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Sir Robert Lusty interviewed by Frank Gillard, 1 March 1978

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ORAL HISTORY OF THE BBC.

SIR ROBERT LUSTY

Interviewed by:

FRANK GILLARD

At Sir Robert Lusty's Home in Gloucestershire,
on the 1st March 1978.

GILLARD: Sir Robert, in the beginning was John Reith, without John Reith there would have been no BBC as we know it today without any doubt, you had an experience of Reith, a number of experiences of Reith which are different to all the others that we've heard about and read about. Could we begin by hearing about Lusty and Reith?

SIR ROBERT LUSTY: Well of course I regarded Reith, long before I had anything to do with the BBC, as one of the great men of our time and especially as I was also in the field of communications. I always regarded his work, his establishment of the BBC, as one of the greatest educational contributions made by broadcasting and all the rest of it. And thus when I became a Governor I particularly wanted to meet Reith, and all sorts of circumstances conspired to make my relationship with Reith to some extent amusing, to some extent difficult, but I grew to become extremely fond of him, and realised, never ceased to realise, that when I was in his presence I was in the presence of a great man. And it became comforting a little later on to recognise one was also in the presence of a man who could be remarkably silly. But in my early days as a Governor, getting around the BBC and meeting people, I wanted to establish a meeting with Reith and I took the opportunity of writing to him and saying I was very flattered to become a Governor of the BBC which owed everything to him and I would like to meet him and we might possibly discuss whether he might be ready to write a book of some kind. I knew as a matter of fact that he'd already done a rather trying autobiography Into the Wind, but it gave me the good excuse of meeting him, and he came and had lunch with me at my club, the Garrick Club. And it was a highly amusing occasion because one of the activities of the Governors's, a few months before I actually got there, was to acquire for the BBC a Beerbohm cartoon of Reith which was hanging in the Boardroom and I'd been told about this about how this had come up for auction and the BBC had sent along an anonymous buyer and I think the price went up to about £60 and it fell to the BBC. And I happened to be the first person to tell Reith this, I said how glad I was to find the Beerbohm cartoon hanging in the Boardroom and how glad the BBC had been to acquire it. And as a very new Governor I felt rather pleased to be able to impart this information to Reith. And he looked at me and said, 'My boy, my boy, the BBC bought that.' Yes, I said, it's hanging in the Boardroom you know so well. And he leaned back in his chair and said, 'my boy, I was the other fellow bidding'. That led to my collapse, and later on I was invited down to take the chair at Uplands on

an evening when Reith was speaking, and this was all during the Pilkington period. And Hugh Greene had very cleverly made overtures to Reith which ensured that he was on our side, which he by no means always was, during this Pilkington period and could be relied upon to speak well of the BBC and it wasn't done in any insincere way but it was a very wise thing to do, and a very useful way to do. And Reith had consented to come down to Uplands and deliver an after dinner address to a seminar there on the BBC and I was to take the chair. And before I went down Arkell said to me, put a foot wrong and you'll undo the good of years, so I went down in a somewhat nervous state to this austere establishment. Reith arrived rather late for a very bad dinner, typical of such establishments, and in a rather bad temper. But we had an altogether not uneasy meal, one or two of us, Reith and so on, and then after dinner the occasion was set up and I wondered whether I might tell this story about the Beerbohm cartoon, keeping one eye on Reith sitting by my side I did this. And it went quite well but I thought I detected that Reith was going a little pink, however it was too late to do anything about it, and I introduced Reith and he stood up to an enormous height and said, That story, which Mr Lusty has told you happens to be true, except in one particular. I have never in all my life called a Governor 'my boy'. And an interesting, (it takes the time a good deal further,) but an interesting aspect of that same evening is reviewed in Reith's own published diaries, a dreadful book on which no-one should come to any opinion about Reith, these diaries should never have been published, they were the diaries of a man much more self contorted than I think even his worst enemy expected. But in any event he records this evening at Uplands and his talk had been so moving and so intensely interesting he held everybody spellbound, that at the end of it I had said well there can be no questions after a talk of this kind, and I closed the meeting. And in the car going home, he took me home in his car, huge great chauffeur driven Rolls Royce it was, he put his hand on my knee, and said, 'my boy, I have never spoken as I spoke tonight, I don't know what came over me, I'm very glad you were there.' His diary entry for that day COUGHS: reads roughly, 'I went to talk at Uplands for the BBC, the Chair was taken by Governor Lusty. The quest.. it was an interesting evening, they were obviously pleased with what I said, and the questions went on for an hour and a half.' Which is an interesting sidelight I think on the diary and on the inaccuracies and perplexities and doubts and really very often disgraceful reflections that run right through it.

GILLARD: In fact there had not been a single question?

LUSTY: In fact there had not been a single question, but I had closed the meeting. But it was such an impressive evening that I remember a

Senior BBC man came up to me afterwards and said I heard ~~Sains~~ sing, I've seen Pavlova dance, and I've now listened to Reith on the BBC. It was a most remarkable evening and I wish a tape existed of that talk.

At any rate; I later on, I was in touch with Reith again because during my travels around the BBC an early one was taken to the BBC library, then run by Mr Collinson I think it was. And talking about Reith and the BBC and so on, and he said do you know that Lord Reith's got an unpublished book, its in a manuscript I've had for years and it was called (~~The Weighing~~ ^{Wearing} Spurs) and its his account of his involvement in the First World War. And I said no indeed I hadn't heard of this. And I then again wrote to Reith who gave me the manuscript "Wearing Spurs" by John Reith, He said he had kept it in his drawer for years. It had been submitted at one time to Jonathan Cape and Jonathan Cape turned it down. Well when I read this book, he handed me a manuscript one Friday I think it was, and I read this book, a short book, over the weekend. And was intensely moved by it, and intensely pleased with it because I thought it was going to be a grand book to publish and a very nice book to publish too. And I telephoned Reith on the Sunday evening to tell him how delighted I'd been with the book, and I later on discussed terms with him but I wanted him to know that I certainly wanted to publish it and how much I'd enjoyed it, and he said in his great Reithian tone, 'I'm very glad to hear this, my wife and I are having a little supper by a small fire, as though he was some poor old aged pensioner, and he was going to receive a certain amount of money from an old diary. And in due course I put up a proposition to him and had a letter back saying.. in this proposition was an advance of some £400 or so against the royalties, and he said I think a naught has dropped out of your letter. And I had to assure him that it hadn't, and the publication of the book, the production and so on all went ahead. But I had another amusing encounter with him, again at the Garrick Club when I gave him lunch on publication of the book. And it was a summer day, a hot day, Autumn day I think it was but very warm, and Reith by this time in his retirement had begun to regret that he hadn't indulged a little more in the pleasures of life, He was drinking a little, which he'd never done before and he had sherry before lunch and he, I remember, had a salad of some kind and.. I ordered some wine, but before this came the waitress put down in front of Reith and his salad a flask of vinegar and a flask of olive oil and Reith looked at this in astonishment and said 'is this drink all for me?' And I said no it isn't actually, its salad dressing. And in due course his book was published and, but of course he thought we'd printed far too few and we made the usual noises of, that authors made, that we weren't spending enough on promoting it, he couldn't find it in any bookshops and so on and so forth. Although in point of fact there was a very good window display in Hatchards which included the.. book was called Wearing Spurs I think I said, and these spurs used to hang behind the lavatory door at Lambeth Palace where he had a flat by some curious arrangement with the Archbishop which I was

never able to discover, and he'd owned these spurs which made part of the window display in Hatchards. But of course he was an extremely difficult author and as time went on he began to lose faith in me as a publisher and always regarded the book as an enormous disaster and I'd lost interest in it and so on and so forth. It was Reith at his silliest. But while all this was going on he'd become High Commissioner, is it called, in Scotland which enormously pleased him and he'd taken up his residence in Hollyrood Palace for the Great Week, telling me that he'd really done this because his wife was going to enjoy it, but this was sheer nonsense, I don't think she was enjoying it very much and he certainly was, and he invited my wife and myself to attend one of his formal banquets. And it was a quite magnificent and extraordinary affair. We assembled, as I always imagined people assembled at dinner at Buckingham Palace; Reith came in.. we were lined up along the wall and Reith came in surrounded by flunkys of one kind and another and resplendent in all his regalia and all his badges and decorations, and walked, as only Reith could walk, slowly with his great height down the line being introduced here and there. Shook hands formally with me and we had an extremely formal dinner, I can't remember if there was speeches, then after dinner we adjourned to one of the large reception rooms and sat about and talked. And then in due course a contingent of guests began to leave in various numbers and at a certain stage it was decided that we should all go one floor lower to a slightly smaller room, and where the atmosphere was a little more relaxed. And then from there I think it was, Lady Reith went off with her ladies-in-waiting to bed and we adjourned downstairs still further into a smaller room still. And I suppose there was 20 or 30 people and I'd been told not to go because Lord Reith wanted to have a talk with me and we were in what, I suppose, was the Butler's Pantry, there was a long line of bells in the room which connected with all the guests room, all the bedrooms and so on throughout the palace. Reith still in the splendour of all his decorations and very regal took me into the corner; looked at me very sorrowfully and dolefully and said, "Lusty that book of mine is an absolute disaster, you have missed a great opportunity of selling a great many copies, I cannot find the copy in a bookshop in the whole of Edinburgh. And surely the bookshops of Edinburgh should have it on display during this period it is very sad that you should be losing such wide sales and so many of my friends have been quite unable to get it." I consoled him as best I could but quite clearly he'd begun to.. I thought that he had some affection for me at that moment, but it had begun to wain and I didn't see him on many more occasions, but there were plenty of occasions of course when one encountered his extreme pettiness and foolishness in so many ways. I remember he received a special invitation from Arthur Ford, who was then Chairman, to attend the Fortieth Anniversa Dinner at Broadcasting House; at the Guildhall I think it was and the invitation was sent round by hand and was graciously accepted on the

strict understanding that he was not expected to make any sort of speech, or perform any kind of ceremony. And he was assured that no, all the other speeches had been laid on and there was nothing more to be done and, simply his presence would mean so much, wouldn't be expected to speak. On the day of the dinner, he telephoned, I think it was Harman Grisewood, and said "everything all ready for tonight" and Harman Grisewood said, "yes yes of course Lord Reith we are much looking forward to your being there, and I am not to make a speech." "No no, Lord Reith, you don't have to bother about making a speech, but why do I not have to make a speech, this is disgraceful that I don't make the speech." But he came.. he came. And, an impressive occasion I remember, or I thought it was an impressive occasion, but a great friend of mine was Alan Laine who founded Penguin books, and I've always felt that the two great achievements of 'communication' as we now know it, of our time, was first Reith and the public Service Broadcasting by the BBC, and a few years later, some 12 years later I think, the BBC had been going for about 12 years when Alan Laine started his venture of Penguin Books and reflecting on this period I believe that these two great ventures, the BBC and Penguin Books, together have made the greatest social impact on society that communication from the time of Caxton had achieved. And I always look back as a considerable privilege that I'm the only person to have been with Laine and Reith on their one and only meeting and it came about in this way. Alan Laine, although he didn't know it, was coming towards the end of his own life; he was to die a few years later from cancer, as always extremely worried as to how he could preserve the identify and unique position of Penguin after his death, and he was a man who consulted far too many people and made far too many plans, and withdrew from all of them at the critical moment. and I said to him, why not have a word with Reith and talk about the possibility of setting up some kind of publishing Corporation which would protect the integrity and purposes of Penguin Books in rather the same manner as the BBC. And this interested Laine very much and he set up lunch at his headquarters in Harmondsworth and at that time Reith was Chairman of the British Oxygen Company en route down the Great West Road from Central London to Harmondsworth and I was to pick Reith up. It was a very wet day and he'd given us meticulous instructions how to approach British Oxygen offices which were a little complicated, and we missed the turning and as we missed the turning I could see this giant figure striding up and down in the rain. But we got to him, and he said "you're late", I said "I'm very sorry but it was very wet and there is a lot of traffic" and he got into the car in rather a bad mood we motored for the next quarter of an hour from Hammersmith down to Harmondsworth and we arrived at Penguin and I took Reith in to the reception and.. the reception girls and I said, "Lord Reith will you tell Sir Alan that Lord Reith is here." So the girl did her stuff on the telephone and looked at us and said, he'll be with you in a moment if you wouldn't mind waiting." Reith looked at me, "Would you do this to me." I rather cowardly way saying, no I don't think I would. And within a very few seconds,

In point of fact, down the stairway came Alan Laine, in there was instant rapport between them, it was fascinating to see it, these two giants in communications. The one I believe had come into operation because of the success of the other. And when I think, when communication looks back over its history, it will be thought that without the BBC the development of Penguin could not have taken place. And together, as I say, they made an enormous impact on the society, there were these two great communicators. Reith more aware of what he had done than Alan Laine in point of fact was, never mind, and we had an agreeable lunch and talked over this thing and so on and Reith was glad to be consulted and we had the tour of Penguin and kept on telling me how fascinated he was, he had no idea that this sort of organisation, and what a splendid man Alan Laine was and how important books were and the tremendous range of titles, he'd never seen so many books together in a warehouse and paperbacks and going all over the world, he went all round the departments, got very excited and in due course we'd go home and dropped him at British Oxygen Company again, but went straight back to my own office to be greeted with the message that Lord Reith had telephoned to say what a profoundly interesting lunch he had had, how moved he was by what he'd seen, how splendid it all was, and he would certainly be thinking about it. Then a little while later I had a letter from Reith. "I have had no response, no communication from that man Laine, I thought he wanted me to take him over," and that was the end of that. But it was an experience that I shall always remember and be very glad to have enjoyed, because it turned out to be a unique one and a little later Reith died and a little later Alan Laine died. And after that I don't remember seeing Reith again, I used occasionally to send him a book in hospital and he would thank me for it. And then of course he died and left strict instructions that there should be no sort of memorial service, everybody, of course, knew that if there were no sort of memorial service a great voice from heaven would say, why is there no memorial service and a moving memorial service in fact was held in, I think, Westminster Abbey. And at its close a Scottish Piper walked up and down the Abbey and it was very moving indeed. And that really, I think are, my recollections of Reith who I believed to have been a great man and I hope that he will be remembered for what he did with the BBC and not for other things. Particularly not by the terrible diaries which were published, I think quite wrongly, after his death.

