actually get into the BBC people who are perhaps..can contribute to programmes in a big way, and I think that one should not restrict them too much, and I think we let up on this. And the point is that quite apart from anything else it isn't keeping the public out if you've got real talent in. And provided it's not a lower calibre than what you can get from the outside public, I don't think outside public have any reason for complaining. And in fact you, by nature in a way get particularly talented people in the BBC who can contribute. And one other thing on the same line but slightly different is the question of nepotism. I found when I first went to the BBC that .. and I can understand this, in a way it was right. There was such a fear of nepotism, that if you were the son of some executive in the BBC, it was almost impossible to get into the BBC because of fear of nepotism. And I've changed this ~~to.~~. in this way: (I'm not sure how far this was actually ever, I don't think it was ever put into a staff regulation, but I changed it orally throughout the Corporation.) ~~But~~ if somebody applies to the BBC who is

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a close relation of somebody in the BBC, of course it has to be disclosed and so on, but it should be taken into account in a normal mature adult way that any other qualification is taken into account. By that I mean that he may have come from a stable, so to speak, where broadcasting (COUGH) is constantly discussed, and he might have become so interested in this profession that he might make a better professional broadcasting man, in whatever field, than somebody who doesn't come from that stable. And it was fair enough to take that into account, objectively, like any other matter that's taken into account when you're considering selecting somebody. But in no way, just.. out of favouritism at all, but simply on is this a..er..a qualification which would help him do well in the BBC? But if so, it's a good, it's a good thing for broadcasting. That's what we've got to think. But of course not just because he is a relation. That is a totally different matter. It must be put into the pot and considered along with other qualifications. But before I made this change, it was actually almost impossible to get in at all, because it was counted as an anti - a reason for not coming in. That's.. that's the change there really.

GILLARD: Thank you. Now you've something more to say to us about communications. You've already explained the chain of communication down from Board of Governors to Board of Management, through to Heads of Departments and down the chain, down the line.

ARKELL: Yes, ~~er.. I think er~~..I think the essence ~~really of one of.. or perhaps~~ the essence of

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good morale is hardly good communications. I mean it's one of the important parts of it, and I don't think you can stress it too strongly. There are various different kinds of communications. There's the communications with the unions, that's extremely important. But the worst mistake to make is to think that's the only way of communicating, through unions. Some firms have gone far too far down that road, and hardly ever talk to their staff. Another way is talking to your own staff. And now this is very important, and I've stressed very much the importance of having meetings fairly regularly with staff, which I've already touched on. While talking... while talking about talking to staff it's also I think a very good thing that people should be trained to speak to large numbers of staff if necessary. And I know that for instance in the television service this was done by Hugh Weldon in a big way, and before that I did it myself, especially in times of crisis. When for instance there was a fear of a closed shop in the BBC on the part of the Staff Association. And I talked to the whole of the staff in the television service, because it was ~~that~~ there where this fear was becoming um..important. And ~~I st~~..I talked to them all, 500 at a time, and it was quite interesting, because I didn't take the view that I was going to try and persuade them about anything at all. I simply said I'm here down here at your disposal. You have to decide what you want to do about this. And when you decide this, about this closed shop, you want to clearly take into account what your union says to you, and you also want to take into account what the management say

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to you. And I just want to tell you what the management point of view is so that you can yourself make your own decision. And then I put as clearly as I could what the management point of view was. I ~~asked~~ said. I was available for questions, and masses of questions were asked. And I believe that that particular talk which ~~all~~ was to all staff, incidentally, did stop the closed shop, because it was so reasonable what I was saying, and if it hadn't been said, they wouldn't have had the other point of view. But the important thing there, in that sort of talk, is to leave it to them to decide. That's that one particular talk. But I used to do it in other crises too. I think that part of training for management is that you ought to be able to talk to your staff in the right sort of way. Now in that connection, I believe that in talking to staff, ~~and I did...~~ (this is historical in a sense in that I used to emphasize this at Management Training Conferences at Uplands over and over again) ~~that~~ it's one thing to talk to staff and give out instructions, and that's very important. But it's another thing to be able to talk to your staff, a group of the people reporting to you, and perhaps be rather silent and as a Chairman, and try and collect the wisdom of that staff. And what you don't use you reject and say why. What you do use you give credit for if possible to those people who made the suggestions. Now that kind of er... this kind of collective wisdom, I would call it or communication, I encouraged a great deal in the BBC, and I hope that it had some effect; but I do think it's awfully important from a morale point of view, as well as creating

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a sense of participation amongst staff, and as well as using a lot of wisdom, because nobody knows so much about a job as the person doing it, afterall.

