

LSE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Title Page

Ref. No.: THS023

Wav file Refs:

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

Interviewee's surname: Sims

Title: Mr

Interviewee's forenames: Nicholas

Sex: M

LSE connection: 1968-2010. Emeritus Professor of International Relations

Date of birth: 18/6/1945

Date(s) of recording, Compact Flash used, tracks (from – to): 7/8/2015

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: 00:41:19

Additional material:

Copyright/Clearance:

Interviewer's comments:

THS023 Nicholas Sims

Track 1 [41:19] [Session one: 7 August 2015] Nicholas Sims [NS], born 1945. [00:29] NS arrived at LSE 1 October 1968, worked here for 42 years and retired 30 September 2010. [00:42] First impressions of campus. They worked long hours. [00:57] so in the evenings saw newspaper vans leaving Strand House (now the Lionel Robbins Building) for Fleet Street as it was the main newsprint distribution depot for WH Smith. Clare Market and Houghton Street were not pedestrianised so often faced vans speeding along with first editions. [01:25] The School was trying to pedestrianise them from as early as 1959. [01:46] Came to LSE to teach international relations. Enjoyed the subject as a student and wanted to help other people to enjoy it. [02:40] The students were very different from now: overwhelmingly male, British if undergraduates or North American otherwise. [03:00] There were fewer postgraduate students then, expansion in this area came in the 1980s and continues. Discusses the difference between teaching undergraduates and postgraduates, for British students postgraduate study was not expected. [04:14] Describes being in awe of LSE and researching how international relations was taught here prior to his interview. Names on book spines became real people and his colleagues which was daunting. [05:59] Teaching has been a highlight of being at LSE. Enthusiasm for teaching and communicating international relations probably got him his job. Describes teaching in the International Relations department and having a pastoral role. Valued teaching. [07:32] Describes seeing students go on to a variety of jobs including public office and other vocations. [08:08] Challenges: Describes the change from the late 1960s/1970s when LSE was a strong part of the University of London. [10:30] Highlights: International Relations has remained a separate department but with close liaison with other departments, centres and institutes. LSE has not taken over smaller institutes and was not taken over itself. Describes the mixture of tasks that went to teachers, which was a big positive for job satisfaction. He felt encouraged to advance himself. Did not enjoy being an examiner. [13:29] Describes changes in the Academic Board. Used to outgrow meeting rooms in Vera Anstey and St Clement's Building. [15:21] Describes a move towards departmentalisation. In the late 1960s there were fewer departments, campus was smaller and most people were teaching as special subjects within the BSc Econ which was set up in 1900. [16:40] NS has life Senior Common Room membership. Serving on committees was also a good place to meet people and create good working relationships. [17:41] NS discusses his favourite places on campus. The lecture theatre he used most is now a study room. Having lunch in Wright's Bar has never changed. The proprietor thinks it dates from 1944. It was also a good place to meet people. NS lists the Robinson Room, the first mixed staff and student restaurant, as another favourite place. It was on the second floor of the main building. [19:41] NS was a member of various committees, which he lists. Mentions the Grimshaw Club. From 1992 he held more senior posts, which he lists, and was particularly interested in academic curriculum development, degree structures and regulations. He was the first non-Pro/Deputy Director to be Chair of Graduate School Board of Examiners 2005-09. Had been Chair of Academic Studies Committee for undergraduates 1993-98. [24:30] Sabbatical leave following committee service enabled him to write more books and articles and refreshed him for return to departmental work. [24:58] In his first year shared an office in Lincoln's

Chambers which was then the northern boundary of the School. From 1970-80 the whole International Relations department moved to the East Building. Then moved to the main building in the old WH Smith memorial hall. Moved to Clement House in 1996. [26:04] NS talks about Chris Hall, then Convenor, and Hilary Parker, now Department Manager. Discusses the importance of departmental managers and continuity of service because of the greater responsibility departments have for budgets and administration. [29:33] Future of LSE. NS thinks LSE will become more international rather than re-integrating with the English education system and hopes it will retain a sizeable undergraduate School. He discusses progress in areas of gender equality and diversity and environmental awareness, and mutual respect between different nationalities and cultures, which he hopes will continue. [33:11] NS discusses some antiquities of the School. When he was first appointed lecturers had to live within 30 miles of the School. He wrote to Director Sir Walter Adams for permission to live in a house in Kent 31 miles away. The Director had a flat in the Anchorage and one of the porters was also his driver and butler at receptions. There was a paternoster lift in the Clare Market Building. The Library employed book binders who were based under Lincoln's Chambers. There used to be a committee on the welfare of overseas students because they were a minority group and a hospitality club where wives of staff provided support to those coming from overseas. [36:08] Talks about being invited by students to speak at the UN society in October 2007 on returning from sabbatical leave, which was very inspiring and in his favourite teaching room. [37:17] The Founders Room, Shaw Library, was another favourite place on campus from early Director's receptions to retirements including his own, and he enjoys sitting there now. [38:57] He describes the impact of the change in technology and achieving his own career aspirations.