

Open Forum 6 (1974)

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Naomi McIntosh:

To present anyone for an honorary degree is a difficult task, to present a Prime Minister is a daunting one. In the first place, one can, indeed one must, assume that his biography, his political and intellectual achievements are so well known as to make their recapitulation blatantly a work of supererogation. Thus I am denied all the usual material for this citation. What then can I say of this man who at the early age of thirty-one became the youngest Cabinet Minister of modern times and who ever since has lived in a positive blaze of publicity, sometimes not, as he has made clear, of his own choosing. Mr Wilson, before that time, had followed an academic career and had studied and taught in a rather older OU. Indeed since the new OU did not then exist, he could be held to have been, if not educationally deprived, at least educationally constrained. My Lord Chancellor we did not, in the Senate, ask the Prime Minister to accept an honorary degree, we asked Harold Wilson to accept it for it was offered last December. It was offered because it was he who gave the concept of a university of the air, later to be translated into The Open University, a political reality. Harold Wilson is a man already honoured by many academic institutions. We honour him for the same reasons that they did but as I have tried to show, we have another very special reason and it is consequently fitting that we should add to the burden of his distinctions. And so my Lord Chancellor, it is my privilege by the authority of the Senate, to present to you for the award of The Open University's highest academic honour, the honorary degree of Doctor of the University, The Right Honourable Harold Wilson.

Lord Gardiner

In the name of the congregation I confer upon you the honorary degree of Doctor of the University.

Wynne Brindle

After Mr Wilson, who himself is Chancellor of the University of Bradford, had received his scroll from our Chancellor the replying speech on behalf of the honorary doctors was made by Lord Feather.