

# SPOKESMAN BOOKS

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## PRESS RELEASE

**10 March 2014**

### **Warwick University Ltd: A Tale from the 70s Still Relevant Today?**

**Launch Event 31<sup>st</sup> March 6pm LSE Old Building Room 3.21**

- *Universities driven by business goals and values....*
- *Covert surveillance by employers and the police....*
- *The law deployed to stifle protest....*

These are some of the crucial issues facing universities in today's Britain. But they were important also in February 1970, when the University of Warwick was convulsed by one of the largest and most significant of the student protests of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

***Warwick University Ltd*** was a Penguin Special published in April 1970 and edited by E.P. Thompson, then Reader in Social History at the university. It is now being republished, with a new introduction written by some of the original contributors.

The book tells the story of what happened when a student occupation of the University Registry uncovered evidence of secret political surveillance of staff and students. It explores the close relations with the world of industry and finance that had developed at Warwick since its foundation was approved in 1961. It goes on to chronicle the fierce confrontation that ensued in the university over issues of governance and democracy, and the wider debates in higher education, the media and national politics over questions of academic and press freedom.

Among the speakers at the launch event (31<sup>st</sup> March) will be the **Rt. Hon. David Davis MP** who was a student at Warwick at the time and who has made the defence of civil liberties one of his central concerns. Also speaking will be Freedom of Information campaigner **Heather Brooke**, also a Warwick graduate.

The confrontation eventually ended with a series of compromises, but among the campus battles of that era it was perhaps the only one in which no one was disciplined, and ongoing positive impacts were achieved. Warwick went on to become the very successful university it is today.

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Yet underlying questions remain – questions about university governance, the role of vice chancellors, relations with business and the state and the overall purposes of universities. Are universities now the open communities of scholars envisaged by the Robbins Report, or closed institutions with scholarship subordinated to other more commercial purposes?

The re-publication of **Warwick University Ltd** provides a stimulus to the emerging debate on the role of the universities, and will prove to be a key text for what happened then, and what needs to happen now.

Some leading commentators have said about the re-publication of the book:

**Sheila Rowbotham**, noted social historian:

“A key text... highlights with acute prescience two major issues even more relevant today: the attempt by business to intervene in academia and the widespread surveillance of social activists”.

**Andrew McGettigan** – author of *The Great University Gamble* (Pluto, 2013):

“...sets out the manner in which the governance of a university can be circumscribed and corrupted. With today's pursuit of new income streams generating a profusion of joint ventures... with profit-oriented operations, we need similar researches, reckonings and confrontations”.

### **Notes for Editors:**

*For further information*

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For a review copy, please contact Tony Simpson: [tony@brpf.demon.co.uk](mailto:tony@brpf.demon.co.uk) (or call 0115-970-8318), [www.spokesmanbooks.com](http://www.spokesmanbooks.com)

*Warwick University Ltd*, Edited by E.P.Thompson

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