

LSE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Title Page

Ref. No.: THS014

Wav file Refs:

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

Interviewee's surname: Thornton

Title: Mr

Interviewee's forenames: John

Sex: M

LSE connection: 1985 graduate diploma, 1986 MSc Economics

Date of birth: 4/4/1961

Date(s) of recording, Compact Flash used, tracks (from – to): 11/7/2015

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: (00:20:41)

Additional material:

Copyright/Clearance:

Interviewer's comments:

THS014 John Thornton

Track 1 [00:20:41] [Session one: 11 July 2015] John Thornton [JT], born 1961. [00:39] JT first came to LSE in 1984. Left in 1987. [00:55] First impressions of campus. JT was used to American campuses. LSE's campus was a shock, no green areas. Went on to appreciate the fact that the focus was on students and learning. [01:30] Studied for a graduate diploma in Economics with a specialisation in international economics. Tutor was Christine Whitehead who was marvellous. [01:52] JT had applied for two year Master's programme, describes why he thinks he was put into the graduate diploma to start with, and was then moved on to the second year of the programme. He enjoyed both immensely. JT had applied to LSE and Sussex and was accepted to both, but chose LSE. [03:44] JT on the other students. His peers forced him to bring his game up. Students from many different countries: fascinating, diverse, intelligent. Undergraduates were mostly from the UK. Would never have experienced such a rich culture in the USA, for example [05:09] recalls communists marching down Houghton St. [05:29] JT was a member of the Riding Club, as a westerner he missed horses. Attended Students' Union meetings. As an American, it looked very much like parliament. Labour students mostly controlled it. Conservative speakers received paper aeroplanes. There was heated debate. Everyone went to the Three Tuns afterwards. [07:02] Discusses pubs on campus. Refectory food was abysmal. [07:29] JT is an Episcopalian and was involved with the Chaplaincy and found housing through that route, on Great Portland Street. [08:15] JT describes his favourite place on campus, the Paternoster lift, which is now gone. It was a revolving lift from the 1960s in Clare Market Building. There was no door and you had to jump in and out. Metaphorically it was an interesting insight into risk-taking at LSE, physically as well as intellectually. [10:12] As an American the LSE system was challenging. Describes the difference between US and UK education structures at the time. Being forced to learn independently helped his personal development. [11:45] Professors were all inspiring. Second degree tutor was Mervyn King, later governor of the Bank of England. They shared a passion for finance. There were Capital Markets Groups. Describes the experience as exhilarating and exciting. [12:55] JT talks about his career now, unexpectedly following on from his favourite work at LSE, in testifying in financial economics. [14:02] JT talks about his background on the west coast of the USA and his previous university. [14:53] Future of LSE. JT hopes that it will work according to the first principles: an emphasis on rational thought and facts. He hopes that it will shape policymakers all over the world. [15:50] Highlights of his time at LSE. Remembers the day went to see his results posted on the second floor and his friend told him he had passed. He didn't go to a graduation ceremony, although he was invited to something later at the Albert Hall. [17:06] JT talks about his involvement with the Chaplaincy. [18:40] He is now a donor to LSE. Attended a reunion in 2009 and met his tutor again. Keeps LSE near and dear to his heart. [19:22] The new Library is spectacular and campus seems to be improving structurally. Still likes the focus on people, inspiration and professors rather than structure itself. [20:02] His advice for prospective students is that if you are independent and like to think differently or outside the box, come to LSE.