GILLARD: Well now thanks, let's come on to your more direct associations with the BBC. Will you tell us just candidly what were the circumstances that led to you in particular being invited to become a Governor and how you received the invitations and so on.

LUSTY: Well of course I.. I was enormously flattered and pleased in what seems to have happened. One gathered afterwards really.. that,

in fact had been rather ill with flu, and had gone away for a short holiday and one of the effects of the flu had been to partially knock out the only ear I have which hears, so I was in great hearing trouble. But it ebbed .. it ebbed and flowed and sometimes I heard and sometimes I didn't, but at any rate after this holiday, I got back to the office and a lot of correspondence had accumulated and I saw somewhere from it, a rather swagger looking letter from the Post Office, wondered what this was about and in fact it was an invitation from the Post Master General; who I think was Reginald Bevins at that time, saying that .. asking whether I would be interested in becoming a Governor of the BBC. And he was writing with the authority of the Prime Minister who was then Harold MacMillan, who in his day had been a fellow publisher, and of course I was enormously thrilled. The letter had gone to a wrong address and gave every indication that the envelope had been run over by a bus it was so muddy. But none the less I was in a panic, I got onto the Post Master General's secretary and explained that I'd been away and I hope it hadn't mattered and so on and so forth; of course I'd be delighted to be a Governor of the BBC. And I had been going through a difficult patch in the organisation - the publishing organisation of which I was involved with trying to knock into shape, and it gave me an enormous thrill to feel that I was going into a wider world of communications. And before going, before accepting, my hearing had taken a turn for the better and I consulted my ^{auralist} as to whether it was safe to accept the invitation, he said "yes, I think there should be no difficulty," and so I did. And almost the very next day, my hearing collapsed again and when in fact my appointment was announced on one afternoon and it was.. I was hearing very badly and instead of attending my first meeting as a Governor I was in fact in hospital and I didn't, (this was in the November of 1960) and I didn't in fact go to the BBC, to any meeting, until some time after Christmas or the New Year. So I started in difficult circumstances. But what I understood later had happened was that Hugh Greene had felt he fairly new then as Director General, it would be useful to have a printed man, a printed word man, as a member of the General Advisory Council and I knew Elaine Greene, Hugh's wife, as she then was, well because she was a literary agent and I dealt with her in the normal course of my publishing activities. And she was very anxious, she said, "have you ever met Hugh?" and I said "no," I hadn't met Hugh and she was very anxious that I should and there was going to be some kind of cocktail party and she said Hugh will be coming will you come and meet him? So I went along with my wife and in fact Hugh wasn't there; he was going to be late in arriving and I never gave a second thought to it and we had to leave and I didn't in fact meet Hugh at all. And then a little later on Elaine Greene got in touch with me again and they'd had a brief holiday and Hugh was returning to work within a day or two, and would I join them for lunch? I said I'd be delighted to join them for lunch and we went to a (wheelers) restaurant in Soho and had a very agreeable lunch which I remember saying nothing at all and I thought afterwards that I'd been really rather silent except that

I'd told Hugh Greene that I thought he had one of the most exciting jobs in the world and so on and so forth. Now apparently the silence I imagined rather impressed Hugh who came to the view that he wouldn't want me as a member of the General Advisory Council, if there was a vacancy among the ordinary Governors and he thought he'd like to.. like me.. to fill that vacancy. I forget how long it was after this lunch but in due course the invitation that I really talked about arrived, and I said I was delighted and I think it pleased Hugh Greene because it was his first exercise in finding an appropriate Governor that he'd undertaken as Director General. And in those days of Arthur Ford I think there was a certain consultation privately but between the Chairman and the Government as to what kind of Governor would be needed in order to keep a balanced board but I have a feeling that possibly the last time this happened and certainly in later stages, while I was there, one had no indication at all of who was going to be appointed as a Governor let alone who was going to be a new Chairman.

GILLARD: What form does the invitation take, is it a letter,..?

LUSTY: It's simply a letter from the Post Master General saying that he's writing with the authority of the Prime Minister and he tells you what's involved and so on and so forth, sends you the last annual report, asks you to reply and to regard it as extremely confidential until the Queen's pleasure has been taken because it's a Privy Council appointment, a Crown appointment. And can only be ratified by a meeting of the Privy Council and the kind of announcement that follows that.

GILLARD: So you were appointed by an Conservative Government.

LUSTY: I was appointed by a Conservative Government and I knew MacMillan as a publisher and I thought it was civil to write to MacMillan and say how gratified I was by this, and how pleased I was that I feel that I have been the first book publisher to be appointed to the board and MacMillan replied very kindly and said it had given him great pleasure to nominate a fellow publisher, and then of course at a later stage, the Conservative Government went out of power a Labour Government came into power and at that time the Charter was coming to its end on an off and was being renewed at fairly short intervals and reappointments became necessary. But further, when in due course I left after 5 years term in the November of 1965, along with David Milne, of Scotland we were both appointed together, and in those days, looking back a little way it was quite an occasion when a new Governor of the BBC was appointed and we made the front page of the Times with little pictures. Nowadays it's hardly announced at all. And that I think is indicative of the lessening

acknowledgement of the role of the Governors, and so on and so forth, partly because the members of the ITA have come along now to play their part and they are not, of course, Crown appointments, they are appointed I think by whoever is now responsible for Broadcasting. Therefore rather by the way.

GILLARD: Tell us of the action you took during the interregnum.

LUSTY: Of course a great drama was always a change of Chairmanship. And we all profoundly regretted when ill health necessitated the premature retirement before his terms came to an end of Arthur ^{Ford} Ford, who I believe to have been a very great chairman and a marvellous chap to serve with on the Board, and when he left the Vice Chairman was James Duff, who lived in Yorkshire, hated London, didn't want to be Chairman but was persuaded to become Chairman before .. for a period, while the Government looked around and the usual rumours spread and multiplied and the press were always saying this that and the other and the need for a strong Chairman of the BBC, Mrs Whitehouse, I think, had begun her operations and had her say in the matter. All sorts of speculation was going on. By this time I was what was then known as "Senior Ordinary Governor." And I thought speculation was proving to be a little damaging and I had the temerity I wrote to Douglas Home I think it was, yes he was then Premier and said that I thought the sooner this period of hesitation and doubt and controversy came to an end the better. And it was an entirely private letter, but it was somehow leaked and there was a reference in the Sunday Times to the fact that a Governor had written to the Prime Minister and this very much upset the, David Milne, the Scottish Governor, who was a rather protocol minded man, he had been a Civil Servant, and he thought it was quite improper that any Governor should write on such a matter to the ^{Prime Minister}. And I heard about this and I had a word with James Duff who knew I'd written, I think I'd told him I'd written at the time, but at any rate I explained at the Board meeting that I'd done that, and everybody at the end of the day agreed it had been a good thing to do. But of all this.. all the projections that had been made and who we were going to have and what was going to happen and so on, the name of Lord Normanbrook had never been mentioned at all. And it was a brilliant appointment and we were all enormously pleased when Normanbrook came along as Chairman.

GILLARD: You were Managing Director of Hutchinson?

LUSTY: Yes I was managing Director of Hutchinson. I had a job to do there and of course in none of these movements had I any possibility of my being other than an ordinary Governor or to the end of the day as it happened, Vice Chairman for a while.

GILLARD: Yes but your term of service was from 1962..

LUSTY: No 1960..

GILLARD: .. 5 years..

LUSTY: November 1960.. 1960 for a term of 5 years which is the normal term. At the end of 5 years you automatically, or almost automatically drop away. And I did, and they kindly gave David Milne and myself the usual farewell dinner and feeling somewhat disconsolate away I went. Being very pleased to have had this wonderful experience for 5 years. And then of course within a very short time things began to happen. Lord Normanbrook was Chairman and I.. I served under him for a couple of years I think it was, I don't remember the exact dates. And he, in his rather different way to Arthur Ford ^{Harold} was a marvellous Chairman, and was clearly destined to be one of the great Chairman of the BBC when his health began to crack up, and he had periods when he couldn't attend as Chairman and obviously his health was beginning to fail. And at that time there were appointing a new Commission of some sort to look into the whole question of the Civil Service and Lord Fulton, John Fulton as he was, was then Vice Chairman of the BBC, (he'd been appointed after James Duff as Vice Chairman) was appointed head of this Commission and it was felt that he couldn't continue to be Vice Chairman of the BBC but that he could remain a member of the Board and this created a difficult situation within the BBC. Normanbrook was ill to some extent.. It was felt that he should be.. felt that it would be easier to have someone to whom knew the ropes already, as the Vice Chairman and for one reason or another the other ordinary Governors were not available to be Vice Chairman and so Hugh Greene and I think John Fulton together had the idea.. and Lord Normanbrook had the idea, that I might be recruited once more to serve a period of office as Vice Chairman. And this .. Harold Wilson, Wedgewood Benn was then Post Master General, ^{and} but I was rather disturbed, I think that I would express myself so violently against advertising and the BBC which was then being discussed in a loose kind of way. But none the less Hugh Greene told me that the Government seemed grateful that this process had been suggested and I was reappointed, this time as Vice Chairman, for 3 years I think it was.. I forget, but in 19... I left in November 1965 having done my 5 years, and I went back again as Vice Chairman in June 1966 until February, I think, 1968, I think that was the.. period. And then of course in a fairly short while, a year later Lord Normanbrook whose health was becoming increasingly bad, died quite suddenly. Overnight, so to speak, I found myself Acting Chairman of the BBC which of course was a considerable proposition

GILLARD: Well we shall be coming to that later on. Your period then with that short interval covered 1960 to '68. They were very important years in the history of the BBC?

LUSTY: I think they were, I think they were.. they were dangerous years with the BBC. And became more dangerous as unexpected events took place, but looking back on BBC history I can think, I can find no other time I would have preferred to be a member of the Board of Governors than during the 5 years I served in the first instance, with Hugh Greene as a very new Director General. He'd been appointed, I think, not many months before the November of 1960 and of course it was the exciting '60's when one felt that great progress was being made all along the line. Things seemed to be booming for the country and going well, and we were making, one thought, advances in publishing, advances in education, we were becoming a more interesting society and all the rest of it. And Hugh Greene, of course, almost from the start and with the full support of the Board, declared policy of 'opening windows at the BBC. And open windows I think he certainly did. And, partly because of this, it was the period of enormously stimulating editorial activity and editorial excitement. And of course I was very lucky, and I came from a somewhat similar ambience of the printed word, I was myself in communications, I understood the language and I was intensely interested in the relationship that might develop between broadcasting and publishing and all the rest of it. And of course I started my time with the BBC during its preparation of papers for the Pilkington Committee, which had been set up to have a look at the BBC in the same predecessors of the Annan Report. And thus when I joined I had available in due course all the BBC's submissions to the Pilkington Committee which covered every area and every aspect of the BBC's operations. And in the normal course of events The Governor would hardly expect to acquire this background in information for at least the first year or two years of this Government Office, especially as the world in which he'd found himself which was entirely outside the world to which he'd been accustomed. And thus I was very fortunate in this, and other things were fortunate too, in that my own office was only a few 100 yards from the Broadcasting House, I was much more available, and had I been further away, or a Governor living in the country, and I was intensely interested in the whole thing, And for one reason and another I think probably was able to involve myself more deeply with the affairs of the BBC than normally would be expected.

TAPE FOUR:

GILLARD: Sir Robert how did the Governors receive the Pilkington Report ?

