

**LSE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET**

**Title Page**

**Ref. No.:** THS017

**Wav file Refs:**

**Collection title:** Tales from Houghton Street: an LSE oral history

**Interviewee's surname:** Jones

**Title:** Professor

**Interviewee's forenames:** George

**Sex:** M

**LSE connection:** 1966-2003. Emeritus Professor, Department of Government. Greater London Group. Public Policy Group; 2009 Honorary Fellow

**Date of birth:** 4/2/1938

**Date(s) of recording, Compact Flash used, tracks (from – to):** 22/7/2015

**Location of interview:** LSE

**Name of interviewer:** Clara Cook

**Type of recorder:** Tascam DR-40

**Total no. of tracks:** 1

**Recording Format:** Wav 24bit 44.1khz

**Mono or stereo:** Mono

**Total Duration:** 01:17:23

**Additional material:**

**Copyright/Clearance:**

**Interviewer's comments:**

## **THS017 George Jones**

Track 1 [01:17:23] [Session one: 22 July 2015] George Jones [GJ], born 1938. [00:29] First contact with LSE in 1960. Thinking about doctorate. LSE top place for studying public affairs. [01:06] Impressed by Professor Titmuss and his social policy group, the Titmice. [01:37] Already had a place at Nuffield College, Oxford, and they persuaded him to stay. Did his doctorate there on the coming of party politics to his hometown, Wolverhampton, in the period 1888-1960. [02:26] Came across LSE's Greater London Group led by William Robson. Assistant lecturer Jim Sharp. GJ came to LSE to talk to them because of their work on the politics of London government. Jim interested in voting and parties. [03:12] visited a historic building where at present the Towers are. Then red brick Victorian office blocks, largely solicitors but the GLG were based there. [03:45] In this building first time had come across lift system operated hydraulically by water. [04:18] Visited them another time in offices on the Strand. In 2015 these buildings were subject to a planning dispute. [05:09] WA Robson attended conference at Jesus College, Cambridge where GJ was an undergraduate. Asked GJ to accompany him to a telephone box because he couldn't operate it properly. [05:46] GJ later realised it was a 'helpless old man' act. [05:59] GJ and William Robson got on very well. [06:46] Lots of contact with LSE before coming to LSE before becoming a full time member of staff. [06:13] GJ also wanted to be at LSE because it was in London, GJ born and brought up in Wolverhampton, West Midlands. Felt like he lived in exile and wanted to be in the capital city. LSE in the centre and surrounded by the institutions he was studying, the law courts, Fleet Street journalists and presses. [07:14] First job after finishing at Nuffield in 1963 worked at Leeds as a lecturer for three years. Always watching papers for jobs. [07:36] 1964 interviewed but felt the job was fixed for someone else. [07:54] Next year another job came up in the Government department and was encouraged to apply. [08:19] Got the job and came to LSE in 1966 and been at LSE ever since, in the same building, Lincoln's Chamber. Started on ground floor and moved upwards. Stayed in final room with a view over Lincoln's Inn Fields from 1977 until retirement in 2003. [09:33] Also involved with Greater London Group, now LSE London, and on retirement moved to share their office. [10:15] Lists positions held at LSE, ending with Emeritus Professor and Honorary Fellow. [10:43] Became Father Christmas at the staff children's Christmas party. Previously done by Michael Wise. [11:54] Teaching in Government department: general government, how country governed and misgoverned. Always involved in first year course introduction to British government and politics. [12:28] Became lead lecturer in that course with Bernard Donohue, another LSE lecturer. [12:50] They had known each other at Oxford and were political allies. [13:12] Took hold of the introductory course and taught it even after he became a professor. [13:28] Important for first year students to meet professors. [14:09] Loved lecturing in the Old Theatre. [14:04] and [14:21] Generally two groups of students with different levels of knowledge on the subject, British Politics A Level students and those from other countries who hadn't studied it. [14:48] student who asked what MP stood for, realised had to express yourself very clearly in early lectures. [16:03] Worked with Peter Self, who succeeded William Robson as Professor of Public Administration on courses about comparative public administration, largely Master's students. [16:41] These were new courses 1964/65 and GJ was part of the expansion.

