

Ken Loach

*Tell the World the Truth and Then Join in the Battle*

This is immensely kind of the University of Bologna, of which I am now a very proud member. Thank you. And thank you to those who have spoken with such generosity about our work.

And also, I must thank you for speaking in English. This is a great courtesy to me, and one I value and appreciate. And excuse me if I take off this hat for a few moments. It is handsome, but a little warm!

In response to the award of this degree – a great honour from such an ancient and prestigious University – I thought I would share some memories of the last 60 years.

Times of good fortune, times of defeat, and a reflection on what this teaches me about today's world.

In the early 1960s, after a few years in the theatre and with a young family to support, I was lucky to get a job at the BBC, directing plays for television. More luck – I joined a group who were given the task of making contemporary dramas. To us, that meant stories of everyday life. We found working in studios restricting, we wanted to take a film camera into the streets. Despite the disapproval of management, we managed it and TV plays became films.

But we had to learn how to make them. Italian films had a big influence on us. Not only did they tell great stories, but they showed that the working class was a fit subject for films. We were used to seeing films about the bourgeoisie, people with money and fine houses. The Italian films taught me that the working class could be heroes too.

We wanted to be authentic, both in the images we presented and in the people on screen. I saw that the camera can reveal so much – the texture of skin, of hands – do they do manual work? How you eat, how you stand – is your body shaped by work? All of which reveals your class. Relationships in families, the use of language, laughter, a sense of solidarity or alienation – all patterns of behaviour that are learned from birth.