LUSTY: There was of course considerable apprehension, inevitable apprehension-as to what the Pilkington Report was going to say about the BBC and how it was going to compare with the ITA and so on and so forth. BBC had submitted a great volume of papers, and I was particularly glad, incidentally, to have been the originator of one of the papers when the BBC had felt that it

had submitted all that was necessary and a casual remark to Hugh Greene, an after-thought one day as a very new governor—that I thought there was a missing paper and that was about the staff and the BBC and they said oh dear me, I think you're right and this meant another paper - the BBC's policy and its relationship with staff - and so on and so forth, that's by the way. But of course we were apprehensive and very much wondering what the report would say and we were going to have copies a little in advance of its release and I think the report finally appeared after the resignation, retirement, of Arthur fforde and I think that when it was published it was during James ^{Buff's} Pough's brief period as Chairman. And we were all summoned to a special meeting, I think if I remember rightly one afternoon, to consider this report and of course from the BBC's point of view it was an absolutely splendid report. The BBC came out whiter than white the service with which it was in opposition came out blacker than black and many people thought rather unfairly, but reflecting back on it I think the Pilkington Report was so complimentary and congratulatory to the BBC and so very much pro BBC washing it whiter than white that it achieved some damage, it was inclined to make the BBC complacent and smug and I think a good deal of difficulty in the future would have been avoided had the BB. had Pilkington been a little more critical than it was.

GILLARD: You've told us that the Pilkington papers helped you to get to know the BBC, what other steps did you take as a newcomer to get to grips with the organisation?

LUSTY: Well as I've already said I found it entirely fascinating, deeply interesting and I thought if I'm going to be a governor I'm going to be a governor and get to know as much about it as possible. And of course I was in the happy situation of making a great many contacts, a great many new friends as it turned out at the end of the day, which were helpful to me as a publisher. I was in the same business in a kind of way and indeed when I was appointed one of the things you have to declare is that you have no business connection of any kind with the BBC. And in my first enthusiastic letter of acceptance I said, I declared that I had none. And then I had ^{diva} about of conscience and I had a wife who was already to prompt my conscience with a Scottish candour and honesty and I had to write another letter to the Postmaster General and said I think perhaps I misinformed you, I hope the Prime Minister, I said rather pathetically, might realise this—that I was a publisher and was to some extent involved in dealings with the BBC over book rights and one thing and another but I hoped no one would worry. And he wrote back very nicely calming my fears and said this was silly I had no need to worry about it at all.

But of course it thus also gave me a perfectly clear conscience in devoting a good deal of time from my office to the BBC and the first step I took was to invite the directors out to lunch one by one and this of course was enormously helpful, and I met the senior staff in that way and discussed their problems and so on and so forth and I probably made something of a nuisance of myself but I was dealt with various departments, library and went round the Television Service of course and Broadcasting House and this department and that department and I then went to the regions and met the Regional Controllers and so on and so forth and I did involve myself pretty deeply. And I found it extremely helpful in this way and I enjoyed it and it all seemed to go in a period of, as I say, great excitement and interest and so on, then of course I became involved as Vice Chairman and the responsibility grew and so on and so forth.

GILLARD: Yes. Did you come in with any crusading spirit, with any intentions to put the BBC straight?

LUSTY: Oh no I came in with no crusading spirit, I came in with no expectations at all, I'd always been interested in broadcasting but I pretty soon discovered that public service broadcasting was not simply a phrase developed or initiated by Lord Reith in the beginning, because it had a profound significance within the BBC, a significance which one found much more recognised when one travelled abroad. As a publisher of course I went to America most years and travelled around, and so on wherever I went I talked about the BBC and met BBC representatives, it's when you go abroad you begin to realise how strong is the leadership of the BBC in broadcasting throughout the world.

GILLARD: And as you got to know the BBC tell us what impression you got of it, was it a well-run organisation and so on?

LUSTY: Yes I was immensely impressed by the BBC, I think what impressed me most was its readiness to accept criticism and almost an anxiety to seek criticism and criticise its own activities more zealously and fiercely than one had any knowledge of outside. And of course the Governors played a considerable part in this and I cannot remember, over the whole of my eight years, a single controversy over a programme being raised in the press which had not been previously raised by a governor at one or other of the fortnightly meetings. And the general; General Advisory Council and the Regional Councils and the various councils set up by the BBC with the intention of keeping in touch with public opinion in every part of the country and seeking people who were likely to be critical; I thought the ability to accept criticism, seek criticism

and do what it could to meet reasonable criticism was the most impressive aspect of the Corporation which struck me.

GILLARD: And as a businessman did you think it was properly administered ?

LUSTY: Well I don't know that I was a very good businessman but I thought it was brilliantly administered and of course every now and again Government became touchy and we had, thought we were being wildly extravagant in this way and that way. And over those years money was not the problem that it has since become, inflation had n't really started very seriously. One was aware of minor extravagances, one thought to be minor extravagances in one way or another. But I remember Arthur fforde saying to me one day did you think we were very extravagant and I said I suppose in some ways there's an extravagance in seeking perfection which the BBC, I thought rightly, endeavoured to do in its programmes in those days. And of course it was the biggest organisation with which I had ever come in contact. The business I was running, a publishing operation was a fairly big publishing operation but I'd never been involved in such a mammoth organisation as the BBC which I came, I thought was quite brilliantly administered. But I was less interested in the administration of course than I was in the in the work which the BBC is set up to do, to provide programmes.

GILLARD: Did you have any specific concept of the role of the Board ?

LUSTY: Yes one gradually becomes aware of the importance of the Board. At first it didn't seem to me that we were very important, we met every fortnight and discussed this, that and the other but one in due course, partly the Board takes its character very much of course from its Chairman from the relationship between the Director General and the Chairman and the senior staff, the Controllers and so on. I think, yes, I came to the view possibly more quickly than many new governors could be expected to simply because of my involvement in the same world, that the Board of Governors had two very positive commitments. One was to public service broadcasting and the other to the BBC to which it was wholly responsible, and its duty to make certain that the BBC conformed to what it regarded, what the Board regarded as the sanctity of public service broadcasting and of course, the Board is there as a buffer between political pressures and so on and so forth, a buffer between outside pressures and the executive, executives of the BBC, the senior of which of course are all appointed by the Board. And so the involvement of the Board was a really deep one.

And one began to realise that the whole activity of the BBC would come to an extraordinary kind of halt without a Board of Governors... [FX Telephone]... I can remember one or two occasions when the Board took decisions which were in fact contrary to the wishes of the executives but which the Board thought was proper for public service broadcasting. One of these was our insistence that the Radio Times should make quite clear when a programme was a repeat or a recording even as against a live programme and all these details we thought absolutely essential for public service broadcasting system to be perfectly candid and true, where all its programmes came from where as I say they were live, repeats, or so on or so forth. Well this was inconvenient to the Executive who'd much sooner that the Radio Times didn't have to go into all these particulars but we insisted that it was a requirement of public service broadcasting. That's the sort of incident where one took a line against that of the advice or wishes of the executives.

GILLARD: Of course you were perhaps fortunate in the sense that until the end, almost the very end, not quite the end but until approaching the end of your eight year period the BBC was passing through a phase in which the relations between the Board and the Executive were smooth and happy, there was a lot of mutual confidence, would you agree with that?

LUSTY: Oh I think there was, and I think this was of great significance to the BBC at that time. The BBC was very clever in its handling of the Board, they make the Board feel important and we were a very close-knit Board and we got on well together, we were the right number, we were nine Governors, seven Governors I'm sorry... (nine Governors) yes I'm sorry we were nine Governors and I remember wondering why nine and coming very quickly to the view that eight would have been one too few and ten would have been one too many. And Arthur fforde took this view, Normanbrook took this view, James Dought took this view and in my brief period I certainly took the view and there was during the... Lord Normanbrook's period of office a suggestion that the Board should be enlarged to twelve, no more than a proposal and it very much shook Normanbrook. and we discussed it together and decided that if any further proposal of increasing the number to twelve we should resist with all the strength at our command but that we would probably be foolish to make too much of a point if they insisted on ten. And in theory sounds a very logical kind of opposition, twelve, what an extra three Governors what difference does it make, they would represent a further spectrum of public life. But anybody really I think who has worked with committees realises that a compact small group can achieve a

unity and a purpose and principles which is very much more difficult to maintain if you're a larger group. In point of fact the number remained at nine until after I left and was increased to twelve more or less on the arrival of Lord Hill, although I know that Lord Hill had not been consulted on the point at all.

GILLARD: Would you say after all your years of experience that the Board initiates thinking or does it react mainly to the proposals of the Executive

LUSTY: I think it naturally reacts to the proposals of the Executive and assuming that the first responsibility is the production of good programmes, one's naturally in the hands of professional broadcasters and professional advisers. But there's a positive reaction to programmes and programmes from time to time are suggested or alterations to them are suggested and, as against the members of the ITA, it has to be remembered that the BBC Board of Governors are responsible for all the producers and all the programme people and so on and so forth and their involvement with the whole operation is a very close one. (YES) And from time to time programmes would be suggested and so on and so forth at a fortnightly meeting when at every fortnightly meeting there was a point at which the Governors could do this sort of thing.

GILLARD: But it has been rather cynically said that the Board is just a cypher, in other words it's just a rubber stamp, what would you say to that?

LUSTY: It's been cynically said that that is so and it gained, it gained credence about a deliberate twist of the facts of the matter by Lord Hill on his arrival, this was one of the difficulties we were up against. Lord Hill arrived thinking that no board of the BBC had been more than a cypher until that moment. In point of fact it was completely wrong, in all my time the BBC's Board of Governors was certainly not a cypher and I don't believe any member of the Board of Management during the whole of those eight years I was there would themselves regard the BB, the Board as a cypher, there to do its bidding. This was a suggestion that Hill, I think altogether wrongly, put about at the moment of his arrival.

GILLARD: Can you give us just one example of where the Board weighed in?

LUSTY: Yes I can and I think it was an extremely interesting example and it was a programme which with the full backing of the Board, with

the full knowledge of the dangers which it might run into, was initiated by Hugh Greene and others and became That Was The Week That Was. And it's extraordinary, looking back over the years of Hugh Greene's administration, one almost gets the feeling that the BBC produced no other programmes than That Was The Week That Was and the Play of the Week, nearly all discussion and controversy surrounded these highly original, contentious, amusing, lively programmes. And of course, virtually that was one of the prime virtues of That Was The Week That Was — came derived from it being a live programme. And I don't suppose any programme or any series has been more discussed than That Was the Week That Was. And it certainly brought about about more points of contention, which were raised by Governors almost every programme, almost every meeting that followed the weekly programme, I think, anybody looking at the minutes of the Board of Governors would find more discussion about That Was the Week That Was than about anything else and it was accepted that there would be mistakes and there would be slips and, occasionally, what would seem perfectly harmless at rehearsal by an inflection in a voice or a glance or something in the live broadcast would give a different twist to what was being said and so on and so forth. But there were every now and again, fairly early in the programme, incidents which were very regrettable and created a great deal of controversy. And these incidents which, I would always believed would not exceed ten minutes over the whole life of That Was the Week That Was, and the programme that followed it, were usually of a kind which gave great offence to a great many people without achieving any compensatory fact at all. A lot of it was smut. Some of it was regarded almost as blasphemy and in point of fact the Board were becoming, towards the end of the day, as the programme developed, nervous and apprehensive about it. And the complaints became more widespread and more frequent and the Board was certainly reaching the point when it felt that something had to be done. And indeed I believe at one point James Doughty, who was then Vice Chairman, very nearly came to a resignation on a matter. And this became known and greatly alarmed Hugh Greene who fairly quickly after this decided the programme must come to an end. The excuse was made an election was coming up, it was an opportune moment to take it off and he came to this decision. But I never have felt that it was a decision he would have come to without feeling that he was losing the support of the Board.

GILLARD: So you're saying that the Board allowed it to be an Executive decision but nevertheless the Board had made it pretty plain that this programme series had to stop ?

LUSTY: Had to stop or be recorded or change its nature; we couldn't go on risking these weekly offences to a great many listeners.

GILLARD: So this great decision that Hugh Greene took in his bath was not exactly a decision he took wholly on his own initiative ?

LUSTY: I think that's so ... and certainly the Board was glad when it came off. They fully backed its successor which never made the same impact.

GILLARD: Yes. What about the cynic who says well the BBC would be just the same if the Board didn't exist at all ?

LUSTY: I don't think it would because the Board is built into the constitution of the BBC and so much that's done by the BBC at the back of every director's mind, I believe, is the awareness, at least, in the days I'm talking about, that the Board was there, that the Board was backing their experimental - their opening of windows, - their move into subjects which hitherto had not been discussed ... and the broadening compassion with which frontiers were being pushed forward, I don't think Hugh Greene could have begun to have accomplished all that he accomplished, all that his colleagues accomplished without the feeling that they had behind them a sympathetic Board.

GILLARD: But how can you resolve this dilemma that on the one hand you have a wise and distinguished chairman like Normanbrook saying that the Board is the ultimate editorial authority, he said this very clearly, (yes) and at the same time other people, other members of the Board saying - oh we don't want a broadcasting council or any such institution because we the Board are the people who watch the interests of the public. So the Board is really saying that it is both the decision-taking body and the court of appeal ?