[17:12] Particularly specialised in Britain, France and USA. [17:24] Speciality was local government. Developed and taught that, and taught it comparatively. [18:02] Students were an international group, came from a wide range of countries and in seminars could ask them to talk about government in their own countries. [18:50] LSE students are superb, still attracts top students. [19:08] LSE still has a powerful international reputation. [19:16] LSE gets top class students who have done well in their first degrees. Thinking about Master's and postdoctoral students as he mostly taught them and supervised research. [20:05] Played a major role in selecting students. Some had played a major role in public administration in their own countries and wanted LSE's name to help them when they went back. Former students worked in government, pressure groups, think tank. Became a network of alumni. [21:34] challenges of working at LSE: 1966 student unrest over appointment of Walter Adams as Director. Then over American involvement in Vietnam war. School closed for a month. [22:14] GJ's involvement in unrest. [22:48] GJ spoke at Academic Board against people who were on the side of student rebels. [24:00] Asked to join General Purposes Committee. Primary issue was the new Director. School was very divided. [24:54] GJ and Government department believed in working through representatives, reasoned argument not direct action. [25:24] Other side were protestors and anti-authority, including the Sociology and Law departments. [26:10] Ralph Miliband in the Government department was on the side of the students. [26:53] Students' Union voted to pull down the gates. [27:42] Led largely by American students who had experience leading rebellion against the Vietnam War. [28:00] Protests around American Embassy in Grosvenor Square. [28:11] Let LSE protestors have the space below the gates, gates were to protect vulnerable areas. [28:36] Gates were at sixth floor by senior common room. Became a symbol of oppression and were smashed with hammers. Staff linked arms to stop protestors going into corridor to sixth floor of Connaught House where director's office was. [29:40] Director called the police and they arrived after an hour. Students were in the basement of St Clement's building. When they emerged staff could identify them. School took legal proceedings against those in the Student's Union and some members of staff who had urged action against the gates. [32:12] School closed for a month but teachers found ways to meet their students and carry on teaching. Majority of staff just wanted to carry on with research and teaching. [32:58] Imre Lakatos in GJ's group, they became friends. [34:29] Students had won victory, lifts at main entrance. The small lift had been reserved for staff but became available for anyone to use. [35:00] Troubles were bad for School's reputation, people remembered who was on which side. However helped staff get to know each other across departments, made friends. So it was good for cohesion of the School. [36:40] Departments didn't have own locations. Administration decided it would be easier for students if staff from each department were located together. However some refused to move. Damaged interdisciplinary coherence of the School. [38:24] GJ had been attracted to LSE by the staff, top in their disciplines. The common room was a lively place for discussion, late '60s and early '70s. [39:24] Bob McKenzie, famous political sociologist at LSE. [40:11] At LSE, academic stars were close at hand. [41:09] Staff lived quite far away from LSE. Staff were not allowed to live more than 30 miles away but people did. Social lives therefore did not revolve around LSE. [42:45] Changes over the years: expanded, new buildings. Unfamiliar place. Students like the new student building but sad to see St Philip's hospital go, his room in Lincoln's Chambers used to overlook it. [44:05] Had previously worked in Land Registry building, now LSE owned and where interview is taking place. [44:17] When GJ started there were 3,000 staff, now

expanded to 10,000. [44:57] Involved in school government. [45:18] Became Chair of Graduate School committee, Secretary was Anne Bohm. Enjoyed being in touch with all of the departments. [47:06] After that became Vice Chair of the Appointments Committee dealing with appointments and promotions below the level of Professor. Ran this for around four years. [49:22] New Pro-Directors, academics taken out of their work to do the work of the Director. In Appointments Committee, GJ felt Director should appoint the Professors. [50:45] This work was in addition to work as an academic. [51:08] Opposed change to status of LSE. LSE was a community of self-governing academic pursuing research and students came to learn from them. [52:26] From the late 70s LSE pursued a business model instead and the governing body changed. Academic staff became employees. [54:00] No longer understands how the School is run. [54:55] As the School has grown bigger it has become more complicated. Used to know how it was governed. [55:42] Future of LSE. While a governor had been shown a map of where LSE hoped to expand to. Directors like to make their mark, with new buildings. [57:12] Fear that expansion plans based on assumptions about low interest rates on borrowed money and continued overseas student fees, but these may not last. [58:11] However LSE's reputation is very strong and likely to last. [59:20] Closest people GJ has interacted with are colleagues in Government department. He was a Convenor of the department in the 1980s. Michael Oakeshott wanted the term to be "Convenor" and not "Head". [01:01:36] The Government department was made up of two groups. Ralph Miliband was in a third but he left LSE after the Troubles. This left the Fabian left wing, of which GJ was a member, and the right wing. In the 1950s Harold Laski died and was replaced by Michael Oakeshott, whose inaugural lecture shocked the traditionalists in the department. Oakeshottians controlled appointments, which GJ undid once he became Chair of Appointments. [01:06:00] GJ was initially blocked from becoming Convenor. Once in post he recruited to two important Chairs. Brian Barry from California. Christopher Hood. He also brought in Patrick Dunleavy. They helped raise standard of Government department and LSE in Research Assessment Exercises. But appointments annoyed Oakeshottian group. [01:09:07] Convenor budget in the mid-80s was £500 for use on hospitality. [01:10:20] Still in contact with Tony Travers. 1974-76 was on Layfield Committee on local government finance and noticed they were receiving exceptional papers from Tony Travers and eventually recruited him to LSE as Visiting Research Associate. [01:13:04] Government was a friendly department. Often friendly despite political differences. Could get on with Michael Oakeshott and Ken Minogue. Also had been allies fighting student rebels. [01:14:44] Cross when Alumni Association organised an event to celebrate the Troubles, seen through the eyes of the students. [01:15:50] Professor Morris on side of students until they went out to the Aldwych. Students throwing marbles under feet of police horses and they fell which horrified Professor Morris so he stopped supporting the students.