GILLARD: Well, now you must have seen one or two of these committees of inquiry into the BBC in the course of your long term.. in fact right in the middle of your period of service came the Pilkington Inquiry. (YES) Were you involved in that, and what did you think about it?

ARKELL: Yes, very much so. I mean I was one of those who was with Harmond Grisewood and Hughe Greene and all of us, we were doing a terrific campaign. And.. that was the one I was most involved in. I was also involved in the one before, in the Beveridge one, and gave evidence to Beveridge. But I think that.. I think that was superbly, the Pilkington Inquiry from the BBC point of view was superbly led by Hughe Greene. No stone was left unturned, and of course with great help from the secretariat and various people.. but he was the protagonist for getting everything that could possibly be done available to the committee in favour of public service broadcasting. And that was when I think Hughe Greene was at his very best at that time.

GILLARD: And now you have some closing remarks.

ARKELL: Well, (COUGH) thank you very much for being so - sympathetic perhaps isn't...

GILLARD: I'm glad the batteries have held out. (LAUGH)

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ARKELL: Yes, quite. It's been a great pleasure to try and give what account I could of the time in the BBC. I may have left a lot of very important things out. I suppose if you wanted me to end on a note of greatest importance, I'd like to perhaps not exactly quote, but mention one or two things that I said.. (because this in a way is historical because I emphasized it so much in the BBC,) ~~of~~ in the BBC lunchtime lecture, fourth series, number two, ~~with~~ The Role of Managements in Broadcasting, which was the 17th November 1965. I think a lot of this still applies, because management in broadcasting is, although in a sense in its basic precepts like management anywhere else, ~~it~~ is something very special in an artistic organisation, with all the duties of impartiality and so on in broadcasting itself and the BBC. And I will say the other thing which I came across the other day, which is more up to date, which is where I was asked to kind of I suppose write a swan song in ~~an~~ ARIEL before I left, and I got hold of it. And I've just read it through, and I think I would stand by everything I said on that particular article. it was 17th July, no it was June I think, 1970. And it was entitled, Concerning Staff as a Whole. And I then ~~re~~ outlined my philosophy really more for the future in relation to the past, about unions and the importance of the product of the BBC, the programme, and the dignity of human achievement. Constructive relationship with unions, the fact that justice is fundamental, and fairness and so on. Those are the things which I believe were extremely important, and which with the help of so many really able staff, both ~~on~~ in my own service,

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in my own staff administration and later in.. administration, and also the administrative staff throughout the BBC who were really again were absolutely first class. I believe that those tenets really did hold up in the BBC and were of enormous importance to the quality of programmes. It was a.. perhaps in a sense not exactly backroom, but it was a service, that's the point, to the quality of programmes. And if I had to say one thing about administration in the BBC, I think it would be this business of devolvement. That, as I mentioned earlier, structural devolution and the art of delegation are of enormous importance, and it's perhaps just worth mentioning one or two points here which I think apply in the BBC. The points of fair renumeration, the delegation of responsibility - to encourage and liberate the talent and genius that may exist at the working level, in the BBC particularly producer level. ~~This business of really~~.. The importance of the simple, as ~~and~~ I wrote or spoke, unselfish act. And I ~~know er..~~ make no apology for that word, because I think leadership, in a sense, the sort of leadership that's important today is not exactly an act of renunciation, but it has to be an unselfish leadership if it's going to involve and get the best out of the staff you're leading. The simple, unselfish act of devolving onto the person below. I put it, the fun, the credit and the fullest responsibility for the job he is doing that is consistent with the overall aims of the organisation. And I think I'd like to end up on that note.

GILLARD: Well, I'm.. thank you very much. Your whole career was a model of its kind, and you

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have summed it up very aptly there, and the principles that you've just been annunciating are principles which you yourself followed without any doubt at all throughout your distinguished BBC years, which will always be remembered. And thank you very much indeed for this valuable and really quite unique contribution. You're the only man who could possibly have given us this overall view BBC administration over the years, and I'm sure that the producers of the future will call down blessings on your name when they find this in the archives and play it over and hear it and no doubt your voice will be heard on the air hundreds of years from now, laying down the law as you've been laying it down this afternoon.

ARKELL: I hope I haven't been laying it down too much.

GILLARD: Well, we'll leave it to them to decide, but I'm quite happy with it, John.

ARKELL: Thank you.. I'm very glad you are anyway, Frank. Thank you so much.

GILLARD: Right.

END OF REEL

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