LUSTY: I don't remember the Board in my time making a claim such as this and of course in my time the Board were very well aware because the appointment of all its members are very well aware of the General Advisory Council and all the Regional Advisory Councils and so on, and the Board took their existence very seriously and were, went through the recommendations of the Executive, who should be appointed, who should be Chairman, and Members of the Board were made to feel very much part of their responsibilities to go round the regions, and listen to these councils and hear what they had to say. And I certainly never heard the BBC, the Board express a kind of arrogant overall censorship of programmes or .. it never felt the necessity for an extension of supervision or the necessity of an over-riding broadcasting council or even, in my day, of the small board of appeal which was set up under Hill's regime.

GILLARD: Can I get you now talking about the relations the Board has with the creative staff and how you can achieve this without crossing the lines, wires with management and topics of that kind; and did the Board ever feel frustrated, how did the Board ensure that what it had to say was transmitted down the line to the people who actually made programmes and did it ever feel frustrated because it wasn't in closer contact with those people ?

LUSTY: I don't think so because the contact with the creative staff was a contact that every member of the Board could make or not as he wished. And members of the Board would regard it as very unwise to make their own arrangements as to what they saw and how to do it and who they should see and so on, but they would say we would like to do this, we'd like to do that, or the other and it would be arranged. The Director General would know precisely what the members of the Board were doing and again the difference between a Board of Governors and the Members of the ITA, the Governor, was in direct contact with, talking to, and meeting and enjoying discussion with producers at all levels, and of course one had to be careful that in no sense was one treading on management territory or taking sides in what, unknown to a Governor, be a dispute. But I think when an atmosphere of confidence is created and established, which is what another prime duty of the Board is to ensure that the climate is right from top to bottom, these difficulties don't exist. I never came across the slightest feeling from the Board of Management that a Governor was being too intrusive or too argumentative or taking too much on himself. I don't, I think there was complete confidence between what then was a fairly small Board of Management, and a small Board of Governors.

GILLARD: Tell us a bit about the procedures of the Board of Governors. How often you met, did you have sub committees, did you vote on topics, all those things ?

LUSTY: Again I can only speak of the time I was there and we met every fortnight, all day, and on occasions we would, as required indeed by the Charter, we would take ourselves into the Regions and meet in the regions in ^{town} time and we would always ... that would always entail a tour of regional activity. The meetings had a certain routine, obviously, every fortnight there was a point at which a Governor could make, say anything he wanted to say about anybody or anything, he was listened to and certain discussion and so on and if a constructive criticism or destructive criticism was made one had complete confidence that the Director General would ensure that it reached the right department.

And we had an enormously beneficial arrangement, which can't always have been popular with the Board of Management, whereby every week and in a sort of rota the various directors would come with a report, which would have been circulated, and put forward his problems and given account of his stewardship, and there would be a discussion on the, whether he was a director of administration, or the director of Bush House, the Overseas Services, or the director of Engineering, Sound, Television, and we knew what their plans were for the future and how they regarded the programmes that were being currently shown and so on and so forth.

And there was an involvement over the whole area of the BBC's affairs. If one was interested, one got one, inevitably, got to know BBC chauffeurs and waitresses at Television Centre and so on and so forth and there was a very close feeling of identity.

GILLARD: Tell us will you about the consensus arrangements.

LUSTY: And again until Lord Hill appeared on the scene I can only remember on one occasion did the Chairman think that a vote was necessary from the Board. It was all done by a consensus from which there was very rarely a dissenter at the end of the day. On the arrival of Lord Hill we immediately had to vote on every petty little subject which destroyed, in my view at any rate, a valuable quality of the Board. But in Arthur fforde's day I can only remember one occasion.

GILLARD: Sir Robert you were telling us that there was one exception to the "no voting" rule during the years of Arthur fforde, what was it?

LUSTY: It was a matter within the BBC of great Reithian principle. But it had its amusing aspect but it was in order ... there was a prohibition against any broadcasting of races of odds before the race, this shouldn't be broadcast, nothing which would induce gambling amongst BBC's listeners and all the rest of it. And on Saturday afternoons racing generally, the television people felt that they were losing listeners to the commercial channels because the commercial channel broadcast the odds before the race. And any change to this BBC rule that no broadcast of the odds should be made, involved a great principle and I remember we discussed it, I think, no less than three consecutive meetings as an item on the agenda. And at the, at one point Arthur fforde said well I really think we shall have to take a vote on this. And we voted and there were two votes against. And Arthur fforde said two votes against are too many I think we shall have to have another discussion next time.

We had another discussion and one member of the Board held out and said that in

principle she was absolutely against it and really with a clear conscience couldn't vote with it. And Arthur fforde said "well I think one is one too few." And so the decision was made that the BBC should be allowed to broadcast the odds before the race. The only other occasion I can remember - and I remember because it was during my period as Acting Chairman - when there was a considerable controversy going on as to whether the police and other organisations, particularly BBC, should be allowed to have hidden tapes when recording conversations and so on and so forth. And there was a great deal of anxiety about this and a great many people felt that no circumstances whatever justified concealed tapes and any subterfuge of that kind, especially from a public service broadcasting operation. And the Executive thought that every now and again in certain types of investigatory programmes, it was really essential to have hidden recorders in order to make the point that the programme was seeking to make or there was some public concern about some scandal where it was necessary to get people talking and not be aware that they were being recorded and so on and so forth. And there was a general feeling on the whole that with very strict safeguards it was right to do this, but it was a point of considerable principle. And again there were two or three, at first, who expressed contrary views and I, because I said once more in the, over the last years, I've only known it necessary once before, I think we must have a vote. And I think there were two against again and there I deferred the decision to another meeting and there was one member of the Board who was adamant and I said, Pym in N. Ireland representative - and I said Dick I think you're not going to agree with this, but I think we must now come to the decision in view of the general feeling of the Board that we must permit this. He said I think you're absolutely right but I'm against it and, but it went through. And it also went through, (it was the point that was raised) at the General Advisory Council which I had to confront that as Acting Chairman and again I was somewhat apprehensive as to what would happen but again it was agreed that the BBC should be allowed to do this, with the consent, on every occasion, of the Director General and I believe that view prevails until now today.

GILLARD: You make it sound as though the Board of Governors was a kind of rather agreeable club, was it too much of a cosy club do you think ?

LUSTY: No I don't think it was a cosy club at all, it so happened that we all got on rather well together. I think it will be found generally that Governors of the BBC are intensely interested in the assignment they've been given and become very much attached to the BBC, not so much a club as a team of people who on the whole hold very strong opinions, but on the whole liberal minded

and preferring to agree than to disagree, but not hesitating to disagree if they felt strongly about it.

GILLARD: Are there any specific incidents that remain very much in your memory, programme issues that the Board had to discuss and so on during your term?

LUSTY: I remember one rather interesting one which came up almost accidentally at a meeting at which I was absent on holiday, and it covered an interview which the BBC had planned and had in preparation with one Von Schirach Scheerer who had just been released from prison where he'd been ... Nuremburg Trial, he'd been sentenced to a number of years and come out. And it had a particular interest to me (and I didn't hear about it until afterwards) because I, a few months earlier, had been involved in a somewhat similar publishing controversy over the reissuing of Hitler's Mein Kampf from the original publication of which my firm, not in my day, had been responsible and still retained the rights. In the book, which had been out of print for a number of years and I had made the decision as to whether it should be republished or whether it shouldn't be republished. I came to the conclusion that it must be republished and encountered an immense amount of opposition and for one reason or another the republication was postponed for a year but at the end of the day it came. And I told Hugh Greene about this because I'd come very nearly to the point of resigning over the issue of being told not to republish Mein Kampf which I thought was necessary to be done. And I'd reported to my board, my overlord board, at a time when I was just going on holiday and there wasn't much to say, and I told them the problems which had come about and what was happening and so on and probably I should have told them earlier but they took fright and stopped the arrangements I'd made. So I very nearly came to the point, as I say, of resignation. And Hugh Greene, the Director General found himself in exactly the same predicament one board meeting. He hadn't a great deal to say and he closed his remarks by saying that the BBC were doing this interview with Von Schirach Scheerer and the broadcast would be made and there was an instant opposition from various members of the Board and at the end of the day the topic, the Board flatly turned it down and said the BBC must not be allowed to proceed or not be allowed to make this broadcast and Hugh Greene was very angry. And himself told me later that he'd come nearer to the point of resigning than at any other point during, of his director-generalship.

And Normanbrook the Chairman was particularly antagonistic to the proposition of this interview and, after the meeting of course, Hugh Greene expostulated with him and there was rather .. naturally cross about it. And

Normanbrook apparently said to him, 'it's your own fault you should never have raised the matter in the first place.' And I forget, I don't think the interview was ever, ever put out. It was curious, on rather similar points, there had been this conflict between publishing or this conflict within book publishing and between broadcasting.

GILLARD: On what grounds did ^{you} ~~the~~ Board resist it ?

LUSTY: My Board resisted it partly because I think they were rather annoyed I'd gone ahead without consulting them and there was a feeling from certain quarters that the whole matter, "Mein Kampf" should be swept under the carpet and forgotten. There had already been, I'd been already involved in enormous opposition, opposition within my own staff, all the Jewish organisations curiously enough had made a great song and dance about it and attempted to do all they could to prevent the republication and also the German Government was very much against it, the West Germans.

GILLARD: But why did the BBC Board resist it ?

LUSTY: Why did they resist a talk from ^{Schirach?} Scheerer? I think really on the same grounds that it was quite wrong for war criminals to come out of prison and be encouraged to express their views in any sort of way. (You) The sooner all this nasty business of "Mein Kampf" and concentration camps and Nazi horrors were forgotten the better.

GILLARD: I'd like you to just round this off by telling us in general terms what it was like to be a Governor, was it a pleasant job, was it demanding was it onerous, was it well-enough paid, how much time did it absorb, those points ?

LUSTY: It was extremely pleasant, extremely interesting and it absorbed really as much time as one wished it to absorb. I gave it a good deal of attention because it was in my line of country. There was a period of great personal unhappiness when my wife died and therefore I was freer than most to give more time and it was a period during which the BBC was extremely kind and considerate to me and I'm quite certain found me jobs to do to occupy my mind which otherwise I might not have got. The pay, I don't think the pay bothered anybody in those days-I believe we were paid five.. a thousand a year. I'm not sure it wasn't five hundred a year. My BBC salary, whatever it was as a Governor, was knocked off the salary I received from my firm so it didn't make much difference to me.

The Chairman wasn't paid very much he received I think double that of an ordinary Governor and the Vice Chairman received £500 more than an ordinary Governor. And the National Governors I think received a little more than an ordinary Governor, but it wasn't by any means an activity one took on because of any sort of payment involved, it was, and one found oneself involved, everybody shared this view with an intensely interesting organisation with an intensely important and interesting job to accomplish. And British Broadcasting Corporation, over that period, was of enormous significance, I think a much greater significance than it is likely to be, as broadcasting in one way and another, proliferates throughout the whole communication area.

GILLARD: I'd like to talk now a bit about the personalities as candidly as you feel you can. You've said a good deal already about Normanbrook and about Arthur fforde and it's evident that you have a very high regard for both of them. They were both, nevertheless, background figures as far as the public was concerned and unknown to the public. Do you think the Chairman should be a visible person, should he be Mr. BBC ?

LUSTY: No I think it's an extremely difficult tightrope over a Chairman to walk along. But I think he has to be a public figure and acknowledged as Head of a great publicly committed Corporation. And I ... Arthur fforde was not a character who in any sort of way sought publicity or notoriety or very rarely expressed a view in public. And I did feel, very early in the day, that certain pronouncements were being made about money matters and licence fees and all the rest of it by the Director General which would better come from the Chairman. I think from time to time the Board did feel this. On the other hand before the public view, all the time, is the figure of the Director General who is the Head Executive and must bear an enormous responsibility which he must carry out in the way he thinks best. But it is a difficult situation and its success naturally depends entirely on the relationship which the Chairman and the Director General manage to establish. And fairly clearly, a strong Director General, a powerful Director General who has a policy which he thinks right to carry out, has got to have a respect for his Chairman. I mean you could hardly imagine a more disparate character than Hugh Greene and Arthur fforde or Hugh Greene and Lord Normanbrook. But for both these Chairmen Hugh Greene had an enormous, profound respect. And ... each established, in their different ways, an easy toing and froing of views day by day, and their rooms were adjacent to each other on the third floor and they'd wander from one room to talk and they'd share the Secretariat. This established, this toing and froing and casual conversation, more than anything

else I think, established, I keep on talking about this, - but established a climate which could pervade from top to bottom of the BBC a climate of confidence, a climate of enthusiasm, a climate in which experimentation and creative people can think creatively, and also establish the climate in which the Board met. Of course one had difficulties from time to time and but no Governor had the slightest hesitation in bringing forward any question which bore upon any aspect of the BBC's affairs, whether it was likely to prove effective or offensive to certain peoples or not, and there was never ... other than than a completely relaxed, healthy climate between the Board and the Board of Management, Director General and the Chairman under whom I served until the death of Lord Normanbrook, but the vital relationships, without which I don't believe the BBC could properly achieve its function, is that between the Director General and the Chairman, each knowing what their, to what lengths they can go in exercising authority without consultation and all the rest of it.

