The Centre for Evolution of Global Business and Institutions invites you to

'How companies respond to globalisation: lessons from the man-made fibres industry'

by Sir Geoffrey Owen
(London School of Economics)

20 October 2011
(drinks and canapés 3.45 pm, talk 4.15 pm)

Venue: Boardroom, Management and Law, Heslington East, University of York
**Sir Geoffrey Owen**

“How companies respond to globalisation: lessons from the man-made fibres industry”

20 October 2011, at 4.15 pm

Sir Geoffrey Owen is Senior Fellow in the Department of Management, London School of Economics (LSE). Before joining the LSE in 1991 he had spent most of his career with the Financial Times, serving as editor from 1981 to 1990. He also worked for the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation in 1968-69, and later for British Leyland Motor Corporation. Since joining the LSE he has written extensively in the field of corporate strategy, corporate governance and global competition. His books include "Industry in the USA" (Penguin 1967), "From Empire to Europe: the decline and revival of British industry since the Second World War" (HarperCollins 1999), and "The rise and fall of great companies: Courtaulds and the reshaping of the man-made fibres industry" (Oxford 2010).

**Abstract:**

The increase in global competition over the last thirty years has led to profound changes in the structure of industries and in the strategies of firms. Nowhere is this most evident than in the man-made fibres industry. Companies had to decide whether to stay in fibres or to diversify into other industries. Either course was fraught with risk, as is clear from the case of Courtaulds. Once the world leader in man-made fibres, it built up a large textile and clothing business, while also diversifying in other directions. The strategy failed, and the company was taken over and broken up at the end of the 1990s. This presentation explains where Courtaulds went wrong, how the takeover was conducted, and describes the subsequent history of Courtaulds major businesses in the hands of their new owners.

Particular emphasis is placed on the on the decisions taken by individual managers and the national and international context within which these decisions were made.