GILLARD: Tell me about the rest of the Governors of your eight years. Quite a few people must have moved through the Chairs around the table in eight years who were the statesmen among them, who were the big important opinion formers?

LUSTY: Well I don't believe we were really a Board of strong individual personalities, I think the strength of the Board was really the strength of a number of people thinking rather alike, like-minded people, broad-minded people rather liberal, I don't

GILLARD: But who are the ones who stick in your mind?

LUSTY: Well I'm just going back over them, ... all in their different ways remain vividly. We had Florence Hancock succeeded by (Dame Ann) Ann Godwin who was, they were both remarkable women. Ann Godwin exercised a great authority on the Board, very wise, relaxed, always interesting.

GILLARD: Did you find the national Governors exercising any special influence or special pressures?

LUSTY: No certainly not, they were extremely easy people to deal with, they had special responsibility and I think themselves were subject to greater pressures of one kind or another, than the ordinary Governors who represented no particular body of opinion and no particular responsibility to any section of the public. The National Governors had to consider their own National Councils and they had to put a National view on various points. But I can't remember

any National Governor at any time proving difficult. In fact they were all extremely good and fair-minded, reasonable and fullfill^d their very proper functions of pressing the claims of their particular responsibilities, whenever they felt they had to, and more often than not, I think, they were probably met with give and take and an easy play of opinion sometimes they were agreed with, sometimes they weren't, but I never remember a difficulty with any National Governor and the rest of the Board.

GILLARD: If in fact the Governors were happily integrated as a team without anybody predominating, I know there was at least one Governor who was not very satisfactory.

LUSTY: In my time I remember one Governor who was appointed and had every qualification one felt of being a very good Governor. But it turned out that he somehow didn't speak the language of the Board, he didn't seem to comprehend what it was all about. The points he made were mostly irrelevant and rather tiresome and one doesn't know quite how these things happen but when it came up, the Charter came up, ^{and} came to an end and the reappointment of the Board was required, he wasn't reappointed and he was very upset about it. It was partly his own fault because he tried to press the Postmaster General for a quick decision. And with rather chagrin and disappointment he received a reply thanking him very much for creating a vacancy on the Board which was promptly filled by somebody else.

GILLARD: I think you ought to name a name.

WALSBOURY

LUSTY: Well it was Lord Horsebury, a very agreeable man and a very distinguished man and we liked him, he was a very nice chap. But he just failed to integrate in any kind of way, or to express any very important or useful view. And it was the only time during my period when the Board felt it had a weakness so to speak.

GILLARD: Let me lead you on now then, we've been talking about Board Members, let me lead you on to the Director General. Because throughout your time it was Hugh Greene and you've said a lot about Hugh Greene already. But give us now a candid assessment of Hugh Greene.

LUSTY: Yes well I, as I've already said, can't envisage a time I would prefer to have operated as a Governor than during the Director Generalship of Hugh Greene who became a close friend and who was in fact Director General

ENLARGO FOR
WALSBOURY LIFETIME

from my appointment until I finally went in February of 1968, and I think he was a brilliant Director General, a man of great courage, decided views, informal in his approach to problems, easy to get on with, with always a great respect for his Chairmen and for the Board. Appreciative I think of the support that he got from them, but of course he knows perfectly well that, he did face a certain amount of criticism and which tended to grow as the years went by. Some of the Board were a little doubtful that we were opening too many windows too fast and I think from time to time we felt - I certainly felt - that he was inclined to pronounce on principles which would be better pronounced and by the Chairman than by himself, not only for the sake of the BBC but for his own sake because they, one of the purposes of the Board is to take from the shoulders of the Executive matters likely to prove irritating to the public, such as the need for increasing the licence fee and so on and so forth. Of course the Director General is always giving lectures and addresses on the various subjects of broadcasting and has to have complete freedom to say what he wants to say. I've always said - and Hugh knows this perfectly well - that within the Greene family (Graham Greene and his doctor brother, Hugh himself as I got to know him), there is what I always describe to him as a kind of element of Greene mischief. When I say that Hugh Greene was a mischievous man I don't mean in any derogatory sense, I mean really rather in the sense that he liked to create a bit of a hubub; he liked occasionally to rub people up the wrong way and so on and so forth.

I wouldn't have any criticism of his operation as a Director General. I think he was exactly the right type of Director General for his time and he had soon convinced me of, not himself by any argument but by simply observing him in operation, convinced me the primary requirement for a Director General was and remains to be a great editor. Hugh Greene always used to say to the Board, he was basically a journalist and the Board would accept this but I used to say to him afterwards, "I wish to God, Hugh you wouldn't keep saying you are a journalist, why can't you say you're an editor, this is what the Board understands and what it expects." He said "What's the difference between a journalist and an editor?" I said "Well I don't know, I think there's a profound difference, a difference of responsibility, a difference of approach, You are the Editor-in-Chief of the BBC and from you flows the whole editorial climate". And I've always been convinced that that was the prime need of a .. for a Director General, to be an editor, somebody else can be the Administration, somebody else can do the finance, but nobody else can create the proper editorial climate in which the producers and the creative staff operate. We shall come to this a little later, but I think Hugh Greene's achievements were very considerable. As Normanbrook grew into the responsibility and got to know what was going on (which he did extremely quickly,) I think he became a little aware of an increasing

arrogance in Hugh's approach and thinking that Hugh didn't handle certain critics very well. I think he dismissed, for example, Mary Whitehouse who most of us regarded as tiresome and not at that time exerting a beneficial or restraining influence just being rather a nuisance; but I think Hugh handled her rather abruptly. I know on one or two occasions he upset a leading bishop who complained to Normanbrook, but there was nothing one was apprehensive about, although one was aware that clouds were forming where previously skies had been blue. And I think this came about well before (when I say well before I mean probably a year before) Normanbrook's death. One of course is always wondering who should succeed the executives and the director-general should this mythical bus run over them one afternoon, from time to time one discussed what would happen if anything, any accident, removed Hugh Greene from the scene. And one, I had talks with Normanbrook, or Normanbrook rather had talks with me, about this. He asked me when we used to lunch privately together and discuss these problems and he used to sometimes feel a little aggrieved if Hugh Greene, he thought, had been rather tactless or rather overbearing or not taking something quite too seriously quite seriously enough and so on.

I don't believe, I believe Hugh continued to be a great Director General until the appointment of Lord Hill which in my view utterly deflated him, but perhaps we can come to that later on. But my assessment of Hugh places him very high in what I understand to be the offices of the Director-General.

GILLARD: Did you feel that he was too much absent, I mean he was endlessly abroad on conferences and every excuse that ever came along? [FX CLCK]

LUSTY: I think that probably happened later after the arrival of Hill, because in my time I find it very difficult to recall an occasion, certainly there can't have been many, when he was away for a Board meeting. He must have been from time to time but certainly I have no recollection of his being often absent and I suspect that this developed a good deal later on when he found himself bereft of a Chairman with whom he could have any sympathy.

GILLARD: Many people, some people including Mary Whitehouse have said that in relatively confidential circumstances Normanbrook pretty well said "Who will relieve me of this turbulent priest?" Do you believe he ever did?

LUSTY: I don't believe he ever did at all. I know Mary Whitehouse has said this and I've denied her in public, in print, letters and she has never responded to any letter, always condemnatory, or always doubting the truth of what she is saying. RECORDING PAUSE.

GILLARD: Well Sir Robert what did you think about the top management team of the BBC, the Board of Management people ?

LUSTY: I think almost without exception I achieved friendship with each member, as I said on my appointment, I made a point, sorry I set out to get to know each of the directors and in each in turn came and lunched with me informally and one established oneself and could fit in with them. When I arrived on the scene I can't quite remember who they all were, Lyndsay Wellington I think was Director of the Spoken Word.

GILLARD: No Director of Radio.

LUSTY: Kenneth Adam was Director of Television. Arkell, Frank; John Arkell was Director of Administration; Harold Bishop was coming to the end of his term as Director of Engineering; Beresford Clark was Director of Overseas Broadcasting and over my time all these offices changed hands, retirement and one was in on the appointment of their successors and this was very carefully done, sub committees, the only sub committees in my term ever set up -- were told, interviewed candidates and came to the Board with their opinions and put forward their views and so on and so forth. I remember fairly early in my days when it was necessary to appoint a successor to Lindsay Wellington and Frank Gillard, who is sitting by my side, was then Controller West Region which I'd already thought to be one of the most attractive jobs within the BBC. and I was deputed to go and spend three days with him and come back with the views whether he would make a good successor to Lindsay Wellington. I spent three extraordinarily interesting days in the West Country with Frank Gillard, came back and reported that I thought he'd make an excellent successor to Lindsay Wellington and Frank Gillard became then Director of Sound Broadcasting.

GILLARD: I remember you and two other Governors gave me a very substantial grilling before it happened.

LUSTY: Did we ? Well we might, I think we did grill people pretty thoroughly and again we didn't always appoint the person recommended by the Director-General. It was a serious, and one of our considerable responsibilities (apart from of course the appointment of the Director General which is made by the Governors not by the Government as people seem to think, was in the appointing of senior staff, which in my day were bound to a level which I would have thought in my day the Governors would have been responsible for at least the appointment of thirty or so top management people, the regional controllers, --

I think we went down to Controller level.

GILLARD: Which was the one you didn't accept the DG's advice over

LUSTY: The Controller Wales was a vacancy, I remember these things. One of the applicants for the job was Baverstock, Donald Baverstock who had, was a brilliant producer and had been responsible for many of the most adventurous of television service current-event programmes and I think he came forward for consideration as the new Controller Wales and I remember these things, he was the one favoured by Hugh Greene. And I happened to be Chairman of the small group of Governors who talked to him and we came to the decision that he wasn't in fact the right man to be regional controller, to be a national controller. And we turned him down which pleased quite a number of people really, I don't think it altogether satisfied Hugh Greene and I cannot now remember who in fact was appointed but we made a different appointment to the one expected.

GILLARD: What did you think of the Board of Management system ?

LUSTY: I thought it was a very good system. If I remember rightly there was seven members of the Board of Management, did that include, no the Director General, apart from the Director General they were of equal rank and equal standing. And put it in a rather acceptable sort of way seemed to us to be a good band of brothers and be the right number to exercise authority, and between them they covered every activity of the BEC and brilliantly we thought, and our contacts with each one of them altogether was very close. Every now and again a new Governor would propose that Members of all Governors should receive the minutes of the weekly meetings of the Board of Management and I remember thinking it would be a useful thing to do this. But very soon realising that it, it wouldn't be a good thing at all. Certainly not a Governor, at any point, to attend a meeting of the Board of Management, I never heard that suggestion made at all, which is made I believe in the Annan Report but that's another matter. Because if the minutes of the Board of Management, which covered every aspect, in depth very often, all sorts of operations and decisions and so on necessary with an organisation like that, these minutes were circulated it would simply mean that they'd been doctored in some way and the Board of Management would meet in less frankness feeling that the minutes were going to the Board of Governors and otherwise. And in my day simply the Chairman and the Vice Chairman read through these minutes and very illuminating and interesting they always were, but they were certainly not of a kind which could become automatically available to other Members of the Board. But it was this comparatively small.

Board of Management, where each Director was equal of the other Directors, doing a totally different job under the Chairmanship of the Director General, able to produce a unanimity of view which was understood by an even smaller no an equal number, the Board of Governors as a whole. It was a small Board of Governors as I've already said, and a small Board of Management and I think the explosion of the Board of Management and the creation, subsequent creation not in my day it followed my day, of Managing Directors was a mistake. It may have added a stature and authority to the Managing Directors but I still feel that this could have been attained without having a two-tier board, as now happens, of the Board of Management which I understand has been very much extended and become very much more of a large, almost public, meeting, than it was in my time, and I think this is one of the points together with a larger Board of Governors at which something was lost to the BBC when it came about.

GILLARD: The Annan Report also proposes that in addition to the separate meetings the Board of Governors and the Board of Management should have joint meetings quite frequently, would you have a view on that ?

LUSTY: I don't think it would achieve any useful purpose at all. We had constant resource to discussions with the Board as each Member of the Board of Management reported to us at our fortnightly meetings, they would stay to lunch, there'd be informal talks and of course there were various functions at which the Board of Management, all Members of the Board of Management, all Members of the Governors, all the Governors would be present and there would be informal toing and froing and talks and I don't believe that a formal meeting, I think would to some extent diminish the authority of the Board of Governors and assume that the Board of Governors had a more professional involvement with broadcasting than they could possibly claim to have, the professional broadcaster is, by this time, by this day, a broadcaster, an extremely professional experienced operator and he can't possibly be matched in knowledge by any member of the Board of Governors and the Board of Governors meeting the Board of Management in total I think would produce a useless waste of trivial discussion which would never come to a point.

GILLARD: Well let's pass on. What did you think of the BBC's relations with the public, in particular the advisory system ?

LUSTY: I thought it was a good system and I go back to the view I expressed early on that I was enormously encouraged by the way in which the BBC invited criticism and carefully selected the, its various advisory councils,

balanced it with a spread of public life. Attracted to it people with very strong views with a great wish to express them and it seemed to me an extremely open-minded society, so to speak. A BBC society if you like. But again there was a feeling, I always experienced when I went round to meetings of the local Advisory Councils which were to some extent managed, obviously, by the Regional Controllers and so on, with great freedom of expression. And a community interest which was important, and a General Advisory Councils were extremely well-attended and all subjects were discussed. In our day we made a slight change. I believe under previous Director Generals (sic) a notice would have to be given of the intention to ... raise a subject, in my day this became changed and no notice was required, anybody could say their piece and say anything they wanted to say. And it worked well and certainly the BBC was responsible for the appointment of people to these councils and it could be said this made it, made manipulation possible, but one was never conscious of it. And indeed I believe at one time the responsibility of creating councils was that of the Post Office who found that they couldn't possibly have the local knowledge who would make a valuable council, Advisory Council Member with as useful a knowledge as the local Controllers and I think it was then left to them.

Probably in, as open government, so to speak has come more to the fore I feel now that the press should be admitted to at least part of the meetings of the General Advisory Councils, the local press if necessary, to the meeting of the Regional Advisory Councils and so on, I think that would be quite a good .. quite a good method of illustrating the readiness of the BBC to accept criticism and the care with which it deals with it.

GILLARD: Parliament of course is the supreme authority and without showing partiality to any party in Parliament the BBC nevertheless has to be careful to .. with respect to its image in Parliament, this is a very important factor in BBC life, certainly at the Board of Management level. It's the Directors were always very much involved in the business of cultivating political figures and making sure that the BBC was properly explained to them. Now how far do the Board of Governors contribute to this process ?

LUSTY: Well the Board of Governors of course was always there to listen to news of the BBC's contacts with parliamentarians and politicians and the rest. And it would normally, in my time I think it was the responsibility of the Chief Assistant to the Director General, Harmon Grisewood who we regarded as our eminence grise who came to us with all the information and political tidbits and a knowledge of what was going on which enabled us to be aware of any situations building up, any pressures being put upon the BBC for one reason

or another, by political interests, as an individual Member of the Board I never have been a political animal and I can honestly say that I haven't the faintest idea of how any member of the Board of Governors in my day exercised his parliamentary vote. We weren't, as far as I know, political in a party sense at all. I was astonished to read, or hear from Hugh Greene not long ago, that it was rather assumed when I was appointed that I would vote Socialist. I simply have voted for all parties and I was never, no political pressure was ever put upon me.

GILLARD

LUSTY:

Sir Robert you were going to tell us the Dick Crossman Story.

LUSTY

GILLARD:

You were asking me about political pressures and political questions. I do remember, shortly after the, Lord Normanbrook came to us, and we always felt that we'd more likely get on closer terms, easier terms with a Labour Government than a Conservative Government, we found in fact that we were getting on increasingly bad terms with the, more and more difficult as we were confronted with a Labour Government, and understanding between us and relations between the BBC and the Government were what was regarded by the BBC at a very low ebb. And Harman Grisewood, who was in charge of this kind of relationship as personal assistant to the Director General, suggested that it might be a very good thing if he could arrange a lunch between Dick Crossman and ourselves. And so at this suggestion in fact we had a meeting, lunch, I think it was the Saville Club, (or Garrick it might have been), between Harman Grisewood, Dick Crossman and myself which Crossman in fact refers to in one of his diaries, and as a result of this meeting there was a further informal meeting between Lord Normanbrook and Dick Crossman and I think the ~~matter was to~~, the damage was to a considerable extent .. was repaired. But I think most of this derived from a incompatibility of temperament between Lord Normanbrook and Harold Wilson and one somehow couldn't imagine the somewhat austere, superficially cold Normanbrook being readily accepted by the ebullient, different characteristics of Harold Wilson. And conditions from that were never very happy with the Government at that time and various kites were continually being flown as to whether we should be differently financed and this, that and the other. But, and Crossman did at one time put forward various alternative suggestions but the end of the day the White Paper came out and the independent position of the BBC was at any rate for a time entirely re-established. But that I think is the only direct meeting I had with a politician except I do remember on one or two occasions, I can't forget, I would ask some MP to lunch who would raise some particularly silly point in the House or something of that sort, I can't

remember the details. But that certainly was the extent of any political relationship I had with anyone.

GILLARD: The Board, perhaps rather strangely, I don't know, I haven't thought about it much myself - but the Board appears to have been content to leave the liaison with Government and the politicians pretty much to the Executive?

LUSTY: I think they did, I think they also were there to protect any principle that might quite suddenly become involved and give moral support to any of the Executive who might find themselves in any kind of position of embarrassment or difficulty, or upset some politician or caused some question to be asked in the House; there was, I think the Board felt it wise to be aloof from involvement of this kind. I've no doubt that if an issue of grave implication were to come along there might be a private meeting between the Chairman and the Minister or the Chairman and the Prime Minister. I think, for instance, the appointment of Governors all Members of the Board of Governors is entirely a matter for the Government and as I said earlier on sometimes there was a question of discussion to ensure balance, although I think this came to an end and there was certainly no discussion whatever with the Board or any Member of the Board over the appointment of Lord Normanbrook or later on the appointment of Lord Hill.

GILLARD: Of course there's no doubt that the official contacts with politicians were scrupulously observed in an official way they were, were they not, Chairman to Minister and Director General to the Director General of the Post Office?

LUSTY: Yes and of course in those days - I think it's been changed now, - the Governors were given by the Chairman a kind of three-line-whip in order to listen to a requested Ministerial broadcast and come to an instant view whether the Opposition should have the right of reply. And this happened on quite a number of occasions and we were all asked to listen to Mr. MacMillan, or Mr. Wilson, whoever it might be, broadcasting in the capacity of Prime Minister and instantly report whether, if the Opposition was to request it, they should be given a right of reply, this was an onus placed entirely on the BBC and on the Board of Governors. But I think that now has been changed in some way. I don't know but it operated in my day.

GILLARD: You as a publisher were Mary Wilson's publisher so you must have had personal associations with her, did you ever get any information about

Harold's attitude to the BEC through that channel ?

LUSTY: No none whatever and in fact I think I'm right, that I had left the BEC by the time we published her, I'm pretty certain, I'm sure I'm right that I'd left the BEC by the time I published Mary Wilson's verse and we never, I never discussed with her, she never discussed with me, later on was an interested observer, commented a little about the Lord Hill business assuring me that she had nothing whatever to do with it, and so on and so forth. But no that was entirely a private matter and dealt with entirely privately, as Mary Wilson's publishers and Mary Wilson exerting a life of her own quite independently of Harold Wilson. "My husband," she said, "doesn't really like poetry"

GILLARD: Well now you've told us how you came to the end of your term as an ordinary Governor, you retired and within a few months you were back as Vice Chairman in John Fulton's place for two years or more and how during that term Normanbrook's health deteriorated and then quite suddenly he died. Now I wonder if you would just carry on with the story from that point ?

LUSTY: Yes well, Normanbrook had been away ill and in hospital and I think as Vice Chairman I had taken the chair at a meeting. Prior, a fortnight before his death, and he'd come out of hospital from the, on the Wednesday before a meeting, a normal meeting on the Thursday, on a Thursday in June if I remember rightly and that would be June 1967 I suppose. And it was a beautiful summer morning, a Thursday, Normanbrook had been to the BEC on the Wednesday afternoon and had gone through the agenda with the Director General. I was living in Hampstead and at breakfast time I had a telephone call from Lady Normanbrook to tell me that Norman had died in the night and would I please do everything necessary. Well, this was obviously something of a situation which had to be dealt with in one way or another pretty quickly. And I managed, fortunately to catch Hugh Greene before he left his home for an appointment that he said that he had with Lord Thompson, Thompson House. And I told him that I'd had this message from ^{Lady} Normanbrook and we decided that the one thing Normanbrook would want was that we should carry on with the meeting scheduled for 11 o'clock that morning. The national Governors would already be in London and the other Governors would be making their way to Broadcasting House and the Director General rather surprised me by saying that he had a meeting with Lord Thompson but would come along to the Broadcasting House afterwards. I said well I don't know, I'd feel rather happier if you came straight to Broadcasting House and we met there." He said Well he thought he'd better see Lord Thompson first, then he phoned back to say that he'd changed his mind and would be at Broadcasting House.

I told my office I wouldn't be in and I went straight to Broadcasting House -- a cool, calm and collected atmosphere, and I'd already suggested to Hugh Greene, who said he wouldn't have thought of the operation, that our flags should be at half mast and our flags were properly at half mast and I telephoned to see that Lady Normanbrook was all right and I had to go through quickly with the agenda for the meeting. I had to sit in a corner of Hugh Greene's office composing a suitable message by the Acting Chairman of the BBC on the death of their Chairman. Hugh Greene had to compose a similar message. We agreed that the appreciation on television should be done by Harold MacMillan, fortunately the BBC recording vans were in the neighbourhood of his house in Sussex and the press was told, and at 11 o'clock, or just a little bit late, the Governors met and we recorded our sorrow and so on and so forth, all agreed that Normanbrook would want us to proceed without break to deal with the meeting and we had a perfectly straightforward and natural meeting which we did essential business and concluded it rather early, had our lunch together and so on and so forth. And in due course I went back to my office and I was telephoned by Edward Short, who was Postmaster General, his secretary, expressing the Postmaster General's sadness at Lord Normanbrook and wanting to be assured that I was ready to carry on meanwhile as Acting Chairman.

There wasn't much alternative to this and this I did. A little later on, (I can't remember the exact sequence) I had a letter from Edward Short saying that he was glad that I was willing to carry on for the time being as acting Chairman. He had every confidence that I could do this. And they weren't proposing to rush any appointment as important as a successor to Lord Normanbrook and hoped that I would not have too anxious a time. I replied that I was very happy to do this to the best of my ability but that I had my own responsibilities and my own work to do and I really couldn't entertain them, the possibility or the suggestion that I might continue beyond the early Autumn, beyond the end of September and that was understood.

And then, about a fortnight later I think it was, the day before we were to have our last meeting before the summer break, (we were meeting at Television Centre), and on the Wednesday of that ~~meeting~~ ^{meeting} I think probably early June or early July I had a request from the Postmaster General's secretary saying that Mr. Short had not met me and he had nothing whatever to say really than to meet me, and to ascertain that things were going well and we were just about to break up for the summer recess and he would be grateful if I could go to the Post Office and see him on the Thursday afternoon. So I pointed out, I said yes I would be very happy to do this and I couldn't be certain as to the time since we had our own meeting at Television Centre and I couldn't say when it would be over and that was perfectly convenient,

it wouldn't matter but if I could just drop in after the meeting, have a little talk all would be well. That was all arranged. And within the next hour, on that Wednesday, I had a further telephone call from Edward Short's Post Office, from his secretary, saying that there had been a serious development and it was absolutely necessary for Mr. Short to see me that afternoon at 3.30 p.m. and could I please make myself available and go and see Mr. Short at the Post Office.

Previously Short had told me in some sort of way, message or letter, I can't remember, that he would notify me of any plans the Government might have for a successor to Lord Normanbrook in plenty of time for me to inform the Governors before any announcement was made. I telephoned Hugh Greene and asked him what was happening, had he any idea why this sudden message that I should be summonsed to Edward Short's office and he had no idea at all. And I borrowed the Director General's car and the Director General's driver because I'd no idea where the Post Office was, or how to get to Mr. Short. In an enquiring frame of mind I took myself there and was ushered into the room, into which after a very brief interval came Edward Short whom I recognised as .. a Minister followed by an enormous bevy of .. I took to be Post Office officials. I was quite alone and I felt very much alone and Edward Short has a waspish, schoolmasterly image and he, but he greeted me very nicely and thanked me for helping them out as I had done and felt they were having someone etc., etc., very kindly. ^{He} sat down at the head of the table flanked by his officials all down one side and all down the other side and I sat on his left hand side and his secretary sat on his right hand side and he looked straight in front of himself and said "I am very sorry to send for you in this way but there has been a crisis in our affairs and a leak in our plans which makes it very necessary that I should see you. I'm about to tell you who will be taking over the Chairmanship of the BBC at the beginning of September and I very much regret I haven't been able to fulfill my undertaking of giving you time to inform your fellow Governors of our plans which will be announced at ten past eight this evening. It has been necessary for the Queen to hold a Privy Council meeting at her box at Goodwood this afternoon, and I have now to tell you that at 8.10 p.m. this evening it will be announced that the new Chairman of the BBC is to be Charles Smith".

I was apprehensive anyway but the name Charles Smith meant absolutely nothing to me whatsoever and I just hardly knew what to do. And then I saw across the table that Edward Short's Secretary had his hand over his mouth and was whispering to Edward Short, "Hill Sir, Hill not Smith". And the impact of this was of course absolutely enormous on me, I had hardly any idea what to say or what to think, but instantly I thought How am I to go back

to the BBC and tell the Director General that our new Chairman was to be Charles Hill. And I hardly knew, I really hardly knew what to say and at the end of the day I said very feebly - "Well I hope, Sir, that he recognises that we're a very different animal to the ITA". And he said "Lord Hill is a very clever man and he will be getting in touch with you". And I thought, very explosively to myself, I'm damned if he's getting in touch with me, I'm getting in touch with him. And again Short expressed his regrets at having to tell me in this way and that I would be hearing from Lord Hill and I was taken back to the BBC's car by his Secretary and drove, driven back to Broadcasting House in a very sober frame of mind for it seemed to me to be the end of the BBC, very likely, in the shape in which we had all known it. And almost certainly the end of a great period of Hugh Greene's life, I couldn't see any possibility of Hugh Greene working under the Chairmanship of Charles Hill who I only knew by repute, but as a man who he didn't hold in great esteem as Chairman of the ITA, who in those days, was very much in competition with the BBC, and always had a public image of being of a man totally different, tougher, rougher character and calibre than the kind of Chairman that the BBC had had in Norman ... in Arthur fforde, James Dough and Normanbrook.

However I arrived at the BBC with this dreadful news, as I thought it to be, and I went straight up to the Director General's office where he was sitting alone. I suppose it was about 4.30 p.m. - 5 o'clock something of that sort and I said "Hugh, I am sorry I bring the worst news that I could possibly bring you. Our new Chairman from the 1st September is to be Lord Hill". And I might have shot him. He bounced up in his chair. And his immediate reaction was to pick up the telephone and said "Get me the Postmaster General". And it was quite clear what was in his mind. And I said "Hugh don't do anything hasty, let's have a talk and let's send for Oliver, - Oliver Whitley" who at that time had become, I think, the Director General's Chief Assistant and moved up from Bush House where he had been
* Director of the Overseas Services, and fortunately when the call came through the Postmaster General had flown, there was no possibility of Hugh speaking his mind to him at that moment. And, but no word of this, no rumour of this appears to have reached Hugh Greene at all.

Oliver Whitley came in and Hugh said "I am going to resign" And Oliver said "Well Hugh this maybe what is wanted, I don't think you should do this, let's have a quiet talk".

Well of course it was impossible to have a quiet talk because the news was fundamentally explosive. It wasn't so much directed against the image of Lord Hill. None of us, I think, knew him very well, I didn't know him at all. Hugh Greene knew him and didn't like him but

* [In fact Whitley became Director of External Broadcasting in 1968, after being CA to DG]

the offence to the BBC of having the Chairman of the ITA, one has to emphasise that in 1967 the relationship between the ITA and the BBC was very much more frigid and hostile and competitive than it has since become.

So one envisaged resignations, trouble of all sorts and I thought my God what a situation for an Acting Chairman to have to confront for the next few weeks. A lot is going to depend on how we operate in the next few days, what the Board is going to say, all sorts of things went through one's mind. And by a curious chance this Wednesday evening was the evening on which the Board of Management normally entertained a Minister, privately at dinner, at an outside hotel somewhere. And the guest this Wednesday evening was to be Anthony Barber and so all the Board of Management were around the place and Hugh Greene said to me that he thought it would be useful if I were to come.

Well I couldn't, I had my own rather difficult evening which I couldn't evade and in any event I felt it would be a mistake. But I said "You go ahead and have your dinner, you've got obviously to discuss this, you can't have a dinner tonight without discussing this and talking to your guest about it. It will be your chief topic of conversation. I've got to go to dinner in Essex with my wife and I'll telephone you during the evening. There is nothing we can do tonight and we'll be meeting tomorrow at the Television Centre, the last Board Meeting before the break and we can all have a talk then."

And so we went on our different ways. I went off down to Essex where we were meeting some friends to have dinner at a pub down there and I said to Hugh previously "I think all we can do tonight is to get tight". And so having got rather tight I went to the telephone to phone Hugh Greene and ask how things were going and Hugh Greene, hesitant at first, thought I was the press. And I wasn't the press and I said "I think Hugh, for the second time in my life, I suggest we fly our flags at half mast tomorrow". And Hugh said that they were having quite a convivial evening and that Anthony Barber was agog with the news and couldn't understand it. It had in fact been announced on the news at nine o'clock and the affair had broken. And it was very, very disturbing indeed. Again I would emphasise because of later developments, ~~it wasn't~~, the antagonism wasn't towards Lord Hill it was this astonishing appointment of the Government, or as it turned out, most people believe, Wilson himself, an act of aggression really, switching Hill from where he was to become Chairman of British Broadcasting Corporation and all the rest of it.

The next morning I went early to the Television Centre and had a word with Hugh Greene and at his request there and then on that morning I wrote to the Postmaster General on behalf of the BBC officially, this was an

official letter saying very briefly "If I should have left you, after our brief meeting yesterday afternoon with any discourtesy I much regret it. But as one who believes very deeply in public service broadcasting I must tell you that the information which you kindly divulged in advance of its release filled with me with profound dismay and consternation. My basic anxiety is that one man in one lifetime can, with sincerity, accept with conviction two completely composing concepts. Nonetheless I am grateful to you for having told me the news as you did". And then I went in and all the Governors, who had gathered previously, having coffee together were in a state of agitation and consternation, could hardly believe their ears. There was no divergance of view at all. This was a most extraordinary event and what were we to do? I explained exactly what had happened. I conveyed the Postmaster General's apologies. I read out this brief letter that I've just quoted to them, which they accepted. I also reported that I had already written to Lord Hill, suggesting that we should lunch quietly together at Broadcasting House at the soonest opportunity. And I think it was during the course of that morning, during the course of that day because my letter had gone round by hand, I had a letter from Hill thanking me for this and suggesting an ^{evening} ~~evening~~ which for some reason or another was ten days ahead, something of that nature. And we talked as I say with a certain amount of consternation and I promised that I would report back to the Board by letter while they were on holiday after my meeting with Hill. I explained that following tradition and protocol the Director General had made it clear that noone, none of the Management, no Director nor himself should be in touch with Lord Hill until I had seen him and had a talk. And none of this was minuted and I suggested that we should regard this discussion as outside our meeting and nothing would be recorded about it.

And in due course, in his book, Lord Hill revealed that as soon as he came into office he went through the minutes in order to see what had happened at this meeting on the 27th July. To his disappointment he could find no reference to his appointment at all, and this gave me a certain satisfaction. We had a normal meeting, I said next time we meet after our summer break Lord Hill will be our Chairman and we wished each other pleasant holidays and the Director General said to me that he would like a word with me in private before I left. And I went to see him, and he told me he said, "Everything since you have been with us has happened and the responsibility has fallen into your lap and I now have another problem to put before you." He said "I'm very sorry to have to tell you this because you are a friend of both Elaine, my wife, and myself and I'm very sorry to have to tell you that our marriage is breaking up and there is going to be a divorce and it's likely, the news is likely to come out quite soon".

I was extremely sorry to hear this news and Hugh Greene said to me "I suppose I can assume that in these liberal days that the Board will take a liberal attitude and not regard this with disfavour?" And I didn't really feel that I could give him such an assurance, I said "I simply don't know Hugh, it seems to me an extremely difficult situation" and privately I was filled with a great deal of doubt. And also filled with a great deal of apprehension at the thought that it might be a situation that I would have to cope with during my period of acting Chairman. And I did privately, with one or two, I thought very liberal-minded people, discuss their views as to what would happen and I was surprised to find that, how condemnatory they were, that this would create difficulties within the Board and within the BBC. I kept these doubts to myself, I didn't tell Hugh, I didn't tell Elaine, I really didn't tell anybody but I was very relieved that there were various legal complications of one kind and another which deferred the final announcement until I had ceased to be acting Chairman and Lord Hill had taken over. But it was, - it did send me home in a very sombre frame of mind.

However in ten days, fortnight's time the date of my lunch or Lord Hill's lunch with me at Broadcasting House came about and in the published accounts since there's been a disparity of dates and intents and so on and so forth, quite clearly Lord Hill's diary had got in something of a muddle he was complaining that no one had approached him and he was left without a word from the BBC. The Director General hadn't spoken to him and hadn't, no word of welcome. In fact he had had a word of welcome, I had asked him to lunch. It had been made clear that he was to see me before any other member of the BBC and in point of fact it was arranged that after he had lunched with me he would go to the Reform Club, of which he was a member, and where Hugh Greene would break his holiday and come and have a talk. And so I went to Broadcasting House and I laid on a simple cold lunch in the Board Room and Lord Hill came and we had a long, long, interesting talk in which we covered all sorts of problems and doubts which he had, and I explained why it was that there was hostility to the announcement, and I explained, as best I could that it wasn't directly against him but that it was a great shock to the BBC and I think he realised this. And I suggested to him that he might like an opportunity to meet the Governors informally at dinner between now and their first meeting - no he did not want to do that. I suggested he might like to meet informally the Board of Management at a meal - no he would sooner do these things in his own way. I suggested it might help him if, at any rate at the beginning, I were to take the chair at the first meeting at which he was to officiate. He said no, he would prefer to do it in his own way. Then in fact I simply followed the procedures which we had followed when Lord Normanbrook had been appointed and

which he found very acceptable: Hill made great play with the fact that I had offered to take the chair for him at his first meeting as though I would want to do that. And he... made one or two observations I thought insensitive, he couldn't understand what all the fuss was about, "it was just another job." And I said quite frankly "That is what all the fuss is about, it's not just another job". He was a tough-minded politician, I didn't warm to him, as Hugh Greene used to say later "He was quite a nice old codger in many ways", he was of an entirely different calibre to anybody within the BBC and any in senior position I had met. And certainly couldn't be more different than Arthur fforde, James Dough or Lord Normanbrook, entirely different calibre.

However after the talk I wrote to the Governors telling them of our meeting and saying that the meeting with Hugh Greene at tea had gone quite well and they had both phoned me, they had undertaken to phone me to say they had had an agreeable exchange of views and perhaps the situation wasn't going to be so difficult as all that. (Ex chiming clock) And I wrote in a rather hopeful frame of mind to the Governors on holiday, as I had undertaken to do, and I sent a copy of my letter, as a matter I thought of civility, to Edward Short to show that things were developing. And I had what I thought was an astounding reply from Edward Short saying that I had no need to send him this copy of this letter I'd sent to the Governors, as I had done so he felt bound to comment on the fact that I seemed to think there was something odd about the appointment of Lord Hill to the Chair of the BBC and would I please disabuse my mind of this, it was entirely a matter for the Government. Lord Hill was a most distinguished man and he hoped I'd do my best to ensure that he entered happily and fruitfully into his term of office. It was an extraordinarily stupid letter, he didn't seem to grasp for a moment the obvious reactions that had taken place. Some of these reactions Hill himself was amused by, such as a comment "It was as though Churchill had appointed Rommel to fight the Battle of Alamein". Hill thought this was very comical.

search And However, things, there were no resignations as I'd heard there might be. There was no happiness, I think there was a general recognition that the BBC of the future was going to be a rather different place and there was a great deal of sympathy for Hugh Greene to whom it was a very considerable personal affront. And many people thought, indeed I did, that this was, would be the, certainly the end of Hugh Greene as a forceful Director General of the BBC. I couldn't see a relationship developing between Hugh Greene and Lord Hill of any significance or value. I remember Hugh saying how can I work with a man I thoroughly despise. And Hugh Greene is incapable of working with a man who he thoroughly despised. However everyone was on holiday, I went on holiday on September 1st. Lord Hill arrived rather ostentatiously

at the BBC, welcomed by a commissionaire with a new pair of gloves, Oliver Whitley in attendance and I sent him a telegram of welcome which was never acknowledged or ever referred to again. And it soon became evident, from stories reaching me, - incidentally he had no use for a Vice Chairman, I was never consulted by him on any point at any time, from the moment of his arrival to the moment I left and I don't believe he had any use for a Deputy Chairman either at the ITA. There's a difference in principle apparent between a Vice Chairman and a Deputy Chairman but he certainly had no intention of asking my advice about anything and in fact he assumed from the start that I was hostile, which indeed to a certain extent I was. And in his book he accused me, with Hugh Greene "Of continuing a barrage of controversy in the press" - in point of fact I was never approached by the press at any single point and I never made any comment to the press at any single time. So it was quite wrong, quite unscrupulous to say that I had done this.

Well at any rate there were indications that he was going to operate in a different kind of way and before we had the first meeting of the Board of Governors in the middle of September I thought it right, without consultation with Hugh Greene or with anybody at the BBC or with Lord Hill, to write this letter which perhaps I might quickly read :-

"In the last few days of my Acting Chairmanship I have been much exercised - and you'll appreciate this - as to how the Board can best confront the clear difficulties and problems which arise from the appointment from the late Chairman of the ITA to the Chairman of the BBC. That problems do and will arise is, I fear, indisputable and it is no service to the BBC or indeed to Lord Hill to evade them or to fail to recognise their existence. I have felt it very much my concern in recent days to ease the tensions which we all know must exist invariably, to my mind, inevitably to my mind. I have reported my long lunchtime talk with Lord Hill in which I told him frankly of the situation he confronts and which he has to recognise is natural in the circumstances. This I now think he understands but I do not believe that he is yet fully aware of the different nature of the beast or can yet accept that public service broadcasting as understood by the BBC in any ways differs from public service broadcasting as he obtains it to be

for commercial companies. Nor does he seem to be aware of the size and wonders of the BBC. He for instance seemed to doubt the wisdom of the Board meeting out of London, a practice which he has stopped at ITA. I explained our obligations and interest in this most important aspect of our affairs. I have formed the impression that he intends to rule, to an extent deliberately eschewed by Arthur and Norman and indeed by the Board. This means to me the probable danger point of explosion. I think Lord Hill was unaware of the Chairman's constitutional subjection to the authority and wishes of the Board of Governors as against the Members of the ITA with its limited involvement. It seems to me that on the Board's handling of this principle much depends and this is a reflection I feel I have a duty to put privately to you at this moment. I have already said I feel a greater optimism than I did but on the other hand I think I ought not to conceal my fears that at a time of quite exceptional and delicate problems confronts the BBC which will involve the Board in divergencies probably wider than it has ever experienced in recent years. I have hesitated to write in this way but after much thought I feel it necessary and I hope it may prove helpful. Needless to say I have had no consultation with any other Member of the Board on the point and have not divulged my intention either to Lord Hill or to anyone within the BBC."

GILLARD:

That letter went to the Board ?

LUSTY:

That letter went to every Member of the Board. And it was leaked, I understand, by a Member who was just about, who had been appointed but who had not attended the Board, to Lord Hill, who was a

personal friend of his and I don't think that was a helpful gesture but I don't think it had any material significance for Hill was already aware of these doubts which were arising in the general mind.

And so we came to the first meeting which was the most uncomfortable and embarrassing affair. Hill would't, didn't want me to utter any word of welcome. He just said in a voice from the stomach, "Let us get onto the minutes of the last meeting". He never referred to the death of Lord Normanbrook or to the man who he was succeeding or to any feeling of pleasure or pride he had in coming to the BBC, and there was an affront in the air, people were upset by this particularly when almost immediately we came to voting on every trivial little matter - "now let's see, let's have a vote on the subject." And the whole situation was a very unhappy one indeed and I thought it was even more doubtful if Hugh Greene would be able to accept the situation or to contrive any workable arrangement. And one of the great changes, almost at once initiated by Hill, was to complain of the Chairman's office. He said it was panelled in a rather dark wood, he said he didn't like the smell of wood but it was this traditional arrangement set up by Reith, Chairman, secretaries, Director General with the toping and froing which I've talked about. Hill didn't like this, he moved into a new suite of rooms a floor above which destroyed a way of life which had been experienced within the BBC since the days of Reith. And in my view was a matter for the Board to talk about. But it was never raised with the Board at any point. And of course as time went on this became an accepted thing and it so happened there was a fairly quick drop-away from the Board and in almost no time there was nobody left on the Board, particularly as three new Governors arrived to bring the number up to twelve who were aware of any other regime but that of Hill. And I was frankly glad when the end of my term came at the end of February. I was given another farewell dinner, I made a speech which was a somewhat ticklish operation but to which Hill said that he could find nothing to take exception to and he wrote very civilly to me and I departed from the scene but kept obviously in touch with friends within the BBC as to what was happening and so on and so forth. And I still thought, and I think now think now that it was the end of Hugh Greene's period of effectiveness and in due course our fears about Hugh Greene became well founded. I ceased to be a Member of the Board, but as I say, I naturally kept in touch with developments, particularly with Hugh Greene who one evening asked my wife and I to dinner at the Television Centre at a party he was giving and he took me into a corner and said "An absolutely splendid thing has happened. I am retiring from the Director Generalship of the BBC and I am being made a Governor of the BBC". And I said "Hugh you regard this as splendid news?" he said "Yes I do, don't you?" - I said "No I think it absolutely

calamitous news and I think it tragic that you should be leaving the BBC, you're leaving it at least two years before you should do so, and I think it's quite wrong that you should go onto the Board of Governors". And he wasn't best pleased by that but he accepted the criticism and I said "I don't think you'll be on the Board of Governors for very long" and in fact he wasn't. And I think it was a disastrous period and a disastrously wrong decision which made life even more difficult for his successor than having to take office at least two years before he was properly fitted to do so.

But things had been difficult from the beginning. And I remember an incidence of Hill's insensitivity. Very early in his day, I think at his second or third meeting, he told the Board quite casually that the Postmaster General had asked him to write a private note on the finances of the BBC and how he thought they might be altered in some kind of way. And there was a horrified pause as he said this, and obvious apprehension and he said "Do you think this is not an invitation I should not have taken up?" and we left him in no doubt whatever that he couldn't respond to such an invitation, he couldn't write such a letter without the authority of the Board and that he would do no more than, in such an instance, discuss it with the Board and be a mouthpiece for the Board. And he was disturbed by this and we got out of it by saying that we thought it was an improper question to be put to him by the Postmaster General, as it had been put to him he'd better get on and reply but it certainly alerted him to... and in fact the response he made was perfectly within the financial principles of the BBC and a letter to which no one could take exception and on which, in point of fact, I congratulated him and it was circulated to the Board.

But that was, he had no idea of the limitations, he didn't seem to have read the constitution of the BBC and so on. And then, partly arising from this, it was the Government were critical of the BBC's finances and expenditures and it was thought as it occasionally was thought that it would be useful to bring in some investigators to have a look at our finances and our methods. At that point I left and I certainly agreed it was it would be a useful exercise, McKinsey was brought in, in a very short time produced a whole batch of revolutionary proposals and changes which were, I think, far too readily accepted, in the main by Hill who wanted to make an immediate impact as Chairman of the BBC, and of course it suited his requirements very well that Hugh Greene, a contentious public figure as Director General, should go and his place should be taken by Charles Curran, at that time through no fault of his, little known, even within the BBC as being a potential Director General, and observers of the press at that time will note that Hill was constantly and increasingly referred to, not as Chairman of the BBC but as

Director General of the BBC. And at the end of the day when he ceased to be Chairman, certain fundamental principles he had still upheld and one wouldn't wish to be unfair to him. But I think he had markedly changed the nature of the beast and I think he destroyed the climate which even yet has not been restored.

GILLARD: Can you be a bit more specific in what way had he changed the BBC ?

LUSTY: I think, and I wouldn't put the entire blame on him, it goes back to the point I made that I believe the Director General of the BBC should principally be an acknowledged and respected Editor and as Editor set a climate respected by directors, respected by producers, respected by everybody and who regard an editorial suggestion or an editorial decision, not as an oppressive move of censorship but as something within the power of a wise editor to make. And I think that neither Hill, with his interference in these matters and his over-riding of a new Director General, destroyed this feeling of confidence and destroyed the climate which had pervaded to the great part of Hugh Greene's reign of office. And as I said when the climate goes wrong at the top it goes right through the Corporation and those in the know can see it reflected in programmes within a very short time, uncertainty creeps in.

GILLARD: But wasn't it history repeating itself, because if you remember the Reith story he had trouble with Chairmen at times who asserted themselves in just the same way ?

LUSTY: Well I don't know, I'm talking about the BBC as I knew it, I don't know what happened in Reith's time except by hearsay and records and so on. But of course one's Governor's appreciation and concept of the BBC is entirely coloured by his own experience and by what he finds out while he's there and it's very difficult to translate oneself into another situation. And it's a situation which I think probably can, obviously changes from Director General to Director General, Chairman to Chairman and so on and so forth, one just hopes that there is sufficient continuity of .. principle for public service broadcasts which can carry an organisation such as the BBC through the ups and downs it is bound to experience.

GILLARD: Lord Hill claims that his achievement was to assert the primacy of the Board over the Executive ?

LUSTY: I don't believe that for a moment. It suited Lord Hill. I think the most mischievous operation taken by Lord Hill was to, was to undercut, undervalue every board until he arrived on the scene with a new conception of a board, he had no new conception. The Board was greatly increased from nine to twelve members in his time, I haven't, I don't know what this exactly involved it must have destroyed a compactness of opinion and discussion, it meant a bigger table, all sorts of things, more people for the BBC to accommodate in their affairs and although it's a big organisation to involve twelve people within its activities is a good deal more difficult than involving nine. And I would myself think, from what I heard, that the Board ceased to operate as effectively under Hill than it did under its previous Chairman. I know this was put around by Hill and other Governors. Of course we seized the initiative, it's a very different place now that we're here and this that and the other. But I simply don't believe it.

GILLARD: It seems to me we've almost reached the end of this story but I want to ask you to read again the letter which you sent to Edward Short on the morning after he had told you of the appointment of Lord Hill, will you read it again ?

LUSTY: Yes I will. 27th July, 1967.

If I should have left you, after our brief meeting yesterday afternoon with any discourtesy, I much regret it. But as one who believes very deeply in public service broadcasting I must tell you the information which you kindly divulged in advance of its release, filled me with profound dismay and consternation. My basic anxiety is a doubt that one man in one lifetime can, with sincerity, accept with conviction two completely opposing concepts. Nevertheless I am grateful to you for having told me the news as you did. (Thanks). This letter, too, was shown by Short to Lord Hill and in his own recollection, which is quoted by Hill, Short said "I was struck dumb by the news" to which I took great exception. I was not struck dumb, I was thunderstruck.

GILLARD: I'd like to ask you how you now feel looking back on your BBC association, what are your feelings about it after what, nearly ten years ?

LUSTY: Nearly ten years. Well I very much regret they ended in a traumatic controversial problems which they did, beyond my control. I have no regrets at anything that I did. I have plenty of regrets at events which developed but not for which I was responsible and if I were confronted with precisely the same situation today I think I'd have acted in exactly the

same way. One might have become more tolerant, I might have ... I didn't at all resent Hill, there was no question of supplanting a position which I had hoped might be mine as Vice Chairman, I mean it was just beyond any possibility; there were no sour grapes about it. I had become deeply attached to the BBC. I thought it was a wonderful organisation, I am very proud of my association with it. I doubt myself, whether it will ever attain the position it maintained in those days because I think the whole nature of communication is changing. And what I'm inclined to feel is that the problems of electronic communication is mostly talked about by people into whose lives it has developed. But I believe that as television inevitably proliferates and electronics achieve more and more astonishing wonders in communication, it'll be accepted as we, from our beginnings, accepted newspapers. And I think the BBC succeeded through initial principles in establishing .. a world dominance in public relations (sic) broadcasting which I hope very much will sustain, will be taken note of by the world as it develops these extraordinary electronic miracles in the future.

But I think probably the need for a dominant BBC will diminish as television proliferates and radio proliferates and all the rest of it.

GILLARD: At the beginning of all this exercise, you said that Hugh Greene had the idea that to bring in a man from the great world of publishing might be a very good thing to do, but how do you feel now about it at the end, has your term of office with the BBC strengthened the links between the publishing world and the BBC?

LUSTY: Oh I think it has. I think the links are much stronger than they were, nothing dramatic about it but in my day the BBC was regarded as very competitive to publishing and there was a good deal of resentment at the publishing activities of the BBC which I think has died down. There is closer consultation, the BBC quite clearly relies upon a degree of literacy among its patrons, as they call them, and literacy is achieved by books and reading. And no I think there's a continuing .. and useful relationship between the printed word and the broadcast word and I think it'll become stronger, publishers have got to adjust their outlook, instant debate has taken the place of a rather later examination by a printed book. The nature of various publications is going to be changed by videodisc, tapes and all the rest of it, but I think the relationship is there and one of the few things I achieved was the publication by the BBC of a little booklet called Writers in the BBC which bought the whole question of editorial inception and excitement and so on, reduced it to terms of how to deal with a broadcasting corporation always in need of new material.

GILLARD: In the few inches of tape we have left, let me ask you a loaded question from my point of view. In your years on the Board what was the division of time between television and radio ?

LUSTY: In my years on the Board, you mean, yes I see what you mean. Ah well you've got to remember that in my time BBC 2 came about and BEC 1 but I know what you're wanting me to say, and not for a moment ever have the feeling that radio was neglected or thought ill of. After all Local Radio came about during this period, University of the Air came about during this period, no I think radio sustained itself with remarkable strength which was due much to the persistence of the Director of Radio as the efforts of the Board.

GILLARD: You don't get away with flattery with me. I used to feel every time I came to you that you'd been sitting there for a fortnight with your eyes glued to television with not a single ear for radio.

LUSTY: No I don't think that was so at all. You remember the consternation and problems which cropped up when you wanted to change the title of Lift up your Hearts !

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